



## Issue 19: Women and Technology in the Postsocialist Space: Intelligence, Creativity, Transgression

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EDITORIAL

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This is the first special issue of *Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media* ([digitalicons.org](http://digitalicons.org)) devoted entirely to a feminist perspective on digital media and communication technologies. In part, it builds upon discussions in previous issues, in particular in articles published here on the political activism of feminist group Pussy Riot. The case of Pussy Riot has shown us how contemporary feminism functions in a hypermediated society. This means that Pussy Riot as political activist group is virtually impossible to separate from Pussy Riot as media product circulating globally on digital platforms. At the time, however, many interesting questions embedded in the case were left untouched, such as the affiliations between post-socialist feminist networks and the waves of feminist campaigns and protest all over the world. With this issue, we wish to develop our understanding of (hyper)mediated feminism precisely in this direction.

A second aim is to re-connect with gender studies and feminist theory by introducing new analyses of how women and technology are represented in cultural texts, how women within the post-Socialist tradition create cultural and feminist associations with technology and how information pertaining to women and technology is distributed across the internet. Employing a gender and feminist studies approach will also help to reframe and update the current understanding of Russian, Eurasian and Central European new media within the global context of digital information flows. The question of gender equality is not specific to any country, culture, or geographical context. However, the ways in which gender is discussed and the degree to which gender equality is a political, social or theoretical concern offers an important window to understanding geographically or culturally localized processes. Therefore, while focusing primarily on postsocialist and post-Soviet countries, the

issue also includes analysis of women and technology in the BRICS countries to provide a comparative perspective.

In 2018, the #MeToo campaign raised awareness of sexual discrimination against women all over the world. The campaign demonstrated the role of the internet as a global medium and showed once more that participation on digital platforms can and will drive change. Although #MeToo did not resonate in the post-Soviet digital space as strongly as in many other contexts—and thus received relatively little attention from researchers of these regions—there are examples of similar campaigns that derive from a more localized understanding of gendered violence. With this issue, we want to acknowledge the significance of human rights and feminist activism online and stress that major breakthroughs take place on the everyday level, through the work of grassroots actors, as well as with the support of ordinary internet users.

By bringing together articles and essays from different backgrounds—academic, professional and geographical—this issue seeks to increase the diversity of perspectives and establish new interdisciplinary practices and approaches to the study of gender and technology in our field. We hope the richness of different perspectives will inspire other scholars to join us in further developing this line of inquiry.

In the introductory essay ‘Re-framing Women and Technology in Global Digital Spaces’ (19.1) the guest editors outline the main theoretical and contextual frameworks of the issue. The opening article ‘Social Networking Sites as Platforms for Transgression: Two Case Studies of Russian Women Involved in Bisexual and Transgender Rights Activism’ (19.2) by Olga Andreevskikh explores how social networking sites are used as platforms for online activism. Andreevskikh argues that digital technologies allow bisexual and transgender women to simultaneously challenge the current state-supported conservative discourse on ‘traditional values’ in Russia as well as to confront the monosexual discourse promoted within Russian feminist and LGBTQ communities. Popular and visual culture play an important role in shaping the perception of technology, including its relationship to women.

The second article, ‘Female Aliens in (Post-) Soviet Sci-Fi Cinema: Technology, Sacrifice and Morality’ (19.3), by Åsne Høgetveit looks at science fiction film, a genre that blossomed in the Soviet Union and other Central and Eastern European states, to shed light on how these imaginations of the connection between women and technology have evolved over time in the Russian context and how they continue to shape current perceptions.

Moving on to transnational perspectives on ‘women and tech’, the article ‘Lost between the Waves or Riding a New Tide? Drawing Connections between Italian and Polish Digitally Mediated Feminism’ (19.4) by Lidia Salvatori analyses how in Italy and Poland—countries currently in political turmoil—transnational networks are activated via internet campaigns against nationalist, right-wing politics and anti-gender backlash. She shows how, based on historical networks of solidarity, contemporary transnational activism on digital platforms can take unexpected forms.

Finally, the fourth article of this issue explores what new insights into the relationship of women and technology can be gained from exploring Google search results. In the article, ‘Mapping “Women in Technology” Issue Networks across Bulgarian, Croatian, and Serbian National Google(s)’ (19.5), Radmila Radojevic and Simeona Petkova reflect on the search

engine's role as gatekeeper of information and provide insight into how the prioritisation of media content drowns out less 'optimised' pages such as those belonging to feminist groups.

The research articles are accompanied by two interviews and a short essay. In 'Digital Culture and Feminist Politics in Contemporary Russia: Inside Perspectives' (19.6), Inna Perheentupa interviews scholar and philosopher Alla Mitrofanova, founding member of the Russian cyberfeminist group, and younger generation feminist Yulia Alimova (Eve's Ribs) to shed light on the connections between different generations of post-Soviet feminists. The interview provides insights into the importance of computer technology in Russian feminist activism, as well as some of the key questions and battles characterizing Russian feminism today. The interview with the women artists of the CYLAND media art laboratory in St. Petersburg (19.7) by Darya Cherkashina explores the experiences of female artists in contemporary Russia, focusing on media art.

The issue concludes with an essay by Cristian Berrío-Zapata, Darío Sebastián Berrío Gil, Paloma Marín Arraiza and Ester Ferreira Da Silva entitled 'Gender Digital Divide in Latin America: Looking for a Helping Hand in the BRICS' (19.8). In a forceful manifesto style, the authors invite the readers of this journal to pinpoint the globally shared structures of gender inequality in digital communication.

The special issue is guest edited by Saara Ratilainen, Mariëlle Wijermars and Justin Wilmes and produced in collaboration with the journal editors Andrew Chapman, Sudha Rajagopalan, Gernot Howanitz, Mykola Makhortykh, Henrike Schmidt, Vlad Strukov and Pedro Hernandez.

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