

PLAYABLE FUTURES

NEXT GEN THINKING FOR THE FUTURE OF PLAY

Playable Futures is a collection of insights, interviews and articles from global games leaders sharing their visions of where the industry and medium will go next. Initially published on GamesIndustry.biz.



A Future for All: How Brazil's multicultural industry might shape the global industry

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Today Latin America's video game sector can be found bristling with activity, success stories, and growth. Now, more than ever, it is starting to serve as a place doing much to shape the future of the global games industry. But it hasn't quite always been that way.

Brazil, for example, famously struggled to establish a market in the 1990s thanks to significant tariffs on the importing of gaming hardware. Despite the rise of a distinct generation of local clone consoles, the gaming medium's potential was effectively stifled across the country. With a modest local market and a lack of the ecosystem consistency conventional platforms bring, that era's aspiring local developers had the odds stacked against them.

Over the years, however, Brazil in particular has emerged as something of a global gaming superpower, rising to prominence in the international industry in tandem with the wider Latin American games sector.

As of mid-2021, the country stood as the 12th largest games market globally, with a value of \$2.3 billion. That positioned Brazil as the dominant leader in its home continent's games market, which is expected to total \$3.2 billion by 2023. Brazil's games industry is sometimes still portrayed as emerging, but while there remains ample room for growth, it is safe to say that Brazil has already emerged and then some.

You can in fact trace the country's game development scene back to at least the early 1980s, when a handful of locals made their own games. But it is the vast nation's more recent history that has seen it become a force that is very likely to have a meaningful impact on the future of the industry for all of us. And core to that potential is Brazil's long standing multiculturalism.

INFORMING THE FUTURE

"Brazil is being seen now as a hot place for game development," offers Eliana Russi, director of operations at Brazil's most prominent game trade body, abragames. "First of all, we are the biggest country in Latin America. We have a lot of talent spread across Brazil. But also, we are a very multicultural country. That gives us the ability to understand different narratives, and to work with and in different parts of the world, because we intrinsically already have

a population that is mixed, and has been for a long time. Our immigration flow is older than what you see in Canada or other countries, so we can see, and we can understand, and we can communicate in these international, multicultural ways. I think this is very, very important."

In an international realm like the games industry, the power of multiculturalism in terms of talent, creativity and collaboration is tremendous. There Brazil is absolutely setting an example a great many more nations – including those with far bigger game sectors – could learn from. Put another way, Brazil's multinational, multicultural mindset is already informing the future of games.

"All of LATAM is a multicultural continent, in truth," adds Russi's colleague Rodrigo Terra, president of abragames and chief technology evangelist at immersive game dev studio ARVORE.

"Across the region we bring different visions to the table, and that is rooted in our cultural lives, and our multicultural mindset. That's been shaping things in Brazil here for a long time, but more and more, we now see it in the games made here specifically. We see it in narratives and gameplay that is inclusive and diverse. But it's also powerful in bringing creativity and different solutions and different visions to how to make games, and how we build an industry that is fresh, contemporary and representative. I think Brazilian companies and LATAM studios are starting to make a difference that is having an influence – a positive influence – on the games industry of the wider world."

The drive to be a globally-facing games industry that has a positive influential impact on the rest of the world is particularly evident in Brazil's own efforts. Brazilian delegations are a mainstay at the likes of GDC, Tokyo Game Show and numerous European conferences. Internally there is a concerted effort underway to train up ever more local talent and take them to global conventions. Investors from far afield are encouraged and welcomed to Brazil on a regular basis, while abragames and its community is widely open to importing industry standards and frameworks from overseas.

Eliana Russi is director of operations at Brazilian game industry trade body abragames, and devoted to elevating the potential of local game studios and startups, bringing 20 years experience in the entertainment industry to the work she does. Rodrigo Terra, meanwhile, is abragames president, and shares Russi's passion for empowering the nation's game makers. He is also co-founder and CTE of ARVORE; a highly creative Brazilian team focused on immersive experiences such as those offered by VR, AR and XR.

LOCALLY GLOBAL

That all bolsters what Brazil can be as a global hub, but in putting years of effort into being internationally facing, Brazil and LATAM are doing much to positively shape what games are across the planet.

"We've actually been exporting popular Brazilian and LATAM culture globally since the sixties," states Terra. "That's great, but now, and in games, we want to express something else globally. This isn't just about the cliches of what Brazilian and LATAM culture is. We are now sharing how we see how we see and solve global problems in the industry, how we see relationships and understanding as key to the work studios do, and what multiculturalism can bring in terms of both working approaches and the content of games."

Brazil and the wider continent's future isn't about catching up with a global games industry. That happened long ago. Rather, today Brazil in particular is looking to lend a new perspective to what the overall games industry can be. It's looking to shape and inform how games are designed, made and published; all while taking its own lessons from the international industry community.

"There are no real boundaries left after the pandemic," Russi concludes. "Brazil used to be seen as a country far away from everywhere else. But it is now very close to Europe and the US and Canada, because the boundaries are meaningless. We are not far anymore because we don't need to be under the same roof. And Brazil really is a place that takes care of its video game industry."

Ultimately, now Brazil sits in the heart of what the international game industry is, it will only have more role to play in shaping that industry. It may have made a somewhat late start, but today Brazil stands as a place that has demonstrated how to grow and shape a national game sector the right way.

And, informed by multiculturalism and an international mindset, it might be a place that has an impact on how everyone in games does their work.