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DIGITAL DYSTOPIAS: LEGAL QUANDARIES OF INNOVATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RIGHTS IN THE METAVERSE

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of the emergence of metaverse-an immersive digital ecosystem in which basic legal categories of space, identity, and sovereignty are utterly restructured-this research article attempts a critical search for the legal voids and normative displacements. As corporations assume almost quasi-sovereign powers in these virtual domains, the outdated frameworks of law premised upon territoriality and physicality have turned rather inadequate. The research article discusses as to whether avatars have legal personhood or not, is virtual harm, acquired through digital sexual assault, identities-based harassment, or algorithmic discrimination, adjudicated when out of clear jurisdiction or not and who is the proprietor of digital assets in an NFT- or virtual real-estate-driven economy. The research article, drawing itself upon constitutional law, private international law, and theories of jurisprudence, calls for an imagining of justice in the digital space. It envisages digital constitutionalism as a participatory, rights-based governance model that cuts across nationalist divides and integrates due process, equality measures, and accountability into platform architectures. Taking the metaverse as both a legal question and an opportunity, it can spawn yet another transnational regulatory order aimed at protecting digital autonomy from corporate hegemony.

Keywords: *Metaverse, Digital ecosystem, Legal personhood, Digital constitutionalism, Algorithmic discrimination*

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master."

– Christian Lous Lange

Imagine waking up, putting on a headset, and entering a world in which cities are carved out of code, identities are fluid, and economies run on nothing but air, no coin ever in your wallet. Borders disappear, bodies are optional, and reality is whatever your algorithm dictates. This is no longer the premise of a sci-fi novel, it is the emerging story of the metaverse, a new and radical vision of human life in the era of digital immersion.

Born out of the pages of Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel Snow Crash, where avatars stalked virtual neon streets, the metaverse has grown up to become a realisable dream funded by some of the planet's most influential tech titans. Meta, Microsoft, and Google are not simply developing platforms, they're building alternative universes. These connected, immersive virtual worlds enable humans to socialize, work, play, and even buy property through avatars that frequently transcend age, race, gender, and place. Here, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), and blockchain come together not only to expand our lives online but transform them.

Technologists portray the metaverse as the third phase of the internet beyond static pages of Web 1.0, social interactivity of Web 2.0, to spatial internet of Web 3.0, in which experiences are not read or viewed but lived. These virtual environments are persistent (they go on without us), interactive (we mould them), and customizable (we recreate ourselves within them). They are designed not only to reflect reality but to stretch and stylize it, offering new canvases for human behaviour, creation, and control.[1]

But with this technology comes a cascade of unanswered questions. Who do the virtual worlds we occupy belong to? What legislation regulates worlds that exist beyond geographic boundaries? How do avatars navigate justice when classic rights do not apply? And more importantly, can the metaverse liberate us from inequalities on the ground or will it entrench them in the name of freedom?

1 Dr. Pradeep V., *The Metaverse: A Transformative Digital Frontier*, Vol 4 Issue 3 IJARSCT, 66-67 (2023).

Avatars of this virtual world resembles the corporations in the domain of persons. Like in the famous case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad* [2] where corporations were interpreted as persons in the 24th amendment in US. Similarly, moves the dice in the debate of artificial entities and rights they could hold.

2. The Digital Body and Identity: Justice in the Age of Avatars

In this evolving landscape of the Metaverse, the body no longer begins or ends with the skin or contact. It is self-created, simulated, and self-fashioned constructed through avatars that represent users in immersive digital environments. But these avatars are not created in a vacuum, they carry the burdens, privileges, and politics of gender, race, class, and ability, albeit in novel and sometimes covert forms. The idea that the Metaverse might offer a blank canvas for identity expression is attractive, but it is also misleading. Where I can create myself, be myself and portray myself the way I want it also open the pandura of frauds and victims to target. As virtual worlds become more entangled with real economies, social interactions, and legal consequences, questions of justice, representation, and digital identity demand urgent and interdisciplinary attention.

