UDC 529

# CHARACTERISTICS OF VIRTUAL CULTURE ON EXAMPLE OF COMPUTER SIMULATION «SECOND LIFE»

Schuh T. , Cherny S.A.

*Hochrhein- Bildungs- und Beratungszentrum in Waldshut, Leiterin*
*Perm State Technical University, head of economics department*
*Tel. 0049 – (0) – 7751 – 898070*
*Tel. 007 – (8) – 912-7893310*

The article covers the characteristics of the virtual culture on example of computer simulation «Second Life», pointing at the changing human role in the global cultural space.

**Key words: virtual world, computer simulation, culture**

Basing on the various facts about virtual reality (VR), it can be interpreted as a way of existence, which combines, in a unique way, real and ideal elements. In the surrounding objective world, the VR appears in form of high-technological devices and things, which are, to some extent, abstract for people; their properties cannot be really and completely understood and are only potentially definable. So, this idealization is virtual, being at the same time an integral part of the objective world, which in its turn reflects in the virtual one. What is especially important, is that only based on objective things is the virtual reality viable. In other words, only a virtual world that includes the elements of a real life, is stable and sustainable. The VR is a fascinating phenomenon – a unique structure that embodies signs of real objective world and the world of information, idealizations, aspirations and fantasies.

The best example for a virtual world is the space of computer simulation. In our case, it is Second Life – the simulation with the following specific characteristics, which are adequately **the characteristics of the culture** of this virtual world:

• Possibility to create an original image and its virtual environment. Moreover, free choice of form provide the culture of Second Life with a pronounced **personalized** character. The user is involved in the human-computer interaction, getting a unique chance of a direct body representation in the virtual world, which determines the **sensitive** character of the culture here. Using his organs of senses and kind of extending them into the space of the computer simulation, the person acquires a new form of the sensory perception of the world. There appear new body practices and a new interpretation of the cultural and philosophic perception of a human body. Projection of human organs of senses leads to formation of a new instrument and object of study, the so called **body-interface,** existing in Second Life in the form of an Avatar.

• **The status of man**, as well as the status of the technical component, **is being changed** in the whole providing system of the computer simulation. Within the framework of the computer simulation, people get a possibility not only to take part in creation of a special world, but also to participate in this world as a character, i.e. **an individual becomes a system at-**

**tribute**. Thus, we refer here again to the *functional changing* of the role of an individual in the culture.

• The so called **hypostasis effect**, when multiple transfer и replication of images of real life erases the border between the objective world and the simulation, enables the **virtual existence of a person.** This possibility stresses the *existential change* of location and role of a subject in the culture.

The above mentioned characteristics are the distinctive *features of the virtual culture of the computer simulation*.

Second Life is one of the most famous and fast developing projects in this field. About 15,5 million of people have visited the world or resident there. Currently, computer simulations are booming. Not only private users, but a great number of companies, including some of the world giants such as IBM, Sony BMG, Dell, Adidas, Toyota, Reuters, Nissan and MTV, represent themselves in the virtual space and take part in creation of virtual worlds. Current expansion of virtual activities, which triggered the changes in all spheres of the social life of people, and first of all, in the culture, has been caused by the following reasons:

• *Firstly*: the quality of the information transmission technologies has rapidly changed recently. Increasingly often are used the methods of speed digital broadband transmission of information (DSL), which enable fast and qualitative real-time communication.

• *Secondly:* computer graphics development, in particular 3-dimensional technologies have reached a high level, which brings the computer simulation nearer to reality, almost with a photographic precision.

• *Thirdly*: existence of the virtual worlds, including the synthetic world Second Life, meets the needs of a relatively large social group of people, who along with the game adventure, are looking for some moral values, creation of some image and reputation. A trivial goal to purchase and sell land with the purpose of building capital under conditions of market risk, becomes for many people some kind of attraction. A wish to reach material well-being and thus receive moral recognition and a famous social status, are the driving forces and the source of interest for many users of Second Life.

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