

## Editorial

# Transmaterial Worlding in Practice

Lorna Edwards, Leah Salter, Gail Simon and Hugh Palmer

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Issue 1 of this tenth volume of *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice* has two sections which share a focus.

The first is a collection of writings which answer the question of what *transmaterial worlding* can look like in practice. The call for papers was a response to the 2019 paper published in this journal, [Transmaterial Worlding. Beyond Human Systems](#) written by two of the editors of this issue, Leah Salter and Gail Simon. The response was such that it is likely to lead to a second themed issue and/or a book of selected papers.

The second section offers short papers on the impact on practice of reading papers in this journal, a new development which will continue into future issues.

The focus on the impact of new ideas on practice, in both sections, is important. What we write needs to be meaningful and relevant for practitioners. Most papers in this journal are written by systemic practitioners who want to study their own practice and share how their learning might make a useful contribution to the world.

*World* is one of those terms which can be taken for granted - as if there is just one world, as a “thing” that exists akin to the planet Earth. In many spheres of practice and in everyday conversation *world* is a casually used term that assumes a level of shared understanding. We might assume that we have an idea about what *a world / the world* is and that most people would agree that the world, whatever it means to each of us, is precious. And yet we live in times in which the world is being treated badly. Some people may feel that the world is treating *them* badly - some parts or people more than others. And yet everything is connected. So what happens over there, to *that* part of the world, out of sight and out of mind to other parts of the world, needs to stay in sight and in mind in all parts, so we can try to make a difference in some way (Palmer, 2022).

This is clearly a systemic problem. What happens if you take the word world and turn it into a verb? What if you then consider how this relates to systemic practice, in all its forms? This is, in part, what *transmaterial worlding* invites us to consider. Karen Barad did that in their book, *Meeting the Universe Half-Way*, back in 2007. They riffed off social constructionist

theory showing how we make our worlds as we go, as we learn, as we reflect, become, try again. But they didn't just mean in language or through verbal communication. And they didn't mean that only humans do this. Donna Haraway (2016) equally conceptualised *worlding* as something that is enacted and embodied and "troubled" the idea that *worlding* is a human-only activity. *Worlding* takes place with our beyond-human fellows. That's a big shift. It displaces humans as the pinnacle of humanity, and "masters" of all they can see or get to.

*Transmaterial worlding* as a concept and as a practice development seeks to bridge systemic practice, social constructionism, decolonisation and new materialism in three important ways.

Firstly, by reframing "social" in social construction to expand beyond human to include all materiality so that social recognises we live in *transmaterial* world. *Transmaterial* invites consideration not just of materiality, but the relationships *between* materialities. It asks that we see everything as alive, as having rights whilst recognising they are subjected to hierarchical status imposed and maintained by the structures of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism and the anthropocentric, supremacist beliefs of human beings.

Secondly, it replaces the noun "construction" in social construction with the verb *worlding*. *Worlding* invites ongoing movement, a process always in flux. *Worlding* is the process of mattering, making, deciding who/what matters. It is a cycle of noticing as we do, as we go, as we reflect, as we revise and respond. It is an ecosystemic and transmaterial reflexive approach to living in a world in panmorphic crisis (Simon, 2021). All materialities are understood as communicative, as relational, and as co-constructing of realities with other materialities, human or otherwise. The term *material-discursive* allows us to acknowledge the realities of lived experience as co-created materially as well as discursively. It invites curiosity about what is present, influencing, influenceable and interactive but not yet acknowledged, heard or given status. It extends what Barad (2007) describes as *ethico-onto-epistemology* – an ethics led way of being-doing-becoming-responding in the world.

Thirdly, it recognises that inequalities exist between i) humans being positioned in hierarchies of who gets to even count as human; ii) between materialities in terms of who/what gets to count as worthy of life or rights. Transmaterial worlding promotes a social justice led systemic approach to understand how everything is connected within and beyond human systems. Mattering is always a political and ethical matter.

In this issue of *Transmaterial Worlding in Practice*, we have several contributions describing how people are working with transmaterial worlding in practice. The contributors tell important stories about practice development within systemic and other, wider practices. Some centralise *transmaterial worlding* as a key influence and some draw more heavily on other significant influences such as ecosystemic practices, new materialism, decolonisation, the post-human, ecotherapy, panpsychism, ecological matters. As a collection, the authors come together in celebrating a diversity of practice that share a deep concern for how we "world our worlds" (Haraway, 2016).