The design and customization of avatars often reflect dominant cultural standards particularly Western, cisgender, and able-bodied ideals. A 2021 study by Vasilia Kourtis and Janet, found that children's avatar preferences often mirrored existing stereotypes about race and gender, demonstrating early internalisation of societal norms even in virtual spaces. Platforms like Roblox, Fortnite, or Horizon Worlds may offer diverse skin tones and body shapes, but these are typically optional add-ons, not defaults. The default avatar often reinforces hegemonic standards, suggesting that certain identities remain "normal" while others are peripheral, even in digital space.

Virtual spaces are also ripe with discrimination and harassment that mirror real-world inequalities. For example, in 2021, Meta acknowledged that several users in its VR platform, Horizon Worlds, had reported incidents of groping and verbal abuse referred to as "virtual sexual assault," with tangible psychological impacts despite the lack of physical contact.[3] Women and LGBTQ+ users are disproportionately

2 *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, 118 U.S. 394 (1886)

3 John Danaher, *The Ethics of Virtual Sexual Assault* (draft chapter for forthcoming Oxford Handbook of Digital Ethics (Carissa Véliz ed., forthcoming)), https://philarchive.org/archive/DANTEO-27.

targeted in these digital spaces, reinforcing the need for both psychological support systems and legal accountability mechanisms within the Metaverse.

From a sociological lens, this reproduction of real-world power structures can be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus and symbolic capital. Just as physical spaces are socially structured and imbued with unequal access to symbolic resources (language, appearance, privilege), so too are virtual spaces structured by code, design choices, and moderation policies all of which reflect and reinforce the ideologies of their predominantly male-dominated developers.[4] The disinhibition effect, as per psychologist John Suler adds another layer to this issue. In anonymous environments, individuals often act out repressed biases without fear of social sanction, leading to increased incidences of hate speech and identity-based harassment.

Legal recognition of virtual identities raises further challenges. Can avatars be protected under anti-discrimination law? Should defamation, hate speech, or assault in the Metaverse be prosecuted similarly to their real-world counterparts? The right to anonymity especially important for political dissenters, minorities, and vulnerable users often collides with the demand for accountability, especially in cases of virtual harm. Courts around the world are beginning to grapple with these questions. In *Doe v. MySpace*[5], the court emphasised the limits of platform liability, but the case signalled early awareness of platform-mediated harms.

Our contemporary legal systems struggle with digital personas that think, speak, and act but lack flesh. The analogy deepens when we consider that avatars, like corporations, are simultaneously "persons" for some purposes (they can own property, enter contracts, suffer defamation) while remaining fundamentally artificial constructs. The crucial difference is that avatars carry the consciousness and dignity of their human operators, making their legal recognition not just a commercial necessity but a fundamental rights issue.[6]

Further, the digital body exists in a liminal zone between being a personal extension of self and a data-fied object governed by terms of service, algorithms, and

4 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), https://www.mit.edu/~allanmc/bourdieu1.pdf.

5 Doe v. MySpace, Inc., 474 F. Supp. 2d 843 (W.D. Tex. 2007), annotated in Internet Law -Communications Decency Act-Texas District Court Extends § 230 Immunity To Social Networking Sites, https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/doe_v_myspace.pdf.

6 EBSCO, '*Santa Clara County v Southern Pacific Railroad Co*', EBSCO Research Starters: Law, EBSCO, 2022, (last visited July 11, 2025).

monetisation practices. The avatar becomes not only a vehicle of self-expression but also a product to be commodified, surveyed, and policed. Michel Foucault's idea of the "panopticon" is particularly relevant here. In the Metaverse, surveillance is ambient and omnipresent; the user becomes both the observer and the observed, internalising codes of behaviour through the interface itself.[7] Yet, unlike real-world legal systems with established due process, platform governance remains largely arbitrary, opaque, and corporate.

The urgent need of comprehensive metaverse governance needs a brainstorm on multiple international policy discourse. The World Economic Forum's 2023 report on *Governing the Metaverse and Privacy and Safety* in it emphasizes that the current regulatory frameworks are fundamentally misaligned with the transnational nature of virtual environments, calling for an adaptive governance models that can evolve with technological advancement while maintaining democratic accountability.[8]

Therefore, ensuring justice in the age of avatars requires more than technical fixes or diversity features. It demands structural changes in legal frameworks that protect digital personhood, sociological insight into representation and power, psychological understanding of identity formation, and ethical reflection on the consequences of immersive environments. Only then can we hope to build virtual spaces that are not just entertaining, but equitable and safe.

