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ONTOLOGY OF THE DIGITAL CULTURE: WORLD TRENDS AND CHINESE ADVANCED EXPERIENCE

Prof. Dr. Denys Svyrydenko[1)]
Dr. Olena Yatsenko[2)]
[1)]*Guangdong University of Petrochemical Technology (China)*
[2)]*National Pedagogical Dragomanov University (Ukraine)*

Abstract. The concept of digital culture defines a set of values, practices, and expectations regarding the format of human interaction in today's online society. Predictions of digital culture describe the specifics of the online environment and the general context of social life. The range of interpretations of digital culture varies between two poles: from the recognition of digital technologies as a way of presenting libraries, museums, historical monuments, etc., to the concepts of digital culture as a new socio-anthropological reality, the content of which is not limited to ICT. Culture as a phenomenon means the semantic unity of human activity, the desire to format social life following ideas and values, the movement from existing to obligatory, from actual to potential, and digital culture is an adequate response to the demands and challenges. People worldwide change their placement of everyday activity, and we could admit such huge transformation in the Chinese People's Republic exactly obvious.

Keywords: culture; digital culture; communication; subjectivity; sociality; cultural heritage; Chinese culture

Introduction

The development of ICT allows for overcoming geographical, political, social and language barriers. Such goods of culture, civilization, scientific and technological progress, which humanity did not dare to dream of, become available to the modern inhabitant. There is a dramatic change in the cultural paradigm because the digitalization of culture means not just a new way, a new technology of fixation and translation of meaning, but a fundamentally new order of self-identification, social interaction, political influence and economic cooperation, ethics and taste aesthetics.

The relevance of the study of digital culture is enough to deal with the wide range of influences that its development has on the content and dynamics of social life.

Digital technologies cause a change in the value-motivational attitudes of humans, as the set of actual needs of the individual and ways to satisfy them. Modern culture "cultivates" the needs and desires of pleasure, and digital technology is highly effective in this context. On the other hand, these objective processes are an acceptable ground for manipulating consciousness at any stage of human life, anywhere on the planet. The trans(post)humanism projects become a reality, and digital culture becomes more and more influential (Bogachevska & Alieksieieva 2020; Dobrodum & Kyvliuk 2021; Kleszczynski 2019; Rozin 2021).

The growth of needs and ways to satisfy them produces the development of the digital economy, in which no material artifacts but creative ideas and solutions compete with each other. And, the outlines of this competition are different, so there are numerous phenomena of cybercrime, degradation of digital content, reduced cognitive and mental operations, and more. The level of influence of digital culture is evidenced by the agenda of the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2020. The world's economic and political elites claim that the era of total competition is approaching at the fastest possible pace and scale, namely the competition of technological alliances, which are formed as a union of socio-political partners of different national and supranational entities.

In terms of the information society and the corresponding consumer way of life, the illusory nature of freedom and trust is noted with the analogy of the presence of animals in zoos: the space of freedom within clearly defined limits and the established order of behaviour. It is a safe space and an entire way of life for animals. Under such conditions, animals completely lose their innate survival skills. Can we use this analogy to make predictions about the "normal anomie" of digital culture, i.e., the destruction of traditional and sustainable worldviews and activities due to the plasticity and variability of meanings and values of the network space?

Information / digital culture: the influence of communication on socioculture

The rapid changes in modern culture are the diversification of information practices (Briggle & Mitcham 2009). If we understand the culture in general as information about certain values, artifacts and practices, the philosophical rationale for its content switches to digital space terminology: "What cultural studies helps us see, however, is that information culture cannot be understood solely in terms of extrinsic information "impacting" pre-established cultures… This phenomenon has gone under several names including new media culture, Internet culture, and cyberculture. These cultures interrelate in complex ways with other cultures already present in the information society. Understanding these interrelations is, we suggest, a significant task for the philosophy of information culture" (Briggle & Mitcham 2009, 172). This methodology does not allow for establishing a hierarchy and a holistic approach to interpreting

the impact between the components. Instead, it illustrates the poststructuralist approach to the study of the phenomenon of culture, its features, and ways they correlate.

