



## EDITORIAL

### Editor's Note

The current issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities* covers issues pertaining to undergoing transformations in value systems investigated from diverse perspectives, such as the features of imagined travelogue; influence of structured discourse on ideological alignment, sentiment shifts, and generational differences in political perception; the status and activity of politicized online opposition communities on VK<sup>1</sup>; an analysis of regional culture policies in Russia in the context of traditional values; public trust in law enforcement agencies; cancel culture as the representation of a form of memory politics; openness and closedness as identity factors in both real and virtual worlds; the need for comprehensive, policy-oriented scenario analysis of the batik industry in Indonesia; the issue of effective management of municipal solid waste as one of the most urgent challenges facing today's megacities; a polymorphic impact of digitalization on cognition, affecting both adaptive capacities and maladaptive risks; a global trend where popular cinema engages with issues of governance, power, and justice.

Andrey G. Ivanov in his ESSAY *Representations of the USSR/Russia in David Bowie's Imagined Travelogue* intends to examine episodes from the biography and creative work of English performer David Bowie (1947–2016)—one of the pop icons who serves as a striking example of a well-known Western artist who had a first-hand experience of Soviet everyday life. The author notes that “in the eyes of the West ... the image of the USSR was often cast as both mysterious and menacing ... The impressions of those Western intellectuals who had the chance to visit the Soviet Union were shaped by highly mythologized narratives in which everyday life was interwoven with entrenched stereotypes, ideological tropes, and familiar clichés about the Soviet past.” Andrey Ivanov explores the concept of travelogue, which is not confined to rigid genre boundaries; it can always be extended by incorporating imagined, mythologized elements inspired both by the circumstances of the journey. In this regard, he treats David Bowie's brief travel notes and musical works as a kind of imagined travelogue across the USSR and Russia.

<sup>1</sup> VK (short for its original name VKontakte) is a Russian online social media and social networking service. <https://vk.com> VK™ is a trademark of VK.com Ltd.

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The ARTICLE *Order, Loyalty, and Polarization in a Public Debate: Evidence From a Russian-Language Online Experiment* by Dimitri Volchenkov, Daniel Korley, and Alexander N. Lebedev is focused on polarization of an audience due to the sequence of statements in a public debate. The authors collected data on the sex, age, education, and political self-identification of respondents and carried out a correlational study. The article explores the influence of structured discourse on ideological alignment, sentiment shifts, and generational differences in political perception using an experimental methodology developed by the authors, as well as AI-driven semantic analysis. The article investigates cognitive biases, polarization effects, and generational loyalty trends.

Elena V. Matveeva, Anna E. Shilova, and Aliya V. Sat in their ARTICLE *Efforts to Preserve Traditional Values Through Regional Cultural Policies: A Case Study of Russia's Siberian Federal District* note that Russia's statehood is increasingly shaped by a reconceptualization of the legal framework regulating the state cultural policy, with one of its main priorities being the preservation and strengthening of Russian moral values. The authors are focused on the political and legal analysis of their integration into regional laws aiming at examining trends in cultural regulation related to traditional values by analyzing the legislation of regions of the Siberian Federal District from 2014 to 2024. Quantitative content analysis was their primary research tool. The categories for analysis include individual components of traditional values, namely, patriotism, citizenship, historical memory, spiritual and moral values, and family. The authors believe that their findings can be extrapolated to other federal districts because they represent nationwide trends in Russia's preservation and strengthening of traditional values.

In the ARTICLE *Russia's Online Opposition Communities Before and During the Special Military Operation*, Dmitry S. Zhukov, Sergey K. Lyamin, and Dmitry G. Seltser put the key research question as follows: How changes in domestic and international politics—primarily related to the special military operation (SMO)—have influenced the status and activity of politicized online opposition communities on VK, the most popular Russian social networking service. The authors understand mobilized communities as “groups composed of members who are strongly disposed to assimilate and share community messages and whose political views and willingness to act, both in virtual reality and real-world spaces, are shaped by such messages.” It is assumed that, first, mobilized communities can push their members to transgress the boundary separating the realm of opinion from that of action. Second, mobilized communities can influence the online political agenda because they have the power to shape the thinking of their members and the online environment. The authors put forward an indicator based on the theory of self-organized criticality (SOC). This is an interdisciplinary concept which describes the complex dynamics of some systems at the macro- and micro levels.

