

# FINAL BOSS: Video games as a Technology of Geopolitical Cultural Power

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines video games as a geopolitical and symbolic field marked by inequality between the Global North and the Global South, dominated by the hegemony of the United States, Japan, and Western Europe. From a decolonial perspective, it seeks to reconnect with the philosophy of technology in order to problematize the technicist and determinist discourses that sustain the exclusion of subalternized voices, in particular the work of Martin Heidegger and his influence in gaming companies and big techs. Northern hegemony imposes a communicational “cacophony” that silences local productions and promotes the reproduction of foreign imaginaries, disconnected to Global South realities—a dynamic akin to the concept of technocoloniality. As such, the paper contributes to the DiGRA community by offering a framework for understanding how geopolitical and technological structures shape gaming experiences, especially in Brazil, and by suggesting pathways for more inclusive video games production that amplifies subalternized voices.

## Keywords

Video games, Technology, Decolonial Studies, Technocoloniality

## PRESS START TO FIGHT THE BOSS: INTRODUCTION

Pressing the start button may contain more than the challenges that the interface presents. Maybe the gesture by itself is hard, since many games carry a reputation of toxic communities or complicated mechanics and newcomers may feel intimidated by a culture supposedly exclusive to specialists. Others may feel foolish by trying to invest their leisure time in an illusion machine, especially in a social context that demands productivity at every living moment. It’s interesting, however, that even beyond these common feelings, the possibility of the simple pressing of the start button depends on where the player is in the world and who he is.

Another challenge outside of the interface comes from the academic environment to those who decide to study video games. The idea of seriousness seems not to match the object, just like on other times with the ludology themes, for example (Huizinga 2018). However, reality points to the urgency of research, as phenomena like Gamergate lay bare the cultural and political mobilization that this medium can generate. Video games helped elect presidents, both in the United States and Brazil, but it is still treated as a tool without any political potential (Goulart and Job 2020;

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Mortensen 2018). Both the personal and the academic dimensions are like bosses to be defeated, but this one is still the most intimidating of all.

Considering this context, the given work is an effort to face such a challenge and press start on the power games in which video games are included. It addresses social position with special attention, going beyond the individual and seeking to understand who and from where games are accessed. In particular, the work conceives them as constituent of a geopolitical structure that excludes certain territories, namely the characterized as Global South, while prioritize others, focusing on the United States, Japan and Western Europe.

In this regard, the aim of this article is to develop a theoretical essay that articulates, on one hand, a critical vision of the discourse surrounding contemporary hegemonic technology and, on the other hand, an examination of unequal distribution of power in the global video games landscape from a decolonial perspective. This landscape is overpowered by a cacophony of political and cultural influence, in accordance with a series of geopolitical mechanisms that treat culture as an instrument of domination, as by the example of the concept of Soft Power. Such mechanisms operate similarly to the process described in agenda-setting theory<sup>1</sup> (Ballerini 2023; Masetto Lima 2023; McCombs and Valenzuela 2020).

By consequence, there is a silencing of subalternized regions, as well as such a level of ideological dominance that takes many actors in these territories to act against their better interests, in a reproduction of Coloniality of Power (Gómez 2019; Mignolo 2000). The main controversy is the case of Brazilian players that defend the Japanese corporation Nintendo's position to ignore regional needs, like localization in Brazilian Portuguese. Furthermore, this convergence of discourses doesn't understand services that work for local distribution of titles and experiences, like emulators and mods, and treats them as piracy (Pereira et al 2020).

The process of influence, agenda-setting and silencing of the Global South operates according to the analysis presented by the celebrated Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2008), in which the dissolution of video games metropolises imposes the presence of their time and prioritizes them as informational center, to which the periphery depends on. In the same way, the international capital and surplus value are driven by a technology logic that includes gaming culture, co-opted by large corporations and the psychopolitics of contemporary neoliberalism, in what, within the Brazilian context of Game Studies has come to be called "Colonização do Jogo", or "Colonization of Play" (Falcão e Grey 2021; Han 2020; Morozov 2018; Santos 2008).

