4BOYUT JOURNAL OF MEDIA AND CULTURAL STUDIES
MEDYA VE KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR DERGİSİ
İSTANBUL UNIVERSITY PRESS

4. Boyut Journal of Media and Cultural Studies - 4. Boyut Medya ve Kültürel Çalışmalar Dergisi, Issue/Sayı 20, 2022
DOI: 10.26650/4boyut.2022.001 Research Article / *Araştırma Makalesi*

An Analysis of Survival Games in Terms of Biopolitics: Frostpunk

Hayatta Kalma Oyunlarının Biyoiktidar Açısından Yorumlanması: Frostpunk Üzerinden Bir İnceleme

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Submitted/Başvuru: 31.05.2022
Accepted/Kabul: 08.08.2022

Citation/Atıf: Savas, S. (2022). An analysis of survival games in terms of biopolitics: Frostpunk. *4. Boyut Journal of Media and Cultural Studies - 4. Boyut Medya ve Kültürel Çalışmalar Dergisi, 20,* 1–21.
https://doi.org/10.26650/4boyut.2022.001

ABSTRACT

Biopower has been discussed by various scholars. Biopower focuses on life and produces it. Fictional universes can be illuminating in understanding the framework of biopower. Speculations on the future and disaster scenarios have been recurrent in many books and films up to the present and some of these have the potential to become a reality. Similarly, digital games can offer similar experiences. Digital games are influential on people and provide visions of the future. There are various types of digital games, but only survival games and government simulation games offer certain projections regarding real life and form the foresight which helps the individual to make social and individual inferences on alternative situations. The aim of the study, accordingly, is to analyse survival games in terms of biopolitics by specifically focusing on Frostpunk. The findings of the study suggest that the laws of Frostpunk can be discussed in terms of biopower. It is, therefore, possible to identify the traces of biopower in the laws of Frostpunk. Frostpunk, thus, contributes to the understanding of the framework of the concept of biopower. The findings of the study indicate that digital games can be used as subjects of scientific inquiry in terms of shedding light on certain phenomena and concepts, and also render them more understandable.

Keywords: Biopower, Biopolitics, Survival Games, Digital Games, Frostpunk

ÖZ

Biyoiktidar günümüze kadar pek çok farklı araştırmacı tarafından ele alınmış bir kavramdır. Biyoiktidar hayata odaklanmakta ve onu üretmektedir. Biyoiktidarın çerçevesini kavrayabilme aşamasında kurgusal evrenlerden yararlanmanın aydınlatıcığı olduğu görülmektedir. Bilimkurgu türüne ait film ve kitaplarda geleceğe ilişkin pek çok öngörüde bulunulmakta ve bunların bir bölümü gerçeğe erişme potansiyeli içermektedir. Günümüzde dijital oyunlara yönelik de benzer bir bakış oluşturmak mümkündür. Dijital oyunlar bireyler üzerinde önemli etkiler sağlamakta ve geleceğe ilişkin öngörüler oluşturmaktadır. Dijital oyunlar dendiği zaman pek çok farklı oyun türü öne çıksa da dijital oyunlar kapsamında özellikle hayatta kalma veya yönetim simülatörleri olarak tanımlanabilecek oyun türlerinin gerçek hayata ilişkin belirli projeksiyonlar sunduğu ve alternatif durumlarda toplumsal ve bireysel ölçekte çıkarımlar oluşturabilecek öngörüler oluşturduğu söylenebilmektedir. Söz konusu noktadan hareketle bu çalışmada, bir hayatta kalma oyunu olan Frostpunk üzerinden hayatta kalma oyunları biyoiktidar açısından yorumlanmaktadır. Frostpunk yasalarının analiz edildiği çalışmanın sonuçları, Frostpunk yasalarının biyoiktidar açısından değerlendirilebileceğini göstermektedir. Söz konusu doğrultuda Frostpunk yasalarında biyoiktidara ilişkin izleri sürmenin mümkün olduğu söylenebilmektedir. Bu

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açıdan, Frostpunk biyoiktidar kavramının çerçevesinin çizilmesinde anlaşılır bir örnek ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma sonuçları, dijital oyunların belirli olgu ve kavramları açıklamada ve çerçevelerini anlaşılır kılma açısından bir araştırma nesnesi olarak kullanılması aşamasında değer yaratmaktadır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Biyoiktidar, Biyopolitika, Hayatta Kalma Oyunları, Dijital Oyunlar, Frostpunk

Introduction

Although digital games do not date back a long time, they have gained the favour of many people in today's world. These games, which are a part of daily life now, have been situated as a meaning-making mechanism through their narratives. Narrative creates the world of the game and builds the foundations of the story (Takatalo et al., 2010, p. 24). Stories in a game might have certain resemblances to real life in so many ways. A game, then, can serve as a projection of the future in certain situations.

Very much like films and TV series, digital games offer similar experiences to their players through their script and narrative. Being part of a narrative, players are engaged in various fictional worlds for various purposes. Playing a digital game, then, might offer much more than fun or escapism. A digital game has the potential to have a significant intellectual and behavioural impact on an individual.

