



Digital Anthropology Manifesto

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Received: 24 December 2023 | Revised: 2 February 2024 | Accepted: 17 February 2024

Abstract

The manifesto format was not chosen by chance. As a rule, manifestations are not acceptable in the scientific community and are practiced to proclaim a new order of things. Historically, social groups have declared their intentions in manifestos of various kinds. This circumstance is also true for contemporary cases such as manifestos of cyborgs, hackers, “Evolution 2045”, etc. Digital anthropology as a subject of manifestation looks anomalous, since it is not related to the interests of a specific social group or force. The intentions of the authors of this manifesto are to proclaim an alternative to the scientific research mainstream. The subject area and thesaurus of digital anthropology historically began to take shape in the Western countries. Due to qualitative and quantitative empirical research, the network has become a kind of analogue of a “field” for the study of behavioral practices, the specifics of thinking, and mythology that makes its way into virtual communication and Internet content. In an attempt to maintain ideological continuity with ethnographic and field research, digital anthropology ignored the conceptual and generalizing statement about a person. The latter was formed in the discourse of philosophical anthropology, not only a historical philosophical movement, but also a current field of knowledge that produces reflexive generalized knowledge about human beings. In the manifesto, the subject of digital anthropology is significantly clarified, and its definition is also given as a result of the reassembly of the subject.

Keywords

Digital; Digital Anthropology; Manifesto; Internet; Digital Philosophy; Subject; Human Being; Posthuman; Posthumanism



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Philosophen aller Länder, vereinigt Euch!

The contemporary world is twofold: flesh and digits (J.P. Barlow). The social, cultural, and political seem to move from one world to another, flowing and coexisting in both at the same time. Person, in the unity of his / her classical hypostases, as a bio-socio-cultural being, accordingly belongs to the physical world (preserving his / her physicality), but more and more confidently enters the digital space (making digital copies of his / her selves and increasingly living online).

To the history of manifesto

On February 21, 1848, the first copy of the “Manifesto of the Communist Party” came off one of the printing presses in London. According to the authors of the manifesto, the re-release of the manuscript took place when they both still had a thirst for creativity. However, the manifesto had already taken on an “independent” life, which is why the authors did not dare to make serious adjustments to the text itself. The manifesto proclaimed a new type of thinking, the movement of slogans on / through paper.

Even the etymology of the term “manifesto” outlines the semantic and methodological framework regarding the practices of its applicability. From late Latin *manifestum* today can be translated as a call to the majority of people or its individual groups, a call to action (a variant of the term from early Latin, *manifestos*, i.e., obvious, is not so strict in its semantic frame). In history, we discover what the ruling political leaders called for (for example, the Manifesto of October 17, 1905, addressed to Nicholas II); particular political actors claiming power came forward with a certain program of thoughts and actions, like the Italian fascists in the party manifesto (1919); finally, poets (see, for example, the manifestos of the Acmeists, Symbolists, Futurists) and artists (starting with G. Courbet, who back in 1835 dedicated a manifesto to realism, moving towards “Mystical Manifesto” (1951) by S. Dali, for instance, which translated into words the unique artistic principles of their movement in art, and ending with “Dogme 95”, again a manifesto on realism, but in cinema, authored by L. von Trier and T. Vinterberg).

In turn, in the context of digitalization, the manifesto has new semantic facets. In programming parlance, a manifest file means a block of metadata that describes a computer program. However, nowadays, not only information data and the way they are processed within the framework of software are manifested, but also a variety of forms of managing this data, and social practices growing out of those management models.

Manifestos about hackers and for hackers

In open discourse, one of the most famous was “The Hacker Manifesto”. The fame of the manifesto, in particular, is largely due to the outrageousness of its



author, hacker L. Blankenship; he published his manifesto after being arrested by the FBI. By and large, the text of the manifesto is a hacker's existential reflection coupled with social recognition. The semantic emphasis here is that North American society of the 1980s does not accept hackers; this rejection, according to L. Blankenship, is based on a misunderstanding of hackers, a certain fear that is rooted in the curiosity of young people who think fundamentally different from their parents (for example, he accused those parents of military aggression, in particular, pointing to debates in relation to atomic weapons), who are simply trying to find a place in this world where they would not be taught, but simply understood (in the author's discourse, "a refuge from the day to day incompetencies"). This reflection turns into the author's self-identification, "I am a hacker, and this is my manifesto" (The Mentor, n. d.). The last lines of the manifesto indicate the hacker's special connection with information flows and an attempt to formalize and legitimize the social practices that express this connection.

