

Governing Digital Immortality

Khadiza Laskor, University of Bristol
Supervised by Professors Richard Owen & Andrew Charlesworth



Digital Immortality

Conceived by Microsoft researchers at the turn of this century which ignited visions of the possibility of a digital afterlife and virtual online personas that could live long after the physical death of their human templates.

Formed from digital remains of a living person (already trialled through grief bots and virtual reality, e.g. self-avatars), the phenomena is set when metaverses come into existence.

Digital Afterlife



Governance & Regulation

History shows that there is a risk of repeating previous attempts at governing other technologies, where there have often been long lags between innovation, understanding of its wider impacts and a governance response (Collingridge, 1980).



Therefore, how should such digital immortality be governed and regulated?

Within academic circles, concerns regarding human dignity, posthumous privacy, personality rights and ethics have already highlighted gaps within legal and policy frameworks, including issues such as avatar rights. These intersect with complex moral and spiritual considerations including grief, loss, bereavement and memorialisation. Nevertheless, if timed well with a collaborative approach with strong stakeholder and public engagement, an anticipatory governance framework could be applied to potentially control the direction of the industry.