Sorgaard Jacques: Tom, what angle do you have on Second Life being an anthropologist?

Tom Bukowski: I’m studying second life trying to use the most traditional anthropological methods possible, looking for moments when they break down – in the hope of better understanding what is new and what not about virtual worlds. There are a whole bunch of topics of interest to me – second life is already so big.

Usagi Musashi: I studied a lot of environmental psychology in university and what I find in second life is that people bring a lot of their emotional baggage to this game and try to apply their ways of life to others.

VoyeurOne Baron: What do you mean Usagi? Could you expand?

Usagi Musashi: This is common here because we as humans need an outlet of sorts to release our innermost needs. For example, a club owner might want to own a club to be in power over others.

Sorgaard Jacques: agreed

Usagi Musashi: To feel bigger than life. Well this is Virtual Reality, so it’s ok. But the problem is they lose touch with the real world. Some larger club owners here think it’s real life. Hence they control the staff and its members in ways that are sickening.

Sorgaard Jacques: What you describe, in relation to autonomy, is an internal or psychological kind of autonomy?

Usagi Musashi: Yes Sorgaard. They create images of people. Or hope to make their businesses more noticeable in the public eye.

Sorgaard Jacques: Right...

Michael John Turner: I think it’s a general challenge to stay in touch with bigger contexts for people, also in first life. To see interrelations beyond autonomy?
Sorgaard Jacques: Power structures within Second Life and beyond

Usagi Musashi: They have power and Linden Lab lets them do what they want, because it boosts the amount of people they can get in the game

Sorgaard Jacques: Very interesting with internal autonomy vs power structures. Also involving Linden Lab in that reasoning...

Usagi Musashi: I look at Linden Lab as a business form. Not because I make money. But because Linden Lab uses the members for their advantage. They use members as assets. And ask members to do things for them based on their location in the world....

Michael John Turner: how is that?

Usagi Musashi: Well, if Linden Lab is getting 10 million in development money why can’t they pay these people instead of using the, “Body for dollar”

VoyeurOne Baron: Have you been asked to do things for them Usagi?

Usagi Musashi: Yes a few times. I was asked to help build the Asian (japanese sim) but they refused to hire me in real life

Hiro Pendragon: According to Linden Lab recently, they spend a majority of money reinvesting in staff growth

Usagi Musashi: Hiro, yes I know. But point is they use the members any way they can

VoyeurOne Baron: So what did you tell them Usagi?

Usagi Musashi: Well, I ignored their message and thought they had a lot of balls to ask us to build for free and not hire sub-contacts to do the work

Hiro Pendragon: Linden Lab was explaining that they run in the red – but it’s a controlled growth, and only in the red because they are growing, not because they can’t make money. But running in the red means not much for developers. That’s definitely something I want to change. I want developers to come together and provide common resources. Maybe a legal organization that can offer legal representation on demand.

VoyeurOne Baron: Maybe it’s time to form a union for exploited workers in Second Life?

Hiro Pendragon: Financial advise / backing. I wouldn’t say we’re exploited. And I’d say that definition is far too large – we can’t be grouping scripters and builders with... say, dancers. The dancers need their own union ;)

Michael John Turner: Or section of the same union...

VoyeurOne Baron: Have you worked for the lindens Hiro?

Hiro Pendragon: I volunteered with quality assurance back in version 1.6 testing. I found it to be worthwhile to see how Linden Lab operates, but it was a huge deal of stress, no pay, and no acknowledgement of the contributions I made – which includes changing some of the quality assurance process itself.

Sorgaard Jacques: Sounds like a union will be needed...

Usagi Musashi: I think there will be. Why not. They are using us and making X amounts in Real Life on us.

Hiro Pendragon: To me, Linden Lab has sort of two tiers. There’s the Linden Lab “we have stock options waiting for us, we make decisions”. And then there’s Linden Lab “We love Second Life so much that we bust our rear ends underpaid”

Sorgaard Jacques: Yepp...agree with you Hiro

Hiro Pendragon: Financial advise / backing. I wouldn’t say we’re exploited. And that’s far too large – we can’t be grouping scripters and builders with... say, dancers. The dancers need their own union ;)

VoyeurOne Baron: Do you know if the community lindens are well paid?

Usagi Musashi: 11.50 per hour

Hiro Pendragon: Yes, that’s what I heard too, Usagi – for Liaisons. And that’s part-time, they don’t get 40 hours a week

VoyeurOne Baron: And how do they recruit?

