INTRODUCTION

VIDEO GAMES AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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VIDEO GAMES AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: FIVE SNAPSHOTS

Las Palmitas II, Dominican Republic, July 1995. As evening falls, the pastel-painted houses lining the earthen roads of Las Palmitas go dark and activities begin to wind down (see Image 0.1).[1] Electricity and running water have yet to reach this rural hillside community, and most people rise with the sun, early in the morning, and go to sleep shortly after dusk. But this evening, in addition to the faint lights of candles and oil lamps shining in the occasional alcove, kitchen or bedroom, a glow emanates from under the metal roof of one house, just inside the main entryway. There, in a small living room with a dirt floor, several children, their parents and grandparents are gathered around a television that has been modified to run on power provided by a car battery. Alongside the TV set there sits a small black box that is also connected to the battery: a video game console manufactured in Hong Kong and obtained by a relative in Santo Domingo, pre-loaded with dozens of classic games originally published for the Nintendo Entertainment System and Sega Genesis.[2] Several generations of family as well as neighbors and friends laugh and compete with one another as the evening wears on. Even (or especially) in locales with little-to-no technological access, sites that may seem situated beyond the boundaries mapping computer technologies, electronic games can represent a powerful force in the lives of their players.

Mumbai, India, May 2016. Eight-year-old game developer Medansh Mehta has just presented his game *Let There Be Light* to Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella—himself a product of the country's public schools in his birthplace of Hyderabad—, who now oversees his company's US$9 billion game operations (see Image 0.2). The game attracted Nadella's attention due to the way it requires the player to balance industrial growth and agriculture, controlling variables such as pollution and growth rate in order to create an industry that is both economically and environmentally sustainable. When the young Mehta proclaims that he aims to become Microsoft's CEO himself one day, Nadella suggests the boy is setting his sights too low, and that his ambition and sensitivity will bring him to unforeseen heights greater than he has yet imagined.[3] Just a few weeks later, Anvitha Vijay, a nine-year-old Australian of Indian origin with several iOS applications to her credit, becomes the youngest developer ever to receive an invite to participate in Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference in San Francisco (see Image 0.2).[4] Vijay had an idea for a mobile application, so she spent a year studying free YouTube tutorials on coding in order to produce *Smartkins Animals* (Jovoya 2016), an educational game for

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1. Author's photograph, Las Palmitas II, Dominican Republic, July 1995.
2. This description is based on the author's personal experience in Las Palmitas II, Dominican Republic, July 1995.
3. Anjali Bisaria, "8-Year-Old Genius Impresses Satya Nadella With His Game, Aims to Be Microsoft CEO One Day!," *India Times*, 1 June 2016, http://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/8-year-old-genius-impresses-satya-nadella-with-his-game-aims-to-be-microsoft-ceo-one-day-256004.html.
4. Priyanka Sangami, "Rise of Young Supercoders: How Indian Kids are Making a Mark in the Coding World," *Economic Times*, 16 June 2016, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/rise-of-young-supercoders-how-indian-kids-are-making-a-mark-in-the-coding-world/articleshow/52271287.cms; Bisaria, "8-Year-Old Genius Impresses Satya Nadella," *India Times*, 1 June 2016, https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/8-year-old-genius-impresses-satya-nadella-with-his-game-aims-to-be-microsoft-ceo-one-day-256004.html; Rutu Ladage, "Anvitha Vijay, 9 yr Kid is the Youngest Apple Developer!," *India.com*, 14 June 2016, https://www.india.com/buzz/anvitha-vijay-9-year-old-indian-origin-kid-is-the-youngest-apple-app-developer-at-wwdc16-1258554/.

Image 0.1. The author (rear left) with host family and friends in Las Palmitas II, Dominican Republic, 1995.

young players. As more young people learn coding and software programming skills from an earlier age and new game design tools are made available to a broader segment of the world's population, the landscape of game development is being radically transformed.

Image 0.2. Indian game developers Medansh Mehta (left) and Anvitha Vijay (right).

Jenin, Palestine, September 2003. During a field interview for an analysis of players' habits in the Middle East, a twelve-year-old girl excitedly pulls researcher Helga Tawil-Souri aside in order to share what she describes as "the best game ever," the first-person shooter *Special Force* (Hezbollah 2003; see Image 0.3).[5] This player is highly familiar with games in this genre, having played games that position the player as part of a U.S. military force intervening in Iraq, Iran, Lybia and Syria. The difference is that *Special Force* is a pro-Arab video game, indeed the very first (though not the only) game of this type that this Palestinian adolescent has encountered. In fact, she has never played a game set in the Arab world that would permit the player *not* to shoot at Arabs. As she explains to Tawil-Souri, prior to playing *Special Force*, "I always had to shoot at my own people."[6] As game development emerges among locales outside the major world centers of technological production, concerns particular to specific cultural contexts push game developers to break with design conventions established in the global north, so that other stories can be told, different audiences can be reached and new experiences can be created.

Image 0.3. A screenshot from Hezbollah-sponsored first-person shooter Special Force (2003).

Manila, Philippines, June 2017. Local 18-year-old eSports champ Andreij "Doujin" Albar has just defeated the world's "undisputed champion" of *Tekken 7* (Bandai Namco 2015), South Korean Jin-woo "Saint" Choi, in a major upset at the Rage Art Championship (see Image 0.4).[7] The phenomenon

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5. *Digital Islam*, "Special Force (Al-Quwwat al-Khasa)," http://www.digitalislam.eu/videoAndGames.do?articleId=1314.
6. Helga Tawil-Souri, "The Political Battlefield of Pro-Arab Video Games on Palestinian Screens," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27.3 (2007): 545.

of eSports—professional competitive gaming—has risen rapidly to worldwide prominence as both a career possibility and a spectacle: in addition to the hundreds of spectators and players in attendance, thousands of fans around the world streamed the final match in which Doujin dethroned Saint. One reason for Saint's loss was his choice to play as the character Eddy Gordo, a Brazilian *capoeira* champion who is not usually used in competition, thinking this would give him an advantage. However, Saint failed to realize that Eddy Gordo is an avatar of longstanding popularity in the Philippines, meaning Doujin was readily familiar with his repertoire of moves and maneuvers. And one reason Filipino players tend to be so familiar with *Tekken* and its characters is that the game was made popular on the original PlayStation console, whose shift from cartridge to CD-ROM facilitated piracy, thus expanding access to players from lower income brackets or those who lived in regions outside the official market of major multinational game corporations. This combination of factors reflects the complex cultural dynamics at play in the circulation of a cultural product like *Tekken*, which was developed in Japan, uses representations of characters from countries such as Brazil and India, was both officially and unofficially copied in China and Hong Kong for worldwide distribution, and decades later came to be mastered by a professional gamer in South Korea who was in turn dethroned by an unlikely challenger from Manila, one who had grown up playing unofficial copies of games from the series like so many players in the Philippines and elsewhere in the global south.[8]

Image 0.4. Playbook eSports team members Alexandre "AK" Laverez (left) and Andrei "Doujin" Albar (right).

Al-Salam, Sudan, January 2014. A group of refugees from South Sudan, fleeing the deadly conflict that consumes the area, are huddled together in an improvised earthen structure with a corrugated tin door and a metal kitchen shelving unit that has been converted into a makeshift entertainment center

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7. Ian Walker, "Local Player Defeats Tekken 7 World Champion at Philippines Event," *Kotaku Compete*, 9 June 2017, https://compete.kotaku.com/local-player-defeats-tekken-7-world-champion-at-philipp-1795967096; Gab Lazaro, "PH Players Impress at Rage Art," Mineski.net, 6 June 2017, https://www.mineski.net/news/ph-players-impress-at-rage-art.
8. The meaning and usage of the term "global south" is discussed in detail in the following section.

(see Image 0.5).[9] About half of them look intensely concentrated, lips pursed, eyes focused—their gazes are fixed on two television screens on atop the shelving unit, as they ably manipulating the controllers in their hands, playing an electronic game. The rest of those present are beaming with bright smiles, happy to find a moment of respite and enjoying some much-deserved entertainment and togetherness with others in their same situation. And that situation is dire indeed—the refugees' home of South Sudan is engulfed in a civil war, and the Sudanese government and South Sudanese rebels have mutually accused one another of violence that has fractured a cease-fire, which itself followed a series of Sudanese bombing raids over the impoverished communities in the region.[10] These are not the only factors that make it so unlikely for these children to have gotten their hands on computer gaming hardware and software—technological access is severely limited by sanctions on free access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) levied by the United States on Sudan along with North Korea, Iran, Syria and Cuba.[11] And in spite of it all, even in the most unlikely and precarious of situations, this moment of shared gameplay offers a reminder that people everywhere in the world place a great deal of personal value on their entertainment, including specific entertainment technologies such as video games.

Image 0.5. Locals and South Sudanese refugees play video games in a market near a refugee camp, 2014.

9. Reuters, "Locals and South Sudanese Refugees Play Video Games in a Market Near a Camp 10 km (6 miles) from al-Salam Locality at the Border of Sudan's White Nile State," 27 January 2014, http://cms.trust.org/item/20140127212510-9x8ha?view=print.

10. Olivia Warham, "A Deadly Sleight of Hand," *HuffPost Blog* (United Kingdom), 28 January 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/olivia-warham/south-sudan-africa_b_4678826.html.

11. Aala Abdelgadir, "The Push to Lift U.S. Communication Technology Sanctions on Sudan," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 28 January 2014, https://www.cfr.org/blog/push-lift-us-communication-technology-sanctions-sudan..

