



IDEAS, NEWS AND RESOURCES | June 2020

The Taos Institute's mission is to bring together scholars and practitioners concerned with the social processes essential for the construction of reason, knowledge, and human value, and their application in relational, collaborative and appreciative practices around the world.

Brief Encounter with The Taos Institute

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More than ever the world needs a relational approach...

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Social Construction and the Recovery of the World

By [Celiane Camargo Borges](#), Taos Institute Board Member

We are living in challenging times, surfacing many reactions, thoughts, visions and beliefs, in an attempt to understand and offer ways to cope with the COVID crisis. What might a constructionist response look like?

From a constructionist perspective, COVID-19 is not separate from us. It is happening through us, in us, between us and because of us. Social construction helps us see the world as an interconnected and complex system in which macro and micro levels, as well as human and non-human entities, are constantly creating and re-creating possible realities. Indeed, this highly contagious virus has implications for every aspect of society: economic, social, political, health and environmental; it forces us to balance the interruptions to our daily lives with the economic need to keep businesses flowing. The virus also makes it necessary to balance physical distance with social connection and collective support.

How can we reframe these dilemmas and embrace interconnectedness?

Dialogue and relationality are fundamental pillars in the construction, deconstruction and re-construction of knowledge and society. Change starts with us in our interactions, one step at a time. SC invites us to come together and share the challenges we face, co-creating new possibilities to stay healthy and connected. The Taos Institute community is offering webinars and online dialogues that invite us to reflexively question the ways in which our habits and taken-for-granted services, economics, and health must change. Through collective discussion, new meanings and possibilities emerge, we re-invent realities. Central to Social Construction is the inclination to hold our ideas and our actions with *uncertainty*: there is a willingness to suspend and critically examine our own beliefs, to question our assumptions and to entertain a wide diversity of perspectives. In many respects, this moment – the moment of the virus – positions us to live this constructionist stance of uncertainty.

In coming together in dialogue, we cannot be sure what the next step might be until interactions promote the emergence of new ideas that we can test. Through the stance of uncertainty, new ideas begin to make more sense. Despite the fear and discomfort, the potential for change ignited by this global crisis is substantial. By coming together with a diversity of voices, experiences, and perspectives, new performances can be enacted, new ways to respond and cope can be imagined, and new forms of living can be created – these are all changes that could possibly be sustained once the pandemic has past. The pandemic therefore is a perfect time for dialogue and innovation.

One way to promote collaboration is through the creation of learning communities. Learning communities are collaborative spaces where new knowledge, experiences, and diverse perspectives are shared. In the current situation, a learning community can advance a coordinated response to COVID-19 and potentially benefit not only the learning community's participants but the broader community as well as society as a whole.

I am privileged to facilitate such a learning community. In the six-week online course: Social Construction – Premises and Practices, 13 participants from Brazil, Canada, Japan, USA, and Spain come together to examine their work, life and the current crisis through the lens of social construction. We invite each other to re-define relationships and practices. Together, we exemplify our interconnectedness and co-create a support system and forge new realities. There are innumerable ways to create learning communities that invite us to explore, learn and create collaborative spaces where new meanings and possibilities emerge. The power comes from creating the time and space for interactions and dialogue. *What are you doing to create these opportunities?*

