

‘I am a European person but have Russian values’: The Russophone World in the UK

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The paper will discuss the interim results of my AHRC-funded research project ‘Global Russians: Transnational Russophone Networks in the UK’ (2016-2020). It will begin by addressing the theoretical issues related to the contemporary visions of diaspora in a globalising world and discuss the emerging patterns of diasporic development of Russian speakers outside Russia. The paper will then proceed to the examination of case studies related to Russian diasporic networks in the UK, discussing them as a cultural nexus of ‘global Russian’ identity production. The broadly understood discursive approach is applied to the data gathered during the extensive fieldwork that has taken place in 2017 and has yielded over 50 hours of recorded semi-structured interviews with leaders of Russian-speaking communities and Russian-speaking cultural entrepreneurs in London. The Russophone community in the UK appears to be fluid, open and multidirectional, while the process of Russian speakers’ diasporisation has a multi-local provenance. Construction of the Russophone imagined community and identities of its participants are multi-vector and have both bottom-up and top-down directions, with organisations and discourses of the Russian ‘homeland’ playing a significant role. For comparative purposes, the paper will juxtapose the narratives of the interviews with how the UK’s Russian speakers narratives are imagined and represented in the transnational artistic productions (in particular, in the television series ‘Londongrad’).