APPROACHES TO VIDEO GAMES AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The five snapshots that open this introductory essay offer a glimpse of video games and game cultures in the Caribbean, Indian subcontinent, Middle East, Asia-Pacific region and Africa, showing some of the ways games impact the daily lives of individuals across the globe, including and especially those that have long been considered "peripheral" to the global centers of technological production and consumption. As Adrienne Shaw has argued, to understand video games, we must look at them *in* culture, not just *as* culture: "games permeate education, mobile technologies, museum displays, social functions, family interactions, and workplaces" and they "are played by many if not all ages, genders, sexualities, races, religions, and nationalities,"[12] as reflected in the anecdotes above. Moreover, as Thomas Apperley explains, "the digital game ecology is shaped through myriad and plural local situations that collectively enact the global,"[13] and these snapshots demonstrate how local economic, political and cultural concerns affect the experience of gameplay, as well as the multiple ways in which site-specificity impacts the player's experience. Elsewhere, I have referred to academic research related to these factors as "cultural ludology," which "focuses on the analysis of video games as such, attending to the myriad ways culture is incorporated into game mechanics, but at the same time recognizes the signifying potential of the cultural environment in which games are created, designed, manufactured, purchased, played and otherwise put to use."[14] The examples above also evidence the popularity of gaming across cultures, socioeconomic classes and a variety of other demographics—gaming is a commonplace practice "embedded and situated in the material and mundane everyday,"[15] and software, video games and social networks are gaining increasing prominence vis-à-vis more conventional U.S. cultural exports like Hollywood movies and hip-hop and rock music.[16] This is true even in locales with strict cultural or political controls on gaming technologies—for example, gaming is highly popular among Iranians and Venezuelans, even among marginalized and impoverished groups.[17] Hence these five snapshots are also a reminder of the increasing impact of video game culture on the global south, and vice-versa. They show just how much of the "big picture" of gaming is lost when we neglect experiences outside of the presumed norm, and just how much perspective can be gained by understanding games as complex technological and cultural products whose creation, circulation, consumption and meaning are shaped by concerns and practices that are fundamentally local and situated in nature.

Video Games and the Global South aims to reimagine the place of gaming in the world, redefining game culture from south to north. While video games are a quintessentially global technology—with game consumption, production and related practices taking place in virtually every country in the world today—they have been received, created and even played differently in different regions, because cultural and national context impact the circulation and meaning of games in myriad ways. Many geographical locales once considered part of the high-tech "periphery" are in fact home to longstanding and widespread technocultures with their own unique characteristics, and with their own geometries of power.[18] This is readily evident in the contributions to this anthology, which examine the cultural impact of video games in regions including Africa, the Middle East, Central and South America, the Indian subcontinent and parts of Oceania and Asia. An analysis of the games and game cultures of the vast region referred to as the global south sheds light on the cultural impact of gaming in less-frequently-examined geographical areas, offering evidence of video games' impact

12. Adrienne Shaw, "What is Video Game Culture? Cultural Studies and Game Studies," *Games and Culture* 5.4 (2010): 416.

13. Thomas Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms: Play and Counterplay from the Situated to the Global* (Institute of Network Cultures, 2009), 18.

14. Phillip Penix-Tadsen, *Cultural Code: Video Games and Latin America* (MIT Press, 2016).

15. Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms*, 8.

16. Brian T. Edwards, *After the American Century: The Ends of U.S. Culture in the Middle East* (Columbia University Press, 2016), 49.

17. Thomas H. Apperley, "Venezuela," in Mark J. P. Wolf, ed., *Video Games Around the World* (MIT Press, 2015), 615.

18. Bjarke Liboriussen and Paul Martin, "Regional Game Studies," *Game Studies* 16.1 (October 2016).

on economics, creative production, education, popular culture and political discourse, as well as showing how cultural context impacts games on the levels of development, design, reception and play practices.

Analysis of video games and game cultures from the viewpoint of the global south invariably intersects with other perspectives in game studies and related disciplines, and the contributors to this volume are participating in several broader dialogues. Therefore it is important to confront several key issues from the outset, including: 1) the meaning and usage of the term "global south"; 2) the critical and theoretical contributions of decolonial and postcolonial perspectives on video games; 3) the problems with conventional perspectives on the "global" game industry and "global" game studies; and 4) the role of local and regional approaches vis-à-vis the discipline of game studies at large.

First, it is essential to describe the history, advantages and disadvantages of the concept of the "global south," a term which stems from anthropology and more specifically from postcolonial and decolonial trajectories within anthropological research. In the essay "The Global South and the World Dis/Order," Walter Mignolo explains that the global south "is not a geographic location; rather it is a metaphor that indicates regions of the world at the receiving end of globalization and suffering the consequences" and comprises "the places on the planet that endured the experience of coloniality—that suffered, and still suffer, the consequences of the colonial wound (e.g., humiliation, racism, genderism, in brief, the indignity of being considered lesser humans)."[19] Likewise, in the introduction to the first issue of the journal *The Global South*, Arif Dirlik explains that "there are certain affinities between these societies in terms of mutual recognition of historical experiences with colonialism and neocolonialism, a history not yet ended of economic, political and social (racial) marginalization, and, in some cases, memories of cooperation or common cause in struggles for global justice in past liberation movements."[20] Thus the global south is a movable and situational term referring to many areas with internal political and socioeconomic divisions as well as previously colonized societies that still endure the effects of colonialism.

But for these critics and others, the term "global south" has its limitations. Mehita Iqani explains that although the term is "prickly in its trendiness and complexity," it is useful in the way that it "'speaks back' by bringing together into one analytical project some of the cross-cutting flows and tensions relevant to contexts in Asia, Africa and Latin America without homogenizing their disparate and unique characteristics," rather than reaffirming the "position of deficiency" implied in outdated terminology such as the "underdeveloped," "developing," "post-colonial," "third" and "non-western" world.[21] Like Iqani, this anthology uses the term "global south" to describe "continents, countries and cultures that were historically interlinked with western power by imperialism yet whose populations did not profit as uniformly from colonial exploitation and its legacies, and where poverty, social ills and inequality are acutely visible in counterpoint with pockets of wealth, privilege and 'development,'" but understands the term "neither as an eliminating concept nor as one that homogenizes massive diversities and complexities into one all-consuming narrative," but rather a concept whose contradictions and fragmentations can provide the ground for productive dialogue. Thus, this anthology uses a focus on the global south to examine game culture throughout societies that differ in many regards but share other characteristics nonetheless, revealing unexpected

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19. Walter Mignolo, "Introduction: The Global South and World Dis/Order," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67.2 (2011): 185.

20. Arif Dirlik, "Global South: Predicament and Promise," *The Global South* 1.1 (2007): 16.

21. Mehita Iqani, "Introduction: The Mediation of Global South Consumption," *Consumption, Media and the Global South: Aspiration Contested* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2-4.

connections that bring together the diverse cultures of Pakistan and Peru, Chile and China, Colombia and Cameroon.

Video games can be decolonial, too. Mignolo explains that *decoloniality* is distinct from the *decolonization* of nations, in that it involves "the decolonization of knowledge and of being and assumes that the way out is to unlink from the colonial matrix of power."[22] A decolonial approach to cultural production poses crucial questions such as "what kind of knowledge, by whom, what for?"[23] Likewise, a decolonial approach to game design would ask what kinds of games can be produced, who can produce these games and what purposes they can fulfill. There is a long history of the development of political, ideological, pedagogical and otherwise "serious" or "persuasive" games in the global south. More than a decade and a half ago, Uruguayan theorist and game developer Gonzalo Frasca spoke of the possibility of creating "video games of the oppressed," using the medium as a tool for education, socio-political awareness and consciousness-raising.[24] In short, Frasca advocated for the appropriation of the means of (game) production by actors in the global south, and the repurposing of these technologies in ways that would benefit the region's inhabitants. Fifteen years later, we can see that many gamers and game developers from across the global south have taken up this challenge, contributing to game cultures and creating games that respond to the obstacles and affordances of their particular geographical, socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts.

In game studies scholarship, a decolonial trajectory has also been developing over the past several years, and various scholars have begun to revisit key questions from postcolonial studies by asking in their own ways, "Can the subaltern play?," or perhaps even, "Can the subaltern code?" While Souvik Mukherjee questions whether games protesting hegemony can truly be considered "subaltern," he nevertheless deems games "platforms of ideological protest" with the capacity to represent "voices from below."[25] Mukherjee and other postcolonial scholars whose work "critique[s] capitalist norms and the resultant hegemonies"[26] have brought much-needed perspective on game development, circulation and consumption outside of the global north. To date, Mukherjee's groundbreaking 2017 study *Videogames and Postcolonialism: Empire Plays Back* is the only book-length study specifically related to postcolonialism and video games, and in it the author explains, "it is high time that the concerns of the millions of gamers in the so-named postcolonial geographies are represented. With the growing attention to issues of diversity in video games, currently involving questions of gender, race, and religion, the intrinsically connected questions of the representations of empire and the post-colony need a separate and yet related consideration."[27] For the purposes of many of the scholars in the present anthology, this intersectional approach is key to understanding the complexities of the relationship between games and culture. This is indeed a late-breaking critical trajectory, and as recently as 2010 Shaw rightly pointed out that, by and large, "although game studies has come to draw on the concepts and subjects of cultural studies, it has not taken on the conflicts"[28] and dilemmas that could productively advance discussions of the impact of factors such as race, gender, nationality, sexual identity and socioeconomic class on games' meaning and the experience of gameplay. In their 2007 anthology *Latin American Cyberculture and Cyberliterature*, Claire Taylor and Thea Pitman point out that "[f]uture work on Latin American cyberculture needs to address more

