

UKRI Network Plus ‘Shifting Global Polarities: Russia, China, and Eurasia in Transition’

Culture, Media, and Resistance in a Polarising World

Manchester University, 30 June-1 July 2025

The UKRI Network Plus initiative ‘Shifting Global Polarities: China, Russia, and Eurasia in Transition’ invites proposals for contributions to a workshop on the theme ‘Culture, Media, and Resistance in a Polarising World’.

Contributions may include interdisciplinary and collaborative, theory and practice-driven, comparative, and/or policy-oriented proposals for papers, film screenings, artistic performances and posters. We seek contributions that explore how artistic and creative communities, civil society and various forms of media are creating, sustaining and contesting centres of power and authority across a region encompassing Russia, China, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central and East Asia.

Questions that might inform the workshop discussions include: How do art and diverse media forms reinforce, reshape, or challenge/bypass existing global and regional orders? What new modes of creativity, activism and cultural expression are emerging in response to the combination of increased tensions, deepening divisions, armed conflict and environmental threats in these regions? In what ways do cultural and artistic expressions and exchanges articulate, contribute to, or counterbalance the heightened anxieties about political, social, environmental and economic futures? How can research on these cultural dynamics deepen our understanding of the forces reshaping this vast and diverse region? How does art help to support solidarities and care networks in (trans)diasporic spaces?

We welcome proposals that provide fresh insights into the complex cultural and media landscapes of the broad region outlined above, and their role in a world marked by increasing polarisation. We invite paper/poster/screening/performance proposals of up to **200 words** on topics including but not limited to:

- Soft power and identity politics.
- Media and culture in the age of social media.
- Propaganda, misinformation and disinformation.
- Resistance in exile.
- Art in (trans)diasporic spaces.

- Poetry, music and protest.
- Collectives, solidarities and activism.
- Lived experiences of war and displacement in art and literature.

Submission process:

Submit your proposals (200 words max) and a 100-word author's biography to Martha Holmes at polarities@contacts.bham.ac.uk with 'Culture, Media, Resistance' workshop in the email subject line.

The deadline for submissions is **17 January 2025 (4pm UK time)**

Successful applicants will be notified by early February 2025. Travel and accommodation grants are available for workshop participants.

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Background

This workshop is funded by the UKRI Network Plus ‘Shifting Global Polarities: Russia, China, and Eurasia in Transition’. This funding initiative brings together a network of leading expertise and centres of excellence from across the UK and overseas to address gaps and needs in research during a period of major societal, geopolitical, and environmental transformation spanning Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central, East & Pacific Asia. The funding was awarded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as part of their Building a Secure and Resilient World strategic theme.

The initiative aims to advance innovative new partnerships within academic and policy circles linked to a range of urgent thematic areas including social upheaval, geopolitics and security, environmental crisis, human rights, Russia-China relations, and post-conflict reconstruction. The network’s activities aim to assist understanding and identification of global risks and help inform better decision-making.

Partners include the Universities of Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester and Oxford, together with the Institute of Development Studies and the Royal United Services Institute in the UK. Overseas, partners include Colgate University in the USA; the Ukrainian Catholic University; OSCE Academy Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan; National Taiwan University; Helsinki University in Finland; and Hokkaido University in Japan.

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