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At the intersection of globalization and ‘civilizational originality’: cultural production in Putin’s Russia

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ABSTRACT

This special issue originates from a transnational collaboration of scholars in philology, comparative literature, social theory, sociology, anthropology, ethnography, and media studies. The collection strives to advance a research agenda built on the nexus of three intellectual and academic domains: post-Soviet ‘Russian cultural studies’, the research paradigm put forward by *Cultural Studies*, as well as empirical methods developed in sociology. The collection illustrates the importance of expanding the experience of Cultural Studies beyond its established spheres of national investigation, while it also speaks to the necessity to re-evaluate the hegemony of the English-language academic and cultural production on the global scale. The collection offers insights into the gamut of cultural practices and institutional environments in which Russian cultural production happens today. It shows how cultural industries and institutions in Russia are integrated into the global marketplace and transnational communities, while they also draw on and contribute to local lives and experiences by trying to create an autonomous space for symbolic production at personal and collective levels. Through diverse topics, the issue sheds light on the agency, i.e. practitioners and participants, creators and consumers, of Russian cultural production and the neoliberal practices implemented on creative work and cultural administration in Russia today. The Introduction outlines the development of academic studies on Russian cultural practices since 1991; describes main political developments shaping the cultural field in Putin’s Russia; and, finally, identifies the Cultural Studies debates the editors of the collection find most productive for investigations of Russia, i.e. the instrumentalization of culture and culture as resource. Relocated in an analysis of a post-socialist society, these conceptualisations seem increasingly problematic in a situation where local and federal policies governing cultural and creative work focus simultaneously on marketization and on nationalism as the main tools of legitimizing the federal government.

KEYWORDS Russia; institutions; creative industries; cultural policies/politics; cultural globalization; culture as resource

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Creatives and recent Russian developments

In late 2016, a Russian-language petition began to circulate on specialists' email lists to save the Marina and Anastasia Tsvetaeva museum in Aleksandrov, a small town northeast of Moscow.¹ Marina Tsvetaeva, a poet famous for her correspondence with Rainer Maria Rilke and Boris Pasternak, embodies for many Russians the twentieth-century modernist canon and the artistic martyrdom associated with it.² Founded by a civic initiative, the museum dedicated to the Tsvetaeva sisters became the property of a foundation based on the initial capital of private donors in 1990. Now it is in danger of losing its autonomous economic and juridical status, and being forced to merge with administrative structures governed by the municipality. At the mercy of the local governor and her benevolence, the museum fights problems common to museums across Russia: a lack of resources, the shutting out of experts from decision-making, the uncertainty of administrative change, the collapse of the esteem associated with traditional high culture, and the local authorities' unleashed will to power (Figure 1).

While the Marina and Anastasia Tsvetaeva museum cannot boast of steady state funding or high attendance, there are a large number of museums and other cultural institutions in Russia, especially in the country's capital cities Moscow and St. Petersburg, which enjoy stable and substantial financial support, and broad public interest. The number of visitors drastically increases when these institutions open blockbuster exhibitions.

One such exhibit took place in 2015 at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. Celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Russian portrait artist Valentin Serov (1865–1911), the Gallery exhibited a lavish display of 250 works by



Figure 1. An image attached to the petition shows the sign for the Tsvetaeva museum. With the Cyrillic script peeling off, and hanging on an unpainted fence behind wild scrub, the drab sign captures what many imagine as a Russian province and the stage of its cultural institutions: abandoned, forgotten, and scarcely attended. The petition text discloses the narrative of the post-Soviet transformation of Russia's cultural institutions and the struggle for the country's cultural heritage. Source: <http://chn.ge/2CPtoB0>.

Serov from 25 Russian museums and several foreign ones. These iconic paintings, such as 'Girl with Peaches. Portrait of V.S. Mamontova' (1887), 'Children' (1899), 'Portrait of Princess Zinaida Yusupova' (1902), 'Portrait of Prince Felix Yusupov' (1903), 'Portrait of Feodor Chaliapin' (1905), and portraits of the Russian royal Romanov family, depict the by-gone beauty of Russia's nobility and Silver Age artistic circles. One could easily discern in the public's interest a longing for a different Russia, a monarchy striving to become a full-fledged member of the European community (Figure 2).

The show exemplifies one of the characteristics of the current cultural policy, namely, investing money and effort in key institutions, which, with their large permanent collections, can be capitalized on as lucrative assets of the Russian state's neoliberal cultural policies.³ Meanwhile, having been at the centre of the country's nation-building projects for centuries, these collections are also able to refashion the public's interest in traditional Russian art and speak to the patriotic and nationalist sensibilities fostered by Russia's political elites.

Although the investment in flagship cultural institutions, which is designed to keep the loyal audiences in their orbit and to sustain international attention, is stable and generous, the leaders of these institutions constantly make sure to express explicit loyalty to the regime. Weeks after the Crimea annexation in 2014, more than five hundred theatre and film directors, musicians, and artists signed a letter 'in support of Putin's policy in Crimea and Ukraine' (Deiateli kul'tury 2014).⁴ Valery Gergiev (general director and artistic director of the Mariinsky Theatre), Vladimir Kekhman (the director of the



Figure 2. Lines were long and people waited for hours outside the Tretyakov complex's brutalist building on Krymsky val to see Valentin Serov's famous canvases.

Mikhailovsky Theatre), and Oleg Tabakov (the director of the Moscow Art Theatre, MkhAT) were among those who signed the letter.

