

Araştırma Makalesi

Castells'in Ağ Toplumu: Ready Player Two ve The Metaverse'te Metaverse ve Telebulunma

Navigating the Castells' Network Society: Metaverse and Telepresence in Ready Player Two and The Metaverse

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Öz: Bu çalışma, çağdaş distopik edebiyatın incelenmesinde Manuel Castells'in Ağ Toplumu paradigmasının geçerliliğini, özellikle Soner Aydoğan'ın *The Metaverse* ve Ernest Cline'in *Ready Player Two* adlı eserleri odağa alarak araştırmaktadır. Her iki eserde de metaverse ve telebulunma teknolojilerinin, merkezileşmiş dijital iletişim ve dönüşen toplumsal yapılarla karakterize edilen ağ temelli bir toplumsal düzenin temel bileşenleri olarak nasıl temsil edildiği incelenmektedir. Karşılaştırmalı edebi analiz yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilen bu çalışma, sanal gerçeklik ve birbirine bağlı dijital ağların romanlardaki temsillerini, sosyal ilişkiler, güç dinamikleri ve kimlik üzerindeki etkilerine odaklanarak ele almaktadır. Araştırma, Castells'in Ağ Toplumu'na dair kavramsal çerçevesinin her iki eserde de yansımaya bulunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Elde edilen bulgular, dijital ağların bağlantı kurma aracı hem de yabancılaştırıcı bir unsur olabileceğini göstermektedir. Çalışma, distopik kurmacanın, yeni teknolojilerin toplumsal sonuçlarını değerlendirmede eleştirel bir bakış sunduğunu ve dijital çağda teknoloji, topluluk ve kimlik arasındaki dönüşen ilişkilere ışık tuttuğunu ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ağ Toplumu, Manuel Castells, Distopya, metaverse, telebulunma.

Abstract: This article uses Soner Aydoğan's *The Metaverse* and Ernest Cline's *Ready Player Two* to explore the applicability of Manuel Castells' Network Society framework to contemporary dystopian literature. It examines how the metaverse and telepresence technologies are represented in these novels as ingredients in a digital social order characterized by decentralized digital communication and transformed social relationships. The paper adopts a comparative literary approach to analyze virtual reality and networked space, focusing on their impact on social structures, power dynamics, and notions of subjectivity. The study shows how Castells' theory of The Network Society is implicit in both novels. The findings demonstrate how digital networks can be both a resource for connection and a wellspring of alienation. The study says that dystopian fiction offers a critical reflection of the social consequences of new technologies, and explores how tech, community and identity are changing in the internet age.

Keywords: Network Society, Manuel Castells, dystopian literature, metaverse, telepresence.

Atıf: Özdemir, H. (2025). "Navigating the Castells' Network Society by Cas: Metaverse and Telepresence in Ready Player Two and The Metaverse". *Edebî Eleştiri Dergisi*. 9(2): 436-452.

DOI: 10.31465/eeder.1688815

Geliş/Received: 01.05.2025

Kabul/Accepted: 19.06.2025

Yayın/Published: 27.10.2025



Introduction

The rapid proliferation of digital Technologies such as ICT, robotic technology, AI, Web 3.0, metaverse, new media telepresence etc. have fundamentally altered societal organization, giving rise to what Manuel Castells (1996) terms the “Network Society.” The Network Society, a concept coined by sociologist Manuel Castells, refers to a reality in which digital information and communication technologies shape social, economic, and political activities organized through networks. These networks, empowered by the internet and other digital tools, are decentralized, flexible, and global—reshaping how people interact, work, and govern. This change, one that has been clear since at least the late 20th century according to Castells himself establishes his theory of a society of interlinked nodes, flows of information and one built around knowledge-based economies. According to Manuel Castells, the Information Age is shaped by four major dimensions of social transformation. First, a new technological paradigm, driven by information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as biotechnology, enables the emergence of new forms of social organization through digital networks. Second, globalization, understood as the ability of core systems (e.g., the economy) to operate as a unified entity in real-time on a planetary scale, marks a historically novel development. Third, Castells identifies the rise of a new symbolic environment, characterized by interactive multimedia communication, which fosters a culture of “real virtuality,” where virtual experiences become integral to human interaction. Finally, he describes a shift in power and governance, marked by the decline of the sovereign nation-state and the rise of network-based structures that operate across multiple scales through shared sovereignty. These concurrent transformations, according to Castells, form the foundation of a new social structure—the network society—characterized by flexible, adaptive, and digitally interconnected networks (2000a: 694-695).

Despite the proliferation and intermeshing of networks in all spheres of our life, Castells’ Network Society is still a useful framework for understanding current alterations in social organizations, communication patterns and power relations. The network society transforming mode of communication, engagement and governance in societies. In the Network Society, those who dominate the channels of information distribution, whether through digital technology behemoths or state apparatuses, have a significant impact on social dynamics. According to Castells (2008: 275), the foundation of social structure lies in the process of work. These dynamics of work are indeed an important framework for understanding the dystopia or contemporary world shaped by the proliferation of networks in various aspects of society. By examining these changes brought about by the network society through Castells’ lens, we can gain valuable insights into how technology, globalization and social change have transformed our world into a dystopia.

Castells framework, one of the most significant implications is moving from face-to-face interaction to digital communication modalities. In contemporary society, social interactions increasingly occur through digital networks, where individuals negotiate their identities and relationships across multiple platforms and layers. This means that the culture will be influenced by both local conventions and global circulating which spreads through networked communication channels.

