

The metaverse meets public good

Unveiling a new platform for action
with the World Economic Forum



Call for change

An inspiring vision for a more unified future

We are all familiar with the metaverse and have almost certainly engaged with at least one iteration of the “internet of place” in our personal or professional lives.

Though the hype may have had its ups and downs, the interactivity of the metaverse promises massive potential for all types of institutions, brands and companies—especially as spatial computing goes mainstream.

Beyond connecting users in shared, unique environments in the blink of an eye, the real power of the technology lies in its ability to establish new ways of working and problem-solving. In fact, studies show that virtual reality (VR), one celebrated feature of the metaverse, [can improve learning retention by 33%](#)

(compared to video), facilitate sustained collaboration and even [help people reimagine what’s possible](#).

The metaverse’s [full continuum of extended reality technologies](#), including augmented reality (AR), will deliver impact by bridging the gap between our virtual and physical worlds. That’s where the World Economic Forum sees unprecedented opportunity. Its leadership set a course to harness the promise of emerging metaverse technologies to [enhance human interaction and cooperation, foster empathy and awareness around social causes and more](#). The ultimate destination: The Global Collaboration Village.

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The World Economic Forum, in partnership with Accenture and Microsoft, has made a long-term commitment to develop the Village as a purpose-driven platform for the “the future of public-private cooperation.” By providing stakeholders with captivating digital means to convene and connect, the World Economic Forum believes that leaders, influencers and changemakers anywhere will be better equipped to collaborate and take decisive and impactful action against pressing problems in the real world—like how to quickly scale-up solutions to address climate change.

The Village concept is simple to understand, but building a platform that leaders and problem solvers want to return to regularly is a significant task. The technology is crucial, and evolving rapidly, but the thing that [makes the metaverse stick](#) is its ability to drive value to a diverse set of stakeholders—from [consumers to businesses and industries](#), and now social good, too.



When tech meets human ingenuity

Assembling a team for modern collaboration

It all started with a sketch from Professor Klaus Schwab—engineer and World Economic Forum Founder and Executive Chairman.

The sketch mapped the layout of a virtual world, which would host a town hall, collaborative centers representing the World Economic Forum's platform initiatives, and five campuses for different stakeholders: (1) business, (2) government and international organizations, (3) civil society, (4) science and (5) entertainment, sports and culture.

That framework was presented to Accenture, [given its proven experience in this space](#), and Microsoft, with the question: How can we

leverage the metaverse to reimagine the future of public-private collaboration? With [the metaverse as the nexus between digital and physical](#), how might we use digital immersion and collaboration as a catalyst for impact in the physical world?

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To take on this challenge, Accenture assembled a multidisciplinary team of strategists, technologists and researchers invested in the [Metaverse Continuum](#) that worked together to bring this vision to life. It featured 3D developers, strategy leads, experiential and industrial designers, sound engineers, architects, visual effects artists, subject matter experts and ethicists around the world.

This unified team, collaborating remotely and seamlessly in VR across geographies, began brainstorming a proof of concept that brought together the themes of sustainability, both economic and environmental, featuring the World Economic Forum's [1 Trillion Trees](#) community. Through briefings and a VR demo during the [Annual Meeting 2022](#), the Global Collaboration Village debuted this proof of concept—hosted on [Microsoft's Mesh platform](#)—to World Economic Forum partners for testing, experimentation and discussion.

With early engagement proven and the desire to see more, the joint team was given the green light to continue building the broader Village, to include the Business Stakeholder Campus and an Ocean Hub, ahead of the next Annual Meeting in January 2023.





A valuable difference

Laying the foundation for a purpose-driven metaverse

One goal for the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting 2023 was to inspire people with a glimpse of the full potential of the Village and the game-changing value it may offer. With more freedom to explore and interact, Davos attendees were invited to dive into the Ocean Hub, an undersea world experience crafted hand-in-hand with the World Economic Forum’s Ocean Action Council to foster deeper understanding of the intrinsic connections between human and ocean health.

The result? A deep and immersive setting to explore our seas—from a kelp farm and mangrove forest along the coast to coral reefs and hydrothermal vents deep below the surface. While visually stunning, the ocean experience was intended to show what’s at stake and provide a backdrop to discuss what could be lost without urgent climate action, as well as demonstrate to leaders all the possibilities in the Village metaverse.

On-site in Davos and in the Village in VR, the World Economic Forum had experts ready to connect the sights and sounds to takeaways and discussions from the frontlines of climate change in the real world—including the need to protect fisheries and safeguard coastal ecosystems.

Participating CEOs and other leaders said that being able to make eye contact and point to objects “underwater” helped to suspend disbelief and foster interpersonal connections. More importantly, many voiced that the metaverse helped bring ocean causes to life. This reaction is precisely why Professor Schwab sees the metaverse collaboration platform as the technology to [“unite people across borders, support the exchange of ideas and revolutionize progress.”](#)

A valuable difference

Professor Schwab also recognizes that the launch of the Village is the first step in a long journey to extend the World Economic Forum's reach and engagement. There's near limitless potential to introduce new products and services, new business and training models, and more.

The team's unifying vision for the Village in the metaverse is to democratize and extend the World Economic Forum's programming, making impactful solutions-oriented opportunities accessible to anyone, anywhere, anytime—365 days a year.

To that end, we're working to deliver on Professor Schwab's vision to use the Village to host cultural events, conferences and even virtual art and museum exhibits, and open the doors for an even wider range of partners to celebrate and showcase their worlds in the same way. As the technology improves, and generative AI is applied to expedite builds and designs, it's not a stretch to imagine C-suite leaders visiting the Business Campus for guidance on scenario planning, or students receiving tailored advice about best practices from industry leaders.

Imagine what breakthroughs might be unlocked when visitors are able to spend a day in the Village exploring the deep sea, understanding carbon capture at a quantum level, looking at a supply chain from a systems perspective, and modeling the impact of currency fluctuations in real time? Further, as AR capabilities advance, the power to overlay critical data and content on the real world will power significant behavioral change.

To date, 130 organizations have joined the Forum, Accenture and Microsoft as Village Partners and are meeting bi-monthly as committed allies in this effort. In addition, a working group has been convened to address issues of trust, security, identity, safety and governance in the metaverse. This effort is expected to not only make the Village a more welcoming place, but to also help formalize a universal code of ethics for this new frontier and ensure the [building of a more responsible and inclusive global "internet of place"](#) at the outset.

The Village, like any technology, is not a panacea for real-world challenges. However, it's not intended to be. Rather, the World Economic Forum's offering is designed as a universal platform for problem-solvers to partner in more compelling and meaningful ways—and effectively change outcomes for the better.

As we look to the future for how to solve pressing global challenges, the Village is a unique solution in many regards. It will provide a platform for sustained collaboration, equipping participants with all the tools needed to spark the game-changing innovations we need as a society. That's a (virtual) reality worth fighting for.



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