

**PERAET 2021****International Scientific Conference «PERISHABLE AND ETERNAL: Mythologies and Social Technologies of Digital Civilization-2021»****VIRTUALIZATION AND DIGITALIZATION OF SOCIETY AS  
FACTORS OF SOCIOCULTURAL ACCELERATION**

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**Abstract**

Different versions of the causes of acceleration are put forward, coefficients are calculated, but the very fact of acceleration of sociocultural dynamics is not disputed by anyone today. The purpose of the research underlying the article was to isolate acceleration factors (virtualization and digitalization processes). The phenomenon of time, being an integral part of the picture of the world, in modern times has complicated its organization and dynamic features. Social time has been significantly transformed under the influence of economic changes, technological progress, virtualization of life, informatization of society, the spread of the value of success, youth and longevity and other factors. The philosophical analysis of the time of culture is invariably associated with the dualism of social forms (objective social formations) and the unique life of the individual (motives, sensations, thinking and mental states of the subject). Modernity has formed a fundamentally new relationship between socio-cultural macro- and microdynamics: the boundaries of individual life contain a number of events of a worldwide scale. In connection with the listed transformation processes, the article provides an analytical review of the author's socio-philosophical concepts of paradoxes of acceleration, inversion and deceleration of social time in modern times. The logic of the article is to separate the description of the sociocultural prerequisites of acceleration and its social effects.

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*Keywords:* Digitalization, socio-cultural acceleration, virtualization



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## **1. Introduction**

Over the past decades, the problem of the acceleration of historical time and "singularity" has equally attracted the attention of both historians and physicists and mathematicians. Different versions of the causes of acceleration are put forward, astronomical coefficients are calculated, but the very fact of the acceleration of sociocultural dynamics is not disputed by anyone today.

The phenomenon of time, being an integral part of the picture of the world, in modern times has complicated its organization and dynamic features. Social time has been significantly transformed under the influence of economic changes, technological progress, virtualization of life, informatization of society, the spread of the value of success, youth and longevity and other factors. The philosophical analysis of the time of culture is invariably associated with the dualism of social forms (objective social formations) and the unique life of the individual (motives, sensations, thinking and mental states of the subject). Modernity has formed a fundamentally new relationship between socio-cultural macro- and microdynamics: the boundaries of individual life contain a number of events of a worldwide scale.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Most researchers reasonably portray the acceleration of modern culture, due to its digitization, as a threat to the spiritual integrity of a person. However, it is necessary to see both neutral and positive effects of the acceleration of postmodern culture.

## **3. Research Questions**

We answer the following research questions:

- What are the types of transformation of socio-cultural dynamics in the context of the expansion of the digital sphere and the spread of virtual reality?
- What are the social effects of accelerating sociocultural dynamics?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the analytical article was to isolate the factors and structure of the acceleration process. A comprehensive review of socio-philosophical concepts of acceleration and deceleration will allow us to systematize the disparate ideas of the transformation of temporality and the impact of these changes both on sociality and on the existence of our contemporary.

## **5. Research Methods**

Our concept (Volkova et al., 2020) is based on an analytical review of the author's socio-philosophical concepts of the paradoxes of acceleration, inversion and deceleration of social time in modern times. We operate both with well-known concepts ("dromology" by Paul Verillo; digital capitalism" by Judy Weissman, etc.), and confidently emerging trends in Western and Russian social philosophy (for example, "time inversion" by V. N. Yarskaya) (Saenko & Khrustova, 2014).

The logic of our research is to separate the description of the sociocultural prerequisites of acceleration and its social effects. Therefore, special attention is paid to philosophical doctrines, the genesis of which is associated with the applied goals of cultural restructuring. For example, "time management"; "slow movement", etc. Practical philosophy today seeks to acquire a training format, so the analysis of such teachings inevitably turns into the study of the very culture of accelerating and slowing down the rhythm of life.

In addition, the article conducts an extramural polemic with the authors of the hypotheses of the acceleration of social time, fragmentary or aspect-wise outlined in scientific publications of the last two decades (Afanasov N. V., Filina I. A., etc.).

