

## [WEBINAR | Virtual Worlds in Pandemic Times: A Report on Research by Prof Tom Boellstorff](#)

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Type:

Seminar

Date:

February 2, 2021

Location:

Singapore

Subject Fields:

Digital Humanities, Communication, Cultural History / Studies, Southeast Asian History / Studies, Anthropology

**DATE & TIME OF EVENT : 2 February 2021, 11:00 - 12:00 (Singapore Time)**

**VENUE : Online via Zoom**

**WEBSITE : <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/20210202-tom-boellstorff/>**

### **CHAIRPERSON**

**Prof Kenneth Dean**, Asia Research Institute, and Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore

### **ABSTRACT**

In this talk, I will present research in progress for the project “Virtual Worlds in Pandemic Times”. In this project, a research team including myself, three graduate student researchers, and a documentary filmmaker are exploring how due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented number of people have been socializing online, in new ways. Better understanding these new digital cultures will have consequences for COVID prevention: successful physical distancing will rely on new forms of social closeness online. It will also have consequences for everything from work and education to climate change.

Our research takes place entirely online, focusing on two virtual worlds: Animal Crossing: New Horizons and Second Life. We work as a team in these two virtual worlds to understand how people are using virtual worlds in the wake of the pandemic. Central to the project is that there is not just one way to be online. Virtual worlds are places where individuals interact with avatars in online environments. They have different characteristics than social network sites like Facebook, streaming websites like YouTube, or chat programs like Zoom, though they share some features with all of these. Better understanding how people are using virtual worlds in the wake of the pandemic might provide innovative strategies for preventing viral transmission, by forging new forms of social closeness in the context of physical distancing. It might also help us better respond to the transformed social lives we are all destined to encounter in the wake of COVID-19.

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<https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/7101667/webinar-virtual-worlds-pandemic-times-report-research-prof-tom>  
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## ABOUT THE SPEAKER

**Tom Boellstorff** is Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine. His research focuses on digital culture, disability, globalization, the history of technology, nationalism, and sexuality. A Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, his research has been supported by a range of sources including the National Science Foundation. He is the author of *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*; *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia*; and *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. He is the co-author of *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method* and co-editor of *Data, Now Bigger and Better!* His articles have appeared in *American Anthropologist*, *American Ethnologist*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Current Anthropology*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *Games and Culture*, *International Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *Ethnos*, *GLQ*, *Media, Culture, and Society*, and *Visual Anthropology Review*.

## REGISTRATION

Admission is free. We would greatly appreciate if you complete the registration form at <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/20210202-tom-boellstorff/>, and we will email you prior to the event for the webinar link.