

CYBERSPACE SERVES CULTURE: EXPERIENCES FROM IRAN DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

*Original*

CYBERSPACE SERVES CULTURE: EXPERIENCES FROM IRAN DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS / Aliakbari, Farzaneh. - ADAPTIVE CITIES THROUGH THE POST PANDEMIC LENS. Ripensare tempi e sfide della città flessibile nella storia urbana. Times and Challenges in Urban History:(2023), pp. 993-994. ( ADAPTIVE CITIES THROUGH THE POST PANDEMIC LENS. Ripensare tempi e sfide della città flessibile nella storia urbana. Times and Challenges in Urban History Torino ).

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2987643 since: 2024-04-11T12:23:13Z

*Publisher:*

AISU International

*Published*

DOI:

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# **ADAPTIVE CITIES THROUGH THE POST PANDEMIC LENS**

Ripensare tempi e sfide della città flessibile nella storia urbana  
*Times and Challenges in Urban History*

X Congresso AISU / 10th AISU Congress

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*Adaptive cities through the post pandemic lens. Ripensare tempi e sfide della città flessibile nella storia urbana / Times and Challenges in Urban History. Proceedings*

a cura di / edited by Rosa Tamborrino, Cristina Cuneo, Andrea Longhi

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Prima edizione / First edition: Torino 2023

ISBN 978-88-31277-03-7

AISU international

c/o DIST (Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio)

Politecnico di Torino, Viale Pier Andrea Mattioli n. 39, 10125 Turin

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1

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a cura di

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X Congresso AISU / 10th AISU Congress

Politecnico di Torino

6-10 settembre 2022

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## **CYBERSPACE SERVES CULTURE: EXPERIENCES FROM IRAN DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

### **IL CYBERSPAZIO DISTRIBUISCE LA CULTURA: ESPERIENZE DALL'IRAN DURANTE LA CRISI DEL COVID-19**

*Il saggio discute innanzitutto l'avanzamento della cultura digitale durante il periodo di quarantena in un contesto non europeo, concentrando lo studio sull'Iran. In secondo luogo, i progetti digitali sono analizzati nel quadro analitico basato sui dati raccolti dalla Direzione Generale della Cultura Islamica della Provincia Di Teheran. Da ultimo, i risultati sono presentati e discussi con l'obiettivo di analizzare criticamente gli effetti della digitalizzazione sul patrimonio culturale dell'Iran.*

#### Parole chiave

Iniziative culturali digitali, VOSviewer software, e-cultura, social media, patrimonio culturale intangibile

#### Keywords

Digital cultural initiatives, VOSviewer software, e-culture, social media, intangible cultural heritage

During the last two years, we have witnessed incredible advancement in the growth of research on E-culture. Due to the advent of the COVID-19 outbreak, this advancement was not only limited to the Eurocentric environment, but also non-European countries like Iran have accelerated rapidly towards digitalization. This paper is the first attempt that presents a comprehensive review of Iranian digital cultural initiatives during the quarantine days. The study takes advantage of VOSviewer software to analyze the trend of digitalization in the country from a thematic and geographic perspective. The results reveal that there is a significant ascending trend in the number of launched digital cultural projects in Tehran province, starting from March 2020 to May 2020 (Quarantine days). Based on the analysis, the number of 64 digital projects with a socio-cultural scope were derived from the programs, and cultural activities of the General Directorate of Islamic Culture and Guidance of Tehran province (لک هرادا) (نارهت ناسا یمالسا داشرا و گنهرف) that accord with the development of digital capabilities in the country. A key finding was the dominance of research related to social media platforms as highlighted by the high number of digital cultural activities that have been launched through Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram. This has clear implications for the improvement of e-culture in the country and the development of this domain by recognition of its social, economic, and environmental values. Moreover,

most of the virtual festivals were related to the intangible cultural heritage of Iran like Nowruz (Persian new year). This has revealed the dominant role of cultural heritage in the progress of digitalization. These results enabled us to provide an initial framework of digital tendency in Iran that could potentially contribute to the aspect of e-culture promotion through developing new digital tools and formats.

Within this framework, this paper firstly discusses the advancement of e-culture during the quarantine period in a non-European context focusing on Iran as a case study. Secondly, the digital projects are analyzed within an analytic framework based on the data gathered from the General Directorate of Islamic Culture and Guidance of Tehran province. Lastly, the pros and cons results will be presented and discussed by aiming to critically analyze the effects of digitalization on the cultural heritage of Iran. In this study, the VOSviewer software is used to construct a term co-occurrence map based on the text data.