"A Cyberpunk Manifesto" was an ironic response to the statement of a caught hacker that resonated with the digital community. C. As. Kirtchev, the author of the manifesto, began his text no less pretentiously than L. Blankenship: "We are the ELECTRONIC MINDS, a group of free-minded rebels. Cyberpunks. We live in Cyberspace, we are everywhere, we know no boundaries. This is our manifest. The Cyberpunks' manifest" (Kirtchev, n. d.). In general, "A Cyberpunk Manifesto" continues the key ideas of its predecessor, reflecting the realities of the functioning of the Internet (according to the text of the manifesto – "the Net") in the second half of the 1990s: firstly, cyberpunks see more than others, because they are not limited only to what is outside, but also look inside reality; secondly, they preach freedom of thought; thirdly, they believe the external social system ("the System") is "wrong"; fourthly, they do not recognize the right to private property: in relation to themselves this applies to intellectual / information products, in relation to a functioning system, to the current economic basis; fifthly, they read the information network as "a house of anarchy", which is impossible and should not be controlled; at the same time, social control exists, so the Net turns into the channel that controls information (later, M. Wark would talk about this in the concept of vectoralist class), and cyberpunks become those who control the Net. Once again, at the end of the manifesto we get a transparent call to action, "The community of Cyberpunks. Unite! Fight for your rights!" (Kirtchev, n. d.).

Between cyborg and hacker: the problem of marginalized in contemporary manifestos

With the development of technology in the academic space since the 1980s its own series of manifestos is being drawn up. Probably the most famous is "A Cyborg Manifesto" by D. Haraway. She defines cyborgs as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway, 2016a, p. 3). However, the manifesto is not only, or rather, not so much,



about cyborgs. Being simultaneously a representative of postfeminism and Science and Technology Studies, D. Haraway formalizes the optics of social understanding when women, representatives of other races, cultures and cyborgs find themselves on the margins. Turning to cyborgs therefore turns out to be the result of a search for a new social and political ontology that structures existing centers of influence and at the same time draws “the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation” (Haraway, 2016a, p. 5).

In the manifesto we see the origins of replacement of a vertical, hierarchical, social view with a horizontal view, leveling the major actants. In D. Haraway’s discourse, the cyborg becomes one which has overcome inherently binary oppositions, which is “no longer structured by the polarity of public and private”, it “defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the oikos, the household” (Haraway, 2016a, p. 7). From there, she formalizes the political understanding of cyborgs with the following strokes: they are disrespectful towards the existing political systems, even though they are generated by them (from the text: “Cyborgs are not reverent;.. The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism”) (Haraway, 2016a, p. 7); severed from the cosmos; need a united political front, but do not have parties that reflect their interests; consist of many parts, but lack holism, the original harmony of the parts with each other.

According to D. Haraway, current intellectualist discourses are imbued with binary oppositions, body vs. consciousness, nature vs. machine, individual vs. collective. The cyborg, in turn, seems to transgress beyond these oppositions. On the one hand, it foreshadows the completion of the exclusively human; on the other hand, it brings others into social arenas and asserts their right to have their place and voice. The cyborg becomes a unique option for overcoming the natural and artificial through their fusion. In 2016, D. Haraway has developed the idea of constructing horizontal optics; based on the material of the so-called Chthulucene she argues that the survival of all living things, including humans, is possible through building unpredictable collaborations; everything is a compost in which “We become – with each other or not at all” (Haraway, 2016b). The manifesto consists, among other things, of the following, seemingly constructive thesis, “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (Haraway, 2016a, p. 65).