22. Mignolo, "Introduction: The Global South and World Dis/Order," 183.
23. Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Duke University Press, 2011), xvi.
24. Gonzalo Frasca, *Videogames of the Oppressed: Videogames as a Means for Critical Thinking and Debate*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2001.
25. Souvik Mukherjee, "Playing Subaltern: Video Games and Postcolonialism," *Games and Culture* 13.5 (2016): 8.
26. Siddharta Chakraborti, Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang, and Dibyadyuti Roy, "Gaming, Culture, Hegemony: Introductory Remarks," *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 7.2 (2015): 139.
27. Souvik Mukherjee, *Videogames and Postcolonialism: Empire Plays Back* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 9.
28. Shaw, "What is Video Game Culture?," 411.

fully these intersections between cyberculture, postcolonial theory, and Latin American identities of the term 'postcolonial' to the region," while they see in digital media the potential for digital forms of "expression of postcolonial consciousness" and "new and resistant forms of identity online."[29]

A decade later, these predictions are clearly confirmed in the vast array of perspectives that have come into play in particular with the advent of "casual" game production and consumption, which focuses on games played on mobile devices and social media platforms, meaning they have a lower level of entry for players and developers alike, bringing new audiences and voices to the world of video games. Likewise, scholars have begun to answer the calls a greater focus on the diversity of gaming and related practices throughout the world that have been sounded over the past decade or so. In their article "Regional Game Studies," Bjarke Liboriussen and Paul Martin attempt to offer "a form of game scholarship more attuned to the challenges of globalization, internationalization and postcolonialism,"[30] authors like Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart have advanced the study of "indigenous media," or "forms of media expression conceptualized, produced, and/or created by Indigenous peoples across the globe,"[31] and Dale Hudson and Patricia R. Zimmerman have examined "forms of knowledge production that complicate and contradict the assumptions and expectations of mainstream media, whether European or East Asian, whether Kollywood, Nollywood, Bollywood, Hollywood, or Tollywood."[32] The centers for game production are diversifying as well, and today every country is not only working on its own Hollywood, but also its own Silicon Valley, through processes that are complicated and often skewed against developers in the global south. As Apperley explains in *Gaming Rhythms*, the structures and practices of the international game industry—as well as the industry's inflexible operations and unequal access to its tools and benefits—are key to understanding digital games globally.[33] An example of these structural imbalances is "platform imperialism," Dal Yong Jin's term for the "asymmetrical relationship of interdependence in platform technologies and political culture between the West, primarily the U.S., and many developing countries" which "is not only about the forms of technological disparities but also the forms of intellectual property, symbolic hegemony, and user commodity because these issues concentrate capital into the hands of a few U.S.-based platform owners, resulting in the expansion of the global divide."[34] These perspectives help highlight the uneven reach and impact of the "global" games industry among different geographical regions.

Too often, game scholarship is blind to its own cultural biases, making universal claims about gaming based on a limited number of conventional examples. When tracing the history of video games, scholars have at times abandoned decades' worth of insight on inclusiveness in analyzing historical and cultural developments in other disciplines, leading to "global" histories that entirely or mostly omit the global south from consideration. This view of the international game industry "suggests a particular smoothness in the description of the manifestations and praxis of that industry,"[35] an illusion which at its worst can mask "a decidedly Anglo-American bias, where gaming practices from specific parts of the world—especially United States and United Kingdom—have been understood to be representative of global gaming cultures."[36] The evidence of this is everywhere, even in some

29. Claire Taylor and Thea Pitman, "Conclusion: Latin American Identity and Cyberspace," in *Latin American Cyberculture and Cyberliterature*, eds. Claire Taylor and Thea Pitman (Liverpool University Press, 2007), 267.
30. Liboriussen and Martin, "Regional Game Studies."
31. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart, "Introduction: Indigeneity and Indigenous Media on the Global Stage," in *Global Indigenous Media: Cultures, Poetics, and Politics*, eds. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart (Duke University Press, 2008), 2.
32. Dale Hudson and Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Thinking Through Digital Media: Transnational Environments and Locative Places* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 146.
33. Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms*, 17.
34. Dal Yong Jin, *Digital Platforms, Imperialism and Political Culture* (Taylor & Francis, 2015).
35. Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms*, 16.
36. Chakraborti, Kwabena and Dibyadyuti, 136.

of the best scholarship on game history and game culture. Whether in popular histories such as Steven L. Kent's *The Ultimate History of Video Games*[37] or scholarly critiques like Tristan Donovan's *Replay: The History of Video Games*, game historians frequently suggest that the history of video games started and ended in the United States, Western Europe, South Korea and Japan. And while Donovan takes on the subject directly, noting that "the attempts at writing the history of video games to date have been US rather than global histories" and arguing that there is a need "to redress the balance," his work still concentrates largely on a relatively limited gamut of nations, most of which are (or were) wealthy countries and conventional centers for the production and consumption of game technologies: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, Japan and South Korea. Other omissions seem to be less self-conscious, making for purportedly universal studies that omit the global south entirely from the scope of consideration, due to the apparently peripheral or economically "non-existent" nature of this broad and varied region. Peter Zackariasson and Timothy L. Wilson's 2012 work *The Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future* focuses almost entirely on video game production in the United States, Europe and Japan, and notes in its introduction that while the most successful game publishers are headquartered in North America, Japan and Europe, producers from "outside of these areas are close to non-existent on the international market."[38] Overall, works such as *The Video Game Industry* or *The Ultimate History of Video Games* are helpful for those focused on the regions in question and groundbreaking in their treatment of video games as a global industry of historical significance, but they are symptomatic of the discipline's general tendency to ignore the global south in discussions of games, game cultures and game studies as a worldwide phenomenon.

There are good reasons to make game studies more inclusive, and recent scholarship has carved out a path for more culturally comprehensive and geographically situated assessments of games' history and global reach. Research on regional or area-specific game studies, and in particular those studies focusing on "regions and localities that have traditionally been underserved by dominant industrial players and under-examined by both journalists and scholars"[39] and/or "areas outside of Western Europe and North America"[40] have made valuable contributions to the way we think about games as a global phenomenon.[41] As Mukherjee has argued, the inclusion of diverse perspectives is advantageous to the game industry and academia alike in simultaneously expanding the international games market and the spectrum of player cultures examined—and interpretations of games and game culture from the perspectives of the global south are important, "not least because they challenge the centrality and fixity of readings and offer a multiplicity of perspectives."[42] One of the primary objectives of this volume is to expand and diversify our methodology for studying games in the global south, building on this pioneering trajectory in recent area-specific games research.

Scholars working on digital culture in the global south have laid essential groundwork for understanding the role of place in games and other electronic media. First and foremost, it is important to recognize that, as Taylor explains, early visions of the internet as a "limitless, free-floating realm, divorced from offline place" quickly gave way to more nuanced interpretations recognizing that "whilst certain conventional understandings of geography and place may be

37. Steven L. Kent, *The Ultimate History of Video Games* (Three Rivers Press, 2001).
38. Peter Zackariasson and Timothy L. Wilson, *The Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future* (Routledge, 2012: 3-4).
39. Ben Aslinger and Nina B. Huntemann, "Introduction," in *Gaming Globally: Production, Play and Place*, eds. Nina B. Huntemann and Ben Aslinger (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2.
40. Liboriussen and Martin, "Regional Game Studies."
41. See, for example, Larissa Hjorth and Dean Chan, eds. *Gaming Cultures and Place in Asia-Pacific* (Routledge, 2009), Mark J. P. Wolf, ed., *Video Games Around the World* (MIT Press, 2015), Dal Yong Jin, ed., *Mobile Gaming in Asia: Politics, Culture and Emerging Technologies* (Springer, 2016), Mia Consalvo, *Atari to Zelda: Japan's Videogames in Global Contexts* (MIT Press, 2016) and Penix-Tadsen, *Cultural Code: Video Games and Latin America* (MIT Press, 2016).
42. Mukherjee, *Videogames and Postcolonialism*, 109-111.

challenged online, this does not mean that place is erased altogether," and indeed, "place is found not to be lacking on the internet, but rather is transformed, given different meanings, or re-affirmed in a variety of contexts."[43] When we envision the places where gameplay occurs, we may immediately think of the living room or the video arcade, the cybercafé or a seat on the train for mobile gaming. Each of these sites impacts the experience of gameplay in different ways, and this is that much more evident if we expand our examination of the places of gaming to include the types of sites Jack Lanchuan Qiu examines in his work on the "information have-less" in urban China, in which he observes that in "[a] factory, a school, a residential community, or prison cell: through the intermingling of people in place, the information have-less and working-class ICTs reconfigure each other in complex ways, giving rise to infinite variations and producing a kaleidoscope of communication patterns."[44] When we look at less-frequently-examined places for the consumption of technology (such as prison cells and factories), we gain a more expansive and realistic understanding of how these technologies fit into the lives of everyday people. The games people play connect into a sense of place: game cultures both reflect local cultures and enable links between transnational communities,[45] while the gameplay experience is impacted by parameters such as socio-economic class, cultural background and geographic location.[46] In their introduction to *Gaming Globally*, Nina B. Huntemann and Ben Aslinger outline how place impacts games, focusing on "how local, national, regional, transnational, and translocal perspectives can add new levels of complexity to how we assess and experience the formal, textual, and representational content of games; discourses and practices of game development, distribution, policy, ratings, and censorship; historical, geographic, spatial, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and domestic contexts that influence design, hardware and software production; and embodied and networked play practices."[47] Together, these myriad factors create what Apperley refers to as the "situated ecology" of gaming, in reference to the ways "[d]ifferent contexts of play create completely different experiences" through "the materiality of the embodied experience of gaming" as well as the ways the game experience is played out as a negotiation between the "global" virtual worlds the material conditions of the "local."[48] By drawing attention to the situated ecology of gaming in distinct locales from across the global south, the work in this anthology offers new evidence and novel case studies that help emphasize the importance of place for the experience of gaming, building upon the critical and theoretical perspectives from scholars of area-specific game studies in order to expand our understanding of how games work as global technologies.

