

## DIGITAL SOCIETY: A SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

*E.V. Listvina*

Saratov State University, Saratov, Russia

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▪ The article analyzes the digital footprint as a phenomenon of the emerging digital space and digital society. The purpose of the article is to study the digital footprint as a multi-layered phenomenon with multi-faceted features that manifest themselves in various spheres of life of an individual and society. The author considers three layers that characterize the digital footprint from the standpoint of its impact on the sociocultural component of society, the specifics of its formation, and its impact on the development and existence of the individual in the modern transformational era. The study highlights the positive (related to the possibilities of realizing personal potential) and negative (suggesting a distortion of the socio-cultural space) aspects of the functioning of the digital footprint. Conclusions are made about the need for a philosophical study of the phenomenon of the digital footprint in connection with its increasing importance in the formation of a new volume layer of socio-cultural space that creates qualitatively different forms of social existence.

▪ **Keywords:** digital society; socio-cultural transformation processes; socio-cultural space; digital footprint.

## ЦИФРОВОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО: СОЦИОКУЛЬТУРНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ЦИФРОВОГО СЛЕДА

*Е.В. Листвина*

Федеральное государственное бюджетное образовательное учреждение высшего образования «Саратовский национальный исследовательский государственный университет им. Н.Г. Чернышевского», Саратов

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▪ В статье анализируется цифровой след как феномен формирующегося цифрового пространства и цифрового общества. Цель статьи — исследование цифрового следа как многослойного явления, обладающего многими особенностями, проявляющимися в различных сферах жизни индивида и социума. Рассмотрены три слоя, характеризующие цифровой след с позиций его воздействия на социокультурную составляющую общества, специфика его формирования, его влияние на развитие и существование личности в современную трансформационную эпоху. В исследовании отмечены позитивные (связанные с возможностями реализации личностного потенциала) и негативные (предполагающие искажение социокультурного пространства) аспекты функционирования цифрового следа. Сделаны выводы о необходимости философского изучения феномена цифрового следа в связи с его возрастающим значением в формировании нового объёмного пласта социокультурного пространства, создающего качественно иные формы социального существования.

▪ **Ключевые слова:** цифровое общество; социокультурные трансформационные процессы; социокультурное пространство; цифровой след.

“The length of time we hang on afterward, a little shorter, a little longer, is what is called immortality.”

*Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus*

Society is currently at a critical stage in its growth, which is characterized, along with political, economic, and environmental changes,

primarily by the fact that society is entering a new period of its existence. This period, however, is associated with the digitalization of the entire

conditions of social life, and humanity is faced with a large-scale change for the first time over several centuries when the very nature of human existence is changing in various aspects. Recently, it has expanded beyond the limits of interest of representatives of technical sciences and now requires urgent humanitarian and philosophical analysis, as we increasingly recognize not only the technical but also the socio-anthropological and societal implications of these processes.

In this article, we will investigate the socio-cultural aspects of the changes indicated.

Discussing the digital space, digitalization processes, and changes by focusing on the extent of technological achievements perceived as an auxiliary element, becoming active transformer of the life of individuals and society, thereby having a powerful impact on professional fulfillment, interpersonal communication, organization of space and other aspects of humans. This achievement is defined in the literature as a digital footprint. However, this term is a calque from English-language texts, where it is called a digital footprint, digital shadow, cyber-shadow, but recently the use of a "digital footprint" has become more notable.

It can be implemented in two ways: active, when individuals present data about their selves, to develop their digital image or digital personality, and passive, when data about the owner are collected without their consent. We can also note that it is developed in these two versions because, when presenting information about oneself, the individual does not always fulfill his/her tasks, but is forced to respond to the requests and requirements of an ever-increasing number of digital organizations, services, etc.

Therefore, we will consider the characteristics of a digital footprint, which should be understood as "the entire complex of data about a person on the Internet" in the digital space, according to A.M. Kondakov and A.A. Kostyleva [2, p. 209]. Thus, making it easy for detailed information about an individual to be found on the internet. The researchers designate three conventional layers of a digital footprint, which will be discussed and analyzed.

