

# Excursions

Volume 11, Issue 1 (2021) | (Re)Connect



Cover Photo: (Re)Connect by Charlotte Esposito

**Louise Elali, Ricardo Ramirez**  
Foreword: (Re)Connect, (Re)Establish a Bond

[www.excursions-journal.org.uk](http://www.excursions-journal.org.uk)

## Foreword: (Re)Connect, (Re)Establish a Bond

**Louise Elali**

*Managing Editor of Excursions*

**Ricardo Ramirez**

*Senior Editor of Excursions*

To connect is an integral part of the human experience. We are wired to make connections with other people, with things, with events; as well as between people, between things, and between events. At the same time that we are social (connected) beings, we also see (connecting) patterns everywhere.

Finding connections is the underlying principle of creating knowledge and the ultimate goal of research. Researchers and scientists are constantly trying to understand the ways in which different phenomena connect with one another – after all, "Discovery is seeing what everyone else has seen – but thinking what no-one else has thought" (Albert Szent-Györgyi). It is about exploring and discovering connections, providing interpretations about the ways in which phenomena that seemed disparate are more related than we had anticipated. A reconnection, consequently, offers an opportunity for a second look: a (re)examination of the connections created in those first instances, a chance to go deeper, notice something new, re-establish or disrupt bonds and patterns.

As a thematic journal, every issue of *Excursions* is intrinsically fused to the context in which it comes together. Our handpicked themes, that often paint a one-word instant picture of the most pressing current issues,

intentionally set the stage to connect and reconnect to research, to academia, and to the world through a compelling new lens. This strong bond to the *zeitgeist* is part of *Excursions's* DNA.

This issue of *Excursions* is no exception, and it would be impossible to separate it from the context in which it was produced. Our first board meeting was on the 1st July 2020, and the finished product hit our virtual shelves on the 1st July 2021, placing the entire production of this journal within exactly one year - and what a peculiar year it has been!

During this time, the unparalleled events of the Covid-19 pandemic forced us to disconnect from life as we knew it. While social distancing weakened some bonds, we found new ways to strengthen others, and even create new ones. Ultimately, this year presented itself as an extreme exercise in understanding how dependent we are on our connections. Exploring the ways in which individual lives, social processes, and other phenomena are shaped by different forms of connection seemed particularly appropriate within this context of constant disconnection and reconnection.

In this issue, *Excursions Journal* invited researchers to (re)connect. The articles assembled here speak about this wide variety of possible approaches and perspectives, highlighting the (re)connections that shape our social and individual lives. As a true product of the pandemic, four of our articles focus on the manifold ways in which issues of (re)connection have become salient during the Covid-19 times.

The first of them, penned by Long, explores the consequences that the move to virtual hearing has had over issues of socioeconomic inequality within the British justice system. Based on interviews with six barristers and solicitors, Long argues that the physical disconnection between lawyers and clients has inhibited the provision of a centrally important form of assistance, which is the one directed at helping clients navigate the norms of the courtroom, which the author assesses as inherently linked to the ongoing socioeconomic inequality that marks the national justice system.

Then, Blitzer reflects on how a post pandemic world can include new ways of (re)connecting humanity and nature. In a passionate call for environmental justice, the author argues that a just post-pandemic economic recovery should move away from existing approaches to sustainable development that prioritise the neoliberalisation of nature through privatisation and commodification, thus placing humans separate from nature. Instead, Blitzer argues, an effectively sustainable recovery should focus on the realignment of the human experience as part of the wider non-human natural world.

The next two submissions, by Foerster and Burong, take a more intimate and personal approach. First, in an auto-ethnographic gesture that combines philosophical reflection and aesthetic practice while self-isolating during lockdown, Foerster explores how an attunement towards atmospheric changes taking place within our immediate habitats can open up new perspectives on processes of subjectivation. Burong, on the other hand, presents a photo-essay that, based on images of spicy food, explores the connections between the immigrant experience and the change of the sense of taste produced as a consequence of a Covid-19 infection.

However, issues of creating, disrupting, and establishing (re)connections extend well beyond what the Covid-19 pandemic has made patently vivid, as they have always been an integral part of the human experience and of doing research. Our other three articles reflect about the ways in which different ideas of (re)connection are integrated into some of the most important social issues of the present: racial inequality, the climate crisis, and conflicts arising from social disembeddedness are here interpreted through the rupture and establishment of connections.

First, Kennedy highlights the importance of considering time when designing projects aiming to establish and strengthen connections within societies that have a history of marked social division. Through examples of community murals projects in the United States and Northern Ireland,

Kennedy argues that having projects that extend for long periods of time is the best way to make possible cross-community contact, critical discussion, and meaningful reflection, elements that are central for improving community relations.

Song, on the other hand, focuses on environmental issues, explaining that the (neo)liberal centralisation of individual agency is insufficiently equipped to tackle the hyperobject of climate change. Through an analysis of historical and cultural objects, Song argues that an effective connection with the world can better be achieved by moving away from the nexus of personhood/subversion/agency, as a recognition of land and animals' agency has not yet equated with a respect to their 'rights'.

Also focusing on a pressing social issue, the comic and film *Black Panther* allows Millanzi to tackle discussions relating to racial inequality. The author uses this fictional universe to propose an understanding of the ways in which connection takes place within contemporary social movements, arguing that through *Black Panther* opportunities that can facilitate change and progress are made possible.

Finally, driven by the strong movements towards (re)connecting that have been taking place within academia, we invited doctoral researchers to reflect on their own experiences of bridging the gap between academia and the world "outside" of it. In this special section, we published nine essays that discuss the many ways in which PhD students engage with different communities, creating a connection between their research and broader sectors of society. These inspiring essays reflect on issues such as funding, publishing, gathering data and, above all, how doing research can open up possibilities for the emergence of solidarity and community.

In a moment where the world needs to (re)establish its bonds, we hope that this issue of *Excursions* will inspire you to make (re)connections with and between research, history, nature, people and, above all, yourself. Now, more than ever, it is time to (re)connect.