Redefining video games from the viewpoint of the global south involves certain risks. First, we run the risk of reinforcing the same binary, center-periphery paradigm that much of our work aims to challenge. No doubt it is important for game scholarship to take the global south into account, but at the same time we must avoid treating the analysis of games in the global south as separate from game studies overall, or approaching the subject in a way that upholds its marginality vis-à-vis a presumed "center" of global gaming culture.[49] Liboriussen and Martin warn of "falling into a naïve essentialism" by labeling scholarship "regional," which could be taken as "dismissive or, worse, as the validation of a centre-periphery model that characterises research from Europe and North America as fundamental."[50] Shaw has argued that "game studies scholars who study the 'others' to this dominant

43. Claire Taylor, *Place and Politics in Latin American Digital Culture: Location and Latin American Net Art* (Routledge, 2014), 3-4.
44. Jack Linchuan Qiu, *Working-Class Network Society: Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China* (MIT Press, 2009), 15.
45. Larissa Hjorth, "Guest Editor's Introduction: Games@Neo-Regionalism: Locating Gaming in the Asia-Pacific," *Games and Culture* 3.1 (January 2008): 3.
46. Chakraborti, Kwabena and Dibyadyuti, 137.
47. Aslinger and Huntemann, "Introduction," 2.
48. Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms*, 35.
49. As Bjarke Liboriussen and Paul Martin explain in their essay "Regional Game Studies" (*Game Studies* 16.1, October 2016), "Regional game studies is not simply exotic ornamentation for the "real" game studies of Western Europe and North America. We claim that in time regional game studies can make significant theoretical contributions to the field."
50. Liboriussen and Martin, "Regional Game Studies."

definition are forced to talk about their subject in relation to the perceived center," noting that in the research she has conducted for two studies, neither Arab gamers nor gay, bisexual and transgender gamers "place themselves outside what is often called video game culture," and therefore research that reinforces this separation "privileges the dominant gamer identity while marginalizing all others."[51] Thus, it is essential that we pursue research on the video games and game cultures of the global south in a way that recognizes the uniqueness of the regions involved, but that also looks to how reimaging video games from the viewpoint of the global south can impact game studies as a discipline worldwide.

While approaching games from the global south brings risks, it also bears many rewards, opportunities and affordances for scholars of game studies and related disciplines. Liboriussen and Martin call for a recognition that "[t]he world is not flat, and there are significant challenges to the development of game scholarship conducted in, for example, regions of the global South, that are not encountered elsewhere,"[52] and in spite of these challenges, scholars in these regions find ways to persevere in order to impact the way we think about video games, as many of the contributors to this anthology demonstrate. As early as 2008, Larissa Hjorth was calling attention to "heterogeneous models for gaming production and consumption" in different locales throughout the Asia-Pacific region, examining "the region's various gaming cultures to reflect on social, cultural, political, and economic factors that are informing the new 'Global South.'"[53] These calls for greater diversity of perspectives and attention to the particular contexts and circumstances for video games and game culture in the global south represent prescient and cutting-edge voices in contemporary game scholarship, and as this anthology shows, such a focus does indeed bring together a vast array of approaches and points of view. Ultimately, we could consider an examination of contemporary technoculture from the viewpoint of the global south as an opportunity for "border thinking," which Mignolo defines as "a machine for intellectual decolonization" that conceives of "the modern/colonial world system […] in terms of internal and external borders rather than centers, semiperipheries and peripheries."[54] Using border thinking to approach technologies such as video games allows us to understand the multi-tiered obstacles and affordances to game development and consumption that exist beyond nationality alone, delving into the particular subcultures, differences in player practices and inequalities in access to game hardware and software that can exist within a single nation. With any luck, the bonds and fractures that emerge through this approach will continue to spread and expand until they reach the very foundations of game studies and the ways we conceive of video games' role in the world.

GAMES AND GAME CULTURES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH: KEY CHARACTERISTICS

No generalization holds true in every case, and there are innumerable differences that make each particular example and circumstance unique. Indeed, such differences are key to many of the chapters ahead. Even still, it is useful to take note of the points of contact that bring together disparate settings and situations, and therefore it will be helpful to keep in mind some key characteristics common to the video games and game cultures of regions, countries and locales within the global south. These characteristics include: 1) a reputation as part of the technological "periphery" or "margin," in spite of a considerable history of game consumption, production, circulation and related practices; 2) a shared set of historical obstacles and affordances to the development of local game culture and game

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51. Shaw, "What is Video Game Culture?," 408-409.
52. Liboriussen and Martin, "Regional Game Studies."
53. Hjorth "Guest Editor's Introduction," 4, 6.
54. Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton University Press, 2012), 45, 33.

industries; 3) a history of in-game representations of local culture, created by developers in the global north; and 4) a dual government role with regard to video games, split between censorship and regulation on one hand, and a growing push to promote national game industries on the other. The remainder of this section will dedicate particular attention to these characteristics, using them as a point of departure for understanding the similarities and differences among the contexts explored in the chapters ahead.

Models that distinguish between supposed "centers" of global technological culture and its "margins" or "peripheries" are highly problematic, due to their unidirectional conceptualization of the relationship between media producers (in the global north) and media consumers (in the global south). In fact, the global south has a powerful impact on the ways media is created, circulated and used worldwide. If we fail to understand how "global" media circulate in countries and regions like those explored in this anthology, then we fail to understand them as truly global media. And yet, in game studies and media studies discussions of media production and consumption, as well as debates surrounding the relationship between games and culture at large, it is common to find sweeping generalizations based primarily or solely on examples from the global north. As Marcos Cueto has argued, however, "technology should be understood as an arena contested by a wide variety of individuals, institutions and actors and through complex local processes of reception, rejection, adaptation and hybridization."[55] Technology, in other words, is not simply transmitted from center to periphery in a unilateral manner, but rather it is shaped and transformed by a continual process of mutual exchange between multiple actors in a global network.

With regard to game studies scholarship in particular, the impact of the global south has only begun to receive attention relatively recently, due in part to the many obstacles that scholars of game culture in these regions face. As Mark J. P. Wolf explains in *Video Games Around the World*, many countries outside the so-called "centers" of game culture "have their own video game industries and their own national histories of video games, many of which are only now beginning to be recorded."[56] Although nearly every country now has a game history that is decades old, those histories have often remained confined within their own national borders and languages, if they have been recorded at all. In the Arab world, for example, Vit Šisler explains that game-related research "remains largely anecdotal and focuses on isolated, albeit important, threads within the fabric of videogame culture and development in the Middle East," and while he argues that "a 'mainstream' Arab, or Pakistani gaming culture does not yet exist," he nevertheless cites "a relatively coherent set of concerns that most of the producers in Iran and the Arab world share," including an emphasis on self-representation, personal motivation, engagement and respect for traditions, religion and culture.[57] Research like Šisler's helps to document the ways global cultural products are adapted, transformed and molded by the local environments in which they are produced and those where they are consumed.

The distinct timelines and trajectories of local game histories show why certain "universal narratives" of technological history fail to account for the complexity and diversity of global media practices. For example, while in some countries early video game culture developed in the same manner as in the United States, starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the release of arcade cabinet machines and home consoles such as the PONG and the Atari VCS, this is not universally the case. The

55. Marcos Cueto, "Foreword," in *Beyond Imported Magic: Essays on Science, Technology and Society in Latin America*, eds. Eden Medina and Ivan da Costa Marques (MIT Press, 2014), vii.

56. Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 1.

57. Vit Šisler defines "Arab world" as "as an umbrella term for countries belonging to the Arab League of Nations and whose official language is Arabic." See Vit Šisler, "Video Game Development in the Middle East: Iran, the Arab World, and Beyond," in *Gaming Globally*, eds. Huntemann and Aslinger, 252-253, 267.

differences between this "standard" model and the "divergent" models throughout the global south speak to the importance of diversifying our understanding of gaming. In the case of the Arab world, for example, Radwan Kasmiya explains that early game consoles reached middle eastern markets around the same time as in the U.S. and Japan, leading to "the demand for video game consoles with an Arabic-friendly interface," and eventually to the development of the first Arabic home computer, the Sakhr (meaning "Rock"), developed in Kuwait in 1981 (see Image 0.6).[58] In Argentina, game consoles also began to arrive in the late 1970s, and while the country's economic twists and turns caused occasional booms for systems such as the Atari 2600 and ColecoVision, it was the Family Game, a pirated version of the Japanese Famicom (known in English as the Nintendo Entertainment System) that revolutionized local gaming due to its inexpensive software and hardware.[59] In China, arcade games began to arrive in the early 1980s after the nation's "post-Mao opening and reform drive," establishing the roots of a national game culture that now generates the greatest game revenues of any country in the world. India's case is unique, as Shaw explains, "because game systems did not enter India until the 1990s, even avid gamers have had comparatively little time with them," meaning that "India did not experience the evolution of digital gaming" at the same time or in the same way as the U.S., western Europe, Japan or other areas.[60]

Image 0.6. A later-model Kuwaiti Sakhr Logo home computer, 1987.

58. Radwan Kasmiya, "Arab World," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 29-30; *Generation MSX*, "Sakhr Logo," https://www.generation-msx.nl/software/al-alamiah-lcsi/sakhr-logo/release/1955/.

