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## Game Development Research by Henrik Engström (2020). A Book Review.

Zeiler, Xenia

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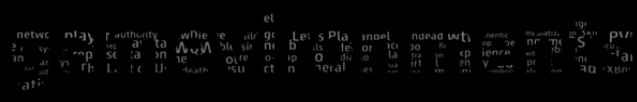
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# ***Game Development Research* by Henrik Engström (2020). A Book Review**

Xenia Zeiler

**Abstract**

Book review of *Game Development Research* by Henrik Engström (2020).

**Keywords:** Video Game Development, Video Game Development Research, Game Studies, Serious Games, Educational Games, Game Industry, gameenvironments

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The development of video games involves complex processes driven by various factors including but not limited to design, creative and management decisions as well as market and business interests by the companies producing especially larger games. These factors can be rather divergent at the beginning of a game development process and need to be continuously negotiated by the numerous actors contributing to create and release a new game.

With the number of existing works on game development being still surprisingly few, the author of the book reviewed here rightfully claims that these processes “are not well understood from an academic perspective” – among other things also because the so far existing studies come from disciplines and use approaches “that have fundamentally different academic perspectives” (Engström 2020, 1). As an important

contribution to give a comprehensive overview of the existing studies in the field, and to link the various different elements and themes related to game development, *Game Development Research* targets primarily students of academic game development programs but can serve as a useful introduction to and overview study for anyone interested in video game development.

### The Book’s Structure

*Game Development Research*, authored by Henrik Engström and published by the University of Skövde in 2020, is a 242 pages open access work. Consisting of eight chapters with diverse sub-chapters, the book presents research with a focus on applied game development – in contrast to existing studies on video game development that tend to focus on singular elements or parts of the whole process, e.g., Chen 2007, Hagen 2011, Keogh 2019, Tyni 2020. In particular, it aims to “map out the various disciplines involved” (Engström 2020, 2) in game development research. Importantly, the book clearly stresses the complex multitude of necessary perspectives and contributing fields to convey “that there are many disparate ‘game studies’ communities that contribute to the understanding of game development” (ibid., 2).

The book thus consequentially includes chapters that relate to academic disciplines (such as software development, game studies, management and business, etc.). This overall structure directly corresponds to the book’s self-declared main goals of characterizing game development research and articles produced in the (selected, important) related individual disciplines. Additionally, the volume includes a chapter on the game industry perspective, thus giving “pointers to resources that lie outside strictly academic research” (Engström 2020, 151).

Consisting of eight chapters and an extensive bibliography, *Game Development Research* introduces the reader to all important game development research done up to the publication date in 2020. The opening introduction discusses the book’s aims, structure and context information on the theme. Then, five chapters are dedicated to individual academic disciplines / fields and their respective contributions: software development, game studies, media production, management and business, and serious game development. Another chapter adds information from beyond academia, namely, from the game industry. The book concludes with a discussion that binds together the chapters, and an extensive bibliography.

**Discussion**

*Game Development Research* is the first publication to give a structured, comprehensive overview of the scattered existing works, making it a perfect starting point for any reader interested in the theme. It not only includes information on numerous themes around game development research but also succeeds in clarifying the nature, strengths and limits of what each academic discipline can contribute to the study of game development. Widening the lens beyond academia and including a chapter on the game industry perspective provides relevant supplementary information.

With its’ distinctive structure, the book offers yet another big advantage: it presents material that is of interest to a wide and varied readership. Readers from various academic fields such as arts and humanities, including game studies, design, cultural studies and others, will benefit from it as much as readers from the game industry. All of these factors make the book a very welcome addition to the so far still rather

limited list of academic and related works dealing with video game development, allowing the readers to understand the necessarily various contributors to the field and their research.

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