Many studies can be found in the scholarship on the interaction of digital games with players and daily life. Servitje (2016) puts forward that the mobile game Plague Inc. offers a reproduction of the pandemic narrative through its unique interaction and significance. Servitje (2016) talks about the effects of mobile technologies on the perception and expansion of the regulations regarding biosecurity and biopolitics. He also argues that the game's interplay, which is in the form of pathogenic calibration, resembles biopolitical discourse and its graphics epidemiologic mapping. Azqueta (2011) offers a large-scale model of comparative analysis for the games that fall into the category of "government simulation games", in which the political development of a group of people is administered by the player. The games analysed in this study are Frostpunk, Civilization V, and Tropico IV. Cansever and Poyraz (2021) argue that digital games are strategically used by biopower and turned into dispositive. They analysed the biopolitical discourse and narratives in digital games by particularly focusing on The Sims 4, claiming that biopower regulates not only real life, but also synthetic life. Klosinski (2020) studied the social vision as well as the conflicts of morality and ethics in Frostpunk by particularly focusing on the interface, trailer, and the web site of the developer. Wencel (2015), in his study which analyses Assassin's Creed video game franchise, Planescape: Torment, Red Dead Redemption, The Walking Dead, The Forest, and so on, aims to approach gamification from the vantage point of biopolitics in order to understand the most fundamental mechanisms of digital games and concludes that there is no idea or praxis in the digital games outside or beyond biopolitics. Attebery (2015) examines the link between biopower and digital games in terms of Pikmin and Pokemon and states that players are actively involved in creating and maintaining biopolitical structures, arguing that these games emphasise biological mechanisms in terms of governing. Findings of the study suggest that the digital games like Pikmin are significant because they call attention to the biopolitical topics such as animal abuse and environmental change.

The aim of this study is to put the survival games under scrutiny in terms of biopower. As it goes without saying, although science fiction does not necessarily draw parallels with today's world, it speculates on the future and such works of science fiction can be observed in films, novels, and digital games. This study, accordingly, will analyse Frostpunk, which is a survival game that takes places in a fictional historical era. The laws in the game will be discussed in terms of the concept of biopower with the help of the book of laws, which is one of the game's mechanics.

1. The Concept of Biopower

The concept of biopower/biopolitics is a frequently used concept in the scholarship. It is thought that the first person to use the term biopolitics is Rudolf Kjellen, a Swedish political scientist (Lemke, 2017, p. 26). Throughout the history, many scholars have discussed the concept in a naturalist and political way, and Foucault put forward a new understanding of the concept of biopolitics in the 1970s (Lemke, 2017, pp 51). Though Foucault is not the one who invented the concepts of biopower and biopolitics, he has become one of the most frequently referred figures in terms of these concepts (Mills, 2021, p. 25).

Power, according to Foucault, "is devoid of a centre or not organised based on a single repression strategy; it is 'a name attributed to or an abbreviation for the network of connections in a complex strategic situation in a certain society' (qtd. in Mills, 2021, p. 42). Because the way that power works in may differ in terms of economics, domestic affairs etc., it should be analysed on a locale scale (Mills, 2021, p. 42). Foucault offers a historical analysis through 'life' and pointed out a modern way for the practice of power (Lemke, 2017, p. 53). He particularly focused on the transformation of power and attempted to analyse the points of difference between the sovereign power and biopower.

For Foucault, power's right on death and life has started to change since the seventeenth century (Lemke, 2017, p. 55). Power's distinctive feature was, for a long time, its right to take life or let live. The one who holds power has the right to let live (i.e., slave/master relationship in ancient Rome) or take life. A moderated version of this right applies to sovereigns. The right to let live or take life was, for sovereigns, considered as the right to respond. To be more specific, sovereign had the right to let live or take life against the people who attempted to overthrow him/her or challenged his/her commands. Still, this right is not symmetrical as it used to be. Sovereign exercises his/her right to let live by not exercising his/her right to take life. In other words, his/her power on life is possible only through death. This is called 'take life or let live' or the right to decide 'life and death'. The symbol of power or of sovereign is a sword. Given the historical conditions of the period (confiscating products, goods, and labour by force and appropriating the riches), power meant a right of appropriation and as such it also appropriated life and had the privilege to take it away. Since the ancient times, the mechanism of power has changed. It has become a mechanism of enforcement and regulation instead of bending and destruction (Foucault, 1978, p. 99-100). So long as the promotion

of life, the growth and nurturing of population became the main focus of the state, a new regime of power emerged (Rabinow, 1984, p. 17). According to Foucault, there are two poles of power over life: (1) first of which (develops from the seventeenth-century onwards) is anatomo-politics which considers the human body as a machine and focuses on disciplining it, enhancement of its capabilities and usefulness along with its docility; (2) second (develops from the mid eighteenth-century onwards) is biopolitics which focuses on the body of the species within the context of biological processes. This approach dwells on the biological processes, such as birth, death, health, and so on as well as on the conditions related to processes. These processes are subjected to intervention and regulation. Power, then, is taken into consideration as two polls; namely, disciplining the body and regulation the population. The goal of power is no longer to kill but to dominate all aspects of life (Foucault, 1978, p. 102-103). These two polls were separated in the eighteenth century. Whereas the institutions, such as schools and the police are foregrounded within the context of discipline; population forecasting, distribution of wealth, and length of life are foregrounded within the context of population (Foucault, 1978, p. 103). "One focusing on putting individualising the powers of body and manipulation, the other on putting life at the centre rather than body, these two poles function as the two poles of biopower; namely, biological processes replace the body" (Mills, 2021, p. 29). Foucault approaches discipline and control from a holistic vantage point and considers these two polls as interconnected (Lemke, 2017, p. 58).

> To say that power took possession of life in the nineteenth century, or to say that power at least takes life under its care in the nineteenth century, is to say that it has, thanks to the play of technologies of discipline on the one hand and technologies of regulation on the other, succeeded in covering the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and population. We are, then, in a power that has taken control of both the body and life or that has, if you like, taken control of life in general—with the body as one pole and the population as the other (Foucault, 2003, p. 253).

The concept of biopower points out that the main concerns of those in power are the production and reproduction of life (Hardt and Negri, 2003, p. 48). Biopolitics, on the other hand, can be defined as politics which deals with life (Lemke, 2017, p. 16). For Gunst, biopolitics includes the protection of environment and all the problems surrounding the future of mankind as well as the issues of health and population regulation (Lemke, 2017, p. 42) and biopolitics is discussed with including the mechanism of power and calculations into human life (Agamben, 1998, p. 119). In broader terms, the concept refers to the power technologies that are internalised by subjects.