59. Graciela Alicia Esnaola Horacek, Alejandro Iparraguirre, Guillermo Averbuj and María Luján Oulton, "Argentina," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 51.

60. Adrienne Shaw, "How Do You Say Gamer in Hindi?: Exploratory Reseearch on the Indian Digital Game Industry and Culture," in *Gaming Globally*, eds. Huntemann and Aslinger, 184.

Like game audiences, our ideas of software and hardware development are often shaped by dominant models such as the one famously established by the homebrew computing ethic of figures such as Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. While it is true that in many places, game developers are primarily motivated to pursue their career path due to a deep personal interest in games, this is not universally the case. In India, for example, Shaw found that most in the game industry "did not enter the field because of a passion for gaming" and that "game development in India did not stem from a 'hacker culture' history prominent in the United States," due to historical differences to the development of local technological culture.[61] Unlike some of the more well-known technological pioneers, many in the global south have pursued technological development primarily as a way of overcoming obstacles, approaching software and hardware development from the standpoint of resolving problems for the end user, or for themselves. In areas with no formal higher education in game development, for example, modding communities have provided a crash course in computer programming for many individuals. In cases such as these, technological development aims less at state-of-the-art innovation, and more at overcoming the many obstacles that stand in the way of game development in the global south. These often include factors such as U.S. embargoes on technology that prohibit developers from purchasing game design engines, middleware and development software in the Arab world and elsewhere.[62] One result of such trade restrictions is that in many countries of the global south, the first locally-developed home gaming consoles were copied versions of other companies' hardware. This was the case of Kuwaiti Sakhr computer, which "was essentially based on the well-known Japanese MSX,"[63] as well as consoles such as the Argentine Telematch, a 1975 Magnavox Odyssey clone. Other early examples of local hardware development include the NESA-Pong, a 1973 PONG clone developed by Mexican entrepreneur Morris Behar;[64] the Brazilian TK90X, a Sinclair ZX Spectrum clone from the mid-1980s (see Image 0.7);[65] and the Xiaobawang ("Big Brother"), recognized as China's first game console, developed in the late 1980s.[66] While such hardware adaptations initially served to fill the void created by the game industry's absence from the formal market in much of the global south, they ultimately laid the groundwork for the emergence of the regional game industries that are developing rapidly today.

In many areas of the global south, piracy is another significant factor in the use and distribution of software (see Image 0.8).[67] However, some readers might be surprised by the unanticipated effects of piracy, since pirated games and software can nurture audiences' media literacy and can even ultimately add to global media publishers' bottom lines. In cases from Mexico to China, Thailand and Indonesia, it has been shown that "gray market" goods—those that are smuggled into the country by travelers returning from trips abroad—have been a boon to gamers as well as the game industry at large.[68] The gray market has benefitted players by offering access to hardware and software that were otherwise unavailable locally on the formal market, lowering consumer prices by circumventing import taxes and expanding access to players of different socio-economic classes. On the other hand, the game industry has benefitted from local publishers' development of important localization practices, improved gaming literacy among local populations and increased brand allegiance when consumers of black or gray market games transition to purchasing licensed hardware and software.

61. Shaw, "How Do You Say Gamer in Hindi?," 185.

62. Šisler, "Video Game Development in the Middle East," 255.

63. Kasmiya, "Arab World," 29.

64. Humberto Cervera and Jacinto Quesnel, "Mexico," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 345-357.

65. Gonzalo Frasca, "Uruguay," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 609-612; *Clube do TK90X*, http://www.tk90x.com.br/imagens/propagTK90X(Jul-85).jpg.

66. Anthony Y. H. Fung and Sara Xueting Liao, "China," in Wolf , *Video Games Around the World*, 121.

67. Sketcz, "Videogames of Egypt," *Hardcore Gaming 101 Blog*, 22 March 2010, http://blog.hardcoregaming101.net/2010/03/videogames-of-egypt.html.

68. Fung and Liao, "China," 129; Cervera and Quesnel, "Mexico," 346, 350; Songsri Soranastoporn, "Thailand," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 546; Inaya Rakhmani and Hikmat Darmawan, "Indonesia," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 250, 256.

Image 0.7. Advertisement for the Brazilian TK90X personal computer,
mid-1980s.

While pirated media can be found the world over, they are the standard rather than the exception in much of the global south—for example, in the Middle East, where the level of piracy is among the highest worldwide—,[69] "the majority of video games, no matter their origin, are either purchased as pirated copies or played in public venues where one copy suffices for tens, if not hundreds, of gamers."[70] This democratizing effect, spreading access to players with less disposable income whose game consumption lies outside the margins of official market data, is key to understanding the impact of piracy. Studies from Brazil and China show that piracy comes into being largely to help overcome the significant obstacles between consumers and content, such as tremendously high tariffs on imported tech goods.[71] Likewise, Apperley's research on Venezuela suggests that piracy is crucial

69. Mohammed Ibahrine, "Video Games as Civilizational Configurations: US-Arab Encounters," in *Islamism and Cultural Expression in the Arab World*, eds. Abir Hamdar and Lindsey Moore (Routledge, 2015), 206-221.
70. Tawil-Souri, "The Political Battlefield of Pro-Arab Video Games," 538.

for the sustainability and profitability of businesses in the ICT sector of the economy, and argues that in "a global economy based on knowledge and networks, exclusion equals poverty, and in some cases, piracy enables inclusion in the economy."[72] Elsewhere, Apperley has pointed out that black market software use in the global south is a tactical response to global inequalities, one that is only logical given the structural unevenness of an industry with ever-growing demands for hardware and internet performance.[73] Moreover, in a global society where participation means not only consuming but producing, sharing and reproducing media, this is essential, as Lars Eckstein and Anja Schwarz explain in *Postcolonial Piracy*: "Cultures of piracy across the globe […] have performed as crucial sites in which various ways of being modern have been negotiated and acted out."[74] Since global citizenship increasingly requires participation in media networks and a knowledge of computer hardware and software, one of piracy's greatest benefits for the global south is an expansion in overall access to those networks and technologies.

Image 0.8. Market stalls selling black market video game hardware and software, Cairo, Egypt, 2010.

Public gaming facilities such as cybercafés, LAN centers, PC Bangs and other game rental spaces are another significant factor in expanding access to gaming technology across the global south (see Image 0.9).[75] Anthony Y. H. Fung and Sara Xueting Liao note that in China's early game culture, cybercafés were both the primary sites in which games were played and also the locales in which piracy spread most rapidly, expanding access to players but cutting into profits for formal-market developers, at least temporarily.[76] Likewise, in many areas of Latin America, the cybercafé has served both "as a democratizing market force spreading game access far beyond the reach of official sales data" and also as "a shared space that has fostered the development of a community of gamers, game developers, and game industry professionals."[77] As Hjorth has noted, the PC bang, the variation of the

71. James Portnow, Arthur Protasio and Kate Donaldson, "Brazil: Tomorrow's Market," in *Gaming Globally*, ed. Huntemann and Aslinger, 76; Fung and Liao, "China," 122.
72. Apperley, "Venezuela," 619.
73. Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms*, 15.
74. Lars Eckstein and Anja Schwarz, *Postcolonial Piracy: Media Distribution and Cultural Production in the Global South* (Bloomsbury, 2014), 18.
75. Lina Andrea Plazas Lizcano, "Cuatro niños se encuentran en un local de videojuegos," 24 June 2005, Biblioteca Departamental Jorge Garces Borrero, http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/57283; Aura Cristina Alzate Vargas, "Jóvenes reunidos en la puerta de entrada a un local de videojuegos," 24 June 2005, Biblioteca Departamental Jorge Garces Borrero, http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/57299.
76. Fung and Liao, "China," 129.
77. Penix-Tadsen, *Cultural Code*, 53.

cybercafé prevalent in South Korea and other parts of Asia that is also the birthplace of competitive online gaming, has played a "pivotal role" in the development of games and game culture across the region.[78] Not only in Korea but in many areas worldwide, the first wave of cybercafés gave way to the development of LAN centers, which further helped to expand the reach of gaming and encourage multiplayer interactions through local area networks (LANs; see Image 0.10).[79] In Thailand, for example, LAN centers began to spring up in the late 1990s near schools and universities in the capital city of Bangkok, and eventually spread to all of the country's provinces.[80] Sites like cybercafés, PC bangs and LAN centers have served as the physical locales that have established the parameters for game culture in many countries, making them crucial for understanding the economic and social dimensions of gaming and game culture in the global south.

Image 0.9. Young patrons gather at two cybercafés in Cali, Colombia, 2005.

In addition to key factors that have helped to nurture regional game cultures such as hardware and software modification, software piracy and social gaming institutions like the cybercafé, many areas in the global south share a history of common obstacles to the development of local game culture and game industries. These obstacles include internal economic divisions between rich and poor, overall digital poverty, urban/rural divides in technological access, an absence of major game industry corporations and a lack of cultural and monetary localization to make games appealing to local audiences. In the Middle East, for example, common challenges to game development include not only those related to the state, such as a lack of intellectual property protection, regulation of cultural production and censorship, but also "social and cultural aspects" including "communication patterns, cultural identity, and religious values."[81] Likewise, the Indian game industry has faced obstacles including include infrastructure barriers such as low PC and Internet penetration, industry-related issues such as piracy and lack of development experience, and consumer-related impediments such as negative perceptions regarding games.[82] And in India as well as many parts of Africa and other areas of the global south, one of the most significant barriers to the establishment of a firm, legitimate local gaming market is the commonplace use of electronic microtransactions and autopayment mechanisms in games designed primarily for users with credit cards, which are extremely uncommon throughout the global south.[83]

78. Hjorth, "Guest Editor's Introduction," 7.
79. @Vainglory, "Had an awesome time meeting and engaging with 300 fans at the #HalcyonGathering LAN Party at Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam! Community OP!," Twitter, 14 January 2017, https://twitter.com/vainglory/status/820282926411776001.
80. Soranastoporn, "Thailand," 555.
81. Šisler, "Video Game Development in the Middle East," 252.
82. Shaw "How Do You Say Gamer in Hindi?," 193.