## 6. Findings

Social dynamics are paradoxical in nature and essence (see more on this in Gurvitch, 1964). Being a supernatural phenomenon, a product of human and social activity, differing from natural cycles, the time of culture itself influences the behavioral forms in culture. Social time, just like natural time, has a tangible effect on a person. Thus, those who do not make constant attempts to control it are under pressure from the course of natural time and the acceleration of social time at the same time. The megatrend of modern culture is the process of global digitalization (Gorlova et al., 2020). Many cultural sociologists note the genetic link between digitalization and acceleration:

*Digital technologies, the intensification of capitalist production, and the diffusion of work and personal space characterize the world of modern man. Digital technologies, literally becoming a part of a person, can completely fill their off-hours. As a result, humanity is faced with an acceleration of the rhythm of life, which generates a permanent feeling of fatigue and lack of time for important things. (Afanasov, 2020, p. 57)*

Calling total digitalization a social challenge, Koneva and Lisenkova (2019) note the impact of digitalization on the intensity of life:

*In conditions of constant turbulence, it becomes impossible to learn once and for all, it is necessary to constantly increase knowledge, be able to find non-standard solutions, be constantly prepared for risks and make instant decisions in a multitasking environment. The nonlinearity of thinking and perception of time (the future in the past, the past in the future) become the key personality traits... (p. 20)*

Rapid technological progress and the development of social networks create a race in which all inhabitants of the civilized part of the world are forced to take part. The motive for quick communication in most cases is the fear of being overboard, that is, becoming an outsider in your environment; to be misunderstood in him, or ridiculed for slowness. This also determines the extension of communication, education, creativity, which is inevitably associated with their simulation. Although many researchers present the vector of communication between social networks and socio-cultural acceleration in the opposite direction: "Being in permanent stress from the accelerating and unknown life of the constantly

modernizing world, a person is looking for a fulcrum and a comfortable place for “their own”, finding them in the space of virtual networks...” (Koneva & Lisenkova, 2019, p. 22).

The acceleration phenomenon implies an increased frequency of virtual contacts and, as a result, a reduced quality of cultural events. It is important to see what influence this phenomenon has on the relationship between the subjects of culture and on the spiritual appearance of the individual.

We consider the acceleration of social dynamics to be the central characteristic of the existence of modern culture. In 1903, Georg Simmel conducted a forward-looking analysis of the ambiguous consequences of an accelerating pace of life in large cities, pointing to an increase in nervous life; intelligence orientation; monetary economy; a satiated economy; isolation, the struggle for individuality (Simmel, 2002). At the same time, G. Simmel noted the spontaneous acceleration relationship with its consequences, the main of which is the anthropological one - the transformation of a modern person into a neurotic, burdened with fears of not being on time, the haste and accumulated plans that remain unfulfilled.

Considering the high degree of technicalism in life as the main reason for the acceleration, Judy Weissman defines the main theme of the book *Pressed for time: the acceleration of life in digital capitalism* as “... the study of the joint evolution of new technology and temporal rhythms, that is, how they shape each other” (Weissman, 2019, p. 15).

The multi-layered sociocultural context of the change in the significance of speed is described by the researcher Filina (2007): Over the past 100 years, humanity has multiplied: 1) the speed of movement of people, movement of goods, money, services; 2) speed of communication; 3) the speed of obtaining information, results, forecasts; 4) the speed of learning and many others – the speed of life (p. 17). Now this list has been added to the rate of social growth of the individual, which arose under the influence of the wide spread of the value of success.

Individual internal and external social time does not coincide. Internal time is associated with memory mechanisms, both individual and collective. Thus, Yarskaya (2011) writes:

*Memory is directly subject to time. The memory policy influences the time formats of social changes: the traditional shortening of the working day, the increase in free time expands the possibility of traveling in time and space of culture, reading, tourism, visiting sites, theater, cinema, museums. Social and political groups are constantly competing for the time model they need. (p. 12)*

Thus, social time, overflowing with the opportunities provided to a person, should contribute to the stretching of internal time, but experience shows the opposite – it is compressed. On the one hand, a person receives clear signals from society about acceleration. Numerous images of success – biopics, blogs of successful personalities of our time with multicolored visual accompaniment – signal: "Make it in time, don't be late, buy, consume, intensify, faster!". On the other hand, culture also transmits meanings latently, creating an entire industry of ideology of immortality and the high value of longevity. As a result of the collision of the indicated tendencies, our contemporary rhythmically changes the trajectory: now they "run away" from time, then "catch up" with it.

