

The Interaction between State Social Policy and National Cultural Heritage and its Impact on Society's Mentality

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Abstract

The interaction between state social policy and national cultural heritage has become increasingly relevant in the context of digitalisation, demographic transitions, migration, geopolitical conflicts, globalisation, and changing patterns of social relations. These processes have implications not only for individual cultural expressions and formal institutions, but also for collective identity, social cohesion, intergenerational transmission, adaptation, and resilience. This issue examines the relationship between social policy, cultural heritage, and society's mentality across diverse institutional and socio-cultural settings. The contributions consider how state policies shape cultural values and practices, while also examining how cultural heritage influences social attitudes, belonging, identity, education, migration, professional development, and responses to crises. Particular attention is given to Central Asian and Eastern European contexts, where post-Soviet transformations, migration, demographic change, digitalisation, and geopolitical developments have generated new challenges for cultural continuity and social resilience. In addition, a cultural analysis of student youth attitudes towards gender roles in southern Kazakhstan tests whether urbanisation reorders inherited value systems. I argue that cultural heritage is neither simply inherited from the past nor entirely determined by state policy. Rather, it is continuously reproduced and transformed through interactions among individuals, families, communities, institutions, and states. The study highlights the importance of considering cultural heritage as a dynamic social resource in the development and implementation of contemporary social policy. The issue is widened further by three contributions that carry this argument beyond the post-Soviet space. A critical analysis of the everyday moral ethics of Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (1192–1274 AD) in the Hindu–Jain environment of thirteenth-century Rajputana; a review essay on social group work in Indian society asks whether a professional method formed in the Global North can be reconstructed from within another cultural, familial and spiritual tradition; and a commentary on ecological abuse reframes environmental degradation as a form of systemic violence whose testimonies are registered through ecofeminist and Indigenous epistemologies. Read alongside the Central Asian and Eastern European studies, these contributions confirm that cultural heritage functions as a dynamic social resource across markedly different institutional settings, and that its relationship with social policy is reciprocal rather than one-directional.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; Social Policy; National Identity; Social Resilience; Migration; Gender Values; Social Group Work; Ecological Justice

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Introduction

The interaction between state social policy and national cultural heritage has become particularly significant in light of recent developments in digitalisation, demographic transitions, migration, geopolitical conflicts, globalisation, evolving patterns of social relations, and population change. These processes have implications beyond individual cultural expressions or formal organisations. They affect definitions of continuity and change, expressions of collective identity, ways of coping with ambiguity, and the ways in which individuals and communities adjust to transformations in their social context.

National cultural heritage cannot be viewed simply as something received from the past and preserved unchanged in the present. It is also a social asset that is continuously constructed and deconstructed through everyday practices, public spaces, cultural policy, migration, education, language, media, and institutions. Contemporary heritage scholarship increasingly emphasises this dynamic and socially embedded character of heritage (Li et al., 2024). For example, research on European cultural policy has demonstrated how heritage can become connected to questions of social well-being, belonging, diversity, and citizenship (Čeginskas et al., 2021). Similarly, studies of migrant communities demonstrate that cultural heritage may be adapted and reconstructed as people negotiate new social and cultural environments (Giglitto et al., 2022).

This issue examines these interactions across a variety of institutional and socio-cultural settings. I argue that culture and social policy should not be understood as separate spheres of governance. Across domains such as employment, migration, ethnic relations, social security, institutional provision, digital communication, education, identity, and belonging, cultural norms shape how policies are interpreted and implemented, while policy decisions in turn influence the legitimacy, effectiveness, and public reception of particular cultural values (Khamzina et al., 2025).

In this context, society's mentality is understood in a broad sense to include attitudes towards belonging, social responsibility, gender, nature, cultural preservation, tolerance, recovery, professional development, change, and intergenerational transmission, as well as identity, adaptation, and resilience. The articles in this issue approach these concepts from different disciplinary perspectives while highlighting multi-level interactions between culture and social policy. These include individual reactions to crisis, intergenerational transmission, media and education, migration and demography, geopolitical and state policies, and processes of identity formation.