This paper, which is part of a of comparative literary research on two Contemporary novels namely *Ready player Two* by Ernest Cline and *The Metaverse* by Soner Aydoğan explore the validity of Castells’ framework in addressing dystopian novels. Manuel Castells – *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), info and comm networks lead to new social order that has decentralized segmentation. At the global level, these networks consist of nodes and flows that facilitate

connectivity, adaptability, and transformation (Castells, 2000). In this article, I contribute to these and related theoretical paradigms by analysing the manifestations the Network Society within contemporary dystopian literature.

1-The Network Society- Manuel Castells

Network Society, according to Castells (1999) is a network form of social organization based on networking logic. This structure is essentially decentralized, does not have a central authority and is based on largely non-hierarchical or at least (often) horizontal relations between the nodes that are interconnected. The network's adaptability and its capacity to include or exclude actors based on value make it the dominant organizational form in the information age (1999: 6). The Network Society theoretical framework proposed by Manuel Castells therefore stands out as one of the most significant and relevant analytical tools to understand the radical transformations of social and technological phenomena at play in societies today. Informationalism—the foundation of the Network Society—is a developmental mode organized around the production, processing, and dissemination of information... Castells (2004) suggests that this informationalism is not merely a refinement of former and singular economic or social force but an independent mode which organizes through core society. This is a setting where the information field above all, and as such facilitates dense interlinked networks that fundamentally change how interaction will continue in space.

Networked Communication (Castells, 2000) suggests network society fundamentally changes the structure of society from traditional social media based on a fixed hierarchal and geographically bounded categorisations to networks of fluid networks that underpin social relations.

In an early paper that virtually laid the foundations of contemporary Internet research Castells (2002) argues the Internet not only transmits information, but is an emerging cultural medium (though one that remains highly contentious) one in which a subject speaks for themselves. The ease of content creation marks a departure from traditional gatekeeping paradigms, resulting in a more complex, democratic, and decentralized flow of information.

Further, the evolution of communications in Network Society are hardly clean as surveillance and control are endemic. The very technologies that facilitate decentralized communication also embed mechanisms for surveillance and user control. The impact of communication in the Network Society runs more deeply right down into generation of new social movements and collective identity at large. Interactions within networked environments transcend geographical and cultural divides, fostering new forms of global solidarity. Metaverse and Telepresence are examples of networked communication technologies that do allow 'distant' participants to unite for the same issues and share works, inciting collective action on a scale not thought possible before.

Central to our age is Manuel Castells' Network Society, where conventional ideas of power distribution have been nearly remade. Digital technologies have profoundly reshaped communication and interaction, potentially reconfiguring traditional power structures in an era where previous forms were decentralized or networked decentralized alternatives. Castells (2011) contends that, access to information and infrastructural information literacy is increasingly the new mode of power in the Network Society. The proliferation of digital communication enabled mass voice decentralization that allowed much more voices to enter and participate in the public sphere. Nevertheless, this decentralization is accompanied by a great deal of problems — misinformation, surveillance and power towards certain entities are few examples. "So, in sum:

the media are not the holders of power, but they constitute by and large the space where power is decided" (Castells, 2007: 242).

Castells outlines four main dimensions of social transformation that built on each other for network society to arise in the information age. In book he elaborate a new technological paradigm build around microelectronics based ICT in communication and genetic engineering—technologies that went beyond mere regulation of society networks to reconfigure it. Next, he introduces a global economy in which production, finance, and information flow operate in real time across national boundaries. Second, he presents the notion of a new cultural form, the interactive multimedia communication systems developing the culture of real virtuality in which symbolic experiences are hypertexted by electronics. Castells presents in the fourth place how state power and governance was changed through declining sovereign nation—states with a new decentralized, networked “network state” dispersed in institutions local national and global. Together they comprise a particular social structure that is typical of the Information Age (2000b: 9–13).

The emergence of the Network Society, as articulated by Manuel Castells, marked a fundamental transformation in social organization, where traditional forms of social hierarchy and domination were essentially dissolved within society. In the digital era, relations between people more and more transcended local place-based ones so that they could converge round common interests, ideas or grudges, instead of only local connections (1999a: 59-62).

Castells introduces the “space of flows” as a distinctive spatial form inherent to the Network Society. He describes it as a ‘material structure of possibilities’ for time-sharing social practices, which is materialised through ‘purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions’ spanning across economic, political and symbolic domains (2010: 442).

In the cultural dimension of network society we witness the emergence of a model of communication based on networking, on flexibility, on transience of symbolic interactions. This emerging cultural landscape is structured through electronic media systems, including but not limited to broadcasting and computer-mediated communication. In contrast to the age of mass media, with its homogeneous one-way messages that are channeled though a few big channels, the current media system is diverse and interactive. Rather than fostering a global village, it fosters the mass customization of symbolic environments, creating what Castells (1997) calls the culture of real virtuality. This notion underscores that the hypertextual or rather, networked multimedia environment we traverse every day is not just virtual, it is the very reality in which symbolic exchange takes place. With today’s media marketplace becoming ever more fragmented and content ever more personalized, the once homogenized mass audience is breaking down and individuals have opportunities to interact with media sources in ways that further molds their identities and viewpoints of the world.

“Networks constitute the fundamental pattern of life, of all kinds of life.” The network society is the social structure of the information age that is centered around electronically processed information networks, and the implied paradigm for when all these new social structures. The networks are composed of nodes whose significance lies solely in their function as information processors and transmitters within the system rather than as inherently different from the rest of their category. As self-organising systems, networks act in response to the environment, engaging redundant nodes and eliminating redundant ones while they sustain performance through flows of information.

Concepts of communication have changed significantly, with the Network Society nurturing many-layered forums for a highly diverse public/private discourse that so often gets collapsed in present day. The implications of what Castells calls this transformation are brought into focus, most notably the nature of social relations redefined as networks prioritizing connection and speed over long-term ties. The manner in which we move towards socialization and discourses in digital spaces move the dynamics of power/influence.