Biopower is a technology of power that brings together various techniques and inventions and is flexible enough to convey technical information. Biopower makes population control possible. Many technical aspects such as census, ballots, and insurance policies can be considered as parts of biopower. Population was non-existent before biopolitics as

it merely represented a group of people in a certain place, population, as we know it today, was constructed by biopolitics (Kelly, 2016, p. 24-25). 'Life' is situated as independent, objective, and measurable in biopolitics. This approach refers to the fields such as statistics, demography, and biology. Such disciplines offer analyses on life in terms of population and make the administration of the individual (punishment, discipline, normalisation etc.) possible (Lemke, 2017, p. 20). The body is also situated as an arena for political powers. The body is something through which the traces of power can be followed (Özmakas, 2021, p. 57). Foucault approaches the body both in terms of economic efficiency and politics. The economic dimension of his approach focuses on the capacity of docile labour force (Özmakas, 2021, p. 59). "Because the subjects who have docile bodies experience their relative liberty as some sort of freedom, there is no need for a centralised power" (Özmakas, 2021, p. 63). It would be safe to say that discipline is always present. However, it is crucial to discuss the change occurring in terms of these discipline mechanisms. Put it differently, it is important to recognise the change of focus in terms of the discipline mechanisms. Methods based on controlling the body and docility-utility relation are called disciplines. As Foucault himself puts it, "The 'Enlightenment,' which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines" (Foucault, 1984, p. 211). Disciplinary mechanisms have been present in monasteries, military, workshops, and so on. These mechanisms, however, have turned into a formula which is used to establish domination in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is different from slavery because it does not work through the appropriation of bodies (Foucault, 1992, p. 169-170). "Power does not oppress the subjects, it produces them (Mills, 2021, p. 42). In fact, it is safe to say that the production of a biopolitical body is a distinctive operation of the sovereign power (Agamben, 1998, p. 6). "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1992, p. 169). According to Foucault,

> "The old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life. During the classical period, there was a rapid development of various disciplines—universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of 'biopower'" (Foucault, 1978, p. 103).

Sovereign power had been a structure relying on physical violence. People were under the strict control caused by the sudden and unexpected death threats posed by the sovereign. Contrary to the biopolitics of biopower, sovereign power was a politics of death. Whereas biopower maintained control through the utilisation of life and flexibility, sovereign power maintained subjugation through the risk of death. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that even though sovereign power has been replaced by biopower in today's world, politics of death is still present as a mechanism within biopolitics (Kelly, 2016, p. 25). This new form

of power that rules life includes death within its mechanisms, but also changes its political significance. Death is no longer the symbol or the right of power and becomes a supplement to the power that lets live (Mills, 2021, p. 28).

With the transition from the power that takes life or lets live to power over life or death, power constitutes its dominion on the length of life and death becomes its limit; in other words, the moment that escapes power (Foucault, 1978, p. 102). Here, how power which fosters life makes death possible is a significant point of discussion. It is impossible to say that power over death is no longer present. The right to take life is not forgotten but has been integrated into the mechanisms of a form of power which controls life (Lemke, 2017, p. 60). Race is the answer to the question how power which fosters life makes death possible. What makes life healthier under the hegemony of this power is the death of the inferior other (Lemke, 2017, p. 62-64). When race is included into the necessary information to be obtained about mankind, disintegration of population into smaller groups becomes possible. Threats posed towards population are not seen as an enemy, but inside and outside threat. In the process of eliminating the threats, not only death, but also 'political death' such as deportation and exclusion order are made use of (Mills, 2021, p. 31-32). Power becomes more about 'how' life should be rather than to be about the right to take life (Foucault, 2002, p. 253).

> Beneath that great absolute power, beneath the dramatic and somber absolute power that was the power of sovereignty, and which consisted in the power to take life, we now have the emergence, with this technology of biopower, of this technology of power over "the" population as such, over men insofar as they are living beings. It is continuous, scientific, and it is the power to make live. Sovereignty took life and let live. And now we have the emergence of a power that I would call the power of regularization, and it, in contrast, consists in making live and letting die (Foucault, 2003, p. 247).

Biopower focuses on the indefinite and random things that happen in terms of population. Security mechanisms, which attempt to maintain balance through statistics and anticipation, are visible. These mechanisms aim to regulate, not to discipline. The main interest here is not the human as an individual. A personalised discipline that focuses on the body and relying on a single body is out of question. Biopower focuses on regulation rather than discipline and views life in terms of man-as-species instead of individualising it (Foucault, 2002, p. 251). Regulations regarding man-as-species necessitates the spread of power.

Biopower constitutes a polycentric structure in its approach to man-as-species. Even though in biopower, the oppression on individuals appears to have disappeared due to the polymorphic nature of the centralised power, the potentiality to intervene increases even more (Özmakas, 2021, p. 63). Power is everywhere. This is a challenge to the state-centred approach to power (Kelly, 2016, p. 19). This can also be defined as a shift from discipline to control (Hardt and Negri, 2003, p. 47-48). There has been a shift from disciplining

through punishment to subjugation through surveillance and regulation. Disciplinary society maintained subjugation through setting the boundaries for what is normal and what is abnormal via institutions (prison, factory, asylum etc.). Society of control, on the other hand, represents a society in which control mechanisms function through one's body and mind. To be more specific, in a society of control power is something internalised, and the disciplinary tools of normalisation are reinforced (Hardt and Negri, 2003, p. 47-48). Power is based on not the law, but the norm. The distinguishing feature of power is no longer prohibition; it is normalisation. What is of importance is not legality or illegality, but normal and abnormal (Mills, 2021, p. 43). Normalisation connects the two previously mentioned poles (anatomo-politics and biopolitics) of biopower together (Mills, 2021, p. 44). "So after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species." (Foucault, 2002, p. 243). Regulatory and control mechanisms aim to establish a homeostasis that provides security rather than educating individuals (Lemke, 2017: 57-58). Power "bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them" (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). "One had the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others" (Foucault, 1978, p. 138). Power makes what is normal a part of itself and makes what is abnormal a problem. The abnormal needs to be transformed into a docile subject. Only the docile subjects can exist in biopower.