Australian thinker M. Wark brings back the hackers in a series of manifestos. She continues her “A Hacker Manifesto” in the logic of the “fathers” of the manifesto. In this logic, human history develops in the context of a change in the dominant economic class: feudal lords replaced slave owners, capitalists replaced feudal lords, a vectoralist class, in turn, replaced capitalists in the digital society. The key confrontation, according to M. Wark, in the digital era is between the class of hackers and vectoralist, information becomes the key good. Unlike her predecessors, the ideologists of the communist movement, M. Wark seems to be creating her



manifesto not in order to determine the main vectors in the development of history, but in order to identify herself. Among other things, she opens the manifesto with the following lines, “A hacker manifesto: Not the only manifesto, as it is in the nature of the hacker to differ from others, to differ even from oneself, over time. To hack is to differ” (Wark, 2004, p. 14). At this point, she acknowledges the possibility of the existence of other “manifestos”, positions on the question of who is a hacker; her manifesto is her answer to the question posed, an attempt to grasp her Self, which is becoming in differentiation.

So, at the turn of 20st – 21st centuries, a social and economic struggle is unfolding between the class of hackers and vectoralist. In the digital era, the struggle revolves around intellectual property, which, in comparison with previous forms of property, is abstract; it allows hackers, as a key productive force, to increase the speed of production of economic goods, new forms of property (from ideas to patents and copyright). But the system of relations described back in the 19th century by K. Marx and F. Engels, dictates its own rules even in relation to products of abstraction. “As the abstraction of private property is extended to information, it produces the hacker class as a class, as a class able to make of its innovations in abstraction a form of property. Unlike farmers and workers, hackers have not-yet-been dispossessed of their property rights entirely, but still must sell their capacity for abstraction to a class that owns the means of production, the vectoralist class – the emergent ruling class of our time” (Wark, 2004, p. 22). Just as in previous economic formations, the class of vectoralist, through a monopoly on the means of production, information channels, seeks to establish a monopoly on the abstractions created, following the logic of violence of the previous classes of economic influence, establishing “absolute control over intellectual property by means of war-like strategies of communication, control, and command” (Wark, 2004, p. 22). M. Wark does not dwell on specific illustrations that would express strategies for implementing such control practices, but in her discourse, there are points of intersection with the understanding of transnational corporations in the logic of the so-called “surveillance capitalism” (see, for example, Sh. Zuboff (Zuboff, 2020)).

The fundamental difference between M. Wark’s discourse and “classical” hacker discourses is that she offers an expanded understanding of the hacker, designating him / her as a key productive force. For her, every creator of an abstraction becomes a hacker, and not just an elite group among programmers. Therefore, she becomes a hacker, just like the rest of us, the so-called “proletariat of intellectual labor”. She concludes that “the interest of the hacker class lies first and foremost in the free expansion of the vectors of communication, culture and knowledge around the globe” (Wark, 2004, p. 381). It is in hackers, according to her thought, that the potential for intellectual development of a particular individual, the entire society and the world as a whole is concentrated. Hence, the strategy in the actions of hackers is the struggle to free up information channels; products of



abstraction, work of thought, intellectual property remains in the hands of their authors, and not distributors of information.

Transepochal uniqueness. Anthropology

Conceptual activity, creating new unique semantic markups, changes thesauruses at super speed. Nowadays, the notorious “obsolescence” is experienced not only by the world of technology, but also by scientific formats, in particular, terminological structures. The latter are historically called upon to protect the markings and watersheds between sciences or disciplines. However, in reality, the boundaries are permanently shifting. Understanding the patterns of these shifts (if they exist at all) is extremely difficult not only for a neophyte, but also for a guru in the world of science. During the “drift” (R. Barthes) of watersheds, special zones are formed – “anomalies”, at least in the well-known metaphor by T. Kuhn. Within new zonal boundaries, specific problems are posing / inventing and solving that are not translated into the dialects of other scientific fields. More precisely, in the process of translation, the meaning can either be sifted or changed beyond recognition. It turns out, for example, that the problem is “far-fetched” and “it has always been this way”. “Presentism” (the concept by I.V. Bestuzhev-Lada), a view of the future as an ever-continuing present, with some “cosmetic”, unimportant modifications, is based on similar principles. These propositions, of course, are extremely convenient for closing the curtain of the window of a stopped train and imagining that it is still moving.

