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Peripheral Games: Chilean Glocalization and the Independent Video Game Scene

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This paper analyzes the Chilean independent video game industry through a postcolonial lens, revealing a center-periphery dynamic where technological access does not dismantle cultural hierarchies. A review of 28 Chilean games (2014-2024) shows only one with thematic glocalization focused on Latin America, five with aesthetic glocalization and 22 with grobalization. Despite the high rate of original IP creation, the lack of local content suggests a form of cultural dependency. Chilean developers, inspired by global media, align with international norms, indicating an internalization of dominant tropes.

Keywords: *independent video games, Chilean video games, postcolonialism, glocalization, game studies.*

Este artículo analiza la industria chilena de videojuegos independientes desde una perspectiva poscolonial, revelando una dinámica centro-periferia en la que el acceso a la tecnología no desmantela las jerarquías culturales. Una revisión de 28 juegos chilenos (2014-2024) muestra que solo uno tiene una glocalización temática centrada en América Latina, cinco con glocalización estética y 22 presentan una grobalización. A pesar de la elevada creación de propiedad intelectual original, la falta de contenido local sugiere una dependencia cultural. Los desarrolladores chilenos, inspirados por los medios de comunicación globales, se alinean con las normas internacionales, lo que indica una internalización de los tropos dominantes.

Palabras clave: *videojuegos independientes, videojuegos chilenos, poscolonialismo, glocalización, estudios de juegos.*

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The global surge of the independent video game movement was influenced by newfound accessibility to technology. This democratization of game development tools and digital distribution platforms, as noted by Paolo Ruffino (2013), dismantled previous barriers to entry, enabling individuals and small teams to create and distribute games without the backing of major publishers.

Concurrently, the Latin American game industry also benefited immensely from this increased accessibility (Frasca, 2024). Both the general independent scene and the Latin American industry witnessed a period of significant growth during the early 2000s up to 2019. A period of expansion documented by scholars such as Sandovar (2017), for the broader movement, and González (2017), Guevara-Villalobos (2021) Robinson (2004), for the Latin American context.

The parallels may induce to think of the Latin American Industry in terms of being independent, however there is a crucial divergence rooted in historical power imbalances (Baeza-González, 2021; Loomba, 2005; Mukherjee, 2017). While technological access may appear to level the playing field, it does not dismantle the deeper economic and cultural hierarchies that structure the global creative market (Baeza-González, 2021).

This paper argues that the Chilean independent video games scene, as a case study, operates within a postcolonial center-periphery dynamic, where the apparent freedom granted by technology is constrained by the neocolonial logic of market, where in the end Latin America is dependent, rather than independent (Marini, 1991).

The subcontinent's marginal position relative to the industry's centers of power —primarily the United States, Europe, and Japan— positions it as a peripheral actor. As Baeza-González (2021) concludes from interviews with Chilean developers and stakeholders, Chile exemplifies this peripheral status, adapting to dominant trends rather than showcasing local identity.

The present research looks to advance a step further by reviewing 28 Chilean games in search for the ones that use thematical, aesthetic or formal glocalization (Roudometof, 2016) strategies, within the grobalization (Ritzer, 2004) phenomena that occurs as an effect of globalization. In order to confirm or confront Baeza-González (2021) view.

INDEPENDENT GAMES AS A CONCEPT

The notion of indie games, much like numerous academic concepts, is "not a fixed or stable idea, and means different things depending on where you are and how it is deployed" (Parker, 2014, p. 1). This ambiguity was recognized early in the field, with Zimmerman (2002) identifying "independence" as an "unresolved problem" (p. 129). And even questioning the existence of independent games.

The term "indie" in games is often defined in contrast to the mainstream (Pedercini, 2012; Parker, 2014). But, while the formal recognition of independent game development is recent, the initial stages of game creation can be said to have been entirely independent.

Furthermore, prior to its identification as a distinct movement, various similar forms of game creation existed, including "amateur, enthusiast, hobbyist, fan, shareware, demoware, freeware" (Parker, 2014, p. 3). Before the term became common, games were being made by regular people, freaks and diversities (Anthropy, 2012). Therefore, simply defining indie games as an opposition to the establishment presents a challenge.

