

A CHINESE VIEW ON INDIE

How is 'indie' defined by professionals within
the Chinese indie game industry?

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore which philosophies and opinions professionals within the Chinese indie game industry hold in relation to the indie concept. Indie is a short form of the word "independence", and is used to describe certain products and creative practices within media such as video games. The term's exact definition is however subject to discussion. This study aims to include Chinese game professionals in this discussion.

The study was carried out in China through *Game Hub Scandinavia* (Game Hub Scandinavia, 2018) and in cooperation with *Indienova*¹. The participants that were interviewed in this study were all professionals within the Chinese game industry. The research tools developed for these interviews were two playable demos and a survey. The answers provided constituted as basis for the study's concluding analysis.

The data indicated that the Chinese indie developers define indie as a creative endeavour which products and underlying ambitions contrasts the commercially motivated game industry in China.

Keywords: China, game studies, indie game development, video game industry, creative industries

¹ Indienova is a media company, community website and marketplace for indie games in China.
Official Homepage of Indienova: <https://www.indienova.com/en>

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1 Introduction

China is the world's largest game market (Newzoo, 2017a) and home to the industry's biggest company in terms of game revenue – *Tencent Games*² (Newzoo, 2017b). These factors place China in a unique position in the international game market, which in turn makes the country relevant to people with a professional interest in video games (Doucet, 2017). Recent years have been eventful for the Chinese game industry, and also for the country's so called indie developers (Garner, 2017). In a large portion of the existing literature on indie games and development however, Chinese developers are omitted. This can, for example, be noted in most of the texts referred to in Parker's eleven-year overview of the indie phenomenon (Parker, 2013). This paper focuses on China specifically to expand and build further on the pre-existing literature in this regard.

The rapidly developing and vibrant game industry of China contains many interesting aspects to be explored through studies such as this, like the traditions, practices and philosophies found within it. Such studies could in regards of comprehensiveness benefit from the inclusion of the small-scale entrepreneurs and creative enterprises that make up China's indie game industry, which is also the specific focus of this study. Since many of the English language papers on the indie subject does not mention China, it is not as thoroughly documented whether members from this industry use the indie term in the same way as western developers and scholars cited in such texts do. It might not be surprising that there are certain differences to be discovered from an inquiry like this, considering the unique historical background of China's game industry (Yan, 2015) and the social isolation of the citizens created by technical restrictions (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Game developer Gao Ming (2018) highlights the unique conditions game creators face in China, regarding funding, isolation and “[the] lack of a social safety net and the limited exposure opportunities for indie games in China compared to the West”.

Personal expression, creative freedom and small-scale entrepreneurship are all elements that have been regarded relevant when defining indie (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). Before discussing whether the indie game industry in China can be regarded as a significant platform for such things, it may be useful to profile the industry itself first to see what its members themselves think to be representing. That is also what this study aimed to do - an attempt to map out the nature of eventual group consensus or the potential plurality of philosophies and values tied to the indie concept among professionals within the Chinese indie game industry.

² Tencent Games is the video game division of Chinese conglomerate *Tencent Holdings Limited*.

Official Homepage of Tencent Games: <http://game.qq.com/>

Official Homepage of Tencent Holdings Limited: <https://www.tencent.com/en-us/>

2 Background

This study explores philosophical viewpoints among professionals within the Chinese indie game industry. It does not focus on indie's role in relation to the entire Chinese game industry, nor on building an overview of its history or speculate on its future, even though such themes are sometimes touched upon by the study's participants themselves during research. Instead, this is a continuation on the discussion on the indie concept, as it appears in existing literature on the subject. The contribution this study provide to the discussion is thus the viewpoints of this specific target group. Before starting to explore the meaning of indie in the eyes of the members of the Chinese indie game industry, establishing terminological standards will be necessary. Due to the angle of focus just described, these standards will revolve around how indie as a term might be used in general, and how it is used specifically in this study.

2.1 The Definition of Indie

There are multiple articles written on the subject of indie, often focusing on the very definition of the concept itself. Ideas expressed in such articles will be covered in this section as they serve as basis in defining the term as it is used in this study. The primary relationship to the indie concept in this study was to continue and expand on the discussion of its meaning. Thus, the term "indie" was not limited to any narrow definition, but rather kept open enough to allow the study's participants to provide their own interpretation of the term. In this chapter, however, the term is tied to a series of concepts based on existing literature to establish a general understanding of what possible phenomenon the term might encompass when used in this text. An overview of recurring definitions and concepts linked to the term by scholars and developers, also constitutes the theoretical basis on which this study's method of investigation was built.

2.1.1 Openness in Defining Concepts

The term might be used in conjunction with other terms to form related concepts (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016), and therefore the definition of the word indie may vary depending on the context. There are three main concepts the word indie is used in relation to throughout this paper. These are *indie games*, *indie development/developers* and *indie game industry*. The first of these three concepts refers to a type of product, the second refers to a practice and its practitioners and the third refers to an industry in which the first two occur. These categories are treated in this section. Whenever the word indie is used by itself in this paper, instead of being used in conjunction with either *developer*, *game* or *industry*, it is simply referring to the word itself. The definition of that word, in turn, is subject to discussion (Parker, 2013) – and in fact, the subject of this study.

In this paper, whenever the word *game* is used, it is exclusively referring to video games, i.e. games that are played on a gaming console, computer or similar device for entertainment purposes. Thus, the term game does not cover physical games like board games or gambling, even if the latter could be played on a computer. Because of this, the word *game* in the term

indie games also exclusively refers to a form of video games. In this text, the term *indie game* simply refers to games described as such by the game's creators, publishers, distributors or by the platform through which they are vended, such as online stores. What constitutes as basis for that description is then left to the user of the term and is a subject of investigation in this study. Note that this definition could encompass any video game in theory, if this requirement is met, but that does not necessarily mean it does so in practice. For the sake of a fair and comprehensive approach, it is important to keep the definition inclusive like this, no matter how diverse the reasons behind the products' classification as indie games might be.

For the sake of consistency and clarity in this paper, *indie development* is referring to the practice of developing *indie games*. Hence, an *indie developer* refers to an individual who has this practice as his/her profession. Note that developers might label their games as indie games *because* they have been produced under conditions they consider to be indie development, which they might have their own defining basis for. These kinds of personal variations are not problematic, but rather the type of nuances that this study focused on when building a basis for analysis. Note that these two definitions open up for a wide variety of products and people to be target for investigation. This is neither problematic. Instead it allowed for this study to transcend homogeneity and explore the potential variety of viewpoints that could exist among professionals in the Chinese indie game industry.

Lastly, *indie game industry* is defined as the production of *indie games* and services related to indie games, such as distribution, vending and publication. Note that a developer or a platform for game distribution can be an active part of the indie game industry *and* at the same time an active part of an industry which does not fit a definition of indie in its entirety.

Possible definitions of indie as provided by members from the study's target group might encompass traits that are also relevant in the definition of other concepts, such as other genres or practices found within the game industry. Though such defining traits might be central in the characterization of such concepts, this by itself does not imply a conflict, as long as it is not contradictive.

Instead of limiting the study's potential by narrowing definitions too much, this open parlance allowed for a wide variety of different game titles and professionals to be made targets for analysis in this study. This openness also kept the initial viewpoint inclusive, in the sense that it allowed for participants to contribute with their own definitions without having them disqualified because of potential conflict with strict, terminological standards.

Mapping out factors that has been considered when discussing the definition of indie in academic texts has been a relevant process for developing tools for data collection in this study, and has required extensive research in pre-existing literature on the subject. These factors often include small-scale commercial development (Ruffino, 2013, p. 107), independence in finance and creativity and certain game styles (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). What these factors include will be treated in this chapter.

2.1.2 The Conditions of Production

As Parker mentions in his paper on the discussion on indie games, the study of indie games has often had a focus on the conditions of production:

[...]a significant thread in indie game studies has been the critical political economy of independent game production, focusing on the conditions of production and distribution, and the movement of capital and commodities.

Parker, 2013, p. 4.

The conditions for the production of games is also held as a relevant factor by Garda and Grabarczyk (2016) when defining indie. In these conditions they include small teams as well as financial, creative and publishing independence. With financial, creative and publisher independence in this case, they are referring to potential investors', customers' or publishers' direct or indirect role in the development process. With the usage of the word "independence", this definition of indie goes back to the etymological roots of the term (Garda, 2016). Since these are the three types of independences regarded (unless else is indicated) when the word "independence" is used in this paper, a more detailed summary of how they are defined by Garda and Grabarczyk (2016) might be in place.

Financial independence concerns the potential relationship between the developer and some sort of funder who provides the means for the developer to carry out his or her work (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). This can be money, an office or equipment relevant to the development process. The funder can of course be an investor, but also contributors through crowdfunding or similar. The funder does not necessarily need to have influence over the game design to make the production financially non-independent. Since the contribution of a funder excludes the possibility for the developer to be entirely self-funded, this definition makes the developer financially dependent. Note the usage of "developer" rather than "game company" or similar here. This is because true financial independence means that the developer does not work as an employee of a company supporting him or her financially to carry out the development of the game. This type of independence, as well as the following two, refer to the conditions of the game *developer*.

The second type of independence, *creative independence* is used to describe games that are made with its own developers as intended audience (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). Why is this a relevant category? Because in all other cases, the designers work to please an external part, and thus must adjust the product to meet the needs of the players or employer. Note that this would not only include factors such as players' or employers' explicit requests, but also assumed needs, such as in the development of products aimed at children.

The third type, *publishing independence*, refers to a case when the publisher and developer form the same part at the time of the game's initial publication (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). By this definition, a game can later be ported to another console and published again in a new format by an external part. The initial process from design scratch to publishing may still have

been an entirely independent process. Note that any case of producing a game might fulfil none, one, two or all three of these cases to a various degree.

In the case of China, another important external party could be the government and its institutions, providing clear guidelines for self-censorship for creators, so their works can pass the Ministry of Culture's review process (Custer, 2014). Such practices might affect not just the content of the games themselves, but the conditions of production *and* the beliefs and actions (and thus the development process) of the developers, as noted in Ahlstrom's and Ding's (2014) article on entrepreneurship in China:

As institutional theory suggests, the beliefs, goals and actions of individuals and groups, particularly working in an organisational setting, are shaped by various environmental influences (Scott, 2014) in a subtle but pervasive way. Generally speaking, private firms in China have grown regardless of the arguably poor applicable legal and financial mechanisms through the use of informal institution such as social capital substituting for more formal rules and laws (Allen et al., 2005; Newman et al., 2012). However, institutions from macro level (policy and regulation) to micro level (individual characteristics and attitude) both constrain and enable entrepreneurial endeavours[...]

Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014, p. 614

Institutional power over the development expands upon what the varieties of independence might encompass, since it is introducing a new external part, namely the government, as a possible influencer on the development process. Small-scale game developers have already used their work to express opposition to such governmental practice (Hollingsworth, 2017), which can be viewed as an example of creative independence in relation to institutional influences. However, content and practices deviating from institutional guidelines were neither incorporated in the development of the demos used in this study nor presented as a subject of discussion in the study's survey. The reason is to keep the study focused mainly on keeping the topics discussed in pre-existing literature on indie as the basis for inquiry, rather than derailing by investigating the role of politically subversive themes in China's indie game industry. With that said, answers provided by the study's participants touching on such topics was given attention in the summary and analysis of the data.

It is important to note that existing literature on indie, mainly focusing on non-Chinese indie developers, mentions the importance of conditions in production (such as independence in creativity) for the developers. Chinese indie developers however, as a potential part of an entrepreneurial community in a developing country (UN, 2014), might have a bigger financial role, since "economic growth and social development, including job creation, is to be found in innovative entrepreneurship" (Ahlstrom and Ding, 2014). Though this might not affect the personal definition of the term indie to the study's participants, it does affect the broader picture significance of the conditions of production of the country's indie developers.

2.1.3 Relevance of Style

Before looking at how relevant literature treats style in relation to the definition of indie, “style” should be defined. Style, as used in this study, is an umbrella term for discernible parts of the game’s design. This definition encompasses the shape of mechanics, like the behavior of the game (control mechanics, behavior of characters, in-game economies, etc.), narrative, theme and aesthetic style, like graphic, sound and music. This broad definition is similar to Lipkin’s (2013) as he describes how certain gameplay elements and content motifs emerged among indie games. Note how he uses “distinct style” to encompass the games’ mechanics, genre and aesthetics, like their musical and graphical style:

Eventually, movements develop an aesthetic of some kind. The DIY mentality of ‘80s indie rock bands created something of a set of tendencies towards lo-fi sounds. For indie games, the same birth of a distinct style has also emerged. There are elements of gameplay, such as a focus on “mechanics, abstract concepts, and unique angles” (Burke, 2012) on the one hand. There are also content motifs: “puzzle platformers, chiptunes and chunky pixels, simple game mechanics with complex outcomes” (Kogel, 2012)

Lipkin, 2013

Experimental or innovative, as those words are used in the context of describing the style of certain game content, like graphics or mechanics, might also benefit from further definition. To do this, this study bases the theory behind these words in this quote by Garda and Garbarczyks concerning the concept of “experimental nature” in the context of indie games (2016):

[...]in more commercial projects experimentation often means being anti-conventional in a very broad sense. One of the most obvious ways of achieving this aim is the exploration of ignored or unpopular themes, oftentimes in the form of a social commentary, as in the case of Cart Life (Hofmeier, 2011), Depression Quest (Quinn, 2013) or This War of Mine (11 bit studios, 2014). Another strategy is reviving a forgotten or currently unpopular genre or game mechanic.

Garda & Garbarczyks, 2016

To keep the definitions open enough to let participants of this study contribute with their own usage of these words, experimental and innovative is used as “anti-conventional in a very broad sense”. As opposed to “conventional” (common, typical), “anti-conventional” would, in this broad sense, refer to the deliberate use of unused styles, seldom used styles or even less popular styles when compared with other games in the same genre. Furthermore, in the design of the demos that was used in this study, “currently unpopular genre or game mechanic” sufficed as experimental to make that process manageable, since determining whether a certain element is completely groundbreaking is hard if not impossible. The difficulties of identifying perfect novelty will be treated later in this chapter.

While agents within the domestic market in China have attracted attention for copying pre-existing concepts (Beck, 2017), there were reasons to suspect Chinese indie developers to be more innovative, assuming that their interpretation of indie had similar roots as the literary sources referred to in this study (Garda & Garbarczyks, 2016; Parker, 2013). This quote by indie developer Gao Ming (2018) strengthened such suspicions:

When we introduce our creations to people overseas, it's not uncommon to face the assumption our work must be ripped off or derivative of other games. That hurts because it's not fair; many of us are original artists with something unique to offer. But it also hurts because it is fair; piracy and plagiarism dominate the Chinese landscape, and only recently has a combination of political, economic and cultural forces opened the door for those of us in China's growing indie scene trying to change what you know about our games.

Gao Ming, 2018

According to Lipkin (2013) and Garda and Garbarczyks (2016), not all types of styles associated with indie have been brought in to the discussion for its experimentation. Certain types of well-established, common styles have also been linked to indie games, like the genre 2D-puzzle-platformers and pixel art style graphics as pointed out by Lipkin (2013, p. 15), who also touch on how such conventions could be regarded to conflict with indie's relation to innovation:

Indie gaming today is frequently charged with being stylistically nostalgic, chronically recreating the 8- and 16-bit games of the creators' youths, but that nostalgia can only come from the implicit rejection of the present. This is all to say that the existence of an "indie style" for games (and other media) is the natural result of the very political and economic conditions from which the indie movement defined itself early on, and while this style may open the movement to criticisms on the basis of lacking originality or losing its innovative edge, as Grayson does, the clarity of purpose remains.

Lipkin, 2013, p. 15

By looking at popular indie titles, it is possible to identify whether they contain styles of the kind described in literature about indie games. Investigating whether a game has pixel graphics or is categorized as 2D-puzzle-platformer might be as easy as looking at screenshots and reading the game's description on its online store pages. To tell whether its style is experimental or innovative, however, is not as easy without doing comparative research, since experimental and innovative are relative concepts. To make such a research manageable, one could narrow it down by defining further conditions. For example, focusing on one central aspect of the game, such as a mechanic or its graphical style, and comparing it with other titles within the same genre. In such a case, looking at similar, existing games helps to identify whether the aspect in question is a reuse of concepts already common within the game's genre or not. If it seems to be a new or rare concept to the genre, its inclusion could thus be seen as an act of innovation or experimentation on the behalf of the developers. Therefore, a concept

commonly found in one genre could be used innovatively when incorporated in works belonging to another genre, since mixing and combining features from different genres can give birth to new ones (Miller, 2017, p. 6).

Why is it important to allow this broader definition of what constitutes as innovative and experimental? Firstly, a stricter definition, such as basing it on how ground-breaking or unique a game is, is hard to do in an objective way, as it might come down to the preferences and interpretations of the individual. Secondly, it might not be possible to tell whether a certain concept is brand new, considering the vast and growing number of games that exists in the market today, so to avoid paralysis by analysis, this study used further conditions to help define whether an aspect of a game could be regarded as innovative. Instead of restricting the definition of experimental or innovative to things as concepts *never* used before, the research into games in this study accepted a selection of similar games – such as games in the same genre – as a sufficient basis for comparison. For gathering such a selection, the study used charts found in relevant sources as an outset for exploring genres and games of certain styles. One source was *Steam Store* (Steam Store, 2018), a platform that is relevant in relation to the indie concept, since it sells indie games (SteamSpy, 2018). It is also relevant in relation to this study's focus on the Chinese industry, since Steam is widely used in China, as the site's official language stats may point to (Steam Store, 2018). If a game contained elements seemingly rare in comparison with games within the same genre, it sufficed as an example of what is considered innovative or experimental in this study.

In the development of the tools used in this study, it was considered that participants may not agree on this definition of experimental and innovative, but instead might keep to narrower and stricter definitions. Therefore, no style or convention was described as innovative or experimental in the research tools provided to the participants. Any comments on such aspects found in the collected data were thus made on the participants' initiative.

2.2 Summary

The motivation for this study is to expand on existing literature on the topic of indie by focusing on a target group that are sometimes overlooked (see e.g. Parker, 2013), which in this case are the members of the Chinese indie game industry. China has a unique position as the world's biggest game market (Newzoo, 2017a). The conditions of game developers face in China are also quite different than those in the West (Gao Ming, 2018; Custer, 2014). Both these factors could make China an interesting case, since it might mean there are dissimilarities to the West to be explored. The angle of this study is a highly individual one, focused on the opinions and thoughts of the professionals themselves, since they are the driving forces behind the industry.

In this chapter, the usage of certain terms having a central role in this study has been clarified. Some of them, such as the different types of independences, use definitions found within specific literature (Garda and Grabarczyk, 2016). Others are more loosely based on how those words are used in a certain text, like "style" (Lipkin, 2013). For the conclusion of this chapter, some of these are summarized below.

Indie might be the most central term for this study. Indie, while used by itself, will refer to a concept associated with video games. Apart from limiting its usage to concern the topic at hand, namely video games and game development, this study did not aim to narrow its potential application by any degree, but rather open up for continuous discussion regarding the term. While a variety of uses found in literature (see e.g Parker, 2013) are regarded as relevant for discussion in this study, none of these compromised the study's necessary objectivity or limited the area of research by being taken as ultimately defining the term.

When *indie* is used in combination with *games*, *developer/development* or *game industry*, however, it is no longer referring to an abstract concept, but to products, people and enterprises. In this paper, *indie games* refer to games defined as *indie games* by the games' developers, publishers, distributors or vendors. That way, what constitutes as indie games is defined by members of the *indie game industry*, a term used to encompass most professionals working with games they themselves consider to be indie. Members from the indie game industry are the target group of this study. *Indie developers* are game developers making indie games.

Style refers to the shape of content in games, including the games' design, such as controls and mechanics, and their aesthetics, such as musical and graphical style.

3 Problem

The focus of this study is to map out attitudes and ideas concerning the indie term among professionals in China's indie game industry. The primary question was: "How is 'indie' defined by professionals within the Chinese indie game industry?" This partly meant investigating whether there seems to be a consensus regarding the term's definition within the said target group, or if the usage and interpretation of the term varies significantly between subjects and thus seem to be defined mostly on the level of the individual. The study also investigated whether the definition of indie more frequently or more rarely tends to have a basis in *independence* (as the word is used in this paper) from where the term "indie" etymologically derives, or in other places, such as the game's style. These areas were explored because both independence in production and stylistic varieties has been pointed out as relevant in the definition of the term in existing literature (Parker, 2013; Lipkin, 2013). Thus, the study was built to explore both what might constitute as indie in the context of production as well as the role that different styles might have in the eyes of this target group.

The motivation behind exploring the ideas around the indie term among these individuals, is partly the contributing function it might have for a deeper insight into related subjects. Data collected in this study could be used as basis for both exploring causal relationships and the possible implications it might have from a social viewpoint. For example, the results of the study might be used as a basis for comparative studies with other game industries, or be further expanded on for investigating their underlying reasons, such as societal or cultural factors. Furthermore, if they seem to indicate something specific about the philosophical context in which Chinese indie games are created and the industry develops, that might also be a subject for further investigation. Such indications could be that the Chinese indie game industry is a platform for very progressively-minded people, which could have its own implications for the role it might have on the social, financial or cultural development of the Chinese game industry.

3.1 Method

The study was carried out as a field study in Beijing, China, through *Game Hub Scandinavia* (Game Hub Scandinavia, 2018) and in cooperation with *Indienova*. The methods of data collection described in this chapter were also conducted in Beijing, China. The individuals participating in this investigation were all professionals within the Chinese indie game industry, either by creating, distributing or publishing indie games. The study included eleven participants in total, all based in China. Most participants were contacted by the help of *Indienova*. People of both sexes and professionals from several different companies were contacted to avoid homogeneity among the participants.

As a qualitative study, the research conducted as a part of it aimed to explore the subjective thoughts and personal nuances among its target group. It consisted of *demos* and associated *surveys* tested and filled out respectively by the study's participants. The survey treated such aspects as various types of independences in relation to game development and, with the help of *demos*, the role that certain types of styles might have for the definition of indie. Though the questions regarding conditions of productions were intended to be complimentary to the questions explored with the help of the *demos*, both kinds of questions were in the end given

equal significance in the analysis of the collected data, since both aspects seemed to be lifted as equally important in the participants' answers.