Human beings have historically always been the focus of concept creation. The increase in statements about them can hardly be fixed by any progression. However, persistently repeating sounds made their way through the discursive noise: a person is a unique phenomenon, spontaneously standing out from the world's hum. This uniqueness was constituted by many features that caused endless debate among schools and trends, but few argued with the uniqueness itself. Already in ancient times, philosophical (formerly mythological) discourse permanently supported the special status of a person. According to Diogenes Laërtius, Thales was grateful to fate that he was a man and not an animal (Diogenes, 2018, p. 65). Even in historical jokes, a person looks at the stars, even though he falls into a well. When, in the presence of Aristippus, someone boasted that he could drink a lot and not get drunk, the philosopher noticed that a mule could do the same (Diogenes, 2018, p. 115). The distance persistently emphasized by the ancients was justified by thinking, the more curious is the anecdote of Plato retold by Diogenes. Defining man as an animal and reducing his uniqueness to two physiological characteristics could lead to the elimination of anthropological pathos. Such a “definition” could not help but provoke ancient Greek “trolling”, and the latter was not long in coming (Diogenes, 2018, p. 226).

No matter what era we turn to (within the boundaries of the so-called linear metapattern of history) a person invariably turns out to be a unique creature.



It seems unnecessary to prove this trivial thesis even in the case of “theocentric” discourses. Thus, according to Tertullian’s definition, God is the highest “magnitude, and strength, and power, and honor, and glory” (Tertullian, n. d.). In theocentric optics, a person seems to have become – let’s put it in the manner of R. Barthes – “smaller in stature”, but he / she alone is capable of defining the Absolute itself. Tertullian’s discourse, to which we appealed as an example of the functioning of the theocentric paradigm, combines hierarchy and order (the latter is determined by identical features of different significances). The apparent paradox “the human is compared with the divine” was resolved not by the titanic rhetoric of the New Age, but by the category of order, since kings are “gods” of other orders.

Actually, a person became both the center of the world and a “great miracle”¹. In the spirit of the progressivist ideologeme, we can say that history led to the fact that a unique being codified and conceptualized, finally, fragmented knowledge about its own uniqueness. This was surely done both within the boundaries of natural sciences and philosophical-metaphysical discourses. In the rhetoric of the Renaissance, appealing both to Antiquity and to Christianity, a person was not created “neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal” so that he / she him- / herself, “a free and glorious master, should mold himself into the image” he / she prefers². History has shown that person has not been able to define him- / herself using any particular thesaurus. Even during the time of ideological dominance of scientific knowledge in Europe (“Enlightenment”), he / she would have been declared an “anomalous” machine. This “anomaly” was constituted by imagination – an unexplored, mysterious property of the brain³.

No matter what paradigm a person is processed in, the output always turns out to be “unique”, “special”. Even in critically charged discourses, homo sapiens was special in its ugliness; let us recall, for instance, the integral figures of the “little” man. However, this swinging rope led from the monkey to the *Übermensch*. And if, in the optics of anthropocentrism, subsequently translated by posthumanism into the quasi-geological “Anthropocene”, peripheral entities could be grouped and classified with considerable arbitrariness, uniting, for example, under the marker “zoology”, then human uniqueness needed a special area corresponding to the status. It turns out that human nature is not reduced to either zoe or bios. According to R. Braidotti, the loss by anthropos the central place in the world calls into question the definition of bios, life as a human prerogative (Braidotti, 2016, p. 386). However, we must not forget that humans found themselves cramped within the conceptual boundaries of bios, which in a sense led to the emergence of a special field, anthropology. In practice the result was not one, but many anthropologies – philosophical, biological, biomedical, cultural, linguistic, comparative, structural, etc. Moreover, “etc.” in this case, is not an excessive turnover; it expresses an indefinite number of contemporary trends that are little known

1 This refers to the famous work by G. Pico della Mirandola “Oration on the Dignity of Man”

2 Ibid

3 See J. de La Mettrie, “Machine Man”.



to Russian humanities scholars. In particular, environmental anthropology, already traditional in the West, studies the impact of the “Anthropocene” on the biosphere, atmosphere, lithosphere and terrestrial geomorphology, and also outlines the path for introducing new terms into the thesaurus (De Lima & De Lima, 2023). Among the criticized terminological innovations, we can mention the so-called “sensing” anthropology, focusing on the specifics of production, absorption, distribution of visual and auditory cultural trends. The focus of sensory anthropology is a person in the modality of a listener or viewer (Omran, 2023). Even in the traditional anthropology of Malinovsky / Taylor / Lévi-Strauss, with its characteristic serious field research, some researchers began to distinguish peculiar “fiefs” of the “salvage anthropology” type (Cassanello, 2023).