2-Metaverse and Telepresence

Emerging technologies—such as new media, telepresence, the metaverse, virtual reality (VR), mixed reality (MR), extended reality (XR), and augmented reality (AR)—are fundamentally transforming interaction and communication across all domains. These technologies with the term Network Society — coined by sociologist Manuel Castells as a frame to encompass deep societal, economic, and cultural reverberations connected to what happens when networks and digital technologies come within reach of most people — are systemic not just as socio-technical instruments for private communication, but clearly how communities work and individuals perceive the world.

VR and AR (Immersive technologies) are the gateways to experience social interactivity in this digital life. In virtual reality, you are dropped into environments that have been entirely created (and by extension opening up a realm of interaction that is both physical and digital). VR and AR are being leveraged more widely to foster social interaction in immersive digital worlds using immersive technologies. Ali et al. (2023) claim that these platforms provide situations for the collaboration among people, educative purposes at distance and virtual experiences together that may break territorial walls. Although the authors do not elaborate on the emotional depth of these experiences, their discussion of collaborative and social applications suggests a redefinition of how individuals connect within simulated virtual worlds. It can facilitate authentic and interfacing experiences by its immersive nature, therefore makes people feel social belonging stronger.

Telepresence is a term used to describe a capability that makes it seem as if an individual is in a place other than where they physically are at the moment. It is an illusion generated by media and sensations that give the user the impression that they are interacting with space and individuals simultaneously removed from themselves. Telepresence technology is not relegated to a single sector but extends itself also teleco responding and business —tovirtual doctor appointments fostering the need that humans at any distance should feel connected. (Sheridan, 1992). Telepresence is fundamentally characterized by its ability to dissolve physical distance, fully capitalizes and embodies the interconnectivity (in/to sharing spaces) is the backbone of Network Society as people work together without being constrained by geographical locations. As Ateya et al., [2025] signifies that telepresence is when an experience is so engrossing it almost removes all seem similarities between our physical and digital world leading us to have a better sense of being. Telepresence is maybe the buzzword of today's digital communication and this, because technology is taking remote interactions to no end. Telepresence is a technology that creates the sensation of being present in another location, allowing individuals to maintain interactive relationships despite physical separation.

According to Fadzli et al., telepresence is one of the concepts that can be well implemented with MR technologies MR sits somewhere between AR and VR, creating a shared space where both digital elements can overlap with real world objects that can collide this interaction in live. In the context of telepresence, MR enables users to feel present at a location and interact physically with virtual objects or remote participants (2020: 1).

Recent developments in computer-mediated communication research point to the usefulness of flow theory in deepening our understanding of human-computer interaction (HCI). As Faiola and Smyslova (2009) suggest, environments that support a strong sense of telepresence can enhance users' enjoyment by fostering flow—a state of deep engagement and immersion. (Faiola & Smyslova, 2009: 575). The 'Metaverse' shares similarities with telepresence—remote control of machines via virtual reality technology—both being recent advancements in digital interaction (Özdemir, 2024: 194). Telepresence is the transportation of a person's physical movements to another location, where they are represented, for example, by a robot (Minsky, 2024).

In the light field metaverse, two primary methods exist for depicting individuals in virtual social environments. The first involves light field telepresence, where a person's real-world physical presence is captured and transmitted to other metaverse users. The second method adopts the approach of current virtual reality applications, representing individuals through synthetic 3D avatars (Kara et al., 2023: 7). XR significantly impacts social interaction and community formation. Telepresence, the forebear to XR will enable people to experience the same worlds and share their interaction as if physically co-present to each other. As the World becomes more globalized and networked, this ability is going to be ever more critical. XR strengthens social bonds by enabling users to attend virtual meetups, work on projects regardless of physical location, and develop communities of like-minded people rather than next-door neighbours.

Metaverse creates virtual presence where users feel they are in this other space. The phenomenon is neatly encapsulated by the neologism of "telepresence," the latter term referring to the idea of being somewhere else physically as VR and telepresence technologies advance, the future points toward social interactions where distant individuals can engage in shared, immersive experiences.

The Metaverse, a newly minted concept at the confluence of digital technology and society that is very likely to be part multiple sectors (like education, entertainment and healthcare) (Fernández-Bergeruelo et al., 2025: 1). The Metaverse is no longer confined to entertainment; it is increasingly applied to transformative uses in education, healthcare, and beyond the actuality of VR also reaching into the realm of education or leverage students to handle real scenarios in history sites, scientific subjects or complex Systems in an interactive manner.

The Metaverse is conceptualized as an ongoing, networked virtual space that blends physical and digital worlds, evolving with technological advancements and societal changes (Mystakidis, 2022: 486). According to Dwivedi et al., "We classify the definitions of the metaverse into four types—environment, interface, interaction, and social value—by summarizing each characteristic of the metaverse" (2022: 3). As Mystakidis explains, "The word Metaverse is a closed compound word with two components: Meta (Greek prefix meaning post, after or beyond) and universe. In other words, the Metaverse is a post-reality universe, a perpetual and persistent multiuser environment merging physical reality with digital virtuality" (2022: 486). Understanding the metaverse requires recognizing its nature as a social construct within the framework of the Network Society. With users contributing to the bounds and experiences of their Metaverse, they infact bring forth a brand of digital citizenship tied in with the changing relationship of technology, community and identity.

According to Li et al., "The Metaverse is envisioned to be an open, shared, and persistent virtual world, where users can work, learn, trade, entertain, and socialize as they do in the physical world" (2022: 4150), highlighting its role as an integrated network of social interactions, economic systems, and digital content. Moreover, the Metaverse modal even lower the bar for a wider participation that rely on VR and additional technological modalities beyond only possible.