3. Governance, Law, and Regulation in the Metaverse

The metaverse's borderless nature tests traditional ideas of jurisdiction. Legal systems based on territoriality in the past, but virtual environments function outside the confines of physical space. It then poses important questions: What country's laws govern activity in the metaverse? How are conflicts decided when actors are in separate jurisdictions?

Valente stresses the imperative for a reengineered legal system that is capable of responding to the specific nature of virtual worlds. He believes that current laws

7 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Alan Sheridan trans., 1977), https://monoskop.org/images/4/43/Foucault_Michel_Discipline_and_Punish_The_Birth_of_the_Prison_1977_1995.pdf.

8 *Privacy and Safety in the Metaverse*, World Econ. F. (July 11, 2025, 4:33 PM), https://www.weforum.org/publications/privacy-and-safety-in-the-metaverse

are not well-suited to deal with the challenges of the metaverse and calls for the creation of new regulatory strategies that take into account the decentralized, transnational nature of these virtual worlds.[9] Without government-wide regulation, private companies have taken great control of metaverse spaces. Such companies set the rules, implement policies, and regulate user interactions, essentially operating quasi-sovereigns. This power concentration has accountability, transparency, and protection of user rights questions.

The issues raised by corporate governance in the metaverse, considering that businesses tend to place business interests ahead of public good. The report emphasizes the need for coming up with regulatory frameworks that weigh innovation against the necessity of protecting users against potential misuses of power.[10]

The changing and dynamic character of the metaverse requires dynamic regulatory rules. Deloitte's report highlights the necessity of adaptable and responsive regulations based on technological innovation. The report recommends an interdisciplinary approach where regulators, industry, and other players come together to create standards that ensure innovation while safeguarding users.

Similarly, in the *OECD's Digital Economy Outlook* it is highlighted that how traditional jurisdictional boundaries have become obsolete in persistent virtual worlds, necessitating some new forms of international cooperation and regulatory harmonization throughout the nations.[11] In addition, the creation of global standards can promote interoperability and guarantee uniform user experiences on various platforms. These standards would solve problems of data privacy, security, and ethical issues, forming a basis for sustainable development of the metaverse.

4. Digital Property, Capitalism, and Inequality

As per the theory, Metaverse was meant to be a democratic playground with a space of limitless creation and connection, transcending real-world hierarchies.

9 Jesse Valente, *Governing the Metaverse,* 9 U. Cin. Intell. Prop. & Tech. L.J. 205 (2024), https://scholarship.law.uc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1056&context=ipclj

10 Deloitte, *Regulating the Metaverse* (2022), https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/consulting/us-regulating-the-metaverse.pdf

11 OECD Digital Economy Outlook 2024*, Embracing the Technology Frontier*. Paris: OECD Publishing, Volume 1, 2024, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-digital-economy-outlook_f0b5c251-en.html.

Yet, as it morphs into a bustling economy powered by NFTs, digital real estate, and cryptocurrency-based transactions, a different reality emerges from the pre fixed prediction we had. Much like the physical world, digital capitalism has brought with it asymmetries of ownership, labour, and access. The allure of a decentralised utopia is quickly giving way to digital enclosures governed by economic gatekeeping, speculative profiteering, and platform hegemony. For say, the rapid rise of NFTs (non-fungible tokens). Initially celebrated as a mechanism to empower artists by allowing direct monetisation of digital works, the NFT ecosystem has since become dominated by elite collectors and speculators. According to a 2021 Chainalysis report, just 9% of NFT traders account for over 80% of profits, indicating a high degree of wealth concentration.[12] Platforms like Decentraland and The Sandbox allow users to purchase "virtual land" using cryptocurrency often for the prices rivalling real estate in metropolitan cities. In 2022, a plot of land next to Snoop Dogg's virtual estate reportedly sold for $450,000.[13] But such high entry costs raise questions: Who truly owns the Metaverse? And who is being priced out of this future?