The notion of the study's relevance to social aspects such as self-expression by creation and independent, small-scale entrepreneurship could be seen as the "paradigmatic orientation" of this study, which Cote and Raz points out as an important factor in the choice of research method (2015, p. 94). Thus, this notion also serves as the initial angle in the choice of method for this study, since the aim to explore philosophical aspects in the Chinese indie game industry relies on a thorough investigation of the viewpoint of its individuals, rather than a polling shallowly explored opinions. Therefore, conducting surveys as a means of interviewing the participants was chosen as method for acquiring the required level of depth in the data.

Interviewing for exploring the personal variations among professionals in China's indie game industry would fit the study's purpose since "in-depth interviews excel at achieving a detailed level of personal depth and describing a smaller, specific group" (Cote & Raz, 2015, p. 93). To avoid confusion concerning the intertwining reference to "interview" and "survey", it might be important to point out that a survey can be the practical method of interviewing, or as Cote and Raz points out: "[...]surveys are a form of interviewing, although they are far more structured than an in-person, open-ended interview (Cote, 2015, p. 95)."

The choice of a survey rather than person-to-person interviews had multiple reasons, of which some were significantly practical ones. One of these was the language barrier, which made a provided text, rather than a verbally expressed question, more practical for avoiding confusion or limiting the participants' ability to express themselves. This made the presence of the study's conductor redundant during the participants answering of provided questions. Another reason was that this enabled reaching out to more people simultaneously in spite of geographical circumstances.

3.1.1 Interviews and Pilot Study

Before starting to gather the main data intended for the final analysis and conclusions, some preparatory research was conducted. As a first step in mapping out general ideas and philosophies among professionals within China's indie game industry, interviews with local game developers were held in various locations in China. These professionals were all CEOs of different, unrelated game studios. The interviews did not follow any specific outline but was rather dialogues concerning different game development topics. In all interviews however, the topic of definition and relevance of indie in China was discussed. Participants were encouraged to speak freely about these matters. Transcripts of these interviews were published in the form of articles through Chinese online media and the views and opinions on innovation, small-scale development, creative freedom etc. expressed by the participants in these transcripts were used as partial basis for the study's demo and survey questions.

Note that the purpose of these interviews was not to gather the data used in the final analysis of this study, since they were too random and uneven in length and depth to be used in the same way as the symmetrical surveys. Instead they served to add a local viewpoint as a relevant complement to the literature on which this study builds its theoretical basis. Their role in the shaping of the content of the main research method will be made clear in the next chapter.

Before conducting the survey with members of the study's actual target group, a pilot study with draft questions was held with members from a corresponding target group in Sweden, namely Swedish indie developers. This was held to get an insight on how individuals from a similar target group would perceive the survey questions in combination with the demo testing. To the extent the questions seemed to be interpreted in a way other than intended or failed to make the participants address important topics, the questions were revised and edited.

3.1.2 Demos

The demos developed and used to explore the role of certain styles have been intended to be the primary research tool for this study, along with the related survey. These two demos have many common denominators, both being 2D platformers, but different to each other in other aspects. One contained traditional and commonly used graphics and control mechanics, whereas the other demo used a mix of less common art styles and a less common type of control mechanic to make it both graphically and mechanically distinct from the first demo and give it a more non-conventional character.

The two demos were both constructed to fit a genre commonly found among games carrying the indie label, namely 2D platformers (Lipkin, 2013, p. 15). The choice of a matured genre was made to anchor the basic mechanics of the demos in something that would be familiar to the participants, rather than exposing the participants to a format so novel that it has a puzzling effect and halts the execution of the testing. A common genre was also chosen so that more innovative elements of the design would be easier to distinguish for the participants. This was supposed to ease the answering of questions regarding this aspect (innovation) in the survey. Lastly the choice of a mutual genre was made so that the two demos would be easy to compare with each other. The reason behind the use of two separate demos was to compare two design styles of different derivations. These styles – retro/classic and experimentalism respectively – has both been associated with indie (Garda & Garbarczyks, 2016). These design styles are exemplified in the demos through two types of game content: graphics and mechanics.

3.1.3 Survey

The survey used contained a series of questions covering different aspects related to indie. This included both questions regarding the styles exemplified by the demos used with these surveys, and the conditions of production highlighted in both relevant literature and in the interviews conducted as a part of this study. These questions aimed at investigating how the participants viewed the role of such aspects for the definition of indie. Apart from the matter of style as exemplified by the demos, the questions also covered the type of independences brought up earlier in this paper (creative, financial and publishing) as well as small-sized development teams (Ruffino, 2013, p. 107).

The survey was translated into the participant's main, written language, which was Chinese (the participants' main spoken language was either Mandarin or Cantonese), and conducted in the absence of the surveys author. The survey was presented, answered and returned in a

digital format through the Chinese media application WeChat (Tencent, 2011). The format of the survey followed the guidelines presented by Cote and Raz (2015), such as their outline for interviews (2015, p. 104) containing both introductory script and substantive questions for data collection. Participants were both solicited to provide their personal definitions of certain styles, and opinions regarding their role/relevance. This is because the study aimed to investigate the personal nuances that might exist in the target group.

3.2 Analysis

In the same way as the content of the research tools was built upon existing discussions regarding the indie term found in various academic texts, the primary angle used in the data analysis was based on the same sources. The data was thus compared with previous discussions on the subject of the indie term. In these sources China has either not been the main focus or possibly not been considered at all. This allowed the study to continue to build further on those discussions with a new angle.

The first step of the analysis was to break down the data and draw parallels between the answers. To do this a sort of coding scheme similar to the one described by Cote and Raz (2015, p. 110-111) was used. Such a coding was done in an iterative manner, to distinguish themes in the data that can be tied to continuously defined categories. The procedure of defining categories through coding followed the standards suggested by Creswell on his book on research design (2013, p. 199). This process was both done through looking at the participants' answers individually and through treating all the gathered data as one source. This made it possible to distinguish how the viewpoints concerning different topics correlated with each other, and also to discover interpersonal patterns.

The second step of analysis involved drawing conclusions from the results through comparing them with information from various literary sources, a step similar to the one suggested by Creswell (2013, p. 199). These conclusions mainly concerned what the data seemed to indicate in terms of cultural and social state of the Chinese indie game industry. One aspect of this was to decide whether these individuals seem to share a philosophical stand-point regarding the definition of the term indie, or if it seems to differ a lot between individuals. Another aspect was whether they often or seldom have an interpretation of the term indie rooted in its etymological background, i.e. independence (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). The causal roots of the participants' various philosophical positions were also a matter of interest during the process of analysis and drawing conclusions.

4 Project Report

The demos developed for this research consist of two separate mini-games contained within the same interactive system. The main purpose of these games, as well as basic concepts on which their designs are based, were described in the previous chapter. They will be referred to as “demos” together, and “Demo 1” and “Demo 2”, respectively when referred to individually. The reason for this is that this is the naming convention used *in* the demos themselves, as well as in the survey used for data collection in conjunction with the demos. Therefore, the naming convention used to communicate with the study’s participants is the same as the one used for the readers of this paper. Such consistency might provide appropriate clarity for all concerned individuals.

The choice of two demos contained within the same interactive system was made to provide the participants with comparable material with distinguishable traits. These traits were subject of discussion in the survey answered by the participants.

This chapter will provide a thorough summary of the demos’ development process. The structure of this chapter follows a chronological order to a large extent, except the specifics of the preparatory research, which will be presented when relevant to the subject at hand.

4.1 Preparatory Research

The preparatory research done as a part of this study consists of three methods: one is the interviews held with people from the target group of this study, the second is an investigation of style among indie titles on the current market and the third is the tests of the demos and survey. In this section, each will be briefly explained. Throughout this chapter, each of these will be more thoroughly presented in a chronological order to emphasize their respective roles throughout the study.

During the interviews, topics discussed in literature on indie were explored through dialogue with the interviewees. A few of these topics regard aspects of indie that concerns the conditions of production as those presented in chapter 2 of this paper. Such topics falls outside the scope of what the demos are designed to investigate. Still, these was treated by the survey to avoid the exclusion of important aspects of indie. Such aspects like for example the role of independence in the development process, or developer team size, might very well be close to the core of what the target group of this study considers to be the defining factors of the indie concept.

The investigation of styles was made to map out trends among indie games and video games as a whole. The findings would then provide as basis for the initial choices in the specific design of the demos. More precisely, this investigation aimed to uncover two things: the first one was to check whether a trend of using pixel graphics and making 2D-plattformers for indie developers could actually be found among indie titles on the market. The reason for investigating these particular styles and genres was trends described in previous literature on indie (Garda & Garbarczyks, 2016; Lipkin, 2013). This was thoroughly discussed in chapter 2 of this paper. The other thing the investigation aimed to uncover was to find one graphical style less common than pixel graphics (since pixel art would be used as the more conventional

graphical style in the demos) and two means of controlling the character more and less conventional respectively in relation to each other. The reason for this was to find proper basis in style when creating the two demos. To be able to serve adequately as comparable material for the participants, the demos had to be based on conventions with different degrees of traditionalism/experimentalism.

Tests were held later during the project and consisted of playtesting demos. These were held at two different occasions during the development process and served multiple purposes. The first purpose was to see whether the design was broken or suboptimal in some way, as that could prevent the collection to be carried out smoothly and correctly. The second purpose of the playtests was to check whether the choice of style for the demos would be perceived the way they were intended to be. This includes both how these styles were defined by the participants and whether these styles were perceived as more and less common in relation to each other.

There was a third test held with individuals from Sweden's indie game industry, serving as the study's pilot study. At this point, demo development had reached its end and the focus was shifted to explore how the style was perceived and how the questions in the survey were interpreted and answered. This pilot study will be further explained, and its results thoroughly presented, in an analytic manner later in this chapter.

4.1.1 Interviews

As a part of the preparatory research, interviews were held with individuals from the Chinese indie game industry, thus fitting the description of the study's target group. These people were CEOs of various indie development studios in China. These interviews were for the most part held in person with the help of a translator. The topics of discussion in these interviews varied from person to person but were always relating to indie games and indie development. The transcript of these interviews was made into articles later posted through Chinese indie game media (Indienova, 2018).

The interviews served different purposes. One of those was to expand on the possible aspects of indie that could be subject of discussion in this research, apart from those that were discussed in the literature on which this study is based. The opinions of the interviewees had some influence on what topics would be chosen for the final data collection, but they also serve as reference material for analysis of collected data. That regards both to the final data treated in the analysis in the next chapter as well as some of the data collected during the pilot tests presented in this chapter.

The interviews can be considered as the part of preparatory research having the biggest focus on the aspects of indie least related to the style of the game itself, even though such aspects as the shape of games were discussed too. Apart from the purposes already mentioned, the interviews also served to help expand the network of contacts available for the participation in the research, and thus ease the possibility to purposely avoid homogeneity.

4.2 Design and Development

The initial step in the design process was to decide what type of mechanics and graphics would be suitable for the exploration of different styles. These styles would be chosen to represent different qualities, and possibly provoke different associations as the two demos were to be used for comparison.

In deciding on what styles to use, the main factor to take into account was how frequently they occurred in video games, since the differences between the demos would be signified by how commonly their respective styles were used within the game industry. To this end, measurable numbers would have to be used, in particular the occurrence of certain styles. The two databases used for gathering such numbers was Steam's game catalogue (Steam Store, 2018) and Giant Bomb (Giant Bomb, 2018a). Steam was chosen because they are a part of the indie game industry as vendors of indie games. Giant Bomb, which is an American video game website and wiki for video games, has an extensive wiki on game concepts, many of which are conventions found within certain graphical and mechanical styles.

A few of the styles researched were found in the literature on indie. These included the 2D platformer genre and the pixel art style that had been tied to the indie game concept (Lipkin, 2013, p. 15), as described in earlier chapters of this paper. Other styles were discovered by browsing different categories and then compared to other styles of the same type, like graphical or mechanical conventions.

Laying down these basic design guidelines could probably best be described as the conceptual phase (Arvola, 2014, p. 39) of the demos' development. Unlike the conventional focus of this design phase, this part's purpose was foremost to discover fitting elements for the exploration of different styles, rather than investigating appropriate design to meet the needs of a specific audience. However, since the purpose of the demos was to be tested by an audience, the human factor was not irrelevant. Using more or less matured styles and conventions within the chosen game genre, further refined by multiple participant tests, made the demos fit for this goal.

The first test started at an early stage, before any of the final graphical elements had been implemented. These early tests were intended to make sure the fundamental UX (User Experience) of the demos would be good enough to support their purpose, namely to present styles. The final demos that resulted from all the tests were the ultimate result of evolutionary prototyping (Arvola, 2014, p. 15). In the picture below (Figure 1) the number and order of movements between different design stages are shown:

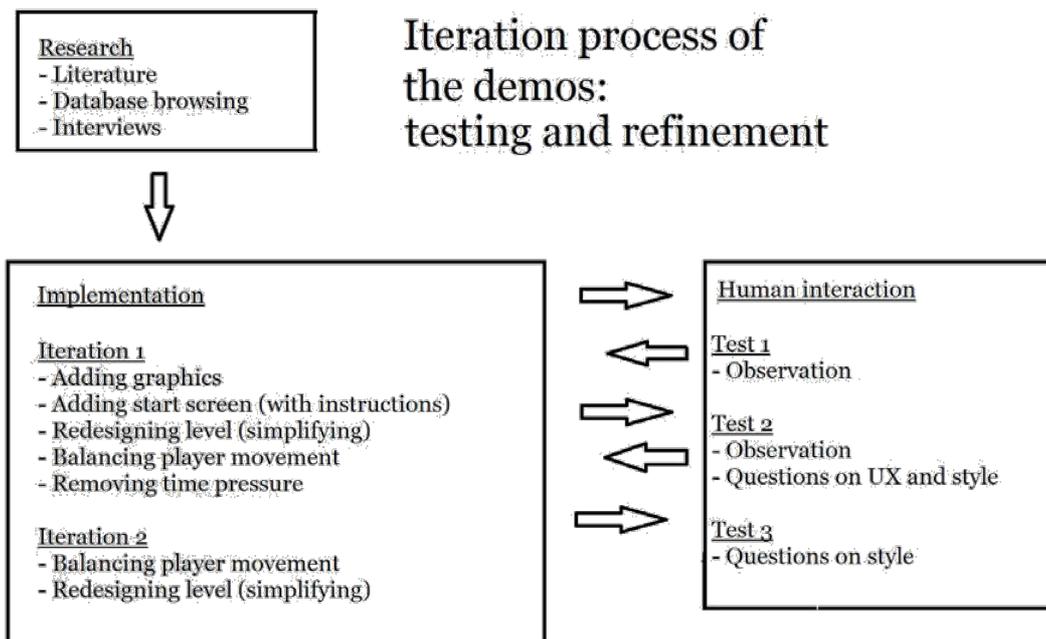


Figure 1 The iteration process of the demos

4.2.1 Commonalities Between the Demos

Before discussing in what way these demos differ, the commonalities will be described and clarified here. Since the focus in the design of these two demos was to present and highlight two specific areas of the demos (the style of graphics and control mechanics) for the participants to easily distinguish, compare and comment on, other aspects of the demos was purposely made alike. That way, such aspects would not play a dividing role in the comparison of the two demos. These aspects are *sound/music*, *basic gameplay objective*, *theme* and *genre*.

In terms of genre, the two demos have been designed to fit the 2D platformer genre, described as typical to the indie game genre (Lipkin, 2013, p. 15). These are really two aspects in one, since describing a game as “2D platformer” says something about both the graphics and the mechanics of the game. In terms of graphics, it means that both styles used for the two demos would be some sort of 2D graphic. This would be in line with the decision to use traditional pixel graphics for Demo 1, since that is a style of 2D graphics.

The other aspect of this choice of genre is that its basic concepts has its roots both in some early video games such as the Super Mario series (Nintendo, 1985) and Donkey Kong Island (Rare, 1994) as well as in popular indie titles like Downwell (Fumoto, 2015), Shovel Knight (Yacht Club Games, 2014) and Cuphead (StudioMDHR, 2017). Thus, the genre itself would hopefully not be unfamiliar to the participants, all members of the very industry from where it derives. The positive aspect would be that demo testing could be carried out easily, and that the basic concepts of the demos would not be novel enough to make the participants experience unintended confusion.

The same could be said for the basic gameplay objective of these two demos, getting through a two-dimensional level by the means of jumping with a character, and finally reach a certain

end-location. This is a traditional structure of a 2D platformer (the 2D platformers mentioned in the previous paragraph, for example, all rely on the same concept.) Thus, even the basic gameplay objective would hopefully not be too unfamiliar to the participants either. Also, the act of jumping with the character would leave room for designing two experientially diverse styles of control mechanics in that area.

The theme of these demos derives from the choice of sprites used, consisting of environmental blocks and a playable character. The playable character in both cases is a frog, a well-known jumping animal. This choice was made to bridge artwork and gameplay, since the latter consists of jumping to a large extent. The environmental building blocks were simply blocks of earth and stone that were intended to inspire no other associations than that of solid ground, since that is the sole function of these blocks. In both cases, the background was also made out of modified copies of these sprites. This was chosen to create a very simple background that would not contain a lot of information that could distract the participants from focusing on the screen.

There is no sound or music in either of these demos. Since music could create certain associations, as when Lipkin (2013, p. 15) points out that chiptunes have been associated with an “indie style”, this was purposely not included. That way it would be made sure that it would not color the experience of how the participants would experience those parts of the demos styles used for comparison in the survey. Even the alternative to use identical sound effects and background music would be excessive and possibly distracting. The total absence of music might make the demos feel less experientially complete than most games, containing music for the most part. Also, sound effects could surely have been used to create more informative feedback to the player, for example to signify the relative power of a jump. However, to keep the participants focused on mechanics and graphics, the simple design decision to use silence was chosen.

4.2.2 Differences Between Demos

The purpose of the two demos was to compare different stylistic conventions, and thus, the importance did not mainly lie in common traits, but rather in their differences. Those differences are found in the areas of both visuals and mechanics, more specifically the graphical style and the method of controlling the playable character in the demos.

The design of both demos was based on specific styles discussed in the literature on indie or on other existing styles chosen by the frequency of their occurrence among both indie games (Steam Store, 2018) and video games in general (Giant Bomb, 2018a). Their frequency and the reach of their defining scope was decided by the help of statistics. These statistics were partly found in the indie game industry and also in game media. It has already been described how a choice of a common game genre was based on literature. The way the unique styles picked for each demo will now be explained.

The focus when designing Demo 1 was to find styles with a certain prevalence among video games, so that these styles could be considered notable conventions. Since both the demos were already decided to both be 2D platformers, concepts common to that genre was chosen for Demo 1, since that demo was intentionally designed to be the somewhat more conventional of the two.

In terms of graphical style, pixelated graphics was chosen for this one, a style both found in early, well-known platformers like Super Mario (Nintendo, 1985) and in prominent indie titles like Shovel Knight (Yatch Club Games, 2014) and Downwell (Fumoto, 2015). A definition of pixel graphics can be found on Giant Bombs wiki and is partly described to be “[a type of] raster or bitmap graphics that are created and edited on the pixel level” (Giant Bomb, 2018c).

In terms of control mechanics, the concept specifically used in Demo 1 was wall-jump (Giant Bomb, 2018e), and for the players’ means of interaction, a relatively common control scheme for PC games (in relation to the one used in Demo 2 specifically) was used: the so-called WASD-keys (Giant Bomb, 2018f). The entire demo could be entirely experienced with these keys alone, except for the S-key, that was not included because of its redundancy. The possibility for the player to use blank-space, another conventional key mentioned in Giant Bombs wiki-page on WASD (Giant Bomb, 2018f) for the means of jumping, was also included for the sake of expanding the options for the participants be able to play the game in a way they might be most used to.

While Demo 1 was designed to be able to convey a feeling of recognition in terms of mechanics, the design of Demo 2 was structured to be stylistically less conventional than the one in Demo 1. To this end, a one-button mechanic was chosen, which according to Giant Bombs wiki on game concepts (Giant Bomb, 2018b) is less common than the WASD-based control scheme (these concepts has 520 vs 21 game appearances according to Giant Bomb wiki) (Giant Bomb, 2018f), and would therefore be considered less conventional by the definition used in this paper. In addition to this, an element of uncontrollable randomness was added to the means of movement, as described in earlier parts of this chapter. This was included to further steer the control mechanics away from well-established conventions and instead move it closer to a less common style, which is referred to as “qwoplike” by Giant Bomb (Giant Bomb, 2018d). The meaning of this term is to make simple tasks in the game harder to execute by making the controls intentionally wonky. On the Giant Bomb wiki, this concept had 14 game appearances. In the case of Demo 2, this effect is ensured by a constantly moving aim that will determine the direction of one’s jumps. As one charges up the power of a jump, this aim would spawn at a random place along a 180-degree path above the character so that the power of the jump would be determined by chance at the time one decides to jump (the details of this mechanic is described later in this chapter). Also, once the left mouse button is pressed, there is no option given to abort the action. Together, these aspects make it impossible for the player to be in full control of the movement. Since the design of interactive systems often focuses on a UX that allows for easy and intuitive usage, it is not a standard design principle to purposely make basic interaction an unreliable task and potentially frustrating (which is not the same as presenting frustrating problems for the user to solve, which could be used in a game as a way to provide entertaining challenges).

Instead of the traditional pixelated graphics, Demo 2 uses hand-painted graphics. Even if this can be found in big titles like Cuphead (StudioMDHR, 2017) it is less conventional among games tagged as “indie” in Steam Store (Steam Store, 2018) (at the date 2018-05-17, 120 titles were shown when browsing games tagged with “hand-drawn” compared to 1286 titles tagged with “pixel graphics” on Steam Store). The environment of this game was given a three-dimensional look to make it visually distinct from Demo 1, that relies on the flat look of simple

pixel graphics. The blocks that makes up the solid environment of Demo 1 was decorated with details like stones and grass to add more visible squares to convey the graphical style through.

4.2.3 Demo 1

Demo 1 was based on the graphical style of visible pixels and the mechanical style of well-established conventions. In the figure below (Figure 2), the three main building blocks on screen is explained. The colored markings in red, yellow and blue respectively, accompanied by a number in the same color, is not a part of the demo. These markings were added to the figures to ease the explanation of the content.



Figure 2 Highlighting the objects of Demo 1

The yellow circle, marked with the number 1, highlights an object supposed to look like a coin, not very unlike the coins collected in classic Super Mario Games (Nintendo, 1985). These coins are collected upon collision with the playable character and serve no other purpose than guiding the players through the level. The underlying idea was to create something that would stand out from the environment. This would hopefully inspire the participants to investigate its purpose by simply moving towards them, and thus move in a direction that would allow them to explore the mechanics. This could for example be by trying to reach a higher ground through wall-jumping.

