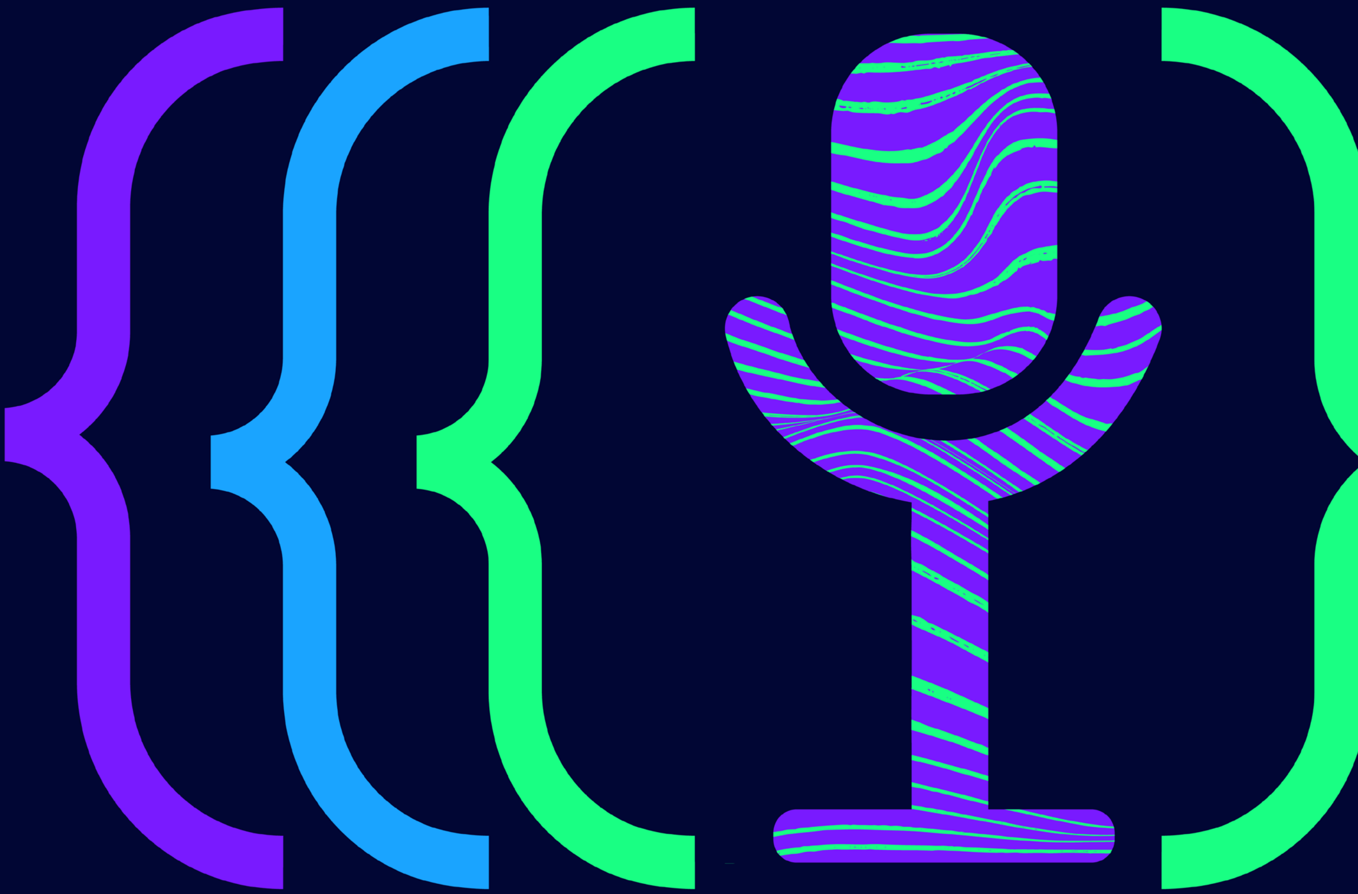


XRPL Insights Podcast

EPISODE 2:

Dr. Vera Radeva & Modupe Diyaolu

«We're literally at the cusp of mass adoption of blockchain technology»

Welcome to the XRPL Insights podcast series! Cassie Hirsh here, Director of Content at XRPL Commons in Paris. Joining us today in the studio is my colleague, **Dr. Vera Radeva,** Academic Program Manager at XRPL Commons, and **Modupe Diyaolu,** a current resident in the XRPL Commons aquarium Residency, presenting her research paper on career prospects in the blockchain ecosystem, an interdisciplinary analysis of social and economic impacts.

Vera will be interviewing Modupe today. So I'm passing the mic over to you, Vera.

Thank you, Cassie. I'm Dr. Vera Radeva, Academic Program Manager at XRPL Commons. My role is to forge academic partnerships and create educational opportunities and curriculum for both professors and students. Throughout our first year, over 120 people from around the world benefited from our free in-house developer training sessions at our Paris headquarters. In addition, we developed and launched 17 hands-on blockchain courses at 10 prestigious universities and business schools such as the Sorbonne and UC Berkeley.

