

Editorial

Emergent Literacies, Cartographies and Ecologies for World-Making

Oliver Koenig, Eva Pomeroy, Megan Seneque, and Otto Scharmer

A new era has not just dawned but firmly taken root—an era that has gradually emerged and spilled through what were once mere cracks, now widened into ruptures (Mahanty et al., 2023). The rise of authoritarianism worldwide signals deep shifts in power and centralization. In our last editorial, we commented:

Democracies throughout the world are caught in a polarizing grip—echoed in rhetoric that swings between moving backward ("Again") and maintaining the status quo ("Still"). When choice is presented as "either-or," as it is throughout much of mainstream discourse, hardly any room is left for the "both-and" approaches necessary to embrace the complexities of our interconnected realities. (Koenig et al., 2024a, p. 2)

Six months on, the either-or discourse has taken on an increasingly vitriolic and even violent tone. While transformation often emerges from the margins, not all transformations inspire hope or inclusion. We borrow the metaphor of interstitial spaces—"space located in the shadow of conventional ... form" (Steele & Keys, 2015, p. 112)—to explore how these shifts, spilling through the cracks of

established norms, both expand the boundaries of what is possible and expose unsettling and destructive forces. These “in-between” spaces, once confined and silent, have now overflowed into public discourse, reshaping what is considered speakable and permissible. This reshaping is transformative (Sommer & McCoy, 2019) not as steady, incremental progression toward greater societal acceptance and awareness of difference, but as a series of ruptures that challenge our assumptions of an unfolding enlightenment. Instead of moving smoothly toward inclusion, these shifts reveal the fragility of progress and the contested nature of what constitutes transformation itself.

As we sit down to write this editorial, none of us are untouched by these currents. The ruptures writ large in our social and political systems show up in our own co-being and doing, with each of us situated in distinct personal and geopolitical contexts. We find ourselves occupying different positions as we navigate a central tension: how to speak hard truths to power while resisting the pull toward further polarization. For some of us, naming the emergent authoritarian, and exclusionary agendas feels essential to preserving democratic and inclusive futures. Yet, this does not preclude an equally pressing commitment to speaking in ways that open spaces for connection, dialogue, and the possibility of bridging differences, emphasized by others. Rather than opposing forces, these are entangled dynamics that we each carry within us, that surface in our lived experiences, our contexts, and the immediate demands of this work. Thus, as an editorial team, we are called to enter into frank, and at times uncomfortable, exchanges, and to listen across our own differences—in a sense, to turn toward a crisis of our own as a fractal of the context in which we do the work of awareness-based systems change. Together, we wrestle with the profound question of how to help bring into reality the systems transformations we know are necessary and what this requires of us now. This includes navigating the inner and collective forces of love, power, and justice that underpin such transformations (Kahane, 2023)—not to achieve a singular future but to co-create plural, just, and sustainable futures in which all can stand on equal footing.

This editorial emerges from our shared attempt to hold these tensions together—not as polarities that divide us but as forces that coexist within and between us, shaping our co-being, co-doing, and co-becoming. The question, then, is not whether to prioritize one position over the other, but how to navigate these tensions internally and collectively in ways that serve systems transformation. This work requires us to hold space for both grief over what has been lost and hope for what might yet emerge (Thaler, 2024). It demands that we engage both with the darkness and the light inherent in transformation (Tourish, 2013).

As we engage in collective sense-making of our current moment we find our different lenses afford different ‘sense,’ revealing how crises unfold not as abrupt, but rather cumulative, processes that reflect broader systemic currents. In offering a political ecology lens Mahanty et al. (2023) situates rupture within broader systemic processes. Far from being abrupt, they argue, rupture accumulates over time through the interplay of material drivers, slow violence,

and punctuated moments of crisis. This cumulative nature creates conditions of heightened insecurity and precarity that are deeply affective, unevenly distributed, and embedded within existing power configurations.