Image 0.10. LAN Party at the Halcyon Gathering, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 2017.

And nevertheless, the global south's gamers and game-makers have persisted. When we focus on the processes through which technologies that are frequently developed in the global north have been adapted and transformed to make them useful to consumers and creators in the global south, a new picture of worldwide technological evolution emerges. Rather than a globe that is simplistically divided between technological haves and have-nots on either side of a digital divide, we observe the way active agents around the globe are finding ways to work around the legal, economic, political and social obstacles to the development of regional games and game culture. This is why, in his research on technological adaptation among the Chinese working class, Jack Linchuan Qiu refers to the "information have-less," a "new social category" consisting of "low-end ICT users, service providers, and laborers who are manufacturing these electronics."[84] Though Qiu's work focuses on China specifically, his observation that "ICTs are becoming less expensive, more widespread, and more closely integrated with the life of working-class people" certainly holds true in many other areas across the global south, and it is an example of the steps that have been taken to allow people of different socioeconomic backgrounds to access technologies, as well as the obstacles they have faced.

The absence of major game industry corporations has been a catch-22 for the global south:

83. Wesley Kirinya, "Africa," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 28; Mukherjee, "Playing Subaltern," 242.
84. Qiu, *Working-Class Network Society*, 3-4.

multinational game companies are hesitant to invest in the global south because of the dominance of piracy and the difficulty of marketing their products to consumers; as a result, hardware and software piracy continue to expand, and the black market becomes the only source of many technological brands in countries across the global south. Historically, the "global" game industry has taken much longer to show an interest in the players and markets of the global south than those in the global north, though there have been some notable outreach efforts along the way. This generalized industry absence includes not only hardware companies such as Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft; but also software developers like Square Enix, Electronic Arts and Namco Bandai; and also online distribution networks like Steam, PlayStation Network and Xbox Live. Even as recently as 2008, multinational game corporations like Sony and Microsoft were practically absent from the Chinese market, which was dominated by producers from China, Taiwan and Korea.[85] In India, Microsoft marketed the Xbox but failed to provide development licenses for Indian developers—reflecting a general tendency of game corporations who *manufacture* but do not *develop* games in the global south—while Sony bucked the trend by engaging in the development of original titles from local developers.[86] In Latin America, major game industry players like Sony and Square Enix have begun incubator programs to help local developers create games for distribution on their platforms, but only after the 2009 economic downturn drove them to seek new customers in the region's untapped markets.[87] And in the Middle East and many other areas of the global south, services such as Xbox Live are not supported, and though Sony's game consoles are popular, Sony does not extend PlayStation Network access to many Middle Eastern countries, making it impossible for console gamers to play online.[88]

Cultural norms and expectations can also affect the development of games and game culture in different regions. The Arab world is a key case in point, as numerous games developed in the West contain elements that are at odds with an Islamic worldview, with the potential for sparking controversy or provoking censorship if they are not localized with care. Brian T. Edwards explains that many in the global south have associated "globalization" with "Americanization," but while in some more extreme cases "the disenfranchised could turn toward a resurgent fundamentalist version of Islam as an alternative globalism," their views of the West have also inevitably been impacted by the ways "the digital revolution made American movies, comics, fiction, music, video games, and websites easily accessible, opening a new way of life that set uneasily with a legend of US imperial designs."[89] Still, the relationship between video games and the audiences of the Arab world is complex, its history fraught with missteps by developers, even those from within the region itself. For example, the cool public reception of *Zoya: A Warrior from Palmyra* (2002), a *Tomb Raider*-inspired adventure game from Syrian developer Techniat3D, has been attributed to the "'improper attire' of the female warrior featured on the cover" of the game.[90] And cultural localization is not always as simple as adhering to local norms for characters' costumes. In his research on game development in the Middle East, Šisler argues that understanding key Arab cultural values such as modesty and honor are essential for addressing contemporary Arab video game production, and explains that regional game developers take a number of measures to "ensure the effective use of design concepts based on prevailing cultural values," including "(a) culturally sensitive design, in general, and (b) religious sensitivity, (c) identity construction, (d) educational appeal, and (e) self-censorship in particular."[91] Ahmad Ahmadi echoes this observation in his research on Iranian game culture, explaining that

85. Yong Cao and John D. H. Downing, "The Realities of Virtual Play: Video Games and their Industry in China," *Media, Culture & Society,* 30.4 (2008): 517-519.
86. Shaw "How Do You Say Gamer in Hindi?," 183-201.
87. Penix-Tadsen, *Cultural Code*, 120-122.
88. Kasmiya, "Arab World," 33.
89. Edwards, *After the American Century*, 21.
90. Kasmiya, "Arab World," 30.
91. Šisler, "Video Game Development in the Middle East," 254.

Iranian culture influences national game development on many levels, including the adaptation of cultural heritage and mythology; the depiction of cultural norms, traditions, customs and rituals; and the representation of modernity, "including free will, the rule of law and freedom of speech."[92] So while cultural differences can serve as obstacles to the development or reception of games throughout the Arab world, it is just as important to note that those same cultural differences produce new opportunities for developers who are able to capitalize on their familiarity with their region's cultural contexts and player profiles.

The representation of local, national and regional cultures of the global south in video games has a lengthy and at times controversial history. Most audiences in the global south grew accustomed to seeing their cultures depicted in games created by developers in the global north long before locally produced games began to appear, and many of these depictions from the outside were predictably reductive and stereotypical. Apperley cites public outcry over depictions of local environments from Seoul to Rio de Janeiro as demonstrations that national, regional and local identity can affect the way hegemonic depictions of "global" concerns are assimilated at the local level.[93] This is why it is so displeasing to see one's own culture depicted poorly, and conversely why it can be so surprisingly pleasant to see a more complex and nuanced depiction of one's culture in a game. Too often players in different parts of the global south are forced to play versions of their homelands sketched out through stereotypical generalizations and clichés, for example the countless Middle Eastern game environments across the medium's history that have used Orientalist imagery to depict the Middle East as either a quasi-historical fantasy landscape, or as a space for contemporary conflicts that situate Arabs and Muslims as enemies.[94] The same is true for other cases where cultures of the global south are represented: Siddhartha Chakraborti argues that in games produced in the global north such as *Tomb Raider III: Adventures of Lara Croft* (1998), *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (2003) and *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* (2012), "India is never seen as a sovereign nation but rather as a location for the use of the western outsider," a framework that perceives India not as a nation but a destination, "a destination ripe for western intervention by denying the nation any sovereignty and agency of its own."[95] As these and many other cases show, the legacy of colonialism and orientalist depictions of cultures outside the global north—a legacy that responds to lengthy traditions in literature, the visual arts, film and other representational media—remains key to understanding the ways video games relate to the global south.

Just as interesting is how players from the global south have found ways to "play back" against colonialist tendencies in video games. Mukherjee has argued that "just as postcolonial historiography and narratives foster 'reading against the grain' of imperial chronicles," video games and play practices produced from a postcolonial or decolonial viewpoint "can be said to be 'playing against the grain'" or "playing back."[96] Mukherjee explains that in his view, playing back "is the playing of the plural; it disrupts linear chronologies and centers of truth; implicitly, it speaks for those voices that cannot be heard in the colonial archives; and it presents scenarios where both colonial stereotypes can be simulated and anticolonial alternative stories can be told." And indeed, there are many cases across the global south that show how game players and designers are developing practices that utilize the medium "against the grain" of its standard use for entertainment in order to represent the cultural and political concerns particular to the designated audience. For example, in his research

92. Ahmad Ahmadi, "Iran," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 284-285.
93. Apperley, *Gaming Rhythms*, 119.
94. Vit Šisler, "Palestine in Pixels: The Holy Land, Arab-Israeli Conflict, and Reality Construction in Video Games," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 2 (2009): 278-279; Vit Šisler, "Digital Arabs: Representation in Video Games," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11.2 (2008): 214.
95. Siddhartha Chakraborti, "From Destination to Nation and Back: The Hyperreal Journey of Incredible India," *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 7.2 (2015): 183-202.
96. Mukherjee, *Videogames and Postcolonialism*, 103.

on game development in the Arab world, Mohammed Ibahrine distinguishes "Islamist" games—those developed by "groups that are radical and violent," a category that could include the Al-Qaeda sponsored *Quest for Bush* (Global Islamic Media Front, 2006), as well as the Hezbollah-backed games *Special Force* (2003) and *Special Force 2* (2007)—from "Islamic" games—those developed by groups that are moderate and non-violent—such as *Under Ash* (Dar al-Fikr 2001) and *Quraish* (Dar al-Fikr 2005), concluding that by representing perspectives that diverge from the common Western game narratives, video games offer developers "an extraordinary medium for non-state actors to culturally resist and confront hegemonic discourses and institutions, and these actors exercise considerable influence over Arab youth."[97] Ibahrine further argues that playing Islamic games can be "an act of emancipation from the American images that have previously dominated the world of video games,"[98] a thesis that would seem to be evidenced in the joy Palestinian player cited in a snapshot at the beginning of this introductory chapter, and others who have found profound self-affirmation in games offering a positive depiction of their own cultures. Still, other critics argue that these games frequently reproduce the militaristic worldview and violent standards typical of the medium, making games like *Special Force* fundamentally similar to western first-person shooters despite their attempts to transcend the limitations of the genre.[99] More recently, as Aslinger and Huntemann have argued, expansions in mobile technology and improvements in internet connectivity have spread access to gaming, game developers working on relatively small-scale smartphone applications and online games have encountered expanded opportunities for the creation of "more local and individualized experiences," while "industries and governments (among others) are jockeying for position in a fast growing market."[100] For example, although games developed in Latin America have not typically been marketed to the region's consumers, that tendency has begun to shift with the expansion of social networking and mobile internet access.[101] Indeed, at this very moment, we are experiencing an explosion in the development of local and regional games corresponding to the particular cultural environments in which they are created, and this boom in self-representation is likely just one of the early steps in the evolution of gaming as a global phenomenon.