Today, we have one of our talented residents, Modupe Diyaolu, who's been working on an in-depth research paper on career prospects in the blockchain ecosystem: an interdisciplinary analysis of social and economic impact. She will be exploring how the mass adoption of blockchain may influence future career prospects and job market trends. Welcome, Modupe. And I hear you go by Mo. The floor is yours.

Thank you, Vera. I'm glad to be here to share my research on how blockchain innovation is changing the landscape of employment.

Mo, can you tell us a bit about your academic and broader professional background and what led you to your research topic?

Certainly. In terms of my academic background, I have a background in engineering actually, a first degree in manufacturing systems engineering at the University of East London in England, United Kingdom. I went on to do a second degree, at the University of Cambridge School of Engineering. That was about, and then I took about 14 years gap. I then went back to university. I went to University of Oxford in 2020 and 2021, just right in the middle of lockdown. I completed a postgraduate in global business at the Saïd Business School. I rounded that up in 2021.

In terms of my career, you know, post-university is about 20 years, odd. I spent 14 years after my engineering degree working in financial services and four years in payments, specifically, working for PayPal. In the last 18 months, I've been working on my own startup, which I co-founded and it's called MiCash. So meCash is about 18 months in now, and we're building a blockchain technology company. The research topic itself lends itself really well to my academic and my career experience.

You know, most recently at my postgraduate research, my postgraduate research was actually focused on digital asset solutions for emerging markets entry. Two to three years down the line, the opportunity to do further in-depth research within this space is really quite interesting. And I think it's quite timely also, you know, we're literally at the cusp of mass adoption of blockchain technology. Looking at the impact on the future of work is really a set of tools that is required for a lot of global ecosystem players in this space.

Wow, what an incredible professional and academic experience. Thanks so much for sharing all that with us and we are impatient to hear more about your research topic.

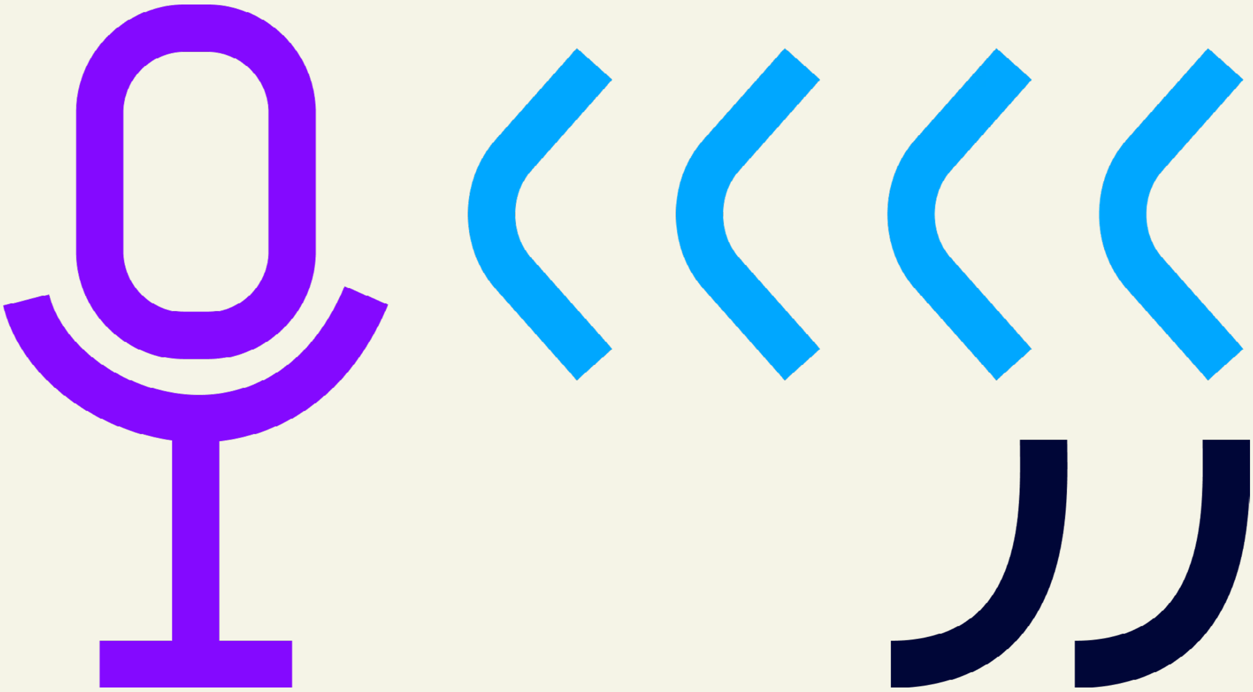
But just before that, could you explain what meCash is doing for our listeners who might not be familiar with it yet?