This asset-centric structure reflects what media theorist Jaron Lanier warned us of years ago by quoting, "*an internet that increasingly rewards those who control the infrastructure rather than those who generate content or value*".[14] In the Metaverse, land ownership and NFTs are not just about aesthetic self-expression or fandom; they are investments, backed by speculative capital and often inaccessible to the average user. The notion of digital property as empowerment ignores the deeper issue: access remains stratified, and exploitation still thrives.

In tandem with the growth of virtual economies is the emergence of "digital labour." From virtual event hosting and avatar styling to beta testing and content moderation, an invisible workforce sustains the illusion of seamless interactivity. Scholars like Trebor Scholz have described this phenomenon as "platform capitalism," where users unwittingly contribute value often without recognition, compensation, or rights.[15] Virtual reality also holds the concept of the present-day psyche. Virtual sexual assault and harassment produce what neurologists call "phantom pain" in

12 Chainalysis, *NFT Market Explained: Trends, Data, and Analysis* (2021), https://www.chainalysis.com/blog/nft-market-report-preview-2021/.

13 Andrea Day, *Investors Are Paying Millions for Virtual Land in the Metaverse*, CNBC (Jan. 12, 2022, 9:57 AM), https://www.cnbc.com/2022/01/12/investors-are-paying-millions-for-virtual-land-in-the-metaverse.html.

14 Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget* (Knopf 2010), https://mogami.neocities.org/files/gadget.pdf.

15 Trebor Scholz, *Uberworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy* (Polity Press 2016), http://pombo.free.fr/treborscholz.pdf.

which the very real suffering is experienced in a limb that no longer exists. The case of Mechanical Turks or in-game gig workers in virtual worlds like Second Life or VRChat, who provide emotional labour, design services, or community moderation, yet operate in a legal vacuum, devoid of labour protections.

The United Nations in their Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy has specifically warned that the development in the immersive technologies can create unprecedented surveillance capabilities that will require immediate attention from the international human rights community, noting that the convergence of biometric data collection, behavioural tracking, and algorithmic decision-making in virtual spaces poses fundamental threats to human dignity and autonomy and life.[16]

The legal system has not yet caught up with these developments. Most consumer and labour laws assume a physical workplace or tangible product, leaving a regulatory gap when it comes to digital assets and virtual employment. Terms of service written unilaterally by tech giants effectively become law, often without transparency or accountability. In 2021, the European Union began considering digital labour protections in the context of the gig economy, but similar efforts in the context of the Metaverse remain embryonic.[17]

In the metaverse, users experience genuine trauma from attacks on their digital bodies, even though no physical contact occurs. This analogy illuminates why traditional legal frameworks, which privilege physical harm over psychological injury, fail to capture the reality of virtual violence. Just as phantom pain requires medical recognition and treatment despite the absence of physical injury, virtual harm demands legal recognition and remedies despite the absence of physical contact. The brain, after all, processes betrayal, humiliation, and violation identically whether they occur in atoms or bits or complete.[18]

Moreover, the class divide in the Metaverse is not just about money but also about access to education, digital literacy, and infrastructural connectivity. A person logging in through a low-spec smartphone in rural India will have a fundamentally different Metaverse experience than someone using a high-end VR headset in Berlin.

16 Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy, Special Procedures, U.N. Hum. Rts. Council, https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-privacy

17 European Commission, *Platform Work: Commission Proposes Measures to Improve Conditions* (2021), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6605.

18 Dwivedi, Y.K., Kshetri, N., Hughes, L., *Exploring the Darkverse: A multi-perspective analysis of the negative societal impacts of the metaverse,* Information Systems Frontiers, Volume 25, Issue 5, 2071–2114, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10796-023-10400-x

As the Metaverse becomes a new frontier of commerce, socialisation, and even political expression, this digital inequality could deepen existing socioeconomic rifts, rather than bridge them.

To build a truly inclusive digital society, we must recognise that technological innovation alone is not liberation. The ownership of digital assets, just like land or capital, must be interrogated through the lenses of equity, justice, and structural reform. Without robust legal frameworks for consumer protection, equitable access, and digital labour rights, the Metaverse may end up replicating if not intensifying the very inequalities it promised to transcend.

