



EDITORIAL

Editor's Note

The present issue of *Changing Societies & Personalities* is devoted to such significant topics as changing values of higher education in various social contexts; a symbolic dialogue between the past and the present on the example of socialist urban spaces; novel museum practices; and popular media myths.

In his article *The Anatomy of a Moral Panic: Western Mainstream Media's Russia Scapegoat*, Greg Simons reflects upon a phenomenon defined as “moral panic” in covering the news about Russia in Western mainstream media. The author intends to separate myths from reality in journalism, mainly the myth of the “fourth estate”, in which journalism is widely defined as “a defender of public interests and a watchdog on the workings of government” possessing power over people, political actors and institutions. Instead, the social role of journalism is viewed through ethical terms. Using the concept of “moral panic” as a means of social and political control, Simons reviews dozens of media texts that interpret the news from Russia as the evidence of “threat”, as well as those that “are pushing back against the moral panic of the Russia threat narrative through deconstructing its logic, argumentation and evidence”. In general, Simons considers the “moral panic” concept to be part of a multi-levelled crisis of liberal democracy in the contemporary world.

In their article *Religion in Public Life: Rethinking the Visibility and Role of Religion as an Ethical Resource in the Transformation of the Higher Education Landscape in Post-1990 Zambia*, Nelly Mwale and Melvin Simuchimba explore the growing public role of religion in post-1990 Zambia by analysing the recent engagement of the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia university education. Prior to gaining independence in 1964, Zambia featured neither public, nor private universities. In the 1990s, changes in the legislation provided new possibilities for various entities, including religious bodies, to establish educational institutions. Therefore, Catholic Universities and seminary are a relatively new enterprise in the country. According to the authors, despite the present visibility of religion both in public life and higher education, the case of Zambia attracts little scholarly interest in comparison with other African contexts, e.g. Nigeria or South Africa. The

authors express hope that the insights gained during their research could be useful for “providing a window through which religion’s visibility in public life could be understood in post-1990 Zambia”. The study is based on interviews with representatives of the Catholic Church and Zambia Catholic University education. The impact of Christian higher education on students’ knowledge acquisition and moral formation is analysed, along with its role in building the nation.

Marina Volkova, Jol Stoffers, Dmitry Kochetkov, in their article *Education Projects for Sustainable Development: Evidence from Ural Federal University*, argue that the concept of sustainable development should be part of mentality developed starting from a child’s early age; therefore, the role of school as a way of improving the general culture of people in the sphere of sustainable development should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, the topic of sustainable development is yet to be properly developed in Russia. According to the authors, “sustainable development requires not only skills and competencies but formation of stable patterns of thinking. It is the point where secondary education comes to the forefront since the establishment of mental models at an early age is much more effective”. Using the case study methodology as a research basis, the authors analyse the experience of the Ural Federal University in creating partnership with secondary schools in Yekaterinburg and demonstrate the potential of schoolchildren’s and college students’ teamwork aimed at developing the skills of proactive thinking in solving environmental problems.

Mikhail Ilchenko’s article *Discourse of Modernist Heritage and New Ways of Thinking about Socialist Urban Areas in Eastern Europe*, addresses the issue of controversial attitudes towards socialist urban heritage. Ilchenko finds such attitudes both in today’s Russia and some East European cities in some East European cities alarming, because socialist buildings and neighbourhoods remain to be essential elements of the urban space. Ilchenko observes an increasing scholarly interest to the urban modernist heritage of the former Soviet republics and former East European socialist countries, and concludes that the modernist architecture is viewed as “an embodiment of critical historical periods – periods of social experimentation and radical cultural change, which still largely determine the appearance and identity of post-socialist cities”, thus involved into a symbolic dialogue with the past. The article provides valuable information about the construction of so-called *sotsgorod* (socialist city) and its former meaning in the context of global trends in town-planning and art, using the examples of the Uralmash district in Yekaterinburg (Russia), *sotsgorod(s)* in Kharkiv (Ukraine), Katowice, and Krakow (Poland). Ilchenko concludes that the discourse of modernist heritage offers a renewed vision for socialist urban legacy, and thus “stimulates symbolic re-discovering of the socialist urban areas in public mind and allows them to acquire new ways of representation as well as the new possible functional roles in the urban space”.

Elena Kochukhova investigates new museum practices, such as art mediation, in her article *Transformation of Museum Communication through Art Mediation: The Case of the 4th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art*. She views art mediation as a practice, which radically changes forms and methods of museum

communication. As Kochuhova points out, “traditional museum communication formats are hierarchical while new formats, on the contrary, should be horizontal. The basic principle of art mediation is to make the viewers’ voices be heard”; thus, new understanding of museum communication enables the visitors to get involved in the work of museums as equal partners. Art mediation is widely discussed not only among the professional museum community, but also among academic circles in Russia and other European countries. Kochuhova explores the experience of the 4th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, which took place in the fall of 2017 in the city of Yekaterinburg. She analyses several interviews with art mediators and make conclusions on the factors that define the process of transformation of museum practices from being a description of art objects towards their interpretation, thus producing new meanings.

In the Book Review on *J. W. Scott, Sex and Secularism* (Princeton University Press, 2018) Andrey Menshikov stresses that the book could be useful for those who are interested in the origins of secularist discourse, particularly in the sphere of gender.

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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