The term "digital culture" appears in the publications of Charlie Gere (Gere 2002). Most researchers do not doubt the relevance of this concept to the definition of human activity in the field of information and media technologies. However, the revolutionary views of Gere are precisely the observation of a new quality of the modern state of culture, the formation of its new essence and a fundamentally new format of existence. Based on the concepts of neo-Marxism and information society, Gere calls the starting point of modernity a new format of communication that affects all spheres of social reality: from production, distribution, and consumption to interpersonal relationships and self-identification procedures.

The difference between visual and material in digital culture is not fundamental: "These diverse analyses of cultural production and digital media itself, a paradigmatic technology of global capitalism reveal persistent lines of continuity between the virtual and the material, as well as between contemporary and earlier cultures and economies (racial, colonial and imperial legacies)" (Schiwy et al. 2009, 291). Even more, visualisation and dematerialisation as the main predictions of digital culture do not provide a sufficient description of this phenomenon (Luna, 2019). The participation, interconnection, and performativity of the imperatives of perception and exploitation of images using modern technologies produce a sufficient level of materialisation or completeness of feeling. Accordingly, digital culture generates a new kind of spatial and temporal experience of interaction with images, in which the difference between its static and dynamic characteristics loses relevance.

Suppose we refrain from evaluative judgements and futurological projections. In that case, the fact of the unprecedented influence of digital culture on the level of awareness of the modern individual, and the content and technology of education, remains indisputable. Naturally, the ways of defining digital culture are closely related to information and the possibilities of its application: "Digital culture is a set of competencies that characterize the ability to use information and communication technologies for a comfortable life in a digital environment, to interact with society and solve digital problems in professional activities" (Mikhailova 2018).

The concept of digital culture is closely correlated with the main ideologies of transhumanism, according to which the development of various technologies determines the whole modern world. Therefore, digital culture is a man-made semiotic space to transform the surrounding reality, artificial and arbitrary in its ontological characteristics. Therefore, his assessment as radical and inconsistent in his optimistic allusions will be fair. Undoubtedly, technology is a continuation of humans' practices to adapt to the world, but not creating a fundamentally different world, a different continuum of human existence.

Problems of subjectivity and identity in digital culture

The formation of digital culture attaches special importance to the problems of cultural diversity and cultural identity (Ferreiro 1997). As cultural diversity means ethnic and language differences and gender, age, economic and social conditions, education, technological infrastructure development, and technology competence, digital interaction becomes more uncertain and with potential risks. The question arises: how will the identity formed in a certain culture be self-actualised in a digital culture? How to identify the features of cultural identity that digital culture eliminates? What predictions of identity does digital culture produce? How do the infrastructure, content, and accessibility of digital culture affect intercultural dialogue and the preservation of cultural diversity? If in the context of digital culture, it is appropriate to talk about identity as a permanent phenomenon in general.

From the standpoint of the postmodern worldview, the vast amount of digital space can be seen as an "archive" of cultural treasures, in which, as in a supermarket, one is allowed to choose and use objects for ones' own needs and interests. But, at the same time, the values of a culture are based on personal responsibility, creativity, and aesthetics. Is it possible to predict the balance of authorship and anonymity, citation and intertextuality, high aesthetics, and mass culture in the digital space? The solution to the problem has few prospects and unambiguous answers. The transversal nature of modern subjectivity reveals the arbitrariness of technical design. Miriam Baldwin (2020) introduces the concept of the "micrological approach" to determine the nature of this process. Its essence is to use it in the application of "structuring mechanisms" – editing programmes and filters that transform apperception. In other words, with the help of digital technologies, the subject becomes a "phenomenologist of his own subjectivity", and subjectivity itself shows a sign of modality in the procedures of self-presentation and self-preparation.