## **CACOPHONY AS A SPECIAL MOVE: SILENCING OF THE SOUTH**

To defeat a boss, especially one who finishes the game, it's necessary to have a lot of patience and an open spirit of curiosity to watch for special moves and learn how to anticipate them. Among the patterns of geopolitics, this work argues for the existence of a metaphorically cacophonous environment, where the hegemony (the Boss) generates so much noise by being communicationally omnipresent that overwhelms the medium, subalternizing the regions that do not possess the same capacity, given the historic extraction they have suffered at the hands of the same actors.

Who are the hegemonic countries? The big producers from the Global North: United States, Japan, United Kingdom and France. They are explicitly in this position. There

are, however, other territories tacitly part of this field, as minor producers, but still influent, given the support they offer to the centers of production, through supply of specialized labor and spaces for networking and promotion. These are the cases of Canada, Sweden, Germany and most countries of Western Europe.

This work argues a series of degrees of hierarchy in the video games field, but, at the base, the subalternized can be found<sup>2</sup>. Besides the strategies composed in the last few years, they still find a lot of difficulties to be heard. Such is the cacophony that is like they are being silenced. Many actors in these territories can't keep producing for a long or satisfactory time.

Not by chance, the subalternized territories are part of the Global South. Latin America is the case mostly studied here, but other regions that can be included are found in the African continent, in the particular cultural diversity of its countries, like Angola, Nigeria, Egypt, for example, as well as the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent etc. They share many similarities in the structural oppression they suffered and suffer with the phases of colonization from the past and the maintenance of the coloniality from the present (Mignolo 2011).

With this explicit cartography, it's possible to imagine the territorial dynamics that are in check. Through a series of geopolitical mechanisms, like Soft Power, cultural diplomacy or nation branding, the Global North keeps the cacophony and limits the entrance of the South in the video games field (Ballerini 2023; Masetto Lima 2023). Besides, it's subjected to the role of merely a consumer, and a secondary one at that, even in terms of culture. Consequently, not only do these territories offer little support for local production, but they also privilege the imaginaries of Northern countries, which helps explain the massive number of Latin-American games with Arthurian, Norse, or samurai themes, for example.

The aim of this article is not argue about the prevalence of these or those mechanisms, leaving such debate for the International Affairs field. However, is evident in all of them a power logic that can be traced to three concepts of the Humanities: first, agenda-setting theory (McCombs and Valenzuela 2020); second, the dynamics of Symbolic Power inside a Field, as established by Pierre Bourdieu (2023); and, lastly, reproduction of Coloniality of Power, inseparable from the decolonial perspective of this work (Mignolo 2000).

Agenda-Setting Theory defends that there is a transfer between the Media Agenda to the Public Agenda. It's possible through a series of available resources, specific to the media in point, that allows the emphasis on certain information (McCombs and Valenzuela 2020). In this theory, the public does not simply absorb and accept the highlighted facts and opinions; rather, it asserts that public opinion can't ignore the issue presented by media. It does not establish "what to think", but "about what issues to think" (McCombs and Valenzuela 2020). The Brazilian researcher Thiago Masetto Lima (2023) detailed how agenda-setting works from one country to the other:

The encyclopedia effect, the omnipresence of media and the more prolonged timeframe for the effects of agenda transfer are patterns that also emerge in the power dynamics of video games' soft power. (...) Games carry an impactful influence in establishing a positive relationship between the players and the country that produced them precisely because of this capacity of

cultural and attribute transmission. (...) This process can be shaped by framing and, therefore, suggest a particular perspective about the issue based on aspects perceived as persuasive arguments. (...) Not necessarily a touristic image or a stereotype about national culture, but political stances (...), values shared with global society and markers of local cultures.

*(Masetto Lima 2023, own translation)*

Just as print media can transmit objects, attributes, and, through the Encyclopedia Effect<sup>3</sup>, culture to public opinion, without eliminating society's critical capacity, video games can shape preferences through their omnipresence and the accumulation over time of titles from a given territory. Specifically: 1) By the repetition of a given information; 2) By its accumulation in consonance to other media, platforms and formats; and 3) By insistence over the course of time, the video games media consolidates a given object (territory) and a constellation of associations linked to it. From this perspective, power sets the agenda, making communication from certain areas more important than others.