The difficulties arise in other areas. Martin and Deuze (2009) characterized it as a style that appealed to authenticity. However, Parker (2014) noted that this style "has been easily coopted and commercialized into a highly marketable genre for the game industry" (p. 4).

Pinpointing economic independence for indie games also remains as a challenge (Lipkin, 2013). While some scholars believe they function within established commercial systems rather than challenging them (Jahn-Sudmann, 2008), others propose that methods like Kickstarter funding offer independence by reducing reliance on major publishers (Lipkin, 2013). This highlights a dichotomy regarding the true autonomy of indie game development.

One characteristic that could be said is that indie games are often developed by small teams or individuals, a production model reminiscent of the industry's early days before the 1990s. The shift towards larger, more complex games necessitated substantial investments and extensive development teams, as noted by Ruffino (2013, p. 107).

Ruffino's research emphasizes three aspects of independent game development that are relevant for the present study:

1. Freedom as political independence: A drive for emancipation, specifically from economic struggle (Ruffino, 2013, p. 111) —although Simon (2013) observes examples of highly successful independent games.
2. Accessible technology: Developers can create games using free tools and distribute them online without intermediaries, democratizing video game production (Ruffino, 2013, p. 112).
3. Intimacy and individualization: A sense of authorship and a close connection between developers and their games (p. 114).

In the end, it is still challenging to determine if these new game development methods are truly more independent than past power structures, and whether they offer genuine creative and financial freedom (Ruffino, 2021, p. 19).

POSTCOLONIAL LENSE ON THE GAME INDUSTRY

Defining postcolonialism is as complex as it was to define independent games, in this case it implies different cultural experiences —such as South American, African and Asian countries— (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2006, p. 2).

As a theory postcolonialism emerged from anti-colonial activism in Asia, Africa and South America that interrogated colonial practices (Nayar, 2010), the theory itself was born after colonialism; however the term does not imply the

end of it, because this form of thought does not think that its consequences have been overcome, there have been developments of new elites and neocolonial institutions that perpetuate similar problems in post-independent societies, that continue with unequal treatments and exploitations (Mukherjee, 2017).

Nayar (2010) identifies several aspects of postcoloniality; among them, the most pertinent to this study is the utilization of 'Third World' labor within the Information and Communications Technology industries. This phenomenon is mirrored in the Latin American video game industry, a topic that will be further explored in subsequent sections.

Another aspect that relates to postcolonialism and that will be further revised in the Latin American context is the notion of a core and periphery (Potter, 2001), initially linked to geography studies and latter linked to innovation (Eder, 2019), which led to a dichotomous representation of an innovative core versus non-innovative regions (Eder, 2019; Graffenberger and Vonnahme, 2019; Isaksen and Sæther, 2015). In other words, colonized regions became less innovative than colonizers, which led them to a disadvantage position in the global markets, leaving them at their peripheries (Baeza-González, 2021).

The peripheral position of Latin America within the international markets left its countries in a situation of dependence. This concept is elaborated by Marini (1991), who explains it as a relationship of subordination that keep reproducing the dependence, mainly because the Latin American countries entered the international capitalist markets by selling food and raw materials, which only helped to further the industrialization of the centers of power. In essences there is an inequal exchange of goods in the global markets.

To better understand globalization, Roudometof (2016) takes the concept of "glocalization" and develops it further. According to the author the term gained popularity in the 1990's, and it was born to address the limitations of the globalization concept.

In this way, the global would be a concept that understand the world as compressed, the linking of different localities (Robertson, 1995), globalization would be a process in which the world is shrinking. "It follows then that globalization is about speed, and speed involves both spatial and temporal shifts (speed = space/time)" (Roudometof, 2016, p. 10).

On the other hand, glocalization puts attention to both the universalization and localization processes that happen in the 'globalized' world around social, economic and political systems (Roudometof, 2016). In this way the local is not becoming completely dissolved by the universal (Schuerkens, 2003).