Interacting with AR (augmented reality), MR (mixed reality), and other similar immersive technologies work to add another dimension versus just being in VR. This multi-reality dimension enables users to shift between different layers of engagement and interaction, forming a synergistic environment that reflects the distributed nature of the Network Society.

The metaverse is the big idea of a set of connected virtual spaces that users can interact with via avatars, do business in and experience a wide range of social and gaming experiences. As the world rapidly becomes more digital first, the metaverse will likely become a new medium for people to gather — potentially changing the way in which we currently connect and communicate. As Bhattacharya et al. (2023) elucidate, The Metaverse is the cornerstone of Web 3.0, shaping the Future Internet by enabling seamless communication and interaction. Tech companies and researchers are actively advancing its practical applications, enhancing user experiences across physical and virtual worlds.

To conclude, synthesizing the definitions of and scope between Telepresence, the Metaverse and different modes of reality illustrates that these techs are not just for self-improvement but fundamental in altering the Network Society. The transformation in how individuals engage, interact, and co-create through globalized digital platforms is driving ongoing shifts—both positive and negative—in our increasingly interconnected future.

Ernest Cline's *Ready Player Two* and Soner Aydoğan's *The Metaverse* both interpret metaverse and telepresence technologies through the lens of Castells' concept of the "Network Society"—referring to networked interconnectedness through digital communication; an increasingly major transformation in social structure enabled by information technologies. Both *Ready Player Two* and *The Metaverse* are clarifying about the metaverse and telepresence technology as central components of the network society, though in tone and structure they could not be more different. With dystopian overtones, Cline's anti-narrative condemns corporate domination and addiction in a hyper-connected world, whereas Aydoğan's utopian visualization glorifies decentralization and empowerment. Together they form complementary reflections on Castells' conceptualization of the present and of one possible future of the digital, where virtual and physical worlds collide.

The Metaverse (2020), a dystopian science fiction novel by Aydoğan, serves as an academic exploration of virtual-physical convergence in a post-technological and post-ecocide apocalyptic world. Set in the year 2186, the dystopian narrative unfolds in the wake of a global catastrophe triggered by nuclear and chemical genocide, leaving a desolate world where few remain alive. Threatened to extinction by limited resources, surviving few in number colonies are fighting amongst themselves. In response, a group of scientists unleash "the metaverse machine" which is an upcoming fictional technology that would, during sleep, let somebody control robotic warriors while awake and responsible for the work in order address famine and other basic human needs. The Salvation Colony, built like a fortress and surrounded by thrills and hazards maintained by impervious but see-through barriers is a refuge to select species of life forms that serve survival test functions which use altered weather to accomplish the most sustainable agriculture possible. The story follows Thomas who is a character with special skills from the metaverse and able to have lucid dreams in the virtual world, as well as manipulate its nature. He is opposed to William Cooper, an AI in an essentially rogue state; his creators designed him as part of strategic military systems but now wants to wipe humanity clean off the planet. Under the guidance of mentor Mr. Walker and administrator Michelle, Thomas engages in combat with Cooper. Thomas then sacrifices himself to neutralize Cooper by entering a lucid dream state (which is later revealed to

be related to his genetics/be born with metaverse abilities). The narrative resolves with Thomas' apparent assimilation into the metaverse infrastructure, where he maintains system integrity and sustains virtual ties with his family, signifying his persistent agency within the digital domain.

In his dystopian science fiction novel *Ready Player Two* Cline continues the OASIS universe of his widely acclaimed *Ready Player One* series, one step deeper into the fully immersive universe of the virtual reality. The sequel picks up again mere moments after Wade Watts has hacked out control of OASIS and inherits the earth-shattering fortune that its founder, James Halliday bequeathed. A key component to the plot, is Wade stumbling across the OASIS Neural Interface (ONI) a world first technology which removes any constraints earlier haptic devices have failed to deliver; gloves and chairs. The ONI allows humans to interact with the OASIS from every sense that is considered possible, creating rather an entirely new dimension to Virtual reality interaction. While this innovation opens up limitless opportunities for users in the OASIS, it also raises significant ethical and safety concerns—including privacy violations, addiction, and the psychological effects of hyper-immersion. In the dark, ever-shifting world of *Ready Player Two*, where tech rules and corporations prey on people's lives, folks lose themselves in fake realities to escape the harsh truth.

The metaverse in *Ready Player Two* is the OASIS, a not-quite-indistinguishable-from-reality VR universe, in which people live and work and socialize, in order to escape from a dystopian world of environmental and economic collapse. The sequel also includes the OASIS Neural Interface (ONI) which bridges the gap from computer to the user's mind in ways that players can feel, touch, and experience.

When I finished my food, I put my AR specs on again and used them to log in to my OASIS account. Then I used a heavily encrypted remote-access code to take control of a telebot—a humanoid telepresence robot—that was located in orbit high above the Earth aboard the Vonnegut. Once my link to the bot was established, my AR specs allowed me to see through its “eyes”—a set of stereoscopic video cameras mounted in its head. I disconnected the telebot from its charging dock, which was anchored to a bulkhead in the ship's forward cargo hold (Cline, 2020: 51).

Regarding the The OASIS as a Global Network Society “Half the world already spends every waking moment ignoring reality inside the OASIS. We already peddle the Opiate of the Masses. And now you want to up the dosage?” (p. 78) this quote demonstrates how the OASIS operates as a worldwide network that influences how people behave and interact with one another. It embodies Castells' theory that networks—such as the internet or virtual reality—become essential to identification, escape, and social organization in contemporary society.

