

Editorial

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Like a murmuration, this 10th issue sees a turn in the movement of a collective. The founding editors are being absorbed into the workings of the group, becoming members of the editorial board. A new editorial team is moving forward, working together as joint editors. We welcome Marilena Karamatsouki, Leah Salter, and Joanna Michopoulou as the new joint editors of this journal. Naz Nizami and Fran Urbistondo Cano are joining as assistant editors for events, media and consultation.

So much has happened since the day in January 2017 when we founded the journal.

Gail: I remember you both walking towards me so purposefully across the bar at Brathay with a serious step and mischievous glint in your eyes. I thought, "What now?"

Citation Link

Birgitte: We were so excited, and we replied: "We wanted to tell you about an idea which fitted perfectly with the motto "stop complaining and do something about it".

Liz: Yes, we'd been discussing an idea for a new journal, a new type of journal. Imelda thinks it's a good idea too.

Birgitte: The background that day was Brathay Hall where we were with our doctoral students on the Professional Doctorate in Systemic Practice. Some months before, some of the students as part of the curriculum had tried to get a paper accepted in the journals available at that time. It had been a terrible experience.

Liz: Yes, and in fact, I'd been attending some seminars on writing for publication. I didn't attend the final session. I hadn't liked the sort of papers they were publishing. They were full of statistics, and I felt they were telling me how I should write. I didn't want that. I wanted to write the sort of thing I felt was missing in practice journals. The only way to change the sort of things getting published was to set up a new journal.

Birgitte: Everything we had been encouraging the students to dream of was impossible in real life. Journals only accepted papers with words and numbers. Otherwise, it was not considered real research.

Gail: Research was being defined in a very narrow way. No storytelling from practice.

Liz: Exactly. So, we wanted to see what could be possible by setting up a different journal. Image and colour are important to me. And pictures. The first thing that one of the main publishers tells authors is that they don't publish pictures.

Birgitte: And you made the pen and ink drawings that we now use as the logo, Liz.

Gail: We needed a title. When John Shotter was in his last weeks of life, he asked me whether the birds I was watching performed murmurations. He was always interested in dynamic stabilities, how parts of a whole moved separately and together, influencing each other, making something together. *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice* seemed to us like a good name for the journal.

Gail: What else was important to us in starting this journal?

Liz: Well, we needed to become sharers of stories again. It has been important to create a journal that takes us back to hearing the inner and outer workings therapists speculating, deciding how to act, checking how our cultural filters alter our noticing, our actions and our telling.

Birgitte: Yes, creating a home for writings in the postpositivist and practitioner research field – regardless of the professional background of the author. We wanted to change the narrative that systemic practice is only for therapists, consultants, and leaders. The world – and job titles – is in a different place compared to times where only therapists, consultants and leaders were expected to initiate change.

Liz: We've run writing workshops and retreats and supported writers to find their voice, develop their confidence and talent. It's part of the mission to get the systemic community writing again, for systemic practitioners to reclaim space for their experience in our own journals.

Gail: An important point is that we wanted descriptions of lived experience. We don't publish dry impersonal writing written from an aboutness position. We only publish first person writing that shows the writer as a participant in relational exchanges, as people who are engaging with other writers. Even discussing theory can still be reflexive dialogue.

Liz: Well, you could say that the journal is part of the movement to decolonise professional practice - and our various selves.

Gail: We encourage writing from within our own experience, alongside people, with critically reflexive positions taking into account the social-political construction of categories and cartographies of who counts, who matters more than others and how that plays out in our practice and writing.

Birgitte: We all three believe in collaboration and it is essential in our everyday practice. Therefore, it felt important that the journal should be online and open for everyone. Anyone who has internet access can read and download all of the content of the journal. There is no embargo on the last year's publications. That's so frustrating for readers! Everything is available to everyone as soon as it is uploaded to the website.

Liz: There's something about the politics of the journal. The journal is completely independent - meaning it is not owned by a large publishing company who can shape a professional community by prioritising sales or word counts over the ethic and aesthetic of a professional community's needs.

Birgitte: We wanted this to become an international community initiative and endeavour. And unlike other journals, there is no stipend or payment for editorial work. The work of the editors is done entirely on an unpaid basis. The same is true of reviewers. The journal relies on donations, fundraising and workshop fees to meet its running costs. I think about the journal as a community movement.

