Web 3.0 as a Pathway to Protopia

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Introduction:

Web 3.0 has been controversial since it came out as a new, decentralized vision of the Internet. As major capitals compete to invest in the world of Web 3.0. It is facing criticisms of security, energy consumption, over-marketing, and centralization. The issues of over-marketing and centralization are shaking the idealized narrative of Web 3.0 at its roots and undermining confidence in Web 3.0. Is Web 3.0 just a game of capital, or an impossible vision? Is its existence still justified? Leaving aside the capitalist propaganda for Web 3.0, what can it do to build a better future for us? This paper will contrast Web 3.0 with a young concept called 'protopia' to address the question of the positive meaning of Web 3.0 in this current context.

I. What are Protopia and Web 3.0?

1. Protopia

Unlike utopia and dystopia, the concept of protopia has been around for a very short time, having been first formally introduced in the American author Kevin Kelly's 2016 book *The Inevitable*, as a positive vision of the direction in which human society should move.

In the book, the authors explain this concept in contrast to utopia and dystopia. In contrast to utopia and dystopia, its most distinctive feature is that protopia is a state of change, a process, rather than some fixed goal in itself. The vision itself contains both positive elements, opportunities and progress, and negative elements, new problems and drawbacks, and the interaction between the two is seen as the basic logic of protopia.

Protopia has three characteristics: first, it is realizable or has already been realized. Secondly, it is a process rather than a specific goal, It is because this process is accompanied by new interests and new problems. Thirdly, the progress is easy to be ignored because it is small and incremental.

2. Web 3.0

Web 3.0 is a new idea and vision of the Internet world. It will build a new Internet ecosystem with the concept of decentralization as the core. The development of blockchain technology provides the technical basis for the realization of Web 3.0 and provides Internet users with the possibility of free activities in the virtual world without relying on the central platform established by large companies, thus solving a series of problems we face with the metaverse catching on, there are a lot of big companies investing a lot of

money in Web 3.0.

But the criticism facing Web 3.0 cannot be ignored because, according to critical voices, Web 3.0 seems to be defeating its goal of creating a more equal, free, and decentralized web. Dirk notes that "investors are ecstatic about Web 3.0 because it offers huge potential returns for relatively low investments ..."[1] Investors have embellished and marketed the Web 3.0 narrative for profit, exaggerating the positive aspects of Web 3.0 to us. More damaging is the fact that the core probability of decentralization of Web 3.0 is seriously questioned and big capital still assumes a major role in the world of Web 3.0, as the technical costs of developing Web 3.0 are high and difficult for ordinary people to achieve. Also setting up servers is difficult for individuals, so in fact, all traffic has to go through centralized servers. Web 3.0 is currently criticized as still being centralized, "The advertised decentralization of power out of the hands of a few has, in fact, been a re-centralization of power into the hands of fewer" [2].

If the idealized narrative of Web 3.0 is a utopia stripped of centralization, discrimination, and inequality, its existing problems and the critiques it faces reveal its potential to move towards an dystopia. However, if we compare Web 3.0 with protopia and explore the intrinsic links and positive elements between the two, Web 3.0 still has positive potential in the future, in terms of promoting the decentralization of the web and the democratization of society. At the same time, it offers new ideas and perspectives on how we can look at both Web 3.0 and protopia.

II. Why can Web 3.0 serve as a path towards realizing

Protopia?

1. Common roots
Both protopia and Web 3.0 are based on current developments in technology, especially computer technology, in the sense that they have similar roots. The rapid development of computer technology has led Kevin Kelly, who is deeply involved in the industry, to make predictions about society. "Becoming" is the first meta-trend that Kelly identifies as Inevitability, arguing that our technology has been and will continue to be "becoming" in the future. For "the future of technological life will be an endless series of upgrades, and the rate of

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[1] Songuer, Dirk. "Why I Don't Believe in the Web3 Narrative." Medium, Medium, 6 Apr. 2022, https://medium.com/@dirksonguer/why-i-dont-believe-in-the-web3-narrative-6db1a1cade32.

[2] Galloway, Scott. "The False Promise of Web3." Medium, Marker, 18 Jan. 2022, https://medium.com/marker/the-false-promise-of-web3-7e6c1a00d4be.

iteration is accelerating." [3] The constant upgrading and iteration of technology keeps us forever as rookies when it comes to them but also gives us new needs and desires. The newness of technology drives us to seek the 'new', and this pursuit of the 'new' creates constant unhappiness and dissatisfaction, but it also drives us to grow and create.