Yet, these crises rarely announce themselves as dramatic breaks. Instead, they spill through and into the interstitial, slowly seeping into the ordinariness of daily life. Their effects accumulate unnoticed at first, becoming part of routines, relationships, and attachments. This steady encroachment normalizes the extraordinary until it becomes ordinary—a process that Lauren Berlant’s reflection on crisis captures with profound insight:

A traumatic event is simply an event that has the capacity to induce trauma. My claim is that most such happenings that force people to adapt to an unfolding change are better described by a notion of systemic crisis or ‘crisis ordinariness’ and followed out with an eye to seeing how the affective impact takes form, becomes mediated. Crisis is not exceptional to history or consciousness but a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what’s overwhelming... The extraordinary always turns out to be an amplification of something in the works, a labile boundary at best, not a slammed-door departure. In the impasse induced by crisis, being treads water; mainly, it does not drown. Even those whom you would think of as defeated are living beings figuring out how to stay attached to life from within it, and to protect what optimism they have for that, at least. (Berlant, 2011, p. 10)

Berlant’s notion of “crisis ordinariness” invites us to see these transformations as the amplification of dynamics already embedded in the fabric of daily life. It asks us to hold the tension between what is overwhelming and what endures, to trace how hope and despair intertwine, and to sit with the complexities of a moment that defies easy resolution. This perspective doesn’t resolve the contradictions we face but illuminates the work of navigating them—a process that requires both patience and courage.

Yet, this analysis is incomplete without also reflecting inward. This involves critically examining how the identity-driven progressive discourse of our own contexts has, at times, contributed to losing connection with the lived realities of many. This gap between discourse and lived reality demands careful attention—our personal attention and that of the broader field of academia—as it has not only fostered alienation but also created fertile ground for conflict to be steered and manipulated. As Léger (2023) observes, “neoliberal centrists have sought to hegemonize identity politics, allowing it to further divide the left while at the same time doing nothing to reverse course on the upward redistribution of wealth” (p. 1). Much like the *proxy wars* of the Cold War, identity debates have become *proxy conflicts* in today’s cultural sphere obscuring and diverting attention from the structural inequalities so much in need of our attention.

This entanglement of cultural and class wars is further exacerbated by forces that distort democratic processes and erode collective agency (Somers & McCoy, 2019). As Scharmer (2024) notes, mass polarization prevents critical conversations about shared concerns and fractures the very foundations of democratic functioning. “Societies that lose those foundations of democratic functioning,” he warns, “are either disintegrating or heading toward the edge of a cliff” (para 9). Two forces in particular, he argues, are to be held accountable for this development: “dark money”—used invisibly to shape political agendas—and “dark tech”—also used invisibly to manipulate citizens’ viewpoints and voting behaviors. Together, they distort not only what is politically possible but also how citizens engage with one another, further entrenching divides and resulting in a “democracy whose soil is being degraded” (para 11).

This alignment of cultural polarization and economic concentration reveals a profound tension: Conflicts over identity often overshadow critical conversations about wealth inequality, gender inequities, and global disparities, leaving the structural inequalities perpetuated by economic systems unchallenged. Joan Tronto (2023) frames this dynamic within the concept of “Wealth Care,” a deeply undemocratic framework embedding the belief that “what democratic citizens should be most concerned to do is to advocate their interests” (p. 23). This framework operates within a landscape where cultural and economic dynamics disproportionately benefit the wealthiest, as evidenced by the fact that the bottom 50% of the world’s population in terms of income owns just 2% of global wealth, while the top 10% owns 76% (Chancel et al., 2022, p. 10). As Léger (2023) observes: “the various forms of identitarianism, left, right and centre, are today working to the advantage of the wealthiest ten and one percent of society” (p. 2).

German sociologists Carolin Amlinger and Oliver Nachtwey (2022) offer further insight into how these dynamics manifest, linking the rise of libertarian freedom to the experiences of precarity and exclusion described in Nachtwey’s concept of a relegated society (*Abstiegsgesellschaft*) (2023), in which increasing numbers of individuals experience a loss of status and security, fueling a sense of disillusionment with collective structures. Libertarian freedom, as Amlinger and Nachtwey (2022) argue, emerges in response to this precarity, viewing social agreements as “external restrictions that limit one’s own self-realization in an illegitimate way” (p. 12; translated by the authors). In this context, the emphasis on personal autonomy over collective welfare becomes a mechanism for navigating structural disempowerment, even as it exacerbates tensions where boundaries of public and private interests collide.