We begin the introduction to the special issue 'Culture in Putin's Russia: Institutions, Industries, Policies' with these two examples, since we believe they illustrate the tensions that cultural institutions and industries in Russia face today. They highlight questions about the autonomy of cultural production vis-à-vis political power and financial control, as well as tensions between Soviet legacy and post-Soviet contemporaneity, new and old forms of cultural institutions and networks, and metropolitan areas and provincial regions. They bring forth questions about the arts and the market, culture and commerce, national treasures, and global capitals, i.e. questions common to many other countries and contexts. But what is at stake in Russia is also the very concept of culture, i.e. the meanings invested in *rusaskaia kul'tura*, Russian culture, its high-cultural and national/imperial/post-imperial meanings, the role of cultural institutions in producing and preserving these meanings, and the relation of these meanings to the cultural policies/politics and cultural discourse of the Russian government. We ascribe to David Throsby's definition of cultural policy as 'the promotion or prohibition of cultural practices or values by governments, corporations, other institutions and individuals' (2010, p. 8), and assert that the core of the Russian government's cultural policies and politics is comprised of two components: first, promoting the conservative version of national history (i.e. through launching the network of thematic parks 'Russia – my history'), and second, capitalizing on national culture as both a soft-power tool and profitable resource.⁵ The relationship between nationalism, cultural infrastructure, and the federal government's legitimacy is currently attracting concerted attention in Russia, with the government advancing new directions of cultural policy and implementing cultural management guidelines.

Due to the centralizing policies of the Russian government and the restructuring of the cultural market, the effects of the state's cultural policy on Russian cultural production need further exploration. We consider it particularly important to research the field of cultural production at the grass roots level, where policy implementations take place and affect those involved in cultural practices: that is, curators, managers, digital publishers, gallery workers, designers, street artists, and other *kreativshchiki*, the Russian neologism for 'creatives'. While Cultural Studies⁶ provides a productive analytical frame for undertaking such research, the authors of the collection also use methods developed in sociology and social theory to conduct the empirical research. The introductory essay presents the odds against which the actors in cultural field operate. It contextualizes the contributors' empirical research in Russia's political and social conditions, in the state's explicit and implicit cultural policies, and in scholarly conceptualisations of global cultural change.

In a 2005 report of an EU policy project, which aimed to introduce a British model of promoting cultural industries to the St. Petersburg city administration, Justin O'Connor saw the Russian protectionist attitude to its high-cultural institutions, national identity, and cultural authenticity – perceived as distinct from 'commercialism, consumerism, and global predatory capital' – as an obstacle for the transformation of the country's cultural policy (O'Connor 2005).⁷ Creating economic and legislative preconditions for cultural institutions, small businesses, and industries to engage successfully in commercial and entrepreneurial activities, was, for O'Connor, a desirable goal to achieve and a sure sign of Russia's Western-style socio-economic development. This, however, was not likely to happen, and to change the course of the development, it was necessary for the federal and regional governments, 'to think about a re-evaluation of commercial and popular culture' (p. 57).

Ten years later, with Europe entering the post-Brexit phase, creative businesses have become an established phenomenon in St. Petersburg and in other urban centres across Russia, as the case studies in this collection attest. The objective of the collection is not to evaluate Russian cultural industries or policies from the viewpoint of an EU policy agenda. Instead, anchored in the analytical perspectives advanced in Cultural Studies by Lawrence Grossberg (2010, pp. 7–10) and others, the objective of the collection is to critically review the contemporary strategic deployment of culture and the predicaments of neoliberal creative labour practices, as well as to engage in a debate about the place of a national cultural policy vis-a-vis the global economy of cultural production. Joining the mainstream of Cultural Studies, which justifiably considers cultural production as impregnated with the power of capital, the contributors to this thematic issue demonstrate how each site of cultural production is specific and its dynamics determined by the contingent configuration of creative forces and institutional settings. The contributors' findings reverberate with those made by researchers of creative labour, especially the one about creative labour functioning in complicated institutional settings captured by Chris Smith and Alan McKinlay:

agents in the creative industries are not simply labor and capital; governments play a role because some of the goods produced in the sector are treated as public goods, for example those with educational value; others have national or cultural value, both for internal purposes of social or ideological control, and also for inter-country competition and prestige. (2009, p. 10)

The empirical studies conducted by the contributors of this collection respond to a recent call by Gill and Pratt's (2008, pp. 18–20) to focus on the meanings cultural workers give to their practices and institutional constraints. In contrast to 'a lot of excitable puff around the creative industries' (McKinlay and Smith 2009, p. 13), this thematic issue describes critically but compassionately the challenges of creative production processes.

The emphasis on cultural work and cultural workers defines a growing sub-field of empirically oriented scholarship aiming to consider the polarization between political economy and Cultural Studies. Having defined cultural industries as institutions which are 'directly involved in the production of social meaning' (Hesmondhalgh 2002, p. 11; see also Banks and O'Connor 2009, Flew 2012), David Hesmondhalgh and others investigated the social and economic power relations which construct cultural practices and representations and created an approach based on the political economy of culture and communication (Ribera-Fumaz 2009, Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010). This approach slowly makes its way into the nexus of academic research on Russian cultural production and Cultural Studies. In the subchapter below, we briefly examine this nexus.

