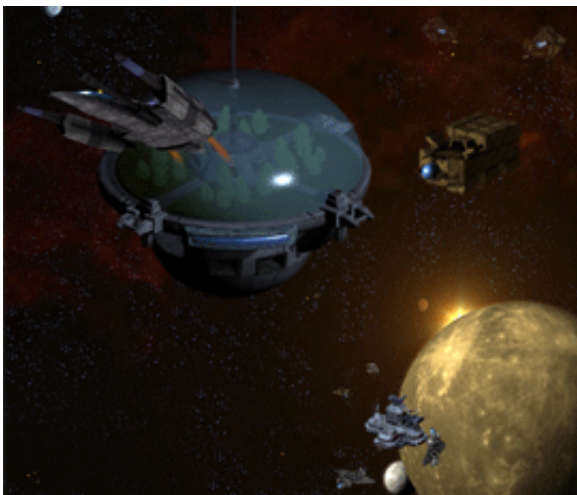


Online game provides insight into human behaviour

June 29 2012



Artistic depiction of a scene from the graphical massive multiplayer online game Pardus (www.pardus.at). Image courtesy of Bayer & Szell OG.

(Phys.org) -- A scientific analysis of players interacting through a popular online game has provided a unique insight into social mobility and other human behaviours.

Vito Latora, Professor in Applied Mathematics at Queen Mary, University of London, and colleagues studied the players of Pardus, a massive multiplayer game with more than 350,000 players who live in a virtual, futuristic universe.

The game is divided into different country-like regions, in which players

can make friends, wage wars, and trade and produce commodities. Most players have a home region where they focus their activities, but can also move to other regions nearby.

The research, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, highlights the potential for online games made up of societies, to analyse [human behaviour](#) on a large scale.

Advances in digital technologies such as mobile phone records and location-based social networks have yielded huge amounts of data on human activities but have lacked a unified theory about human mobility.

The study analysed information on the Pardus players' movements and socioeconomics during a 1,000-day period. Most players preferred to move within a region rather than crossing into different regions, suggesting that their movement is constrained not only by physical distances but also the presence of socioeconomic boundaries within the universe of the game.

The precise order in which players tended to visit locations was also important, suggesting a role for long-term memory effects. These two mechanisms suggest that both spatial and temporal constraints are important for the understanding of the rules that govern [human mobility](#).

Professor Latora said: "These [online games](#) provide a fascinating new way of observing hundreds of thousands of simultaneously socially interacting individuals engaged in virtual economic activities.

"The vast dataset from Pardus allows a high-precision study of multi-relational, large-scale social networks of humans as well as movement patterns of the players."

Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

Citation: Online game provides insight into human behaviour (2012, June 29) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-online-game-insight-human-behaviour.html>

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