The creator of the direction "dromology" (theory of speed), Virillo (2004), very accurately defines speed as a representation of the work of a socio-political machine with destructive power. The French philosopher declares the radical disappearance of time and space in modern times. They are displaced and replaced by speed. According to Virillo (2004), speed is not an indicator of the speed of movement in space, but the relationship between phenomena. Virillo (2004) notes that speed acts like a drug and requires its further increase. Speed machines are radically changing the way we perceive. They change spatial and temporal elements, transforming them into new phenomena. Speed allows one not only to move more easily, but also to see, hear, perceive the world around you more intensively.

However, positive assessments of the acceleration of life are based only on the implied background of the built-up past. On the one hand, the mass stereotype that "time used to go slower" contains connotations of regret about the lost regularity of existence and criticism of the modern race. On the other hand, the social myth "speed is a high value of modern culture and a prerequisite for the success of an individual" abolishes nostalgia.

According to our observations, the attitude to acceleration as a source of danger and destruction is more stable, therefore, it is necessary to separately note the variety of ways to resist social acceleration: from "slow movement" to information ecology. People who refuse to race are increasingly shaping the mood of the masses today. The so-called "outsiders" and "downshifters" spread ideas about the benefits of passivity and slowness.

Security strategies in the context of the destructive threat of sociocultural acceleration:

1. "Slow movement" is the culture of slowing down the rhythm of life. The Slow movement philosophy should be understood as the formation of cultural security strategies. Currently, "Slow movement" is gaining great popularity and has already more than twenty directions: Slow city, Slow aging, Slow art, Slow church, Slow parenting, Slow education, Slow mentoring, Slow science, Slow programming, Slow food, Slow things, Slow fashion, Slow TV (slow media), Slow money, Slow startup, Slow gardening, Slow travel, Slow photography, Slow reading. Everyday life is most susceptible to the accelerating dynamics of the introduction of technological innovations (food, household appliances, communication, etc.), therefore, the culture of slowing down begins with these areas.

2. Time management is based on the ability to plan, organize, prioritize, manage time, and not obey its run. The technology of organizing time and increasing the efficiency of its use, developed in the 20th century by A.K. Gastev, then P.M. Kerzhentsev, is very popular today. In this regard, as well as with high technologies that free a person from routine and heavy physical labor, the question remains as to why an individual "does not have enough time anyway". Let us pay attention to the fact that the main role in the victory of information and technical chronophages over the time management system is played by a deep change in the existence of an individual who exists simultaneously in two realities or who has completely moved into virtual space. Culturologists predict the birth of forms of virtualization in the religious space (Khlyshcheva et al., 2020), the impact of digitalization of education on the structure of collective historical memory (Fyodorova & Romanova, 2020), the introduction of new, digital technologies into the everyday life of society and individuals (Malkov, 2021), replacing the traditional form of lecture in university education with dehumanized techniques (Shatunova, 2015). Let us offer an illustration of the victory of "self-dispersion over self-organization". The authors of the article watched

in discouragement and sadness as users of one of the social networks posted birthday greetings and wishes for health in the feed of their former university teacher, who died about two years ago.

3. Information ecology. Petrova (2020) writes that the expansion of the digital environment leads to global transformations:

*...transformations (often negative) occur in various fields: emotional and behavioral (changes in needs and motivation, impaired empathy and attachment), cognitive (clip thinking, weakening of the synthesizing capabilities of the mind). These transformations entail changes in the human mind, in the ways of his self-identification, in his worldview and culture. (p. 89)*

The researcher defines information ecology as a kind of culture of interaction with the digital environment and connects it with procedures for slowing down social life.

In the space of information ecology, the skill of conscious consumption in the context of “dirty digital” – dirty digital visuality becomes necessary (Stepanov, 2019, p. 126).

## 7. Conclusion

Sociocultural acceleration, therefore, is immanently associated with the development of technology, virtualization of communication, digitalization of all spheres of culture, the spread of the value of success, youth and longevity. These connections are contradictory in nature. The intermediate result of the analysis of these contradictions in the future should be the "lexicon of the scientific metaphor of the acceleration of culture", which will reveal the universals and features of philosophical reasoning about acceleration.

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