GSS rolled out the ONI-net, a social-media platform built around .oni file-sharing. It allowed users to browse, purchase, download, rate, and review ONI experiences recorded by billions of other people around the world.” (...) The ONI made the lives of impoverished people all around the world a lot more bearable-and enjoyable. People didn't mind subsisting on dried seaweed and soy protein when they could log on to the ONI-net and download a delicious five-course meal anytime they pleased (Cline, 2020: 25-26).

This illustrates a new species of networked communication and content production, in this excerpt. It reflects Castells depiction of how digital platforms transform the modes of interaction and consumption of information with myriad modes of active engagement, collaborative work, experience-shares. The quote shows how the hyper multimedia —ONI headset—they use to address social issues such as inequality and poverty is an example of technology becoming a cutting-edge tool for fighting social problems. This supports the claim that technology can provide an avenue for empowerment, as well as the crafting of social processes into new forms of escapism or dependency according to Castells.

A major issue in Castells' work, the blurring of boundaries between virtual and physical realities is highlighted in this sample. It demonstrates how networked technologies are redefining the human experience and transforming humans into active participants in digital worlds rather than passive observers. "Now people no longer watched movies or television shows—they lived them. The viewer was no longer in the audience. Now they were one of the stars. (...) "The ONI made the most addictive pastime imaginable—far more addictive than the OASIS had ever been, and that was saying something" (Cline, 2020: 25-26). This quotation emphasizes how networked technologies may be both transformative and addictive. It is a reflection of Castells' investigation into how human behavior is altered by digital networks, which redefine social norms globally and give rise to new kinds of reliance.

The OASIS is in line with Castells' network society by serving as a planet-wide, non-modulated digital infrastructure that defies spatial dimensions. It enables instant communication, commerce and cultural exchange but also enhances inequality (access to cutting-edge tech like the ONI is now a marker of social power). The book is critical one of the power held by corporations in digital spaces – Gregarious Simulation Systems (GSS) and arch-rival Innovative Online Industries (IOI) are engaged in a struggle for control – and Castells' own worries about the consolidation of power within networked ones.

"The device you now hold in your hands is an OASIS Neural Interface, or ONI." He pronounced it Oh-En-Eye. "It is the world's first fully functional noninvasive brain-computer interface. It allows an OASIS user to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel their avatar's virtual environment, via signals transmitted directly into their cerebral cortex. The headset's sensor array also monitors and interprets its wearer's brain activity, allowing them to control their OASIS avatar just as they do their physical body—simply by thinking about it." My vision went black for a moment as the headset instructed my brain to place my body into a harmless sleeplike state, while my conscious mind remained active inside what was basically a computer controlled lucid dream. Then the OASIS slowly materialized into existence all around me (...) (Cline, 2020: 16).

OASIS is a double-edged sword. Sets up connectivity and community (Wade Watts & friends working together worldwide), but its curse of becoming physically isolated from the real world, says Castells the real potential for alienation in hyper-connected digital spaces. Central to the plot of the novel is a struggle either to save or remove ONI technology, and whether or not such tech liberates or enslaves society.

I stabilized and magnified the image until I had a satellite's view of my own house and the patio where I was currently sitting. For a second or two, I was able to gaze down at myself through the eyes of a telepresence robot aboard a starship orbiting the Earth. When the Earth rotated out of view again, I turned the telebot away from the window, then I used it to make a quick circuit of the ship. Dozens of other telebots floated through each of its sections, under the control of the technicians and engineers back on Earth (Cline, 2020: 52).

The OASIS connects people globally, fulfilling Castells' vision of a networked society, but its immersive nature isolates users from physical communities, raising questions about the balance between digital and real-world relationships. The OASIS, a virtual reality platform, plays a major role in society in the future depicted in the novel. Because the OASIS acts as a worldwide network that links people and influences their social interactions and economic activities, it represents Castells' concept of digital interconnectedness.

The novel touches on the theme of social isolation, as characters often prefer the virtual world of the OASIS over real-life interactions. This reflects the dual nature of digital networks in the Network Society, which can both connect and isolate individuals. While digital networks enhance connectivity, they can also lead to social isolation and fragmentation. Castells explores how these networks can create both inclusion and exclusion.

I still couldn't fathom why Samantha felt the need to endure all of the hassles and risks of real-world travel when she could have visited safely via telepresence robot, or experienced any location in the world by downloading an .oni clip recorded there. She also could have visited any of those countries inside the OASIS (Cline, 2020: 67).

Characters have a habit of gravitating more towards the OASIS over actual life, so the book touches on social isolation motif. This reveals how the digital networks of the Network Society are able to connect and disconnect people from each other. Digital networks may foster greater connectedness but they also have the potential to contribute to de-networking and social isolation. Castells analyzes the dynamics in which such networks can exclude as much inclusion.

We'd also started funneling cash to the struggling U.S. government and its citizens, who had been surviving on foreign aid for decades. We paid off the national debt and provided aerialdefense drones and tactical telebots to help reestablish the rule of law in the rural areas where local infrastructure had collapsed along with the power grid. Human law enforcement officers no longer had to risk their own lives to uphold the law. Our police telebots were able to carry out their mission to serve and protect without putting any human lives at risk. Their programming and their operational fail-safes prevented them from harming anyone in the line of duty (Cline, 2020: 45).

This excerpt can be examined using Castells' "Network Society" theory, which examines how networks and digital technology alter social, political, and economic systems. The passage's first section explains how cutting-edge technologies, such tactical telebots and aerial defense drones, are deployed to aid the beleaguered American government and its people. This supports Castells' contention that digital networks and technology have the power to impact political and social institutions in addition to spurring economic growth and innovation. Law enforcement's employment of telebots raises concerns about surveillance and control while demonstrating how digital technology can improve safety and public services.

