



Issue 16: Patriotic (Non) Consumption: Food, Fashion and Media

EDITORIAL

National sentiment has regained prominence in calls for political unity often to protectionism, separatism and even aggression. In countries such as Belarus, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Ukraine, the rise of protectionist, nation-centric movements and patriotism is driven by domestic political issues, on the one hand. On the other, patriotism and nationalism have emerged in response to the ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region and in response to globalization and associated (and often imaginary) threats.

Although patriotism / nationalism can be perceived well beyond the programmes of political parties and rallies, the bottom-up dynamics and mundane practices of patriotic consumption are still under-researched. There is even less scholarship on consumption and patriotism and digital media; and finally, there has been little work emerging in relation to the countries of the region. Therefore, this special issue of *Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media* aims to fill in these gaps.

Patriotic consumption can appear in different spheres, from high arts to popular culture, and engage with many actors in discussion over contested meanings. Fine art and ‘culinary art’, streetwear and screenwear, performance and self-performance on social media intersect with politics and ideology and produce cultural forms in which these contested meanings become apparent. In our special issue we focus on these political and politicised contexts of patriotic (non)consumption. We explore how these processes have been documented in social media where users reveal their ideological allegiances by making comments about what otherwise appears to be mundane objects and practices.

The issue is published in two clusters (see issues 16 and 17). Here we list entries that appear in the first cluster. After the Introduction (16.1) we have Vera Skvirskaja’s article (16.2). It employs the concept of ‘patriotic conspicuous consumption’ in the Russian Federation to understand her case of the garment called the *vatnik*. She explores how this humble garment became a form of patriotic branding that deploys symbolic images of ‘the enemy’.

Popular creativity turned vatnik-object into an icon, a mem, a commodity that appeals to anti-liberal, militaristic and conservative values but also ridicule Russia and the Russians.

Jamie Rann (16.3) takes us on a detour through the phenomenon of the Russian salad, and in particular elaborately decorated salads produced on patriotic holidays, and then disseminated through social media. He analyses the military tropes featured on these mayonnaise-heavy chopped salads, the cultural semantics of the salads themselves, and the discourse that surrounds their presentation on social media as a kind of ‘populist postmodern patriotism’.

Tatiana Efremova (16.4) analyses the phenomenal success of the Serov exhibition that took place at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow in 2015 by zooming on its reception on state TV and social media. Focusing on the contradiction between the anti-Soviet nostalgia for imperial Russia and the distinctly Soviet chronotope of the queue, Efremova enters the discussion on the importance of cultural memory for patriotic identity. She argues that the queuing turns into physical and symbolical manifestation of national pride in Russia.

Tetiana Bulakh (16.5) looks at political consumerism and such acts as boycotting of Russian goods and purchasing of domestically produced products by Ukrainians and discusses how citizens participate in crafting the state in this country. The essay analyses social media as platforms for statecraft and describes how the mediate consumers’ fantasies about ‘European Ukraine’ leads to their efforts to influence political development of the country through (non-)consumption.

Olga Echevskaia (16.6) writes about regional patriotism that manifests belonging to ‘small motherland’. She explores how regional brands in Siberia appeal to regional identity and patriotism in their brand messages using as examples commercial brand ‘I’m Siberian’ and a cultural event ‘Monstratsiia’. The article shows that the brands, which appeal to regional identity, inevitably face the involvement in politics and have to deal with interpretation of their brand message as ‘separatist’ in today’s Russia.

Vlad Strukov’s entry (16.7) launches a new type of research publications—the visual essay. As the name of this genre suggests the focus is on the use of images and visualisations not only as a way to present data but also as a means to conduct research. With this new genre, we anticipate that the authors of visual essays will use different formats to present their work while maintaining a focus on flexible, innovative and interdisciplinary research. Visual essays work as a verbal-visual discourse making a coherent, creative and substantive case for putting the images at the centre of the analysis.

The special issue has been prepared by the team of guest editors—Olga Gurova, Ekaterina Kalinina, Jessie Labov and Vlad Strukov—and produced in collaboration with the journal editors Andrew Chapman, Pedro Hernandez, Gernot Howanitz, Natalia Konradova, Sudha Rajagopalan and Henrike Schmidt.

Vlad Strukov (London)