Cultural Studies in the Russian context

Cultural Studies became particularly relevant for scholars working on Russia cultural and social developments in the 1990s, when the dissolution of the Soviet Union was followed by fundamental changes in all spheres of society (a process generally known as *desovietization*). The transition from Soviet to post-Soviet times was intensively and immediately reflected on and negotiated in the cultural sphere by means of symbolic production and institutional reorganization. State cultural and media institutions crumbled into economic crisis and Soviet intelligentsia lost its role as the moral backbone of society (Wachtel 2006). One of the most striking consequences of the Soviet disintegration was the explosive boom of popular culture, and the arrival and accessibility of Western imports. New types of cultural products (advertisement, pulp fiction and best-seller literature, glossy magazines and television serials), as well as new types of leisure activities (beauty centres, package tourism and pet shops), became available for the post-Soviet consumer, simultaneously reconceptualising everyday life in terms of entertainment, leisure, and consumption.⁸

In order to analyse these developments, a number of Slavic Studies scholars turned to British (Anglo-American) Cultural Studies, which resulted in a number of single- and multi-authored, interdisciplinary volumes (e.g. Kelly and Shepherd 1998, Barker 1999a).⁹ These works are valuable because they introduced a detailed account of different areas of cultural change as that change was taking place, while reconfiguring the existing ways to talk and write about the divide between 'East and West', 'high and low' as well as the 'official and dissident' culture that had been essential to the discourses on culture in the Soviet period. The introductory article to one of these collections, established later as a foundational textbook of the new approaches, articulates a desire to establish a new field, *Russian Cultural Studies*. Unlike the British School of Cultural Studies, it was conceptualized outside Marxist

theoretical premises considered to have lost their explanatory power in the Russian context with the fall of the Soviet Union. However, it did share some of the main agendas of the British school, such as the study of identity, everyday life, and popular culture (Kelly *et al.*, 1998).

One of the most significant contributions of the 1990s Russian cultural studies is its critical analysis of a number of well-known concepts traditionally used to reproduce the essentialist discourse on Russian culture (*russkaia kultura*), with Russia understood as something unique, 'metaphysical' and existing separately from the Western cultural paradigm.¹⁰ This attempt to demystify Russian culture through an etymological analysis/intellectual history and thereby link Russian cultural analysis more tightly to the context of global Cultural Studies bears many similarities with the *Keywords* approach employed by Raymond Williams (1976) and many later Cultural Studies scholars in the West. These examples inspired scholars in the field of Slavic Studies, a field with a strong philological tradition, to analyse Russian literature beyond the high-cultural paradigm and break out from the state- and ideology centred discourse, which now seemed outdated.

Another characteristic of the 1990s Russian cultural studies, which sets it apart from Cultural Studies *per se*, is its interaction with historiography. This, again, was related to the perestroika reforms and post-Soviet 'archival revolution'.¹¹ Re-evaluation of history also became a dominant project in cultural production outside academia: especially television, literature, and advertisement intensively reproduced and re-circulated well-known themes, motifs and slogans from Soviet, as well as pre-revolutionary, times (e.g. Morris 2005). *Nostalgia* was acknowledged as the prevailing symbolic practice of post-Soviet Russia.¹²

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian educational and academic fields experienced a 'cultural turn' illustrated by the emergence of the discipline known as *kul'turologiia* (culturology). Essentially, it replaced the institutional and ideological void left by Marxist Leninism and was taught largely by the teachers who had been in charge of dialectic materialism in the Soviet education system (Scherrer 2003, Laruelle 2004). One of the major objectives of *kul'turologiia* was to establish a scientific discourse of Russian (national) identity as a response to the changed world politics at the end of the Cold War (Scherrer 2003, Laruelle 2004). Russian *kul'turologiia* appears to share with Cultural Studies the broad and inclusive understanding of culture but, at the same time, there are significant epistemological and theoretical differences. Kelly *et al.* (1998, pp. 12–13) point out that Russian *kul'turologiia* partially built on the legacy of the Tartu semiotic school of cultural analysis, which preserved the hierarchical binarisms of high culture and applied them to the analysis of other cultural phenomena. Later commentators see *kul'turologiia* as an attempt to re-establish the civilizational

understanding of Russian cultural identity; for instance, Laruelle captures the methodological nationalism of *kulturologiia* when she states that it ‘focuses on the idea of nation: cultures, religions and sciences are above all national and must be studied from that angle. This is why, paradoxically, the difference between the terms “culture” and “civilization” is always unclear’ (2004, p. 29). The role that the rapid institutionalization and legitimization of *kulturologiia* played in the recent conservative turn among current Russian elites remains a question to be explored.

Academic mobility between Russia and other countries has been expanding since the 1990s and there is a vibrant global community of scholars that work on Russian cultural production in transnational environments. Therefore, it is hard to make clear institutional distinctions between Russian cultural studies conducted within Russian borders and elsewhere. Over the past decades, the field of Russian cultural studies has grown increasingly nuanced and today it encompasses a multiplicity of different research with different theoretical framings.¹³

In this instance, we would like to single out research on fashion and fashion industry, which has brought up questions of class (see Gurova and Morozova 2018) and gender (see Dashkova 2013, Vainshtein 2017). Dashkova’s and Vainshtein’s research shows how gender structures are reaffirmed in the fashion economy. As Margarita Kuleva’s research in this special issue shows, gender bias is an underlying factor in the labour conditions of the creative industries. The fact that the creative professionals are predominantly female may be the cause for the fact that, when compiling this special issue, we found it hard to trace male scholars working on empirical research in the field.

What connects much of the research described above is the fact that it is carried out in collaboration between researchers from various countries across the European East–West divide, as well as across the Atlantic. Russian-born scholars may be educated or work in non-Russian academic institutions, and non-Russian scholars are educated, work, and conduct fieldwork in Russia. Meanwhile, members of the research communities, regardless of national background and identities, often exchange ideas and research results in international conferences and research seminars, as well as by means of publications. This is not to say that there was no research on Russian cultural practices conducted in Russia outside the theoretical and methodological developments, or institutional constellations, described in this Introduction, just as there is non-Russian research on Russia, which ignores the results of Russian domestic scholarship. This collection was initiated by an international collaboration, which, as, we hope, shows the productive results of cross-cultural fertilization in research on Russia’s cultural production.

