

# Excursions

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Foreword: Embracing Chaos

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# Foreword: Embracing Chaos

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When we chose ‘chaos’ as our theme for 2020, we had no idea how prophetic this choice would turn out to be.

It was Autumn 2019 and our newly formed editorial board was concerned with the state of the world. Between the climate emergency and the migration crisis; between terrorist attacks and protest movements on the streets; between algorithms and the gradual loss of data privacy; between the Brexit deal and the series of UCU strikes in the UK; we felt like the world had turned upside down and only one word could describe it: chaos. We armed ourselves with Toni Morrison and published our call-for-papers in December, asking researchers to embrace chaos with us.

There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, **chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge** — even wisdom. (Toni Morrison, 2015)

Little did we know that just a couple of months later, the world would be living a whole new level of chaos – and embracing chaos was no longer a choice, it was a necessity.

The year isn't over yet and it is already common place to say that 2020 is an extraordinary year. It has challenged us in multiples ways, and, by limiting movement and social interaction, it has forced us to re-learn how to live our lives and attempt to create a 'new normal' out of chaos.

The fact that we did, despite the universal chaos, publish this issue of Excursions is a testament to the resilience of the authors, reviewers, and editorial board. Although the future is still uncertain, these remarkable academics keep on pushing, and continue to do research – whatever that looks like – and contribute to knowledge.

In this issue, Excursions had the pleasure of assembling a collection of eight articles that examine chaos in a variety of ways and inspires thoughts and dialogues.

Our chaotic conversations start with the hectic character of urban living. César R. Canova suggests that Architecture and Design can assist the task of unraveling urban chaos through a 'balanced' architectural practice; and Juliana Viégas de Lima Valverde proposes that society needs to move from urban chaos to a new reality, a new social and environment ideal inspired by nature. Chaos opposes order and is fuel to a new order.

As fuel to a new order, chaos can spur activism. Even when facing turmoil, some are not willing to silence themselves. Heather McKnight explores nano-utopian moments of activism – which, although unplanned, are accelerated processes of self-organisation that appear to arise out of chaotic situations; and Craig Halliday argues that an artist's creations launched a campaign to bring peace to a chaotic, fragmented country.

How does chaos motivate creativity? Farah Alrajeh shows that the violence and disorder in a post-war period inspired authors and artists to innovate; and, using undergraduates as a case study, Natalya Souza explains that creativity happens at the edge of chaos and in the space in-between chaos and order.

Chaos can also be used as leverage to better understand the human experience. Ana Carolina Minozzo reasons that Psychosocial Studies can benefit from a little chaos by taking into account not only words, but also sounds, noise or vibrations that emanate from the body; and Saba Karim Khan actively celebrates chaos – or, better yet, the dataset chaos of ethnographic research, formed by the ambiguity, fluidity and fragmentation of being human.

Finally, this issue of *Excursions*, undoubtedly shaped by the Covid-19 pandemic, wouldn't be complete without an attempt to document the chaotic times in which we are living. Consequently, we issued a call for essays and invited Doctoral Researchers to tell us what it was like to do *Research in Times of Chaos*. In this special section, we published eight essays that discuss a variety of pandemic-related issues, from how difficult it is to focus and write, to how to deal with interrupted field work; from how the world was not in order before the pandemic, to how the world needs to heal.

In the midst of this chaotic world and your own personal chaos, I hope you enjoy this issue. If 2020 thought us anything, it was to adapt and embrace chaos. So I invite you, yet again, to embrace chaos with us.



Excursions Editorial Board 2020