The thematic scope of the issue is particularly relevant because cultural heritage may influence how societies interpret and respond to political, economic, technological, and demographic change. At the same time, state institutions have considerable capacity to define which cultural practices and narratives are preserved, promoted, adapted, or incorporated into national development strategies. This creates an important field of interaction in which heritage may become a source of social cohesion and resilience, but may also become a site of contestation concerning identity, diversity, inclusion, and political legitimacy.

Alongside the studies drawn from Central Asia and Eastern Europe, this issue carries three further contributions that extend its comparative reach to South Asia and to the environmental domain. Their inclusion follows directly from the rationale set out above. If cultural heritage is a dynamic social resource rather than an inherited deposit, then its workings should be legible wherever institutions, families and communities negotiate continuity under conditions of change, and not only in the societies in which post-Soviet transformation has made those negotiations most visible. The three contributions examine, respectively, how the everyday ethics of the Hindu–Jain landscape of thirteenth-century Rajputana were governed under the leadership of Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (1192–1274 AD);

how a professional method may be reconstructed from within a cultural and spiritual tradition rather than merely translated into it; and how the exclusion of the non-human world from the circle of moral and legal consideration constitutes a further, and largely unacknowledged, dimension of the heritage-policy relationship. Taken together, they allow the issue to test its central propositions against settings whose historical trajectories differ substantially from those of the post-Soviet region, thereby strengthening rather than diluting its analytical coherence.

Critical Analysis

Crises, Governance, and Cultural Resilience

A key aspect running through this thematic issue is the relationship between crises, governance, and cultural resilience. In their article, Bhadauriya et al. explore the moral authority exercised by Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri (1192–1274 AD) within the Hindu–Jain milieu of thirteenth-century Rajputana. Their study shows how ethical self-discipline was articulated as a foundation of saintly authority in a culturally plural regional landscape signalling liberalism and smooth functioning of governance.

Kanafina et al. examine how current changes occurring in Central Asia are influenced by multiple intersecting factors, including post-Soviet political transformations, economic fragility, labour mobility, digitalisation, geopolitical confrontation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and migration. Their contribution highlights that resilience can be created in ways that are not purely security-oriented or economic.

Symbolic transformations in politics, language policy, migration policies, cultural institutions, social codes, digital government, and society reconfigure the dynamics between society and the state. This contribution addresses the macro-level dimension of the thematic issue by exploring the close links between cultural and social change during periods of crisis and systemic transformation.

The importance of cultural resources for resilience is also reflected in the wider heritage

literature. Research on cultural heritage resilience demonstrates that heritage may contribute not only to the preservation of material assets but also to social cohesion, continuity, and the capacity of communities to respond to disruption (Buribayev et al., 2025; Choi et al., 2021). Heritage thus becomes relevant not merely as an object requiring protection but as a resource through which communities can interpret change and mobilise existing forms of knowledge and social connection.

In addition to institutional reactions to crisis, Zelenin's research considers individual and organisational impacts of crisis. Adaptability, cognitive flexibility, professional motivation, leadership, mental health, and responses to crisis are explored. This widens the discussion of social resilience from the institutional level to the individual level. Professional and psychological resources can influence individuals' responses to and interpretations of disruption. Social policy is also experienced through individuals' ability to respond to crises through personal efficacy, professional identity, social connections, work, and participation.

This perspective demonstrates that resilience is not only about institutions and organisations responding to crises. It is also about the resources available to individuals within those institutions and organisations. The connection between individual and institutional resilience is particularly important for understanding how broader social policies are translated into everyday experiences.

National Identity, Cultural Continuity, and Intergenerational Transmission

Another significant theme concerns the formation of national identity within political and institutional frameworks. Karassayev et al. explore the impact of migration, repatriation programmes, language policies, demographic movements, and inter-ethnic institutional arrangements on evolving ideas of national unity.

The relevance of this study lies in its examination of the tension between cultural homogenisation,

ethnocultural identity, and civic inclusion. This issue is of primary importance to contemporary cultural policy as political actors attempt to foster a shared national identity while simultaneously managing societies characterised by historical, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural heterogeneity.