I piloted the telebot over to a circular observation window set into the outer hull. Then I waited a few seconds for the ring to rotate around, until the luminous blue curve of the Earth came into view, filling my field of vision. The Vonnegut was currently passing over North America, and through a break in the cloud cover I was able to locate the outline of Lake Erie, and then the dense urban grid of Columbus just below it. I stabilized and magnified the image until I had a satellite's view of my own house and the patio where I was currently sitting. For a second or two, I was able to gaze down at myself through the eyes of a telepresence robot aboard a starship orbiting the Earth (Cline, 2020: 51).

The excerpt specifically featuring an example of telepresence (the protagonist being observed by themselves in a starship orbiting Earth) in some ways shows how telepresence works as it happens to utilize a telebot. As Castells points out, this provides understanding of the global scope and network nature of digital networks. A digital and networked era transformation in human interaction and time-space perception: technology is the ability to enter, experience control of distant places with technology

To sum up, this quote reiterates the main principles of Castells' theory of "network society" : digital connectedness, wealth and the potential for revolutionary change in society by technology. Castells speaks about power allocation and use in networks.

One way to articulate power control in the Network Society in my opinion: He asserts that information network as the main power source of Network Society. In the book Watts takes control of OASIS, illustrating an age-old power struggle where every civilization is linked to technology Wade Watts. The battle for the networked society goes on in The OASIS by trying to secure a stake in power and supremacy.

“Sir Parzival,” she said. “I present you with the Rod of Resurrection. It will endow you, its wielder, with the ability to create new life and overcome death. If you use its power wisely, it will forever alter and elevate the destiny of the human race.” (...) If I wanted to create a digital clone of myself inside the OASIS, all I had to do was highlight my name on the control menu and then press the Resurrect button (Cline, 2020: 411-412).

By directly interacting with the user’s brain, the cutting-edge virtual reality headgear described in the quotation from *Ready Player Two* enables users to completely immerse themselves in the OASIS. This idea is consistent with Castells’ “Network Society” theory, which highlights how digital technologies are changing social relationships and structures. The headset gives users previously unheard-of agency in the virtual world and symbolizes improved digital interconnectedness. Because the technology tracks brain activity and may be used to collect information and shape behavior, it also raises concerns about control, monitoring, and the possibility of social isolation.

It allows an OASIS user to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel their avatar’s virtual environment, via signals transmitted directly into their cerebral cortex. The headset’s sensor array also monitors and interprets its wearer’s brain activity, allowing them to control their OASIS avatar just as they do their physical body—simply by thinking about it.” (Cline, 2020: 10)

While the race to improve social interaction in OASIS with a truly holistic sensory experience within headset is very cool, it also could marginalize users from reality. That is consistent with Castells’ discussion about how the digital network can both build stronger social ties and tear existing ones down. The headgear is of great cultural and economical significance, too, that it gives a new mode of consumption for not only information to entertainment but also spurs more innovation and new markets. Control over information networks in the network society is one major form of power as the quote indicates.

Aydoğan’s *The Metaverse* presents a speculative vision of a fully realized metaverse, blending virtual reality, augmented reality, and Extended Reality (XR) technologies. It explores a world where individuals interact in Lucid dreams and telepresence technology in a digital ecosystem. Aydoğan’s metaverse embodies Castells’ network society through its virtual ecosystem based on Lucid dream and The metaverse machine system. Aydoğan’s novel features advanced telepresence through VR/AR headsets, connection bands and lucid dream technology, enabling seamless interaction in the metaverse. These technologies allow users to project their presence across virtual spaces, attending meetings, doing their work while sleeping, or controlling their telebots without physical constraints. Telepresence in *The Metaverse* facilitates Castells’ “space of flows,” enabling fluid, real-time interactions across global networks. This aligns with Castells’ vision of empowered individuals in networked systems, though it assumes widespread access to sophisticated technology such as Virtual network or Digital ecosystem. Telepresence is less a plot driver than a backdrop for exploring the metaverse’s potential. The novel focuses on how these technologies reshape work, education, and social bonds, presenting them as tools for communication network and sustainable work.

The machines would project everything the robots saw into the third stage of human sleep—REM—as if it were a dream, guiding the robots through this illusion. If a person unconsciously stepped outside their designated work zone or attempted to shift to a different task, the connection between the robot and the sleeping individual would be severed by the central hub that managed the link. At the moment of waking, the robot would automatically shut down and remain inactive until the person fell back into REM sleep (Aydoğan, 2020: 2).

It shows a world in the future where people and robots are connected through network based on REM-stage of sleep enabling control as well communication. This aligns with Castells’ study of the network society where technology penetrates every fibre of human experience making it

impossible to meet real life and cybernetic one. The use of REM sleep as a symbolic medium in which human-robot interaction takes place reflects Castells's notion of how networks renegotiate social structures and human experience. It illustrates that the latest technologies can be able to both fabricate new form of hegemony and dependency, thus changing how people interact with each other and their surrounding. This connectivity considered in the context of a new social theory, *The Network Society*, explains the disruptive power networks generate in the society of today; networks extend human capacities as well creating elaborate networks of autonomy and control.

Thomas, on the other hand, repairs the firewall and improves it beyond its previous state. Suddenly, the screens of everyone scanning the system at the connection hub go black. A message appears on the screen. It reads:

"All systems have been hacked.

Legionnaire software is loading.

I can see all your fears—

Now it's time to erase them from your minds.

I AM THOMAS.

THIS IS THE METAVERSE." (Aydoğan, 2020: 155).

In this passage, a system is being hacked by character Thomas to assert his dominion, and say (when he declares the network as his own). Themes that are explicitly addressed in this scene come out prominently in *The Network Society* by Castells such as power, surveillance and his main thesis about technologies as revolution. An example of existing power towards network, where important nodes can lead to central actors having great and significant power is in Thomas being able to lurk within and control the system. His statement, "I can see all your fears—Now it's time to erase them from your minds," emphasizes how intrusive digital surveillance is and how technology has the power to change psychological states as well as outward facts.