During the second testing of the demo, the participants commented that the coin didn't seem to have a purpose helping them to beat the game in any manner. Since it was more important to guide the participants than to provide satisfying gameplay, the coin object was still included in the final iteration of the demo.

The red circle marked with the number 2 highlights the playable character. The squares that make up this sprite is four times bigger than an actual pixel. The reason for this was to make the “pixels” visible without zooming in the view of the game too much, and thus keeping the level of detail on the different parts of the demo more flexible.

The third object, marked by a blue square and a number 3 is a solid, unmovable object that serve as ground and walls in the game world. These are the main building blocks of the level design and are referred to simply as *blocks* in this text.

The character can move left and right at a fixed speed and jump and moves downwards on the y-axis unless it meets a block in this direction. It can also wall-jump, which is done when pressing the key for jumping (either the W key or the blank space key) while meeting a block to the left or right, and simultaneously not meeting a block on a downwards direction on the y-axis. This would result in an angled upwards movement away from the wall.

4.2.4 Demo 2

Demo 2 was based on hand-drawn graphics, and a control mechanics that would feel more unconventional than that of Demo 1. Just like the main parts of Demo 1 were described with the help of a picture (Figure 3), the same will be done for this demo, with the same type of colored markings and numbers.

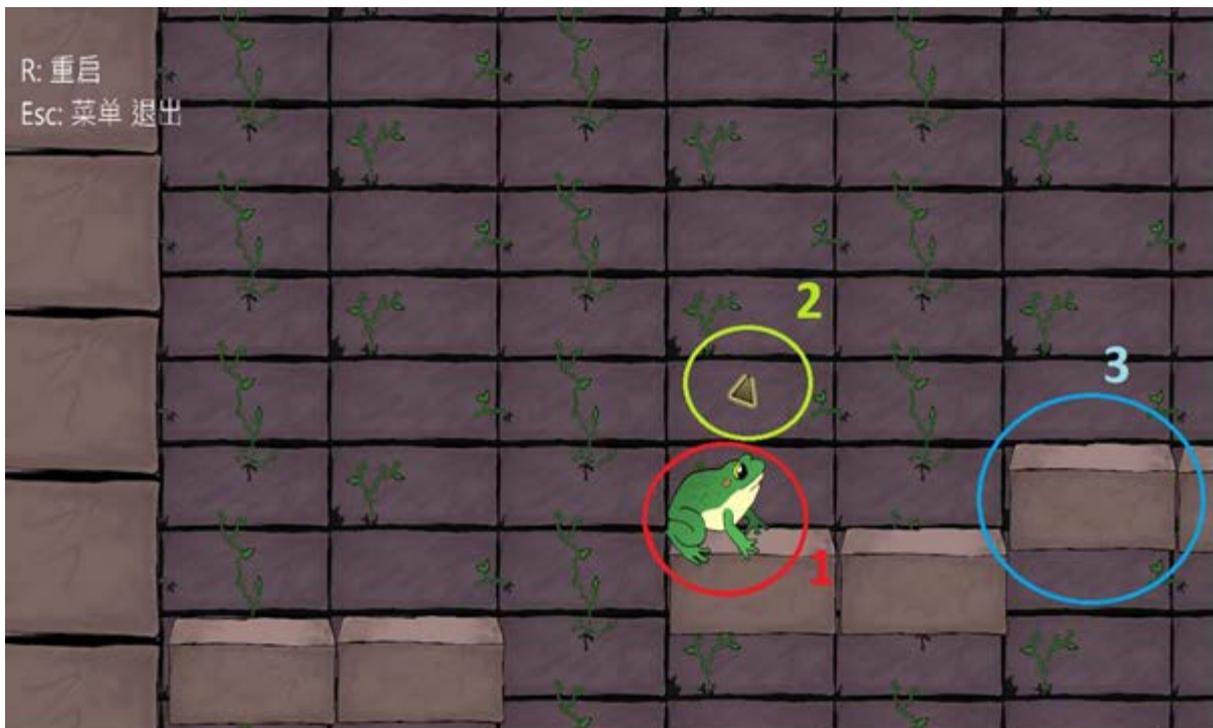


Figure 3 Highlighting the objects of Demo 2

The red circle marked with the number 1 highlights the playable character. Just like the character in Demo 1, this object is affected by in-game gravity by being bound to move downward along the y-axis as long as it is not stopped by a block, highlighted in the picture with a blue circle and the number 3. Just like in Demo 1, these blocks are what the level is built from.

Movement of the playable character is controlled by one button alone, the left mouse button. Pressing the button increases the variable that controls the jump length of the character, and releasing it triggers the jump itself. While the button is pressed, an instance of the arrow or triangle marked with a yellow circle in the picture is visible.

The arrow is the object that constitutes this demo's UI. It is designed to provide the player with two types of information, both related to the player's movement. Firstly, the arrow continually moves between two points on each side of the character in a half circle. This way it always points outward from the character somewhere along a 180-degree angle. If the left mouse button is released the character will jump in the direction the arrow points.

Secondly, the arrow also indicates how much power the jump will have if the mouse button were to be released. This is indicated by the color of the arrow, ranging from green, through yellow to red, with green being the weakest and red being the strongest.

Because of the limiting possibility of movement, the level design is a lot shorter and simpler. There are no possibilities to move the character mid-air or do wall-jumps. It is very hard to determine with any precision where the character will land. All these factors would make a counterpart to the coin-object found in Demo 1 redundant and possibly distracting for this demo and was thus not included at all.

4.2.5 Pretesting and Iteration

Three different tests with two new participants at each occasion were conducted during the development process. The aim of the first one was to investigate whether the gameplay of the demos was clear enough to not confuse the participants or be designed in some way that would add an unintended level of difficulty. Therefore, the information needed at this point could be gathered almost purely by observation of the players' behavior, with some questions added for the sake of clarifying the reasons for certain actions. This test was conducted with Chinese natives in professions unrelated to the game industry. While these people were not a part of the target audience whose viewpoints this study aims to map out, this test focused on technical aspects and basic design structure, so the matter of attitude towards the styles of the game didn't carry any importance.

The test was conducted by the participants while they were being observed. Questions regarding the players' interaction and experiences were given during the test itself. The players were given as long time as they wanted with the demos.

After this initial test had been carried out, an iteration of the first version of the demos was performed. The tests showed that some graphical details had been confusing to the players (Figure 4). Furthermore, the built-in time-pressure elements were shown to make the demos very difficult (Figure 5). It was therefore removed to avoid the risk of holding the players back from making enough progress during their tests. It is important to let the players make progress to experience aspects of the game that were the real subjects of investigation, i.e. the basic graphical and mechanical style.

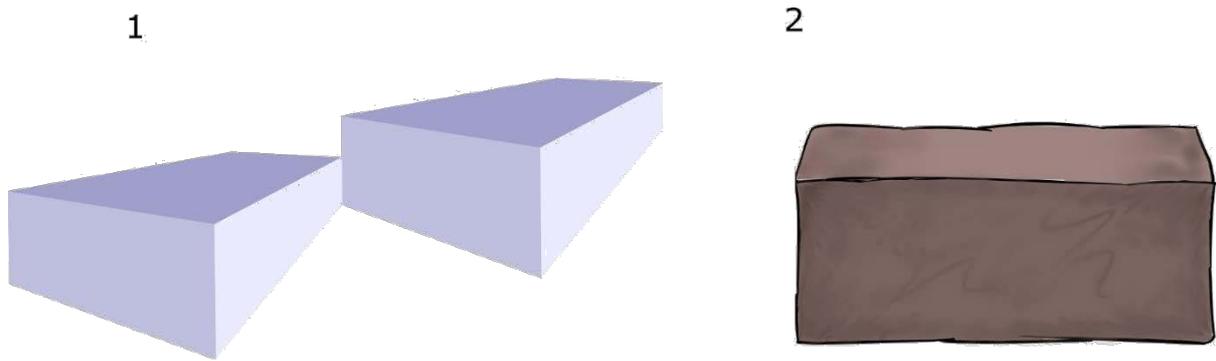


Figure 4 Different block shapes were perceived differently by the participants

Figure 4 above shows the shapes of the blocks from Demo 2, before and after testing and iteration. The angled blocks to the left, marked with the number 1, was confusing to the participants, who perceived a false depth that made them feel tricked when colliding with the edge off a block when attempting to jump through it. This was because the collision mask had a 2D shape for an object that seemed to be three dimensional.

The object to the right in figure 4, marked with a 2, is the sprite used in the final version of the demo. It is also supposed to have a perceived depth, but without a diagonal angle. This was iterated by the time of the second testing.



Figure 5 Rising water aimed at inspiring upwards movement

As seen above (Figure 5) there is a blue area in the lower half of the picture supposed to represent water. This was an element initially present in both demos. The water line would rise continually upward along the y-axis, covering more and more of the level as time went on. If the playable character was to collide with the water line, the level would reset and the player would have to start over. This was included to inspire the players to keep a steady pace

upwards, getting to know the different aspects of the demos at a fast and effective pace. Since this added an unnecessary level of difficulty and stress for the player, it had been removed by the time of the second testing.

After iterating the demos based on the first testing, a second testing was carried out with a new pair of participants. This time the participants were Chinese people doing internships in the Chinese indie game industry, thus somewhat closer to the target audience of this study. These participants were provided with a few questions in the shape of a survey that regarded the style of the game. They answered in written format and thus a first response related to the subject of this study was provided. The questions provided in this survey were in English, and in the same way, the answers were requested in English. Given that the respondents native written language is Chinese, this might have affected the length and level of detail of the answers. Only some balancing in regard to movement and level design to make the demos easier was made on the basis of the returned questions.

The third and final test aimed at investigating what associations and reactions the demos and the survey questions would incite among people with professions like those found in the study's target group. Thus, this test was conducted in Sweden with participants considered as a non-Chinese counterpart to the target group, namely Swedish indie game developers. For this test, the questions planned to be used for the final data collection were used. This way, the suitability of the questions in regard to the demos was put to test. The answers would therefore have a bigger impact on the content of the survey than the demos themselves, unless the outcome of the test would seem to call for yet another iteration of the demos. Questions not directly regarding the demos were also provided to this pair of testers. Thus, all sort of questions aimed to be included in the final data collection could be answered in a trial context.

4.3 Final Test and Survey – A Pilot Study

The third and final test served a certain role since it was carried out in a manner very similar to the one of the study's final data collection, and thus serves as the study's pilot study. The similarity with the final data collection is true both in regard of the type of questions used as well as the participants' commonalities with the study's target group.

In this part of the chapter the answers given by the two participants from the pilot study will be analyzed. The answers themselves can be found in appendix (see Appendix A). In the appendix, the survey questions and the participants' answers have been translated from Swedish to English by the survey conductor. The words shown in square brackets, [like this], are words added by the translator – not the participants – for the sake of readability. Italicized text, *like this*, signifies that the text is a question provided to the participant and not a part of their answer.

4.3.1 Analysis of Answers

Since both demos and questions similar to those used in the final data collection were used in the pilot study, the answers provided by these participants were thoroughly reviewed and compared to the sources that both influenced the design of the demos and the topics touched on by the questions. In this part of the chapter the observations made from reviewing these answers will be presented.

Both participants describe the graphical style of Demo 1 with the words *pixel art/graphics*, *old* and *retro*, which was very much the intent of the design, since it was based on the indie game conventions described by both Lipkin (2013) and Garda and Grabarczyk (2016). The participants both experience this graphical style to be most in line with what they consider to be “indie game”, since they think, for different reasons, that indie studios or “smaller companies” (here, participant 2 seems to imply that smaller company indicates indie, which she later contradicts) tend to use Pixel art / old graphics more than AAA studios. Here, both participants seem to use AAA studios as an opposite to indie in their explanation, just like Wang (Bankler, 2018d) did in the interview with her.

This way to use AAA as an opposition to indie can be seen again when participant 1 describe a product of a big development team as a “AAA Game”, and therefore “less indie”. It is used one more time as the opposite to indie by participant 2 comparing the tendency to experiment, which she contributes to indie, and the tendency to “do what is safe and guaranteed to work”, as a something “AAA” tends to do, not very unlike how San Lang compare indie and “commercial companies” in the interview with him (Bankler, 2018c).

Participant 2 described the control mechanics of Demo 1 as “standard”, which was the intention when basing the design of Demo 1 on certain conventions. Participant 1 even compares it with an existing convention by saying it is “a bit like old flash games you’d control with the arrow keys”, and even uses the expression “WASD” (Giant Bomb, 2018f) which further confirms that this design choice is based on an established convention.

Participant 1 also comments on the control mechanics of Demo 2 to be allowing the player to “[...] have any control of power or angle [...]” which seem to confirm commonalities with the very design concept on which it is based (Giant Bomb, 2018d). While participant 1 did not experience any of the two control mechanics as more indie than the other, participant 2 “absolutely” considers the control mechanics of Demo 2 to be more indie than Demo 1, since it is more experimental, which was the very intention of its design.

These were the answers relating to the demos in some way. Since two other questions that considered the conditions of production were included in the test as well, there might be reason to take a look at how those were answered, and how they compare with other sources used for the in this study.

Participant 1 thinks indie is less commercial and financially focused. Other developers interviewed for this study also used “commercial” as an opposite to indie, like Jason Li (Bankler, 2018b). Participant 1 also mentions that indie focuses more on making games for a target audience they can identify with and that “think the same as yourself”. This statement would be in line with how Garda and Grabarczyk describe creative independence (2016).

On the aspect of publishing, she goes on to state that if a development studio is so big that their games “could be considered AAA games”, they are less indie, even if they publish them themselves. In that case their games should be considered commercial. This is very close to

what participant 2 comments on, when she states that she does not consider *Blizzard*³ indie even if they theoretically should be considered completely independent. Regarding Blizzard, Jason Li said in the interview that Blizzard was considered indie by him, but not based on their publishing independence, but on their tendency to innovate (Bankler, 2018b).

Participant 2 also points out that she believes small-team indie developers can decide what games they want to make themselves, and would not have to take orders on what to create, but decide themselves, which is very much in line with what Wang describe to be an important aspect of her work as an indie in the article with her (Bankler, 2018d).

Regarding team size, participant 1 says the size of the development team does not matter at all for the basic definition of indie, but that it could be hard to find many members to share one's specific devotion to work towards a certain niche. That is very similar to what Guo Xing said in the interview with him when asked about the role of team size:

Indie is not a matter of the number of members. Indie means you start your own thing and go you own way. Indie is the grassroots movement of the game industry. Expanding is not easy though. It is important to find the right people, with similar vision and competence, and most importantly, the same taste. It is difficult to build such a team to begin with.

(Bankler, 2018a)

Regarding the graphical style, both participants did not just describe the style of Demo 1 in words found in the literature that inspired the purpose for Demo 1's graphical design, they also described it as related to the indie game genre. Regarding the style of Demo 2, none of the words used to describe it related to "hand drawn", but rather to genres for which it could have fitted. So, the intended style was not identified or rather conveyed properly. Still, it seemed to function as a comparable option to the graphical style of Demo 1, and thus not lose its intended purpose.

Regarding the control mechanics, Demo 1's style was described in terms that inspired its design, and so was Demo 2. In that regard the design of this aspect was a full success in regard to its intent.

Most importantly, the demos seem highly comparable to both participants and both did spark discussion regarding their relation to indie. Note that even if they were to say that the styles could not possibly serve as a basis for telling whether a game has indie elements, this could still be a fruitful answer, as long as the participants provide some thoughts regarding the importance of style.

³ The American game developer and publisher *Blizzard Entertainment* is a subsidiary of the holding company *Activision Blizzard*, one of the world's largest game companies in terms of game revenue (Newzoo. 2017b).

Official Homepage of Blizzard Entertainment: <https://www.blizzard.com/en-us/>

Official Homepage of Activision Blizzard: <https://www.activisionblizzard.com/>

The questions of the survey seem to have been interpreted correctly by judging the answers provided by the two participants. Questions 1 – 4 received brief answers, which is not surprising, as the purpose of these questions was to let the participants freely share their associations and interpretations related to the style. Thus, these questions let the participants think about the styles, and define them in their own terms, which prepare for the questions 5 and 6, when they will be asked to give motivated answers that relate the definitions of these styles to the indie term.

Question number 7 was split up in to three different questions in the survey that was later used for the study's primary data collection. This was done since there are many types of independences, and the participants only focused on one aspect each when answering this question. Splitting up the question, and being more precise on what independence they should regard when answering these questions, made sure the participants' answers would encompass more types of independences.

5 Evaluation

In this chapter, a thorough evaluation of the study and its findings will be presented. The chapter is divided into three main sections: *The Study*, *Analysis* and *Conclusions*. In the first of these, *The Study*, the basic intentions behind the study, including specific aspects of the study's survey, will be explained. The process of data collection will also be described here.

In the second part, *Analysis*, the method of data analysis will be described. After that, general reflections on the collected data will be presented followed by individual analyses of each participant's answers. The individual analyses are intended to provide an insight into the decoding process, and to mark what theories and interpretations underlie the study's ultimate conclusions.

In the final part, *Conclusions*, the conclusions drawn from the data analysis will be presented. These conclusions will serve to answer to the study's research question. This includes highlighting of recurring patterns, discovered themes and ideological standpoints, significant statements and diverging thoughts, as well as possible explanations to, and an analysis of, all of these aspects.

5.1 The Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how members of a specific target group, namely professionals within the Chinese indie game industry, would define the term 'indie'. The data was thus gathered through the participation of eleven individuals from this target group. In terms of variety, these participants were from a total of eight different companies, and the ratio in terms of sex was three women to eight men. Twelve individuals were personally invited to participate in this study. All but one agreed to do so. Most of these individuals were found through the help of *Indienova*, who has assisted in carrying out this study to a significant extent.

The two research tools used for data collection, the demo and the survey, were distributed to the participants through the Chinese media application WeChat (Tencent, 2011). The demo and survey were played and filled out respectively by the participants, always in the absence of the surveys conductor. Both the research tools and the gathered data were translated into Chinese written language and English respectively by individuals doing internships in the Chinese indie game industry. Thus, the translators were all people who themselves were active in the same professional environment as the study's target group without fully being a part of it. Any confusion that emerged during the translation process was straightened out through direct dialogue between the translators and the survey's conductor.

5.1.1 Overview of Survey

The survey used for data collection was distributed to the participants through the Chinese media application WeChat (Tencent, 2011). In the interest of both clarity and providing the best opportunities for the participants to elaborate easily on each question, participants were given the option to answer in the native written language, which was Chinese writing in all eleven cases. In the same way, all questions and information included in the survey were provided in both English and Chinese writing. Three participants still chose to write their answers in English (see Appendix C). In the survey, the intent of the study as well as the

treatment of the data is clearly explained. Instructions on when to play the demos were also included, along with a clarification on which aspects of the demos were the focus of interest for this study.

The questions in the study are divided into two sections. The first of these is titled “Questions Regarding Conventions” and all questions in this part is stated in reference to Demo 1 or Demo 2. These questions all regarded the graphical and mechanical styles and conventions exemplified by the demos, and which could also be found in other games.

Question 1 - 4 were somewhat different from the other questions. They were included to let the participants provide their own definitions for the conventions and styles they observed in the demos, as well as let them share the associations and thoughts they might have of them. Thus, these questions were not designed to gather data that could directly help answer the study’s main research question. Rather, they would function as support questions to question 5 - 8, which in turn would take matter of style and convention and put it in relation to the indie game concept.

In the second section, titled “Questions Regarding Conditions of Production”, the possible aspects of indie that might fall outside matters of game conventions and style were introduced. The first three of these regarded independence in game development. More precisely, these were the three types of independences discussed earlier in this paper that Garda and Gabrozyk defined in their article on indie games (2016). This was followed by a question on the relevance of team size, since small-scale development was also brought up in literature that has been referenced in this study (Ruffino, 2013, p. 107).

Finally, the last question was perhaps the most open one, and for this reason, sometimes also the most important one, as it allowed the participant to move beyond the constraints of a focused subtopic (see Appendix B for reference). Thus, the freer option could allow the participants to lift aspects untouched by previous questions and get to the core of their personal viewpoints on the topic of indie. One might wonder why any other questions were necessary when this open question would allow the participants to discuss all aspect they would see relevant to the research question. However, to gather relevant data that could easily be compared with the literature on which this study built its theoretical basis, the concepts discussed in these texts were properly presented in the survey for the participants to share their thoughts on.

5.2 Analysis

In this section, the analysis will be presented in a chronological order. In the first part, 5.2.1, the method of data analysis will be described to provide an insight in to the work of the analyst. The method followed an inductive approach with a predetermined strategy of decoding and organizing as a preparation for making conclusions about the data’s implications on the research question.

This is followed by 5.2.2 on general reflections on the gathered data. Partly, the varying quality of the data and other general observations are discussed here, but also the answers to the survey questions that did not directly served to help answer the main research question.

Finally, this section ends with individual analyses of each participant's answer, in which the main points and most significant lessons from each case will be lifted in an analytical manner. This is done to provide further insight into the analysis process and transparency regarding how the individual cases of data were treated.

5.2.1 Method

As a qualitative research focused on exploring individual thoughts and their underlying philosophies, data analysis was done in a structured manner of decoding, organizing, interpreting and comparing freely formulated text from a total of eleven different sources. The raw data from all these participants were structured question-by-question in the surveys, but through the inductive approach of the analysis method, this simplified structured was dissolved in the decoding process, and partly replaced with new categories made from various discrepancies and recurring patterns. This was done in a manner similar to National Science Foundation's guidelines on qualitative data analysis, especially as they point out that "While initial categorizations are shaped by pre-established study questions, the qualitative analyst should remain open to inducing new meanings from the data available" (Berkowitz, 1997).

Since the data gathered in the study were asymmetrical, freely expressed and highly subjective due to its open format, the first step in its decoding process was to identify relevant information and opinions. Through this process of data reduction, the most significant aspects of the data were selected by their estimated relevance to the main research question. Because of the central role of the individual in this study, the data reduction was firstly done case-by-case, to highlight the selected data in its primary context (i.e. as tied to a specific individual). Later in this chapter, analyses of each participants' data will be presented.