Since glocalization can be seen as a better definition of globalization, that understands its nuances, it is important to use another concept as opposed to the glocal. This new concept would be 'grobalization', which is defined by Ritzer (2004) as "imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas" (p. 73).

This process aims for unilateral homogenization overwhelming the local and producing more profit. Grobalization would be the result of colonialism and neo-colonialism (Roudometof, 2016, p. 51). And it relates directly with the theory of

dependence by Marini (1991), because is the result of the subordination in which powerful countries impose their will over the others.

The term glocalization bearers' resonances with the concept of hybridization, with some differences.

Hybridity can be understood as the new forms of culture and identity, produced by cultural interactions (Foulcher and Day, 2002). The exchange that produces hybridity is rarely a symmetrical process of equal exchange, this leads to the peripheral countries to mimic the centers of power (Eko and Widyahening, 2020). Mimicry happens because of an ambivalent relationship between both (Foulcher and Day, 2002). Ambivalence, as described by Foulcher and Day (2002), and Fathi and Dastoori (2014), manifests as both original and authoritative, articulated through repetition and differentiation.

The difference between hybrid and glocal is that hybridity is the result of the mixture of two cultural streams, without specifying the origin of each one; "glocality necessitates the presence of two streams, one of which needs to be local" (Roudometof, 2016, p. 14).

Mukherjee (2017) utilizes a postcolonial perspective to analyze video games, building upon Gikandi's (1996) examination of cricket in India. Gikandi's work highlights how cricket fostered new avenues for identity and self-expression. For Mukherjee (2017) these new spaces talk about a hybridization that results from the former exchange between colonizer and colonized. He illustrates the complexities of the hybridization by commenting on the film *Lagaan* (Gowariker, 2001) in which the cricket game is used by the colonized to beat the colonizers, in other words people from India use the game to "play back" (fight back) against the British.

Gikandi (1996) then applies the analysis of postcolonial issues to videogames, notably *Assassins Creed III* (Ubisoft Montreal, 2012), a game that is about critiquing imperialism, and that features a well-developed native hero, but it is still meant for a white, male, westerner audiences (Shaw, 2015).

THE LATIN AMERICAN GAME INDUSTRY

The history of game development in both Latin America and Chile follows a trajectory emblematic of a peripheral region's engagement with a globalized industry.

Latin American game development traces its roots to the early 1990s (Robinson, 2004) but experienced a surge in studio growth between the early 2000s and 2019. This expansion, mirroring global trends of the independent industry that saw its development during the same age (Chen, 2017; Sandovar, 2017), can be attributed to several factors, some of which are particular to the region, such as the advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that facilitated game production and consumption during those years (Guevara-Villalobos, 2021); and other global factors, such as technological progress that has democratized several aspects of videogame creation, including animation, testing and distribution tools (Frasca, 2024; Ruffino, 2013; Brand and Baeza-

González, 2024). Although Ruffino (2013) notes that distribution platforms are often controlled by major industry players, which raises concerns about the genuine independence, and in the case of Latin America replicates the relationships of dependence.

Latin America's initial engagement with video games began as consumers on the fringes. Consoles and computers were initially imported by migrants and tourists returning from the United States (Guevara-Villalobos, 2021, p. 222). Yet, early forms of resistance emerged, such as the acquisition of Chinese-cloned FAMICOMS (Penix-Tadsen, 2017), and piracy, which remains an ongoing characteristic of the region's video game market (González, 2017).

The rebellious spirit was continued by reverse engineering and hacking that led to making games based on the modification of existing ones and some original titles (Guevara-Villalobos, 2021; Penix-Tasden, 2017).

Initially, Latin-American countries, particularly Mexico due to its proximity to the United States, primarily served as extensions of global assembly lines. Rather than developing local companies, they were utilized for low-cost production of cartridges and other components for the US and Canadian markets, (Guevara-Villalobos, 2021; Kline *et al*., 2003). The growth of companies in the region was largely absent at the outset. This resonates with Nayar's (2010) vision of the utilization of "Third World" labor in these industries.