5. Rights, Responsibilities and Justice

The metaverse, a vast galaxy of immersive virtual spaces, remaps the experience and contestation of human rights. On the one hand, it provides hitherto unmatched ways of expression, identity formation, and association. On the other hand, it magnifies historic oppressions and creates new vulnerabilities. The more that users live, work, socialize, and even spend money in virtual places, the question arises: how are rights safeguarded and who is responsible when they are not?

In principle, human rights expression, privacy, and protection from violence should carry over unproblematically into virtual spaces. But in practice, the exercise of these rights in the metaverse is broken up and unevenly applied. Whereas physical zones are covered by constitutional rules, the metaverse is governed mostly by private firms, which function as de facto governments by making the rules, resolving disputes, and enforcing norms.

The freedom of expression is also regularly infringed by platform algorithms flagging, suppressing, or deleting material without clear reasoning or means of appeal. Although the moderation to suppress hate speech and harassment is necessary, it is often lacking in due process. Equally, the privacy right is grossly undermined by ubiquitous surveillance integrated into metaverse infrastructures, users' gestures, gaze, dialogue, and biometric information can be harvested to enhance immersive experiences or profit from conduct. The potential for virtual violence in the form of sexual harassment, racialized harassment, and doxxing is equally severe and generally under-policed.

Such scholars as Julie E. Cohen posit that the digital public sphere is less subject to democratic ideals and more to "architectures of control" created by commercial

forces. Here, rights are commodities—bestowed, revoked, and altered as per changing terms of service instead of constitutional provisions.[19]

The European Emerging Virtual Worlds: Implications for policy and regulations report recognizes the need for proactive regulatory approaches that protect fundamental rights while fostering innovation, explicitly calling for EU-wide standards on digital identity, virtual property rights, bridging the gaps and cross-border enforcement mechanisms.

These perspectives not only remind us the upcoming revolution but also warns us regarding the crisis we can expect alongside.[20]

One of the pillars of justice is due process the right to be heard, the right to appeal, and the right to an unbiased adjudicator. In the metaverse, individuals who are suspended, have their data deleted, or subjected to other sanctions seldom enjoy effective procedural protection. This is unlike in national legal orders, where independent tribunals play the role of providing remedies, while in platform governance, there are often closed moderation teams or automated decision-making processes.

This digital shortage has been referred to as "platform law" a discretionary and privatized legal order that is efficient but not accountable. The absence of independent mechanisms for oversight evokes ethical questions, particularly where wrongful banning, misidentification, or algorithmic bias are involved.[21] The separation between constitutional rights in the real world and corporate governance regulations intensifies in the metaverse. For example, while the Indian Constitution ensures freedom of speech through Article 19(1)(a), users on Meta's Horizon Worlds or Decentraland are subject to platform rules that may ban certain political speech or satire considered inappropriate by internal community standards.

In America, the First Amendment limits censorship by states but not by private entities. Therefore, platforms may lawfully silence users, even though it would offend public norms of fairness or proportionality. The European Union's Digital Services Act aims to alleviate this imbalance of power by requiring transparency

19 Julie E. Cohen, Between Truth and Power: The Legal Constructions of Informational Capitalism (Oxford Univ. Press 2019).

20 Francesca Di Porto, Davide Foà & Sean Ennis, Emerging Virtual Worlds: Implications for Policy and Regulation 24 (Ctr. On Regulation in Eur. 2024).

21 Jack M. Balkin, *Free Speech in the Algorithmic Society: Big Data, Private Governance, and New School Speech Regulation*, 51 U.C. Davis L. Rev. 1149 (2018).

and accountability in content moderation, but its scope over decentralized virtual spaces is limited.

6. Toward a Just Metaverse: Cross-Disciplinary Proposals

As the Metaverse continues to evolve from a novelty into a structural part of our digital ecosystem, it is no longer sufficient to view it merely through the lens of technological progress. The urgent need is a framework that reflects the complexity of this space, one which fuses legal clarity, ethical foresight, technological design, and sociological understanding. Justice in the Metaverse cannot be reactive; it must be anticipatory.