Anthropology in contemporary realities

In the situation of a growing number of anthropologies, the emergence of corresponding directions responding to technology is quite natural. Visual, media, multimodal anthropology, focusing on social networks, digital mapping, video games, soundscapes, graphic novels, artificial intelligence technologies and other things for the sake of understanding the current human situation, in a sense, could not help but appear on the “market” of concepts (Nesvaderani, 2023). All of them in their own way made and are making a certain contribution to “human geography” (Eggan, 1937). With the emergence of new anthropologies, the circumstances of human mapping, of course, change significantly, as if following the instructions of C. Lévi-Strauss. Comparative and structural anthropology predominantly involved contact between “civilized” researchers and representatives of other cultures. However, C. Lévi-Strauss saw the possibility of a “call” for anthropologists to study “home” culture. At the same time, the preservation of research distance – the scientist positioned distance as an attribute of scientific practice, – is due to the locality of the phenomenon or the fact that the phenomenon is rooted in the “depths of ruthless life” (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 338). In the focus of structural anthropology – variations of classical “distant” theory and practice, – media and specifically digital anthropology have, like as, for instance, futurology, a debatable status. Distance is in question: how is it possible to study digital technologies, social networks, Internet culture, digital content, down to micro formats (short stories, comments, memes, gif files, tags, etc.)? The formulation of the question is due to the fact that the researcher him- / her-self is largely immersed in the digital environment and is unlikely to be able to adequately delineate subject boundaries. However, distancing itself already implicitly contains a problem: by moving away, the researcher ceases to see the details. There is a known risk that the output will be a blurry picture. Both strategies, both maintaining distance and rapprochement, thus have obvious costs.

To a first approximation, the definition of digital anthropology is already problematic. One thing can be said with certainty: historically early definitions are not



enough for us. Digital anthropology of the recent past focused on the “exotic” other, that is, it used an ethnographic thesaurus. The progressiveness of the new anthropology is due to the use of digital information and communication technologies. The latter made it possible to digitize large volumes of data or create author databases, experiment with methods of presentation and distribution of materials (Cohen & Salazar, 2005). Over the course of two decades, within the boundaries of digital anthropology, which deals with the “exotic” other, there has been a complication of the thesaurus; in particular, “online anthropology”, “cyberanthropology”, “anthropology 2.0” have emerged, studying the impact and consequences of the spread of the Internet in traditional environments and ways (Aouragh, 2018). Despite the natural preservation of the ethnographic background, some statements in the article by M. Aouragh indicate the possibility of expanding the subject area of digital anthropology: firstly, social life is spreading in online arenas, that is, the circumstances and nature of communication are changing, and secondly, technologies are redefining human “habits” (by extension – way of life), thirdly, a person expresses him- / her-self through the Internet. Summarizing these currently generally accepted theses, M. Aouragh came to the conclusion that ignoring digital technologies, information and communication networks excludes an adequate understanding of a person and society.

The indicated position takes anthropology to another level, changing the subject markings and redefining its status as a field of knowledge. The subject is constituted not only by knowledge about other/alien/exotic cultures, but also about the changing environment in which the researcher him- / her-self is immersed. In “online arenas”, as M. Aouragh puts it, new formats of social interactions are unfolding, from collaborations to rivalry and outright hostility. Abroad and in Russia, a critical analysis of the transformation of the social structure, politics armed with digital technologies, collective memory, etc. is being formed. Philosophical books are popularized (and this is significant), focusing on personal development, values, freedom and other anthropologies. One recent example is Eric Saden’s book “The Tyranny of the Self,” in which the author does not limit himself to lengthy critical statements on the topic of digital culture, but generalizes data from the analysis of social networks, referring to cases of Twitter, Instagram, etc. (Saden, 2023). In the subject field of digital anthropology, sociological research, engineering and technical knowledge, linguistic and semiotic scientific research, philosophical conceptualization and thesaurus of social sciences and humanities actually interact. This circumstance correlates with the logic and trends of the so-called “post-non-classical” science (V.S. Stepin), dealing with self-developing systems, phase transitions, entropy, permanent dynamics, fluctuations and difficulties of forecasting, multifactoriality, etc.

