

[an error occurred while processing this directive]

Low graphics | Accessibility help



Click

Highlights

Gadgets and guides

Meet the team

About the programme

RELATED BBC SITES

SPORT

WEATHER

ON THIS DAY

EDITORS' BLOG

Last Updated: Thursday, 2 September, 2004, 14:57 GMT 15:57 UK

E-mail this to a friend

Printable version

Political games

Computer Games are not normally particularly thought-provoking.

In fact, most gamers would prefer to shut themselves off from the outside world while playing.

But in recent years games with a message have emerged, aiming to make those who play them a little more aware.

David Reid met up with some Italian activists for whom politics is the name of the game.

Revolution?

Steeped in history and wealth, Milan - Italy's commercial capital - seems an unlikely place for a revolution.

However, venture down a side street off the tourist map and you can find the Centro Sociale La Pergola. It is a gathering point for a group of Milan's young radicals.

Many of them are media professionals for whom the Internet has become an essential tool for political organisation.

Alex Foti, of Chainworkers.org explains why. "It's because it's a many-to-many medium, whereas traditional politics is done one-to-many - from Gates to many, from Murdoch to many, from Berlusconi to many and so on.

"It is a way of harnessing the wisdom and vitality of the crowds. Social research has proved that groups, when confronted with well-defined problems, show a marked interest in them."

(To find out more about Chainworkers.org, look for the "Who are we? - in English" graphic on their site.)

The Internet allows the Centro to organise political demonstrations cheaply and easily.



An online May Day parade allows people to participate virtually

CLICK

**Click on Twitter**

Get the latest with our Twitter alerts

**on Facebook...**

Join in the conversation on Facebook

**... and on Google+**

Put Click in your Circles to receive updates

SEE ALSO:

- The revolution will not be blogged 06 Aug 04 | Technology
- Your choice of politics sites 04 Aug 04 | Politics
- Net brings activists out in force 05 Jun 04 | Americas
- China censors online video games 01 Jun 04 | Technology
- Game plays politics with your PC 03 Sep 03 | Technology

RELATED INTERNET LINKS:

- Chainworkers.org
- Molleindustria
- Newsgaming
- Tax Invaders

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites



Molleindustria offers demonstrators a virtual equivalent

But for activists who can't take to the streets, the organisation's web-site, Molleindustria, or "soft industry", has offered them the virtual equivalent - an online MayDay parade which allows people to add to the throng and stylise their own demonstrator.

Gaming ideology

Yet it is for video games that Molleindustria is best known. In line with its radical politics, the aim of the games is to highlight what its creators believe is most unfair about global capitalism and the modern labour market.

Their online game, Tamatipico, gives players their very own employee whom they have to keep happy to maintain production.

Fail to give your worker enough sleep or time in front of the TV and he calls in sick or goes on strike.

But ultimately the boss has the upper hand: if you're unhappy with your worker's performance, you can fire him on the spot.

Games designer Paulo Pedercini explains Molleindustria's thinking. "We don't think it's enough to simply change the graphics' look, or to change the characters in order to give a different message.



“ The real meaning of a video is expressed through the internal rules of the game ”

Paulo Pedercini, games designer

"The real meaning of a video - its ideology - is expressed mainly through the internal rules of the game, its structure and mechanisms."

This approach is best illustrated by the Uruguayan group, Newsgaming. They have produced a Shockwave-based game called September 12th.

In its frightening logic, players hunt down terrorists. But with clumsy missiles, collateral damage is impossible to avoid.

Meanwhile their game Madrid, if it can be called a game, is sombre in its simplicity. The rules require players to click on the candles so they burn brighter. But like all remembrance, the flames eventually fade.

US target

The producers of these games are developing a sort of gaming counter-culture, seeing themselves as the latest in a line of political satirists playfully poking fun at passers-by or at those in power.

One of the main targets of such games is the United States, because of the internationalisation of its culture and more recently the war against terrorism.

But Americans themselves, indeed none other than the Republican Party, are using video games to score political points.

The Republicans' version of space invaders is Tax Invaders. It depicts Republican President George W Bush as the only hope in the battle against high taxes.

Video games are normally a form of escape - a way to tune out from the troubles of the world.

However, the producers of this new breed of game have shown they can also act as an effective vehicle for political expression.

Click Online is broadcast on BBC News 24: Saturday at 0745, 2030, Sunday at 0430, 0645 and 1630, Monday at 0030. Also BBC Two: Saturday at 0745 and BBC One: Sunday at 0645. Also [BBC World](#).

Other items in this programme were:

[Zombie PC](#)

[Click Tips](#)

 [E-mail this to a friend](#)

 [Printable version](#)

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

[E-mail news](#)

[Mobiles](#)

[Alerts](#)

[News feeds](#)

[Podcasts](#)

[News Front Page](#) | [Africa](#) | [Americas](#) | [Asia-Pacific](#) | [Europe](#) | [Middle East](#) | [South Asia](#)

[UK](#) | [Business](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Science/Nature](#) | [Technology](#) | [Health](#)

[Have Your Say](#) | [In Pictures](#) | [Week at a Glance](#) | [Country Profiles](#) | [In Depth](#) | [Programmes](#)

 [CC BY-NC-ND](#) MMIX

[Back to top](#) ^^

[Help](#) | [Privacy and cookies policy](#) | [News sources](#) | [About the BBC](#) | [Contact us](#) |