In the opening paper, "*The Entangled Human: Fourfold Vision, Sacred Unity and the Ethics of Transmaterial Living*", Hugh Palmer recognises that he's not just connected "to all of this, I'm entangled in it." This invites us to reflect on our, perhaps yet, unrecognised, entanglements both as systemic practitioners and in all our other daily-life roles. Hugh sets out the practice of Fourfold Vision as an ethical awareness of a larger transmaterial relational network.

Rolla Lewis shares relational practice with the transmaterial in his paper, *“Wandering with Mindful Wonderment”*. He goes on to share lifescaping action research where a group of people in different geographies share in zoom meetings about their relationship with a chosen tree.

In her paper, *“Summer Travelling with Posthumanism”*, Joanne Adams describes her experience of being with/in/of the sea during a summer holiday. She returns to systemic practice with the transmaterial idea of the tentacular which she describes in a subsequent supervision session.

Dominic Abraham and Danna Abraham tell the story of intra-species collaboration, as a transmaterial practice, grounded in mutual influence and shared responsiveness. Their paper, *“Aesthetics of Co-ordination: On Behalf of a Kinder Reply”* invites us to approach practice as a creative interaction, working with what is emerging.

Phil Arthington takes us away from the clinic as a context for therapy and into conversational partners' homes. In his paper, *“Transmaterial worlding in the home”* he describes how transmaterial worlding practice invites curiosity and openness with the human and other-than-human participants in the home.

Charlie Chapman's paper, *“Pragmatic Pathfinding: reflective walk and talks with my colleagues in children's services”*, invites us into an application of transmaterial worlding through her reflective walks and talks with colleagues in the outdoors of South Wales. We hear and see how she moves between her inner thoughts and outer talks on the challenges of her work and her feeling, “I need to be in a wider world”.

Finn Finlayson offers us explanatory and descriptive short paper, *“Transmaterial Worlding. A brief illustration of the theory in practice”*. It shares her process of understanding transmaterial worlding and acknowledges how Western capitalist society complicates the process of understanding. She shares stories of communities of practice around our relationships with clothes production and consumption and, in a systemic practice context, wonders how consideration of a situation through beyond-human-material may make possible the worlding of something new.

Jayashree George invites us into her painting as inquiry. In her paper, *“Attuning to Generational Relational Wisdom Through Elephants”*, she describes having a vision of painting 108 elephants and how this led to a journey of discovery, not only of elephant lives but of planetary health. She includes many of her paintings and describes the process of moving between

In the new *Impact of Reading on Practice* section, we include three articles in which systemic trainees or recent graduates reflect on the impact on their practice of reading papers from this journal.

In his paper, *“On Reading the ‘Aspects of Reading’”*, Joseph Grabiner-Wolfson responds to in Desa Markovic's paper, [Aspects of Reading](#) (2021). He traces how engaging with the multi-perspectival approach to reading systemic literature drew him into unexpected dialogue with the traditional Jewish exegetical method of PaRDeS, finding that both approaches resist singular interpretation in favour of layered meaning-making. In doing so, he arrives at a Batesonian insight; that the coherent thread in systemic thinking may lie not in shared content but in a shared method of learning to learn.

Working with women who have experienced partner violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armina Čerkić reflects on how reading Julia Jude's (2017) [African Indigenous Oral Traditional Endarkened Feminist Practice](#) prompted her to slow down and allow objects, such as a locked phone, children's

clothes or a photograph, to carry witness without requiring an explanation. Her paper, “*When Objects Refuse Silence: Violence, Resistance and the Re-shaping of Knowledge*” traces how this shift reshaped her understanding of knowledge, listening, and decolonising practice, and gave rise to an unexpected collaborative document.

In the third, and final paper in this section, Yuritzi Uribe Lemus offers “*Questioning Certainty: Theoretical Tensions in Practice. Tensions as an Ethical Companion*”. They write from within the pressures of doctoral training in couple and family therapy, where the injunction to “not know” had come to feel more like a performance than a genuine inhabitation, until reading [Stories of Self. Ideology in Action](#) by Gail Simon (2024) and [Towards a heart-centred philosophy: Embracing poetry as transformative practice](#) by Danna Abraham (2024) that offered her language for the ethical friction she had carried for a long time. She reframes tension as a companion that keeps practice accountable to human complexity over theoretical tidiness rather than something that requires solving.

As guest editors of this issue, we wish to thank the care and rigour offered by our reviewers and writers. Each issue of *Murmurations: Journal of Transformative Systemic Practice* is a community activity. We offer a reminder that this is a journal run by the systemic community for the community, human and beyond-human. Please check out our other calls for papers and get in touch if you have an idea for a themed issue or have a paper in mind that is looking for community to bring it into being.

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