

# COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK: “SITUATING RUSSIA”

## WORKING GROUP ON “GEOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY”

### I. THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The working group “Geography and Identity” is broadly concerned with the multiple ways in which identity in Russia has been and is articulated geographically, and how geography itself (understood in the most catholic sense) constitutes a part of the identity structure. The specific objective of the group is two-fold: a) to allow individuals to pursue—in a collaborative and strongly interactive framework—individual and highly focused research projects; and b) to encourage the group to reflect collectively about the more general intellectual issues that are implied in the thematic focus. It is expected that both of these objectives will be fully represented in the final texts of the members’ research products.

The composition of the group is deliberately wide-ranging and heterogeneous. It is transdisciplinary in that it crosses the line between the two fields of history and geography. The research topics will involve the problem of identity in both historical and contemporary contexts. Finally, a diversity of geographical representation has been sought, and the proposed research team represents institutions in four urban centers across European Russia: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, and Pskov.

The group as a whole breaks down into three distinct sub-groups, devoted to the themes *landscapes*, *boundaries*, and *provincialism*. These particular topics hardly exhaust the range of possible geographical takes on identity, to be sure. They do however provide a useful range of perspectives for comparison and contrast, which does at least some justice to the complexity of the problem. And not least of all, they are all powerfully relevant to the Russian example. The activities of the working group are structured to allow the sub-groups both to work autonomously and to come together to share insights and critique each other’s work. As well, each sub-group, and the working group as a whole, will benefit from the participation of external specialists, both Russian and Western.

Individual team members are charged with the formulation and design of their individual research projects, and they are encouraged to do so in terms of their own particular interests and expertise. At the same time, there are strong thematic links which should be connecting their projects to the research of other colleagues in the ‘Geography and Identity’ group, the other groups in the ‘Situating Russia’ team, and indeed the other national teams in China, Southeast Asia, and France, which together with Russia comprise the Collaborative Research Network enterprise. (These are spelled out more fully in Peter Sahlins’ essay *Official and Vernacular Identifications*

*in the Making of the Modern World.*) From this standpoint, it would be useful if members of the ‘Geography and Identity’ group could keep the following general questions in mind when formulating their own projects:

- What exactly does the ‘geography of identity’ mean? In what ways does it form an intrinsic and important part of identity structures overall?
- How can the specific issues of geography and identity in Russia be related to larger theoretical debates between ‘constructed/imagined’ as against ‘essentialist/primordial’ positions on the nature of national identities?
- Where does the impulse driving the identification process come from? To what extent is the agency of the state a critical factor? Do social groups generate identities autonomously, for purposes which they themselves define?

## II. TEAM MEMBERS

### **COORDINATORS:**

Mark Bassin

Dept of Geography, University College London

email: [mbassin@geog.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:mbassin@geog.ucl.ac.uk)

tel: (00-44-20) 7679-5546 (office)

(00-44-20) 8800-5185 (home)

Konstantin Eduardovich Aksenov

Dept of Geography, St. Petersburg State University

email: [axenov@peterlink.ru](mailto:axenov@peterlink.ru)

tel: (812) 542-27-79 (home)

(812) 936-57-41 (mobile)

### **Boundaries**

Kolosov Vladimir Aleksandrovich

Institute of Geography RAN and Moscow State University

email: [vladk@online.ru](mailto:vladk@online.ru)

Manakov Andrei Gennadievich

Dept of Geography, Pskov State Pedagogical Institute

email: [mag@volny.edu](mailto:mag@volny.edu)

Isachenko Grigorii Anatolievich

Dept of Geography, St. Petersburg State University

email: [greg@G11395.spb.edu](mailto:greg@G11395.spb.edu)

Postnikov Alexey V. (Prof., Dr.)

Visiting Scholar,

Harvard University

Davis Center for Russian Studies

E-mail: [postnik@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:postnik@fas.harvard.edu)

### **Landscapes:**

Turovskii Rostislav Feliksovich  
 Depts of Geography and Philosophy, Moscow State University  
 email: [turov@cityline.ru](mailto:turov@cityline.ru)  
 Mezhevich Nikolai Maratovich  
 Dept. of International Studies, St. Petersburg State University  
 email: [MEZ1313@rambler.ru](mailto:MEZ1313@rambler.ru)

Bogorov Valentin (Post-Grad), University of Wisconsin-Madison  
 email: [vbogorov@uswest.net](mailto:vbogorov@uswest.net), [olgak@cityline.ru](mailto:olgak@cityline.ru)

### ***Provincialism***

Liukshin Dmitrii Ivanovich  
 Dept of History, Kazan State Universtiy  
 email: [Jan\\_bux@mi.ru](mailto:Jan_bux@mi.ru)

Ishakova Natalia Evgenievna  
 Dept of History, Kazan State Universtiy  
 email: [Jan\\_bux@mi.ru](mailto:Jan_bux@mi.ru)  
 Samarkin Oleg Aleksandrovich  
 Dept of Sociology, Kazan State Universtiy  
 email: [Jan\\_bux@mi.ru](mailto:Jan_bux@mi.ru)

### **III. SCHEDULE OF WORK**

**(Note: Konstantin Aksenov is the liason for all Russian team members. They should send all of their materials directly to him in St. Petersburg, not to Mark Bassin in London.)**

#### ***June-July 2001***

formal letters of invitation to particpate circulated among team members

#### ***1 August 2001***

all team members respond to invitation confirming intention to participate and acceptance of conditions

#### ***1 Sept 2001***

individual project statements due (1500 words)

Sept-Dec 2001

Research Period I; informal consulation among groups/coordinators

American post-grad fieldwork in Moscow, collaboration with landscapes group

identify/invite external Russian specialists for sub-group seminars (1-2 per group)

1 Jan 2002

first research report due (2000 words)

Mid-Late January 2002

individual day-long seminars for each group, to be attended by at least one coordinator

external Russian specialists will present formal critique at seminars

***Late January 2002***

American post-grad returns to US

***1 February 2002***

each group circulates summary of seminar results

external specialists will circulate final critiques

***February-May 2002***

Research Period II; informal consultation among groups/coordinators

identify/invite Russian (1) and Western (1-2) specialists for cumulative workshop

***1 June 2002***

submission/circulation of final papers (7000 words)

***Mid-June 2002***

cumulative workshop for entire groups