Usagi Musashi: Well they have their online hiring Voyeur. But they also ask people that have experience if they find out.

Hiro Pendragon: If you want to be a liaison the best route is to become a mentor or live helper, participate a lot, get to know the Lindens, then just ask.

Michael John Turner: What’s a liaison?

Hiro Pendragon: Liaison are the equivalent of a GM – Game Master. Deals with customers who have disputes, advanced technical problems, etc.

Usagi Musashi: Think abut it Hiro, they pay lindens 11.50 per hour. They have a hell of a job. Its stressful and all. Linden Lab should create more levels of paid jobs to increase their value in Real Life.
VoyeurOne Baron: I would never want to work for them. Just curious.

Usagi Musashi: Voyeur, I hear that a lot.

Michael John Turner: This is about consumers feeling like unpaid producers?

VoyeurOne Baron: Yes, and it's something which extends way beyond SecondLife. I mean the whole notion of "prosumers".

Hiro Pendragon: It's so true though, Second Life is an awesome prosumer tool. Instant access to audience, very low cost, and near-pro level of control.

VoyeurOne Baron: "awesome prosumer tool" – yes – but it's easy to feel exploited when you understand that you are the product. Kind of like when they asked you to work for free, Usagi...

Usagi Musashi: Yes, Voyeur... I mean at first I thought WOW I get to help out. After running around without having control. To start dealing with problems. I thought Oh My God this is nuts.

Michael John Turner: Good one, Jesz.

VoyeurOne Baron: The whole notion of precarious work and the development of prosumers is an economy-wide phenomena.


VoyeurOne Baron: The change in working conditions in the post-fordist era has fundamentally changed the meaning of work and what is being employed. Some argue, that all of life and our capacities as persons are being employed.

Hiro Pendragon: Yeah, but that's a product of the information age in general. The concept of bringing work home with you. Workaholism.

VoyeurOne Baron: It's also about your free time being part of what is employed, thereby taking away the distinction between work and life.

Hiro Pendragon: There's something refreshing about working a 9-5 "menial" job that offers decent pay. You get so much more free time. Even though the "white collar" jobs are supposedly SO much better paying, you wind up earning the same amount for more stress and less free time. This is personal to me. I'm taking a jump to being my own boss. Like I said – it's a good time to be an entrepreneur.

VoyeurOne Baron: That's cool (but also means work = life... usually).

Hiro Pendragon: Yeah, but the rewards are staggering. Ownership. A feeling of pride in what you create. Things that... hell, we haven't had since pre-Ford. Since before jobs became lever-pulling.

VoyeurOne Baron: What's your business, Hiro?

Hiro Pendragon: Well, I do scripting contracts and I run my weapons shop :) Also tools development.

Michael John Turner: In second life as first life?

Hiro Pendragon: Yes, that's where I'm transiting to. I still work a 40 hour job Real Life... but not for long.

VoyeurOne Baron: I am very curious Hiro, because if you are becoming a full time Second Life-entrepreneur... then there are a lot of interesting questions regarding autonomy...

Hiro Pendragon: I'm curious too. This is new to me :)

VoyeurOne Baron: Like to what extent your business (and thereby your income) is dependent on Linden Lab.


VoyeurOne Baron: Of course... but this becomes on a different level if Second Life is what you do for a living.

Hiro Pendragon: Yeah, a different level? Like... how much time do you invest in Second Life on a purely hobby basis?

VoyeurOne Baron: Well... I'm kind of doing it professionally as well. I'm here as part of my art practice.

Hiro Pendragon: And do you see how people who just treat it as a hobby burn out often?

VoyeurOne Baron: Probably. No first hand experience.

Hiro Pendragon: A year ago I took a whole month off, but partly because I was sick with 2 different flu strains.

VoyeurOne Baron: But this is also one of the starting points with the magazine on autonomy... Sorgaard and I are interested in how we can use Second Life as a platform and still have a level of autonomy. Can The Port be something in itself for example? On a long term basis we are working on applications that can move in and out of Second Life (that kind of parasite on Second Life) without being dependent on Second Life.

Hiro Pendragon: Heh, I like that. I think bottom line – for the Port – as long as you have interesting things happening, it will attract attention. No?

VoyeurOne Baron: Sure. But also, as long as we have interesting things happening at The Port in Second Life, we are part of Second Life as a product... like what Usagi was saying.