



**REPORT FORM FOR
NETWORK ACTIVITIES**

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Confidential

1. Lead Applicant

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Present appointment and employing institution

Lecturer in Russian, CREES, the University of Birmingham
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Role in activity

Co-ordinator (with Dr Jeremy Morris, University of Birmingham; Dr Vlad Strukov, University of Leeds, Dr Seth Graham, UCL)

2. Activity details

Type and title of activity

The two proposed workshops 'New Media in New Europe-Asia' meet the requirements of the two types of activities specified in the guidelines including thematic and interdisciplinary workshops. Invited speakers and their topics would cover a range of disciplines and take disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to new media in Russia, Eurasia, Central and South-East Europe.

Location

University of Birmingham and UCL

Date

From: 30 March 2010	To: 28 May 2010
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Brief Description of activities carried out (please include or attach a confirmed list of participants)

New Media in New Europe-Asia, the two linked one-day workshops explored the new media phenomenon and its landscape in Russia, Eurasia, Central and South-East Europe. The first workshop was held at CREES (the Centre for Russian and East European Studies), University of Birmingham, on 30 March 2010, and the second workshop took place at SSEES (the School of Slavonic and East European Studies), University College London, on 28 May 2010. The workshops were co-organised by Seth Graham (SSEES, UCL), Jeremy Morris (CREES, Birmingham), Natalia Rulyova (CREES, Birmingham) and Vlad Strukov (SMILC, Leeds). The workshops attracted the audience of over 50 participants including eminent academics, journalists, media practitioners and government officials from the UK, the EU, the USA, Canada, Russia and Kazakhstan. The two keynote speakers, one at each workshop, were media practitioners: the Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists Nadezhda Azhgikhina, and the Freedom House Consultant on New Media for Central Asia and blogger Yelena Jetpyspayeva. All papers given at the workshops stimulated abundant discussions and fruitful exchange between speakers and other participants. Most participants found the workshops useful and timely. For example, Stephen Ennis, a Media Analyst of BBC monitoring, said in his brief interview that a wide range of presentations gave him new ideas, such as the interaction between state TV and the Internet. Another participant, Luc Levy, a representative of the French government working on soft power and the Internet, said that the workshop would help inform policy (please see the main page of the project website for further comments: <http://eurasia.vladstrukov.com/>).

The first panel of the first workshop 'Activism and/or Apathy' investigated the role of new media in civic movements and political activities focusing on a few case studies. The second panel 'Legacies of the past and Challenges of the Present' looked into the developments in the Russian-language internet, in particular, the impact Soviet legacies have had on the internet-based media, the issues related to the spread of hate speech, and the expression of gender on blogging sites. The final session 'Politics and Civic Society' developed further some themes discussed in the first session. The papers examined the potential and challenges brought up by new media for civic society in Russia, Bulgaria, and Armenia.

The first session of the second workshop 'On- and Off-Line Identities in New Eurasia' focused on the formation of individual and collective identities online in Russian- and Bulgarian-language internet spaces. Session two 'New Media and/versus Old Media: Regional Insights' examined media convergence, the interaction between the 'traditional' mass media and new media, and the use of the internet-enabled media for the development of civil society in Russia and Central Asia. The final session focused on 'Spectacle and Entertainment', as suggested in the title of the workshop. The papers explored the effects that new media developments have had on pop culture in post-Soviet Europe.

All the information about both workshops including confirmed speakers, programmes, paper abstracts, research questions, planned publications, and feedback can be found on the project website <<http://eurasia.vladstrukov.com/>>. Confirmed speakers, programmes, paper abstracts, research questions, and CEELBAS feedback forms are also attached below.

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.

The aims and objectives of the proposed workshops were as follows: (1) to facilitate original, cutting-edge research in the field of new media; (2) to encourage disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of new media; (3) to extend the remit of post-soviet media studies beyond Russia to Eurasia, Central and South-East Europe and to encourage a comparative dimension in considering new media in these regions. The above aims and objectives were successfully achieved:

