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METROPOL

Jaroslav Švelch

Subversion hinter dem Schutzschild des Fortschritts. Spielen und Schreiben von Computerspielen in den Computerclubs der kommunistischen Tschechoslowakei

Subversion Shielded by Progress. Playing and Making Computer Games in Communist Czechoslovakia's Computer Clubs

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Abstract

This essay points out a seeming paradox of the Czechoslovak hobby computing and gaming movement in the 1980s – the fact that its activities were supported by the state, and yet the resulting games ignored or subverted state ideology. Czechoslovak state authorities supported playing on computers as a way of teaching children how to program and become useful members of the national economy or military. Yet, computer clubs became sites of unsupervised tinkering and experimenting, and their members and alumni wrote games that poked fun at Party ideology and invited players to anti-government demonstrations. The essay has two main goals. The first is to describe how computer game cultures existed and thrived under state socialism thanks to the computer hobbyists' tactical repurposing of the existing state infrastructures. The second is to analyze the entertaining and subversive products of that gaming culture, focusing on a specific case of the game »Šatochin«, a parody of Soviet war hero narratives. The article draws from archival research, oral history interviews, and textual analysis of preserved computer games.

Über den Autor

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