EDITORIAL

Wanderers of western cities – especially of such highly populated urban areas as downtown Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, London, New York, Los Angeles or San Francisco – have undoubtfully noticed the growing number of public advertisements dedicated to video game titles over the past ten years or so, and readers of electronic or paper journals just might have noticed that the budgets for the most popular video game titles have begun to exceed those of movies, even the most expensive Hollywood ones. Drawing on this very basic evidence alone, available and ascertainable to anyone in quotidian experience, one could state that if – mostly due to technological development –cultural primacy first passed from literature to cinema, and then from cinema to TV-series, the spiritual torch of material pop-culture now, in our own era, most definitely passed to their digital, interactive and playful counterparts.

Despite the fact that this trend has already been in motion and discernable at least for the last ten years, the sphere of academic research has, so it seems, serious problems in following, understanding and dealing with this (relatively) new and ever growing cultural reality that is not only redefining the prevalent modes of cultural production, but also – in combination with other digital phenomena such as Facebook, Twitter, and so on – radically transforming social reality. It seems that Hegel's metaphor of Minerva's Owl, referring to philosophy's delayed coming on stage when things are already over (the main point being that philosophical thinking can only take hold of reality *post festum* and therefore cannot predict or create the future), can best describe almost all academic endeavors, be it in the field of sociology, political sciences or cultural studies. As far as the latter are concerned, one cannot overlook the fact that it took a long time before any serious research emerged, aiming at grasping the novelty and all those distinctive traits that characterize the digital world in general, and the field of video games in particular. And with regard to the succession of literature-film-television-videogames proposed above, it probably comes as no surprise that cultural studies of video games were first developed, and still extensively draw their epistemological approaches from the more developed and already established fields of cultural studies of literature, film, and television.

The ongoing process of interweaving games studies with cultural studies has already produced a very productive shift in the perspective which video games are analyzed, discussed, and perceived from in scholarly writings.[1] In

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[1] *Authors have dealt with video games from a variety of perspectives in trying to grasp video games culture, e.g. the perspectives of their relation to thinking (Johnson, 2005), learning (Gee, 2003), gender (Cassell&Jenkins, 2000), children (Kinder, 1991), war (Halter, 2006), and so forth, making the list endless, and thus any list neccessarily incomplete.*

the field of cultural studies, this is apparent from the growing number of articles and conference papers that analyze video games from a cultural studies perspective, and in this regard, it is worth mentioning that the 2008 special issue of the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* was dedicated to games studies.[2] In the field of games studies, this shift can best be described as a shift from the study of games culture towards a cultural studies of games, one of the most important milestones in the context of academic journals definitely being the birth of the journal *Games and Culture* in 2006, which surmounted the long-insurmountable gap between games studies and cultural studies. The distinction between "the study of games culture" and "cultural studies of games" was introduced in current debates with the argument that not all video games studies must look at games as culture, but those that do, should adopt cultural studies critical and reflexive approaches to culture (Shaw, 2010: 404). A series of cultural studies reflections was made by a wide number of scholars considering video games: epistemological, critically reflecting on the already employed interdisciplinary approaches drawing on the fields of economics, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology; and methodological, focusing on neglected ideological aspects of video gaming, such as racism, gender issues, imperialism, colonialism (all mentioned with or without the prefix "post-").[3] Moreover, all of these different epistemological and methodological approaches were not simply used as tools, but were also critically reflected upon after having been employed for particular case studies or genres as a whole. Within this dynamic, games studies benefited from a distinctively cultural studies approach and *vice versa*, cultural studies themselves were enriched by theoretical reflections that would not have been possible outside of the particular context of games studies.

This special issue of *Teorija in praksa* dedicated to the cultural studies of video games therefore aspires to join the ardent and vivid international academic debates of our time, and at the same time inaugurate a new field of research in Slovenian cultural studies that will, so we hope, produce a similarly productive, enriching, and creative effect through its interweaving of existing approaches and fields.

Mirt Komel
Guest Editor

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[2] *The special issue of the European Journal of Cultural Studies focused on the most relevant topic at the time in the study of games in general (Nieborg & Hermes, 2010), and video games in particular, namely, the extremely popular online multiplayer genre (Humphreys, 2010).*

[3] *The same trend is characteristic of cultural studies as a whole, namely, borrowing the epistemological and methodological apparatus of more established fields of research (Boellstorff, 2006; Myers, 2003).*

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