

Lucy Birge
University of Manchester

Projecting Russia onto the Global Media Ecology: the Case of Sputnik

Founded by the Russian state news agency in 2014, Sputnik is a heterogeneous web-based broadcasting outlet featuring news analysis, opinion pieces and opinion polls, multimedia content, live newswire, a social media presence and a digital radio station.

Where RT, Russia's state-funded international television broadcaster, is more concerned with critiquing Western domestic and foreign policies, Sputnik, principally a radio broadcasting outlet, concentrates on depicting a favourable image of Russia. The proposed paper will ask: what is the distinctive role of Sputnik in Russia's efforts to project itself onto the new global media ecology? Three case studies will show how the outlet deploys three seasoned tropes of Russian identity: the centenary of the 1917 Revolutions (great Russian history and culture); war in Syria (Russia as a great power); and the Salisbury poisonings (Russia and the West).

Content from Sputnik International's UK and US English language radio broadcasts will be contrasted with its Russian language radio output, targeted at Russians and Russian-speaking communities in the "near abroad". Similarly, Sputnik's broadcasts will be compared to the analysis of RT undertaken within the AHRC project Reframing Russia. The axes of comparison will enable one to assess for the very first time Sputnik's distinctive role in Russia's larger projection strategy.