The relationship between heritage and identity is not necessarily static. Cultural heritage can provide a sense of continuity while simultaneously being reinterpreted in response to new social circumstances (Pirmanova et al., 2020). This is particularly evident in contexts of migration, where individuals and communities may maintain elements of ancestral heritage while adapting them to their new environments. Heritage can serve as a means of preserving identity, but also as a mechanism through which new forms of belonging are negotiated (Baibolov et al., 2025; Giglitto et al., 2022).

Kydyralieva et al.'s study raises related questions at another level by examining continuity across family, community, education, ritual, oral traditions, work education, and intergenerational links. The research highlights the need to move beyond a simple binary between preservation and modernisation. Urbanisation, standardisation of education, and the use of digital technologies can disrupt established routes of cultural transmission (Trushaj et al., 2025). At the same time, these technologies can create new opportunities for recording, transmitting, and transforming cultural knowledge.

The methods of preservation and transformation of nomadic culture discussed in the article support another key point emerging across this issue: successful cultural heritage requires both preservation and transformation. Continuity is more likely to be maintained when communities are able to participate actively in shaping the ways in which cultural practices are expressed and transmitted. Community initiatives, cultural organisations, schools, digital tools, and education can support this process, but heritage must remain connected to everyday life.

This contribution consequently links studies of socialisation, cultural policy, and ethnopedology while demonstrating the intergenerational nature of the reproduction of social attitudes. Heritage is not simply transferred mechanically from one generation to another. Instead, each generation participates in its interpretation and reproduction.

Cultural Diversity, Education, and Media

Another dimension of the issue concerns the impact of cultural diversity in contemporary communication environments. Bidzilya et al. explore the role of media literacy as an educational and institutional tool that can influence attitudes towards diversity, intercultural communication, and critical information processing.

This cross-cultural study highlights that the effectiveness of media literacy depends not only on its content but also on its integration within wider educational and institutional systems. Teacher training, availability, cooperation between public and educational sectors, and institutionalisation— all influence the extent to which media literacy can contribute to intercultural understanding.

This issue is particularly important in the context of digitalisation. Digital communication can facilitate access to cultural knowledge and enable communities to participate in the production and dissemination of heritage. At the same time, digitalisation may reproduce inequalities in access, visibility, and participation. It can also accelerate cultural change and expose individuals to competing narratives of identity and belonging.

Consequently, the relationship between cultural heritage and digitalisation should not be approached simply as a question of technological preservation. Digital environments also affect how heritage is interpreted, who has the authority to represent it, and how individuals encounter cultural narratives. The institutional and educational dimensions of this process are essential.

Migration, Mobility, and Human Capital

Amanturova et al. further explore the relationship between migration, vocational training, graduate employment, digital credential validation, and regional institutional capacity. Their contribution brings attention to another domain in which government policies have important social consequences: human capital.

Skilled migration is often represented primarily in economic terms, but it also produces important cultural and social effects. Migration can affect regional opportunity structures, disrupt or reshape networks of knowledge, and influence perceptions of career opportunities (Silagadze et al., 2020). It can also affect younger generations' perceptions of mobility, professional development, and social inclusion.

These processes illustrate the tension between rootedness and mobility. Professional mobility, migration, international collaboration, academic mobility, and international education can facilitate individual and regional development while simultaneously raising questions concerning human capital retention and community reproduction.

Cultural heritage can also be transformed through these processes. Migrant communities do not necessarily abandon their heritage when they move; instead, heritage practices may be reconstructed in new social environments. The interaction between migration and heritage involves both continuity and adaptation, with implications for identity, community cohesion, and participation in the cultural life of receiving societies.

Culture, International Cooperation, and Geopolitical Relations

Nursultanova et al. approach culture in transnational and geopolitical terms. Their paper explores academic mobility, cultural activities, humanitarian projects, scientific collaboration, and educational programmes as examples of how culture functions both transnationally and as part of foreign policy, while remaining connected to the national sphere.