Another significant aspect is related to the innovation of human-machine assembly variations. With the domestication of the computer, issues related to the conceptualization and assessment of human-machine interaction of the new



technological generation has become more acute. In the West, a general label “Human-computer interaction” (HCI) has already arisen in 1990s (Sharples, 1996). As Mike Sharples noted, the fact that computers have penetrated homes and businesses makes cognitive, social, organizational, economic, and other factors important. Among these factors, the researcher named psychological (Sharples, 1996, pp. 7–8), without focusing enough attention on it. One of the author’s interesting theses was that the machine embodies familiar mental models – in particular, the model of an everyday interior, signified by the metaphor of a desktop. At the dawn of the domestication of the computer, the primary codification of the methods and factors of interaction between human and machine was of great importance. However, nowadays, uncritical reproduction of such conceptual markings does not seem sufficient to understand the full spectrum of interactions (assuming that we are able to cover this spectrum at all). Interaction with a machine today, like decades ago, is not limited to manipulations with hardware and, moreover, to interaction with software or tools. We are talking about interaction with architecture and interiors produced by software and the net.

Web 2.0 architecture is largely driven by social networks and hosting. According to the definition of Nicolae Sfetcu, the second-generation web has evolved towards “simplicity” and interactivity, but not only at the software and hardware level (Sfetcu, n. d.). Behind the concept of Dale Dougherty and Tim O’Reilly lay a complex architecture for which, with some limitations, only the basic terms of synergetic would fit. In the context of the new interior, a person received new opportunities and roles: author, commentator, critic, copywriter, rewriter, plagiarist. It is clear that the overwhelming number of designated statuses have analogues outside the web space. Skeptics generally tend to see network technologies as a continuation of the past in accordance with the formula “it has already happened”. Behind the technical capabilities of web 2.0, such as content distribution or messaging protocols, there is hybridization of “online” and “offline”, already familiar to digital native, anonymization of presence (at least illusory (Trufanova, 2021)) and profiling (including fake), that is, the production and distribution of anthropoprojections. It’s not just a matter of distribution of attention or diffraction of location, as E. Trufanova wrote about in particular (Trufanova, 2021, p. 372). Web 2.0 architecture does allow multiple browser pages to be activated at the same time, without this ability it is difficult to imagine appropriate interaction. The fact is that human profiling and the practice of producing profiles (which, in principle, is semantically inconsistent with traditional technological interiors before the web), the emergence of “everyday digital traces” (Armstrong et al., 2023) cannot be unambiguously assessed: on the one hand, in the categories of individualism, these are phenomena of the “self” order, on the other, the independent, autonomous existence of the “digital self”. In the latter case, it is not determined by a specific referent, but is distributed among agents and functions, including algorithms. As one research team notes, “black box algorithms” transform digital “footprints”, generating special – usually advertising, – content based on thoseprints (Parkes



et al., 2023). In traditional categories and the web space, alienation practices are also known. However, one should not assume that there is nothing new in the content of these practices. Any optional action and any activation of a web browser, the very fact of connection, turn fragments of a person's life into data. Actually, "datification", serving "communicative capitalism" (Renata Couto de Azevedo de Oliveira) and data capitalism, brings to life a kind of quasi-formation – "dataism" (Oliveira, 2022). No traditional socio-political data collection machines (primarily the population census) reached "dataistic" proportions. A person in the context of datification and, more broadly, the Internetization of all social spheres can no longer be marked exclusively by the category of subject. The "subject" turns into an ideal retreating under the onslaught of algorithms and data of the traditional anthropocentric world.

In the context of the domestication of the Internet and datification as a current technological process influencing the socio-economic and political structures, digital anthropology is an interdisciplinary field of scientific research that captures the problematic nature and special position of a person in the context of current technologies operating with encoding (ICT, software, Internet, Big Data). The focus of digital anthropology is the actual dyad of people – digital technologies, as well as anthropomorphic, anthropogenic and technogenic phenomena in their connections and interactions. In particular, "profiles", "accounts", "digital traces", algorithms for generating and distributing content. Non-traditional formats can be genetically reduced to the anthropological world, but they do not depend on the will of the specific subject who "gave birth" to them, that is, in a certain sense, they are autonomous.

(Post) anthropology of the new world

In the book "Posthuman" R. Braidotti formulates the conceptual points of her post-anthropological program. Arranging the material in the logic of postfeminist research, she focuses the reader's attention on the dynamics of transformation of the "Vitruvian ideal". Starting from the classic drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, who depicted the human (male) body in ideal proportions, she uses a "Vitruvian" frame in the depiction of women and animals.