Regarding Symbolic Power, the Brazilian researcher Frantjesco Ballerini was the first to suggest its extension to geopolitical application in the case of Soft Power (2023) and, as this article argues, to other international mechanisms. According to Pierre Bourdieu (2021), the concept is established by the recognition of legitimacy in its exercise. In the social environment, objectivity is concordance between individuals, in other words, consensus. In this case, as a collective construction that, besides serving particular interests, imposes itself as universal and not open to criticism. Therefore, on one hand integrates the ruling class and, in the other, demobilizes the ruled, legitimizing the order of interests and defining hierarchies and classifications. Bourdieu affirms:

*Symbolic Power as power to constitute the given through enunciation, to make see and to make believe, to confirm or to transform the worldview and, this way, the action over the world, therefore the world; power almost magical that permits to obtain the equivalent of that that is obtained by strength (physical or economical), given the specific effect of mobilization, it only can be executed if recognized, which means ignored as arbitrary. This means that the Symbolic Power (...) is defined in a determined relation- and, through it- between those who execute power and those who are subject to it, which means, in the field structure itself where belief is produced and reproduced. (Bourdieu 2021, 11, own translation)*

When discussing a field, Bourdieu refers to a concept of his own contribution to sociology, precisely a "space of positions" (2023, 25, own translation) taking into account that "the social space will be defined as the universe of relations in which all social position will be defined" (2023, 25, own translation)

Fields possess their own rules of perpetuation. The relations in this space are unequal, marked by hierarchies, where the weakest is invited to perform them once again with the strongest, in an exercise of Symbolic Power. Alternatively, an agent of considerable accumulated symbolic capital can institutionalize a rule to be applied, distinguishing him/herself in relation to others. It's interesting to note that the

Symbolic Power also is revealed, therefore, as renown, prestige, respect, merit or visibility:

*A principle of structuration of the intellectual field (...) is the unequal distribution of symbolic capital and we can, in a general manner, identify provisionally with prestige, renown, celebrity. This structure of the symbolic capital that is invisible, that is not codified (...) is really active: it benefits for being diffuse and elusive, it commands the practices, the interactions between people, the co-opting, the exclusions, the attendances etc. (Bourdieu 2023, 108, own translation).*

Therefore, it's possible to affirm the cartography of video games global environment as a field where Symbolic Power, or cultural power, is executed by analogous dynamics. Besides, the actions of certain territories are only possible because the social spaces where they are newcomers offer conditions of effectuation of "potentialities inscribed in the action itself, in the situation, in the social space." (Bourdieu 2023, 23, own translation). Thus, the sociologist affirms that "there are in each one of us potentialities that maybe never are revealed because they do not encounter social conditions for effectuation, the field in which they could be realized." (Bourdieu 2023, 23, own translation).

These conditions, in the geopolitical case, do not exist for the Global South due to historical construction, specifically given the temporal relation of subalternity that was imposed on it by the North. Therefore, it becomes evident that the same power also is from the Coloniality of Power. In particular, from its third phase, when through the growing influence of the United States after the Second World War, an entire logic of economy based on liberalism, of culture based on the influential power of the cultural industry, and of superimposition of its epistemes over those of other territories in the name of development and democracy usurped Europe's protagonism and reproduced domination based on the underlying foundations of colonialism (Mignolo 2011).

The subalternized actors in the video games field find traditions and decolonial perspectives silenced nowadays by the cultural and geopolitical power dynamics. Global domination is such that many producers from the region nor even consider stories of their own locality, surrendering instead to projects from metropolitan centers presented as universal (Mignolo 2000). In dialogue with Bourdieu, many times this surrender can often be an expression of a lack of conditions, of an awareness of subalternity even, so that in some cases producers from the Global South reproduce the hegemonic sounds in an attempt of symbolic recognition, whether aimed at accessing the market or stemming from an internalized mindset, an adopted psychopolitics (Han 2020). Others try to find manners to sound resistance, but even them still need, to some extent, of a symbolic capital of conformity.

To the Global South, video games field and its rules were imposed by the North, which necessarily takes a systematic silencing. The conditions for development and visibility function epistemologically and structurally according to the consensus, reality, and privilege of the United States, Japan, and Western Europe. By extent, the notion of video games themselves as an expression of high technology contributes to this colonial, symbolic and cultural domination mechanism. In the next section, the article dedicates efforts to expand into how this occurs.