In the early 2000s, a small industry started to grow in several countries of the region, the countries that led the movement were Brazil —with somewhere along 300 game maker companies—, Argentina —about 100 studios— and Chile —between 20 to 60— (Guevara-Villalobos, 2021; Xhardez, 2012). Still they only represented about 4 % of the global market in 2017, even though the population of Latin America represents 8.6 % of the world population, almost double of the US (González, 2017). The main trend was for these small companies to develop IP's owned by industries in the center of production (Guevara-Villalobos, 2021; Xhardez, 2012). And if they made their own IP's, they aimed the themes and designs towards the international market (González, 2017).

THE CHILEAN INDUSTRY A PERIPHERAL SCENE IN CONTEXT

The history in Chile follows along the path of the rest of Latin America. It began taking its current shape in the early 2000s, a period that saw the founding of several key players. This growth continued, evidenced by the establishment of the Chilean federation, Video Games Chile (VG Chile), in 2010 (Brand and Baeza-González, 2024, p. 98).

Accurately quantifying the current number of game development companies in Chile remains challenging. VG Chile presently has 25 members (VG Chile, 2025), while estimates suggest a fluctuating landscape, with previous claims of 200 companies down to approximately 150 currently active (Brand and Baeza-González, 2024, p. 97).

The growth of the Chilean industry can be explained in part by the support from state organizations, such as Pro Chile, which has supported missions to

the main market fairs around the world; also the corporation that foments production (known as CORFO) and the Ministry of Cultures, Art and Patrimony, both of which support with funding (Brand and Baeza-González, 2024).

Like the rest of Latin America, many of the Chilean companies do work for hire and develop external IPs, but there are many that create their own. Even though, according to Baeza-González (2021) Chilean developers know that they are at the periphery of this market, which leads to avoiding developing games that might be related to their identity or folklore. And some of their biggest projects end up being funded by international publishers, which also influence the themes and designs that are being produced (Brand and Baeza-González, 2024).

The Chilean and Latin American region's influence on the video game industry has been limited. Predominantly, the United States, Europe, and key Asian markets have driven the industry (Johns, 2006). Since its inception, Japan and the US have been the primary production hubs, later expanding to include other European markets and China, which excerpt cultural dominance over the medium (Baeza-González, 2021). The overwhelming strength of these countries has resulted in a cultural hybridization between them. For example, Atari (an American company) was named after a Go move (a Chinese game), or Taito's (a Japanese company) *Space War* was inspired by *Star Wars* (Consalvo, 2006).

Consequently, Chilean and Latin American studios find themselves marginalized in both consumer and industry labor markets (Guevara-Villalobos, 2021, p. 221). The subcontinent faces disadvantages in this market, with power imbalances causing regional game developers to often neglect local themes and designs (Johns, 2006). This, in time, makes it even harder to establish new themes that come from the peripheries (Lipkin, 2013). Their own productions are done as a reply to hybrid cultural texts, because it is the only way in which they can reach international audiences (Kraidy, 2005). The relevance of the Chilean industry within the world market of games is so small that most Chileans don't even know that videogames are being made in their own country, and there is little said of them in the national press (Brand and Baeza-González, 2024, p.104).

On the other hand, González (2017) believes that "Latin American games have elements that set them apart from regular games in the market". According to the author, these games are considered to be more open to risky themes " such as drug trafficking, prostitution, war crimes, corruption, sexual abuse, promiscuity, poverty, mental illnesses, sexism, and racism" (González, 2017). However these themes don't seem to be strange to many independent games or even to triple A games such as *Grand Thief Auto* (The Chronicle, 2025).

OBJECT AND METHODOLOGY

Starting from what has been stated so far, the present research wants to see: How many Chilean games can be understood as examples of substantive (thematic), superficial (aesthetic) and/or formal mechanical glocalization? To see if the trend is really as it has been stated by the authors mentioned before, particularly

Baeza-González (2021), who recognizes that there are some games that do depict Chilean culture, themes and designs, however they are a minority, becoming the exception that shows the rule: Chile, and Latin-America are at the periphery of the market, and the vast majority of games made by them adapt to trends, not to the national culture.

