

Where is the metaverse? - Reflections from Web Summit 2024 in Lisbon

The big misunderstanding regarding "the metaverse" is the attempt to locate it on a specific platform. It has become clear that the metaverse is not only firmly anchored on Facebook or a specific company.

Rather, the metaverse evolves as the new way of how we experience the web. After more than 25 years of building websites, the web is increasingly developing from a pure 2D view into 3D experience, which is why the new phase of web development is referred to as the 3DWeb. Today, there are pure 3D worlds such as Decentraland and Sandbox and hybrid 2D/3D platforms such as Roarington.com that we developed as a vertical Metaland for the classic car scene.

A Metaverse website is characterised by three-dimensionality, by the possibility to "immerse" yourself in a website or certain areas, to move freely "within it" and to actively interact with the content of the page. This is why we at OVR LAY speak of the immersive web. Since immersion in a 3D world requires spatiality, the term spatial web is also sometimes used as an alternative (e.g. Apple).

Immersion in the web can take place via the navigation perspective or via an avatar. If the user can move freely around the website as an avatar, interactions between the avatars are also possible in the metaverse.

For all gamers (and for all parents with gamer kids), these are not major achievements, but "everyday gamer life". Much of what we subsume as metaverse has its origins in the gaming world, which is why, not surprisingly, the game engines, i.e. the backend technologies of modern games, are also the basic technology for many metaverse platforms (e.g. The Sandbox and Decentraland are both based on the game engine Unity).

An exciting discussion in Lisbon was how metaverse platforms could evolve from a walled garden into interconnection. In particular, Robby Yung from The Sandbox put forward what I consider to be a very plausible thesis, namely that the metaverse platforms must be interoperable as users want to transfer their avatars, but also their other digital assets, from one metaverse to another.

An example of this is a digital twin of an iconic car, an exclusive watch or other brand and lifestyle objects that the user can transfer from one 3D world to another platform.

The most useful technology for this is blockchain. Each digital asset is issued as an NFT and can therefore be protected and identified in a unique and unforgeable way. Protected as an NFT, a digital object can be transferred from one platform to a game or another metaverse platform.

On the metaverse platforms, the digital assets can be used in the specific surrounding the different platforms provide and brands can grant all NFT Digital Twin owners access to exclusive community areas and invite them to exclusive digital or real-life encounters with other users.

We are familiar with all these mechanics from the real world, which can be mirrored on metaverse platforms. The metaverse thus becomes a "digital overlay of the real world" (Prof. Dr Marcus Gross) with "bridges" between the real and virtual worlds that allow us to move between them. This is increasingly creating a hybrid living environment that combines the advantages of the real world with the possibilities of the digital world.

About OVRLAY

OVRLAY specialises in digital immersive technologies to make brand and product experiences more emotional, relevant and interactive. We create platforms for multidimensional customer relationships, bring brands and products to life digitally and create the basis for new digital business models.

OVRLAY's headquarters are located near Munich in Germany. Our nearshoring technology and development centre is located in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our team combines all disciplines and skills to design, develop and operate multidimensional experience platforms for our clients, based on ISO 27001 and ISAE 3402 certified processes.

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