## SECOND PHASE: VIDEO GAMES AS TECHNOLOGY

If the Final Boss was already scary in the first phase, the complexity is about to increase. The previous section focused on reflections about the field of video games, but without thinking specifically in the context of the dominating discourse about technology. Behold, then, the fearsome second phase!

This section will explain how a certain tradition within Western philosophy of technology, grounded in the thought of Martin Heidegger, developed a deterministic logic that frames it as a neutral field, free from any perspective or interest. In doing so, this thought laid the foundations for historical practices of video game production in the Global North, which, as argued previously, constitute the episteme imposed on the Global South and serve as a driving force of modernity/coloniality, as proposed by Walter Mignolo (2011). To this end, it will be necessary to revisit the history of video game development in the following discussion, to explain the Heideggerian influence and highlight some problems it causes in the Global South, particularly in Brazil and Latin America.

The association between video games and technology has been present since the emergence of the first games in the 1960s. The specific date of 1962 marks when *Spacewar!* was created by Steve Russell and a group of programmers in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It's remarkable that this celebrated academic center is focused on technology since its very name, but also the way the game was funded. Russell was part of a group of scientists who received funds from the United States military-industrial complex during the Cold War to develop projects of simulation and information to potential conflicts. It was through a certain informal use of those resources that they created *Spacewar!* (Dyer-Whiteford and De Pauter 2009).

Many of the first games emerged in military laboratories, through similar processes, motivated by a certain scientific and ludic enthusiasm. Only in the late 1970s that a truly commercial gaming industry came into being, including the number one corporation at the time, Atari. The context then shifts from a series of informal investments with the resources from the military-industrial complex to the formation of a production market composed, on one hand, to a growing class of technology developers influenced by Californian New Left culture and, on the other hand, by great corporations that acquired the rights to their work (Dyer-Whiteford and De Pauter 2009).

Although promoted an ideology of free software, humanized capitalism and eventual software and hardware modifications that could potentially be illegal, the programmers were politically disorganized. As a result, growing tension developed between these workers and the corporate managers who sought to exploit their work accordingly to the market logic of the time. It was primarily these problems of management and work, in conjunction to the enormous supply of games and the poor quality control, that took the United States' market to a crisis in 1983 (Castanheira 2024; Dyer-Whiteford and De Pauter 2009).

From the ashes of this market, however, Japan built its hegemony in video games. It's the beginning of a discourse of artistic initiative, to the point of creating an environment that nurtures geniuses, such as Shigeru Miyamoto and Akira Toriyama, who lend their talent to the companies. At the same time, narrative as an video game

element is reinforced and treated to this day as a distinguishing feature, as exemplified by Nintendo. The 1980s marked the rise of Japan, and slowly United States recovered its position, only in the 2000s they would compete as equals again, until eventually surpassing it. Western Europe also entered this scenario largely thanks to its material and epistemological privileges, never matching the two video games powerhouses, but still exerting tremendous influence, as in the case of companies like Ubisoft (France) and Rockstar North, previously DMA Design (United Kingdom) (Dyer-Whiteford and De Pauter 2009).

The 1980s retook the process of association with technology that had already begun with video games in the late 1970s. Many of the minds involved in the development of computing and information companies had worked years before in games. The ideological context was the same, and if initially there was a conflict of perspectives between a Californian New Left and traditional companies, eventually this encounter renewed a capitalist, corporate and extremely technological culture and a class of technocrats.

*Apparently, the tensions between capitalism and “holistic humanism” weren’t so insurmountable. What is seen, especially with the technological boom in fields like informatics, in the 1980s, is the crystallization of an informational model in which the “heroes of counterculture” like Steve Jobs and Stewart Brand (founder of WEC), from defenders of a libertarian ideology capable of build and modify technologies accordingly with the needs of each individual and produce an environment socially sustainable, shifted to fomenters of closed models of computational technology, stimulating a proposal of capitalism more critical to the institutions. The public sector, in general, was seen as corrupt and institutional bureaucracy was an enemy to be challenged. (...) Silicon Valley ideology conjugated in a very effective way the countercultural discourse with a new model of business that emerged from the new technological structures.*  
(Castanheira 2024, 9, own translation)

The same utopian, countercultural, anti-establishment youth possibilited, or even became, years later, the leaders of big techs. The process of formation of giants from the United States’ economy and its colonial power, exemplified by Google and Microsoft, is the same that generated game corporation like Activision, Electronic Arts and Nintendo. The neoliberal inversion of this process is laid bare in the 2000s, mainly through Apple’s discourse<sup>4</sup> (Castanheira 2024; Dyer-Whiteford and De Pauter 2009; Morozov 2018).