The application of Constructivist and Neorealist theories provides an opportunity to examine both normative and strategic aspects of cultural foreign policy. Intercultural encounters, human relationships, accumulated knowledge, and social ties can result from humanitarian projects, scientific programmes, cultural activities, educational programmes, and academic mobility. At the same time, these activities can serve foreign-policy purposes.

This perspective expands the understanding of social policy and heritage beyond the domestic level. Cultural values and heritage can participate in the construction of national narratives while also functioning within international relations. In this sense, cultural heritage operates across multiple scales: individual, family, community, institutional, national, and transnational.

Gender Values, Cultural Axiology and the Limits of the Urban–Rural Binary

The question of how value systems are transmitted and reinterpreted across generations is pursued in a different register by Bazarbay et al., whose cultural analysis of student youth attitudes towards gender roles in the southern regions of Kazakhstan brings the issue's concerns to bear on one of the most intimate domains of cultural heritage.

This contribution speaks directly to the issue's argument about intergenerational transmission and the reciprocity of policy and heritage. Gender norms are shown to be neither wholly inherited nor wholly amenable to institutional direction; they are reproduced through familial socialisation and simultaneously reinterpreted through education, media and global information flows. The study's practical implication is equally pertinent to the volume's concerns: the authors identify a persistent gap between declarative endorsement of equality and its enactment in everyday domestic practice, and caution that youth and gender policies calibrated to an urban–rural divide will address a cleavage that their data do not find. Cultural and axiological foundations, rather than spatial ones, are where such policy must do its work. The authors are appropriately candid

about the study's limits, notably the predominance of female respondents, the cross-sectional design and the absence of a non-student comparison group, all of which constrain causal inference and invite the longitudinal research they recommend.

Cultural Heritage as a Resource for Professional Practice

If the preceding contributions examine heritage as a field of values and identity, Pulla and Sharma's review essay considers it as a resource for professional method. Their assessment of *Theory and Practice of Social Group Work in Indian Society* (Balgopal, Pathare & Balgopal, 2024) opens by revisiting the foundational definitions of social group work, from Coyle and Konopka through Schwartz's mediating model to Toseland and Rivas, and identifies their common commitment to mutual aid: the proposition that members of a purposefully constituted group assist one another to change more effectively than an expert can change them singly. The essay then poses the question that animates the volume under review, namely whether a method whose vocabulary and theoretical apparatus were formed in Chicago, London and Boston, and thereafter disseminated largely unaltered, can be rebuilt from within another cultural, familial and spiritual tradition rather than translated into it after the fact. The question is far from academic: India's approximately 550 social work institutions have long taught the method from texts written for a different society, a different family structure and a different relation between the individual and the collective.

The review traces how the volume answers that question. Role theory is reworked for conditions in which expectation is structured by age, caste, gender and position within the joint family, so that a daughter-in-law's caregiving obligations operate simultaneously as belonging and as constraint. The ecological perspective, first advanced by the senior author four decades earlier, is revisited to reposition the worker's task as the restoration of fit between person and environment rather than the correction of a deficient individual; the density of urban

settlements during the COVID-19 pandemic is read accordingly as an ecological mismatch rather than a failure of individual discipline. Gestalt therapy is adapted so that sessions may open with drawing rather than speech, in recognition of the risk that direct emotional disclosure carries in collectivist settings, and is set alongside Raja Yoga as a secular resource for attention regulation and group cohesion. The concept of allogenic conflict, which names the friction generated in groups by the social weight of difference itself rather than by interpersonal failure, receives its fullest application to Indian conditions. Concepts such as dharma, karma, izzat, lajja and vasudhaiva kutumbakam are treated as formal theoretical categories rather than as cultural ornamentation, and the argument is tested against field accounts from the 2004 tsunami on the Tamil Nadu coast, the 2018 Kerala floods, a Maharashtra family court and a rural group addressing chronic alcohol use, the last reported with a candid two-year follow-up of mixed outcomes.