Cultural policies and politics in Putin's Russia

'Putin's Russia' in the title of this thematic issue refers to Russian societal and cultural developments from 2000 till the present, a period marked by the political hegemony of United Russia and the succession of Vladimir Putin's three presidencies interrupted by his service as the prime minister of the country from 2008 to 2012 during Dmitry Medvedev's presidency. Several studies of popular culture have shown that Putin is a popular celebrity whose public image is reproduced in a myriad of cultural commodities ranging from artworks, songs, and souvenirs to clothing, foodstuffs and home decoration (e.g. Goscilo 2013b). Due to their scale and volume, Russian culture's ubiquitous representations of Putin have given reason for cultural scholars and critics alike to make a parallel between the current 'Putinomania' and the Soviet-style cult of leadership (Goscilo 2013b, Turoma 2017), which, too, was produced and maintained by a massive cultural industry encompassing both everyday-level products and more exclusive art forms. On the other hand, Putin as celebrity is reproduced and perceived in the context of global and commercial popular culture. Therefore, as Helena Goscilo argues, 'the Putin phenomenon – [as] a product of distinctly postmodern social and philosophical indeterminacy – offers ordinary Russian citizens a degree of agency without any precedent in the Soviet period' (2013a, p. 3).

With Vladimir Putin's third re-election as the President of the Russian Federation, this agency was manifest when creative professionals, together with liberal intelligentsia, gathered political momentum in mass protests around the country during the electoral campaigns of 2011–2012.¹⁴ As a result, in pre-Crimea Russia, it seemed for a short period of time that cultural and intellectual practices were regaining new political relevance. The election cycle exhibited a gamut of improvised forms of cultural protest and self-expression, which symbolically attacked and mocked the regime, which many voters found increasingly nationalist and authoritarian. Various satirical projects criticized several aspects of Russia's political and societal developments deplored by those who identified with a Western-style liberal agenda. These were the restrictions of media freedom, violence against political journalists, the Russian involvement in the Caucasus, the corruption of the legal system, the rise of nationalism, the increasing power of the Russian Orthodox Church and its close relations with the Kremlin, and patriotism incorporated in the school curriculum (cf. Turoma 2017)

While creative professionals were among those who contributed to the economic growth and stability of Putin's first and second term, they also turned out to be the force for supporting the anti-Putin movement. This, however, was a short-lived moment of liberal protest before a state-governed conservative turn. During Putin's third term, there has been a strong emphasis on patriotic education and a rebuilding of national and state identity in an

Orthodox religious framework.¹⁵ This period has witnessed the ‘evolution of his [Putin’s] regime from soft to hard authoritarianism and a revanchist great power’ (Kuzio 2016, p. 1). In international politics, this development culminated in the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, followed by the war in East Ukraine, the reciprocal economic sanctions between Russia and Western countries, and Russia’s military campaign in Syria as Bashar Al-Assad’s ally.

The case studies in this issue focus on Putin’s third term (2012–present),¹⁶ during which a number of trajectories of ‘electoral authoritarianism’ (see Gel’man 2013) have shaped and transformed Russian society and cultural production. A number of initiatives taken at the level of state politics during Putin’s third term play an increasingly significant role in the field of cultural production. Such flagship institutions as the Tretyakov Gallery aside, cultural institutions receive unprecedentedly little financial support from the state (e.g. Jonson 2015), and they are thus forced to turn to the business sector and private funds in search of economic sustainability. At the same time, the leading cultural institutions work in a very competitive environment comprised of the more recent cultural agencies and spaces and other leisure activities, which are easily available online. They are oriented in their operation towards the federal government, which, in many cases, is the only provider of financial support. The way the government runs and funds cultural institutions is seldom met with criticism, since such criticism can cost these institutions their financial support. For this reason, the speech given in October 2016 by Konstantin Raikin at The Union of Theatre Workers of Russia deserves to be quoted at length. It highlights the critical approach of cultural actors prominent in state cultural institutions to the government’s policies, particularly those of the Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky:

I am very much worried – as I believe all of you are – about what is happening in our lives right now. These, so to speak, assaults on art, on theatre in particular. These completely lawless, extremist, arrogant, aggressive actions, hiding behind the words of morality, and all kinds of good and lofty words: ‘patriotism’, ‘homeland’, and ‘high morals’. These groups of people who were allegedly abused, who close theatre plays, close exhibitions, very arrogantly behave, and it is somehow very strange that the government stays neutral – distancing. It seems to me that this is a hideous attack on artistic freedom, on the prohibition of censorship. And the prohibition on censorship – I do not know what everyone of you thinks of this – I think this is the event of the greatest significance in our lives, in the artistic and spiritual life of our country. This [censorship] is a curse, and centuries of shame for our culture, our art – finally, it was banned. And what happens now? Now I can see how this is clearly someone itching to change and to go back. And go back not just to the times of stagnation, to even more ancient times – to Stalin’s time. Because our immediate superiors speak to us with this Stalin’s language, Stalin’s settings – unbelievable! This is how officials talk; my immediate superiors, [First Deputy of the Minister of Culture Vladimir] Aristarkhov talks this way. Although he, generally speaking,

needs to be translated into Russian from 'Aristarkhov language' because he speaks the language, which is simply a shame to be spoken on behalf of the Ministry of Culture (Raikin 2016).

Emotional and heartfelt, Raikin's intervention captured the opinion of many cultural workers in Russia who may not have the opportunity or the boldness to speak out publicly. 'Patriotism' and 'homeland' are the catchwords repeated in the political leadership's discourse, mirroring the state's cultural policy, which is strongly articulated in the context of national identity and security strategy.