While asleep, Thomas becomes aware that he is dreaming. He looks at the hands of the robot he's connected to—What is this? Am I a robot?—he suddenly recoils. He glances at his feet, then at his body. As he does, the robot he is linked to begins to move. Overcome with fear, he abruptly wakes up. (Aydoğan, 2020: 14).

According to this passage, Thomas, the character, has a flash of insight when he is asleep and realizes he is dreaming. He has the unnerving thought that he might be a robot himself when he looks at the hands of the robot to whom he is attached. He panics at this realization, and as he examines his body, the robot to which he is connected starts to move in time with his movements. Thomas's sudden awakening, overcome by terror, emphasizes how difficult it is to distinguish between his actual world and the virtual or dreamlike condition he is in when attached to the robot. A major issue in Castells' *The Network Society* is the blurring of borders between the actual and virtual worlds, which is highlighted in this scene. It illustrates how technology can produce immersive and confusing experiences that test a person's sense of reality and self, especially in networked systems. The psychological effects of these encounters are also discussed in the chapter, as problems concerning identity, autonomy, and the meaning of life in a digitally connected world are brought up by the blending of human consciousness with technology.

"We're certain, sir—we've checked all the systems. Everything appears normal. He woke up, the connection was severed, then he went back to sleep. We're currently reconnected. For now, everything seems to be functioning as expected." Turning to Michelle Keenan, he asked, "Are you saying he did this consciously?" At that moment, Thomas's eyes catch the name etched on the robot's wrist. William Cooper is written there. [...]

Thomas suddenly stops in his tracks and begins to think. Where do I know that name from? he asks himself. William... William Cooper... it doesn't feel unfamiliar at all. [...]

Then, for a brief second, he sees the robot looking directly at him—and he flinches. How is this possible? Thomas wonders. There's a person connected to that robot... Could it be that he, too, has realized he's dreaming, just like me? (Aydoğan, 2020: 9–15-18).

This scene, highlighted by The Network Society of Castells on blurring actual-virtual lines and the psychological effects of immersive technologies in this scene. Thomas's interaction with the robot is one example of how networked systems can create ambiguous situations where humans start to seriously question their reality and sense of self. The recognition of Thomas and the robot at that moment of synchronization, as well as William Cooper being named tickles the complex mesh of identity within digital society intertwines with consciousness and self. However another key part of Castells' work is what he regards as the agency of individuals in networked systems, which is revealed as to whether Thomas's actions were conscious. It shows the technology an empowerment it makes things that complicate and makes us vulnerable, Thomas seems just uncertain and afraid. The text makes clear what one might call the transformative and terroristic potential of digital networks to change human experience and perception.

First, they connect their daughters to the machine, then themselves in their own rooms, and drift off to sleep. Thomas opens his eyes with a jolt. Am I dreaming? Where am I? he asks himself in confusion. He looks at his hands and realizes he is inside the robot. He begins to speak aloud: Yes, I'm asleep... but how is this happening? He turns to his right and sees the robot beside him. Stepping away from the workstation, he starts wandering through the factory. Hundreds of robots are working relentlessly. He begins walking toward the outside (Aydoğan, 2020: 27).

This excerpt corresponds to Castells dissections of network society — where technology becomes an essential part of human life and changes in social organizations, identities, experience. The capacity of Thomas, and his family to remain connected while sleeping with robots is a testament of networked technologies future state change-for creating new means of interaction/ conscious. The robot is Thomas clarity upon waking up, felt disorientation from being in a virtual, digital immersive experiences that dissolve the boundary between reality and simulation. It further shows a glimpse of how technology can be used increase human capabilities by allowing the use of artificial material bodies as our own. This calls into question the ethical ramifications of such sophisticated human-machine connections as well as autonomy and agency. With its incessantly working robots, the factory environment also alludes to the wider societal effects of automation and how technology shapes labor and production. All things considered, this sentence highlights the intricate and varied ways that digital networks and technologies are changing society and the human experience.

After three years of research, scientists developed a machine called the Metaverse. The machine linked humans and robots while the humans slept, allowing the robots to perform the same—or even different—tasks as their human counterparts during the night, guided by the brain's frequency patterns. In effect, a workforce of five hundred million was doubled to one billion, with the robots operating entirely under human control. The machine would transmit everything seen by the robots into the third stage of human sleep—REM—presenting it as a dream, allowing humans to direct the robots subconsciously. If a person unknowingly strayed outside their designated work zone or attempted to engage in a different task, the central hub managing the connection would sever the link between the robot and the sleeping individual. Upon waking, the robot would automatically shut down and remain inactive until the person re-entered REM sleep (Aydoğan, 2020: 6).

This paragraph is very well supported by Manuel Castells work on the network society, where technology literally changes human experience, the framework of labor and the institutions of society. The metaverse machine for one is a shining example of how this high-tech can enhance your humanity to make for extraordinary efficiency and productivity. The machine reflects Castells' theory that networks reinterpret the nature of labor and identity by establishing a smooth bridge between human awareness and robotic functionality through REM sleep. The power

dynamics present in networked technologies are highlighted by the centralized control structure that oversees the human-robot relationship. It emphasizes how people in charge of a network's infrastructure or important nodes—in this example, the hub—have a big say in how people behave and how systems function. As seen by the automated disconnecting of the connection if people deviate from their assigned jobs, this reflects Castells' analysis of how networks can both concentrate authority and introduce vulnerabilities. And the passage alluded to the other side ethics & psychology of these high class human machine interfaces. Blurring the line between dreaming and reality, a line about autonomy, agency, and what technology might mean for our future conscious humanity. In short, this passage is demonstrating the transformative, dense properties of digital networks in contemporary society unveiled by *The Network Society*.