- (1) All academic papers were original and scholarly. Each paper examined an aspect of new media in at least one country of Eurasia, Central and South-East Europe. Speakers offered some new approaches to the study of new media: for instance, Spassov's comparison of the role of the alphabet on the Bulgarian Internet, Kuntsman's comparative analysis of hate speech in Russian-language blogosphere by different ethnic communities, Morris' ethnographic approach to the study of the use of the internet in Russian provinces, Pearce's innovative research into the use of mobile phones in Armenia, and some others. New hypotheses were offered, such as that the use of new technologies in the considered regions is specific to each country and dependent on various geo-political factors to greater extent than previously thought. The examples given in the following paragraph (2) demonstrate that global technology fulfills different functions in different parts of the world; its use is applied to local needs and adjusted to the stage of societal development.
- (2) Speakers were mostly academics and some PhD students doing disciplinary, inter- and multidisciplinary research into new media; they represented a range of qualitative, quantitative and comparative approaches to the study of the Internet and digital technologies in Russia (Floriana Fossato, Sarah Oates, Robert Saunders, Olessia Koltsova, Stephen Hutchings, Jeremy Morris, Natalia Rulyova, Dimitry Jagodin, Lara Ryazanova-Clarke), Bulgaria (Maria Bakardjeva, Orlin Spassov), Ukraine (Galina Miazhevich), Finland (Markku Lonkila, Boris Gladarev), Central Asian countries (Claire Wilkinson), and Armenia (Katie Pearce). The workshops were interdisciplinary, as the study of new media requires multiple and diverse approaches from all angles and disciplines including political science (Oates), cultural studies (Miazhevich, Rulyova), media and communications (Kuntsman, Hutchings, Calvert), ethnographic (Morris, Pearce), literary studies (Ryazanova-Clarke), and gender studies (Goroshko). Inter- and multidisciplinary exchange helped explore the themes of both workshops in greater depth. For example, exploring new media and civic activism, the media scholar Koltsova focused on a case study in St Petersburg which involved organizing protests against the closure of the European University. Her conclusion was that new media tools of communication are only supplementary to more traditional ways of communication, such as personal contact. Sharing her personal experience as a blogger, Wilkinson, on the other hand, showed that the use of new media and blogging, in particular, can and does lead to the mobilization of public resources and is crucial to the development of civil society, especially in near- or totalitarian regimes, like those in Central Asia. Pearce's ethnographic approach to the use of mobile phones by young people in Armenia demonstrated that in a country where Internet use is still low it is replaced by peer-to-peer content sharing via mobile devices. Saunders analysed the relationship between new technologies and the legacy of the past in Russia. He examined how Soviet-era power dynamics and ideological orientations (the "ghost") influence political relations in post-Soviet "new media zones" (the "machine"), from cyber-attacks to social networking to nationalist rhetoric on the Internet.
- (3) The workshops particularly focused on comparative dimensions of the use of the Internet. For instance, Oates compared the use of the Internet by political parties in Russia and in the UK. Informative comparisons were made during the discussion following Bakardjeva's paper, in which she discussed the use of the Internet by citizens and civic movements in Bulgaria; it appears that the voice of Bulgarian civic society has grown stronger, and with the help of the Internet has been able to penetrate the sphere of formal politics on occasion, with important consequences. Fossato who analysed civic engagement in Russia has come to more pessimistic conclusions: Russian bloggers are active but atomised, and civic activism is almost non-existent on Runet. This led to some interesting discussions about the differences in the ways that new media have impact on society: the Internet neither automatically leads to democratisation nor to the strengthening of civil society.

The above aims enabled the workshops to further the stated CEELBAS mission and research priorities in the following ways:

- 1) The workshops further explored contemporary 'cultural processes' (one of the CEELBAS research themes): forms of cultural expression and practices in online media. For example,

exploring the theme of identity construction and its manifestation in Central European and Russian pop culture, Miazhevich focused on the Eurovision contest. She identified a 'double voiced' act that self-consciously parodies Western imaginings of an exotic, yet sexually promiscuous East (hence the frequent inclusion of ethnic 'pastiche' alongside sexual excess). Her insights into parody and humour were developed further by Ryazanova-Clarke who focused on the linguistic and visual aspects of the Russian-language show 'Rulitiki' posted on YouTube, by contextualizing it within the development of political satire in post-Soviet Russia. These two papers revealed the specificity of post-Soviet humour as a post-Soviet cultural phenomenon and as it is represented in new media.

- 2) They also contributed to the CEELBAS research theme of Identities and Solidarities, examining how regional, national, ethnic and other identities are manifested in new media forms.

The global and local in identity construction, a key theme of the project, was examined thoroughly in the second workshop. Morris presented some insightful ethnographic observations and analysis of the role of new media in everyday practices and in the formation of the identities of Russian working class people in a provincial "mono-town". Russian workers put a strong accent on the "informative-educational" role of the Internet in the domestic sphere, and in particular on sustaining practical skills of "make do and mend" – an indicator of continuing narratives of self-reliance and DIY, if not "exitism" from consumption. In their case, global technologies were used to serve the needs of local community. Another approach to online identity construction on the Bulgarian-language Internet has been offered by Spassov, who investigated a conflict between the Cyrillic and Latin scripts where the former is presented as a marker of authentic identity in the Latin-speaking globalized world, and the former as the "Western" alphabet, a sign of opposition to the official national culture.

Drawing on communication theories, Calvert examined the construction of identities by more sophisticated Internet users, i.e. *LiveJournal* bloggers in Nizhnii Novgorod, especially those involved in anti-capitalist, anarchist and/or environmental protests. Calvert identified that their online identity construction strategies are designed with the global in mind, i.e. they apply strategic essentialism, or the boiling down of oneself and others to certain characteristics of online interest. Approaching identity construction from a cultural studies perspective, Rulyova focused on the strategies and tools used to form immigrant identities, in particular Chinese, by Russian-language bloggers. Drawing on gender theories, Goroshko zoomed in on the gender aspect of online identities. The latter three papers revealed similar online identity construction strategies at work, including schematic representation and simplification based on the stereotypes and expectations of online readers.