A decree signed by President Putin on 24 December 2014, set the guidelines for Russia's state cultural policy.¹⁷ The document presents culture as a system of values and institutions that produce and preserve these values. 'Russian culture' is understood as a fundamental force for Russia's civilizational 'originality' (*samobytnost*). It is the foundation of a unified 'Russian mentality' (*mentalitet rossiiskogo naroda*), the production of which is the goal of cultural policy as outlined by the decree. The document makes great claims about the ability of culture to unify Russia's 'multinational' people and instil patriotism and national pride in them (cf. Turoma and Aitamurto 2016b). In so doing, it raises questions about how the Russian government is co-opting and institutionalizing the concept of Russian culture and making it the foundation of national identity. The production of national identity, at the heart of which lies the 'Russian culture' that presumably 'speaks directly to the soul' (cf. O'Connor 2005), is being commodified by the Russian state's own Cultural Industry, which, when spelled in the singular and with capital letters, invokes Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's critique of the post-WWII American mass culture with its banalities and misrepresentation of democracy and deception of citizens. In practice, the cultural politics of Putin's third term relate strongly to the isolationist turn in foreign politics that followed the annexation of Crimea, as well as to Russia's role as a producer of energy resources.

While the state expects the actors in the cultural field to participate in the production of cultural nationalism, consumers may still expect them to protest the state's hegemony. Such expectations were recently met when members of the production team of *Nureyev*, a controversial ballet at Bolshoi Theatre, appeared on stage at the end of the premier wearing T-shirts with the slogan 'Free the Director!' (*Svobodu rezhisieru!*). The director Kirill Serebrennikov is known to have staged productions openly critical of Vladimir Putin's politics, and is currently at home arrest for accusations of embezzlement and, thus, he was unable to attend the premiere.¹⁸

Globalization and culture as resource

Compiling a thematic issue on cultural institutions and their change in Russia during the last 20 years, we strived to make sense of institutions as both

formal and informal rules of the game that present ‘the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction’ (North 1990, p. 3).¹⁹ The extent to which both explicit and implicit rules regulate the interaction between governments, cultural institutions, ‘creatives’, and consumers of culture testifies to the fact that, under neoliberal governance, cultural production is subjected to ‘instrumental’ intervention (Rose 1999). On the one hand, one witnesses the increased bureaucratic regulation of the activities of museums and philharmonics, while on the other, those who run cultural organizations are expected to be able to anticipate what kind of art and culture will be rewarded. It is our contention that the configuration of goals, emotions, performances, and memories that together comprise cultural practices in Russia today can be productively analysed when Russian policies and politics are viewed as a neo-authoritarian and neoliberal hybrid.²⁰

In this instance, we find it useful to refer to George Yúdice’s assertion:

The notion of culture as a resource entails its management, a view that was not characteristic of either high culture or everyday culture in the anthropological sense. And to further complicate matters: culture as a resource circulates globally, with ever increasing velocity. (p. 2)

According to Yúdice, globalization turns culture into an important asset that – under conditions of the right investment in it – can generate urban growth, prevent social conflict, and strengthen national identity. According to Yúdice, globalization ‘absorbs and cancels out hitherto prevailing distinctions among high culture, anthropological, and mass culture definitions’ (2002, p. 6). While culture – from art to food – actively penetrates all spheres of life, including, importantly, politics and economics, it needs to be justified and legitimized according to the pervasive logic of economic utility. Yúdice analyses official claims that variously enrol culture for social and economic purposes. And indeed, one often hears the statements that culture should help to stimulate economic growth through tourism, provide new working places, and mobilize people’s creative energy.

Yúdice’s main argument that it is ‘*not possible not* to make recourse to culture as a resource’ (2002, p. 28, italics eds.) is echoed by Ilya Kalinin, a specialist in Russian cultural studies, when he traces similarities between the way the Russian government controls and distributes the revenues from selling oil and gas, the country’s main natural resources, and the government’s attempts to control human resources:

In the situation of detachment from the global market of capital and technology, Russia is obliged to concentrate on its own domestic resources, which are hydrocarbon ... and the cultural heritage. This is also the reason for a more active cultural politics (technologies of appropriation and utilization of the cultural heritage), ever more clearly acknowledged by the political elite and concerning state cultural institutions. (2015)

As a result, 'a resource imaginary' is at work in many other spheres of Russian life, but especially in 'the attitudes displayed toward Russia's past in the state politics of memory' (2015).²¹

It needs to be stressed, though, that commentators on Russian culture and politics, among them Kalinin, generally have a more critical take on the idea of 'culture as an important asset and a resource' than Yúdice does. For example, they point out that, by actively promoting an understanding of culture as a resource, the political leadership in Russia can be seen as falsifying some core democratic ideals of citizen participation for the benefit of the ruling elites (political, economic, and religious) (cf. Kalinin 2015, see also Etkind 2017). This means that, instead of offering material benefits or guaranteeing social justice to the people, Russia's leaders use the idea of national culture to create an abstract sense of common well-being and a feeling of superiority in comparison to 'others', be it Europeans or Americans or any other areas or nations in the world. When viewed from the perspective of Russia's state cultural policies, globalization appears, then, in an entirely different light: the 2014 decree signed by President Putin states that the

Contemporary globalized world is an arena for political, economical, and cultural battle. The main point of this conflict is the West's effort to take the victory of the Cold War to its logical end and finish off Russia, as the USSR was finished off. (Principles of State Cultural Policy 2015, p. 37)

Globalization, in this official interpretation, is not an asset capable of preventing conflict, but it is the very source of conflict.²² It is against this discourse and understanding of globalization that many Russian cultural critics find it necessary to argue.²³

Describing the intertwinement of the natural resources industry and cultural production, Douglas Rogers adds an important factor to the accounts of the commodification of culture by describing the role that oil- and gas-processing corporations play in Russian regions. Speaking of the Perm region and the LukoilPerm corporation, he claims: 'Complaints that the Soviet period had left culture in ruins were answered with corporation funded festivals, celebrations of local culture, and the reconstruction of churches and mosques' (Rogers 2015, p. 289). The above-mentioned hybridity of the workings of culture in Russia is exemplified in the 'schizophrenic' pastiche of the news and events available for Russian audiences in Russian-language media.