As Gaffikin (2023) suggests, this climate of division reflects a deliberate effort to keep discourse off balance. The narrative of a deeply polarized society often oversimplifies a more nuanced reality. Mau et al. (2023), in their analysis of societal trigger points, argue that many conflicts dominating public discourse arise not from irreconcilable divides but from specific issues that ignite disproportionate contention. These trigger points distort the perception of societal consensus and obscure opportunities to address deeper structural

inequities through collective effort. For example, in a recent report, the United Nations Development Program found 69% of respondents in a global survey reported a willingness to reduce their income to contribute to climate change mitigation—arguably the most ‘collective’ of wicked problems—yet only 43% believe that others feel the same way (UN Human Development Report 2023/2024a, p. 6). Moreover, 68% of those surveyed simultaneously reported feeling little influence over their government’s decisions and half reported not feeling in control of their own lives (UN Human Development Report, 2023/2024b, p. 110). This lack of perceived influence undermines collective efforts, explaining why altruistic sentiment often fails to translate into tangible action focused on the common good.

To use an American term, the situation is a “hot mess.” Within this context, one can easily perceive the process of creating this and other editorials, like much sense-making about our current moment, to be a chronicling of collective collapse, a notion reflected in the emerging field of collapsology (Servigne & Stevens, 2020). This field often engages with conversations centered on navigating the trajectory of collapse—conversations that, while vital for understanding our current predicament, carry the risk of fostering apathy and closing down pathways to collective action and change. Yet, as Ian Fazey noted in the *In Dialogue* feature in the previous issue of JASC, “we know that to create something new, we have to allow things to die first. So, at what level does one simply accept that we are just in the collapse of the old system?” (Koenig et al., 2024b, p. 240).

If we accept this proposition, that we are bearing witness to the collapse of the old system or, as Vanessa Andreotti frames it, “hospicing modernity” (Machado de Oliveira, 2021), we return to the question of what is ours to do in this time. When 50% of people around the globe feel they have no or limited control over their lives and even less over our public spaces, where is our agency? As we noted in our previous editorial, in our own work, it is through “co-developing our own practices and rituals” (Koenig et al., 2024a, p. 1) that we cultivate the alternative interstitial spaces that allow us to explore this question—different and third discursive and material practices that exist in-between the restrictive either-or deadlock (Hussenius et al., 2016, p. 13). Within this effort, the space we try to create and the spaces that inspire us are those where sustained acts of community-building challenge existing contexts, loosen rigid boundaries, and nurture sites of interchange that shape possible futures.

Co-curating a journal issue, and then writing an editorial that traces the thematic connections running through each contribution, is always an act of sense-making. As a new journal representing an emerging field, each editorial is simultaneously a reflection on our own journey with the field of Awareness-Based Systems Change. What strikes us in this reflection is the sense of being on new territory, where our methods and frames haven’t yet quite caught up. We find ourselves in the dual task of questioning current ways of understanding, being, and doing in the world while, at the same time, through these

contributions and within ourselves, something else is opening up—not so much new as an exploration of what has been present in our experience but largely unexpressed.

This reflection brought us to a core question: how do we navigate the space between the tangible and intangible? And how do we do this while integrating both “the ‘enlightened’ and ‘shadow’ sides of our culture, at both the social and individual levels” (Rajagopalan & Midgley, 2015, p. 559)? The challenge was to explore how the articles in this issue speak to the space between these dualities and their potential to support *becoming* within the context of shadow in this new era.

In this exploration, three central themes emerged, guiding us in our navigation of world-making: emergent literacies, cartographies, and ecologies. Each is distinct yet intertwined, contributing uniquely to the fabric of awareness-based transformation. Their relationship is neither sequential nor linear but rather braided together in dialogue, much like systemic transformation work where conversations and interactions spill into each other, forming an interconnected whole, showing that systemic intervention flourishes when varied knowledge practices intertwine (Rajagopalan & Midgley, 2015).