The second step was to organize the highlighted passages of the data through data display (National Science Foundation, 1997). Through that process, new, higher-order themes and categories were formed from recurring patterns, interrelationships and other parts considered to be of strong relevance to the study. Thus, the data did not inherit its structure by any predetermined framework. Instead, the categories were formed by outstanding aspects of the data identified during the data reduction. This approach, considered an inductive one, made it possible to organize the data into a display of various concepts. This display of concepts, which will be presented in the concluding section of this evaluation, could thus form an outline of existing philosophies related to the indie term found in the study's target group. Many of these were concepts discussed in literature used in this study and hence relevant to the analysis, while some other were new aspects not emphasized earlier during the study.

The final step was to see in what ways these concepts could form a coherent picture and provide a basis for drawing conclusions or open up space for further research. This required comparing the different data with both each other and with external texts such as relevant articles. This process showed that while some of the identified patterns were held together by a causality described by the participants themselves, other, subtler connections between thoughts and phenomena seemed to exist as well. This will be more thoroughly presented in the *Conclusions* section in this chapter.

It is important to note that the data remained anonymous to everyone except the study's sole conductor. The identities of the participants were not revealed to the people handling the

translation of the data or anyone else. The only personal details kept in this paper are the gender and occupation of each participant.

5.2.2 General Reflections on Gathered Data

Before presenting the data, some general reflections should be discussed so that those aspects can be understood and kept in mind while reading the analysis. This is not a judging of the quality but rather a series of relevant observations shared in the paper. All matters discussed in this section can be observed by the reader in the appendix (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Appendix B and C are thus an all-encompassing reference for the general reflections on the data, all individual analyses and the final conclusions in this chapter. The following remarks in this section will not single out specific participant's data, but rather describe them as a single collection of data in very generalized terms.

One notable aspect of the collected data is that its comprehensiveness varies significantly between subjects and cases. In some cases, one participant could answer at great length to a question with many pointers and references, while another participant could answer with a single word. This resulted in some people making up a significantly larger portion of the total data than others in terms of word count. Though some questions included the encouragement to "*Elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be*" (see Appendix B), they could in some cases receive a very short answer. In some cases, multiple questions were entirely skipped, sometimes with a comment explaining that they are irrelevant. This had the consequence that the study did not gather a lot of data on some aspects of indie discussed in the literature on which this study is partly based. Thus, a reliable, comparative analysis regarding those aspects could not be conducted to the same extent as some other aspects. However, the fact that some topics seemed to be almost unanimously treated as irrelevant, like the topic of publishing independence, should also be considered a revealing and informative sign.

One significant problem with the method of data collection is that it did not allow for follow-up questions for clarification or further details. This makes some passages of the data less comprehensive than others and some thoughts and philosophies less than fully explained.

The data were translated from Chinese to English with the help of native writers of Chinese writing. At a few instances in the textual data, grammatical errors can be found. All of these were discussed and clarified between the study's conductor and the translator. Of course, the translated data was kept in its original format.

The part of the survey regarding style and conventions was introduced with four questions without references to the indie concept (Appendix B). Thus, these questions, 1-4, were not directly connected to the main research questions, and will not be treated the same way or subject to the same level of analysis as the rest of the questions. While the other questions specifically asked the participants to define and discuss indie as a concept in relation to certain aspects, the purpose of 1-4 was instead to explore how the participants would define the styles found within the two demos used in this study. One reason for this was to allow the participants to start thinking about these aspects of the demos in regard to conventions and style before putting them in the context of defining the indie term. Another purpose of these questions was to explore the general associations the participants might have regarding the

style, as whether they would consider it to follow certain conventions or be examples of experimental design. Thus, the answers later given regarding the demo's suitability for the indie genre could be compared with the associations and definitions presented by the participants in question 1-4 to evaluate patterns between their definition of the indie concept and such aspects as experimental design and graphical conventions. By asking these questions first, no assumptions were made during the analysis as to whether the styles of the demos were perceived and classified by the participants.

The participants generally describe the graphical style of Demo 1 in terms related to the concepts on which it was based. These include "pixel graphics" and "pixel-art", which in turn was related to terms like "traditional" and "retro". This shows that the participants share similar types of associations to this concept as the authors of the literature used as a basis for this study (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). These types of terms were used in those texts to describe a strain of conventions grown out of the indie phenomenon. Whether adherence to these conventions was relevant or not to the participants will be discussed in section 1.3. Demo 2 in turn was neither described as traditional nor innovative. It does not seem to provoke any strong association to any extremity on the spectrum of conventional/experimental. It is, however, described in terms regarded in its design, namely, hand-drawn.

The control mechanics of Demo 1 were also tied to traditional concepts by the participants, often describing it as an example of a design belonging to the platformer genre, which was also the design model the demo was built upon. And just as with the graphics, this aspect was also described as "traditional", which, once again, is in line with the fundamental idea of its design. Other concepts that was used in the design was also used to describe the styles, such as "Wall jumping" and "WASD" (Giant Bomb, 2018e; Giant Bomb, 2018f).

The control mechanics of demo 2 was the only aspect exemplified by the two demos described as unconventional and novel in style. Apart from that it was also often described in more detailed, step-by-step answers instead of by the means of recurring concepts such as the case was for demo 1 (though an example of "single-button" used as a convention did occur). This could be seen as indicating that the participants perceived the control mechanics unconventional, as they did not use any pre-existing labels to describe it. This suspicion seems to be confirmed in some of the answers regarding the design's fitness for the indie genre.

5.2.3 Analysis of Data by Individual

These individual analyses, together with an inductive analysis of the collective data, serve as basis for the final conclusions. The purpose of individual analyses was to be able to treat every piece of data in their distinctly individual contexts. After all, this is a qualitative study with a focus on the boundless plurality of individual thoughts and opinions. While all the participants belong to a specified group, i.e. professionals within the Chinese indie game industry, the focus is not to treat them as a single source of data, since the qualitative approach of this study aims to identify previously unspecified and individually specific thoughts and opinions. Thus, numerical estimations are of little relevance in comparison to subjective qualities when analyzing the answers.

To view and analyze data both individually and in its full completeness requires the same data to be observed from two different angles. This is important since some patterns might be most

visible when the collected data is viewed in its totality, such as reoccurring opinions between participants, while some patterns might first be made visible when looked at individually, such as the causal roots of a philosophical viewpoint.

Structuring, summarizing and presenting the individual analyses in the manner of narrative descriptions like this will also make the analytical process of this study visible to the reader. This, in turn, will visualize connections between the central points of each individual participant and the concepts and themes presented in the conclusions (next section, 1.3). While some of those themes and concepts were identified in the process of individual analyses, many other were extracted from structuring the all data in its completeness through abstract generalizations.

Participant 1 - CEO and Game Developer, female:

The recurring position that can be followed throughout participant 1's answers is the idea that the opposite of indie games is what she calls "commercial games". This can be seen in the way she repeatedly uses the term "commercial game" as a given counterpart to whatever an indie game is. Though she does not provide a direct definition of what a commercial game is, her answers seem to imply that it is either a commercially successful game appealing to a wide audience, or a game created with the intention of being commercially successful. What could speak for the earlier of these two interpretations is when she answers on whether demo 2's control mechanics is fit for indie as a genre. Since she experiences that the control mechanics are not just odd, but also "uncomfortable", it would lessen its commercial appeal, she writes. In turn, this would make the control mechanics fit for indie, as "The difference between a commercial game and an indie game is not whether the style of the game is unique enough, or if it follows any conventions, but whether the design is acceptable by the public". This would diverge from what many other participants answered, as they would often highlight the importance of innovation as a core principle to indie unrelated to whether it results in commercial success or not (even though she is not alone among the participants in using the term "commercial" as a counterpart to indie).

What might speak for the interpretation that the participant defines a "commercial game" based on the intent and motivations of the developers themselves is to be found in her answer to question 12 regarding team size. Even here, the concept of commercial games as opposed to indie games is in the center of the participant's concern. She claims that team size is not relevant in theory, but in practice, since bigger team would mean bigger expenses for the developers. Since profiting on an indie game is difficult and the cost of a big team is high, she argues, they might have to consider the game's viability for commercial profit as a result of this. Either, the participants mean that this shift in attitude and motivation, now steered towards a more commercial one out of necessity, goes against indie, or that it will result in more commercial type of games as opposed to indie games.

Regarding the various forms of independence, she answers that publishing and financial independence is irrelevant, since a commercial game can still be financed and published independently. But, like in the case with many other participants, creative independence is seen differently. Creative independence is important, she claims, but not necessarily in regard to the audience. If the audience happens to be a minority group, it is still indie. It is in the pursuit to satisfy a majority audience it distances itself from indie. Once again, it is not clear

whether this is because it affects the shape of the games or if it simply is the change in motivation that decide this.

However, the participant gets very specific on what she herself considers an indie game should be, namely “[a] stand-alone, single-player, paid to download, original game”. In this case it might be important to point out that the polar opposite to this is the sort of games dominating the Chinese market: “MMOs, MMORPGs, and MOBAs, especially if they use free-to-play” (Priestman, 2007).

Free-to-play is especially emphasized by the participant, as she brings up the matter of Kejin. Kejin (氪金) is a Chinese term used to describe a certain type of business model built around microtransactions in free-to-play games (Baidu Encyclopedia, 2018). Sometimes, this even include a pay-to-win concept, which is a very big phenomenon in China (Huang, 2018). The participants also point out that the use of the indie term has been subject to inflation as many kejin mobile games has used indie as a tag for their product to make profit, while she herself sees kejin, which is a type of commercial game, as an opposite to indie game.

To sum this up: participant 1 seem to define indie on the basis on what it is *not* (or rather, what it should not be), i.e. a commercial game and widely popular. This, together with her description of an indie game as something in many ways opposite to the dominating type of games and kejin games, make it seem as if the participant sees indie as an alternative to the mainstream trends of the Chinese game market.

Participant 2 - CEO and Game Developer, male:

In the case of participant 2, the only factor that seem to determine whether something is to be considered indie or not is the level of creativity behind it. To him, this makes factors such as financial or publishing independence irrelevant for the definition of indie, and he even claims that an AAA game (which is a term used by some other participants as a given opposite to indie) could be regarded as indie. This is in line with Jason Li’s claim that *Blizzard* qualifies as an indie studio because of their creative games, which he expressed in the interview done as a part of the preparatory research in this study (Bankler, 2018b).

Creative independence on the other hand, has a significant relevance, since games developed under such conditions tend to be full of personal expression, which is the most precious and invaluable perspective of indie, he states. Regarding Demo 2’s control mechanics he also comments that trying to create new or trying to change a conventional game control is an example of an “indie game pattern”.

Just as participant 1, participant 2 brings up the unrestrained use of the indie tag, saying that “many products on the market today only use the popular tag of indie games to draw attention in order to have more sales.” He points out that while there is no rigid definition to indie, he feels that he can personally score on scale just how much “indie spirit” (an expression he is not alone among the participants to use) a game has, and thereby he takes the indie concept and turn it into a measurable quality to himself.

Participant 3 - CEO and Game Developer, male:

Participant 3 takes a quite unique stance in comparison to the other participants. This is especially the case in regard to the standard of the game product, and his view on innovative game design. Conclusively, however, it seems to amount to a similar position as many other participants takes.

When answering the questions regarding style and conventions represented by the demos, participant 3's focus is on what he perceives as their lacking quality, which makes him unwilling to associate them with the indie label. In regards to the control mechanics of demo 2, participant 3 call it a "meaningless innovation", which seems to be an acknowledgement that they are the result of innovation, but lacks value since it "violates the intuition of the average player". On the other hand, he praises demo 1, which was designed to adhere to a non-innovative design for being consistent with norms familiar to a player. He states that he "believe game design must follow some conventions or standards" which makes him feel that "demo1's control mechanics is designed by an experienced player." Compare this with participant 1 who instead wrote that the bad design of demo 2 made it fitting for the indie genre, not inherently because its low quality, but because it would make it unacceptable by a majority audience. Participant 3 on the other hand, says he would not acknowledge any amateurish, experimental work as fit for the indie genre. Thus, "experimental" almost seem to be regarded as a negative (at least in the combination with an amateurish level of craftsmanship) if it does not amount to higher quality gameplay. Even when using his own studio as an example, he regards the indie label as something to be earned, unaffected by factors such as financial independence.

Participant 3 claims that the most important perspective of indies (as himself), is that they are motivated by the working as a game creator rather than by material pursuit. This ties back to the position held by participant 1 who contrasts the level of commercial pursuit with indie, as well as with the viewpoint of a few other participants. While money has its importance to life in general, participant 3 writes, the goal of an indie is self-realization by creation. In conclusion he writes: "Without this goal, any other things will lose its meaning to be Indie."

To participant 3, innovation and experimentation, which are traits explored by this study because of their recurring association to the indie concept, does not seem to hold any intrinsic value. Quality of the product, on the other hand, does, as well as the motivation of the game creator.

Participant 4 - CEO and Game Developer, male:

Participant 4 initially takes a more practical rather than ideological approach. He states that the design of demo 1's control mechanics fits the indie genre because it is "easy to make" and "full of variability", and in commenting on the graphical style of demo 2, as he considers a hand-painted style to require a high level of artistry to master which may be too much for a small team. In these answers, he spontaneously associate indie development with limited resources as well as small teams. The latter association is eventually nuanced in his answer to the question regarding team size, as he states that team size might not have a strict limit.

Though participant 4 initially focuses on the assumed means available to the developer, he moves on to a more philosophical standpoint in answering the questions regarding aspects of indie outside the investigative scope of the demos. While he, like many of the other

participants, thinks that both financial and publishing independence has no or specifically conditional relevance, he states that creative independence is important because it allows the game to express the producer's own idea. The participant says is that "[i]f the producer just treat [the product] as a commercial game, the game could never become a truly indie game". Though it is not clear what he means by "commercial game", by using the same expression as many other participants he contributes to a fairly consistent pattern in the data.

Participant 5 - CEO and Game Developer, male:

For participant 5, the single most important aspect of indie, apart from the matter of developers controlling their own resources, is self-expression. Thus, an indie game can be determined by an obviously expressed and strongly characterized creativity, he writes. He expresses his concerns about a market with an excessive proportion of too similar games and copying of other games. To him, since "there are too many similar games on the market" the indie game term has the purpose to help people "find something different". He also points out that many developers, in China especially, does not prioritize innovative self-expression. He states that there are circumstantial reasons for this, since he feels that China is not a society supporting personal expression. These concerns are similar to those expressed by indie developer Gao Ming in his article on the challenges faced by China's indie developers (Gao, 2018) or to the description of the nation's domestic conditions given by Thomas Wong of One Zero Digital Limited (Sayer, 2017). Both of these point to the fact that the society rather promotes a money oriented focus rather than one based on creativity.

Participant 6 - CEO and Game Publisher, male:

Participant 6 states that the pixel graphics of Demo 1 is consistent with his personal requirements for what constitutes as indie. The reason is that this style is currently popular among indie titles while AAA studios use other types of graphics, he claims. He praises pixel-art's ability to produce a unique artistic experience at a lower cost. Furthermore, he judges both control mechanics' to be fit for the indie game genre on account of them being already commonly used. These positions are somehow incompatible with the position of some other participants that indie games defining trait is their element of evident innovativeness.

It is worth noting that participant 6 is the only participant to take the position that publishing independence is, in his words, "pure indie" (which might be particularly noteworthy considering that he is a game publisher). In a similar way, he praises game developers distributing their games for free, because it shows that they enjoy the process of making games and realize themselves. This might be the type of attitude he refers to as he uses the expressions "indie spirit" and "spirit of indie", which he is not alone among the participants to do.

Participant 7 - Game Publisher, male:

Participant 7 acknowledges that the pixel-art used in Demo 1 is an example of a convention found among famous indie game titles but makes it clear that he does not think a graphical style can represent indie as a genre. Regarding the mechanics, he thinks that neither of the demos have a level of creativity suitable for indie games and thus shows that he holds creativity and innovativeness as the highest standard in determining what defines a game as indie. This is also confirmed as he disregards all questions concerning conditions of production as

irrelevant except the question on creative independence, stating that it is the core of indie which allow the developers to express themselves.

Participant 8 - Game Designer, female:

Participant 8 lifts the topic many of the challenges that Chinese indie developers in China, and Asia as a whole, face when answering the questions. Since many of these questions do concern the conditions of production, which happens to be quite unique and difficult in China (Sayer, 2017), this is a relevant matter that gives the study insight into the underlying reasons for the participants' philosophical positions. Participant 8 states that the conditions of indie developers in foreign countries look very different, with their own indie game unions, and express a wish to establish a similar indie community in Hong Kong. Such local indie communities do exist in the west:

The local scenes in major cities like Toronto and Boston (Merenkov 2012) are also emblematic in that they involve a great deal of face-to-face social interaction at game jams, festivals, showcases, and other events run by community organizations such as Toronto's Hand-Eye Society and The Boston Indies.

Parker, 2018

To participant 8, the relevance of game style and conventions is not defining indie, but rather the conditions of production. Like many other participants, she uses the term "commercial game" as a given opposite of indie game, which seem to indicate once again that intentions behind the game development are central to the participant.

Participant 8 shares a lot of thoughts concerning the conditions of production when answering the question on financial independence. Like others, she also states that a challenge to Chinese indie game developers is that the norms of an Asian society like China measure value only in terms of money. Thus, she writes, games do not attract a lot of investors, and describe their attitude like this: "[Games are] a non-profitable industry, and the risks are high, wait 'til you team make a game that is globally renowned then I will invest my money on you.". She thinks that no one will appreciate creativity, but only its potential profitability in a product, and that the indie tag is seen only as a way to raise business value. This misuse of the indie game label was also brought up by other participants. Her overall opinion on financial independence is not that the type of independence bears the most relevance, and that neither funding nor business advice from a third party is a bad thing for an indie developer. Her thoughts are similar concerning publishing independence, stating that publishing companies can help make up for indie developer's weakness, as she presumably thinks that an indie game studio is not big enough to have some of their own manpower dedicated to advertisement.

In answering the question on creative independence, she compares the game developer to other types of creators, like musicians and painters, claiming that they are unified by an inherent wish to express themselves through their work. Though she herself thinks that the possibility to create without considering people or even one's own livelihood would be unrealistic, she also thinks it would be ideal. Putting self-expression as the main goal of an indie developer makes her position contribute to a philosophical pattern that now can be seen running throughout the data.

Participant 9 - Game Designer, female:

Participant 9 differentiate between “creation-oriented” and “product-oriented” games. The participant provides definitions for these: while the former should be signified by the development team’s decisive power, the latter are games fitted for the needs of an external actor, such as “customer needs, the market [or] executive requirements”. Because of this, participant 9 thinks the style of the game should show the development team’s style, as opposed to being an “ice-cold” industry product. Such a product might be what other participants have in mind as they use terms like “commercial product” as contrasting concept to indie.

Participant 9 herself says she would rather use “independence” or “spirit of indie” as terms because of the vagueness of the indie term. If those terms are used to represent her philosophy on this matter, “independence” might be understood as independence from decisive power from an external force and spirit of indie as motivation by creation rather than motivation by commercial pursuit. These definitions could be seen as complementary to each other, were non-creative third-party actors might have a less creation-oriented mindset and rather like to see the product shaped for maximum commercial viability.

Participant 10 - Game Developer, male:

To participant 10, the questions concerning the style of conventions exemplified in the demos are not valid, since he believes indie games should not follow any conventions, but that the shape of such aspects like “graphical style and control mechanics are just ways creators chose to express themselves”. By this, he seems to lift self-expression as a central aspect of game creation. Apart from that, participant 10 does not really provide any insight into what he himself considers to be indie, as he also regards any aspect touched on in the questions regarding independence as irrelevant. As the decisions are still made by the developers, even those regarding market adjustments, any external influences are optional, and therefore a game can still be indie. Unfortunately, the survey format limits the possibilities to make clarifications through follow-up questions to the moderate amount of information provided by participant 10.

Participant 11 - Game Publisher, male:

To Participant 11 there seem to be multiple aspects relevant for the definition of indie, without singling out any one as more important than the others. One of these aspects is the importance of letting the development team be in full control of the production, including aspects of finance and publishing. This relevance of independence also includes the developers’ detachment from commercial demands, which the participant sees as a requirement for indie, while contrasting that with “[a] product of a business team”. Once again, commercial intent is regarded as the opposite to indie. Another aspect of development participant 11 sees as important is experimentation, and even describe the game mechanics of demo 1 as “all-too-common” when answering whether it is fit for the indie game genre. It is hard to determine how these various factors directly relate to each other according to the participant without getting speculative.

5.3 Conclusions

In the data decoding, passages and statements in the data identified as particularly relevant were highlighted. These were decided to be relevant if they had some connection to concepts or themes discussed in existing literature on the subject, reoccurred in different places

throughout the data, were explicitly emphasized as important by the participant or were noted to be outstanding or surprising in some significant way. These consisted of philosophical viewpoints, convictions, beliefs, statements, thoughts, opinions and ideological positions of the participants, which in turn were categorized by bringing them together. These categories consisted both of previously defined concepts and new conceptualizations of identified patterns. Some of the labeled categories were: *motivations of the game developer, certain types of independences, the importance of personal-expression, commercial goals, challenges in game development, decisive control, innovation and experimentation, creativity, style conventions, quality of products*. These were then boiled down further to a few main themes, all related to each other, which will be presented in this section. The connections between these, distinguished and interpreted through the process of qualitative analysis, will be presented in the section's concluding part.

5.3.1 Innovation and Creativity

Repeatedly, the participants emphasize creativity, experimentation and innovativeness as defining qualities of indie games. While Demo 1's adherence to conventions common to the indie genre, like pixel graphics and control mechanics standards (Lipkin, 2013), do not seem to be an excluding factor for most participants, neither is it a defining one. Whenever a convention or style represented in the demos are deemed inadequate to represent the indie genre, it is so on the basis of lacking innovativeness. However, creativity, experimentation and innovativeness by itself do not always seem to suffice as the sole defining trait if they do not amount to something else (novelty, originality, higher level of quality, appeal to a minority audience, etc.). Still, on the matter of independence, creative independence was often singled out as either the only or the most important type of independence. In this case too, it does not always seem to be the point. Instead, it is the possibility creative independence gives the creators to express themselves through their creativity and realize their own ideas, ungoverned by external needs, that is important. Along with self-expression of the developer, originality by itself is also lifted as valuable by multiple participants.

In some cases, that quality is contrasted with the practice of copying other games, a phenomenon that is significantly widespread in China (Beck, 2017). So while creativity and experimentation are aspects that have indeed been highlighted as relevant to the indie game genre (Garda and Grabarczyk, 2016), games possessing such qualities in China are thus also alternatives to the types of games that might signify the country's game market from an outside perspective (Gao Ming, 2018). With that said, even though copying existing and commercially viable games might be particularly widespread in China, it is a phenomenon also occurring in other markets too, as this quote by the programmer Cliff Harris seem to indicate:

This is a great time for indies to really innovate and do well. In practice, not many of us are trying. If I see another match-3 game I'll cry. It's sad to see so many small developers behave exactly like the big companies we have supposedly escaped from.