The dialectical contradiction between the algorithmic idea of society as a narrative of the past and the strategic approach, according to which culture performs certain projective functions in relation to social development, reveals the desire to preserve sustainable cultural values in the context of potential challenges and threats posed by the digital revolution: "Among the new digital ecosystems, public or private, where humans and machines interact to solve complex problems and generate products and services, there are cyber-physical systems such as smart cities, Industry 4.0 paradigm and augmented reality environments developed in social networks, video games, virtual visits of experiential tourism. These models have rapidly replaced those developed in the creative economy" (Lazzeretti 2020, 8).

The potential of digital culture to preserve historical and cultural heritage is difficult to overestimate and inappropriately ignored (King et al. 2016). Digital culture projects serve as a "showcase" for a broad audience and create a dynamic

space of multi-subject interaction. In other words, digital culture in a global sense produces a space for the accumulation of cultural values, their preservation, and potential dissemination. The development of digital culture projects provides an opportunity to address issues of financing the protection of cultural heritage effectively, relativity and content of digital cultural experience, localisation of cultural value, the importance of time for the establishment and dissemination of cultural values, the impact of community participation in the sustainability and the dissemination of cultural values.

The concept of "participation" as a modern example of sociality's explication

The central term in understanding digital culture is participation in creating a particular product and its consumption (Rutten 2018). Modern technologies significantly increase the opportunities to participate in various activities. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic experience, digital culture allows us to discover new trajectories of interaction in space, rethink the spatial coordinates of distance and communication, proximity and remoteness, joint creativity, and mutual understanding (Możgin 2020).

It is appropriate to define digital culture through participation and through the concepts of correction and bricolage as a combination of arbitrary fragments (Deuze 2006). The digitalisation of everyday practices creates a new form of alienation inherent in modern digital postmodernism: "The analogue relation that expressed us and the social relations that conditioned that expression, withdraws from our experience. We are neither homo analogicus nor homo digitalis - but existing ontologically somewhere in between in our alienated 'relationlessness'. We atrophy further and made vulnerable within the changing criteria of what counts as knowledge and truth" (Hassan 2021, 6). The reason for this alienation is the gap between instrumental or professionally-oriented knowledge and deep knowledge, or potentially able to significantly change the world. The analogous essence of humans formed by history is disoriented in the aporia of digital technologies because pragmatics does not demand valuable and vital knowledge of capitalist society.

The concept of digital culture defines, in essence, a certain set of values, practices, and expectations regarding the format of human interaction in today's online society. Therefore, the predictions of digital culture describe the specifics of the online environment and the general context of social life. And in this aspect, there is a fundamentally new stratification of society, namely different generations of users of the digital space (Taipale 2016). Based on the differences between the categories of digital immigrants, the first and second digital generation, there are differences in the behavioural strategies of information network users. The criterion for differentiation in this aspect is the time indicator: digital immigrants and the first digital generation prefer asynchronous online communication. The second

digital generation mainly uses synchronous communication, direct participation, and communication efficiency. In other words, if the first two groups use the space of digital culture as a specific resource for their lives, the third group directly carries out its activities in it.

The phenomenon of the digital crowd as a new form of collective life is the subject of a study of the correlation of traditional and digital culture in the context of social life (Ziada 2020). The use in political protests and manipulations, the gradual formation of total digital control, and the possibility of arbitrary transformation of the emotional background are the arguments and prospects for studying this phenomenon. The digital crowd intensifies the processes of effect and deindividualisation and causes further explication of these effects during daily practices. In other words, the format of interaction in the digital space weakens the effectiveness of traditional ethical imperatives of behaviour.

Culture means the transfer of experience, effective practices of behaviour, and interaction. Therefore, education and science as strategies for designing digital culture and knowledge management are developed in the light of computer art and design, applications with didactic content, virtual and augmented reality projects to solve educational and research problems, and more. Accordingly, modern universities are interested in forming various platforms for the introduction of advanced technologies in the process of education and training of specialists in all fields and specialities (Rudenko et al. 2020).