Emergent literacies explore ways of knowing that go beyond the visible and known, inviting us into a relational accountability that is ontological, ethical, and epistemological (Barad, 2007). One dimension of emergent literacies involves fostering a deeper awareness of the emotional and psychological dimensions of engaging with our own knowing and doing. As Bendell (2021) note, “People who do not experience any distress, despite being exposed to the information on the situation, might be experiencing something psychopathological,” (p.36) thus emphasizing the necessity of acknowledging and engaging with difficult emotions as part of a genuine literacy practice that embraces relational accountability.

A second dimension emphasizes the embodied, relational, and co-emergent nature of knowing. Erin Manning asserts that:

Thought is not first in the mind. It is in the bodying... where it is not the mind that speaks, what emerges is not a subject-centered narrative, but an account of how thought moves, how it moves us and how it moves the world. A practice of collective learning is about the movement of thought, engaging thought at the immanent limit where it is still fully in the act. (Manning, 2019, p. 47)

This approach to literacy highlights that learning and knowledge are collective, embodied acts that extend beyond individual cognition to encompass shared practices. It calls for a reorientation toward interconnectedness and collective responsibility, shifting the focus from static representations of knowledge to dynamic processes of understanding that move through and with us, implicating us as both carriers and movers of thought (Manning, 2021).

Emergent cartographies challenge us to rethink the act of mapping itself—not just as a means of representing space but as a practice that can reveal or obscure the potential for new ways of being. Indigenous educator, artist, and activist Lilly Manycolors (2022) conceives of forms of mappings as mechanisms of worldbuilding rooted in interrelationality and politics of care. For her, “Worldbuilding is defined as creating a tangible space where species are braided together. I believe people are capable of disidentifying with imperial-colonial mapping practices to worldbuild + curate reality otherwise” (Manycolors, 2022, para 7). Such mapping practices and resulting cartographies emphasize relationality and collective participation, resisting colonial and extractive approaches to understanding space. Bayo Akomolafe captures the essence of such forms of un/settling:

To be in a place is to keep making maps to locate oneself there again and again, and being at home is always an exercise in cartography. So how do we find ourselves in modernity? We keep lists, we name things, we lose them, we filter out information, we adopt positions, we promise, we renege, we try out things. These exercises make ‘place’ an ongoing socio-material dynamic.

This suggests that to be displaced is not so much to be chased away from one’s land (indeed, displacement can happen without being chased away), as it is to be interrupted by the imposition of a finished product, a complete map. This is the stuff of the colonial: the denial of place and the insertion of the frozen. The toxic gift of arrival. (Bayo Akomolafe, 2020, para 1–2)

Unlike conventional mapping that freezes landscapes, positionality, and imposes order, emergent cartographies reveal the lived, shifting nature of place and location, capturing how spaces can become sites of negotiation and resistance.

Finally, *emergent ecologies* ask us to consider the interconnectedness of life systems, encouraging us to embrace difference and interdependence as foundational elements of our collective world-making. Peter Block’s (2008) argument that “only when we are connected and care for the well-being of the whole that a civil and democratic society is created” (p. 9) reinforces this view, highlighting that ecologies are relational spaces that nurture collective world-making. His perspective emphasizes that authentic transformation arises from embracing interconnectedness, fostering environments where true collaboration and mutual care can thrive. As Escobar (2024) writes, “we have to return to this basis in biology, the biological basis of coexistence they refer to as ‘love,’ which today we could perhaps call ‘care’” (p. 131). This emphasis on care as a fundamental practice aligns with Haraway’s concept of *sympoiesis*, or “making-with,” which posits that no entity exists in isolation but is always in a state of co-creation (Haraway, 2016). Such ecologies activate a “relational field at its point of inflection, creating a new composition that is capable of keeping difference alive” (Manning, 2016, p. 234). This invites us to reconsider the human-centric

narratives that dominate our understanding of ecosystems and to foster practices that sustain diversity, nurturing spaces for shared survival and healing.

Together, these three dimensions—literacies, cartographies, and ecologies—offer a layered approach to world-making that resists the simplicity of linear narratives and embraces the complexity of entangled relationships. They remind us that genuine transformation is not an individual endeavor but a collective one, flourishing within the interstitial, relational spaces of care, negotiation, and shared accountability. These spaces hold both the visible and invisible, bringing awareness to what often lies beneath or in the shadow of conventional discourse. By avoiding rigid frameworks or singular interpretations, this integrated approach cultivates coherence while maintaining space for deep heterogeneity—essential for meaningful systems change.