This transformation was only possible thanks to the notion of neutral technology, one that does not depend on ideologies or sociopolitical perspectives. As such, it is nothing more nothing less than a tool, a pragmatic instrument, that depends only on human intention. The dominant technological discourse relies to this day on this logic, whose main foundational voice is the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (2007<sup>5</sup>). Although the thinker does not affirm that technique cannot be reduced to a tool, he does not immediately reject the perspective that it is a means to an end. What he rejects is that this notion should be confused with the essence of technique, as well as the perspective that reduces it to a mere human activity. In reality, the modern subject is destined by technique.

Such essence refers to the capacity of technology to put the world at disposal, in adopt orderings that challenge nature and unconceal from her a specific truth— in this case, its resources, its energy. Accordingly, modern technique departs from others historically observed by Heidegger, since this expanded power of exploitation was only achieved thanks to the underlying mentality of the science of the 17th and 18th centuries, that regarded nature itself as an object to be unveiled, enabling the preparation of technology that was to come (Heidegger 2007).

Technology englobes human agents and nature, in a way that exploits them within a large system of subsistence: resources are extracted, transformed, storage, distributed. Each one is involved in a process of unconcealment, yet enclosed in itself, and operating in an automatic, utilitarian continuum. The tree is cut down and processed in wood, that is unconcealed as paper, that is sold to the print media, that publishes newspapers that are consumed by readers. Heidegger (2007) calls this process “enframing”, or com-position (*Ge-stell*), the essence of modern technique, that can be defined as a historically situated logic that establishes challenges to extract resources. Not only does nature suffer here, but also human beings, treated as material (Heidegger 2007).

To the philosopher, there is an involuntary component in this process: not only is human ambition in controlling technology unfounded, but it will also necessarily be disposed to composition. The author uses precisely the word “destiny” (*Geschick*). On this lies a terrible danger, because, once challenged and compelled to act, or not act, in accordance to the convocation, humanity can be taken in the automatism of a specific unconcealment, prisoned in the unsheltering of subsistence, and lose freedom (Heidegger 2007).

Nevertheless, Heidegger defends that in the same process humanity can find a more authentic way of being. An individual can exercise the consciousness of being challenged and reflect about it, seeking to reveal his/her/their own truths, meanings, dis-positions (*Ent-bergen*). The person can seek the existential, meditative path, of questioning how one stands in relation to that process, how acts or fails to act in the face of technique, how appropriates it, how opens oneself to find meanings. As a result, this path inevitably takes one to question his/her/their own being, in unconcealment. As such, the com-pose, the challenging unshelter, the technical, shifts into the dis-pose, the producing unshelter, action. On the other hand, Heidegger highlights technique in arts as a more direct approach to freedom, the aesthetic path. The unconcealment of truth in beauty dis-poses a poetic way of being in the world (Heidegger 2007).

Heidegger’s perspective poses significant problems to the relationship with technology when this context is considered from the 1970s onwards. Although the German philosopher did not defend the neutrality of technique, he established a deterministic thought in which humanity is inevitably subjected to an automatic model, without a plausible explanation of its origin. Heidegger suggests a historical production of modern science in the 17th and 18th centuries, but does not analyses the social relations that support the argument, treating it instead as a given institution. In practical terms, although he criticizes the Platonic and Aristotelian essentialism, his own determination of “destiny” of humanity presents a metaphysical aspect. The simplification of an inevitable, acritical and unthinkable relationship with technology into a rhetoric of neutrality, illusion of control, universal benefits is an easy stage to develop within the communicational structures of large corporations.