Sure, my interest in decentralized finance and its potential to revolutionize traditional banking systems has really led me to explore innovative solutions, that's why I co-founded meCash. So what we're solving for at meCash is we're solving for low cost, fast settlement and secured means of making commercial cross border payments. We're SME focused. We're targeting emerging markets who are unable and unable to access traditional finance like we do in the Western markets and who are pretty much cut off from the international financial rails. We see an average transaction size of about $33,000, that speaks to the nature of the type of transactions we are trying to enable cross-border. meCash is really building an enterprise-graded solution to deliver access to international payments for emerging market SMEs. We're leveraging the XRPL's efficiency and scalability to deliver this efficiency for our customers and this use case we're pursuing.

Very exciting. I hope that your stay at the XRPL Commons Residency Program, the Aquarium, was really helpful and helped you actually move forward with your journey. For all our listeners who want to hear more about your project and the rest of the team, we are inviting you to our demo Day on the 11th of December of 2024. **Can you tell us a little bit more on why you chose your research topic?**

This research is academically interesting to me because whilst there are many researchers looking at exactly what the blockchain technology is, there are many researchers also looking at use cases coming out of this technology. There's very limited research on the social and economic impact for careers. You know, there's very limited research looking at how the labor force will evolve once the technology reaches mass adoption. My theory is that blockchain technology will change traditional industries and how ecosystems are organized. There'll be new challenges for the existing labor force today, and there'll be requirements for new skills, as we continue to edge towards mass adoption of blockchain technology. This will present its challenges, but there will be significant opportunities for the future of work too.

If you think about my experience, having worked in banking and finance for 17 years, and most recently running my own start-up within the blockchain and DeFi space, with a key focus on blockchain technology at its core of its business model and of its technology. It really lends itself well to this research area because I'm a key participant of how blockchain technology and the blockchain technology ecosystem will change. You know, we're talking about new job roles, for example: community leaders and community managers. These are job roles that didn't exist 20, 30 years ago. I'm pretty excited about the prospect that this technology is bringing for the future of work, and the opportunity to spend some time to look at it in depth and produce a bunch of tools and scenario models that can be used by ecosystem players is actually quite thrilling. I'm looking forward to doing some work around this space.



I agree! What a fascinating subject. I'm sure that your results will actually benefit a lot of us people in the audience, but also anyone interested in developing and taking different careers paths.

But as someone who also did research myself, I also wanted to ask you a little bit more personal question on **what are the challenges that you actually face and encounter during your research and how do you plan to address them?**

Good question, Vera. I think the first key point is that the research topic is very broad. My theory is that there are many nuances as you move from different business verticals to the other. So the career prospects and the career changes in finance will be very different from the mining sector or will be very different from the education sector. For me, that means that there's a requirement or there's a need to possibly narrow down the business verticals that I'm focusing on as part of this research. However, the research will be aiming to answer three of the following questions.

The first one is to what extent can digital infrastructure and its adoption transform existing professions?

The second question would be what are the underlying reasons that drive a company to adopt digital technology such as blockchain? And what would be the political, social, cultural and cognitive barriers responsible for hindering the adoption of this technology?

The third question we'll be looking to answer from the research is, how are the barriers to technological adoption created in companies? What are the levers to eliminate bias related to adopting new technologies within a company?

I assume that at the end, the research will aim to come up with some very meaningful scenario models. And I'm sure that these will be useful tools that can be adopted by ecosystem stakeholders, alongside adopting and incorporating blockchain, but looking at the future of work for its employees, new job roles and partnerships. I'm very much looking forward to reading the final result. But Mo, there is something we haven't discussed yet. **I've heard that in 2021, you won the best paper award at University of Oxford. Can you tell us a little bit more on the subject of the paper?**

Yes, sure. I can, Vera. When I kicked off my post-grad and I was looking for a paper to write, I was looking at emerging technologies specifically. My thesis was, if there was a global technology company like PayPal, like Facebook, like Google, and they were looking for the next 250 million new customers, where should they be looking at? My thesis was they should be looking at Africa. And then the next question will be, what technology could they take into that market? To get that number of customers and what would that technology solve? My thesis was blockchain technology: it was revolutionary, there was massive adoption within emerging markets, specifically Africa and Nigeria at that point. My paper was really based on a global technology company going into Africa and picking a country. What technology would they take in and what would they use that technology for? It was a DeFi use case. I finished that paper, I think in April 2021, and graduated at the end of 2021. It was a pleasant surprise to realize that I was awarded the best paper. I think that was really what birthed meCash about three months later.

Thank you, Mo. Thank you for sharing your ideas for the research with us. To our listeners, if you would like to learn more about Mo's work and meCash and how she gets on with the research in the coming months, stay tuned for the next issue of our XRPL Community Magazine where we'll feature an in-depth article about her research.

You can also catch up on past issues of the magazine and download the upcoming edition at xrpl-commons.org. It's always exciting to see how research can uncover new possibilities we hadn't initially considered. Are you a developer or researcher using XRPL in a novel way or for a new use case? It's always interesting to hear how researchers and builders in the XRPL ecosystem are applying the protocol to solve real-world issues. Got a story for us? We'd love to hear it. Drop us a line on Twitter.

Thanks for tuning in to the XRPL Insights Podcast, where we explore blockchain innovation.

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