Layer 1: represents the data that people present about themselves in mobile applications and social networks, which they control because it includes data about the age, gender, education, interests,

contacts, requests, photographs chosen by the individual and which they choose to share, and has the right to make profiles that are closed for other users, etc. The individual feels the greatest freedom of choice, rejecting or accepting requests, clicking the "like" or "dislike" button, removing someone or something from their digital reality, as well as creating a digital image (or several images under different nicknames), assuming that in this way; they can feel fulfilled most conveniently with all its complexities and preferences. This layer is the basics; without it, the existence of the other two layers is pointless. Although it depends on the individual's decision in creating a digital profile, on its content. Socio-cultural priorities and aspects of the digital footprint manifest in this layer.

Firstly, the eternal desire of a person to leave a legacy and continue on time is discussed in this segment, which is a defining feature of European culture, where everyone strives to document their unique being, noting their significant accomplishments and achievements, otherwise, a person is in danger of completely dissolving in the nameless millions of predecessors. Such legacy remained in the memory of contemporaries and descendants primarily as a result of the actions, deeds, material achievements that were sifted out by historical memory. However, this need has been made easy in recent times. One can record every second of their life, in real-time, noting action today, which in the '90s, the program "Behind the Glass" caused heated discussions, now practically everyone can do it, and most active users and bloggers exhibit their whole lives in the digital space, making the screen of a monitor, tablet, or other gadgets the fourth transparent wall open to the world. Moreover, it is assumed that this world is interested in obtaining this information, that it is significant for the existence of society and the formation of a stable life.

Therefore, we can argue that the concept of leaving a memorable footprint is fundamentally essential for society, and the standard set by those who dreamed of remaining in history is reduced to the story of their daily life. This situation is a reflection of the actual increase in attention over the past decades to the simple elements and facts of the life of an unremarkable person, as noted by many researchers. However, digital technology has taken this opportunity to a greater level.

An individual becomes focused exclusively on the public manifestation of his/herself when the number of likes and subscribers becomes important. These subscriptions and other methods of approval make the digital image more tangible, voluminous, and lively. Hence, the owner of the digital personality seeks to increase the signs of approval because, without them, the image is flat, ethereal, and lifeless, that is, it does not exist and correspond to its direct tasks. Nevertheless, online Newline is full of messages that are unremarkable and vanish in the information space, but satisfy the needs of increasing "social exhibitionism."

Secondly, it contributes to the actualization of the creative potential of the individual. The personality is in the constant building of oneself, considering the proposed digital parameters and trying to demonstrate their originality and uniqueness. Under these conditions, a specific digital projection takes shape, through which the individual tries to communicate with the outside world, thus, the same virtual, digital one. However, for the projections functioning in it, it turns out to be a multidimensional reality where these projections implement the "podium consciousness" of their creators, continuously presenting themselves in a multitude of insignificant manifestations [3, p. 57].

Thirdly, a digital image is developed with a concentrated manifestation of traditions and priorities adopted in a particular culture. In this stream of individual bits of information, if they are scrolled through like a filmstrip, a condensed cultural template (reflecting generational, gender, social customs, and priorities accepted in society) can be seen, as well as a highly charged socio-cultural and psychological portrait of the person, which can turn out better than its author desires. In particular, this stream is demonstrated through addiction to social networks, where certain generations "inhabit" Odnoklassniki, Vkontakte, Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok. However, it is evidence that every emerging generation settles in the network that is most acceptable and set of social interests, as well as changes it with difficulty, and for the most part, does not strive to change it.

Fourthly, while noting that the digital footprint contributes, therefore, to the disclosure of communication opportunities, providing an individual with a maximum of options for self-actualization,

it has also increased the probability of distorting these opportunities, since the individual, building his or her lacuna in the digital space, intercepts others directions and vectors of endless options remaining in the conviction that they use them to the maximum extent possible.

Simultaneously, it is noteworthy that these characteristics also have negative aspects. Thus, fifthly, there is a leveling of various event levels, when the Newline equally presents random episodes, fleeting emotional reactions of individuals, along with a significant event in their personal life or with an event of a regional or global scale, which erases the user's perception of the gradation of the event line developed by previous generations and smoothens the reaction of every user.