The Brazilian researchers José Claudio Castanheira and Melina Silva (2025) show the relevance in debating technology and comprehend it as a concrete, social construction, arising from the interaction of multiple institutions, with distinct natures, and human and non-human agents: “We examine technologies not only as tools for achieving a certain effect, but also as the result (and producer) of an ordering of the world (Castanheira and Silva 2025, 128)”. They present the efforts of Social Construction of Technology (SCOT), Large Technical Systems (LTS) and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to advance Heidegger’s perspective, understanding the relationship between humanity and technology in accordance to local, specific contexts, shaped by a process of conflicts and negotiations between distinct groups.

By defining com-position as destiny and not considering these relations, Heidegger necessarily resorts to a dangerous universalism. On one hand, this reflects a theory of technique that does not articulate sociological components, ignoring that each place and time shape and build its relationship with technique in a distinct way. On the other hand, this stance is marked by epistemic privilege and creates the possibility of exclusion of many social groups that are not considered by it, as the decolonial critique strongly remarks. José Cláudio Castanheira reinforces such critique to Heidegger in other article (2024):

*The way technologies have been historically understood must take into account demographical and geographical issues. Framing science and technology through a sociological and historical lens can reveal the constitution of complex techno-scientific environments, in which the coexistence between human and non-human elements reshapes the notion of agency and even the purpose of different technological proposals. (Castanheira 2024, p. 6, own translation)*

Besides, Castanheira (2024) highlights other problematic dimensions in the German author’s thought that can also be critiqued from a decolonial perspective:

*Heidegger describes technologies as device to “isolate” nature and put its resources to the disposal of humanity, like a storage. Heidegger does not treat technology as a “thing”, a tool with clearly defined uses to reach a goal, but as a relation between the humanity and the world. Technologies are, therefore, a way of relating and understanding reality. The question that can be argued, considering this affirmation, is that technologies are forms of coercion into the natural environment and they act considering well delimited goals and according to a previously defined logic. (Castanheira 2024, 5-6, own translation)*

Two problems in particular are highlighted: the extractivist view of nature and of human life, both necessarily consider a reproduction of Coloniality of Power. The German philosopher establishes a perspective that encourages the uncontrolled use of resources, naturalized by the inevitability of technical composition and by the absence of a more thorough examination of the construction of this ordering according to social complexity. Besides, such language of domination echoes the historical and cultural process of imposition of colonial interests, including through the aggressive transformations of space and against dehumanized groups, in the service of technology and the rhetorics of progress (Krenak 2022; Mignolo 2011).

In combination with the already discussed tendency to universalization, Heidegger's discourse shows a favorable potential to reinforce the material and epistemic privilege of coloniality, with an emphasis in technology. Social groups not contemplated by it, exemplified by territories of the Global South and other vulnerable peripheries in the world (even in the North), as well as minorities affected by issues of race, gender, sexual identity etc., are necessarily excluded by this logic of reproduction.

Not surprisingly, Heidegger's ideas make possible the structure of the same large corporations that today impose an aggressive neoliberalism of consumption and technology production, in consonance with the third phase of coloniality proposed by Walter Mignolo (2011). Games companies operate by the same logic, grounded in their shared status of holders of technique and in the common origins of their fields, despite their operational and commercial distinctions.

José Cláudio Castanheira (2024) identifies as an expression of this reproduction of Coloniality of Power what he defines as technocoloniality:

*The submission to international technical protocols produces dependance on multiple levels: economic, political and cultural. Besides, it is also responsible for creating a self-image of inefficiency in peripheral countries and for distancing them from issues closer to their own realities. Every technological solution, in defining the problems that will address, presupposes a specific reality. This reality, however, is always closer of those countries that developed the technology. (Castanheira 2024, 16, own translation).*

The concept seems tailored to fit the case of relations between hegemony and subalternized in the video games global scenario, but actually is the result of a common observation from peers in the scientific community. The context of technique presented in this section helps to explain and reshape the intensity of the problems identified through the decolonial perspective in the previous one. Several producers from the Global South have internalized, through the logic of symbolic, colonial and cultural power, a self-image of inefficiency and submission to the North, in addition to preferring to mobilize a distinct imaginary instead of their own reality. In the long run, Castanheira does not project an optimistic process for Latin America without a commensurate response:

*The main logic of the means of production and circulation, however, is that of erasing specificities. The technicist discourse functions both as a material impossibility (certain things cannot be recorded in the original "local" form, except through a technical adaptation), and as a force within a globalized imaginary (if the whole world records like this, with these specific tools, that must be the best way to do it). This tension is object of a constant negotiation in order not to lose the material element of the performance (often imbued with ritualistic values), and, at the same time, to meet the technical parameters of a historically and socially constructed notion of recording quality (Castanheira 2022, 425)*

Although he deals with a different area of cultural production, music, Castanheira's argument can also be applied to video games, within their own particularities, as noted, but with an additional broadening: it can now be stated that a relationship of dependency is being slowly imposed by Northern technologies in ways that marginalize and silence the South. There is already little incentive for local producers to create games and, when they do it, the possibility to develop them for the more powerful consoles is rare. At the same time, even when elaborating for computers, mobile or more accessible platforms, they still rely on foreign softwares and technical parameters, as well as facing the temptation to draw on the familiar tropes of Western imaginaries.

Additionally, this perspective considers necessary negotiation. If before this was already suggested by the presence of producers in a field where certain symbolic conformity is demanded, according with Bourdieu (2023), now is possible to understand the constant tension between local expressions and international standards. From the stance of distinct producers, resistance or conformism may be identified.

Both the big techs that notoriously dominate the global technological scenario today and the gaming companies have appropriated and accelerated a process of globalization, and, consequently, the advance of capitalism. Those even co-opted these. They incorporated the logic of neoliberalism and, therefore, of coloniality. Kishonna Grey and Thiago Falcão (2021) denominated the more explicit aspects of this transformation in video games *Colonização do Jogo*, or *Colonization of Play*. Years earlier, however, the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2008) had already anticipated this process, at least regarding the cartography of power in the field. In particular, he emphasizes what he called the dissolution of metropolises:

*At this moment, the metropolis is present everywhere, and at the same time. (...) Places would, in fact, become functional sites of the metropolis. And, parallelly, through the metropolises, all locations become functionally central. (...) The simultaneity between places is not only of physical time, clock time, anymore, but of social time, of the moments of social life. But the time that is everywhere is the time of the metropolis, that transmits to all territory the time of the State and the time of multinational corporations and large companies (SANTOS, 2008, p. 78, own translation).*

Two forms of hierarchy are established by this new regime in which the centers are appropriating informational and technical networks to dominate other regions: one of time and another of information. The metropolis, the headquarters where economic, political and cultural hegemony converge, privileges this time for its own operations. Other times exist, "subaltern and differentiated" (Santos 2008, 78, own translation), but they are subjected to a hierarchy, along the web of relations that integrates the globalized world. In the context of video games, the operative time is that of the Global North, specifically of United States and Japan. This is evident in particular in the great promotional events from companies like Nintendo or Sony, prioritizing their own clocks.

Regarding information, "today the instantaneity is socially synchronous. It is, therefore, the true 'dissolution of metropolis' (Santos 2008, 79, own translation)". The

centers manage both the value and the meaning of the information distributed, standing first in terms of its quantity and quality. The incorporation of other regions in the globally shared system of information depends on these metropolises. In other words, the metropolis attains a singular capacity for agenda-setting, in all its manifestations: omnipresence, accumulation, repetition, continuity.

Applying this second hierarchy, this work observes a sensitive case in the relationship between the Brazilian market and the Japanese company Nintendo. It uses informational privilege to label undesirable circulation practices as piracy and employs disproportionate legal instruments against small initiatives. From this position of prominence, it's also possible to speak of a presumption of legitimacy attached within its practices in the field, which helps explain the uncritical support Nintendo receives from a segment of Brazilians.

The metropolises to which Santos (2008) are referring to specifically are Brazilian regions, zones of more economic influence, but he also suggests the hierarchy of headquarters from foreign multinational companies. São Paulo may dominate many cities of Brazil, but it is still subordinated to others financial centers like New York or Tokyo. Following this logic, the geographer reinforces the cartography of hegemonic video games landscape, across its various territorial layers: at the top, United States and Japan, with their capitals and nodes; slightly below, but still hegemonic, Western Europe, with its capitals and nodes; at the base, the Global South.