- 3) They offered scope for interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary collaboration among scholars, in particular, in the arts and social sciences. (see point 2 under 'aims and objectives')
- 4) They integrated the academic capacities of two CEELBAS member institutions (Birmingham and UCL), extending collaboration to Leeds, as the four co-organisers represented these three academic institutions.
- 5) The workshops were aimed at regions listed under CEELBAS research initiatives initiating a comparative perspective of new media in Russia, Asia, Central and South-East Europe.
- 6) The dissemination of workshop findings via academic journals including online distribution will maximise international reach and facilitate discussion of new media and digital technologies in academic community and beyond. Selected contributions will be published in the form of articles in two special issues: of *The Europe and Asia Studies (EAS)* (2010) and *Digital Icons: Studies of Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media (DI)* (2010). The deadline for complete articles is 1 September 2010. Articles are required to be no longer than 8,500 words. The co-editors of the EAS special issue are Jeremy Morris, Natalia Rulyova and Vlad Strukov. The editors of the DI special issue are Seth Graham and Vlad Strukov.

4. Outcomes

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

The workshops have led to consolidating the networks of academics and media practitioners working in the area of new media. All participants of the workshops have been circulated a list of attendees with contact details.

- A network of academics with practitioners has been formed; for example, since the first workshops Dr Rulyova has been invited to give an expert's opinion on the developments of the media on BBC (Russian service)
- A network of international academics with the Union of Russian Journalists was further developed; Azhgikhina, the Secretary of the Union, has discussed ideas for a project on the post-Soviet media and *glasnost* with the academics from the University of Birmingham; Rulyova attended a conference on *glasnost* in Moscow on 16-17 June 2010 to which she was invited as a result of the first workshop;
- Ideas discussed at both workshops were further developed at another CEELBAS-funded workshop on new media in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus organised by Galina Miazhevich, a speaker at the second workshop of our series, in Oxford on 23 June 2010;
- Report on the workshops is to be published in *Digital Icons*, an online journal on new media, on 1 August 2010 (see <http://www.digitalicons.org/>); the network of scholars formed around *DI* was further expanded through the workshops: Vlad Strukov, the editor of *DI*, has invited a few speakers to contribute to *DI*;
- A selection of papers delivered at the workshops will be published as a special issue of *the Europe-Asia Studies* in 2010;
- Academics have started forming a network with new media practitioners; the keynote speaker Jetpyspayeva has applied to do a PhD in the media at the University of Southampton; her decision was partially inspired by the second workshop;
- The expenses on the first workshop have been reduced as a result of the use of Skype to deliver two papers by North American scholars, Bakardjieva (Canada) and Pearce (USA); their papers were an asset to the workshop.

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

<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<p>Key speakers (Travel, accommodation and subsistence)</p> <p>UK speakers (travel and accommodation) 2145.19 International speakers (travel and accommodation) 2006.25 Catering 587.23</p>	
<p>Postgraduate participation</p> <p>Three key speakers were PGs: one UK-based and two PGs from abroad; their total travel and accommodation expenses amounted to £349.3 which is included in the overall travel and accommodation expenses for key speakers mentioned above</p>	
<p>Room/equipment hire</p>	
<p>Administration costs</p>	
<p>Printing and publicity (including conference packs)</p>	£27.1
<p>Other (please specify)</p>	
<p>Total expenditure</p>	£4,765.77
<p>Total contribution invoiced to CEELBAS</p>	£4,765.77

6. Breakdown of total costs for projects (please attach evidence of expenditure)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Staff costs	
Equipment/technical costs	
Administration costs	
Other (please specify	
Total expenditure	
Total contribution invoiced to CEELBAS	

7. Dissemination and further research

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

Morris, Rulyova and Strukov submitted a proposal for the special issue 'New Media in New Europe-Asia' to *The Europe-Asia Studies*. The proposal has been approved by the chief editor Terry Cox. According to the proposal, the special issue would consist of 18 articles organised in six chapters: (1) Political Mediation; (2) New Media Aberrations: Violence, Nationalism and Hatred on the Internet; (3) Activism and/or Apathy; (4) Alternative Social and Economic Networks and Internet Use; (5) Identity Construction; (6) Spectacle and Entertainment. Contributions to the special issue would be based on the papers presented at both workshops. Speakers have been asked to revise and resubmit their papers in the form of articles by 1 September 2010. The special issue is planned for publication in 2011. Strukov, the chief editor of *Digital Icons*, has also identified a couple of papers to be considered for publication in DI in 2011.

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.

