

Editorial: Decolonising Systemic Practice

Marilena Karamatsouki, Joanna Michopoulou and Leah Salter

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This publication feels a long time in the making, and perhaps overdue as a themed issue, but with the subject being decolonising systemic practice - a core value of the journal, it is perhaps more of a punctuation mark in an ongoing dialogue.

It is an important punctuation at a time when decolonisation is so vital and so often foregrounded - at least at the level of theory if not at the level of practice or action. Some of the papers in this collection speak to that tension - of the space between theory and action. There are many challenges present and also opportunities to be challenging. These papers focus on the latter and they each, in differing ways, highlight innovative research and practice that are grounded in decolonial theory and action.

The nature of colonialism is that it continues to categorise and dehumanise us - centring white, male, western, able bodied, heterosexual, cisgender and neurotypical human as the "norm" from which divergence is viewed as "less than" and "other". The legacy of this continues to be a powerful discourse that requires ongoing challenge, and invites us to redefine for ourselves what community can be.

When we put out a call for papers for this issue alongside an opportunity to contribute to an online writing project with the same theme, we were encouraged by the interest shown and the potential for creating community around writing as a form of resistance. The workshops we offered for writers were very well attended. People wanted to engage in conversation, to take part in collective writing spaces. There was energy and passion, coming from a place of collective concern and, of course, important points of difference.

There were also stumbling blocks along the way, but this is to be expected. Gail Simon (one of the contributors of this special issue) has written previously about *Stolpersteine*, commemorative brass plaques embedded into pavements of roads in Europe to mark the lives of people murdered during the Holocaust.

Stolpersteine can be translated as "potential problem" or sticking point. Gail has referenced this in relation to the inevitability of tripping up along the way when we are speaking into the territory of colonialism (Simon, 2021).

In the process of producing this issue, we encountered some of these trip points but we also noticed a tremendous ethic of care and attention and a deep concern. Writing into this theme requires time and space as well as care, something that too few of us have available to us in our busy, daily lives amongst the multitude of concerns we have about the world. So, of course, not all writing ideas made it into this publication. They might find their way to publication at another point. We hope so. It does take time to speak into a theme that is so important and sensitive. We may know we are troubled by what is going on and we might know that we want to move, act, speak out, challenge and protest; and (dependent on how we are positioned and perceived) we may not be safe to do so, or may not be sure how to speak in a way that is sensitive to others or in a way that acknowledges our failings as well as our concerns. We may not know how to speak in ways that validate our own cultural experiences, without marginalising others, knowing that we only have a partial, temporary view of the world. We may not be able to gauge how our words will be perceived now, in this moment, let alone in the future when new things have come to light and new views have opened up. This can easily prevent us from putting pen to paper to create sentences that can seem like indelible marks. It is daunting. There are risks.

So, as we go forward with this issue, we acknowledge what we do not yet know and might never fully comprehend, from our limited standpoints. And we recognise and honour the courage of the authors who have contributed to this issue.

We acknowledge too that there are many overlapping, overwhelming challenges facing the world and facing us as practitioners right now. Gail Simon has referred to this time as an era of "panmorphic crisis" (Simon, 2021) and this feels very present. As we mark, in the week of this publication, the international day of commemoration and dignity of the victims of genocide, we are overwhelmed by the amount of loss and suffering in Israel and Palestine and the waves of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia that have followed. We acknowledge other conflicts in the world and the political climate in countries facing far right governmental and civic change. We are deeply troubled by the plight of people facing huge risks in their country of origin, trying to stay alive in war zones and/or political regimes that present a threat to their lives because of certain identity markers that are deemed "other".

We are also shaken by consequences of climate change resulting in lives lost, the demise of habitat and species - echoes of which can be seen across the world with varying levels of disruption and devastation. The imposed colonial governance of communities, currently and historically, locally and globally cannot be separated from this concern. There is so much to be preoccupied with and it is easy to feel unable to make a difference, to feel hopeless. All the papers in this issue offer opportunities to think beyond those feelings of hopelessness.

Each issue of a journal is a chapter in a bigger story and the papers here build on contributions from earlier publications, where authors have spoken out against the injustices they see in their daily lives. Some papers that come to mind are Charlotte Burck and colleagues' paper in volume 5.2 in which they speak of the impact of bearing witness and supporting people at the Uyghur Tribunal in the UK last year. Peace Anumah's powerful writing in issue 6.1 highlights the inequalities and

injustices experienced by Black people in the UK's health system. Cathy Richardson/Kineweskwêw's papers in issues 1.2 and 6.1 reflect on the experience of Indigenous people and the stark inequalities in health and wellbeing for First Nation communities. In this issue, Cathy and her colleague Nicolas Renaud turn their attention to education and ways of making community within learning cultures (more below). Creating a conversation between earlier issues and this issue is perhaps another way to create community and opportunities for solidarity, straddling differences in time and place.

Joanne Hipplewith in this issue speaks into this boldly and thoughtfully, offering an important critique of colonialist language and epistemology, referencing important Black and Indigenous scholars and the contributions they have made and acknowledging the relevance of ancestry. Joanne's research, grounded in systemic theory and practice, disrupts the dominant narratives of the academy. In describing her internal struggles and cultural reflexivity, Joanne's powerful writing is part of a process of decolonising her many selves.

Cathy Richardson/Kineweskwêw and Nicolas Renaud also speak to the challenges encountered in academia within the context of First Peoples' Studies. This is an important area for decolonising practice, re-imagining (or re-turning to) what is considered as knowledge and know-how. Cathy and Nicolas remind us of the relevance of Indigenous knowledge in how we can relate with, and take care of, each other and our earth. They also invite us to reflect on research as an instrument of colonialism.

Patrick Goh puts forward a strong argument for viewing systemic practice as a decolonial alternative to the dominant, colonial and neoliberal discourses within managerialism. Speaking from within lived experience as a person raised in a colonised nation, and as a Human Resources consultant, Patrick invites consideration of alternative practices, including the role of systemic reflexivity.

Gail Simon continues with this theme, reimagining systemic reflexivity as having the ability to break free from reflexive loops governed by culturally specific ideology. She proposes reflexivity as decolonial action - a 3rd order ethico-onto-epistemological form of accounting and activism.

Finally, **Mark Huhnen** reflects on a personal journey, making connections between anarchist philosophy and systemic thinking in terms of their ontology and politics. Taking us through a brief historical exploration of anarchy, Mark shares examples of using anarchist ideas in therapy practice and leadership coaching. Assemblages of power distribution and the anarchist critique of domination and oppression offers a framework to maintain a decolonial lens in practice.

And a special thanks to the reviewers of the papers in this issue. If you are interested in writing or reviewing for the journal, please email us editors@murmurations.cloud

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