Xu Wang, Alexander V. Petrov, Maria S. Baynova, Ariadna A. Petrova, and Olga P. Gorkovaya in the ARTICLE *The Societal Perception and Challenges of Municipal Solid Waste Management in Russian and Chinese Megacities: A Comparative Study* explore the issue of effective management of municipal solid waste (MSW) as one of the

most urgent challenges facing today's megacities. The authors argue that despite the availability and gradual integration of advanced technologies for waste segregation and disposal in both Western and Eastern urban centers, societal acceptance remains a critical barrier to their widespread adoption. Thus, a key impediment lies in the psychological resistance exhibited by various social groups and urban communities, who are often reluctant to participate in structured waste segregation practices. The authors insist that, in both Russia and China, public perceptions of waste segregation serve as major obstacles to the successful implementation of comprehensive environmental policies in megacities; therefore, fostering stronger environmental ethics, as well as reshaping societal attitudes toward the feasibility and benefits of modern waste collection is of vital importance. In both Russia and China, MSW collection and utilization have been the subject of extensive scholarly investigation. Nevertheless, a notable gap persists in the academic literature. The empirical foundation of this study is based on sociological surveys conducted among residents of Russian and Chinese megacities, with a particular focus on educational level, income, and place of residence in Moscow, St. Petersburg (Russia), and Nanjing (China).

The ARTICLE *Public Trust and Perception of Justice in Law Enforcement in Kazakhstan* by Kuanysh Sailau, Makpal Dabylyayeva, Assem Ibraimova, and Yermek Toktarov explores how law enforcement agencies (LEAs) are embedded within the local community. The authors argue that public trust in various agencies was put under a stress test in January 2022, when Kazakhstan experienced one of the most dramatic episodes of domestic turmoil. The article proves that the perception of the society or government as unjust results in less confidence among the population in the institutions which are supposed to protect them. The study relies on data gathered from respondents in Kazakhstan, whose government has recently announced a host of reforms under the title of *Ädiletті Qazaqstan—Adal azamat* [Just Kazakhstan—Fair Citizen]. The survey, which was conducted in September 2023, involved 2,000 respondents from all regions of the country.

Oksana V. Golovashina and Roman Yu. Batishchev in the ARTICLE *Forced Oblivion: Cancel Culture and Historical Identity* examine language in the context of cancel culture, which the authors interpret as “a practice of excluding an individual, brand, or company—a modern form of ostracism rooted in the prioritization of ethical forms of identity.” The focus of the article is the relationship between identity and cancel culture, namely, the influence of cancel culture discourse and practices on historical consciousness. Central to this analysis is the role of language as an indicator of change. The authors examine cases in Russia where historical events or periods have been deliberately rejected, exploring how practices of enforced forgetting shape the identity of large communities. They define cancel culture “as forced forgetting that impacts the identity of a community,” thus representing “a form of memory politics expressed through public negative assessments of a historical event used by political actors to legitimize themselves and shape their identity.” Cancel culture is used by political actors during times of radical revision of the past, which are often linked to historical and political upheavals.

The ARTICLE *Without a Future: The Man-Making Project in Socialist Yugoslavia in the 1940–1980s* by Alexander S. Lunkov focuses on various aspects of the human

being-making project in Yugoslavia. The author argue that Yugoslavia provides an example for studying all stages of the development of a human project, from its conception to its deployment and result, at the same time as trying to act independently. The author states that "desire for the uniqueness of its own human project collided with the reality that there were not enough resources and political will to achieve the desired future." Alexander S. Lunkov outlines features of the Yugoslav man-making project through the proposed philosophical-anthropological four-component model: cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and bodily.

Svetlana Yu. Belorussova in the ARTICLE *Openness and Closedness: Ethnic Strategies of Indigenous Minorities in Virtuality vs. Reality* notes that the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds have become blurred, making them far less distinct than they were 20–30 years ago. Today's "cyberactivism increasingly serves as a tool for self-presentation and self-actualization, rather than an end in itself." The author explores how openness and closedness shape identities in both real and virtual worlds, and examines how patterns of openness and closedness in a community are shaped by its interactions in both real and virtual environments. The research focuses on four small-numbered Indigenous peoples in Russia, namely, the Besermians, Nagaybaks, Soyots, and Tubalars, each with a population under 10,000. These communities provide a particularly clear lens for studying openness and closedness, given their density, stability, and relative homogeneity. The article relies on a consolidated database of small-numbered Indigenous communities on VK, Odnoklassniki<sup>2</sup>, and Telegram<sup>3</sup>.

The ARTICLE *Digitalization as a Factor in the Socio-Psychological Adaptation of Students* by Anatoliy V. Karpov, Alexander A. Karpov, and Anastasia A. Volchenkova stresses that digitalization exerts a polymorphic impact on cognition, affecting both adaptive capacities and maladaptive risks. That is why the impact of digitalization cannot be unambiguously assessed as positive or negative: it represents a multi-layered continuum of effects. According to the authors, on the one hand, technologies expand access to information and contribute to the development of new competencies; on the other, they can affect the depth of cognitive processing and emotional regulation. The article aims to examine the impact of digitalization on students' cognitive, metacognitive, and regulatory processes, with particular attention given to maladaptive syndromes and their implications for socio-psychological adaptation. The authors propose the following hypothesis: digitalization of the educational environment mediates the transformation of cognitive processes (metacognitive functions, regulatory mechanisms, and communicative abilities), which leads to systemic changes in the adaptive potential of the individual. In the study, time is conceptualized as a comparative parameter, more specifically, data from 2014 and 2024, serving as an integral indicator of the evolution of digital conditions. The authors conclude that there is a pronounced decline in the key adaptive qualities in today's student population, and highlight the need for further in-depth research into the underlying causes and mechanisms of these changes.