Contributions to This Issue

Each contribution in this issue—in its own way—cuts through the layered approach of literacies, cartographies, and ecologies, confronting today's discourses with tough questions but also with potential solutions rooted in deep and ethical practice. They show that true transformation requires letting real experiences challenge and evolve our concepts, ensuring they stay relevant.

This issue commences and features four *Peer-Reviewed Articles*. First, Judith Enriquez's article, *Becoming-Story: A Decolonised Desire of a Colonised 'I'*, explores literacy, identity, and decoloniality through the lens of personal disruption and systemic critique. Set against the backdrop of a literacy project aligned with Sustainable Development Goals and shaped by the dominance of the English language, Enriquez recounts how the Covid-19 pandemic fractured her research and academic self. This rupture serves as an opening to reimagine literacies beyond developmentalism, dominant narratives, and textual confines. Through the concept of *becoming-story*, Enriquez traces how literacy, voice, and self are interwoven with ways of knowing that are shaped by both colonial legacies and personal entanglements with land, language, and community. She critiques the reductionist paradigms of solutionism and "best practices" that permeate both research and global development, offering instead a vision of literacy as embodied, relational, and ecological. Drawing from Indigenous epistemologies and grounded in experiences of listening to the land and the stories it holds, the article weaves together a narrative of literacy events as life-based and life-giving, offering a poetic methodology of walking, listening, and memory work. By slowing down and attending to relational accountability, Enriquez enacts a decolonial approach that invites readers to rethink literacies as processes of collective becoming.

In a series of articles to delineate Radical Participatory and Relational Design, Victor Udoewa's third article published in *JASC Studies in Radical Biocracy: Flows from Relational Being to Relational, Autonomous Decision-Making*, reimagines decision-making as a systemic practice grounded in relational ways of being. Critiquing conventional models rooted in individualism

and competition, Udoewa introduces *Radical Biocracy*, a relational approach to transform decision-making into a dynamic process, embedded in mutual interdependence and ecological principles. At its core, Radical Biocracy relies on three key ecological "nutrients": relationality, emergence-conducive principles, and relational autonomy. These elements create conditions where decision-making becomes an emergent phenomenon, bypassing the need for hierarchical deliberation. Drawing on biological metaphors, such as the self-healing properties of fractured bones, Udoewa illustrates how interconnected processes can generate solutions that are symbiotic and unplanned, yet deeply responsive to the needs of the system, pointing to new cartographies for understanding decision-making as a shared, relational act. Grounded in a project to co-design an equitable, racially just Parent-Teacher Association, his article invites a rethinking of autonomy as something deeply relational, where individual actions are interwoven with collective intentions.

Bianca Briciu's article, *Absencing as Attentional Violence and Its Impact on Well-Being: Loss of Resonance in Advanced Capitalism*, critically examines how advanced capitalism shapes and undermines well-being. Drawing on two concepts from Scharmer's work, Briciu explores how absencing as attentional violence—the systemic de-sensing and disengagement from the interconnected nature of self, others, and the world—manifests in advanced capitalist societies' framing of well-being as individual self-optimization. In her article she works to unpack the pervasive internalization of capitalist values, linking self-worth to productivity and reducing the complexity of well-being to a consumerist model. This reductionism fosters what Briciu terms inner, relational, and social absencing: a lack of awareness of one's wholeness, the commodification of relationships, and a dominant social logic of alienation and disconnection. In the main part of her article, she traces how even transformative practices geared towards enhancing well-being such as mindfulness, workplace spirituality, and Theory U, are at risk of being co-opted by the very capitalist logic they seek to resist. Through an engagement with attentional violence, the article challenges to resist the logics of advanced capitalism and to nurture practices that restore resonance and wholeness in personal, relational, and social contexts.