To answer the research questions this study reviews 28 Chilean games applying a coding framework based on the concept of glocalization (Roudometof, 2016), categorizing each game based on its primary strategy for engaging with global and local cultural elements. As explained in table 1.

Table 1. Glocalization Strategies

Substantive (Thematic) Glocalization	This concept describes games where a global form (the game genre, like an RPG or platformer) is fundamentally shaped by local content (the narrative, setting, characters, and mythology derived from a specific culture). The process can be understood as the refraction of a global wave —the game genre— through the prism of a local culture, creating a new, heterogeneous outcome (Roudometof, 2016, p. 65).
Superficial (Aesthetic) Glocalization	This category refers to games that incorporate local signifiers as decorative or background elements, adding local 'flavor' without altering the core product. These aesthetic touches can be seen as a 'token presence' of the local, designed to make a globally standardized product more familiar or acceptable in a specific market (Bhaduri, 2008, p. 2).
Formal (Mechanical) Glocalization	This category assesses a deeper level of cultural integration where the game's mechanics, rules, and systems of interaction —it's very *form*— are influenced by or derived from local cultural practices or concepts. It involves questioning whether the fundamental way a player interacts with the game world is a refraction of a local logic or worldview, thus challenging the idea that game mechanics are purely universal or globally homogenized structures.
Globalization	Games in this category do not just lack local elements; they are products of a logic rooted in McDonaldization —the principles of efficiency, calculability, control, and standardization— that actively promotes a uniform global consumer culture at the expense of local diversity (Turner, 2003). In summary, these games adhere to the global discourse as hybrids, without local elements.

Source: Own elaboration.

The corpus for this study consists of video games developed by member studios of VG Chile and released between January 2014 and December 2024. This 10-year period was chosen to capture the contemporary state of the industry following the establishment of its primary trade association. To focus the analysis on commercial entertainment products aimed at the global market, educational games and titles created for advertising or marketing purposes were excluded, as their intended audience is often strictly national.

The data collection process involved reviewing the official websites of the 25 member companies of VG Chile. This process yielded a final sample of 28 games from 11 distinct studios. The remaining 14 companies were excluded because they were either in the process of developing their first game, focused exclusively on non-entertainment products, or had no released games within the specified timeframe. The analysis of each game was conducted through direct gameplay where possible, supplemented by watching comprehensive gameplay videos and reviewing descriptive materials on developer and publisher websites. The process

of codification for each game was made by the two researchers, after each one reviewed the games, and agreed upon after discussion.

It is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this selection process. The sample represents a significant portion of the organized, public-facing segment of the Chilean industry but does not encompass the entire landscape. The findings are therefore indicative of trends within this specific cohort and should not be generalized to every game developer in Chile without further research.

In addition to the content analysis, two key aspects of each game's production were systematically recorded to contextualize the findings within the industry's economic structure: (1) Intellectual Property (IP) Ownership; Games were categorized as either "Original IP" (conceived and owned by the Chilean developer) or "External IP" (developed under license for an external rights holder). (2) Publisher Origin: The publisher for each game was identified and categorized as either "Local" (the developer itself or another Chilean firm) or "International" (a publishing company based outside of Chile). This data was collected from developer websites and official digital storefronts (e.g., Steam, PlayStation Store).

This in order to see if the Chilean reality reflects Nayar's (2010) vision, in which the country's industry could be seen as "Third World Labor".

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the 28 games reveals a clear pattern of alignment with global market trends, confirming the peripheral status of the Chilean industry.

Applying the glocalization framework, only one game, *Locuras en el Bananverso* (Newvicon, 2024), could be considered a form of Thematic Glocalization at a regional level. It is based on the popular Uruguayan youtuber "Bananero," whose humor and style resonate widely across Spain and Latin America. The game's protagonist is voiced by the comedian himself, and its dialogue is filled with jokes and references recognizable to his Spanish-speaking audience, representing a clear orientation towards a specific Latin American cultural niche rather than a generic global one. It is still a form of hybridization, since the game world and its mechanics resonates with other 3D adventure games.

