Alexander R. Galloway: TEORIJA VIDEO IGER: Eseji o algoritemski kulturi (original title: GAMING: ESSAYS ON ALGORITHMIC CULTURE), MASKA, zavod za založništvo, kulturno in producentsko dejavnost. Naklada: 400, Ljubljana, 2006., 271 str.

Alexander R. Galloway, the author of the book *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*, is an American writer, a computer programmer and a philosopher in the field of technology and the theory of media. He is also an associate professor of media, culture and communications at the University of New York. More importantly, he is the author of multiple books on gamic, media, and algorithmic theory. *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*, which was released in 2006, as such being his second book, has been translated into several European languages. It is, in fact, a collection of essays on electronic games and theory behind them, which is compared with film theory and brings attention to the interweaving facts among the two of them (the game and film). Writing is separated into five parts. Each of them speaks of a different aspect, through which games in relation to film, sociology, psychology, and culture can be looked upon. Those are '*Gamic Actions, Four Moments*', '*Origins of the First-Person Shooter*', '*Social Realism*', '*Allegories of Control*' and '*Countergaming*', of which each is separated into multiple smaller subcategories. The last subcategory in each of the titles is a detailed summary of the essay, part of which it is.

Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture is not a book, meant for readers who know nothing about games and have never played one (even if it has plenty of black and white photos), nor it is a book for someone who wishes to learn about game design, animation, or even video game programming. All of these are mentioned, although only as a small theoretical references for better understanding of what has been written on a certain subject, just as multiple other professions and aspects of gaming industry are brought to light, lit up and then thrown away when not needed any more. It tells a reader about the connection with other (mostly film) industries of origins of different game genres and theory that supports both the operator (or the player, as author calls the person who is "operating" the game) and the machine relation, control over gamer person, and the art of breaking rules by artists for a better

gameplay experience or just for a pure pleasure of art. It is a set of explanations, which will change the reader's view upon certain aspects of the world of games, and make him see the connections, origins of elements, and patterns that appear in the midst of industries that combined call themselves the entertainment industry.

The first essay, the '*Gamic Actions, Four Moments*' (1), one of the longest parts of the book, tells the reader about a difference between diegetic and non-diegetic actions of both machine and the operator and constant relations that appear among them. The difference between diegetic and non-diegetic acts is well explained and serves as a great introduction to other writings, which frequently use terms, explained in this 'chapter'. Part of the title, four moments, derives from diegetic act of the operator and machine and non-diegetic act of the same two. These are not rules, only possible features that can be well seen while watching actions of both operator and machine, while one is active and the other is not and what kind of activity each one of them is doing.

The second work, entitled '*Origins of the First-Person Shooter*' (2), discusses the relation of a film and the first person shooter (FPS) game. An important fact that has been brought forward is the history of so-called subjective shot, which was, quite unsuccessfully, at first used by the movie industry in 1925 and has been making appearances since then. It is easier for a machine or a predator to be presented in subjective shot than a living, normal person, says Galloway and supports this fact with the success of the *Terminator* film series against bad response of critics when "normal" people were presented this way in a film called '*Lady in the Lake*' (1947). He makes a statement that the FPS game genre is a successor to subjective shot.

The third essay, called '*Social Realism*' (3), the shortest of them all, speaks of a difference between levels of realism in different electronic games. Again, the author's main focus is the genre of first person shooters. He makes clear, what realism really means – more importantly, that it depends on a point of view. He finds out that it is not the content of the game itself that makes the game realistic, but the context of it: American people do not feel the same level of realism while playing Special Force as Pakistani people, who (Hezbollah) actually made the game and are in fact living it.The fourth essay is the '*Allegories of Control*' (4): to win the game, an operator must

understand and satisfy its rules. To satisfy it, one must fall under the metaphorical control of the game. In relation to the game, he becomes a subject, he cannot do what he wants, but only what the game permits him to do. However, there is also control over the game; after all, the player is still an action-maker. Still, it is all just an allegory, both of these, the pretending. Under the influence of informatics and the ideology.As the author says: Foundations of gaming are deeply connected to the discipline itself.The fifth and the last of the writings is called 'Countergaming' (5), the breaking of game. Making modifications has always been a very popular activity among players who wanted to modify the way the game looks, works, or just make a video out of its objects and characters. Experimental film is the same thing in the film industry, only harder to make. The author presents a list of six formal differences between games and counter-games after an original Wollen's list of differences between the film and the counter-film.This is a book for people who have experience with games and who also wish to build a solid theoretical foundation layer. People can become more erudite in understanding this relatively new, fast evolving technological and sociological phenomenon and origins of its elements, altogether called electronic game. Even if the writing is already a bit old, especially because it is describing the industry that changes so fast, most of its sayings are timeless and still correct. A reminder to where games come from and what defines them.

Uroš Rudolf
Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
University of Maribor, Maribor, Slovenia