<sup>2</sup> Odnoklassniki is a Russian social network owned by VK. <https://ok.ru>

<sup>3</sup> Telegram™ is a trademark of Telegram Group Inc., its operational center is based in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

Erna Mena Niman in the ARTICLE *The Intersection of Belief, Culture, and Social Life: A Case Study of Indonesian Ritual* undertakes an in-depth study of Penti ritual practices. Among them is an annual rite that marks the end of the agrarian year and represents a form of gratitude to the ancestors and the forces of nature for the harvest. The author aims to understand how traditional belief values, cultural customs, and social relations interact dynamically in the practice of the ritual. The author believes that the younger generation in some societies are beginning to experience a disconnection from the traditions of their ancestors. They no longer fully understand the symbolic meaning behind the ceremonies in the Penti ritual. This research is important not only to document local culture, but also to trace the processes of ongoing social transformation, including how the Manggarai Indigenous people in Indonesia are adapting and reinterpreting their traditions in the contemporary context. Thus, the study contributes to the fields of cultural anthropology and the sociology of religion by offering a nuanced understanding of how traditional rituals like Penti serve as dynamic arenas for negotiating identity, belief, and social structure among Indigenous communities facing the pressures of modernization. Data collection involved three main techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

The ARTICLE *A Cinematic Reflection on Nigeria's Political Economy Using Nollywood's Black Book as a Lens* by Essien Oku Essien, Emmanuel Nyong Inyang, and Jason Emeka Umahi analyzes *The Black Book* (2023), a film directed by Editi Effiong and distributed by Netflix, which boldly ventures into the underexplored thematic terrain of institutional corruption, state complicity in violence, and the fraught quest for justice in Nigeria's decaying political order. The authors note that political economy of Nigeria is characterized by an entanglement of chronic corruption, entrenched elite capture, pervasive state violence, and an aggressive turn toward neoliberal privatization. Since its postcolonial transition, Nigeria has been plagued by structural inequalities sustained by the misuse of state institutions and the appropriation of public wealth by a narrow oligarchy. *The Black Book* reflects a broader global trend where popular cinema engages with issues of governance, power, and justice, employing the aesthetics of genre storytelling to dramatize complex political realities. The article investigates *The Black Book* as a cinematic artifact that both reflects and critiques Nigeria's political economy. The authors put the research questions as follows: "How does the film visually and narratively represent the structures of corruption, violence, and privatization in contemporary Nigeria? More precisely, what semiotic strategies, rhetorical, visual, auditory, and symbolic, does the film deploy to encode its political messages?" In addressing these questions, the study adopts the methodological lens of screen semiotics, which offers a robust toolkit for decoding the meanings embedded in cinematic texts.

Velan Kunjuran, Naziatul Aziah Mohd Radzi, and Diah Ariani Arimbi in the ARTICLE *Revitalizing the Batik Industry in Indonesia: A Scenario Assessment* highlight the craft of batik in Indonesia as a cultural emblem through which Indonesians express social status, communal identity, connections to the natural world, historical narratives, and cultural heritage. Batik is inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Nevertheless, as the authors argue,

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currently the batik industry, which is deeply rooted in national culture, is facing the shortage of skilled workers. In addition, the lack of engagement among youth in the batik industry is linked to its strong association with older generations. The authors stress a noticeable lack of research adopting a comprehensive, policy-oriented scenario analysis of the industry. Their study addresses these gaps by providing a macro-level assessment through qualitative content analysis, integrating policy review, economic trends, cultural identity, and sustainable development perspectives.

Irina G. Polyakova, Marina V. Valeeva, Anastasia A. Lebedeva, and Alexandra Yu. Khramtsova in the RESEARCH NOTE *Donor Programs in Human Reproduction: Reviewing the Debate on Anonymity and Openness* underline that donor anonymity in reproductive processes helps protect the confidentiality of participants, particularly parents, enabling them to form traditional nuclear families without third-party interference, while safeguarding privacy, avoiding stigmatization, and maintaining psychological comfort. However, the balance between anonymity and openness, individual autonomy, in which freedom of choice is central, with sociocentric pressures expressed through public expectations, norms, and regulations, requires consideration of the rights of all participants involved in the reproductive process. A key question of the research is: What should be prioritized—the child's right to know their origin or the donor's right to privacy? The authors argue that the answer to this question also depends on the cultural context. In order to address this dilemma, the article reviews and analyzes current research on donor anonymity, applying an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to reach empirically grounded conclusions.

Discussions around the topics raised in the present issue will be continued in the subsequent issues of our journal. In planning to introduce new interesting themes, we welcome suggestions from our readers and prospective authors for thematic issues, debate sections or book reviews.

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