It is also necessary to explore the foundations of the transformation of power or its infiltration into daily life. Given the infrastructural conditions of power, it is safe to say that 'to know' has become quite significant. Biopower works through knowledge. Biopower has seized life through the knowledge of the individuals that make up the population. Hence the importance given to statistics in the discussions on biopolitics. Gathering information about the population has created substantial opportunities for modern states (Mills, 2021, p. 39). Modern state has acquired the capacity to operate in terms of population through the practices like statistics. To know, therefore, has become the main source of power for the dominant power.

Foucault's analysis can also be discussed in terms of capitalism. According to Foucault, if the methods which subjugate individuals to discipline had been non-existent, the new demands of capitalism would have been prevented. Similarly, if the immobilisation and control of populations as well as the rational distribution of populations based on statistical information had been non-existent, capitalism's emergence would have been impossible. The growing and spreading of the disciplinary mechanisms of knowledge and power preceded the rise of capitalism both rationally and temporally. Even though these technologies were not the reasons why capitalism rose, they were prerequisites for its success (Rabinow, 1984, p. 18). Therefore, biopower becomes an irreplaceable element in the development of capitalism. Capitalism, which is a system included in the relations of production of bodies, attempts to adjust the phenomena of population to economic processes. In fact, capitalism asks for

more: while both of these factors grow together, capitalism demands more docility, and while reinforcing life, it wants to create a power relation which promotes subjection. The docility of man in relation to the accumulation of capital, the growth rate in population, and the differential allocation of profit due to the expansion of productive forces were made possible because of biopower. The body, then, became something to invest in and to manage (Foucault, 1978, p. 140-141).

As Hardt and Negri (2003, p. 49) put it, the power perception of human has succumbed to capitalism as it has made its presence permanent by penetrating into the human body and all social relations. This, in other words, represents the transition from disciplinary society to the society of control. Body is important for a capitalist society, and it is considered as a biopolitical truth (Foucault, 2011, p. 137). Practices such as medicine and biology can be discussed in terms of that. This is one of the main focal points of biopolitical analyses.

Foucault's approach to the concept of biopolitics, however, is not consistent. The meaning of the concept is ever-changing. It is generally used to refer to three things: (1) a new signification of the sovereign power, (2) a vital role within the rise of modern racism, (3) individual governing himself/herself and the art of government which emerges due to the liberal forms of social regulation. Furthermore, Foucault uses not only 'biopolitics', but also 'biopower' to refer to the same thing (Lemke, 2017, p. 54). Biopower, thus, consists of two poles, and these poles complete each other. The two forms of power function as the two poles of biopower. Anatomo-politics of human body considers the human body as a machine and emphasises discipline through usefulness and docility, whereas biopolitics analyses man as a species and focuses on the technologies (rates of birth/death/longevity etc.) of population regulation (Mills, 2021, p. 28-29). Foucault provides various definitions when talking about governmentality. He sometimes uses it to refer to the cohesion between thought and practice, sometimes to the government itself, and sometimes to power (Kelly, 2016, p. 21).

The main argument here is that the transformation regarding knowledge at the end of the classical age constituted the preconditions of a form of power which considers life in terms of both individual body and population. According to Foucault, power is not exercised through the mechanisms of the sovereign. It is exercised by the sovereign through the networks that include external institutions. He also calls for a reconsideration of subjectivity because the free subject appears as a by-product of power now (Mills, 2021, p. 53). Foucault (1992, p. 272) refers to the concept of panopticon as a form of exercising power upon the human mind and defines society not as society of the spectacle, but as surveillance society. This society is defined in various ways, such as surveillance, disciplinary, control, and so on by various thinkers. Another thing to notice here is that biopower spreads from inside to outside.

2. Digital Games

It is known that the concept of game is as old as the history of humanity. The daily practices of men have always been represented in games. Believes, values, and ways of

thinking of societies have shaped the form and content of games. Similarly, games have also shaped members of these societies. It is, accordingly, safe to say that games hold an important place in daily life.

"A game is an activity that emerges on its own accord with no hidden agenda and makes people happy" (Karahisar, 2013, p. 108). Games can also be defined as mental or physical activities that have certain rules, help develop skills and intelligence, and allow one to have a good time (Aytaş & Uysal, 2017, p. 676). Digital games, on the other hand, include the elements such as interactivity, virtuality, and mutability that are provided by digital media and incorporate these into the process of gameplay (Ilgaz Büyükbaykal & Abay Cansabuncu, 2020, p. 3). Digital games can also be defined as a body of systems and games with rules and purposes that can be played only via the hardware such as monitor, mouse, keyboard as well as via certain software (Hazar et al., 2017, p. 180).