Legal reform is foundational. Existing laws are rooted in territoriality, physicality, and conventional understandings of identity and fail to account for the porous, borderless architecture of virtual spaces. There is a growing need to establish legal norms that treat digital personhood, virtual assets, and algorithmic harms as legitimate subjects of regulation. Scholars like Julie Cohen have called for reconceptualising the "informational subject" in digital economies to protect autonomy and dignity.[22] This calls for ethical design in platforms embedding due process, privacy safeguards, and non-discrimination principles directly into code.

At the same time, the governance structures of digital platforms must be democratised. Most Metaverse platforms today are governed by opaque corporate policies, with limited input from the communities they serve. To counter this, participatory governance models like Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAOs) offer promising alternatives. These models, while still experimental, could enable community-driven rule-making, enforcement, and dispute resolution. The concept of "e-courts" or virtual adjudicative mechanisms with transparent procedures and independent oversight also merits exploration, particularly in user-to-user disputes.

However, justice in the Metaverse cannot be fragmented by jurisdiction. Much like the climate crisis, the issues of virtual harm, identity theft, or digital property disputes demand multilateral engagement. International cooperation perhaps under the aegis of institutions like the UN or a new Digital Rights Convention must form the backbone of a regulatory order that is truly transnational.

22 I. Dorca, *Review of* Between Truth and Power: The Legal Constructions of Informational Capitalism *and* The Code of Capital: How the Law Creates Wealth and Inequality *by* J.E. Cohen & K. Pistor, 54 Law & Soc'y Rev. 722, 722–27 (2020), https://www.jstor.org/stable/48585390

Ultimately, designing a just Metaverse is not just about protecting users; it's about reimagining what justice means in a world where lines between the physical and digital are increasingly blurred. And to do so, we must bring lawyers, coders, ethicists, and sociologists to the same table not as adversaries, but as co-architects of our shared digital future.

7. Conclusion

The metaverse is not merely an advanced technological platform; it is an epistemological revolution in how we think about space, autonomy, governance, and justice. It is not so much the next chapter in the history of the internet, it is a break, a redefinition of the very coordinates upon which law, society, and human agency have traditionally been based. In this immersive, decentralized, and hyper-interactive space, legal realities become fluid, constitutional lines become blurred, and traditional concepts of accountability start to erode. The virtual sphere is no longer an escape; it is a lived environment where choices are exercised, identities are framed, and rights are respected or trampled tacitly, and without recourse.

In such a landscape, the lack of democratic checks and due process mechanisms is a severe threat. Power does not emanate from the state anymore but from platforms, algorithms, and corporations, entities that now act as quasi-sovereigns with systems of enforcement, justice, and control unto themselves. The social contract, previously based on public discussion and constitutional principles, is being subtly rewritten through dark terms of service and privately constructed norms. The outcome is a digital dystopia in which individual rights may be revoked through code, community norms operate as law, and justice is frequently regulated by market forces more than moral norms.

And yet, this seeming dystopia contains within it a revolutionary promise: the potential to create a digital architecture in which justice is not merely duplicated, but reimagined. The metaverse challenges us to face the shortcomings of our existing legal and ethical systems and to challenge ourselves to create something superior. What if justice were not just embedded after-the-fact, but as a design principle? Suppose human rights weren't exceptions to the platform economy but its code. The metaverse, in all its entanglement, affords us the unusual chance to pose foundational questions anew: What is privacy if our very look can be followed? What is freedom of expression in a world owned by big corporations? What is accountability if harms take place in a space devoid of borders?

The way forward cannot be by old-fashioned regulation. It will involve a transformation of the legal imagination, a realization that virtual worlds must be regulated not as digital appendages of national territory, but as new jurisdictions in need of participatory governance. It needs to be transnational, open, and based on the everyday practices of users, particularly those most vulnerable. We must move toward a model of digital constitutionalism that is democratic by design and grounded in evolving conceptions of rights - rights that reflect the entanglement of code, identity, and power.

If we lose, the metaverse will become a feudal system of private authority and commodified consent. But if we win, if we refuse to place justice in the margins of the digital stack at every level we can not only make the metaverse a frontier of technological progress, but a test bed for the next generation of human rights. In this post-territorial era, the true challenge is not merely to regulate the metaverse but to rethink justice itself.