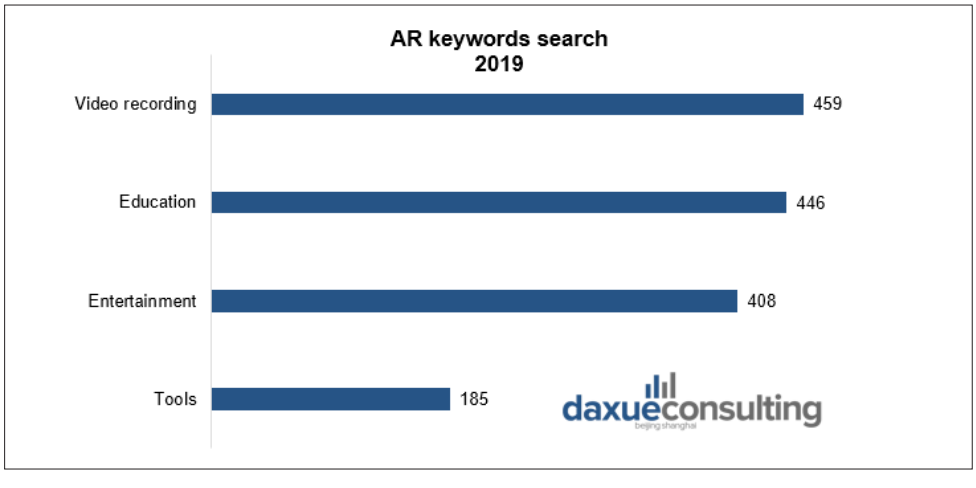
The digital culture of modern China: worldview prerequisites and social achievements

Chinese culture, and especially Chinese hieroglyphic writing, undoubtedly contribute to the organic development of digital culture. Thus, Chinese culture provides the necessary ground for the development of digital culture. Chinese culture especially cultivates the values of the aesthetics of contemplation. Respectively, the content of an expressive image representing the fullness of meaning is close to modern trends in the visualisation of ideas, principles and concepts. The well-known principle of binary dialectics, substantiated by Taoism several millennia ago, underlies the programming language through which digital culture is created. The metaphorical, incomplete, and decentralised narrative of Chinese culture also reflects the nature of modern-day communication on social media. The priority of the collective over the personal, which distinguishes Chinese culture from other worldview systems, also allows the bearers of this cultural identity to act quite organically and effectively in the digital space.

The term “digital” means digital technologies, namely ICT, big data, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality technologies, unmanned aerial vehicles and autonomous control. All these practical aspects of digital culture stimulate the development of any economy sector, from agriculture to space technology. So, “the

growth scale of China's digital economy reached 35.8 trillion yuan ($5.5 trillion) in 2019, accounting for 36.2 percent of the GDP, with a growth rate three times higher than that of the traditional manufacturing economy, according to data from the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology. By 2027, it is expected that the digital economy will account for about half of China's GDP and become the main driver of the country's economic growth" (Global Times, Jan 14, 2021). On a worldwide scale we notice, that "the US digital economy continues to rank first in the world, reaching $13.6 trillion in 2020, China ranks second with a scale of $5.4 trillion, according to an industry white paper released by China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT) on Monday. Germany, Japan, and the US ranked third to fifth, with a scale of $2.54, $2.48, and 1.79 trillion, respectively, the white paper showed. China meanwhile has the fastest development speed in digital economy, with a growth rate of 9.6 percent year-on-year" (Global Times 2021).

If we consider the main spheres where AR develops, it would be next:



Data Source: Mill Economy, designed by daxue consulting, AR keywords search (Daxue Consulting, June 24, 2021)

Also, the "digital" in the modern world is a factor of production, a new kind of consumer product, a unit of capital, a way of organising economic activity. In concrete terms, "digital" is information as a resource of knowledge and education, a resource of cultural creation (digital music, videos, applications, etc.). Note that the digital economy, which is talked about by famous modern thinkers, does not mean the virtualisation of economic processes, but rather an innovative model of digitisation of the traditional economic system. Digital technologies are making an

obvious contribution to economic growth and are becoming a new driving force for China's economic development. Thus, "the country's digital economy amounted to 4.4 trillion dollars in 2018, which accounts for more than a third of GDP and makes it the second largest digital economy in the world after the USA" (Xinhua 2019).