The last peer-reviewed article of this issue by Ricardo Dutra Gonçalves and Lisa Grocott's *Awareness-Based Design: Bringing Design to Social Presencing Theater* is a seminal contribution introducing *Awareness-Based Design (ABD)* as a living curriculum for engaging with the intangible dimensions of human experience—thoughts, emotions, felt senses, and sensations—through relational and co-creative processes. Drawing on case studies from India and Chile, the authors offer rich accounts of how ABD prompts—ranging from visualizations to sensory tools—enable participants to access and articulate deeply personal and relational experiences. These prompts serve to illuminate the non-verbal, pre-reflective layers of experience, fostering transformative shifts in perception and action. By introducing the interconnected literacies of *making visible, making space, making aware, and making sense*, the authors exemplify how design can make the ephemeral tangible, and explore how inner awareness can and needs to

be connected to outer transformation. In so doing, they expand the possibilities of design to include not just the creation of objects or systems but the cultivation of relational and generative capacities within the social field. This article serves as a prelude to the upcoming *Special Issue on Social Presencing Theater (May 2025)*, offering readers a first deep dive into the potential of combining social arts (and design) and embodied awareness.

This issue features our fourth book review, and the second by Norma Romm, who explores José-Rodrigo Córdoba-Pachón's 2024 publication *Ritual and Systems Thinking: Managing an Initial Encounter*. Once again, Romm provides an account of her intimate engagement with the work, founded in relationship with its author and drawing from her own vast experience with systems thinking and systems change. She draws out the core through-lines and questions raised by Córdoba-Pachón in his extensive exploration of the role of ritual to heighten awareness of “life forces bigger than ourselves” and their role in systems change. In doing so, Romm concludes, Córdoba-Pachón “invites us too to embark on such a journey, partly through engaging with his deliberations, but also creatively extending them” (Romm, 2024 p.129).

This issue's *In the Making* and *Discussant Commentary* bring to the fore the issue of evaluation in awareness-based systems change—a key aspect of the work that has not yet been broached in JASC. In their paper *Generative Evaluation: Learning With and for Living Systems*, Malika Virah-Sawmy, Christina Tewes-Gradl, and Pierre Golbach share their early work exploring the potential for evaluation itself to be a generative force. Central to their approach is their conceptualization of the settings in which they work as living systems that, when held organically with warmth and space for emergence, can engage in the “daring, complex, and exploratory interventions” (Virah-Sawmy et al., 2024 p. 132) needed for transformation. Inspired by Michael Quinn Patton's *Developmental Evaluation*, they describe a hybrid evaluation-intervention approach to evaluation that brings together stakeholders of an initiative or collaboration to re-connect, re-fresh purpose, and re-view design, and they illustrate this approach with three distinct case studies. It is our great fortune in this issue to have Michael Quinn Patton himself as the Discussant for this exploratory work. He locates the work within the proliferation of evaluation approaches, highlighting that the articulation of these distinctions is in fact an important development as the relatively new field of formal and systemic evaluation evolves. Rooted in the notion of project accountability, and a command-and-control approach, evaluation has evolved in step with recognition of the ongoing, complex, dynamic, and generative process of program and systems change. For Patton, as we seek to create more sustainable and equitable futures through programs that reflect this recognition, aligning evaluation methodology with program purpose is particularly appropriate and relevant. It is here that he locates and sees the potential contribution of Generative Evaluation.

In this issue's *Innovations in Praxis*, Janine Saponara gives a rich account of what is involved in creating environments and building containers for authentic

citizen participation. She uses the Rethink DF 2030 project as her field for exploration. The project engaged stakeholders from 33 cities in the Federal District of Brazil as they co-developed a Strategic Public Policy Plan. The process involved 46 facilitators from over 5 Brazilian states in the co-design and co-facilitation of a 12-month on-line process, using Theory U as framing methodology, supported by other transformative methods and approaches. The narrative reveals the quality of conscious and creative artistry needed to build containers at different levels of scale to hold the level of complexity and tensions inherent in collaborative governance, as diverse groups seek to co-shape inclusive, transformative pathways. In this piece, Saponara identifies and unpacks three essential dimensions of their own transformation system that helped them evolve as individuals and as active contributors to the containers they created: *connection, coherence and amplification*.