As an accurate symbol of humanism, the "Vitruvian Man" appears at the end of the 15th century, during the transition of a person from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and Modern times. God "leaves" the social and political stage; its place is taken by a person with the so-called "perfect proportions". Titans from art and science formulate the Enlightenment ideal in the worldview of the man of the new era; the ideal is realized in the focus on non-stop self-improvement of a person, the affirmation of his subjectivity. Humanists form educational programs for everyone (more precisely for every man). Since these programs, as a rule, were formulated in Europe and recorded in European languages, Europe itself ceases only to be a place on a geographical map or an agent on a geopolitical map,



it becomes the center of the Enlightenment, dictating the ideal of subjectivity to the whole world, norms of equality, no alternative recognition of human rights and freedoms.

Already on the first pages of the famous “The Second Sex”, referring to her colleagues at the school, S. de Beauvoir formulated the problem: the existentialist philosopher talks about “human”, but behind this “human” there is always a man and never a woman (Beauvoir et al., 2011). After the Second World War, when a woman proved by her example that she could simultaneously care for a family and engage in professional activities, she gradually asserted her agency by gaining the voice in social arenas. This is the pathos of S. de Beauvoir’s book; in the history of the development of civilizations, a woman from nothing wins back her rights to voice, choice, and self-determination. Hence the first variation of the “Vitruvian Man” in the context of an already antihumanistic logic, “New Vitruvian Woman”, the key to understanding which is not the ideal proportions of the body (as the desired ideal), but the logic of bodily organization that turns out to be close (similar) to everyone (Braidotti, 2013, p. 53). Therefore, “Vitruvian Woman” turns into a symbol of the so-called sisterhood (“the principal of political sisterhood”), defending her place in social and political arenas.

According to R. Braidotti, antihumanistic logic is developing and acquiring posthumanistic features. “The posthumanism in the sense of post-anthropocentrism displaces the dialectical scheme of opposition, replacing well-established dualisms with the recognition of deep zoe-egalitarianism between humans and animals. The vitality of their bond is based on sharing this planet, territory or environment in terms that are no longer so clearly hierarchical, nor self-evident. This vital interconnection posits the qualitative shift of the relationship away from speciesism and towards an ethical appreciation of what bodies (human, animal, others) can do. Ethics, based on Spinoza’s concept, acts as the main point of reference for changing human-animal interactions. It traces a new political frame, which I see as an affirmative project in response to the commodification of Life in all its forms, that is the opportunistic logic of advanced capitalism” (Braidotti, 2013, pp. 139–141).

Initially in social arenas, and then in the field of research practices, the so-called zoe-egalitarian turn has been formed, returning a person to the awareness and recognition of the living other in relation to his / her (human) nature. Along with a woman, a dog (“Leonardo da Vinci’s Dog” by S. Harris (Braidotti, 2013, p. 140) and a cat (“Vitruvian Cat” by M. Stievater (Braidotti, 2013, p. 141)) have appeared together with a woman in a series of “Vitruvian” drawings.

In digital anthropology, we as humans continue to talk about humans. But together with a person in the digital space, many “non-human” actants coexist (for example, a computer and a net), the understanding and acceptance of which is possible with the transition from anthropocentric to anthropomorphic logic.



The place of digital anthropology in the contemporary research field

In this part we turn to quantitative methodology, i.e., those numbers on request “Digital Anthropology”, which are uploaded in the “Mendeley” library¹. In November 2023, the total number of search results was 2,972 articles and other publications. Moreover, for the first time the combination “Digital Anthropology” appeared in scientific articles (more precisely in the title, abstract or keywords of the indexed publication) in 2014, the total number of publications for this year was 113. The largest number of publications with “Digital Anthropology” was published in 2019 (338). In turn, in 2023, as of November, 145 publications were published and indexed.

The distribution of articles by journals is as follows: “Molecules” (80); “Current Anthropology” (50); Forensic Science International (42); “American Journal of Physical Anthropology” (36); “American Anthropologist” (31). According to this data, most of the publications with the “Digital Anthropology” marker are presented on the pages of English-language journals. In most cases, anthropological topics are already stated in the titles of journals. In some cases (such as “Molecules”) the subject matter goes beyond the anthropological framework. We believe this is due to the introduction of digital phenomena (for example, digital twins) in medicine and natural sciences.