Historically speaking, people need to share a certain space in order to perform the act of playing a game. This physical space needs to be preserved so that the game can be sustained within a certain period of time. This requirement places certain limitations on the practice of playing a game as well as on the potential expansion of this practice. Although the practice of playing a game occurred face-to-face for a long period of time in history, with digitalisation certain transformations have taken place in terms of the practice of playing games, which is as old as the history of humanity. Playing a game, accordingly, no longer depends on the availability of a sustainable physical space, which is to be shared by the people who will play the game so that the game can be played together. In today's world, those possessing any technological device such as computers, cell phones, and tablets can play games with people from all over the world without being have to share the same physical space at the same time. This has made possible for games to hold a more important place in people's lives. With the disappearance of spatial and temporal limitations, people no longer face traditional restrictions in terms of participating in games, and this has become a driving force that gets more people to be involved in the practice of playing games. Accordingly, the content and meaning of games have also flourished.

As far as the contents of games are concerned, it is safe to suggest that games have become considerably comprehensive. Digital games today offer in-depth universes and detailed networks of script—particularly the modern digital games which allow players to assume certain roles to interact with others in a fictional world (Zagal & Deterding, 2018, p. 20). Modern digital games offer fictional universes that are so extensive and well-rounded ,which is beyond what the players of digital games can even imagine. These digital games that are categorised as FPS, TPS, RPG MMORPG, MOBA, RTS, TBS, Adventure, Simulation etc. are helpful in the development of imagination.

The meaning of a game is another major point of discussion. Traditional games were for teaching and fun. They brought people together, made them socialise, allowed them to gain

certain skills and abilities, and strengthened the bonds between communities. Games are also useful in the development of academic progress, eye hand coordination, problem solving, reasoning, and decision-making skills (Toran et al., 2016, p. 2265). This is also applicable to digital games. Simulation games, for example, teach players how to use various machines, tools, and equipment, whereas puzzle-adventure games instruct players on certain topics and contribute to the development of problem-solving skills. Accordingly, it is safe to say that games can be a decisive factor in terms of one's way of thinking and behaviours as well as one's interaction with his/her social milieu and certain concepts. This tells us that games are not just for fun and should be put under scrutiny in various ways. It would be wrong to say that role-playing games with fictional universes in which players assume certain personas are completely detached from real life. Fictional world and real world might have so many similarities. Insights, skills, abilities, and perspectives acquired through digital games can be quite useful in one's daily life. Therefore, it would be safe to suggest that digital games are instructive in establishing conceptual framework.

What has been discussed so far is applicable particularly to survival games. In survival games, players are required to make certain critical decisions and act on these. Playing such digital games, for example, can raise awareness in terms of climate crisis or can improve one's ability to better comprehend what is going on in his/her life. The survival games like Frostpunk, This War is Ours, and Plague Inc. or the simulation games such as Civilisations, Tropico, and Government Simulator raise one's awareness in terms of his/her social milieu. Whereas Frostpunk draws attention to climate crisis, This War is Ours emphasises the destructiveness of war. Plague Inc., on the other hand, had drawn attention to a potential pandemic even before the coronavirus outbreak occurred. It is impossible to deny the fact that digital games create awareness.

The above-mentioned examples show that the interaction of digital games with and their influence on daily life should be discussed in a much more comprehensible way. These games not only make certain predictions about what may happen in the future, but also draw attention to what is currently taking place, emphasising potential threats and providing perspectives. Given that millions of people play these digital games on a daily basis, it is only natural to argue that digital games have the potential to provide a conceptual framework on certain topics or raise awareness on certain issues. The fact that approximately three billion people play digital games today (TrueList, 2022) is indicative of how influential digital games have become.

3. Analysis of Survival Games in Terms of Biopolitics: Frostpunk

The aim of the study is to analyse survival games in terms of biopolitics. The study will also explore whether digital games can be used as an object of scientific inquiry that elucidates certain concepts and discusses the Book of Laws in Frostpunk in terms of culture. This study limits its scope to a single survival game: Frostpunk. The scope of the game's analysis will be consisted of its content, and the analysis will solely focus on the Book of Laws.

As previously mentioned, there have been various studies on digital games, including Frostpunk, concerning the biopolitical narratives. This study will distinguish itself from the previously made studies by specifically focusing on the Book of Laws. Accordingly, the study will put the Book of Laws under scrutiny in terms of biopower. This study will focus on survival games. The study uses voluntary sampling method since it is not possible to include every aspect in the universe of the study into the study (Ergin, 1994, p. 91). Voluntary sampling consists of the elements which have the potential to find a solution to the research problem (Saruhan & Özdemirci, 2013: 184). In this direction, it can be said that the most appropriate sampling method for this research is voluntary sampling.

The study will perform content analysis within the context of qualitative research. Content analysis is a method that analyses the object of research by dividing it into categories. Since there are no standardised categories in content analysis, new categories are established for the object of research in each study (Çilingir, 2017, p. 151; Elo & Kyngas, 2007, p. 109). The study divides the content of the video game into categories at first. The regulation of the community in the game works through certain laws. The scope of the content to be analysed is limited to the Book of Laws, and the contents of these laws are included in the study. The reason why the study particularly focuses on the Book of Laws is that it constitutes the fundamental principles on which the practices of the virtual community in the game are based. Moreover, additional information regarding the contents outside the categories of law are also discussed in the study. The analysis is focused on the categories of Adaptation and Order (the category of Faith is excluded) and the relevant subcategories within these two. Adaptation is divided into the following six categories: working conditions, condition of children, procedures concerning dead bodies, treatment and healthcare, food, and leisure/social life. Order is analysed in terms of only a single category. Following the categorisation process, the laws in the game are placed within the right categories. After the contents of the categories are established, the study puts the laws in these categories under scrutiny in terms of biopower. The analysis equally focuses on both the general categories and subcategories. The study, to sum up, dwells on the categorisation of the contents of the game and analysing the established categories in terms of biopower.