Bananero's career and life exemplify the impact of globalization and hybridization, raising questions about whether his humor truly reflects Latin American sensibilities. Born in New Jersey to immigrant parents, he spent time growing up in Uruguay and currently resides in Miami, creating a personal history that blends US and Latin American experiences. His humor, characterized by vulgarity, sexual innuendo, and double entendres, is not exclusively Latin American, with comedians like Benny Hill and Filthy Frank employing similar techniques worldwide. The primary connection to a Hispano-American audience lies in the Spanish language. This is particularly noteworthy as it is the only game where Spanish is the main spoken language (while text can be changed to different languages, voices are in English in all of the other games). This observation supports Baeza-González's (2021) view of Chilean developers operating within a peripheral market that must adapt to dominant global markets.

Five other games utilize Superficial Glocalization, where local culture serves as superficial set dressing. Two of these games incorporate Latin American elements, while the remaining three use Chilean elements. One particular game prominently features these elements through characters from Chilean mythology.

Abyss Odyssey by ACE Team is the sole game that references Chilean mythology and characters in this manner. For example, enemies include a Pudutaur (replacing a Centaur, with *pudus'* being native deer from southern Chile), *ekekos* (an Andean deity), *camahuetos* (mythological creatures from Chiloé), and *huasos* (Chilean cowboys). Even "*La Pincoya*" (a mythological creature from Chiloé) is available as a playable character. However, the overarching theme revolves around an evil abyss, summoned by a sorcerer, which could be situated anywhere in the world. This suggests that despite their prominent display, all these elements are purely aesthetic.

Four other video games incorporate Latin American or Chilean elements into their backgrounds. *Dandi's World* features various artistic movements in its level designs, one of which evokes a well-known Chilean art movement. *Massive Warfare: Aftermath*, a battle game, offers several arenas, including Rapa Nui. Notably, the use of "Rapa Nui" instead of "Easter Island" reflects a local perspective refracting a global influence (Roudometof, 2016, p. 65). The remaining games include Latin American elements such as an Aztec arena in *HeadSnatchers* and the reference to the sun as Inti (the main Incan god) in *Cat's Planet: Inti's Call*, despite the game's primary theme being cats as planets in a cat solar system.

The remaining 22 games fall under the category of Grobalization. These titles adopt established international genres —from JRPGs and platformers to tactical and racing games— without any discernible Chilean or Latin American cultural markers. Their aesthetics, narratives, and character designs are indistinguishable from those produced in the industry's power centers.

In terms of Mechanical Glocalization, none of the 28 games analyzed presented unique gameplay mechanics derived from local culture; all adhered to established global genre conventions, such as sports, games where the player must kill their enemies or survival games. This reinforces the global aspects of all games, including those that used thematic glocalization or aesthetic glocalization, where global mechanics are added to a mixture that already had global thematic and aesthetic elements mixed with local ones.

PROSPECTIVE GLOCALIZATION: GAMES IN DEVELOPMENT

While the analysis of released games presents a stark picture, an examination of projects currently in development offers a more nuanced view, though one tempered by the uncertainties of production.

Several studios are working on titles that explicitly aim for Thematic Glocalization. Austral Games, for instance, states in its mission a desire to exhibit "local culture," specifically "Latin American and Chilean" heritage (Austral

Games, 2025). Their upcoming game, *Curilemu*, is an adventure-horror title inspired by the myths of Chilean Patagonia and set on the recognizable island of Chiloé. Similarly, BCS Studios is developing *Revenant Souls*, a game "inspired by the mythology of southern Chile" (BCS Studios, 2025). ACE Team, the studio behind Abyss Odyssey, is also developing The Mound: Omen of Cthulhu, which, despite its Lovecraftian (and thus global) influence, is set during the Spanish conquest of a region resembling the South American Pacific coast.