This issue's *In Dialogue* makes visible what it means to be and to become awareness-based systems change through the very process of intervention itself. In conversation with Associate Editor Megan Seneque, Teo Lordache, Sharon Munyaka, and Liz Alperin Solms explore what it meant for them to be a container for systems transformation in their work of co-leading an in-person UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Leadership Lab in Liberia. They reveal their journey of navigating the interstitial spaces, not only within and amongst themselves as 'co-facilitators' in all their diversity, but also in the complex context of Liberia, a country which they had never previously visited. In many ways their transformation journey is an embodiment of the key question we have explored in this editorial: "how do we navigate the space between the tangible and intangible? And how do we do this while integrating both "the 'enlightened' and 'shadow' sides of our culture, at both the social and individual levels?" They provide a living example of what it means to create new narratives of possibility (personal and collective) in a context of crisis and with a history of conflict. In the process of creating a container of love and care, which held diversity at multiple levels, they reveal the emergent literacies, cartographies, and ecologies required for world-making in times of rupture and profound transition.

This issue began with the acknowledgment of a new era—an era of ruptures spilling through the cracks of the structures that once seemed to contain and hold together. These cracks have widened into gaps that are not easily bridged. The rise of authoritarianism, the intensification of inequality, and the fracturing of collective agency have left many feeling adrift, unsure of where to stand or how to move forward. Yet, as much as these ruptures reflect a breaking apart, they can also become "open moments" (Mahanty et al., 2023, p. 187), where both risks and opportunities open up—spaces where the difficult work of wading through uncertainty, rather than rushing to patch the cracks, becomes possible.

To wade in this water is to feel its depth and its cold, to sit with the discomfort of not knowing how or if we will reach the other side. It is also to take responsibility—not in the sense of control or mastery, but in response-ability (Barad, 2007): the capacity to engage with care and integrity in the messy,

relational work of transformation. This involves more than naming the external forces that perpetuate inequality and exclusion; it requires us to examine, with humility and honesty, the frameworks and narratives we ourselves employ. This has been our own process as a team writing this editorial in a moment in time that feels fractured and fractious—within, between and around us. We hope our effort to walk the talk of awareness-based systems change and hold ourselves accountable to the relational work we call for in the world is reflected in the editorial itself.

Writing this editorial has actually been such a process for us as an editorial team given we have not been united about our perception of the current moment or what is needed now. At times our work together has been deeply emotional; at other times it has been fraught with our own shortcomings, misperceptions and contradictions. In navigating these pitfalls, we have tried to walk the talk of awareness-based systems change. This meant holding ourselves accountable to the relational dynamics we call for in the world, challenging the dualisms that pervade not just society but also our own ways of thinking, and finding ways to bring our own personal and emotional engagement with the content into a commentary that could otherwise remain safely hidden in third-person analysis.

Addendum: Milestones and Transitions

As this issue closes, we are also reminded on two significant developments on JASC's maturation journey, which mark both an ending and an opening—emblematic of the interplay of continuity and change that the journal tries to embody.

The first is a moment of recognition: JASC is now listed in the *Directory of Open Access Journals* (DOAJ) and has been awarded the *DOAJ Seal*. This honor, bestowed on only about 10% of the journals in the directory, signifies adherence to best practices in open-access publishing. For Ph.D. candidates, this listing makes it easier to include their work in JASC, and for international grant proposals, it serves as a mark of excellence.

The second moment is a wholehearted thank you and farewell. Kelvy Bird, who has been an integral and founding member of our journal and production team, is stepping away from her role. Kelvy's care-full attention to design and layout has shaped the journal's aesthetic identity—an attention to the spaces between, the gaps otherwise easily missed. Her foundational contributions over the past four years have ensured that the offerings within JASC are not just meaningful but receivable. Whether locating artists' pieces or providing her own, Kelvy has brought visual coherence to our shared work, offering a sense-making that is just as vital as the words themselves. Her legacy will remain imprinted in the DNA of this journal, and we are deeply grateful for her artistry and herself as a person—Kelvy you will be dearly missed. Fittingly this issue's artwork, bringing beauty and meaning into the margins and spaces of our collective work, is by Kelvy herself.

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