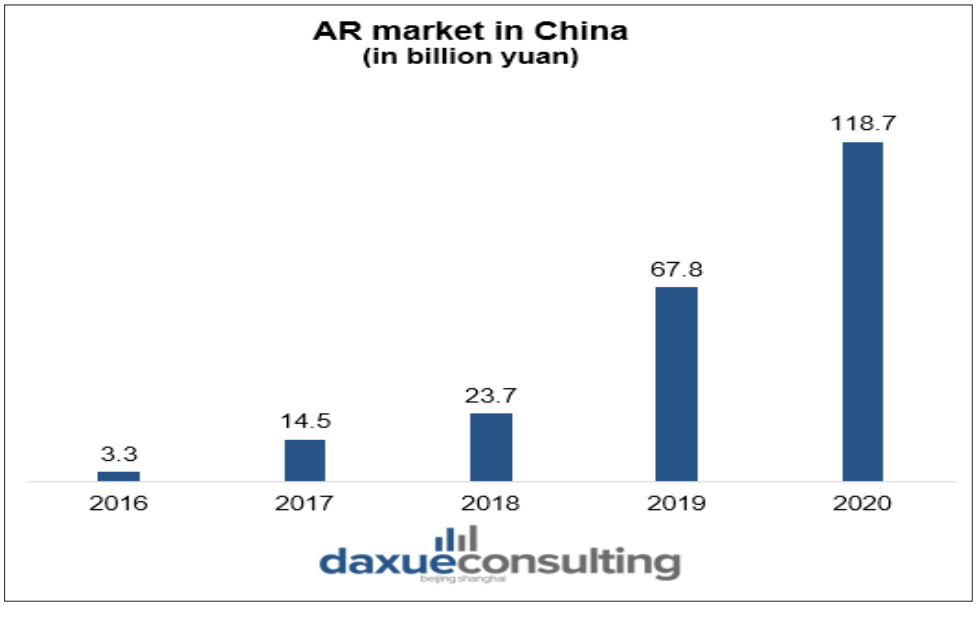
The People's Republic of China is actively developing a digital culture in all senses of the term. According to Technology and Innovation Report 2021 this country quickly develops innovative technologies: "China is also a major producer, notably of 5G, drones and solar PV. For each of the technologies, these two countries are also responsible for 30 to 70 per cent of patents and publications" (Technology and Innovation Report 2021).

China is not only one of the world leaders in the development of virtual and augmented reality technologies, robotics and artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, biological, chemical, and other technologies, but is actively developing innovation and creative economy, culture, education, science, architecture, and urban infrastructure. For example, Kayla Matthews (2019) names China a "dominant player" in the global economics of VR/AR technologies. Annika Steibe, an international authority in the field of management and innovation, on pages of Forbes admits: "major Chinese companies are exploring VR/AR. The "big 3" Internet firms, Alibaba, Baidu, and Tencent, have significant ventures under way. So do mobile phone maker Xiaomi and numerous more. These moves come in addition to existing activity by firms that focus on, say, low-cost headset manufacturing or game development. There is also a growing amount of cross-border activity and partnering" (Steibe 2017).

China is one of the world's largest consumers of robotics. Thus, in 2015, 68,000 robots were sold in China, and in 2020 more than 100,000 units were produced (Xinhua, 2019). So, Hong Cheng and his colleagues point out "in particular, the top industries in China for robot adoption are also automotive (accounting for 44.5 percent of all manufacturing robots), electronics (24.7 percent), metals (13.9 percent), plastics and chemicals (11.5 percent), and food and beverages (2.9 percent). The higher rate of robot adoption in the automotive and electronics industries has implications for the future of robots in China. China has been the largest national producer of automobile units since 2008: indeed, since 2009, annual production of automobiles in China has exceeded that of the United States and Japan combined. China also clearly dominates the global electronics industry: over 70 percent of the world's computers and electronics are made in China. These industries in China seem likely to keep expanding, which implies that China will become an even more significant user of robots" (Cheng 2019).