The new dimension that the discussion of technological discourse has brought to the analysis of video games' cultural power reinforces its theoretical foundations and deepens the understanding of some of the problems arising from the inequality between the Global South and North. In the following section, the article concludes with certain provocations regarding the future.

## **GAME OVER?**

Did we win the Final Boss or do we need to practice more for victory? It's undeniable that the challenge of power is one of the most difficult available today. At the same time, the player is not with the same level of skill and knowledge from when he started. Besides, this is the type of game that can only be finished cooperatively.

Castanheira and Silva (2025) powerfully argue that Decolonial Option should be less articulated to identify resistances and more to advance a critique of colonial dehumanization:

*We should bring to the fore the definition of precarity highlighted in decolonial studies as a politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic support networks and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death, referring to the ways in which the conditions of coloniality often increase the vulnerability of women, people of colour, trans or LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities, whose experiences in capital are marked by saturated regimes of precariousness and oppression (Castanheira e Silva 2025, 135)*

This argument displaces a discourse of better applying Soft Power or other manifestations of geopolitical cultural influence to, through them, further identifying

problems in vulnerable places and peoples. At the same time, this logic articulates attempts of intellectual connection and debate between regions that still can intensify their efforts of communication. From Latin America, the given work seeks to discuss with Japan and the Global North but decisively basing the critical and epistemological perspective from here.

The Brazilian researcher Emmanoel Ferreira (2023) was an important figure in this development, through the argument that play may find connection with politics and, at the same time, aesthetics. Distinct sensibilities confront hegemonic ones in political arena or vindicate spaces in a shared common place, inaccessible to them. Therefore, strategies of emancipation between many groups may be observed in the Brazilian case, as Nintendo's power remain a gravitating threat.

Ultimately, the present author seeks ways to understand possible cosmotechnics of Latin America through video games and to explore ways of learning how to devise strategies of resistance for the subalternized populations of the Global South and to protect them against epistemicide (Castanheira 2024; Hui 2020).

Finally, the conclusion of this work highlights the broadening of the perspective on the subalternization of the South through the understanding of video games' mobilization as a technique within a discourse aimed at appropriating or alienating local specificities. Video games are guided by a hegemonic landscape that promotes the exploitation of nature and humanity—particularly in the Global South—and generates the exclusion of groups not linked to the epistemic privilege sustaining it. Understanding this field as a space of contested forces is essential, as is the necessary willingness to engage in social debates about technology and to encourage projects of local expression and sovereignty. The cartography of geopolitical power is further reinforced through the concept of the dissolution of metropolises.

These conclusions will incorporate an important part of the present author PhD thesis and, through further discussion with peers, fortunately develop to a more complete version and to possible solutions to the many problems faced in Latin America by video games producers, artists, players and enthusiasts.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This is a line of thought with broad acceptance in Journalism, but Maxwell McCombs (2020) did not intend to restrict it to the press. The theory proposes a direct transmission from the media agenda to the societal agenda and examines how this process is possible. More in the next section.

<sup>2</sup>One can argue of the existence of a group of emergent countries between the base and the top, mostly not invested in logics of decoloniality (Gómez 2019). They are in dominated positions, but potentially dominating. In this group are included countries like China, South Korea, Poland etc.

<sup>3</sup>A term from Maxwell McCombs that refers to, in one hand, the learning strategy and, in the other hand, to the mediatic result of repeating so much the same information that it's memorized by the recipient (McCombs and Valenzuela 2020).

<sup>4</sup>"Indeed, the first Apple users could "hack" the computer and modify it freely, because the corporation took a stand against other computer makers that wouldn't allow modifications in their hardware. Accordingly, the act of "hack" was a moral critique of contemporary technological capitalism. Slowly, however, the alternative offered by Apple became the system itself– to become a "hacker", you simply bought Apple products, that soon became so closed as their first adversaries. The moral critique was no more: it was pure aspirational marketing, a fairy tale that convinced the United States' middle class that it could too be bold and cool– but only within the market (Morozov 2018, 14-15, own translation)"

<sup>5</sup>Book originally published in 1953.