Gail: We use Open Journal Systems, software which was developed by scientists who were frustrated that their work never got read by colleagues who couldn't access their papers. So, they created software for others to use. We have no paywall and no requirement to register or login in. Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice is part of a wider movement to democratise knowledge and information sharing.

Liz: Murmurations is innovative but it is also a quality journal with rigorous practices. Papers are double or treble peer reviewed. Not anonymously though. We didn't want to lose that human relationship in the reviewing process. Reviewers write feedback to contributors with a fusion of warmth and criticality. Most papers go through a few rounds of review. It's been good to see how papers progress.

Gail: We've built up a good range of reviewers who get very involved in giving direct and constructive feedback.

Birgitte: But the writings have been ground-breaking in style and content. When you create a new space with new permissions then people can explore their practice with more coherence and creativity.

Liz: There is more technology can offer an online journal. We have M Talks and Systemic Lives podcasts but multi-media can open up other possibilities yet.

Gail: After six years, we are ready to pass it on to a new editorial team. They have creative ideas on how to further develop the journal.

Birgitte: It's just like in a real murmuration – we were three, it has grown, and it gathers birds for a variety of reasons. Each bird navigates based on the signals from the seven or so closest to them. After taking a lead for a while the bird falls further back in the flock and the birds behind will take over.



Founding Editors at the launch of Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice, London, 24th November 2017.

Photo: Marilena Karamatsouki

The articles in this issue are inspiring and provocative. Despite this being a general issue, many of the papers have common themes of working with a social justice agenda and of using systemic positioning and ethics to engage in acts of solidarity.

The work of the systemic Uyghur witness collective is documented with reflection on their experiences of witnessing and of offering systemic consultation at the **Uyghur Tribunal** in London. Charlotte Burck, Gillian Hughes, Julia Nelki and Julia Granville speak movingly about their process and practical/ethical positioning in offering themselves as witnesses not only to the original crimes against people but to the process of the witnesses giving testimony at the Tribunal.

Hugh Palmer addresses the urgency of societal changes needed to avert global catastrophe. He connects and extends the systemic ideas from Gregory Bateson's of "conscious purpose" and "dualistic thinking" to propose dishonesty in public discourse as a pathological symptom of Capitalism.

This connects with the process described by Julie Oates in her paper of the recognition and accompanying sadness (and liberation) that she needed to leave the NHS to work in ways more coherent with her politics of change. Julie walks us through her journey from family therapist into a community led change project, the Poverty Truth Commission whose structures reposition all participants to decolonise hierarchical structures and their premises.

The paper by Amanda Middleton is adapted from the opening keynote talk at the 2022 annual conference of the UK Association of Family and Systemic Therapy. She invites readers to consider their assumptions about binary genders and biology as a concrete given and critique the role played by pathologising colonial practices in restricting the psychotherapeutic imagination of what gender and sexuality can be.

The expressive writing groups described by Thivvia Rangunathan and Dawn Thibert show how poetry and writing exercises generate decolonised ways of knowing and expressing knowledge. Creative psychotherapies used to be offered in the NHS but have been the casualties of cuts and evidence base discourses. Daring to do it anyway, they create the conditions for new and wider tellings which step outside of the discourse of individualised pathology.

Anja Zimmermann talks about her research journey into showing how she needed to foreground responsibilities people have towards each other in the moment. She externalises the voices of influence in order to challenge them and ensure she foregrounds a social justice agenda.

Gail Simon offers a much needed paper for systemic practitioner researchers. She describes ten areas of distinction between professional practice and research practice, and provides examples of questions under each of the categories. The paper starts with a definition of practitioner research and then gives a brief history of practitioner research followed by reflections on the relationship between academic and professional knowledge, and decolonising practitioner research.

In this issue's revival paper, Smaro Markou remembers a 2007 interview with Peter Lang in Athens. Peter documents the story of people and moments and places in the development of a new systemic therapeutic way of working. It's a fascinating overview and important documenting of how Peter's journey was interwoven with developments in the field.

The final reflection on a workshop echoes the special issue on the EcoSystemic Turn with systemic

practitioners working with each other in nature to explore embodied ways of knowing with reflections from workshop host Lorna Edwards and participants Andreas Breden, Chiara Santin, Justine van Lawick and Erik van der Elst.

Thanks to all our reviewers and contributors to this issue. We hope you continue to see *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice* as a home for you, as reader, viewer and writer.

Liz, Birgitte and Gail

Founding Editors, 2017-2022

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