In the case studies included in this special issue, globalization is approached from viewpoint of those connected with global economy, mobility, and flows of information. The fact that they discuss 'creatives', for instance, museum workers (Safonova *et al.*, Kuleva), in the Russian context is a sign of globalization. Furthermore, the conceptualizations the authors use, such as precarity (Gurova and Morozova 2018), the digital turn (Ratilainen), urban initiatives (Suleymanova, Trubina), changes, in the library and

reading culture (Pape and Smirnova) call for the acknowledging of globalization's effect at the grass-root level. As a whole, as this collection of articles contests that, far from constituting a unitary concept or a one-dimensional process, globalization emerges as a differentiated set of processes driven by contradictions, mutual influences, varying push and pull factors, and a local constellation of actors and institutions.

The contributions highlight this complexity of situations, contexts, and discursive spaces in which Russians involved in cultural production, either as authors and makers, or consumers and observers, or as both, negotiate the state's increasing influence, the nationalism it promotes, and its isolationist politics, on the one hand, and globalization's opportunities and predicaments, on the other. The policies governing the cultural and creative industries in Russia are essentially both neoliberal (focusing on marketization of cultural institutions) and nationalistic (using nationalism as the main tool for the legitimization of the federal government).²⁴ Meanwhile, it is difficult to draw a clear-cut line between the ways in which the neoconservative and neoliberal tendencies materialize in place-based cultural economies. The local growth machines often incorporate cultural institutions and creative policy-makers into their initiatives. For these institutions and agents, engaging with the fluctuating governmental cultural policies is an opportunity to further their own agendas. Critics of a neoliberal creative economy point out the comfortable symbiosis between the promotion of creativity and 'the grain of extant neoliberal development agendas, framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption, and place-making' (Peck 2005, p. 740). As a result, it seems fair to claim that those talented individuals who explicitly promote the nationalist agendas are currently more fortunate than those embracing cosmopolitanism.

Contributions

The contributions to this thematic issue discuss the following topics: street art as a form of cultural entrepreneurship and local activism; labour practices of fashion designers and precariousness of the creative class; the organizational change of the structure of cultural institutions in St. Petersburg; the transformation of the public library system in Moscow; the publishing business's digital projects and algorithmic culture; Tatar creative industries in Kazan; and professional careers and identities of creative workers. In other words, the contributions address Russian culture, or cultural practices and processes, in the form in which culture manifests itself in Russia at present, but which has gained less attention in scholarly literature than these practices and processes deserve.

Among recent theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of cultural production, the authors find particularly useful the ones delineating

the spatial and economic diversity of the creative industries (Ponzini and Rossi 2010; see also Trubina 2015, 2018) as well as the controversies of their functioning in the localities, namely that 'the line between commercial and subsidized sectors, between primarily economic and primarily cultural activities, or indeed motives of art and motives of profit was by no means clear cut at this local level' (O'Connor 2010, pp. 35–36). The contributions produce alternative ways of reflecting on these conceptualisations and methods, advancing critical perspectives on the study of the practices and technologies of cultural production in a post-socialist context and that context's entanglements with globalization processes. Through diverse topics, the issue sheds light on the agency, i.e. practitioners and participants, creators and consumers, of Russian cultural production, as well as the identities of creative professionals and cultural administrators and the diverse audiences that participate in Russian cultural production. The contributions probe institutional structures in flux, i.e. the emerging networks of cultural entrepreneurs, the practices of fundraising, promotion, and managerialism, and the role of arts and culture in the economy and community development.

In 'Street art in the non-capital urban centres: between exploiting commercial appeal and expressing social concerns', Elena Trubina explores the ambiguities of urban actors and their roles in local economies and cultural and administrative environments. She juxtaposes two different contexts in which street artists operate in two large urban centres: Nizhny Novgorod and Ekaterinburg. While street artists' activities were traditionally seen as manifestations of rebellious subcultures, their meaning today is controversial and, in many cases, closely linked to the hegemonic structures of capitalism and governance. Trubina shows that in Russia street, artists prove their rebellious aspiration, on the one hand, by contesting aggressive gentrification of the city centre and related evictions (in the case of Nizhny Novgorod). On the other hand, the artists become dependent on the local government and corporations as a source of legality and financing (in the case of Ekaterinburg). Trubina's article demonstrates that, in spite of increasing over-centralisation, Russia's cultural and regional diversity results in strikingly different contexts of street art promotion due to specific configurations of various interest groups in the cities.

Olga Gurova and Daria Morozova's contribution addresses the vibrant scene of creative enterprises, clusters, and professionals in Russia's urban centres, which, despite some pessimistic evaluations of the results of EU-led policy experiments (see O'Connor 2005), have continued to contribute to Russian cultural production. Their article 'Creative Precarity? Young fashion designers as entrepreneurs in Russia' links the lifestyle and careers of young people in the fashion industry to neoliberal policies, which instil entrepreneurial predilections in the mindsets of young people and make them adapt to the hegemonic economic system. This encourages supplementing the

instrumental goals and explicitly stated conservative social and political values. The authors reflect on the impact that the popularity of patriotic feelings has both on the designers (they are prompted to include national imagery in their designs) and the consumers, who have turned to domestically produced clothing.