In much of the global south, the state has played a split role with regard to video games: on one hand, games are seen as a dangerous concern to public health and morality, the focus of censorship, restriction and regulation in response to hegemonic representations and culturally controversial material; on the other hand, many governments seek to support of the game industry as a chance to partake more fully in the international knowledge economy through investment in national creative industries. This push-and-pull between governmental attacks on games and support for their development can be observed in cases from across the global south, in varying levels of extremity. China is a paradigmatic case of this dual state role. Dirlik sees China's visible contradictions as exemplary of the possibilities and the challenges facing the global south, with its high level of national economic development and integration in the international neoliberal economy balanced by its cultural autonomy and socialist-rooted ideas of equity and justice.[102] Certainly, these contradictions and fragmentations are as visible in China's video game culture as anywhere else. First, there is the heavy hand of state control: fueled by rising public controversies and alarms raised concerning childhood game addiction over the course of the 1990s, the Chinese Ministry of Culture demanded in 2000 that all companies and individuals to cease to produce, distribute and circulate video game

97. Ibahrine, "Video Games as Civilizational Configurations," 213-214.
98. Ibid., 216.
99. Šisler, "Video Game Development in the Middle East," 211.
100. Aslinger and Huntemann, "Introduction," 1.
101. Agustín Pérez-Fernández, "Video Game Development in Argentina," in *Gaming Globally*, eds. Huntemann and Aslinger: 80.
102. Dirlik, "Global South: Predicament and Promise," 17-18.

hardware domestically, a ruling which led to a longstanding ban on game consoles in China that also had the unforeseen effect of forcing all production, distribution and circulation of Chinese games to move online.[103] Fung and Liao argue that this ban was motivated by "economic and national protectionism," as a measure aimed at reducing the dominance of foreign game companies in China, where domestic companies had little experience other than importing and cloning foreign games.[104] Additionally, the Chinese "censorship mechanism" involves a combination of state and market procedures that range from official licensing and censorship of foreign games featuring violence, sex, superstition or seen as threatening to national sovereignty, to market functions such as self-censorship by game developers and publishers, who, for example, avoid all political content.[105]

But just as the state can frequently serve as an obstacle to the development of games and game culture, it can seek to advance national interests by investing in game development. In cases from across the global south from China to Colombia and from Thailand to Iran, governmental support has been cited as a key piece of the puzzle that leads to successful game development and a sustainable game development ecosystem.[106] Many of the most forward-thinking state agencies and political voices in the global south have begun to embrace gaming and game development as positive elements of national culture and areas of potential growth for the national economy, helping to strengthen the optimistic view that the balance in the state's dual role regarding video games will tip away from censorship and control, and toward nurturing and support.

Together, these four key factors—a reputation as part of the technological margins despite a longstanding game culture, a shared set of historical obstacles and affordances to game development, a legacy of cultural representation at the hands of game developers in the global north and a divided official perspective on video games—help understand the ways that games have been uniquely adapted and transformed by actors in the global south in order to ensure their compatibility with the parameters of local cultural expectations, technological capabilities and economic circumstances. While the situation of every region, country and locale is irreducibly unique, these factors illuminate some of the points of contact that can bring together otherwise disparate countries and regions, showing that an understanding of the games and game cultures of the global south is essential to an understanding of games and game culture in general.

REDEFINING VIDEO GAMES AND GAME CULTURE, FROM SOUTH TO NORTH

Today, video games are a major part of culture in the global south, and likewise, in order to understand contemporary game culture, it is essential to take into account how games are created, circulated and put to use in regions like Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Central and South America, the Indian subcontinent and developing areas of Oceania and Asia. In order to better comprehend video games as a global phenomenon, it is essential to learn from the experiences of game players and developers from these regions, helping redefine games and game studies from south to north. Video games have never just "fallen into place" in the global south—instead, they have been situated and contextualized, made playable and accessible by the active efforts of countless groups and individuals whose endeavors are landmarks in the development of global game culture. Today a number of factors have paved the way for a boom in game access and game development alike across the global south, including an increase in mobile internet access and use; a concomitant increase in developers'

103. Fung and Liao, "China," 127.
104. Fung and Liao, "China," 132.
105. Cao and Downing, "The Realities of Virtual Play," 523-524.
106. Cao and Downing, "The Realities of Virtual Play," 524; Luis Parra and Global Game Designers Guild, "Colombia," in Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 142; Soranastoporn, "Thailand," 552; Šisler, "Video Game Development in the Middle East," 255.

access to the casual game market; public and private efforts to nurture a healthy game development ecosystem; and increased crossover, visibility and relevance to other facets of culture such as sports, music and art. These elements are making the global south's impact on game culture clear in new and undeniable ways, and they show why the development of games and game culture in the global south is likely to continue its exponential expansion for the foreseeable future.

Increased access to games in the global south means increased game literacy among today's players, who are tomorrow's game developers. Over the past decade, an explosion of cellular and mobile internet access have made video games and other interactive media accessible for the first time to many audiences in the global south. In India, for example, Shaw explains that "massive growth in mobile phone use" has increased the popularity of social networking games and motivated a shift in focus toward the development of mobile games, with mobile gaming being heralded as a major boon to the local game market due to "high consumer adoption, micropayment models, cheaper development costs, and lower piracy risk."[107] And indeed, similar factors are motivating a shift toward the mobile market in many other areas of the global south. In Africa, mobile phones outnumber PCs and game consoles combined,[108] while in Latin America mobile subscriptions now outpace land lines by a factor of more than 4 to 1.[109] Research on the use of ICTs in development projects highlights the role played by state-funded and NGO-supported programs focused on improving access to the internet and related technologies. Chile, for example, is considered a leader in ICT policy across Latin America and the global south due to its hybrid approach to expanding access, which focused on the creation of school programs (Enlaces) and access points in public libraries (BiblioRedes) as well as schools and stand-alone telecenters (Infocentros).[110] At the same time, the good intentions of development projects run up against the media uses and desires of actual users—for Chile's library-based BiblioRedes access points, for example, content-control policies grouped gaming along with other restricted or forbidden uses such as online chatting and pornography.[111] The Chilean case illustrates some of the obstacles that have lay upon the path to an expansion in access to gaming technologies across the global south in recent years, as well as some of the collective efforts and innovations that have helped resolve these issues.

An expansion in mobile technology use and the booming popularity of casual games have not only led to new and more diversified gaming audiences, they have opened up new opportunities for game development across the global south, as small independent game studios have brought their products to the international market thanks to the lower investment necessary to create games designed for mobile devices and social media platforms. Research across the global south, from India, Thailand and Indonesia to Latin America, demonstrates that there is a major game development boom has been building up over the first two decades of the 21st century.[112] In his research on Africa, Wesley Kirinya traces the history of regional game development to South Africa in the early 2000s, going on to discuss the establishment of new studios around the same time in Kenya and Ghana, as well as in the mid-2000s in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Morocco.[113] As the first generations to grow up playing video games have come to maturity across the globe, games have become an integrated part of their cultural experiences, and the desire to contribute to game development has expanded. This has led to some creative integration of local culture into locally-developed video games, a practice

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107. Shaw, "How Do You Say Gamer in Hindi?," 189-190.
108. Kirinya, "Africa," 28.
109. Penix-Tadsen, *Cultural Code*, 57.
110. Dorothea Kleine, *Technologies of Choice?: ICTs, Development, and the Capabilities Approach* (MIT Press, 2013), 10-13.
111. Kleine, *Technologies of Choice?*, 90
112. Mukherjee, "India," 138; Soranastoporn, "Thailand," 552; Rakhmani and Darmawan, "Indonesia," 263; Penix-Tadsen, *Cultural Code*, 136-138.
113. Kirinya, "Africa," 17-28.

which is itself fraught with controversy for developers in the global south, who may question the pros and cons of tying game development to the depiction of "local color." As Wolf explains, there is "tension between foreign imports and indigenous production" in every country that produces video games, with foreign games establishing design conventions and audience expectations alike.[114] While multinational corporations and government agencies seem to have an insatiable thirst for things like "local color" and "Latin flavor" in games developed in Latin America, for example, game developers may be hesitant to pigeonhole themselves professionally and creatively into what some see as tired tropes and cultural stereotypes.[115] The game cultures of the global south have come into being as part of the struggle and synchronicity between the local and the global within the contemporary media landscape.