Martin & Deuze, 2016

5.3.2 Motivation

The shape of the game, whether experimental and unique, or clearly built around a business strategy, might rest on the motivations of its creators. The motivations found in the Chinese

game industry are described by the participants to be rooted in either commercial gain or in creativity and a need for self-expression. Many participants think this difference in attitude is what separates indie from other games. As when participant 6 praises developers who distribute their games for free and are out to “enjoy the process of development or realize themselves”, it is the passion for the game creation that defines an indie developer, and not the strive for commercial success.

Many participants feel that such motives (rather than commercial pursuit) put them in opposition, not just to the dominating trends of the market, but to their society as a whole. Participant 8 claims that the “Asian society is used to measure personal achievement and value by money”, and participant 5 claims that China is “not a society that encourages personal expression.” A more direct example of this oppositional attitude among Chinese indie developers is provided by participants 1. She, who used the term “kejin” to refer to a type of non-indie games, specifically describes an indie game to possess certain qualities, such as being single-player and pay to download. Such qualities are the opposite of the current trends on the Chinese game market, such as MMOs and Free-to-play-models (Priestman, 2007). She also states that a game appealing to a minority audience rather than a majority is indie. These positions also indicate that, to Participant 1, indie is a contrasting alternative to the commercially dominant genre of games in China. Such a view is consistent with how indie is described in existing texts on indie, as for example when Lipkin states that “[at] its simplest, indie media is defined by what is not mainstream” (2013).

Though AAA games, which are described as the opposite to indie in some of the literature used in this study (Lipkin, 2013, p. 9), are occasionally mentioned and used in the same way by some participants, large-scale companies and big-budget games like this are not emphasized to the same extent. One might however wonder if a huge, hierarchically structured team would allow for the decisive control to be in the hand of the developers, highlighted as important by participant 8, and be able to survive without considering commercial gain (a concern pointed out by participant 1).

5.3.3 Conditions of Production

The role of conditions of production had its own section in the survey. These questions aimed to explore the participants’ thoughts on aspects of indie possibly not covered by the questions related to the demos. Some topics touched on in this section did not turn out to be especially significant to the participants. On the other hand, other aspects not directly addressed by the questions were brought up as significant by the participants, such as societal norms.

So what about independence, the very word from where the term ‘indie’ etymologically derives? On this topic, publishing and financial independence were seen radically different from creative independence by most participants. Financial and publishing independence were seen as basically irrelevant, as long as the decisive control lied with the development team, rather than with a third-party actor. The decisive control was viewed as important as it would leave room for the creativity and self-expression of the developers to flourish freely. Creative independence, on the other hand, seem to be held as closer to the core of indie by many. Creative independence is thought to allow the developers to be have the decisive power in the development process and is thus a prerequisite for self-expression.

As mentioned in 5.3.2, the societal and cultural conditions are also seen as less than optimal by many participants. Such conditions include lacking support from the society and a traditionally low emphasis on creativity in the country. Such concern has also been lifted in Chinese media (Chen, 2017).

5.3.4 Summary

As could be expected when investigating individual thoughts and opinions, there is a plurality of positions and philosophies to be discovered among the participants, both on the level of details and to a degree that can cause some contravening positions in the data. This proves that, in China too, the indie term is defined on the level of the individual, instead of being inherited through some sort of general consensus. This, however, is not the most important or the most interesting aspect of the data to this study. Instead, as a study aiming to build further on the discussion on the indie concept, the unique viewpoints of this unexplored target group, and positions diverging from thoughts found in previous literature, are of significant interest. The roots of these special thoughts and opinions, which in turn could open up for further studies on the conditions of the developers, are also of interest.

To the professionals within the Chinese indie game industry, the indie term is used to describe a type of game and basic philosophy that in many aspects contrast with the mainstream trends and products found on the Chinese game market. In terms of the products, this means the games are the result of the developers aim for self-expression and creative aspirations. In contrast, the target group of this study feels that most products on the domestic market are shaped and driven by commercial intent. This apparently has an impact on the design of the game products themselves, be it lacking originality, quality or an inherent structure to maximize commercial profit. Sometimes this results in a type of copycat games, particular for China (Beck, 2017). To members of this study's target group, the commercially focused game development is the opposite of indie, and their products and practices incompatible. This view is not unique to these participants, but can also be seen in existing texts on the subject of indie, as when Parker refers to indie games as "non-commercial, not-for-profit, activist, and amateur games" (Parker, 2013).

Indie games, on the other hand, make up the domestic market's vanguard of innovation and creativity. This motivation to create new and interesting games as a way of self-expression is the essence of indie, and in relation to that, indie game conventions, team size and financial and publishing independence, signified as relevant to the term in previous literature (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016), are of little or no relevance.

The reasons for the dominance of this certain type of commercially focused games have their roots in the societal and cultural norms of the country (Gao, 2017). With monetary profit held as far more important than creativity in China, the motivations of many non-indie developers is thus to maximize their commercial success and design their games to help attain this goal. Despite the challenges in choosing a less profitable and by the society less encouraged path in their work, the motivations of the indie developers are described as dedicated to creativity and a need for self-expression.

On a philosophical level, the professionals within the Chinese indie game industry focus on creation-oriented game making with the intent of self-realization, rather than treating their

games as commercial products in first hand. This attitude of the developers is sometimes referred to as “indie spirit” by the participants themselves. In some cases, even, indie is described as a measurable quality. Participant 2 says he can “score a product from 0 to 100” on how indie it is. Thus, the motivation and attitude behind the work of the game developer is central, and motivated by a strive for self-expression, and their products, the indie games, is the fruit of their creative endeavor. These games are in turn characterized as innovative and unique, fully designed to express the creative passion and ideas of its creator.

The idea that indie development provides the game industry with innovative ideas and break new ground through experimentation is not uniquely found in China. Neither is the idea of indie’s freedom from a more commercially focused agenda, like the one dominating the mainstream of the industry. This is exemplified in this quote from Martin and Deuze’s paper *The Independent Production of Culture: A Digital Games Case Study*:

The games industry, like any creative industry, thrives on new titles to become the next franchises or hits. Yet, simultaneously they are choking off their supply of new games available by favoring investments in “proven” titles. However, various markets in the industry allow for varying degrees of diversity, with platforms such as PC games, web-based browser games, and mobile phone games able to support a fair number of independent developers who fulfill a void that has not been adequately addressed by the mainstream development companies.

Martin & Deuze, 2016

So what the Chinese indie developers’ perspective add to the discussion on the definitions of the indie term, is not the view of indie’s creative function or the industries tendency to play safe. Instead, it shows a distinct version of it, born out of an equally distinct sort of game market. This game market, which is also the world’s largest by revenue, is signified by copycat studios and game products designed to profit from the same, reoccurring business model. The oppositional and innovative role of indie games in this context is thus marked by not adhering to such commercially viable models and designs and instead put self-expression as highest value, along with the exploration of concepts that has not been worn out by or currently holds a dominating role in China’s domestic market.

6 Concluding Remarks

Now that topic, method, data and analysis have been presented, it is time to both summarize it in a way that provides a comprehensive overview, as well as have a discussion about the study in a reflective manner. The discussion in this chapter will reflect on the study in the light of a broader context. This includes looking at the ways this study managed to expand the discussion found in existing literature on the indie concept.

Apart from the main discussion regarding the indie term, there are other aspects of the study that will be discussed in this chapter, for example, the suitability of the study method. Specifically regarding the practical choices and ethical considerations behind the data collection. Furthermore, the selection of participants in relation to homogeneity, will be highlighted here.

Lastly, this chapter take matters touched on, but not fully explored, either due to the scope and focus of the study or the possibilities of its method, and suggests ways to include them in future research. These are matters of sex, politics and a further look into the causes behind the findings of this study.

6.1 Summary

The Chinese game market has in recent years come to grow into the largest one in terms of revenue. China is home to game industry giants like *Tencent*, but also to a community of indie game developers (Garner, 2017). In academic publications on the discussion of the indie phenomenon, this group does not have the same representation as that of western scholars and game developers (Parker, 2013). In such texts, indie's relationship to the word "independence", from where the term etymologically derives, is explored. This can imply independence from some sort of third party (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016) or from established conventions within game design (Lipkin, 2013). Through exploring whether people operating within the Chinese indie game industry defines indie in similar terms, it would be possible to further expand the discussion by extending its scope of inclusion.

The Chinese game industry exists within other environmental circumstances than their western counterparts, and must relate to other factors such as censorship (Custer, 2014) and social isolation due to technical restrictions (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Such societal conditions, in addition to natural nuances resulting from cultural differences, might affect the way the professionals within the indie game industry view themselves and their work. What do they think themselves to be representing? As a first step to identify that, and by that starting to profile this relatively unexplored group, their own definition of indie should be explored. And that has also been the purpose of this study.

The goal of this study has been to include a specific target group, namely the professionals within the Chinese game industry, to the discussion of the indie term. This was motivated by an interest in exploring the philosophies and viewpoints held by these people. In turn, their statements could provide insight into the industry, and indicate whether it is a platform for things like self-expression, creative freedom and small-scale entrepreneurship, which has all been tied to the indie concept (Ruffino, 2013).

Though the indie term is recurrently tied to different things such as experimental game design (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016) and small development teams (Ruffino, 2013), its definition remains a subject of discussion, and often defined on an individual level. This openness was kept in this study out of necessity, to not exclude any definition expressed by the study's participants by regarding it as "incorrect" in relation to any predefined standard. Instead, the full spectrum of definitions occurring within the literature on which this study built its theoretical basis was regarded. Some of the relevant concepts found in the literature, such as the various types of independences defined by Garda and Grabarczyk (2016) and the tendencies to either adhere to certain stylistic conventions or focus on experimentation was included in the research tools developed for this study's data collection.

While the word indie was left to the study's participants to define, specific uses of the term were given more firm definitions. The following concepts described in this paragraph were defined by this study's conductor with the intention to make them as inclusive as possible. *Indie game*, in this study, is defined as video or PC games labeled as "indie" by its developers, its publishers or by its distributors. *Indie developer* refers to a professional game developer creating indie games, and *indie development* to the practice of doing so. The *indie game industry* refers to the industry in which these games are produced and distributed.

The study was carried out as a field study in Beijing, China, through *Game Hub Scandinavia* (Game Hub Scandinavia, 2018) and in cooperation with *Indienova*. The individuals participating in the study as providers of data, were all professionals within the Chinese indie game industry, either as developers, publishers or distributors of indie games. As the study aimed to explore the subjective viewpoints of these individuals, and get an insight into their underlying philosophies and opinions, the study was conducted through a qualitative approach.

The method used to explore the subject of this study consisted of various steps. At first, extensive research into the subject was carried out. This included looking into existing publications on indie, databases and relevant articles found in game media, as well as conducting interviews with multiple developers from the Chinese indie game industry. These interviews were transcribed and published as articles through Chinese game media (Indienova, 2018).

For the purpose of the study's main data collection, demos aimed to exemplify two tendencies found in indie game design were developed. These tendencies consisted of a focus on experimentation and unconventional game play on one hand, and adherence to a set of traditional stylistic conventions, on the other. Both of these are commonly occurring in indie games (Garda & Grabarczyk, 2016). The purpose of these were to allow the study's participants to discuss the content of the demos in relation to the indie concept. As a part of the development process of the demos, they were shown to testers and iterated in response to the feedback multiple times. Finally, a pilot study with the finished demos and an early version of the survey (similar to the one used for the final data collection) was conducted through the help of a target group similar to the one explored in this study. The individuals participating in the pilot study were professionals within the Swedish indie game industry, and their answers to the survey questions were analyzed in a similar manner to the data that was later collected from the study's actual target group.

Apart from the questions concerning the demos developed as research tools in this study, the Survey also included a series of questions on the role of conditions in game development. While the majority of the questions, focused on the content of the demos, aimed to explore the role of style and experimentation in game development, these other questions were included to address aspects of indie that fell outside the investigative scope of the demos and their associated questions. The questions were open ended and formulated to encourage comprehensive answers that could constitute as an appropriate basis of a qualitative analysis. Through the help of Indienova, professionals representing both sexes and multiple different companies were contacted and asked to participate in the study. Eleven people from different parts of China agreed to participate. The demos and the survey were translated to Chinese written language and distributed to these people through Chinese social media channels (WeChat, 2011). After the data, consisting of the participant's answers, had been collected, it was translated into English. Finally, the data underwent a decoding process in an inductive manner to explore what patterns and relevant concepts it contained. This was both done by looking at each participants' answers as the unique expressions of separate individuals, as well as by treating the data as a single source to discover interpersonal patterns. Through this process, various categories were formed through conceptualizations and organization of the data. Many of these were based on the emphasis put by the participants and on its relation to concepts discussed in previous publications. These included aspects such as different types of independences, the importance of personal-expression, commercial goals, decisive control etc. These were then further boiled down to three main categories: *Innovation and creativity*, *motivations* and *conditions of production*.

Through thorough analysis, final conclusions were drawn aimed to answer the study's main research question. While these participants turned out to represent a quite diverse range of viewpoints, many common themes reoccur throughout the data. One common tendency was to describe indie as a type of games and game developers that in many respect contrasts the dominating trends of the industry in which they occur. The most important way this is manifested is through the games' emphasis on innovation and experimentation. For the indie developer, the highest goal is recurrently stated to be that of self-expression. This motivation is highlighted as particularly important, and as the opposite to motivation of developers that make what the participants call "commercial games".

To the extent that this data qualifies as representative for the thoughts and opinions of this study's target group, it seems to indicate that professionals within the Chinese indie game industry see themselves as a part of a movement existing in opposition to the country's mainstream game industry. While the majority of the industry's companies are primarily driven by their profit interest, indie developers are driven by the need for self-realization and creative outflow. The result of this is that their creations, indies games, are significantly more innovative than the games on the market which more or less follow well-established models to ensure commercial success.

6.2 Discussion

As the study has covered what it aimed to do and reached its final conclusions, the topic of its initial purpose should again be reviewed. It is thus time to turn the focus around and zoom out a bit to get an overview of the study's contextual relevance. That involves comparing its

content and focus with the type of texts that was used in its theoretical groundwork. In what way does this study add something new to the existing works on this topic, and what role did the concepts and themes from such texts have in designing the study's demos?

Another important aspect to look at is the surrounding factors that was discovered during the study and that ultimately shaped its outcome. Such factors might have had an impact on the nature of gathered data, and say something significant of its underlying causes. Among such factors is the degree of homogeneity among the participants, political factors and the uncovering of societal and cultural problems. How have such factors been treated in this study (not least in regards to ethical responsibility) and what do they say about the larger context of the subject explored by this study?

6.2.1 The Study's Relevance in a Broader Context

In previous publications on the topic of indie, the focus has often been the definition and evolution of the indie term. Interviews, articles and other texts on the subject have often been the sources on which these authors have built their overviews and understandings of the term. While the same sources have constituted as the basis on which this study built its research tools and borrowed its definitions of various, related concepts, the final data has been collected from new and direct sources. These sources, consisting of individuals from a less explored target group, namely Chinese indie developers, were focused on in an effort to introduce new insight into the subject. When comparing the study's findings to the viewpoints and concepts described in texts, there are both commonalities and differences to be noted. The specifics of these commonalities and differences were described in the analysis and conclusions of this paper, and hopefully provides an insight into the views of the target group represented by the participants. But to understand the significance of these, it will be important to zoom out, away from details and look at it in the light of the broader discussion.

Opinions on the importance of increased representation by such groups as the one focused on in this study, has been brought up in other texts:

Aslinger calls on game scholars to become more attuned to the increasingly global economics of gaming. If indie gaming is a global phenomenon, how is independence configured in different national, regional, and local contexts?

Parker, 2013

But even in Aslinger's own publication, *Gaming Globally: Production, Play, and Place* (Huntemann & Aslinger, 2013), where the Chinese game industry is looked at, the local indie developers remain left out of the spotlight. This lacking representation is shared with all other academic texts looked at in this study. This makes the motive of this study, to explore this target group through their direct participation, an exploration of an often overlooked part of the game industry in related literature.

Some aspects of preexisting texts were specifically focused on for the sake of building a theoretical basis for developing the demos and deciding the areas of exploration. These were the relevant concepts for the definitions of indie, such as innovation and experimentation,

stylistic conventions and independence in production. The historical development of the indie term and underlying reasons for how these concepts became relevant were much less central to this study, however. While the history of China's indie game industry could surely be compared to its counterparts in other countries, such a comparison falls outside of the scope of this study. The underlying reasons for how the indie term is defined, however, were given attention, as those were highlighted by the participants. In future studies on this topic, a comparison concerning this aspect might also be interesting. Since the focus of this study's was the local definition of indie rather than mapping out the conditions of the study's target group, such a comparison was just briefly touched on in this paper.

In the analysis of the data, the concepts that were specifically looked at proved to be given very different degrees of importance by the participants. Many aspects of independence, for example, did not seem to be as central to them. At least not by the defining standards of independence suggested by Garda & Grabarczyk (2016). The attitude of being a counterculture to established and dominant trends and norms of the domestic game market did, however. This attitude is shared with western indie developers, seen as Lipkin (2013, p. 10) provides many examples on how well-known indie game developers does not only practice experimentation, but also takes an active stance against what could be considered "mainstream" or "dominant" in the game market. The commercialism dominating the industry is specifically singled out as an opposing ideal to indie development by the participants. This view is not unique to China, as also exemplified in Lipkin's text:

Kogel (2012) points to a defining "indie ethos" characteristic of the movement that "their game follows an uncompromised artistic vision" and "some disregard for money, unless they are bordering on homelessness." He contrasts this ethos to Zynga, which despite releasing games similar to those of "real" indie developers is "evil:" "They are evil," Kogel states, "because they bluntly prioritize money over creative vision. If money comes first, neither the format nor the price can change that a developer is not seen as indie.

Lipkin, 2013

Though the participants' comments on the study's demos displayed diverging opinions on having a style adhering to common conventions to the indie genre, they also showed a unifying view on indie as an inherently experimental and explorative force within the game industry. The literature which, through its reoccurring emphasis on innovation, inspired this study to explore this aspect of game development in relation to the indie term, also showed that this view of indie's role in the industry is not exclusive for China. This can be seen as exemplified by this quote from Parker:

Jahn-Sudmann (2008) argues that indie gaming constitutes what Gans (1974) calls a "taste public," which distinguishes itself primarily according to indie games' (perceived) design innovation and ability to explore possibilities closed off by the mainstream industry (such as procedural generation). Complementing the mainstream in this way, as noted above, allows some indie games to achieve a high degree of cultural status and to occupy a niche in the market.

Parker, 2013

6.2.2 Credibility and Ethical Aspects

On a basic level, the study aimed to explore how the participants would define certain aspects and value them in relation to specific concepts. The most straightforward way to do this was considered to be asking them directly. This was done through a series of open-ended questions, provided to each participant. The majority of these questions concerned the content of two demos designed specifically for the purpose exploring the role of style and conventions related to the indie games. The rest of the questions concerned concepts touched on in literature on indie. The questions were answered in the absence of the study's conductor for reasons described in section 3.1, including the matter of the language barrier (the surveys conductor did not speak the language of the participants) as well as the possibility of reaching people in different regions of China simultaneously. One might ask whether this method was optimal for gathering the type of data sought in this study (i.e. freely expressed thoughts and opinions). Was it enough to fully explore the topic, considering how complex and diverging subjective viewpoints can be?

Though the data collected was judged by the study's analyst to be comprehensive enough to constitute as basis for the conclusions drawn and presented in the previous chapter, it is possible that there are further patterns, causal relationships and greater philosophical depth behind the participants' answers to be uncovered. Since there was no possibility to ask follow-up questions or to make the participants clarify or expand on certain aspects of their viewpoints and thoughts, all the aspects of the topic could perhaps not be fully explored. Thus, in an attempt to promote maximum quality among the collected answers, the participants were allowed to both define and discuss various aspects of indie, unrestrained by either time or the limits of any close-ended questions. In the hope of allowing the participants to freely bring up any aspect they would see relevant to the concept of indie, the last question of the survey even allowed the participants to discuss the subject outside the scope of a presented sub-topic. This aimed to partly make up for the absence of an interviewer, who could have encouraged the participants to go in-depth by asking follow-up questions, and thereby complementing the data with further insight.

For the sake of transparency, the selection process of the study's participants should be described. The entire study has been conducted through the cooperation and help of *Indienova*, and the participants were contacted through their help. Apart from providing localization, publishing and distribution services for indie developers, *Indienova* manages online forums, publishes indie game related news media and organizes game related events around China. *Indienova* is thus both an active part of the Chinese indie game industry, in which the target group of this study occur, as well as the country's domestic indie community. Throughout the entire duration of the study, the participants stayed in direct contact with the study's conductor, who in turn had insight into the participants previous and current work within the Chinese game industry from the very start (such as what studios they were working at, what their specific roles had been during various game projects, etc.).

A reasonable area of concern could be that eleven participants is not enough to encompass the full plurality of thoughts and opinions within the target group they represent. The answer to that lies in an understanding of what this study actually aimed to accomplish. It is important to differentiate between the aim to map out all collective and individual philosophies existing within this group in its entirety, and the aim to introduce the group and their viewpoints to

the discussion. There has been no assumption during this study that all individuals in this target group would adhere to the same beliefs and standards as the participants when defining the indie term, thus, no mutual viewpoint has been sought. Still, the patterns and common viewpoints even in this smaller representation has been highlighted as significant in relation to the study question. Though there might be many more ideas and philosophies to be explored among other members of this group, the mere representation of active professionals in the Chinas game industry, and a thorough consideration and analysis of their thoughts and opinions, still expands on the current discussion on the topic.

Despite conscious considerations in the selection process, such a small group of people may be at risk of being too homogeneous to represent China's many professionals within the indie game industry. Considering the potential plurality of any nationwide group in a country of 1,4 billion people, this is a fair suspicion. So how does the level of heterogeneity look like among the people participating in this study? Due to the anonymity of the participants, this has to be spoken of in general terms, rather than revealing individual details. The distribution between the sexes among the participants was three females and eight males. Hence, male participation was more than double that of the female. Without access to any statistics on how the sex ratio looks like within the industry, it is not clear whether this is a representative distribution. This could however be a potential area of exploration through further research on the members of the Chinese indie game industry, an idea that will be addressed in the next section. It might be worth noting that the female participants provided a relatively generous amount of data compared to the majority of the male participants (see Appendix C).