Among the most cited publications is the encyclopedic article by D. Miller with the same title “Digital Anthropology” (Miller, 2018). The English anthropologist D. Miller is, by and large, the author of the concept of digital anthropology, which in his own discourse has evolved from the search for new means and ways of conducting anthropological and ethnographic research in a digitalizing reality to an independent discipline. In the stated article, he seeks a balance between the anthropological and the digital, when in digital studies it becomes productive to turn to anthropological methodology and ultimately pose the question of what it means to be human in the digital world.

The digital makes significant adjustments to the material world of a person and society. They are most clearly presented in the example of the transformation of labor practices: as a result of digital revolutions, “old” professions (telephone operators, typists) are leaving the labor market, and new ones are being formed (SMM, SEO, e-sportsman); the speed of information transmission increases significantly; normativity in labor relations is being transformed. Along with changes in the social, digital is adjusting financial practices; new currencies are emerging that are not tied to the state (Bitcoin), as well as fundamentally new banking systems that are capturing economically developing markets (M-Pesa in Kenya). Among other things, the digital provokes the creation of new social groups, for instance, the already mentioned hackers, as well as skimmers, research on whose is possible using the methodological apparatus of anthropology.

1 <https://www.mendeley.com>



Conducting digital research through the prism of anthropological methodology allows us to form the so-called a holistic view of digital phenomena and the transformations it generates, through the presentation of these phenomena in the unity of the oppositions inherent in them. Moreover, within the framework of anthropological research, observations are organized not for a narrow group of respondents (as in-depth research is carried out in sociology or psychology), but for large social groups, including the so-called technological “margins” or “newcomers”, Africa, South Asia, Latin America. And yet, no matter how broad the questioning base of anthropology may be and no matter how it expands the possibilities in the study of the digital, the key anthropological question continues to revolve around a person and understanding the essence of what anthropology itself is becoming as an “old” discipline of the “new” world.

The methodological issues of the discipline are continued by an anthropologist from Brazil, L. Cesarino (Cesarino, 2021). The focus of her attention is platformization, or rather its anti-structural and at the same time systemic effects. Using the example of platformization, L. Cesarino develops the thesis that anthropology in general and digital anthropology in particular are not identical to ethnography due to their potency in working with elements from different structures. H. Geismar and H. Knox, in turn, in their textbook on digital anthropology offer the academic audience a panorama of digital phenomena (from social media to virtual worlds, hacking, blockchain and digital environmentalism) in the context of understanding how the anthropological and digital can be studied in intersectional settings (Geismar & Knox, 2021). And again, in our work we are faced with an appeal to ethnographic methodology, here as an option for exposing myths about the digital age, but revealing its consequences in the everyday life of people around the world. Finally, a researcher from Australia, S. Pink, in her publications demonstrates some dynamics of interest in digital anthropology. In the 2010s she operated with a “digital-visual-sensory” approach, within which she had been seeking to discover the area of intersection between design and anthropology (Pink, 2014). In the 2020s her attention unfolds in the context of the current phenomenon, COVID-19, and she sees the potential of digital anthropology, together with social work specialists, in the definition and implication of new ways of practicing the so-called “digital social work” (Parkes et al., 2023).

In parallel with the development of the discipline of digital anthropology in English-language discourses, it is gradually being introduced into domestic research practices. For example, S.V. Tikhonova and S.M. Frolova, the authors of one of the most cited articles on the topic in Russian, posed the problem through the prism of the transformation of anthropological and social in the context of the digital (Tikhonova & Frolova, 2019). Building the optics of understanding and conceptualizing these transformations, in their opinion, can be associated with the construction of a methodological platform that accumulates the potential of social philosophy and digital anthropology.



We are also in search of the methodological foundations of digital anthropology. However, unlike colleagues from other countries, in our research project we are shifting attention from classical anthropology and ethnography to philosophy, which includes the problems of flat ontologies and postfeminist research, philosophical anthropology and new anthropological projects, including posthumanism.

Acknowledgments

The research was supported by Russian Science Foundation “Conducting fundamental scientific research and exploratory scientific research by individual scientific groups” (regional competition) 22-18-20011 “Digital literacy: interdisciplinary research (regional aspect)”.

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