The reviewers' verdict is favourable but not uncritical: they note that caste, though present throughout the allogenic conflict framework, receives no sustained analysis of its own, that the treatment of Raja Yoga is disproportionately brief beside that of Gestalt therapy, and that postcolonial, feminist and structural critiques of social work are largely absent from the volume's argument. For the purposes of this issue, the essay's significance lies in the distinction it draws between reconstruction and translation. It demonstrates that cultural and spiritual heritage may function not merely as content to be preserved but as theoretical infrastructure for professional and institutional practice, and that the participatory, context-sensitive approach advocated throughout this issue has a direct analogue in the design of social intervention. It also extends the issue's comparative frame from post-Soviet to post-colonial conditions, where the inherited authority of Global North models raises questions of cultural continuity and institutional legitimacy that are structurally similar to those examined in the Central Asian contributions, even though their histories differ.

Ecological Heritage, Gendered Violence and the Testimony of Nature

Bhattacharyya's commentary on Nature's #MeToo extends the issue's concerns to a domain that discussions of heritage and social policy too often leave aside, namely the relationship between societies and the non-human environment. Arising from two sessions on ecofeminism and environment convened under the Gender and Feminist Geographies Research Group at the 2025 Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) conference, the commentary proposes that ecological degradation follows the same grammar as the gendered abuse that the #MeToo movement, initiated by Tarana Burke in 2006 and globalised through social media in 2017, made publicly legible: the exploitation of an unequal power relation, the extraction of value from a body rendered voiceless, the silencing of witnesses, and the denial that shields perpetrators from accountability. Situating the argument against environmental determinism, possibilism and ecofeminism, and against the history of climate science from Fourier, Foote and Tyndall to the Keeling Curve, it contends that the gulf between the rhetoric of sustainable development and the reality of extraction has continued to widen in the four decades since the Brundtland Report.

The testimonies assembled in support of this claim are drawn from widely separated sites: lead-contaminated water in Flint, Michigan, and elevated cancer incidence along the petrochemical corridor of the Mississippi; long-term boil-water advisories in remote Indigenous communities in Canada; logging frontiers in the Amazon and Indonesia; hazardous air in the megacities of the Global South; and the 3.8 million annual deaths, predominantly of women and children, attributed to indoor air pollution. The commentary gives particular weight to the fate of those who speak for the abused environment, citing documentation of at least 146 environmental defenders killed or disappeared during 2024, a third of them Indigenous, and to the apparatus of denial, evidenced by a documented 267 per cent rise in

COP-related disinformation between July and September 2025 and by the Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change signed at COP30. Against this, it sets the evidence that repair is achievable: the recovery of the ozone layer following the Montreal Protocol, the marked cost advantage of forest restoration over engineered carbon removal, and gender-transformative transition initiatives from the women-owned solar park at Naradi in Gujarat to community governance arrangements in Fiji and ecosystem restoration in La Mojana, Colombia.

Its relevance to the present issue is threefold. First, it demonstrates that heritage transmission encompasses ecological knowledge as well as language, ritual and family practice: the sacred groves stewarded by the Khasi of Meghalaya, the Bathou faith of the Bodo and the Wangala harvest festival of the Garo encode relations of reciprocity in which rivers, hills and forests are animate kin rather than inert resources. Second, it shows institutions belatedly catching up with those cosmologies, as in the conferral of legal personhood on the Whanganui River under Aotearoa New Zealand's Te Awa Tupua Act of 2017 and the Uttarakhand High Court's declaration in the same year that the Ganga and Yamuna are living legal entities, a jurisprudence that translates Indigenous and ecofeminist claims into the language of consent and accountability. Third, it insists that a just transition which neglects gender will reproduce the inequalities it purports to remedy, since women are overrepresented in informal and caring work, frequently lack secure land tenure and are disproportionately exposed to dispossession by large-scale environmental projects. The commentary thus supplies the environmental dimension of the reciprocal relationship this issue examines: state policy determines which relations to the natural world are recognised in law, while inherited cosmologies shape how such policy is received, contested and lived.

Contradictions and Methodological Diversity

Several important contradictions emerge when the studies included in this thematic issue are considered together.