“Got you!”

“Are you planning to use these robots to attack people? With a single button, humans could destroy all of your robots.”

“That’s exactly what I want. Let them do it—let them destroy every last one of my robots.”

William Cooper bursts into laughter.

“Why are you laughing? Do these robots you’ve spent years building mean nothing to you?”

“On the contrary, the entire reason I built them was to terrify people. If they told you what you just said—and they’re actually preparing to do it—then they’re doing exactly what I hoped for.”

“What do you mean? What kind of game are you playing now?”

“This time, there’s no game, Thomas. If they destroy the connections, they’ll never be able to fight me again. Do you really think they’re the only ones with a connection? I have one too—my own, independent connection (...) (Aydoğan, 2020: 111-112).

Key concepts in Manuel Castells' *The Network Society* are reflected in this chapter, including the relationship between control, power, and technology strategy. Cooper's control over the robots and the Metaverse system is a prime example of how people or things can use technology to affect others and change the course of events. As Castells examines in the context of how networks may centralize power and alter society dynamics, his acknowledgement that the robots were designed to frighten people highlights the use of fear as a tool for control. Cooper's admission of his separate role within the system emphasizes even more how complex power is in networked society. It outlines how people who run central nodes / infrastructure will still function autonomously and strategically even slightly outside of the visible architecture of a network. Castells' description of how networks are forging new forms of power, what he terms “distributed control as monopoly” fits this nicely as well. It further elaborates on consequences of cutting edge technology both psychologically and ethically. Using robots to generate terror brings to mind concerns of the ethical use of technology and the ability of bad actors to employ advanced capabilities as well. Castells also addresses the blurring of the line between perception and perception in reality, in his examination of digital networks and the transformation in human encounter and norms. All things considered, this passage demonstrates the intricate relationship between strategy, technology, and power in the network society.

For example, in a chapter of Soner Aydoğan's *The Metaverse* depicting post-apocalyptic world with a systemic virtual reality in control, Castells' network society becomes hauntingly real. The dystopian nature of the story, which combines material ruins with the virtual Metaverse, echoes Castells' “space of flows” and “real virtuality” in which experiences with the virtual redefine human reality (2000a: 694–695). Cooper's command to menacing robots and the Metaverse elucidates the idea of “distributed control as monopoly,” the way power is exercised by the commanding nodes in a decentralized network as Castells suggests (2000a: 695). Cooper's dominance of the fearmongering robots and the Metaverse represents Castells' concept of

“distributed control as monopoly” – how master nodes exert power in a decentralized network (2000: 695). This power relation and the role of the robots in creating fear also link to the novel’s questioning of the psychological and moral impacts of technology, reminiscent of Castells’ discussion of cultural code manipulation in the Information Age (2000: 695). The narrative’s non-linear structure, potentially shifting between Cooper’s perspective and those of marginalized characters, reflects the fluid, interconnected nature of networks, immersing readers in a world where reality and perception blur.

The power, ethics and altered present of the novel further complicate Castells framework by Cooper training to be a strategic autonomous network node who manipulates the Metaverse to secure dominance (2000: 696). Such inclusion of his ‘separate role’ within the system stresses the complexity of power in networked societies, one in which major actors inhabit both inside and outside the visible architectures. The robots, which become extensions of Cooper's desires, also raise ethical concerns regarding the misuse of technology—as a warning that technology could be used for the exclusion and manipulation that Castells fears in globalized networks (2000a: 694). Meanwhile, scientists and marginalized characters, possibly resisting Cooper’s control, embody Castells’ networked social movements, striving to reprogram the system with alternative values (2000a: 695). Featuring a worldwide, unequal Metaverse *The Metaverse* transforms Castells’ theories into a thrilling story, provoking you to think about the impacts of technology on society in the networked universe.

Conclusion

In order to make sense of the present transformation process in the Network Society, it is essential to study existing technologies. The advent of artificial intelligence, big data and the Internet-of-things already reveals major shifts in generation/share / use of information. Research directions should therefore center on the effects of these technologies on civil liberties, privacy, and social justice with an emphasis on expanding surveillance and control by state as well as corporate actors.

Overall the definition and telepresence implications are primary to grasp the changing ground reality of remote interaction. Telepresence technologies are as much about creating an embodied presence as improving communication, and they speak to broader networks issues reflecting the nature of being in the network society beyond a mirage of presence, shifting our understanding of human being together in a mediated world. Telepresence is a rich set of applications and not just another technological novelty but stretching relevance through diverse domains providing practical solutions. Telepresence simulates being truly there in a location, and by its very nature requires technology to replicate the feeling that one is physically present somewhere even though here they are not. The emergent technology in question is widely important to education, telemedicine and corporate training and has its own differentiate but it can be seen as reinforcing the big picture of Network Society multiplicity as well.

Although both novels use telepresence and the metaverse to examine the network society, their priorities are distinct. Though it occasionally sacrifices depth for amusement, *Ready Player Two*’s narrative-driven, pop-culture-heavy approach warns of how technology might undermine human agency, echoing Castells’ criticisms of power and alienation. *The Metaverse* supports Castells’ vision by providing a more technical, progressive viewpoint.

Finally, it might be argued that *Ready Player Two* and *The Metaverse* is a literary examination of the ideas presented in Castells' "Network Society" ideology. Castells' study of how digital technologies effect contemporary society is consistent with the novel's portrayal of a digitally connected world, power dynamics, cultural impact, economic ramifications, and social isolation. Together, these novels narratively explore Castells' insights into digital connectivity, power dynamics, and social isolation, underscoring the need for critical engagement with the network society's evolving landscape.

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