Maria A. Safonova, Nadezhda A. Sokolova and Alexandra S. Barmina's article, 'The established and the outsiders: legitimacy and economic niches of the four generations of Saint-Petersburg cultural institutions', scrutinizes St. Petersburg's cultural institutions from the viewpoint of network analysis, which comprises 34 major art and cultural institutions in the city. The authors argue that the current cultural policies in Russia have resulted in the birth of a new, 'hybrid' organizational structure that mixes various art forms and aesthetic modes and that relies on commercial units for increased economic revenue. At the same time, cultural institutions are constantly re-evaluated by different audiences, such as experts, visitors, and employees, who articulate their views in high-cultural, popular, and commercial discourses. This makes the traditional contradiction between commercial and high-cultural values a central issue when evaluating the life cycles and sustainability of art institutions in contemporary Russia. The article shows poignantly that cultural prestige is an important symbolic resource and that the hegemonic system of symbolic evaluation is deeply invested in the entire field of Russia's cultural institutions.

Public libraries have traditionally been important sites of self-education and social inclusion where people have access to knowledge and where they can exercise their role as 'cultural citizens' (Hartley 2002). As Ulla Pape and Anastassia Smirnova show in their article, 'Transforming the public sphere: the case of Moscow city libraries', public libraries are crucial for the analysis of the public sphere and civic engagement in post-Soviet Russia. Focusing on the reform of the city library network, the authors point out how public libraries, even in the capital Moscow, remain in the Soviet era. The article vividly describes how Moscow attempted to reform its public library network through a collaboration between intellectuals, creatives and civic servants. The example of public libraries thus illuminates the role of the local administration, on the one hand, and the overall political context, on the other, in the development of cultural institutions. As the authors conclude, the library reform was launched in the unfortunate period (2013–2015) when the crisis in international politics heavily influenced the domestic arena, resulting in severe restrictions of the public sphere.

Saara Ratilainen's contribution, 'Digital media and cultural institutions in Russia: online magazines as aggregates of cultural services', discusses the culture of reading and its new economy in Russia by emphasizing the role of digital, multiplatform distribution, and production of media content.

Through an analysis of online magazines and their participation in 'algorithmic culture', Ratilainen relocates the study of the digital turn to concern post-Soviet Russian media and cultural institutions. Seeking out both synchronic and diachronic variables of Russian media development, Ratilainen juxtaposes her analysis of the Moscow-based, print-turned-digital lifestyle magazine *Afisha* with a discussion of the digital-born regional online magazine *Inde*, a Kazan-based publication recently established to enhance urban culture in the Tatarstan region. Ratilainen's article demonstrates how Russian media industries and cultural institutions interact with their audiences through the globally networked media infrastructure.

In her article, 'Creative cultural production and ethno-cultural revitalization among minority groups in Russia', Dilyara Suleymanova examines how Tatar activists in Kazan, the Republic of Tatarstan, build their identity and negotiate their belonging to a religious and ethnic minority at a grass-root level through creative industries, urban activism and online initiatives. Her case studies cover crafts and design, urban festivals, and educational projects aimed at invigorating Tatar traditions and language. She places her analysis of the Tatar cultural practices in the framework of global urban initiatives and activism. Digital technologies, especially social media, play an important role in disseminating these cultural products, while they offer an alternative space for interaction and participation. Suleymanova demonstrates how the new forms of urban initiatives prevent ethno-cultural activism from being overtly politicized, creating, thus, a space of 'relative freedom' for minority-related cultural projects in the midst of current Russian state centralizing policies, which have significantly restricted minority rights.

Margarita Kuleva's article 'Cultural administrators as creative workers: the case of public and non-governmental cultural institutions in St. Petersburg' argues that for many creative, it is still the cultural institutions that frame and affect their labour conditions. Kuleva delineates two types of cultural institutions in St. Petersburg – those that stem from the Soviet times and others that emerged just recently – demonstrating how their differing organizational cultures result in dissimilar patterns for financing cultural production. The first revert to state-imposed measures, while the second, to support themselves, have to introduce a commercial dimension into nearly all their events and productions.

While obviously not all-encompassing, this collection of articles aims to demonstrate that both popular interest in culture and its instrumentalisation by authorities result from structural and institutional changes of a country which, once capable of producing world-class cultural artefacts, now struggles to find a new place under the conditions of global populism, the growing popularity of neoconservatism, and on-going economic and cultural globalization.