In a sense, the introduction and development of Web 3.0 is a concrete and typical example of this 'becoming'. They both represent a new way of thinking and a desire to push beyond the limitations of current systems.

2. The similar goals of both in terms of decentralization and democratization

Protopia and Web 3.0 share similar views and tendencies in terms of decentralization for democracy. In particular, they both focus on the voices and power of communities, especially minorities, defend freedom of expression, oppose capital and political hegemony, and attempt to promote democratic development.

The futurist Monika Bielskyte, an advocate of protopia, is supportive of community cooperation and listening to minority voices: "Our goal is always to centre the previously marginalized perspectives. Above all, Protopia explores visions of embodied HOPE, futures wherein we have come together, as imperfect as our condition is."[4]   to further democratize politics through the power of community.

Web 3.0, on the other hand, was proposed to solve the problem of large platform centralization that existed in Web 2.0. "And justly so, the Web 2.0 provided a fertile ground for corporations to monopolize control and profits."[5] Under the Web 2.0 system, large corporations have extremely high levels of control, which hinders freedom of expression, the political expression of communities, and democratization in the internet world. "The net giants are doing nothing other than consolidating control. take internet.org for example, Mark Zuckerberg's program's intentions are rightly questioned as an obvious route whereby Facebook can control and discriminate access to the internet by any way they deem fit." The overlay of control and the nature of capital expansion has given the internet a centralized character, and so the

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[3] Kevin, Kelly, The Inevitable (New York: Penguin, 2016), p. 4

[4] Bielskyte, Monika. "Protopia Futures [Framework]." Medium, Protopia Futures, 29 Jan. 2023, medium.com/protopia-futures/protopia-futures-framework-f3c2a5d09a1e#d349.

[5] Zago, Mat. "Why the Net Giants Are Worried about the Web 3.0." Medium, Medium, 22 May 2022, medium.com/@Matzago/why-the-net-giants-are-worried-about-the-web-3-0-44b2d3620da5#c1b8.

decentralization and democratization goals advocated by Web 3.0 were born. The goal of decentralization and democratization advocated by Web 3.0 was born, coinciding with the vision of protopia.

3. Similar internal logic

Web 3.0 is still in its infancy, the pioneers are feeling their way, there are both pro and critical voices in the field, and it is still difficult to predict a definitive future for Web 3.0. But Web 3.0 tries to move toward the original goal of democratization and decentralization in this exploration. This is consistent with the dynamic development logic of protopia.

While achieving Web 3.0's idealized narrative may be challenging, it still serves as a path toward realizing protopia. Web 3.0 can also serve as a tool to empower the current Web2 system. Both Web 3.0 and protopia share a similar logic of decentralization, community-driven decision-making, and democratization of power, which makes the shift towards a more decentralized web a significant step towards realizing protopia.

4. Web 3.0 as a force to promote protopia

Driven by similar goals, Web 3.0 has the potential to be a pathway to protopia. There are already active attempts in the Web 3.0 field to democratize forms of organization, decision-making, and political participation.

DAOs are a unique form of organization in the Web 3.0 space. They have a flat structure, with no centralized leadership, but rather a democratic voting process by DAO members who hold tokens to make major decisions and rely on smart contracts to regulate organization and participation, which is an important attempt to improve organizational structures and promote democracy in organization and decision-making. There are some iconic organizations, such as Aragon, Giveth, MakerDAO and others. Despite problems such as inefficiency, DAOs are actively adapting themselves to face these problems. Audrey Tang was appointed minister without a portfolio for digital affairs in the Lin Chuan cabinet on August 2016. They took office as the "Digital Minister" on October 1, and were placed in charge of helping government agencies communicate policy goals and managing information published by the government. This is a microcosm of Taiwan's openness to the power of the internet to actively promote political democracy.

In summary, the common roots, similar goals, and similar internal logic reveal the rationality of Web 3.0 as a way forward for protopia, and in fact, the web 3.0 field is already attempting to move towards the goals of decentralization and democratization. Whether the idealized narrative of Web 3.0 will become the future of society is unknown, and it is even questionable whether it will move toward a kind of dystopia. But seeing Web 3.0 as a way forward for

implementing protopia, as a complementary solution to the Internet and social problems by following the problem-tweak-trial-solve logic, would be a way forward for Web 3.0. Further, using this thinking to look at the decentralized vision of Web 3.0 will yield new perspectives and have a positive impact on the decentralization of the internet, and indeed the democratization of realistic politics.

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