Gender is just one aspect of the personal variations among the members of the study's target group. The participants in this study also derive from different geopolitical circumstances. While the majority of the participants are from either mainland China (specifically Beijing or Shanghai), a minority are from Hong Kong. As an autonomous territory, existing under the premises of the *Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China* constitutional (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, 2018)⁴, Hong Kong is beyond the influence of the Ministry of Culture guidelines (Custer, 2014). This of course affects the conditions of their game production, as well as their game content, since they do not have to adhere to the same censorship laws as most of China. As the environment shape the beliefs and goals of the people living within it (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014, p. 614), one could expect the viewpoints of people from different geopolitical backgrounds to be diverse. Because of the premises of animosity for the participants, and the scope of the study itself, displaying the participant's citizenships for the purpose of comparison cannot be done. With that said, such a comparison could surely be interesting in future studies.

Concerning the aspects of censorship and legislative restrictions and guidelines provided the Ministry of Culture, a careful approach has been taken throughout the study. One of the reasons has been in the consideration of the participants. As the data gathering was conducted through the Chinese media application (Tencent, 2011) inside the country, all information was potentially exposed to Chinese online policing agencies (Hunt & Xu, 2013). Through ethical consideration, the participants were thus not urged to discuss politically sensitive topics.

⁴ English language information booklet.

6.3 Future Work

Apart from this study's relation to earlier literature, its relevance for future ones should also be discussed, as its findings may very well have value for research into related subjects. With its focus on a fairly unexplored (at least in western, academic contexts) subject as the philosophical views of professionals within the Chinese indie game industry, the study makes an effort to provide new insight for people who are not themselves a part of that community. To the extent that this study is able to provide such an insight, and thus help explore the Chinese game industry's creative forces and grass root entrepreneurs, it may open up for further questions. What type of research could further expand on this, or benefit from the data and conclusions reached at in this study?

By just looking at the sex ratio in the small selection of participant, it is not possible to know how the distribution of male and female professionals within the rest of the Chinese indie game industry looks like. One might suspect that the Chinese game industry, too, suffers from an imbalance in this regard, just as it does in the west (Maggs, 2017). A large scale, quantitative data collection, covering numerous game companies and professionals in China, might provide an overview of the matter. For an understanding of the causes of whatever patterns such a statistical enquiry might reveal, interviewing the individuals with gender related questions could be a relevant method of exploring this matter.

According to Parker, "indie communities are by no means free from prejudice and oppression along gendered lines" (Parker, 2013), which could be the result of a general problem with lacking diversity within the game industry (Ramanan, 2017). Moreover, the game communities do not exist in a vacuum, but are very much affected and shaped by the conditions of the societal and cultural circumstances in which they exist (Gao, 2018). To understand the conditions of the people who make up the Chinese game industry, it would be important to understand such circumstances. In China, which has a culture in which traditional gender roles are still commonplace (O'Sullivan, 2012), it is possible that few women feel that they "possess the emotional and financial resources required to brave the tide of political, social and parental waves pushing them towards marriage" (Collinsworth, 2015), and at the same time build a career as an indie developer. A publication by *United Nations System in China* from 2014, states that "[f]or-profit companies and the competitive and profit-driven market prefer male employees with no family burden while rejecting women under the pretext that they suffer the dual burden of work and family" (Bohong, Chunyu & Ling, 2015). As indie development was often described by the study's participants as the opposition to the commercially motivated majority in China's game industry, it might provide a platform of opportunities to women in China who are interested in game development. As with the case of this study, insight into the conditions of any specific group of people found within the industry would probably be best explored through subjective reports of the individuals within it.

Creativity and innovation was emphasized by the participants of this study as a very important aspect of indie. At the same time, China is occasionally described as unfavorable for creation driven game production (Gao, 2018). China's game industry is unique, not just in terms of size (Newzoo, 2017a) but also because of restraining political conditions, such as censorship (Custer, 2014) and social isolation (Human Rights Watch, 2006). How this affects both the works and lives of the professionals within the indie game industry could be an interesting

area of exploration. An understanding of past and current conditions under which the professionals within the industry operates could give a valuable insight. The possibilities and vitality of China's future game industry are predicated on the fertility of the environment it will evolve from.

There are of course multiple angles to explore and different ways to do this. If one would want to focus purely on the influence of legislative power, it would be possible to research the effects of such factors through a comparative study between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, Macao and possibly Taiwan. If such a study would collect its data directly from a target group found in these places, those participants would share similar, cultural affiliation (i.e. Chinese) but operate within different societal systems. This way, you could isolate the political aspect of this as the area of focus, and leave cultural ones aside.

But as pointed out by participant 8 in this study (see Appendix C), even in Hong Kong, powerful investors and governments remains uninterested in games, especially indie games, as they do not see them as profitable. Perhaps, this points to a tendency in Chinese societies not to value its gaming industry beyond its capacity to generate profits. In that case, conditions resulting from the restrictions set by legislative powers are not the only ones that affects the work of the professionals within the Chinese game industry. Whether such factors are underlying the tendency described by both participants and articles (Gao, 2018; Sayer, 2017) for many game studios to copy lucrative game concepts, instead of creating new ones, remains to be discovered. To really get an understanding of how multiple factors within a society shape the game industry, a comparative study with a non-Chinese counterpart could be a possible method. For example, Poland, which both have a background of communist governance and a history of video game piracy (Crawley, 2014) just like China (Beck, 2017), but has nowadays, unlike China, made a name for themselves as a creative wonder in the international game market (Little Black Book, 2016). Instead of having to battle with restrictions and isolation, the domestic game industry is highly valued in Poland and has a high status, even cherished by the government as an important creative industry to be supported (Polish Press Agency, 2018). The supportive environment in which indie game studios flourish in Poland seem to be in stark contrast to the one described by Chinese indie professionals. A comparison between China and an appropriate counterpart could provide further insight into the lives of the developers in the country. How this in turn affects the individuals within the indie game industry could be a valuable insight, as it does not only say something about the potential and future of these markets, but also about how societal conditions influence such creative endeavors as game development in general.

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Appendix A - Pilot Study Answers

Answers, Participant no. 1

1. How would you describe the graphical style of demo 1?

[Answer:] Old games with pixel graphics, retro. Atmospheric with drops falling from the roof.

2. How would you describe the control mechanics in demo 1?

[Answer:] A bit like old flash games you would control with the arrow keys. But instead of the arrow keys you use WASD. Jumping with the up [key] and to the sides with the left- and right [keys].

3. How would you describe the graphical style of demo 2?

[Answer:] Feels a lot like placeholders. Like the graphics isn't ready yet. Or like someone cut the pictures together for a flash game.

4. How would you describe the control mechanics in demo 2?

[Answer:] Doesn't feel so smoothly with the computer mouse. Since it's just one button used maybe that button could've been big? E.g. the [blank] space [key]. You didn't have any control of power or angle more than pressing and waiting. If you were unsatisfied with your power or angle it wasn't possible to abort and try to make a better jump.

5. Do you experience the graphical style in any of these demos to be more in line with what you consider be indie game than the other? Please motivate your answer:

[Answer:] I would probably say that the graphical style of Demo 1 has more indie feel. Partly because it feels more polished than Demo 2 that feels built out of placeholders, and also because it's common that smaller companies use old graphics and that e.g. AAA companies focus on newer, more advanced graphics.

6. Do you experience the control mechanics in any of these to be more indie? Please motivate your answer:

[Answer:] I don't experience any of these control mechanics as more indie. On the other hand, both feels very flash game compatible.

7. What role does independence from a third party (client, funder, publisher, etc.) play in the classification of indie development.

[Answer:] I assume that if one doesn't think that indie development is only [development] without a third party you could also define it in a different way? I think that indie is less commercial and financially focused, and focus more on finding their own niche for a smaller target audience that maybe the development team also can identify with. To make something out of passion for people that thinks the same as yourself. But I also think that if they are so big that they make AAA games but publish them themselves, then maybe they are less indie. But then maybe you could start calling their games commercial.

8. What role does the size of the development team play in the classification of indie development?

[Answer:] No role at all, really. But it is harder to find a team that has the same devotion to work towards one's own special niche, which is a strength that indies might have.

Answers, Participant no. 2

1. How would you describe the graphical style of demo 1?

[Answer:] Pixel Art, felt retro and older. Connected to the culture around "hardcore-gamers" rather than casual gamers.

2. How would you describe the control mechanics in demo 1?

[Answer:] Standard and rather boring. One has seen it before and there was no new twist around it. Easy to control.

3. How would you describe the graphical style of demo 2?

[Answer:] It felt more adapted for casual gamers, maybe younger kids and mobile games.

4. How would you describe the control mechanics in demo 2?

[Answer:] Harder and more fun than the first [Demo], even if it was a bit too slow while waiting for the speed/angle you wanted.

5. Do you experience the graphical style in any of these demos to be more in line with what you consider to be indie game than the other? Please motivate your answer:

[Answer:] I consider the graphical style of demo 1 to be more "indie" since I associate indie to games with a lesser focus on the graphical aspects and more focus on fun and unique gameplay. It also feels like indie studios have a bigger tendency for wanting to provoke a feeling of nostalgia with their games than AAA-studios, which Pixel Art can do.

6. Do you experience the control mechanics in any of these to be more indie? Please motivate your answer:

[Answer:] The control mechanics in demo 2 absolutely felt more indie than demo 1. The way I see it, AAA tend to do what is safe and guaranteed to work, while indie might experiment more and do things that are more niched that not all [kinds] of player would appreciate.

7. What role does independence from a third party (client, funder, publisher, etc.) play in the classification of indie development.

[Answer:] It's different. I probably think that a studio can be indie even if they get funding or gets published. For me it's more about that it is a small team that decide what games they want to make themselves, as well as innovates. That they don't get orders [from someone else] on what should be created, but decide themselves.

8. What role does the size of the development team play in the classification of indie development?

[Answer:] To me, the size of the team should be less than 20 people, or else I would not view the studio as indie in the same way anymore, even if they are "independent". Blizzard is not indie to me even if they theoretically should be that since they are completely independent.

Appendix B - Survey

General Information

简述

My name is Victor Bankler, and I am a Game Design student at the University of Skövde, Sweden. I am currently doing a thesis, and the data gathered with the help of this survey will be used as a part of my study. The title of my thesis is “A Chinese view on indie: what are the defining traits of ‘indie’ according to professionals within the Chinese indie game industry?”

我是 Victor Bankler，一名在瑞典舍夫德大学学习游戏设计的学生。我目前在撰写一篇论文，在此问卷帮助下收集的数据将会被用于我的研究中。我的论文题目是《中国人眼中的独立游戏：中国独立游戏产业中的圈内人士们是以何特征定义“独立游戏”的？》

The purpose of this survey is to explore viewpoints among the members of the Chinese indie game industry. If you have been asked to participate you are considered to belong to this group by the definitions used in this study.

此调查的目的是为了探索中国独立游戏产业中的开发者的观点。如果你被请求参与回答问卷，你则被认为归属于本研究定义的此分类下。

Here is some information that you should read before starting the survey:

这里是开始问卷之前需要了解的信息：

- Participation is voluntary, and you may choose to *not* participate at any point, even if you have agreed to participate at a previous time.

参与调查是完全自愿的，你可以在任何时候决定 **不再参与**，就算你之前同意过回答问卷。

- As a participant in this study, your identity will be kept anonymous. No information you contribute can be deduced to you as an individual. The only part of your profile that will be included in the published paper is your gender and your occupation. The reason that this info is relevant is to make potential homogeneity among the study's participants visible.

作为此研究的参与者，你的身份将会保持匿名。你提供的所有信息不会有任何个人的针对性。唯一在最后发表的论文中提供的信息将会是你的性别和职业。这一部分信息和研究相关的原因是使参与者之间的潜在同质性更加明显。

- The final result will be published as a peer-reviewed research paper through the DiVA portal, which is a joint search service and an open archive for research publications and student essays produced at various universities and research institutes. The final result can be provided to you as soon as it is completed, if you wish.

最后的结果将会经过同行评审后，以研究性论文的形式发表在 DiVA portal 上，这是一个针对在各大大学和研究机构产生的研究出版物和学生论文的联合检索服务和开放存档系统。最后的结果，如果你需要的话，可以在完成后尽快提供给你。

- **As a scientific work, the final result of this research might be used for further research in the future.**

作为科学工作，此研究最后的结果可能会被用于未来的学术研究。

- **If any of your answers would need further clarification after the survey is filled out and returned, you might be contacted within the coming month of your participation.**

如果你的任何回答在问卷填写完毕后需要更详细的解释，我可能会在参与后的一个月内联系你。

If you have any questions or want to get in touch for any reason, please send a mail to me, the surveys conductor. My e-mail has been provided to you separately.

如果你有任何疑问或者以任何理由想取得联系，请发邮件给我，即此问卷的负责人。我的邮箱地址已单独提供给你。

Survey Instructions

问卷指引

The survey consists of two parts. One of them treats different conventions in games, and their relation to indie games as a genre. The other part treats the topic of conditions in game development.

问卷由两个部分组成。其中一个部分着眼于游戏中的不同设计理论，以及它们与独立游戏作为一种风格之间的关系。另一个部分着眼于游戏开发中的各种条件和约束。

As a practical basis for discussing the topic of conventions, you are asked to first play the two demos that you are provided together with this survey. The aspects of the demos you are asked to pay attention to then are the graphical styles, the control mechanics, and the difference between the two demos. As long as you feel that you have managed to gain an understanding of these aspects, there is no reason for you to finish the demos or spend any more time playing them.

作为讨论设计理念话题中的实践基础，你将会首先被要求游玩在此问卷中一并提供的两个试玩作品。你需要注意试玩作品中的几个方面：视觉风格、操作机制和两个作品之间的区别。只要你觉得你已经了解了这些方面，你可以不用玩到最后，甚至不用再花更多时间试玩。

Read the instructions for the control scheme on start-screen carefully. Pressing Esc while in the start-screen will close the application. By pressing the button reading “Demo 1” will start **Demo 1, and pressing the button saying “Demo 2” will start **Demo 2**.**

仔细阅读开始界面的操作方式指示。在开始界面按 **Esc** 键将会退出程序。按下写着“Demo 1”的按钮会开始**试玩作品 1**，按下写着“Demo 2”的按钮会开始**试玩作品 2**。

Now, before continuing to the Survey questions, please proceed to play the demos.

现在，在继续回答问题之前，请开始试玩作品。

Questions regarding game conventions

关于游戏传统的问题

* 此处设计传统是指是否符合游戏已经形成的约定俗成的设计，如生命槽、分数。

Now that you have played both **Demo 1** and **Demo 2**, you will be requested to answer a few questions regarding their graphical styles and their control mechanics. You will be asked how you perceive and would describe these aspects for each demo. You will also be asked about the relation between these aspects and the indie game genre.

现在你已玩完试玩作品 1 和试玩作品 2 了，你将会被要求回答几个关于它们的视觉风格和操作机制的问题。你会被要求回答你是如何看待和会如何描述试玩作品中的这些方面。你还会被要求回答这些方面中的关系和整个独立游戏分类。

It is *not* interesting whether you think these aspects of the demos were of good or bad, or need improvement, since this was not a playtesting in that sense. Try instead to focus on what the questions are actually asking you to answer.

我们 **不在意** 你认为试玩中的这些方面是好是坏，或者是否需要改进，因为这并非是一个游戏测试。请将重点放在题目中真正期待你回答的问题上。

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* of **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

5. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

6. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的 *操作机制* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

7. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的 *视觉风格* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的 *操作机制* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

Questions regarding conditions for game development

关于游戏中条件和约束的问题

The following questions touch on the topic of conditions in game development, and what you find to be relevant for the definition of indie. Please keep elaborating freely and comprehensively on your answers, whatever they may be.

以下问题涉及游戏中的条件和约束，以及你认为与独立这个定义相关的内容。请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

Appendix C - Participant Answers to Survey

Participant 1

Gender: Female

Occupation: CEO Game Developer

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style of Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

像素风格

Pixel-art style

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

键鼠操作的平台跳跃，非常传统和经典。

A platformer controlled by mouse and keyboard, very classical and traditional.

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

手绘风格。

Hand-drawn style

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

通过鼠标蓄力来控制主角跳跃的距离和方向。是没有见过的操作方式。

The character's jumping distance and direction are controlled by holding down the mouse button to accumulate the energy. A type of control mechanism I've never seen.

5. Does *the graphical style of Demo 1* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

这个视觉风格是遵循其设计传统的。但是不能说它是符合独立游戏分类品质的。因为像素风的视觉风格是可以用在商业游戏中的，尤其在很多手机平台的商业游戏上已经非常常见。

This graphical style follows a design convention, but that does not mean it has the quality suitable for the indie game genre; the visual style of pixel-art can be used in commercial games, especially common for commercial games on many mobile platforms.

6. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的 *操作机制* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

这个操作机制是遵循其设计传统的。但是并不能说它是符合独立游戏分类品质的。因为这种操作机制在商业游戏中也是很常见的。

This control mechanics follows a design convention, but that does not mean it has the quality suitable for the indie game genre; for this type of control mechanics is also common in commercial games.

7. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的 *视觉风格* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

这个视觉风格是遵循其设计传统的。但是并不能说它是符合独立游戏分类品质的。因为这种视觉风格也是可以用在在商业游戏中的，如果是比较好看的手绘风格，我可以确认用在商业游戏中是没有问题的，不过这个 demo2 的问题是他的手绘有点丑.....

This graphical style follows a design convention, but that does not mean it has the quality suitable for the indie game genre; for this type of graphical style is also suitable for commercial games. If the hand-drawn style is done well, I'm pretty sure there's no problem for it to be in a commercial game, but the problem of demo 2 is it's kinda ugly.....

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的 *操作机制* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

这个操作机制是不遵循其设计传统的。我认为它是符合独立游戏分类品质的。但是之所以我觉得他符合独立游戏分类品质，并不是因为他不遵循传统，而是因为他不是一个好的设计，这样的设计是不会出现在商业游戏中的。商业游戏和独立游戏的区别并不是在于这个游戏的风格不是独特，或者它的设计是否遵循传统，而是在于它的设计是否可以被大众所接受。一个新的、不遵循传统的设计也可能是被大众接受的，这就是为什么 Minecraft 获得了商业成功。而这个 demo2 的操作方式很别扭，如果是用在平台跳跃上的话，我可以确信可以接受这个设计的人是非常少的，所以它是一个不会出现在商业游戏中的设计。

This control mechanics does not follow a design convention, and I think it has the quality suitable for the indie game genre. However, the reason I think it is suitable for the indie game genre, is not that it does not follow a design convention, but because it is not a good design, which will not appear in a commercial game. The difference between a commercial game and

an indie game is not whether the style of the game is unique enough, or it follows any conventions, but whether the design is acceptable by the public. A new, unconventional design could be universally acceptable, that's the reason of the Minecraft's commercial success. Nonetheless, it's uncomfortable to use the control mechanics in demo 2, and if used in a real platformer, I'm fairly positive that few people can accept this, so that's why it is a design that won't be used in commercial games.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

不关联，因为财源独立的人也可能会做山寨氪金商业游戏。此外在中国有很多做独立游戏的团队是有投资的，鉴于独立游戏（主要指单机游戏）并没有商业模式，所以有没有投资对于这样的团队的长期发展来说，是没有区别的。

Not relevant, because even a financially independent developer could build a copycat game, or a kejin game. Other than that, many indie game teams in China actually have funding, and because there's no business model for indie games (mainly single-player), there's no difference for a team like this to have funding or not in the long run.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

不关联，无论是商业游戏还是独立游戏，都可能会采取自发行，或者第三方发行的方式来发行游戏。

Not relevant. Either a commercial game or a indie game may take the opportunity to publish the game by itself, or by a third-party.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

创意独立这一点是相关的，但是为了客户这一点不是绝对的。没有一个游戏可以满足所有人的要求，所以区别在于你是要满足哪一部分人的要求。满足最大众人群的要求的结果是游戏可以获得商业成功，它追逐的更多的是商业回报，所以在定义上会远离独立游戏。而满足自己一开始就设想的小众群体，更像是独立游戏。在这个小众群体中的玩家的意见也是值得听取的，他们可以帮助你完成得更好。

It is relevant for creative independence, but not absolutely necessary if for the customers. No game can satisfy everyone's demand, so the difference is which group of customer you want to satisfy. The result of satisfying the majority can result in commercial success, and because it pursues commercial success, from the definition it would be more distant to indie game. If

the game is satisfying the minority group from the beginning of the creation, it will be more like an indie game. It is still worthy to listen to the needs and opinions of people in the minority group, which could make your game better.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

只是考虑形式的话，理论上是不相关的。但是从结果上来看，是相关的。因为独立游戏的营收能力太差，所以大团队相对小团队更不灵活、管理难度高、内耗高、成本高，这样的团队开发的游戏很难不考虑商业营收的问题，所以说从结果上来看，小团队和独立游戏的定义是相关的。一般开发一个作品的合适的人数，应在五人以下。

If considering the form of it, theoretically it is not relevant. But from the result, it is relevant. Because the ability to profit is bad to the indie game, so a larger team is less flexible, more difficult to manage, there will be more internal consumption and total cost comparing to a smaller one. A larger team must consider their ability to profit commercially, so judging from the result, it is relevant between a small team and the definition of indie. An appropriate team size for developing an [indie] product should be less than five.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

在我个人的定义中，独立游戏是单机游戏而不能是氪金游戏。但这仅是我个人角度的一个定义，因为我认为独立游戏应该是原创的，且我对于原创度的要求很高，氪金是包含在游戏中的一个系统，所以一旦有氪金要素，我认为这个游戏从某种程度上来讲就已经不是原创的了。在中国，2016 年的时候有很多人讨论独立游戏的定义，比如是不是小团队开发的就是独立游戏？那如何解释小团队开发的山寨游戏？那是不是单机原创游戏就是独立游戏？那如何解释腾讯的 next studio？但是今年已经没有人讨论了，因为现在无论你是不是独立游戏，打不打独立游戏的标签，你都没有办法因此受益赚到更多的钱（在 2016 年有很多氪金手游打着独立游戏标签赚钱）。所以独立游戏的定义每个人都可以有不同，对于我来说，我会用“独立游戏”这个词来指代单机付费下载原创游戏。

In my personal definition, indie games should be stand-alone, single-player games and not kejin game. But this is only a definition of my personal perspective, because I think that indie games should be original, and I have high requirements for originality. Kejin is a system that is included in the game, so once the game has kejin element, I considered the game is not original in some sense. In China, many people discussed the definition of the indie game in 2016, such as whether it was an indie game developed by a small team? Then how to explain a copycat game developed by a small team? Does an indie game have to be a stand-alone, single-plater game? Then how do you explain Tencent's Next Studio? But nobody discusses anymore this year, because now, whether you are an indie game or not an indie game, or you

give yourself an indie game tag, you will have no way to benefit from it (in 2016 there were many kejin mobile games profit from an indie game tag). So the definition of an indie game can be different for everyone. For me, I use the term "indie game" to refer to, stand-alone, single-player, paid to download, original games.