3.1. Findings

Frostpunk is known to be the first survival game. In the game, the world is in a state of apocalyptic global cooling, and the humanity is on the brink of extinction. The player is assigned the role to govern the last surviving city on Earth. Certain vital decisions have to be made in order for the society to survive, and these decisions have certain consequences (11 Bit Studios, n.d). In the game, while trying to survive in a world with harsh climate conditions, the player must govern the society as its decision-maker by enacting the laws which regulate the way that people live.

It is possible to talk about a disposition to establish a link between the laws and culture. Understanding the law as a product of culture (Sümer, 1998, p. 313) or as a social product would render keeping the law outside the boundaries of culture obsolete (Üçüncü, 2016, p. 382). Mezey (2001) argues that the law and culture signify one another rather than being two separate discourses. He explores the respective constitutive natures of culture and the law. Cotterrell (2004) emphasises that legal theory should systematically take the concept of culture into account and discuss how to do it best. He states that because culture includes a number of uncertain and different phenomena, its contributions to legal theory would be limited. Licht et al. (2005) explores how the laws of different countries reflect the dominant culture. To be more specific, he examines whether the cultural factors are visible in the laws. The findings of the study show that the laws of corporate governance are associated with the dominant culture. Thus, it is plausible to analyse the operative mechanisms of society and the values that the members of society cherish in terms of the laws. Indeed, the laws in Frostpunk affect daily life and therefore assume a formative function.

The system of law appears in two different forms in Frostpunk. The management of society is done through the laws titled 'adaptation'. The Adaptation Laws are divided into six categories. Although these categories are not particularly named in the game, they can be named as working conditions, condition of children, procedures concerning dead bodies, treatment and healthcare, food, and leisure/social life. There are twenty-one different laws (twenty-eight if the alternatives are also taken into account) in total under the category of the Adaptation Laws.

Table 1: Adaptation Laws

Working Conditions	***Condition of Children***	***Procedures Concerning Dead Bodies***	***Treatment and Healthcare***	***Food***	***Leisure/Social Life***
Emergency Shift	Child Labour - Safe Jobs / Child Shelters	Cemetery / Corpse Disposal	Radical Treatment / Sustain Life	Soup / Food Additives	Fighting Arena
Extended Shift	Child Labour - All Jobs	Ceremonial Funerals	Care House	Alternative Food Source	Duelling Law
	Medic Apprentices / Engineer Apprentices	Organ Transplants	Extra Rations for the Ill / Overcrowding		Public House
		Organic Fertiliser	Prosthetics		House of Pleasure
			Triage		Moonshine
(11 Bit Studios, 2018)					

While some of the laws offer only a single option, others force the player into choosing one of the two. Approval of each law has certain consequences for the other laws, emphasising the interconnection of laws.

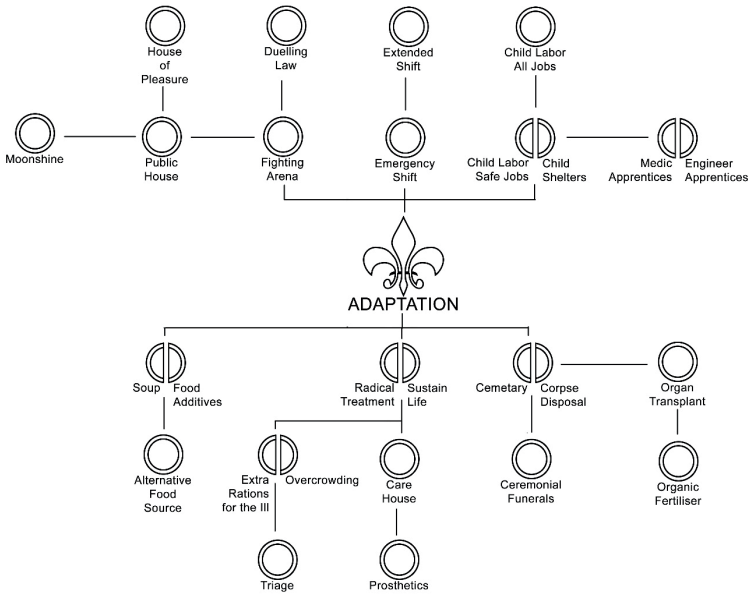


Figure 1: Relations on Adaptation Law Tree (11 Bit Studios, 2018)

Emergency Shift makes the workers work for the next twenty-four hours in any given facility. *Extended Shift* increases the total working hours up to fourteen. *Child Labour - Safe Jobs / Child Shelters*: whereas Safe Jobs make children work in refectory or in areas of resource gathering, Child Shelters make sure that children stay safe inside the shelters. *Child Labour - All Jobs* make it possible for children to work at any place. *Medic Apprentices / Engineer Apprentices*: whereas Medic Apprentices make Child Shelters help medical facilities, Engineer Apprentices make Child Shelters help workshops. *Cemetery / Corpse Disposal*: Cemetery buries dead bodies in the ground, whereas Corpse Disposal covers them with snow. *Ceremonial Funerals* allow a funeral ceremony for each burial. *Organ Transplants* function to save lives using the bodies of the fallen. *Organic Fertiliser* allows dead bodies to be used for fertilisation. *Radical Treatment / Sustain Life*: whereas Radical Treatment allows invasive and experimental methods as well as amputations, Sustain Life focuses on keeping the ill alive rather than risking radical treatment or amputations. *Care House* aims to keep the gravely ill alive in special houses. *Extra Rations for the Ill / Overcrowding*: whereas Extra Rations for the Ill provide extra rations for the sick people, Overcrowding doubles the maximum capacity of medical facilities. *Prosthetics* aim to enable the amputees to rejoin the workforce. *Triage* focuses all efforts to healing those who have the potential to recover at the cost of sacrificing those who are severely ill. *Soup / Food Additives*: whereas Soup aims to feed more people utilising the same amount of raw food instead of cooking full meal, Food Additives allow sawdust to be added into food in order to make it more filling. *Alternative Food Source* allows dead bodies to be utilised as food. The laws such as Fighting Arena,

Duelling Law, Public House, House of Pleasure, and Moonshine are activities that are utilised to keep the people entertained in the leisure time (11 Bit Studios, 2018).