Notes

1. *Myzei sestior Tsvetaevykh v Aleksandorve v opasnosti!* [online], n.d.
2. Marina Tsvetaeva fled the Bolshevik Revolution, lived in poverty in Prague and Paris ostracised by the émigré community, then returned to Russia, where, after the arrest of her husband and daughter, she committed suicide in anticipation of a Nazi invasion in 1941. Once excluded from the Soviet literary canon, Tsvetaeva regained fame in the perestroika years, and the house where she stayed when visiting her sister Anastasia in 1915–1917 has become a site of literary pilgrimage and poetic gatherings.
3. For our take on neoliberalism, see below, especially, note 20.
4. The letter with signatures can be read on the website of Russia's Ministry of Culture: <http://mkrf.ru/m/471859>. For the news about the letter in Russian media, see *Izvestia* 2014.
5. On the initiative of the Bishop Tikhon Shevkunov and the Council of Culture of the Russian Patriarchy with support of the President Putin, 20 thematic historic parks 'Russia – my history' were opened in the fall 2017 across Russia. The Ministry of Education recommended schools make advantage of these parks in history teaching. The progressive Russian historians in their letter to the Minister of Education Ol'ga Vasil'eva objected to the contents of the parks and raised the questions about one-sided (paternalist) version of the Russian history that the parks present, namely, the glorification of all Russian tsars and silencing or condemnation of the rebellions, etc. See the open letter by the 'Free Association of Historians' (*Vol'noe obshchestvo istorii*) in *Volistob* 2017.
6. To make the distinction between Cultural Studies and Russian cultural studies (see below) clearer, we use upper case for the first and lower case for the latter.
7. The policy experience O'Connor describes was sponsored by Tacit, a grant-financed technical assistance program launched by the EU in 1991 to help the former Soviet republics, i.e. the Commonwealth of Independent States, as these countries were referred to then. It has been replaced by European Neighbourhood Policy and Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument since the project O'Connor discusses.
8. On post-Soviet advertisement and TV commercials see, for example, Kelly (1998), pulp fiction and serial fiction, Goscilo (1999), Nepomnyashchy (1999); glossy magazines, Goscilo (2000); Bartlett (2006), Ratilainen (2015); and pet culture, Barker (1999b).
9. Since these initial steps, there has appeared a bulk of literature on popular culture and the everyday. Among the topics in this field of research there are sexuality and love (Tiomkina and Zdravomyslova 2002, Borisova *et al.* 2008), celebrity (Goscilo and Strukov 2011, Goscilo 2013a, 2013b), fan and fandom (Voizianov 2011, Samutina 2017), TV and TV series Tishler (2003), MacFadyen (2008) and Khitrov (2016), Hutchins and Tolz (2016). See also Chernetsky (2007), Borenstein (2008), Leiderman (2011), Rosenholm and Savkina (2015), and Beumers (2016).
10. These include the old Russian terms referring to individuality, *lichnost'*; community, *sobornost'* and *obshchestvennost'*; and intellectual life *literaturnost'*; as well as the central to Soviet educational and hygiene campaigns term *kul'turnost'* (Cornwell and Wigzell 1998, Kelly and Volkov 1998, Offord 1998, Barker 1999c).
11. The 'archival revolution' started in the mid-1980s. Long-sealed central and local party archives, as well as private collections and museum holdings, opened to

- public generating a stream of new historical studies on Soviet Union (Raleigh 2002).
12. See, for instance, see Oushakine (2000, 2007), Boym (2001), and Nadkarni and Shevchenko (2004).
 13. Gender studies, women studies, queer studies, masculinity studies, postcolonial studies, memory studies, studies on spatiality, to mention some major theoretical frames, are well presented in the scholarship on Russian and Soviet cultural practices and discourses.
 14. On the discourse of creative industries and creative class in Russia, see *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* (2013), Beumers *et al.* (2017).
 15. On this, see, for instance, Turoma and Aitamurto (2016a).
 16. Vladimir Putin is running for another consequent term in the upcoming Presidential Election, March 2018. Among the candidates accepted by the central Election Commission, there is no real competition to his popularity. The most prominent oppositional candidate, Alexei Navalny, was denied candidacy based on an on-going law suit.
 17. When finalizing this Introduction, we learnt that president Putin has expressed a need for a new legislation to increase the state's control of cultural production (Latukhina 2017).
 18. The ballet was supposed to premier in July at the Bolshoi Theatre but was withdrawn from the program two days before the first night and later in the fall, Kirill Serebrennikov was arrested. Russian media as well as international media followed the incident closely (e.g. Sulcas 2017, Svoboda 2017).
 19. Formal rules, often expressed in politicians' speeches and official documents, 'have the sanction of tradition and precedent' in John Dewey's classic definition (1938, p. 53), whereas implicit or informal rules of the game, equally important in shaping audiences' perceptions and cultural participants' actions, may be what people believe to be signals coming from the political elite. For more recent theoretical debates about institutions and networks, see, for instance, Powell (2007) and Scott (2001).
 20. We find David Harvey's definition of neoliberalism and its implications for cultural institutions an effective point of departure:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (2005, p. 11)

According to Harvey, neoliberalism has been put into active practice since the 1970s, and he, like many other commentators, includes post-Soviet countries among those that have 'embraced, sometimes voluntarily, and in other instances as response to coercive pressures, some version of neoliberal theory and adjusted at least some policies and practices accordingly' (p. 12). For an analysis of how neoliberal ideas entered Russian economic policies and intertwined with Russia's oligarch-led, authoritarian developments, see Peter Rutland's essay 'Neoliberalism in Russia', esp. on neoliberalism in Putin's Russia (Rutland 2013, esp. pp. 29–39). On Russia and globalisation in a general areas studies context, see, for instance, Legvold (2011).

21. On the links between economic globalization, and the ways of incorporating cultural similarities and differences into management and strategy development see, for instance, Breidenbach and Nyíri (2009) and Venaik and Brewer (2016).
22. A number of state-led cultural initiatives strive to distance Russia from the 'globally circulating cultural resources' and offer an alternative to the America-led/Westernized globalisation. This attempt is actualised, for example, in *Russkii Mir*, the state-sponsored foundation created in 2007 to 'popularize Russian language, which is the national property of Russia and the backbone of Russian and world culture' (russkiymir.ru). Over the past decade, *Russkii Mir* has become one of Russia's most visible soft-power tools. See Suslov (2014), Uffelmann (2014), and Laruelle (2015).
23. On globalisation and Russia, see Legvold (2011).
24. For the intertwining of economic nationalism and neoliberalism in Russia, see Kangas (2013).

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