[Comments by translator:]

¹ Kejin (氪金) game. A Chinese phrase that is developed from a Japanese word “課金”, which directly translate to “charging money”. It is used to describe games that is often free to download and play, but includes a lot of in-app purchases, and often mandatorily demand player’s to pay for better experience. This kind of game is often commercially successful.

Participant 2

Gender: Male

Occupation: CEO Game Developer

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style of Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

复古像素风格

Retro pixel-art style.

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

可自由控制主角移动和跳跃的操作方式

[A mechanic that allows player] to freely control the character to move and jump.

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

手绘背景结合逐帧角色动画的 2D 画面风格

A 2D style with hand-drawn background combined with frame-by-frame animated character.

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

角色的移动需要通过一个有技巧性的操作挑战来完成，玩家对于角色能前进的方向存在一定的不可控性，使得角色的移动会产生和玩家操作预期不符的结果。

The movement of the character needs to be accomplished with a certain technique that almost like a control challenge, and the player sometimes can't control the direction the character moves, making the movement of the character unexpected for the player.

5. Does *the graphical style of Demo 1* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

像素风格与是不是独立游戏没有任何关系，纵然独立游戏里经常出现像素风格的游戏，但是我认为这二者之间并不存在任何逻辑联系，只是制作人自身针对项目开发的成本或者擅长的风格做出的选择，和产品是不是独立游戏没有关系。

Pixel-art style has nothing to do with indie game at all. Although indie games often make pixel-art as its graphical style, I don't see any logical connection between them. Creators choose the graphical style based on the cost of the development or simply what they are good at, it has no relations with indie game itself.

6. Does *the control mechanics of Demo 1* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

DEMO1 当中的操作是一个非常传统且常见的操作模式，这种操作模式出现在任何独立游戏或非独立游戏中我都不会觉得意外，纵使操作模式可以作为一种玩法的创新点，但是使用传统的操作模式不代表不能制作独立游戏。Control mechanic inside DEMO1 is very classical and commonplace, I would not be surprised if this kind of control mechanic appears on indie games or non-indie games. Although control mechanics can be a creative perspective in gameplay, using a conventional control mechanic does not mean it is not an indie game.

7. Does *the graphical style of Demo 2* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

DEMO2 这种美术风格在我看来也属于一种并不是十分独特的视觉风格，出现在独立或非独立游戏中我觉得都可以胜任。DEMO2's art style is also not a unique graphical style to me. It is great to be used in both indie games or non-indie games

8. Does *the control mechanics of Demo 2* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

这种在操作上增加设计点的设计思路在我看来符合一个独立游戏设计的思路，制作者试图在一些传统的游戏操作上增加一些创新或者改变，我认为独立游戏适合进行此类尝试。A design idea that tries to add design points onto control mechanics is an indie game design pattern to

me. Creators tries to create something new based on or change the conventional game control mechanics, is for what I think indie game is suitable.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

我目前认为有没有第三方投资的支持和产品是不是独立游戏没有任何关系。个人开发也可以不是独立游戏。高成本的大作也可以是独立游戏。 **I think financial independence, whether third-party invested or not, is not related to the definition of indie games at all. A one-person work could be a non-indie game; A high-cost triple-A could be an indie game.**

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

同上，我认为有没有发行商参与与产品能否称得上是独立游戏没有任何关系。 **As above, I don't think publishing independence is relevant to the definition of indie games.**

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

我认为此种游戏的设计充满制作人个人的表达和创意，我认为这是独立游戏最难能可贵的闪光点，纵使在越来越多的项目中很难发现此类精彩特质。 **I think the design of this kind of game is packed up with creator's personal expression and creativity, which is the most precious and invaluable perspective of indie games; though it is more and more difficult to find such exciting qualities in recent projects.**

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

同 10.11 问。我认为没有任何关系。 **Same as [9, 10] questions, no relations in my opinion whatsoever.**

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

我认为目前市场上的很多产品只是借用独立游戏这个热门标签来拉动用户的注意力。从而获得销量，当然，独立游戏这个概念并没有任何绝对正确的定义和概念，也没有任何组织或个人有资格评判哪个游戏是独立游戏哪个不是。只是出于我个人，还是能从个人的角度对于某款产品“有多具有独立精神”在心中能打出一个 0-100 的分数。

I think that many products on the market today only use the popular tag of indie games to draw attentions in order to have more sales. Of course, the concept of indie games does not have any absolute correct definitions or concepts, nor does any organization or individual qualify to judge which game is an indie game and which is not. Just for me personally, I can still score a product from 0 to 100 inside my heart for “how much indie spirit it has.”

Participant 3

Gender: Male

Occupation: CEO Game Developer

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* of **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 **1** 中的 *视觉风格*？

粗糙，拙劣像素。A crude, clumsy pixelated style.

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 **1** 中的 *操作机制*？

简单直接. Straightforward.

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 **2** 中的 *视觉风格*？

白描，粗糙 Simple drawing, rough.

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 **2** 中的 *操作机制*？

反常规，拖沓，有门槛不易于掌握。

Unconventional, sloppy, has a barrier and not easy to master.

5. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 **1** 中的 *视觉风格* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

见到像素类型，我一般会 and “复古”、“硬核”等关键字联系起来，因为像素代表着之前的游戏时代，总会让我和曾经的那些游戏类型关联起来

Demo1 的像素非常粗糙，给我非常拙劣的感觉，这种感觉让我认为游戏缺少美术视觉上的雕琢，似乎流露出一不专业的感觉。我很不愿意将这种低成本和粗糙与 Indie Game 关联起来，并且我不愿意将一些拙劣的新手或个人作品划分为 Indie Game——也许这只是某人自娱自乐或者胡乱来玩的；但也必须承认，某些方面存在短板（如视觉）是 Indie Game 经常会有的情况。

When I see pixel-art, I often relate them to keywords like “retro” or “hardcore,” because pixel-art represents the old times of gaming and reminds me of the old gaming types.

The pixel-art in Demo1 is very rough and gives me a strong feeling of clumsy. This kind of feeling makes me think that the game lacks polishing in graphical style, or at least unprofessional. I truly don't intend to relate anything that has this low-cost and crude feeling with indie game, and especially don't want to put some inferior, raw newcomer or personal works into the definition of indie game—they are probably the result of people carelessly playing on their own; But I must admit, indie games often have some perspectives (like graphics) as their weaknesses.

6. Does the control mechanics of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

Demo1 的操作非常符合游戏玩家的操作习惯，我觉得游戏设计是应该遵循一定得传统和规范的，这让我觉得 demo1 的操作是由一个有经验的玩家所设计的。

The control mechanics of Demo1 is very consistent with the norm of players. I believe game design must follow some conventions or standards, which makes me feel that demo1's control mechanics is designed by an experienced player.

7. Does the graphical style of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

Demo2 的画面非常的直白，缺少抽象和概括，就像是一个美术新手所做的，感觉很业余，至少让人觉得作者在视觉上并没有什么追求。

The graphical style of Demo2 is rather straightforward, lacking abstract and generalization. It is exactly like a work of newbie in art, it feels amateur, at least make people think that the creator is not after graphics or art.

8. Does the control mechanics of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

Demo2 让我感觉非常糟糕，似乎设计者缺少游戏的基本了解，这种操作是无意义的创新，违反一般玩家的直觉，给我的感觉是缺少基本的游戏常识和经验。我不会将一些业余的尝试作品归类为 *Indie Game*。

Demo2 makes me feel bad. The designer seems to lack the basic understanding of the whole industry. This kind of controls is a meaningless innovation, which violates the intuition of average players. Therefore, it gives me a feeling of lacking basic game knowledge and experience. I would not acknowledge anything amateur experimental work as indie game.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

我对于“独立”这个词的理解，更多的是思想上的独立。经济独立是对开发者保持思想独立，或不被干涉的重要条件，但这并不是充分条件。

我们的团队在早期开发的两年，完全个人出资，我们也并没有将自己称为“独立游戏”，这个词在我心中非常的先锋和伟大，我们觉得自己并不适合这个名词。在后来我们接受了投资后，我也依然不去依附任何个体。我们的作品一直保持自己的品味和风格，这对我们来说非常重要。真正独立的精神和个体，他们生而自由，和物质无关。

强调经济独立，没有意义。

My comprehension towards “indie” is more like an independent thinking. Financial independence may be an important factor of keeping the developers thinking independently, or not being interfered, but is not sufficient.

Our team, at the beginning two years of development, were fully funded by our own, and we did not call ourselves “indie game.” This phrase is very progressive, great, and strong, that we didn’t think we deserve to be tagged with it. And when we accepted our external funding, I still did not attach to any other individuals [or companies]. Our work remains to stay at its original flavor and style, which is very important to us. Real independent spirit or individual, they are born free, with or without physical materials.

There will be no meaning emphasizing financial independence.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

所以，这题对我来说就没有意义了。

So, this question is meaningless to me.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

在我心目中，对于 Indies 最重要的一点就是，我们首先是作为一个游戏人对自作品的追求而并非物质追求成为 Indie。那么，Indies 必须有一个觉悟就是——物质（金钱）如此重要，它们是保证创作和生活的基石，但物质只是手段，而非的目标。Indie 的目标只有一个，就是达成自己心目中的作品，完成自我实现。

脱离了目标，任何事情都将失去作为 Indie 的意义。

In my heart, the most important perspective about Indies is that, we first pursue our own work as a game maker rather than a material pursuit to become Indie. Therefore, Indies must have a realization—materials (money) is important, that they are the cornerstone of creation and life, but materials are only means, not goals. Indies' goal is only one, that to achieve self-realization by the creation of the work inside one's heart.

Without this goal, any other things will lose its meaning to be Indie.

Participant 4

Gender: Male

Occupation: CEO Game Developer

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style of Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

Pixelated（像素化的）

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

Traditional platformer game（传统平台跳跃游戏）

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

Hand painted (手绘的)

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

Single-button operated (单键操作)

5. Does *the graphical style of Demo 1* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

I think 2D pixelated style is a proper and one of the most common style for making indie games.

6. Does *the control mechanics of Demo 1* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

2D platformer style fits indie games very well because of its 'easy to make' and 'full of variability'.

7. Does *the graphical style of Demo 2* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

I think hand painted style can reach a much higher level on artistry than a pixel styled game. But it's much harder to be mastered and need a lot of polishing, not even only on the artwork itself, but also music and other things. And the most of all, it can't fits every kind of game I think. But if anyone can get the point of this style, and also his or her game can fit the style, the game may can be a masterpiece on artistry. But this may takes too much for a small team.

8. Does the control mechanics of Demo 2 have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

Single-button operating always being used for creating creative games which always are indie games I think.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

In my personal idea, as long as the starting of your game creation was not a requirement of others, your game can be defined as an indie game. No matter if there is financial aid or not.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

I think indie games can be published either by the producer or by a third-party organization for its first time release. This will not affect whether its a indie game or not. I think this may just a selling strategy.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

This may be more important for indie games. The game should express the producer's own idea, make the effect by others or market to the lowest level.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

Most of indie game team I think has lower than 10 people in it. But this may not be a strict limit because some games like 'Ori and the blind forest' has more than 40, the game could still be called indie game.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

In my opinion, the most important standard to judge a game is indie game or not is just how the producer see the game by himself/herself. If the producer just treat it as a commercial game, the game could never become a truly indie game. Even it fits the normal defination of indie games.

I don't know whether I've provided contents you need or not, but I hope this survey could gives you at least tiny help.

Participant 5

Gender: Male

Occupation: CEO Game Developer

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style of Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

回答：复古像素风格

Retro pixel-art style.

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

回答：常见平台跳跃操作的一种

A type of average platformer controls.

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

回答：单调重复的 2D 小游戏画面

Mundane, repetitive 2D little game style.

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

回答：把握度的操作模式

A control mechanics that requires hold to a certain extent.

5. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

回答：5. 6. 7. 8. 单独把视觉风格和操作机制拿出来，都可以说符合独立游戏品质。搭配到一起就不一定了；独立游戏没有必须遵守的设计传统。

Answer 5. 6. 7. 8. Individually, graphical styles or control mechanics can all be suitable for the quality of indie game genre. But when combined, it is not certain, for indie games has no design conventions to follow.

6. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

7. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

回答：财务是否独立并不是关键问题，而是是否对财务有控制权，所以不管是否由外部投资都应该对财务有控制权。

Financial independence is not the key issue, but whether to have the control over finance. So whether externally invested or not, [developers] should have the control over the finance.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

回答：也和是否独立没有关系。

Also not related to indie or not.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

回答：创意应当有明显的个性表达才是独立游戏，如果发现创意有大量相似性的话，就说明不是独立游戏，它一定借鉴了其他游戏。

Obviously expressed and stronly characterized creativity is indie game. If the idea is found to be similar in many ways, it is not a indie game, but rather copying other games.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

回答：完全无关联。No relevance whatsoever.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

回答：我认为游戏产品都应该是“独立游戏”，“独立游戏”之所以被提出来，是因为市场中的相似游戏太多，必须要找到一些不一样的产品，才出现这个名词的。做游戏的目的首先是个性表达，在不受外界影响的情况下，开发者应该把个性表达作为首选目的，但大多数在这个市场中的开发商完全不是从这个角度出发的，尤其在中国。所以在中国提“独立游戏”根本没什么意义，中国的人很多，环境还不是一个崇尚个性表达的社会，“独立游戏”也就不能得到一个共同认知，所以没必要去强调或者做区分。每个开发者自己心里会很清楚，对于自己而言，花费了多少资源、精力和风险利用游戏来表达一个个人的想法，如果他尝试过，那么在那段时间，他就在做独立游戏。

I think all game products are “indie games.” The reason “indie games” are brought up are because there are too many similar games on the market, so [people] have to find something different, and that’s why the phrase appear. The prior purpose of making games are personal expression. Without an external influence, developers should put that as their priority, but

many developers in the market are not like that, especially in China. So there's actually no meaning to mention "indie games" in China. China is too populated and is still not a society that encourages personal expression. "Indie games," therefore, are not a general conception and acknowledgement, so no necessity to emphasize or make distinctions. Every developers know exactly, deep in their heart, that how many resources have they spend, how much energy have they put, and how many risks have they take into making games and try to express themselves. If they ever tried, then at the time of that development, they are making indie games.

Participant 6

Gender: Male

Occupation: CEO of game publishing/distribution company

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* of **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

答：试玩作品 1 是复古的像素风格，有传统平台游戏的感觉。像素颗粒较大较明显。

Demo 1 is under a retro pixel-art style, with a traditional feeling of platformer games. The pixel bits are large and obvious.

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

答：试玩作品 1 的操作是传统的键盘操作，但不是最基本的方向键，而是采用 WAD 这种 FPS 常用的按键组合。操作还比较顺畅，开始不知道有双阶跳，还以为是利用墙壁反弹连续跳跃，但是一会儿就发现了。

The control mechanics in Demo 1 is a conventional keyboard control, though not basic arrow keys but rather WA[S]D, a typical combination for FPS. The controls are rather smooth. [I] didn't know there's double jumping and thought it's a wall jumping made by bouncing of opposite walls, but soon found out [the double jumping].

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

答：试玩作品 2 是较为偏漫画的线条画风格，某种程度上像是矢量风格。

Demo 2 is more like a line-sketching comic style. In some ways it is like vector graphics.

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

答：利用鼠标按键启动动作，然后决定方向和力度，松开进行跳跃。
Use the mouse button to start the action, deciding the direction and power, then release the button to jump.

5. Does the graphical style of Demo 1 have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

答：试玩作品 1 更符合我的独立游戏的品质要求，主要原因可能是由于目前像素风格基本上被广泛用于独立游戏，而 3A 大作或者大型游戏公司更多的采用 3D、写实或者漫画的画面风格。玩的像素游戏比较多，也比较喜欢像素艺术。它不仅仅是制作成本低廉，同时也能给人独特的艺术感受。

Demo 1 is more consistent with my requirements for qualities in indie game. The main reason may be that the current pixel-art style is basically widely used for indie games, while some 3A games or large game companies use more 3D, realistic, or animated style. I played a lot pixel-art games and like pixel-art. It not only costs less but also gives people unique artistic experiences.

6. Does the control mechanics of Demo 1 have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

答：个人认为操作机制还是比较符合的，对一款独立的平台动作游戏，双阶跳、有设计的平台布局，都是期待中的。

Personally, I think the control mechanism follows. For an indie platformer game, double jumping and designed level layout, is what I expected.

7. Does the graphical style of Demo 2 have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

答：个人感觉这种风格更多的是出现在教育课件中。游戏中采用这种风格的不是特别常见。或者说并不是那么好把握。

Personally, I think this style is more likely to appear in educational courseware. This style is not particularly common in games, or rather not easy to be proficient at.

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

答：见过很多同样操作机制的独立游戏，可以说是符合的。

[I] have seen many indie games with silmlar control mechanics. [I] would say it's suitable.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

答：如果没有第三方资金支持，那么团队本身在运作形式上就是独立的。而针对游戏来说，我认为一款独立游戏与是否有资金支持并没有必然的联系。游戏开发者本身具有的独立的态度，游戏本身表达出来的独立精神才是最重要的。

Without the funding from a third-party, the team itself is independent in its operational form. For games themselves, I think there is no connection between an indie game and financial independence. The independent attitude of game developers and the indie spirit the game shows are the most important parts of the indie game itself.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

答：独立发行的话那么就是很纯粹的独立了。

An publishing independence would be pure indie.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

答：我会认为这款游戏具有独立精神。开发者为了实现自己独特的创意，而不用去考虑其它外在因素，是很纯粹的一种独立开发。

I would consider the game has the spirit of indie. Developers can achieve their own unique creative thoughts without thinking any external factors would be a pure indie development.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

答：觉得团队人数和独立的定义并没有必然关系，据我们对站内会员的统计，单人开发占的比率很大，并不一定需要很多人。

It is not necessarily relevant for the size of a team and the definition of indie. According to our statistics on the members of the website, the ratio of single-person development is very large, so it does not necessarily require a lot of people.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

答：有些独立开发者花了很多时间开发游戏，但是免费发放，这是仅仅为了享受游戏开发乐趣或实现自我的开发者，也值得称赞。

Some indie developers spend a lot of time developing games but distribute them for free, which is also worth praising because the developers are just to enjoy the process of development or realize themselves.

Participant 7

Gender: Male

Occupation: Publishing & Distribution

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* of **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

Pixel

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

Platformer

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

Realistic

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

Use left click to control the strength and directions of jump according to the timing

5. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

No, graphic style doesn't represent genre. some people may think pixel represents indie, because some famous indie games are pixel style, and pixel looks low-cost. But pixel is just the graphic style, 3A games also could be pixel style, and pixel is also as complicated as the realistic style.

6. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

No, platformer is a very classic genre, it is just one of key factors, it may shows some basic rules, Demo 1 need to add more creative rules.

7. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

No, realistic style is just graphic style, it doesn't represent indie or not.

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

No, if Demo 2 was developed 20 year earlier, it could be a good indie game, because there were no game like it. But now, there are so many games like Demo 2, it doesn't show its creativity.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

No, it is irrelevant.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

No, it is irrelevant.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

Creative independence is the core of indie, developers could express themselves, that makes indie different.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

No, it is irrelevant.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

No, thanks.

Participant 8

Gender: Female

Occupation: 獨立遊戲開發者 (Indie game developer)

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style of Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

我認爲他屬於復古像素風格 (Retro Pixel)。

像素的大小和顏色就像在 Snes 主機時代的 8-bit 遊戲畫面。

本來這風格僅僅是出於硬件本身對於分辨率與色彩的限制。

但在現代社會，這種畫面反而成了一種特定而強烈的美術風格。

I think it is belonged to retro pixel-art style.

The size of the pixels and colors are just like the 8-bit gaming graphics in SNES console era.

The occur of the original style is only due to the limitations of hardware itself on resolution and color.

But in modern society, this kind of graphic becomes a specific and strong artistic style.

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制?

我認爲 Demo 1 的操作機制是橫板跳躍遊戲 (2D Side Scrolling Platformer) 常用的機制。

這種操作機制中其中最廣爲人知的作品就是 Mario Brothers。

僅使用左右移動以及跳躍 配合敵人與地形 就能做出豐富多變的關卡設計。

這是一種考驗操作以及按鍵時間，動作元素較豐富的玩法。

最適合配合家用機手制來游玩來降低按鍵的失誤。

I think the control mechanics in Demo 1 is a conventional mechanic used in 2D Side [Scrolling] Platformer.

Under which the most well-known work is the [Super] Mario Brothers.

Using only left and right movement and jumping, along with enemies and terrains, [developers] can make rich and varies level designs.

This is a kind of mechanism that requires precision and timing, alone with plenty of action elements.

It is most suitable to play with a home console controller to reduce errors in controls.

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格?

Demo2 中的風格 我認爲是 帶點寫實元素的卡通手繪風格。

因爲從角色的比例，細節（例如 腿部）和色彩來看並沒有特意地誇張或者簡略化。

整體的不工整黑綫與上色的筆觸 (BrushStroke) 表達出手繪的感覺。

I think the style in Demo2 is comic hand-drawn style with a bit realistic element.

Because from the ratio, details (such as the legs), and colors of the character, there are no exaggeration or simplification.

The careless black lines and brush strokes of coloring in a while makes a feeling of hand-drawn.

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制?

我認爲 Demo 2 的操作機制是在 Touch Screen 手提電話普及以後才流行的一種操作方法。

Demo 2 雖然與 Demo 1 一樣也是一款平臺跳躍遊戲，

但是 Demo 2 的極簡化一鍵操作 (One Touch) 很明顯是配合手機平臺來使用的。

這種操作方法對沒有玩游戏習慣的人非常友好，

因爲只需要考慮按下去與放手的時機就可。

可是一鍵操作導致了玩法上面失去了組合按鍵而產生的趣味性。

因此放在電腦或者主機上的話，這種操作機制太容易學習並單調，讓人覺得非常乏味而慢節奏。

I believe the control mechanics in Demo 2 is popularized after the generalization of mobile phones with touch screens.