A spectrum of official, private and hybrid efforts have also worked in concert to prepare the terrain for this recent increase in game development and game culture in the global south. In terms of financing for game development, the degree to which the balance tilts toward government support on the one hand, or industry support on the other, varies from case to case. In China, the game industry's success has been based less on ties to large, established state-owned media conglomerates, and more on private investment and the support of non-state entities.[116] Colombian game development, for its part, has been nurtured by grassroots associations of game developers such as SOMOS as well as those with ties with international organizations, such as the International Game Developers Association in Colombia and the Global Game Designers Guild.[117] In a number of African contexts, along with growth in the mobile game market, game development has been driven by a focus on the creation of digital development games (DDGs), a trajectory that is not without its problems—Jolene Fisher argues that DDGs are far from radical or revolutionary in their approach to development issues, and indeed that "the production of DDGs is directly tied to the worldwide growth of the digital games sector, a highly concentrated media system in which the Western loci of production, technology, and skills reinforces established North/South knowledge/power divides."[118] While there are many individuals and organizations willing to support game development in the global south, each one has its own agenda and its own objectives. Therefore, the types of development that are most heavily promoted often depend upon the interests being served, whether they are focused on creative production, community building or economic development. These are just some of the considerations and choices that game developers in the global south must make to get their games to players, showing how the interests and expectations of supporting entities can impact the types of games that can potentially be produced within a given set of circumstances.

Critical perspectives, theoretical frameworks and case studies of game culture from the global south are essential to make game studies more diverse, inclusive and complete in its analysis of games and game culture as worldwide phenomena. As this introduction has attempted to make clear, we can no longer think of video games and game culture as phenomena that originate in the global north, but rather the technocultures surrounding video games are developed simultaneously and divergently in different locales throughout the globe. Looking at games from the perspective of the global south means understanding the steps that must be taken in order to make global culture local, and the processes involved in bringing local culture to a global audience. The critical perspectives of scholars from the global south enrich the spectrum of viewpoints on the role of games in culture, and provide

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114. Wolf, *Video Games Around the World*, 6.
115. Penix-Tadsen, *Cultural Code*, 101-104.
116. Cao and Downing, "The Realities of Virtual Play," 523.
117. Parra and Global Game Designers Guild, "Colombia," 143.
118. Jolene Fisher, "Toward a Political Economic Framework for Analyzing Digital Development Games: A Case Study of Three Games for Africa," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 9 (2016): 44.

a more nuanced background for understanding games as a truly global phenomenon. And universal attempts to theorize what video games are and how they function will inevitably fall short if they fail to take into account the limitations of the perspective being imposed, or if they are blind to the game-related practices and traditions of regions other than those in which their own theories originate. In other words, game studies as a whole has much perspective to gain from the global south, and it is no longer enough to study the games and game cultures of this vast and varied region as a marginal add-on or peripheral appendage to game culture as envisioned from the viewpoint of the global north. As the work of this anthology's contributors demonstrates, the time has come to redefine video games and game culture from the perspective of the global south.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Video Games and the Global South is divided into three sections, each thematically organized around a significant point of intersection between the chapters in the section.

Part One, "Serious Games and the Politics of Play" focuses on the relationship between video games, politics, economics and cultural identity, using a variety of approaches including the analysis of "serious" game design and procedural rhetoric, aesthetics of art games, modification practices of player communities and the representation of cultures of the global south by game developers in the global north. In "Replaying the Digital Divide: Video Games in India," Souvik Mukherjee responds to several currents in recent postcolonial critiques of gaming, using them to help reveal the mechanisms that influence views on India's video game industry by analyzing the rhetoric employed by both the state and actors in the country's game industry. Claire Taylor's chapter "Serious Gaming: Critiques of Neoliberalism in the Works of Ricardo Miranda Zúñiga" examines this Chilean artist's interactive works, which combine street interactions with digital/online games in order to maximize audience engagement and encourage players to question the rules of the system in which they are playing. This thread of art game analysis is continued in Jenna Ann Altomonte's chapter, "Playing *Killbox*: Didactic Gaming and Drone Warfare," which shows how DeLappe's multimedia art works as a critique of drone warfare's violent effects on perpetrators as well as victims, putting players in each position in order to force them into an ethical conundrum. In "Playing Beyond Precariousness: The Political Aspect of Brazilian Modding in *Pro Evolution Soccer*," Thaiane Oliveira, José Messias and Diego Amaral apply Walter Mignolo's concept of epistemic disobedience to an analysis of the practices of Brazilian software modifiers and hackers, showing how their work uses state-of-the-art design practices to foreground the interests of subaltern communities at a particular geographical and historical junctures. Rhett Loban and Thomas Apperley shed further light on the cultural role of software modification in their chapter "Eurocentric Values at Play: Modding the Colonial from the Indigenous Perspective," which examines how indigenous culture, history and issues have conventionally been depicted in video games, as well as how they are being reimagined by communities of strategy gamers and game modders. In the final chapter of Section One, "Digital Masks and *Lucha Libre*: Visual Subjectification and Allegory of Mexico in Video Games," Daniel Calleros Villareal explores the history of the lucha libre mask as a ludic symbol of Mexico, analyzing the ways video game luchadores impact Mexican gamers' self-images and notions of cultural identity. Together, these six chapters break new ground in research on the relationship between games and culture in the global south by applying a postcolonial or decolonial perspective to the analysis of regional game industries, serious game design, software modification and in-game cultural representation's impact on players, providing an in-depth examination of serious games and the politics of play in the global south today.

Part Two, "Gaming Communities and Subcultures," includes six chapters focusing on the unique practices, identities and interactions of player communities from across the global south. In the first chapter, "Not Waiting for Other Players Anymore: Gaming in the Middle East between Assignation, Resistance and Normalization," Pierre-Alain Clement provides a framework for the analysis of current video game practices in the Middle East by exploring games' development process, content, audience and user-produced content in light of recent regional data related to online gaming. Verónica Valdivia Medina's chapter "National Cultures and Digital Space: The Case of *World of Warcraft*" uses a comparative analysis of player interactions on North and South American *WoW* servers to identify significant elements of national culture that players bring to this platform, as well as the profound effects of cultural perspective on the meaning of games for players from different backgrounds. Jules Skotnes-Brown, in the chapter "Colonized Play: Racism, Sexism and Colonial Legacies in the *Dota 2* South Africa Gaming Community," analyzes interactions among South African players of *Dota 2* to explain why racism and sexism are allowed to thrive in an online community amidst widespread national attempts to rid the country of such prejudices. Also focusing on *Dota 2* player communities but in the context of Peru, Jerjes Loayza's chapter "Ludic Solidarity and Sociality: An Analysis of the Impact of *Dota 2* on Lima's Youth" argues that, though consumers of video games are sometimes stigmatized as isolated or even antisocial, *Dota 2* players in Peru's capital city not only prefer to share common spaces for the purpose of team interaction, but also because they form long-lasting friendships, bonds and interpersonal relationships in public gaming centers that extend beyond the games themselves. In "Arab Gamers: An Identity Inclusivity Study," Bushra Alfaraj offers a systematic analysis of interview data from Arab-identifying players to learn how audiences from this identity group make sense of the current state of lacking Arab representations in video games. Finally, in "eSports Gamers in China: Career, Lifestyle and Public Discourse among Professional *League of Legends* Competitors," Boris Pun, Yiyi Yin and Anthony Y. H. Fung explore eSports in China from the perspective of political economics, showing how this phenomenon is representative of game culture in a country where the economy is booming but political controls are strict, a situation typical to a number of other locales in the global south. The six chapters that make up Part Two serve to illustrate how the practices of player communities and subcultures throughout the global south correspond to the cultural, technological, social, political and economic conditions in which games are played, offering insights that can help enhance our overall understanding of the relationship between player practices and cultural context.

Part Three, "Circulation of Games and Game Culture," explores emergent practices related to gaming and the multimodal networks through which games are produced, circulated, consumed and otherwise put to use across the global south today. In "Digital Gaming's South-South Connection," Thomas Apperley compares ethnographic player data with participant observations from cybercafés in Melbourne, Australia and Caracas, Venezuela to explore how networked gaming uses globally scaled real-time cross-cultural and transnational communication to connect and reconnect regions in ways that realign local and regional geographic imaginaries. Also shedding light on an underexplored game culture within the global south, Rebecca Yvonne Bayeck's chapter "The Emerging African Video Game Industry: An Analysis of the Narratives of Games Developed in Cameroon and Nigeria" offers key insights into the burgeoning west African game industry, exploring the relationship between the narratives of regional games and the local cultures of the countries in which they were produced in order to offer insights that are relevant to game development on a global level. In "Video Game-Related Engagement on Social Media in the Middle East," Ahmed Al-Rawi and Mia Consalvo examine how Middle Eastern audiences engage with video games and game-related topics on social media, using data from Facebook and Twitter to show how these online platforms serve as extensions of the

offline debates that occur around key cultural issues. María Luján Oulton examines how the Southern Cone is responding to global cultural shifts in "The Nuances of Video Game Curation: Lessons from Argentina," analyzing the interaction between art and video games over the last decade in Argentina to show how societies of the global south not only consume cultural products but remix and recreate their own content, shaped by their cultural identity and context. In the chapter "Mobility through Games: Gaming Cultures and Migration," Will Balmford, Larissa Hjorth, Ingrid Richardson and Joshua Wong use an ethnographic analysis of Asian international students in Melbourne, Australia to explore the role of migration in the circuits of game consumption, showing the complex ways in which distance and intimacy are interwoven within the practices of being home and away. Part Three concludes with the chapter "Whose 'Game Culture' is It, Anyway? Exploring Children's Gameplay across Cape Town," in which Nicola Pallitt, Muya Koloko and Anja Venter examine children's gameplay across settings in Cape Town including suburban schools, holiday clubs, township libraries and family households in order to show that the physical location in which a game is played can be as important as who plays, what they play and how they play. These six chapters offer a concerted view of emergent practices that can help expand our understanding of games and game culture by highlighting the unique transmedial relationships that connect previously divided regions, revive cultural traditions by merging them with media of increasing relevance to audiences, bring together the worlds of video games and other forms of art and establish new forms of player communities that may be intimately tied to a precise location, or may cross geographic expanses that were once unimaginable.

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