

The 2018 Football World Cup in Russia: Cultural Impact & International Reception

Workshop and round table discussion

17 October 2018, Wednesday, 3.30-5.30pm
ER142, Elvet Riverside 1, MLAC, Durham University



The World Cup football championship, as other international megaevents of this scope, is not only a key activity in the sphere of sport, an example of outstanding economic investment or a period of worldwide tourism boost; it also creates a strong reason for transforming media images of hosting countries and expanding the horizons of cultural awareness across audiences, it changes perceptions of national cultures and facilitates transnational communication. The 2018 Football World Cup in Russia has proved this point – providing another case for media scrutiny, it has added nuances to the international image of contemporary football culture as well as fandom lifestyle(s) in Russia. This workshop will bring together journalists and academics specializing in football culture and international sports management, Russian studies and communication research and will open up a discussion on the changing roles of sport megaevents in cultural awareness, transnational communication and international outreach as exemplified by the recent World Cup in Russia.

CONTACT: P.S.KLYUCHNIKOVA@DURHAM.AC.UK

Programme

3.30pm Welcome from the CrossLangDyn project

3.40pm Andy **POTTS**, independent sports journalist

Snow on the Seats: A Fan's Journey through Russian Football in the Run-Up to 2018

Journalist and football fan Andy Potts was based in Moscow for almost a decade in the run up to the World Cup. When he arrived, going to watch the football was almost a taboo; fans were perceived as drunks at best, thugs at worst. By the time he left, an audience drawn from Russia's oft-cited, rarely-identified 'burgeoning middle class' was turning up to cheer on the national team. What changed, and how much has stayed the same?

4.00pm Vitaly **KAZAKOV**, University of Manchester

Can a "Good World Cup" Improve Russia's Image? Insights from Journalists and Fans at Russia 2018

The virtually problem-free organisation and the Russian team's unexpected performance at the tournament proved many pessimists wrong, making Russia 2018 FIFA World Cup a success story for the organisers, the country's authorities, and, more importantly, regular citizens and international guests of the tournament. This talk will explore reflections on the tensions between expectations and reality in Russia during the tournament. Based on interviews with local and international fans and media personnel covering the competition, we will share insights about their experiences, address the issue of legacies, as well as explore the perceived ability of such events to meaningfully improve a host country's image.

4.20pm Mikhail **BATUEV**, Northumbria University

The 2018 FIFA World Cup: international visitors' perceptions of risks

Some previous studies have dealt with crime-risk perception in sport events and tourism management. However, the FIFA 2018 World Cup presented a very complex case with multiple risks that are perceived to exist in Russia (e.g. football hooliganism, racism, homophobia, among others). Some initial findings from a survey of the fans of different national teams who travelled to Russia will be presented. This survey was part of Northumbria University research project and was conducted in four host cities during the World Cup.

4.40pm Marie **GILLESPIE** & Rhys **CRILLEY**, Open University

Reframing Russia through Football: Analysing RT's World Cup 2018 Reporting & Audience Reception

Global sporting events such as the World Cup are often spoken of in terms of soft power – where they are viewed to be beneficial to the states that host them. With the World Cup 2018 being hosted in Russia amidst deteriorating relations between Russia and the 'West', concerns were raised prior to the tournament that "Putin is going to use it in the way Hitler used the 1936 Olympics". Such concerns, whilst hyperbolic, warrant further inspection; how did the Russian state represent the Russian nation through their coverage of the World Cup to global audiences? And how did audiences interpret and respond to such representations? In order to answer these questions, this paper provides an analysis of over 700 online articles published by the Russian-state funded international broadcaster RT (formerly Russia Today). We then discuss findings from social media and focus group analysis of RT audiences, and reflect on the implications of how sport, soft power, and digital technologies intersected in RT's World Cup coverage.

5.00pm General discussion led by Kay **SCHILLER**, Durham University

THE EVENT IS PART OF THE OWRI 'CROSS-LANGUAGE DYNAMICS: RESHAPING COMMUNITY' PROJECT



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