However, the potential of these projects is shadowed by the precarious nature of peripheral game development. *Ríos de Lluvia*, a game set in Chile's Maule region, was released in early access in 2021 but appears to have stalled, serving as a cautionary example of a locally themed project that failed to reach completion. The prospects for Revenant Souls may be more promising, as it is being developed by ACE Team which has a large trajectory of games developed (ACE Team, 2020).

PRODUCTION MODELS AND CULTURAL DEPENDENCY

An analysis of the production data complicates a simple narrative of economic determinism. Of the 28 games studied, a vast majority (22) were original intellectual properties created by the Chilean studios. Furthermore, a significant portion (8 games, or 28.5 %) were self-published or published by other local firms. This contrasts with earlier assessments of the Latin American industry, which emphasized a prevalence of "work-for-hire" on external IPs.

This high rate of original IP creation, when juxtaposed with the profound lack of local cultural content, points to a more subtle and deeply ingrained form of cultural dependency. Chilean developers are not merely being contracted to produce culturally foreign content; they are exercising their creative freedom to voluntarily produce works that align with the aesthetic and thematic norms of the global centers of power. This phenomenon demonstrates the efficacy of cultural hegemony, where the dominant ideologies of the metropole are so thoroughly internalized that they are reproduced willingly, without direct coercion. The "intimacy and individualization" that Ruffino (2013) identifies as a hallmark of indie development appears, in this context, to be an intimacy with the cultural products of the center, which inspired these developers, rather than with their own local heritage. This suggests that for many peripheral creators, the imaginative landscape itself has been shaped by the media they consumed, which overwhelmingly originated from the global North. True independence, therefore, is not just a matter of securing funding or owning one's IP; it requires a conscious decolonization of the creative process itself.

Table 2 summarizes the analysis of the 28 games.

Table 2. Analysis of Cultural Content in Chilean Independent Games (2014-2024)

Company	Main Language	Game	Year	Publisher	Publisher Origin	IP Status	Cultural Content Classification
Abstract Digital	English	Tormented Souls	2021	PQube	UK	Original	Grobalization
ACE TEAM	English	Abyss Odyssey	2014	Atlus/Sega	USA/Japan	Original	Superficial Glocalization
ACE TEAM	English	The Deadly Tower of Monsters	2016	Atlus/Sega	USA/Japan	Original	Grobalization
ACE TEAM	English	Rock of Ages II	2017	Atlus/Sega	USA/Japan	Original	Grobalization
ACE TEAM	English	Sol Seraph	2019	Atlus/Sega	USA/Japan	Original	Grobalization
ACE TEAM	English	Rock of Ages III	2020	Maximum Entertainment / 3goo	Sweden/ Japan	Original	Crobalization
ACE TEAM	English	The Eternal Cylinder	2022	Good Shepherd Entertainment	The Netherlands	Original	Grobalization
ACE TEAM	English	Clash: Artifacts of Chaos	2023	Nacon	France	Original	Grobalization
AONE GAMES	English	Omen of Sorrow	2023	East Asia Soft Limited	China	Original	Grobalization
Cloud Creatures	English	Chicken Go	2020	Self-published	Chile	Original	Grobalization
Gudhar	English	Bee Careful	2022	Self-published	Chile	Original	Grobalization
Gudhar	English	Cat's Planet: Inti's Call	2023	Self-published	Chile	Original	Superficial Glocalization
Iguana Bee	English	MonsterBag	2015	Self-published	Chile	Original	Grobalization
Iguana Bee	English	HeadSnatchers	2019	Iceberg Interactive	The Netherlands	Original	Superficial Glocalization
Iguana Bee	English	GI JOE Operation Blackout	2020	Game Mill Entertainment	USA	External	Grobalization
Iguana Bee	English	World Series Baseball	2022	Game Mill Entertainment	USA	External	Grobalization
Iguana Bee	English	Skull Island Rise of Kong	2023	Game Mill Entertainment	USA	External	Grobalization
Iguana Bee	English	L.O.L. Surprise! Roller Dreams	2023	Nighthawk Interactive	USA	External	Grobalization
Iguana Bee	English	What Lies in the Multiverse	2023	Untold Tales/ Doyoyo Games	Poland/ China	Original	Grobalization
Newvicon	Spanish	Locuras en el Bananverso	2024	Self-published	Chile	Original	Thematic Glocalization (LatAm)