As the climate conditions get worse and as the people hear rumours saying that they are alone on Earth, they will lose hope, and this causes a new category of law to be emerged. This second category of law appears to the player with alternative options. In the process of determining the second category of law, the purpose to be given to society is taken into consideration, and the player is asked to choose either Faith or Order. Because the practices of surveillance and control are more visible in Order, the study will focus on this category. There are eleven laws in Order.

Table 2: Order Laws

Neighbourhood Watch	Guard Stations	Prison	Forceful Persuasion
Morning Gathering	Patrol	Agitator	New Order
Foreman	Propaganda Centre	Pledge of Loyalty	
(11 Bit Studios, 2018)			

All of the laws listed above offer only a single option and progress in a linear way. The approval of each law enables another to appear. Similar to the Adaptation Laws, each law in Order Laws is interconnected.

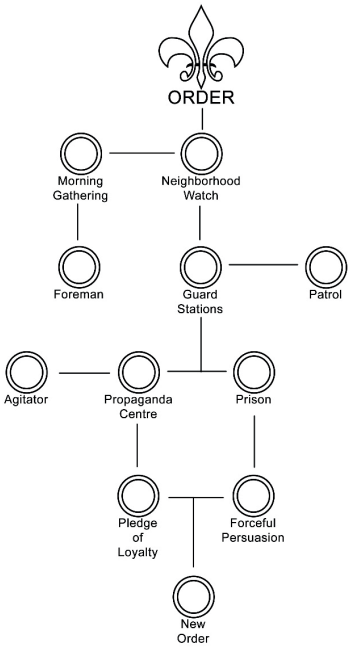


Figure 2: Relations on Order Law Tree (11 Bit Studios, 2018)

Neighbourhood Watch enables watchtowers to be built in the city. *Morning Gathering* aims to organise meetings in the morning to remind everyone the goals and priorities. *Foreman* means an appointment of responsible foremen to make sure that people work as effectively as possible. *Guard Stations* aim to establish a military force that would maintain peace and order in the city. *Patrol* provides safety and order within the city. *Propaganda Centre* is responsible for informing citizens and spreading the news. *Prison* functions to isolate those who pose a danger to society 'for the greater good'. *Agitator* motivates people by reminding them of the importance of their work and effort through playing pre-recorded speeches via strategically placed speakers around the city. *Pledge of Loyalty* gives people who made 'mistakes' in the past a second chance to 'fix' themselves. *Forceful Persuasion* aims to inform inmates about the enormity of their wrongdoings in a more 'direct' manner to make them become a part of the society again faster. *New Order* considers those who express their doubts as traitors and establishes an order where obedience is regarded as the highest virtue (11 Bit Studios, 2018).

As it can be observed, most of the laws in Frostpunk can be analysed in terms of biopower. Moreover, it can also be observed that societies can resort to primitive practices in a state of global disaster. In the game, accordingly, the boundaries become blurred, and a social start over, where the pre-biopower practices are in effect, is present. Adaptation Laws are, for the most part, concerned with the human body. Most of the laws consider people as a flesh/body to be inflicted punishment upon. Similarly, there are practices in the laws concerned with man-as-species. These laws include certain regulations and practices for the human body (dead or alive). The laws such as Soup/Food Additives and Alternative Food Source in the Adaptation Laws focus on feeding the society. The laws like Cemetery/Corpse Disposal, Ceremonial Funerals, Organ Transplants, and Organic Fertiliser focus on public health and therefore can be discussed in terms of socialisation of the body. These laws enable the dead bodies of the members of the society to be utilised to sustain life. Similarly, the laws such as Radical Treatment/Sustain Life, Care House, Extra Rations for the Ill/Overcrowding, Prosthetics, and Triage that are included in Treatment and Healthcare have bearing on public health. The laws like Emergency Shift, Child Labour, Safe Jobs/Child Shelters, Extended Shift, Child Labour - All Jobs, and Medic Apprentices/Engineer Apprentices that are included in Working Conditions and Condition of Children are concerned with the efficiency of workforce and regulation. As for the Order Laws, practices regarding surveillance and control are particularly foregrounded. This category of law deals with the surveillance, regulation, and control of the individuals by making the members of the society become voluntary inspectors. These laws, then, allow power to penetrate into individuals. Furthermore, the laws concerned with disciplining the body rather than controlling the individuals are also present. The laws such as Neighbourhood Watch, Morning Gathering, Foreman, Guard Station, Patrol, Propaganda Centre, Agitator, and New Order allow control and surveillance to spread within the virtual community of Frostpunk. Lastly, the laws like Prison and Forceful Persuasion offer practices that focus on the human body.

Statistics are also as important as the laws in the game. Information regarding the daily resource balance; the health, working, and living conditions of the members of the society;

heat level differentials; the efficiency of facilities/workforce; housing conditions; the total number of population; and so on can be collected. Immigrants moving into the city by themselves and travelling in a hot air balloon are also important in terms of the regulation of population. At certain times immigrants arrive at the city, and depending on their state (disease, labour eligibility etc.), their entrance into the city is either approved or rejected. Similarly, scout groups can travel to certain areas and encounter people living outside the city, and this requires certain decisions (such as leaving the sick behind or abandoning people) to be made. Situations like these are also made possible with various events (like increasing work efficiency etc.).

