Friday Seminar

Tentative forays into the ethnography of metaverse

Apr 5 | **1:00 - 2:30PM** | **NAH 213**

New media afford new forms of human sociality, require new forms of ethnographic investigation, and provide new means of presenting and engaging with ethnography. Articulated through recent ethnographic projects in what may be termed 'metaverse' spaces, this paper proposes several potential lessons. These cover methodological and epistemological insights for fieldwork within virtual reality and with communities whose key bonds run through cyberspace. But learning to navigate and understand the roles of these technologies in the field is only part of the challenge, as mastering AR and AI techniques can help to exhibit ethnography beyond the traditional constraints of the monograph or the ethnographic film. Artefacts that may be produced through the ethnography of metaverse can themselves become tools for ethnography, for instance where a hologram or radiance field representation of a space can be used as prompts and allow creative participation both of the ethnographic subject and the consumer of ethnography.

Matthew Adams is a PhD student in anthropology at Brunel University, currently training at CUHK and funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Council's Techne Consortium. Matthew has worked at Brunel Interdisciplinary Lab's lab-grown meat group, on the British Academy-funded COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy project, and currently works for Brunel's health in metaverse research unit.