The first is the contradiction between continuity and adaptation in culture. There must be sufficient continuity within a culture to maintain collective memory and identity. However, the social significance of culture also depends on its ability to operate within evolving institutional and technological contexts. Heritage that is entirely detached from contemporary social life risks losing its relevance, while excessive transformation may weaken perceptions of continuity.

The second contradiction concerns diversity and integration. Governments may seek to create common citizenship and shared national narratives, but long-term social integration requires consideration of cultural, regional, ethnic, linguistic, and other differences within society (Spytska, 2023). Cultural heritage can provide common points of reference while simultaneously revealing differences that need to be acknowledged rather than suppressed.

A third contradiction exists between rootedness and mobility. Professional mobility, migration, international collaboration, academic mobility, and international education can facilitate development but may also challenge mechanisms of human capital retention and community reproduction. (Martynovych et al., 2024)

Finally, there is an ongoing contradiction between digitalisation as a means of expanding access and digitalisation as a source of new inequalities, vulnerabilities, and cultural shifts. Digital tools can strengthen heritage preservation and transmission, but their effects depend on institutional capacity, accessibility, media literacy, and the active participation of communities (Tan et al., 2025; Trushaj, 2025).

These contradictions demonstrate why the relationship between social policy, cultural heritage, and society's mentality cannot be reduced to a simple causal model. Rather, it involves reciprocal processes in which institutions shape social meanings while social practices simultaneously influence the reception and transformation of institutional policies.

From a methodological perspective, the issue reflects this complexity through a broad range of approaches, including documentary, ethnopedagogical, historical, legal, psychological, statistical, survey, comparative, heritage, and social policy methods. Such methodological diversity is not accidental. The relationship between mentality, heritage, and social policy requires analysis at multiple levels.

Institutional policies can provide insight into policy-making processes; demographic and labour data can make transformations visible; surveys can identify social practices and attitudes; psychological tests can reveal individual-level responses; and comparative analyses can demonstrate different institutional reactions to similar processes. A multidimensional methodological approach is necessary for understanding how cultural heritage and social policy interact in both institutional structures and everyday social experience.

Conclusion

This thematic issue contributes to a more holistic understanding of the relationship between public policy, cultural heritage, and society's mentality. The contributions illustrate the role of culture in dealing with institutional change, demographic transformation, gender, nature, geopolitical conflicts, technological development, globalisation, migration, and instability.

The articles demonstrate that cultural heritage is neither completely outside public policy nor entirely amenable to it. Heritage is reproduced through relationships between individuals, families, communities, institutions, states, and societies. Its meanings may be supported, challenged, reconstructed, or transformed through education, migration, media, language policy, digital technologies, social institutions, and everyday practices (Li et al., 2024).

The studies also suggest that cultural heritage should be understood not simply as a collection of objects, traditions, or historical narratives, but as a dynamic social resource. Its relevance lies partly in its capacity to contribute to belonging,

social cohesion, resilience, identity formation, and intergenerational continuity. Heritage can become a field in which competing interpretations of identity, inclusion, diversity, and national unity are negotiated.

The interaction between state social policy and cultural heritage is reciprocal. Policies influence which cultural practices receive institutional recognition and support, while cultural values and practices influence how policies are interpreted, accepted, and experienced by society. This interaction becomes particularly visible during periods of crisis and rapid transformation, when established forms of identity and social organisation are challenged.

The issue consequently points towards the importance of participatory, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches to cultural and social policy. Preservation and transformation should not be treated as mutually exclusive objectives. Instead, sustainable cultural continuity may depend on the ability of communities and institutions to adapt heritage to changing social realities while retaining meaningful connections with the past.

Ultimately, the relationship between heritage, policy, and mentality is best understood as an ongoing process rather than a fixed institutional arrangement. The articles gathered in this issue provide different perspectives on that process and demonstrate the value of examining cultural heritage and social policy together, particularly in societies experiencing migration, demographic change, digitalisation, geopolitical uncertainty, and rapid social transformation.

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