Demo 2 though is also a platformer as Demo 1,

it's clear that Demo 2's minimalistic One Touch control is in line with mobile platforms.

This control mechanic is friendly for people that don't have any gaming experiences, because all they need to consider is the timing of holding down and releasing the finger.

But this one touch control lacks the joy emerged from the combinations of keys in gameplay.

So, if put on PCs or consoles, this control is way too easy to learn and repetitive, making people feel dull and slow.

5. 、 Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

6. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

7. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

我認爲無論是 Demo 1 與 Demo 2 的操作與視覺風格都符合獨立遊戲的分類的品質。

在我看來 Indie game 與商業遊戲的區別在於製作這個遊戲的出發點而非產品本身。

從視覺風格來看，像素遊戲可以是獨立遊戲，手繪 2D 風格也可以是獨立遊戲，甚至是 3D 寫實類似 3A 遊戲的畫質也可以是獨立遊戲。考量的點我認爲只是出於團隊自身認爲哪種風格能更好表達遊戲的中心思想或者團隊本身能力的偏好而決定。

而操作機制方面，我認為在現代社會是取決于遊戲推出的平臺與玩家的人群對象而界定，這與是否獨立遊戲無關。根據不同的媒介的用戶群體以及硬件局限性，爲了更好的 UX(user Experience) 體驗而去應用設計原理甚至發明新的操作機制，我認為是 GameDesign 中的基本環節。因此很難但從操作機制中下定義去分類是否獨立遊戲。

從控制青蛙吃金幣，最後達到金色青蛙處。

從設計傳統來看，那無疑是非常符合遊戲的定義：有目的地進行一系列的選擇。

金幣代表短期目標（或者獎勵機制）掉落水中無法控制代表懲罰機制。

這些明確的規則都很好理解，也把一個互動媒介變爲遊戲。

I think both the controls or graphics in Demo 1 or Demo 2 are suitable for qualities in indie game genre.

In my opinion, the difference between indie games and commercial games are the starting points of the game development, not the products themselves.

In graphical styles, pixel-art games can be indie games, hand-drawn 2D style can also [be used] in indie games, even 3A-like games with 3D realistic graphics can be indie games. The consideration [of using which style] only comes from the team itself, how they think which style can better express the central idea of the game, or the preference of the team.

As for the control mechanics, I believe nowadays it depends on the platform of the game and the targeting player group, which is not related to the definition of indie game. Applying design principles, or even developing new control mechanics, for the players with different media, the limitation of the hardware, and a better user experience, is a basis in Game Design to me. "Controlling the frog to get coins and reach golden frog as its end."

From a design convention, that is coincident with the definition of a game: a series of choices with a purpose.

Coins represents a short-term goal (or a bonus mechanism) and falling into water represents a punishing mechanism.

These rules are clear and comprehensive, which also make an interactive medium into a game.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

我認為獨立的定義就是沒有依附於任何團體（或者被第三方左右）的個人或團隊則爲獨立。并且這個定義適用於其他行業：例如 音樂，美術。

財源獨立意味著時間上是自由的，如何分配時間以及資源則是完全由個人去決定，但是相應的，需要承擔所有的風險和後果。

在遊戲開發中，開發組需要做很多很多的決定，并且要用能力去實現所做的決定。

財源獨立的情況下，遊戲的一切都由開發組去決定，那麼遊戲本身肯定是有個性的。

就跟一個人一樣，不願意在公司當員工的人總是有個性的。

個性就是代表著獨立。

但是獨立也需要生存，這是一個很現實的問題。

目前在亞洲，獨立遊戲還是一個很新穎且模糊的概念。

一群全職獨立遊戲開發者在他人眼中就跟不事生產的無業游民差不多。亞洲社會習慣以金錢去衡量個人的成就與價值，因此在家人或朋友眼中，獨立開發更多的僅僅被視為一種興趣（Hobby），而不能夠成為事業（Career）。這種不理解導致他們不會成為你的投資者。而亞洲的投資者普遍不會投遊戲，以香港為例，投資者與政府普遍對創新科技，服務平臺，金融相關的行業有興趣。遊戲？聽上去就不是一個很能賺錢的領域，並且風險不低，等你們團隊造出轟動國際的遊戲時我才會考慮去投資。

這就形成了一個 paradox 的局面，如果我已經很成功，我就不會那麼迫切需要投資。

以我個人來說，我并不反感財產資助，沒有投資者是希望自己的投資是虧損的，因此他們會根據自己的經驗或者市場觀察去提供商業上的意見，我不認為這是一件絕對的壞事。

但是實際情況是，沒有人會提供援助。也沒有人會欣賞創意，他們只會衡量遊戲所產生的實際商業利益，而獨立遊戲也對於他們來說只是提高商業價值的一個標籤而已。

今年是我踏入全職獨立遊戲開發的第三年，這期間見到了太多的團隊在開發過程中解散，遊戲胎死腹中。大家作為獨立遊戲開發者，也都是堅持一年就意味著這一年是成功的局面生存著，隨著遊戲製作的工具門檻越來越低，獨立遊戲開發者面對的競爭越來越激烈。

I think the definition of independence is that [development] individuals or teams are not attaching to any company (or manipulated by a third-party). And this definition applies to other industries like music and fine arts.

Financial independence means that people has total control over their time. How to allocate time and resources is determined by themselves, but correspondingly, it is also them who need to take all the risks and consequences.

In game development, the dev teams need to make many decisions and use their ability to realize the decisions.

When it's financially independent, everything about the game is decided by the development team, so the game itself must have its own personality.

Personality means indie.

But indie need to survive, which is a worldly matter.

At present, indie game in Asia is still a new and vague concept.

A group of full-time indie game developers are like the homeless in other people's eyes. Asian society is used to measure personal achievement and value by money, so in the eyes of family members and friends, indie development is more regarded as a hobby instead of a career. This lack of understanding cannot lead them to become your investors. And Asian investors are generally not interested in games. Take Hong Kong as an example, investors and governments are more interested in innovated technologies, service platforms, and financial-related industries. Games? Sounds like a non-profitable industry, and the risks are high, wait 'til our team make a game that is globally renowned then I will invest my money on you.

Which is paradoxical, if I'm already succeeding, I won't be so badly in need of the investment. Personally, I am not at all disgusted with the help of funding, no investors want their investments to be under deficit, so they will provide business advices based on their own experiences or market observations, and I don't think it is an absolute bad thing.

But the reality is that no one will provide a helping hand. No one will appreciate creativity. The only measurement they do is how much they can profit economically from the game. And indie game is merely a tag for them to raise the business value [of the game].

This year is my third year being a full-time indie developer. During this period, I watched too many teams dismissed, and their games died in the water. As indie game developers, we take a living and preserving year as a success itself. As it is more and more easy to make games with game developing tools, the competition we face are more and more intense.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

發行獨立，我認為則代表在市場推廣等等商業事務（已經脫離了開發範疇）均由團隊自己負責。那就代表一切的決定權都是自己決定，自己承擔結果與風險。

與開發獨立比較我認為並沒有什麼很大的區別。

但就我個人經驗而言，在投入了大量的精力去開發后，我實在是沒有精力再去處理發行相關的事務和宣傳。我相信很多發行商也明白我們這些弱點，而成爲獨立遊戲發行商。他們用自己龐大的資本去選擇發行的遊戲，而我們作爲獨立遊戲開發者，爲了生存，有時候只能受制與他們。這是一個可悲的現實。

Publishing independence, I think it represents that all the marketing and other business matters (which do not involve game development) are taken care of by the team itself. Therefore, it means that everything is decided by their own, and they shall take the results and risks.

I don't think there's a difference compared to development independence.

However, as for me, after putting a lot of energy into the development, I really do not have anything more to deal with publishing-related matters and advertisements. I believe many publishing companies knows our weakness, so they become indie game publishers. They

decide to select what they want to publish with their exceeding capital, we as indie game developers can only subject to them for survival. What a pitiful reality.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

在創造過程中沒有考慮為其他人妥協的情況，我認為這樣的創作過程已經達到與創作一個藝術品差不多層次的高度了。完全的希望透過作品去表達自己的個性與想法，甚至有些獨裁的手法創造出來的產物。就像作曲家或者畫家的即興創作一樣，不考慮生計，只考慮自己當下的感覺與想表達的事物，我相信這是所有創作人（不僅僅是遊戲創作人）向往的事情。創作的靈感或者推動力就是來自於自身內在的感覺。這是一種很理想但不太現實的創作狀態。

In the process of creation, no compromise is taken into consideration for other people. I think such a process has reached the same level of creating art. I believe every creator out there (not just game creators) wants to have a self-expressive way to present personality and thoughts fully through their work, even using a somehow autocratic way to create the product, just like an improvisation of a musician or a painter, without thinking about their livelihood but only what they feel and what they want to express. The inspiration or impetus of creation comes solely from their own feelings. This is an ideal but not very realistic state of creation.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

據我所知，亞洲社會對於獨立遊戲的定義大部分就是根據製作組人員來厘定。

在我以往參加獨立遊戲展時提交的表格中，都會有指定報名團隊人數需要為 50 人以下。

我相信他們是參照了根據 Google 對獨立遊戲團隊的定義。

而現在亞洲坊間有很多號稱一人開發的遊戲，其中大部分的遊戲資源都是透過外包 (outsourcing) 的方法去製作，有些更甚是發行商公司利用一人-二人團隊作為遊戲宣傳的手段來引起市場話題，消費“獨立遊戲”這個概念。在亞洲這個注重完成度很高的遊戲畫面才能奪取眼球的獨立遊戲市場中（大家普遍只靠網上的宣傳片和截圖來對遊戲定下第一印象），是不是意味著有錢才有資格製作獨立遊戲，並且較易取得成功呢？臺灣的一位獨立遊戲開發者 Rlcky Ho 在採訪中就曾提出過，自己成功的要訣在於把自己不擅長的事情付錢給擅長的人去做，自己就可以專注做好自己的事情。這在有財力支撐下肯定是最理想的方法，但是對於國內一些獨立開發者而言 要養活自己就已經很困難，那麼這些人是不是應該都去上班而不應該去做獨立遊戲？

As far as I know, Asian society defines indie games mostly based on the size of the development team.

In the form I submitted for indie game expos, there were always a limit that the enrollment team size should be less than 50.

I believe they consulted the definition of indie game team from Google.

Now there are many games in Asia claim to be developed by one person, but most of the game assets are made through outsourcing, and some publishing companies even exploit the tag of one-person/two-people team as a marketing strategy to create marketing topics, consume the idea of "indie game." In the Asian indie game market, where only a game with highly developed graphics is eye-catching enough (people often only looks at the trailers and screenshots and have their first impressions), is it really that only the ones with money can make indie games and succeed easily? Ricky Ho, an indie game developer in Taiwan, said in an interview, that the key to success is to pay others to do what one's not good at, so that one can be focused on things one can done well. This is surely the most ideal way when people have financial support, but for indie developers in the country, it is already difficult enough to survive, so should they all go and have a decent office job instead of making indie games?

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

在香港的市場中，據我瞭解以及討論區的情況，獨立遊戲開發者非常少。

在參與獨立遊戲展會時，由於大部分都會按國家地區劃分區域，所以互相見面日子增多，得知香港遊戲業界的圈子其實很細小。

除了我們這一批年輕的開發者外，有一群 40 歲以上的遊戲從業員 也會在獨立遊戲展會擺攤，代表香港獨立遊戲。他們製作一些跟賽馬，Poker，麻雀 相關的賭博遊戲，並且都是商業註冊過的正規公司，而不是獨立遊戲工作室的身份去擺展覽。

這種情況我相信在國外的獨立遊戲展會是不怎麼會發生的，因為這些遊戲無論怎么看都是商業遊戲，（並且是暴利的遊戲。）這些人年資比我們都要長，在他們製作遊戲的時候，根本沒有獨立遊戲這個概念。而這一批人都是香港遊戲協會的成員，是代表著整個遊戲業界工會的人士。在獨立遊戲開發者勢力薄弱的局面中，我對於國外的獨立遊戲聯盟或者工會組成是非常感興趣的。我希望能夠在香港成立一個相關的獨立遊戲聯盟，例如在武漢他們就組成了武漢獨立遊戲聯盟。在這類型的組織中，獨立是什麼樣的存在呢？我覺得這是一個引人思考的問題。

In the market of Hong Kong, according to my knowledge and the forums, there are few indie game developers.

When attending indie game expos, many will split [developers] up with [their] originated countries or areas, so [people] get to see each other very often, and [I then] know the circle of the Hong Kong gaming are rather small.

In addition to our group of young developers, a bunch of 40-year-old game workers also have their booth at the indie game expos, representing Hong Kong indie games. They make some

horse racing, Poker, Mahjong related gambling games, and are all formally registered companies with business license, instead of showcasing under a name of an indie game studio. I believe this case would not happen too often in foreign indie game expos, because these games would be called commercial games under any scenario (and often they reap staggering profits). These people are elders to us, they have no idea of a such indie game when making games. Nonetheless, these people are members of Hong Kong Game Association, representatives of the whole [Hong Kong] gaming industry union.

In the situation where indie game developers are powerless, I am indeed interested in how indie game unions or groups are formed in foreign countries. I wish I can establish a relatable indie game union here in Hong Kong, for example they have a Wuhan Indie Game Alliance in Wuhan. Yet, what would indie be in a type of group like this? I realize this is a question worth considering.

Participant 9

Gender: Female

Occupation: Game Designer

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style of Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

像素风

Pixel-art style.

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 1*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

键盘操作，控制角色移动及跳跃

Keyboard to control the character to move and jump

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

手绘 2D 卡通风格

Hand-drawn 2D comic style

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics in Demo 2*?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

鼠标操作，在恰当的时机选择合适的方向进行蓄力跳跃

Mouse control, and wait for the right moment to save energy and jump towards the correct direction.

5. Does *the graphical style of Demo 1* have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

是。像素风通常被认为是相对小众的风格，且门槛相对较低，并且有多种便捷的制作工具可以辅助，因此通常被资源匮乏的独立开发者选择作为其作品的美术风格，所以思维定式会使人先入为主的认为其偏向于独立游戏。

Yes. Pixel-art are often considered as a relatively niche style, with relatively low threshold to make and many convenient tools to assist with, so are usually taken by resourceless indie game developers as the graphical style of their work. Therefore, a stereotype would make people tend to have a first impression of an indie game.

6. Does the control mechanics of Demo 1 have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

操作机制比较传统，该作品并不因此显得独立或不独立。

A traditional control mechanics, so the work does not appear to be indie or the other way around.

7. Does the graphical style of Demo 2 have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

此风格并不会让该作品显得独立，因为这种风格对美术品质要求较高，并不像像素风那样可以以相对较低的门槛达到还算过关的美术水准以及风格化效果。此风格可以说是无风格，品质达不到反而会让人觉得制作廉价。

This style won't make the work appear to be indie, because the style requires a relatively high standard of art quality, unlike a pixel-art style which a relatively low ability [to create art] can achieve a so-so art standard and stylized effect. The style [of Demo 2] would be rather called no style at all, a low quality [of this style] would make people feel it's low-priced.

8. Does the control mechanics of Demo 2 have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

该作品的操作相对较为独特，独立游戏通常追求一定的独特性。这样的操作机制可以被认为具有一定的实验性质，是偏独立的。

The control mechanic is relatively unique, and indie games often are in pursuit of a certain uniqueness. This kind of control can be considered having a certain experimental nature, which is sort of indie.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

无关

Irrelevant.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

无关

Irrelevant.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

我认为这个是影响作品是否被定义为具有独立性最重要的因素。即这个作品应该更倾向于创作导向而非产品导向。即游戏内容创作，以及开发中各种选择的主要出发点应当源于团队本身，而非外界因素，例如客户需求，市场，领导要求等因素。团队作为创作者应当保留对这个作品的主导权利，做团队真正想表达的东西，才是其独立性的最大基础。

I think this is the most important factor that effects whether the work follows the qualities of indie or not. Point is the work should be more creation-oriented, instead of product-oriented. That is, the creation of game content, and all the choices made during the development should be originated from the team itself, not some external factors such as customer needs, the market and executive requirements. The [development] team, being the creator, should reserve the right to dominate the work, and make something they truly want to express, which is the fundamental basis of indie.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

无关

Irrelevant.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

独立游戏应当是非常风格化的作品，应当带有强烈的团队风格色彩，即所谓的有灵魂的作品，而不是一个冰冷的工业产品。实际上独立游戏的定义非常模糊，并没有一个明确的界限，我更倾向于去用独立性，或者独立气质这种界限模糊的定义去考量一个作品拥有多大程度的独立倾向。

An indie game should be a highly stylized work, and should have the strong style of the team, meaning it has a soul, instead of being an ice-cold industry product. In fact, the definition of indie is vague, there's not a clear line. I would rather use independence, or spirit of indie, this kind of blurred boundary to define how much inclination to be indie the product has.

Participant 10

Gender: Male

Occupation: Game Developer

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* of **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

低像素

Low-bit pixel

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

经典的传统机制，移动、条约、踢墙跳，有超级马里奥的感觉。

Traditional classical mechanic, movement, [jumping], wall-jumping, somehow like Super Mario.

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

幼儿卡通

Toddler cartoon

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

比较糟糕的体验，有些《掘地求生》的感觉，这种操作方式让人不舒服，但某些合适的时候也会让人感觉有趣，这取决于环境因素，只有我自己我不会喜欢这种操作机制的游戏，但是如果几个朋友聚会也许大家会觉得这样反人类的操作机制也有一定的乐趣。

A rather awful experience, a resemblance to "Getting Over It." This kind of control mechanic is uncomfortable, but under certain circumstances could be fun as well, depends on the player and the environment. If it's only me playing, I won't like the control mechanics, but on a party a few friends together might find this anti-human control mechanics somehow fun.

5. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

见问题 8

See question 8

6. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

见问题 8

See

question

8

7. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

见问题 8

See question 8

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 2 中的操作机制是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

首先我非常不喜欢问题 5\6\7\8 的提问方式，我不认为独立游戏有什么可以遵循的设计理念，所谓的视觉风格或操作机制都是制作人表达自己想法的一种展示方式。我非常不喜欢这些问题。First, I really don't like how question 5/6/7/8 are asked. I don't think indie games have any conventions to follow, the so-called graphical style or control mechanics are just ways creators chose to express themselves. I don't like the questions at all.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

见问题 12

See question 12

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

见问题 12

See question 12

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏中创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

见问题 12

See question 12

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

我不认为第三方投资者、发行商或者玩家、客户等人群与独立游戏的定义有必然什么联系。在整个的开发过程中，第三方投资者也好，发行商也好，玩家、客户等人群他们仅仅能提出他们的意见，采纳与否完全是独立制作人自行决定的。

如果在开发的过程中，制作人迫于资金、市场环境等问题作出的调整和改变，也都是制作人最终自己的决定，所以它依然是独立游戏。

I don't think a third-party investor or publisher, player or customer, etc. has anything to do with the definition of indie games. In the whole development process, whether the third-party investor or publisher, player or customer, etc., they can only give suggestions, it is actually the indie developer's call to take the suggestions or not.

If during the development, because the lack of funding, questions about market environment, or problems like that, developers have to make certain adjustments or changes, it is their own decision, so [the product] would still be called indie.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

没什么了

Nothing.

Participant 11

Gender: Male

Occupation: Publishing & Distribution

1. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* of **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格？

A retro pixel style game, but not polished very well.

2. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 1**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 1 中的操作机制？

A very tradition and basic platform game.

3. How would you describe and define *the graphical style* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的视觉风格？

hand drawing style but simple and a bit crude.

4. How would you describe and define *the control mechanics* in **Demo 2**?

你会如何描述或定义试玩作品 2 中的操作机制？

A turn-based platform game controlled by a charge bar and direction point.

5. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 1 中的视觉风格是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

The graphic of the demo is very unpolished for me, but I don't think the indie game genre depends on any specific graphical style. For indies it is very important to achieve a best result with limited cost, we don't need to be best on all aspects, which is a goal for 3A or 2A games, but we do need to find our own unique advantages.

6. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 1** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 **1** 中的 *操作机制* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

These all-too-common game mechanics make the demo very boring for me.

7. Does *the graphical style* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 **2** 中的 *视觉风格* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计传统？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

The graphic of the demo looks a bit better than demo1, but it is still very unpolished for me, but I don't think the indie game genre depends on any specific graphical style. For indies it is very important to achieve a best result with limited cost, we don't need to be best on all all aspects which is a goal for 3A or 2A games, but we do need to find our own special advantages.

8. Does *the control mechanics* of **Demo 2** have qualities or follow any conventions that is suitable for the indie game genre? Please elaborate freely and comprehensively on your answer, whatever it may be.

你觉得试玩作品 **2** 中的 *操作机制* 是否有着符合独立游戏的分类的品质或遵循其设计理念？请随意并清晰地阐述你的观点，不管观点如何。

I don't like the core gameplay in fact, delay operation is never a good idea for any kind of games, because players don't like meaningless wait and always want to control their character accurately and fast.

9. In what way, if any, is financial independence, as defined as game development without the financial aid of a third party investor, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，财源独立，即在游戏开发中没有第三方投资者的财产资助，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

There's a very blurred boundary line, I think it depends on if the developers have absolute control over their games but not about how much and how they get the money from others.

10. In what way, if any, is publishing independence, as defined as not having the game published by a third party at the time of its initial release, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，发行独立，即在游戏首次发行时没有第三方发行商的参与，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

Just like the question 9, it depends on if the devs have absolute control over their games.

11. In what way, if any, is creative independence, as defined as creating games without having to adapt them to the needs of a customer, client or executive producer, relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，创意独立，即在游戏创造过程中没有为了顾客、客户或总制作人的需求而适应、改变，是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

For me indie game should be a work from some creators but not a collective product from a business team, but sometimes the boundary line can be very blurred. For me, if the devs adapt their games to the commercial demand too much, their games will be not so very indie any more.

12. In what way, if any, is team size relevant for the definition of indie?

如果相关的话，团队人数是如何与独立的定义有关联的？

An indie game team often can not be very big, that's right, but we shouldn't take the effect for the cause. I think it is not about the team size.

13. Is there any other aspect of game development that you think is relevant for the definition of indie, not covered by the previous questions?

是否有其它在游戏开发过程中你认为与独立的定义有关，但并没有被以上问题问到的方面？

Thoes diversities of games experiment and practice is very indie for me.