Company	Main Language	Game	Year	Publisher	Publisher Origin	IP Status	Cultural Content Classification
Niebla Games	English	Causa: Voices of the Dusk	2021	Self-published	Chile	Original	Grobalization
Niebla Games	English	Cuddle Quest	2024	Self-published	Chile	Original	Grobalization
Octeto Studio	English	Cyber Ops	2020	Games Operators	Poland	Original	Grobalization
Octeto Studio	English	Wings for Hire	2024	PQube	UK	Original	Grobalization
Ruken Games	English	Dandi's World	2022	Self-published	Chile	Original	Superficial Glocalization
Smarto Club	English	Teacup	2021	Whitethorn Games	USA	Original	Grobalization
Tiny Bytes	English	Massive Warfare: Aftermath	2018	Self-published	Chile	Original	Superficial Glocalization
Ulpo Media	English	Pocket Cute Cats	2022	Mouse Trapp Games	Poland	Original	Grobalization

Source: Own elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The analysis of 28 games from 11 VG Chile member studios confirms the central thesis that the Chilean independent video game industry operates as a peripheral creative sector, shaped by the dynamics of cultural dependency. The answer to the primary research question —How many Chilean games can be understood as examples of substantive (thematic), superficial (aesthetic) and/or formal mechanical glocalization?— is stark: only one game demonstrates Thematic Glocalization oriented towards Latin American identity, and even these thematic references may be questioned. And five demonstrate different levels of Superficial Glozalization.

The overwhelming majority of titles (22 out of 28) align with a model of Global Homogenization, adopting the themes, aesthetics, and genres of the industry's hegemonic centers. This finding strongly supports the conclusions of Baeza-González (2021), reinforcing the view that Chilean developers largely adapt to global market trends rather than expressing a distinct national culture.

It's worth noting that many of these games prominently feature elements from other cultures as part of their main theme or foreground aesthetic. For example, *HeadSnatchers* is presented as a Japanese contest game, and *Wings for Hire* is a JRPG (Japanese RPG). *The Deadly Tower of Monsters* requires the player to ascend a monster-filled tower, reminiscent of 1950s US B horror movies. Additionally, both *Rock of Ages* games involve players competing against figures from global history and various global art movements.

The study's key contribution lies in its application of a postcolonial framework to interpret these findings. The high prevalence of original IP creation alongside a

low incidence of local content reveals a form of cultural dependency that is more profound than simple economic "work for hire." It suggests an internalization of the cultural norms of the centers of power, where creative agency is exercised in service of mimicry. Returning to Ruffino's (2013) three aspects of independence, the Chilean case presents a complex picture:

1. Freedom as political independence: There is little evidence of political or cultural emancipation. Instead, developers appear to pursue economic emancipation by aligning with the cultural and market logic of the centers of power.
2. Accessible technology: This has clearly been a catalyst for the industry's existence, as argued by Frasca (2024). However, this study demonstrates that technological access does not equate to cultural autonomy. State support has also been a crucial factor, but it primarily facilitates entry into the existing global market rather than fostering an alternative, locally-focused ecosystem.
3. Intimacy and individualization: While this research cannot measure the subjective passion of developers, the content of their games suggests an intimate creative relationship with the international media that inspired them. This reflects a passion for the medium as defined by the global centers, a phenomenon well-documented in studies of creative labor (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; O'Donnell, 2014).

This study is subject to limitations. Its corpus is drawn only from members of VG Chile and may not be representative of the entire, more fragmented national scene. Future research could expand this analysis to include non-affiliated developers or conduct ethnographic studies to explore the motivations and perspectives of the creators themselves. Nonetheless, the evidence presented here, supported by the work of previous scholars, strongly indicates that for peripheral creative industries like Chile's, true "independence" remains a complex and elusive goal. It is not merely an economic or technological state but requires a conscious and challenging act of cultural decolonization in a global market where conformity is often the most viable path to survival.

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