Sixthly, the individual becomes reliant on responses that can be insignificant for the person who broadcasts the reaction for a particular individual, they can be extravagantly serious and have profound consequences, which can affect their behavior not only in the network space but also in reality.

Seventhly, a long stay in the digital space can distort people's self-perception and their attitude toward non-virtual reality, where they can transfer their emotions and constructions and take specific actions based on this non-virtual reality, being involved already in changing the traditional social reality that can lead to the fact that the digital world itself becomes a force that has all the resources for building people who assume that they are independent and self-sufficient in the space they are familiar with.

We went into such detail on the characteristics of layer one; because as stated above, it serves as the base for subsequent layers, since it provides the necessary material for their formation, strengthening, and proliferation.

Layer 2: proposed by A.M. Kondakov and A.A. Kostyleva, consists of information about the behavior of individuals in the internet space. The current technological level allows forming of complete cartography of an individual composed of and synchronized the isolated, open, or encrypted "digital bricks" localized on various servers, platforms, and sites.

Furthermore, metadata that people create about themselves in the professional community, both at the request of the organizations where they work (now almost everyone is presented in

detail in several professional search engines), and the data that one leaves about his/herself with the actions such as fleeting likes, opening random pages, preferences in search engines, games, one's location, movements, financial expenditures, durations of network and other communications, touching the screen of a gadget. What is popular nowadays; "stories" disappear from the personal Newline after 24 hours remain in the digital depths and are unable to compose a complex contextual holistic information unit about us, which we cannot correct, delete, or rewrite. And if personal memory can transform or overestimate the entire stages of an individual's life, explain the change in their views, attitudes, and, as a result, their actions and digital images that bring back memory, transformations, and psychological impulses and combine them into an indestructible database. This base is not controlled by individuals, and they rarely have an idea of the degree of its saturation.

Layer 3: This layer is connected with the first and second layers. Within its framework, the algorithms of the individual's actions are analyzed for use by various social structures. It is indicative that at first, corporations were concerned with the problem of the digital footprint to detect the purchasing preferences of people, as well as organizations that compose information packages of data on their employees. Profiles of various persons are formed out of the results of this analysis, based on which marketers, advertisers, and others work. Furthermore, obtaining a large amount of information about this kind allows for the modification of the customary structure of production, according to which demand begets supply. The aforementioned network capabilities build a digital personality and gently line up its requests based on the interests of the manufacturer, forming needs, preferences, and in the future, the entire lifestyle.

However, we are currently aware that these opportunities are expanding, and based on the existing digital social portrait, social structuring takes place, when loyalty passports and social ratings are drawn up by banks and companies, and in some cases by the state. Therefore, in China, since 2014, the "Social Credit System" has been gradually introduced, which tracks law-obedience, honesty, and consumer behavior, as well as ranks citizens according to these criteria [1].

Thus, we concluded that the influence of digital data leads to a revision of models of social reality [4, p. 122]. The ongoing changes in society make the problem of studying the phenomenon of the digital footprint, which is becoming more significant and regulating social life, urgent. Its impact on various aspects of social life necessitates its legal and administrative foundation, which has been taking place in recent years.

Consequently, we can assert that we are witnessing the emergence of a new volumetric layer of socio-cultural space, resulting in qualitatively different forms of social existence and necessitating considerable philosophical reflection and forecasting, through a multitude of digital traces.

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## ■ Information about the author

*Evgeniia V. Listvina* — Doctor of Philosophy, Professor, Head of the Department of Philosophy of Culture and Cultural Studies, Saratov State University, Saratov, Russia.  
E-mail: listvamer@yandex.ru.

## ■ Информация об авторе

*Евгения Викторовна Листвина* — доктор философских наук, профессор, заведующий кафедрой философии культуры и культурологии. ФГБОУ ВО «Саратовский национальный исследовательский государственный университет им. Н.Г. Чернышевского», Саратов.  
E-mail: listvamer@yandex.ru.