Surely population has a lot to do with culture. Culture shapes the lives of the individuals who are members of a society. When the laws of the society in the Frostpunk are put under scrutiny, it is observed that these laws regulate the lives of people, making the analysis of the relationship between these laws and culture possible. The laws set the boundaries as to what the members of the society are allowed to do. Therefore, adapting to the practices of daily life and following the rules set by the laws are interrelated.

Conclusion

Apocalyptic future and the end of civilization, as we know it, have always been recurrent themes in science fiction. Speculations on the future and disaster scenarios have been recurrent in many books, films, and games up to the present. Indeed, even the epidemics quite similar to the Covid-19 pandemic have been recurrent in various films and TV series in recent history. What is new and unprecedented is the role these areas and video games play in our understanding of politics. (Servitje, 2016, p. 85).

It is safe to assert that video games should be seen relevant and significant in terms of defining and forming the frame of various phenomena and concepts regarding real life. Frostpunk, accordingly, as a video game, holds an important place as an object of scientific inquiry that provides a framework of biopower. Frostpunk presents a successful image of biopower. Survival narrative is important in the perception and expansion of biopower. Biopower interferes with the life of man-as-species, and this interference is perhaps best seen in the moments of survival.

In the game, a virtual race of human beings has to go along with certain decisions (even though the possibility of mutiny is present) in order to survive the apocalyptic atmosphere. These decisions are made for people's 'own good'. It is observed that the legitimacy of the decisions made is questioned by people with regard to survival. If the decisions made result in positive consequences, people support power. However, if they result in negative consequences, people can resort to mutiny. People focus on the end products rather than the decision-making process as far as the decisions are concerned, but the content of the decisions and the laws need to be put under scrutiny in order to establish a framework of biopower. The blueprints of the society of normalisation are visible. Foucault (2002, p. 258; 1978, p.

101) states that the society of normalisation coincides to be situated in between discipline and regulation. Battles are fought in this society not for the sovereign, but for the survival of everybody. Becoming extinct under control or recreating history in the process of preventing an extinction foregrounds biopower. Docile individuals are important in maintaining normalisation. This form of power, according to Foucault (1978, p. 106), deals with spreading the norms rather than drawing a line between the sovereign and his/her enemies. Threat is not an enemy, and it is divided into two: inside and outside (Mills, 2021, p. 31). These are visible in Frostpunk as climate is an outside threat, whereas Londoners and thwarts are inside. Also visible are the various mechanisms developed to handle these threats.

The majority of the laws and practices in the game can be analysed in terms of biopower. Even the alternatives provided fall into the territory of biopower. The game presents an image of the world where the terms such as increasing efficiency, discipline, regulation, overseeing, and control are foregrounded in order for the survival of humankind. The image presented by the game is where the processes like utilising statistics, distinguishing between individuals, exclusion, and punishment are practised in a normalised form. The laws and events in Frostpunk allow the player to make decisions and observe the consequences. The laws for regulating population can always be put into effect in the game. The human life and body as well as man-as-species can always be interfered with. The quality of population can be regulated and the statistical consequences can be observed.

The obsession for development is in line with a policy of producing steadfast population (Agamben, 2000, p. 34). There is an attempt for development in Frostpunk. A virtual community in the game has just suffered from a disaster and is in a state of building a developed society. It is worth noting that there are various practices in effect in the game for increasing the efficiency of workforce and for the society to develop a citizenship consciousness. As Hardt and Negri (2003, p. 48) put it, biopower regulates life from the inside, and this can only be achieved if the domination of biopower over population is internalised by individuals and becomes essential. In the game, the idea of producing docile individuals is prevalent, and the practices of subjugation are implemented.

This can also be analysed from a cultural vantage point. As previously mentioned, the laws and culture are interconnected. *Jus non scriptum* is just as important as the law for the social mechanisms to function properly. In the game, the members of the community internalise the aforementioned practices and make them part of their lives. Hence, the emphasis is on cultural assimilation. The society in the game has a culture and a way of operation that is supported by the laws. Those who join the society later on must accept the present culture and the law in order to survive. Assimilation, then, becomes a prerequisite for survival in a primitive community in the game.

When the past studies are taken into consideration, it would be safe to say that the studies of Servitje (2016), Azqueta (2021), Cansever and Poyraz (2021), and Klosinski (2020)

illustrate the link between the digital games and biopolitics. These studies approach the issue in terms of narrative reiteration and discourse, the influence on the perception and extension of biopower, the strategical use of biopower, and ethics and morality. The studies in which various survival games are comparatively analysed as well as the ones specifically focusing on the certain parts of the games show that the traces of biopower is visible not only in real life, but also in synthetic life. This study, accordingly, focused on Frostpunk, which is a survival game, with a similar approach, but differentiates itself by analysing biopolitics in terms of the rules that make the society in the game function. Put it differently, the study put under scrutiny the relationship between the regulatory rules and biopolitics. As Attebery's (2015) study demonstrates, digital games can raise awareness on certain issues or play a certain part in establishing conceptual framework. The analysis conducted in this study draws parallels with that of Attebery's in terms of current trends and concepts in the field.

In that direction, it is safe to say that digital games can be used as subjects of scientific inquiry in terms of shedding light on certain concepts. Frostpunk's speculation on the future is enlightening. Climate crisis is one of the world's major issues today. As Frostpunk's universe illustrates, climate conditions have the potential to transform societies and people. The determinist nature of technology can also cause negative consequences. Not all changes mean improvement, but some of them can bear bitter fruit. Since the precautions taken against the climate crisis are still not enough on a global scale, the real world facing a similar fate is not an farfetched idea. Even though one might think that humanity can survive under any circumstances, but as Frostpunk asks us at the end of the game: "but was it worth it"? Frostpunk is indeed a well-designed video game because it broadens one's horizon and asks the questions that we should be asking.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.
Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.
Grant Support: The author declared that this study has received no grant support.

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