



ABSTRAK

Saat pertama istilah '*metaverse*' lahir, ia dikemas dengan bayangan ancaman kemajuan teknologi bagi berbagai persoalan yang sudah mengakar dalam struktur dan sistem relasi kuasa antarkelas di tengah masyarakat. Namun, saat pandemi COVID-19, pada satu titik, '*metaverse*' menjadi populer dan muncul di tengah wacana krisis, bahwa inovasi dan transformasi digital merupakan jawaban dari upaya bangkit di tengah pandemi. Tulisan ini akan berupaya menunjukkan, bagaimana rantai ekuivalensi yang mengikat *metaverse* sejak pertama istilah ini diperkenalkan sebagai sebuah konsep yang terintegrasi di tahun 1992 dan saat *metaverse* memperoleh popularitasnya di tengah pandemi COVID-19. Krisis, dalam konteks ini pandemi COVID-19 membuka kemungkinan untuk memperdalam relasi kuasa dengan pengetahuan. Meningkat drastisnya di tengah pandemi dan turunnya kembali antusiasme terkait *metaverse* pasca pandemi menjadikannya menarik untuk menganalisis proses diskursif dan reartikulasi apa yang berlangsung saat pandemi COVID-19. Melalui pendekatan teori diskursus oleh Laclau & Mouffe (1985), tulisan ini akan mengajak para pembaca mengeksplorasi tendensi arah gerak agenda pembangunan dan transformasi digital ke depannya, serta bagaimana narasi kapitalisme neoliberal menunjukkan hegemoninya dalam mengontrol arah gerak sistem sosial, ekonomi, dan politik.

Kata Kunci: *metaverse*, teori diskursus, rantai ekuivalensi, inovasi, transformasi digital, problem struktural, pandemi COVID-19, wacana krisis, kapitalisme neoliberal.



ABSTRACT

When the term “metaverse” first emerged, it was accompanied by concerns about the potential threats posed by technological advancement to deeply rooted structural issues and power relations between social classes. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the metaverse gained popularity at a particular moment of crisis, framed as part of a broader discourse that positioned innovation and digital transformation as key strategies for recovery. This paper seeks to examine the chain of equivalence that has linked the metaverse since its conceptual introduction in 1992, and how that chain evolved as the metaverse rose to prominence amid the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic, as a moment of crisis, created the conditions for a reconfiguration of power relations through knowledge production. The drastic surge of interest in the metaverse during the pandemic, followed by a decline in enthusiasm in the post-pandemic period presents a compelling case for analyzing the discursive processes and rearticulations that occurred during this time. Drawing on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), this paper invites readers to explore the emerging trajectories of development and digital transformation, and to critically examine how the narrative of neoliberal capitalism asserts its hegemony in shaping the direction of social, economic, and political systems.

Keywords: *metaverse, discourse theory, chain of equivalence, innovation, digital transformation, structural issues, COVID-19 pandemic, crisis discourse, neoliberal capitalism.*