Besides, we know an exciting experiment of human way of socialisation of robot in China: "In the first Weibo post, the female virtual student named Hua Zhibing, greeted Chinese netizens and said that she will start studying in the computer laboratory in Tsinghua University" (Global Times 2021). In addition,

China is shaping a new wave of entrepreneurial innovation in the digital industrial transformation.



Data Source: Mill Economy, designed by Daxue Consulting,
Share of AR products in China
(Daxue Consulting, June 24, 2021)

Constant is being actively used, and new communication links are being established to strengthen the Chinese position in today's world-class digital culture. Digital platforms such as DiDi Chuxing are referred to as the "ecosystem builders" of the city (Chen & Qiu 2019). Such digital services combine the public and private sectors of the economy to solve pressing social problems. After all, digital culture jointly influences the analogue, changes the geometry of the space of human existence, transforms the environment into a more comfortable, ecological and harmonious one. Thus the concept of "digital landscape" arose to define the ethnography of the space of the modern city in the context of the concept of heterotopia by M. Foucault, namely "we further define a digital landscape as a collection or system of digital spaces on the earth, and use it in this study as a collective term for diverse digital spaces marked by a complex combination of the virtual and real world" (Lin & Yang 2020, 1220).

Well-known successful Chinese government programmes to create such a digital landscape for people with disabilities: "China's disability governance propaganda is

an all pervading presence on the digital landscape operated or controlled by the CDPF; for example, how President Xi Jinping pays special attention to disabled people and disability affairs, how CDPF's Chairwoman Zhang Haidi provides services for disabled people, how the central government helps disabled people, and how China makes great achievements and progress in disability affairs" (Lin & Yang 2020, 1225).

Culture is inevitable, regardless of whether a person is in the real world or cyberspace (Chen, 2016). At the present stage, digital culture is often assessed as "gaming", supporting and entertaining. But its development has the potential to level the established narratives of meaning, discursive practices of legitimising power, and traditional procedures for establishing identity.

Conclusions

The digital culture interpretation varies between two poles: from the recognition of digital technologies as a way of presenting libraries, museums, historical monuments, etc., to the concepts of digital culture as a new socio-anthropological reality, the content of which is not limited to ICT.

The traditional discourse of culture provides analysis in three areas: the semantic level of knowledge, meanings, and values; syntactic level of social relations and sustainable practices of social interaction; pragmatic level of personal acceptance, contextual expediency, and variability of the norm. And at all these levels, the digitalisation of culture has a confirmatory effect. Culture as a phenomenon means the semantic unity of human activity, the desire to format social life in accordance with ideas and values, the movement from the existing to the obligatory, from the actual to the potential. All the essential determinants of culture: signs, symbols, social institutions, production technologies, rituals, and life practices are an external manifestation or explication of the dream of a safe, just, meaningful and happy life. Technocratic concepts of digital culture force us to reorient research attention from abstract definitions of the phenomenon to more specific, historically, socially, and economically determined configurations, thus forming a clear idea of the possibility of designing and modelling the desired formats of human life. And given the above arguments, it becomes clear that there are compelling arguments for the success of such transformations, just like in the Republic of China.

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✉ **Prof. Dr. Denys Svyrydenko**
ORCID iD: 0000-0001-6126-1747
Belt and Road Initiative Institute for Chinese-European Studies (BRIICES)
Guangdong University of Petrochemical Technology
139, Guandu Erlu, Maonan District
Maoming City
525000 Guangdong Province, China
E-mail: denis_sviridenko@ukr.net

✉ **Dr. Olena Yatsenko**
ORCID iD: 0000-0003-0584-933X
Department of Methodology of Science and International Education
National Pedagogical Dragomanov University
9, Pyrohova St.
01630 Kyiv, Ukraine
E-mail: yatsenkood@gmail.com