

Ledger's Sebastien Badault: "We're Entering Into The Revolutionary Era Of Digital Ownership."

Sebastien Badault, Ledger VP of Metaverse & NFTs, a world-leading hardware wallet manufacturer, and co-founder of MetaCircle, a European Metaverse think-tank, argues that crypto and blockchain are ushering in an Internet of Value that will redefine the rules of digital ownership and reshape our virtual lives.

This is the first article from Maddy Ness and members of Metacircle, the unified voice for the European Metaverse ecosystem.

What people widely call "Web3" has different manifestations. You will invariably hear "tokens," "cryptocurrencies," "NFTs," "decentralisation," "blockchains," "decentralised ledgers," and, although distinct, the "Metaverse." One word you will hear more rarely is "ownership," yet foundational to the Web3 Revolution.

From physical property to digital

ownership

Let's zoom out a little. The advent of the modern economic system, capitalism, enabled anybody to own physical goods and enjoy a right that seems as natural as basic freedom: private property.

But while private property can be taken for granted in the physical world, things are different in the digital sphere.

Thirty years into the first Internet Revolution, known as the "Internet of Information," the only thing you can own (albeit you rent it) in cyberspace is... a URL. In today's Internet, you don't own anything, and that's how Web2 was designed from the start. All the content you receive and send online – messages, files, texts, audio, music, etc. – is duplicable content that isn't yours. Your data isn't yours either; you generously give it to centralised entities that own and monetise them on your behalf. Your online identity is also someone else's, scattered across third parties enjoying full access to it.

It is from this observation that the activist group Cyberpunk started. The idea was to use cryptography so that individuals could protect their information and – most importantly – themselves while using the Internet. It was about regaining digital power by having the choice of what one shares with a third party. That's precisely what blockchain, cryptocurrencies and smart contracts are doing. This set of technologies enable anybody to own something that is digitally scarce and to enter cyberspace through new entrance doors, digital wallets, that will not only store your cryptocurrencies but also your identity, belongings, finances, art, memberships, communities, and anything else of value.

Digital ownership will soon underpin our digital lives, from finance to gaming, from citizenship to creativity, from social media to entertainment, inverting the top-down structure of Web2. The recent downfall of FTX, once a leading centralised exchange, has shown that when you delegate your digital value to a centralised entity, your assets are immediately prone to mismanagement, hacks, frauds, opacity, conflicts of interests, or any forms of counterparty risks, giving value to the blockchain's *raison d'être*. It's a revolution of trust. Don't trust the middlemen. Trust the immutable code. Trust yourself.

The Revolution of ownership has already started

In the aftermath of the FTX collapse, we saw large sums of money flowing from centralised exchanges to personal wallets and DeFi protocols' activity surging

to new heights. During the FTX crisis, Ledger's hardware wallet sales saw a four-fold increase in November compared to the previous month, showcasing that when centralized custodians fail, individuals realize the importance of self-custody. Against the FTX backdrop, Changpeng Zhao, the CEO of Binance, the world's largest centralised exchange, even called self-custody a "fundamental human right".

This trend toward decentralisation is not a passing fad. It's concrete proof that the next Internet revolution will unfold with users in full possession of their digital assets. The crypto adage: *Not Your Keys Not Your Coins* has never been more alive.

This revolution of ownership goes beyond money. It's a wide ranging phenomenon that will impact every sector.

Culture will be a key driving force in Web3, with artists and creators at the forefront of the shift. With NFTs, scarce digital items that one can truly own, artists and creators are discovering new ways to monetise their creativity, engage with communities, and offer "token-gated" experiences.

Brands are also closely watching and onboarding the Web3 space, understanding that digital wallets could reinvent their relationship with consumers through new forms of CRM and incentives schemes or, as Nike is doing with .SWOOSH, inviting their community to co-create with them in a horizontal way.

With the launch of our secure NFT platform, [Ledger] Market, we implemented a Web3-native e-commerce strategy built on customisation and reward. With this new method, users can connect their digital wallets to be immediately eligible for a specific service, which was, in our case, the *Black-on-Black Nano*. It didn't require bank verification or any complex process. The experience was seamless, community-focused, horizontal, with our communities of users in full ownership of their tokens. We believe this method will shape the future of e-commerce.

If the Metaverse is the next computing platform, digital ownership will be its core principle, and blockchain technologies its central operating system. As more of our lives become digital, you don't want your identity, value, data, or avatar to belong to someone else. You want it to be yours. You accessed Web1 with a login/password, Web2 with Google or Facebook, and you will connect to Web3/the Metaverse with your digital wallet.

We are still in the early days of the Web3 shift. I see it as an anthropological transition. The tools and applications needed for this revolution of value are being built right now with Creativity, Security & Usability at their core.

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