

LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ, Ana Mercedes, *Resolución de conflictos en el metaverso*, Tecnos, Madrid, 2025.

Exploring the metaverse means entering a space that remains invisible yet increasingly shapes our everyday interactions. Within this environment, individuals acquire goods with no physical substance, construct alternative identities, and engage in transactions that generate rights and obligations as real as those arising in the tangible world. It is a domain where avatars, tokens, virtual properties, and automated decision systems coexist in ways that challenge traditional legal logic. Yet despite its futuristic appearance, this digital universe raises profoundly contemporary questions: Which courts may exercise jurisdiction over disputes emerging within it? Which law governs these interactions? How is liability organised when conduct does not occur in any identifiable physical space? This comprehensive analysis unfolds across ten chapters, each addressing a different dimension of the metaverse and its legal implications.

In the opening chapters, López Rodríguez presents virtual worlds, their various types and the risks they entail. She makes a clear effort to delineate the object of study, distinguishing between social, educational, simulation-based, and commercial environments. This classification helps to reveal that not all virtual settings pose the same challenges. Moreover, the author identifies issues such as privacy, security, and cross-border interactions as central elements for understanding why Private International Law becomes a necessary point of reference. In this way, the reader understands from the outset that the law does not approach the metaverse as a marginal curiosity, but as a natural consequence of the digitalisation of human relations.

The metaverse is then distinguished from adjacent concepts such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and the evolving Web frameworks. The analysis avoids unnecessary technicalities and instead focuses on why these environments, despite their novelty, generate legal relationships that demand coherent responses in areas such as contracts, liability, property, identity, and cross-border disputes.

The book proceeds to examine the structural elements of the metaverse: blockchain technology, smart contracts and DAOs. These are presented with clarity, allowing even readers without technical background to understand why notions such as legal personality, domicile or liability take on new dimensions when applied within decentralised systems. These issues are legal in essence, yet they require reinterpretation in settings where interactions are not anchored to any fixed territory.

The figure of the avatar receives substantial attention. The author explains its various forms and functions, its connection to digital identity, and the privacy, security and data-protection issues that arise. She also examines the possible legal personality of avatars and the attribution of responsibility for their actions. Although no definitive conclusions are offered – because the area remains unsettled – she sets out the competing doctrinal positions clearly and demonstrates why these debates will be pivotal for the future development of the metaverse.

The following chapters address more traditional fields of law: contracts concluded in virtual environments, consumer relations and employment relations that may arise from activities carried out within the metaverse. The author analyses how these categories must be adapted to digital settings, what specific features characterise transactions online, and what challenges arise concerning jurisdiction and applicable law when interactions occur between parties in different countries or when platforms operate without a clear territorial basis. This analysis underscores that, although the medium is new, the underlying legal structures remain recognisable, though affected by digital delocalisation.

The thematic breadth of the book is particularly evident in the chapters devoted to virtual goods and intellectual property. The author examines NFTs, their legal nature, the challenges posed by decentralisation, the rules governing their transfer and the jurisdictional questions they raise. She also explores virtual immovable property, movable property and intangible goods within the framework of Private International Law. These chapters illustrate how classical property-law concepts must be re-evaluated when the objects in question exist solely in virtual form.

All of this leads to what is arguably the book's most innovative and thought-provoking contribution: the reflection on the possible emergence of a *Lex Metaversi*. The author explains that the inadequacy of traditional connecting factors – anchored in territorial criteria – and the increasing complexity of digital interactions may encourage the development of a substantive body of rules created within the metaverse itself, akin to the historical evolution of the *Lex Mercatoria* or the more recent *Lex Cryptographia*. This *Lex Metaversi* is not presented as a substitute for state law but as a potential complement capable of addressing disputes that current legal systems are not yet prepared to manage. The author recognises that such developments will be controversial, raising questions of legitimacy and institutional control, but demonstrates how, in fully digital scenarios, they may offer practical and effective solutions.

The final reflections include concrete proposals, such as employing the *voie directe* approach in metaverse-related disputes, acknowledging the role of self-executing decisions within blockchain environments, and developing principles on virtual property, civil liability, and user protection. The author also highlights the role that organisations such as ELI and UNIDROIT may play in formulating guiding principles that could, over time, form part of a future *Lex Metaversi*. The book concludes by emphasising the need for cooperation among legislators, platforms, academics, and users in constructing regulatory frameworks capable of addressing a world that, although intangible, produces fully real legal effects.

Beyond its analytical depth, the book stands out for the clarity with which it exposes the methodological challenges that Private International Law faces in digital environments. One of its most valuable contributions lies in showing how traditional connecting factors – domicile, habitual residence, place of performance, the place where the damage occurs – begin to lose descriptive force in spaces where geographical localisation is either irrelevant or technically indeterminable. Instead of framing this as a crisis of the discipline, the author presents it as an opportunity to reassess the conceptual tools that have historically structured cross-border legal reasoning. Her approach demonstrates that the metaverse functions not as an exception to legal theory, but as an accelerator that exposes pre-existing tensions within the field.

Moreover, the book succeeds in situating the metaverse within broader debates on digital governance. The discussions surrounding decentralisation, automated decision-making and self-executing mechanisms resonate with contemporary questions about legal authority, democratic legitimacy and institutional accountability. These concerns are not treated abstractly: they are grounded in concrete examples – virtual property transactions, avatar-related disputes, decentralised organisations – showing how these issues materialise in practice. The author does not offer prescriptive solutions; instead, she maps the conceptual terrain with care, inviting the reader to reflect upon the kinds of legal architectures that might be capable of responding to digital complexity.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of the work is its insistence that the metaverse should not be viewed merely as a technological novelty but as a transformative environment whose legal significance is already manifest. By articulating the contours of this new domain with precision and analytical sobriety, the book offers a framework that will undoubtedly prove essential as legal systems increasingly confront disputes arising in virtual spaces.

Taken as a whole, *Resolución de conflictos en el metaverso* provides a comprehensive, clear and well-grounded analysis of a phenomenon already generating tangible legal consequences. The work combines traditional legal subjects with features intrinsic to virtual environments – tokens, avatars, virtual real estate – and shows that reading this book means confronting a legal reality that, although it may initially seem futuristic, is already unfolding. The reader is left with the impression that the metaverse is not a world yet to come but one already present, and one that demands – and will continue to demand – solid legal responses, especially from Private International Law.

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