

## Change in Flow: How Critical Incidents Transform Organisations

**Editors: Nancy Wallis and Maria Spindler**

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Nancy Wallis and Maria Spindler

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*Editors' Notes*

## **Change in Flow: How critical incidents transform systems**

Welcome to our special issue of the COS journal, Volume 5 Issue 1. This issue is dedicated to the exploration of flow, and how it may be enhanced, and disrupted, as part of the ongoing dynamics in the life of a system. It has been said that a system is perfectly designed to get the results it does. In our selection of articles for this issue, we invite you to share in the experience of the authors as they describe the nuances and shapers of flow as a key contributor to outcomes in the systems they describe, whether the system is the Self, an interpersonal relationship, or a business organization. Join with our authors as we seek to better understand how change in the homeostasis, or the state of flow in a system, is influenced by intention, by other persons, and by critical events.

First, we share in the exploration of flow intra-personally as artist Adra describes ways in which chaos theory informs her creative process. She explains vividly how chaos may be experienced as having an inherent order, and may even be experienced as flow, if the artist is willing to let go of control during the creative process. She explores several ways individuals may engage with flow, including in her own process of painting and within a larger organizational context as part of exploring chaos within organizations.

Brembach also uses both first- and third-person perspectives as she reveals the flow within human movement as a means for accessing the potential humans may bring to their work as they seek to understand and resolve conflict between them. She illustrates this by describing a case in which a team uses movement to better understand and resolve conflict between the team and its leadership.

Miller and McCann direct our attention to the second-person, interpersonal space as they consider the interplay between two colleagues, none other than themselves, as they simultaneously create, engage in, and reflect upon their

flow while collaborating on a writing project...their very article for this issue! Their account includes highlights of Csikszentmihalyi's original work in flow theory, providing a focal point for readers as they savor the unique inquiries into flow throughout the articles in this issue.

Herdman-Barker and Wallis urge us to appreciate another form of flow, that of the fluidity inherent in the unfolding of a person's life journey, which includes all sorts of adventure, loss, love, success, surrender, revelation and more. Using the metaphor of yin and yang, they guide us through an exploration of the tension held in considering adult development as including the hierarchical order of human development (the developmental "map"), while reverently holding up the contextualized, dissonant and oftentimes untidy realities of the human experience of maturation.

Emerson and Wallis turn our attention to another example of flow as part of a complex process, that of using polarity management to harness the flow in paradoxical tensions. Citing the seminal work of Barry Johnson, and using a case from their consulting work together, they describe how polarity thinking can help manage two poles of a paradox by depicting the flow along an imaginary infinity loop formed by accentuating more of the upsides and less of the downsides of the two poles, also using a third-person, organizational perspective.

Pircher narrates an actual consulting case where flow, experienced as an emergent quality of a self-organizing structure, is leveraged to guide a reorganization of an Austrian firm from a hierarchical organizational structure to a more self-directed and flexible, process-oriented one.

The issue concludes with a dialogue between Schüller and Spindler on "Flow beyond Systems". Their lively thoughts unfold around the core question of how patterns in societal and business life can be recreated beyond the familiar by intentionally connecting to the undivided life force, cultivating multiple lead systems: somatic, cognitive, relational and emotional. Inspirational interplays of humanly embedded individuals and new patternings are triggered in the minds of the reader while the two are interweaving these

challenging ideas and needs for action with the movement of COS. In this regard, it is also a reflective dialogue!

We wish you an enjoyable reading journey here, one that stimulates your curiosity about the power in flow and how it may contribute to increasingly meaningful explorations.

Nancy Wallis and Maria Spindler  
Los Angeles and Vienna, May 2016  
<http://www.cos-journal.com>

## About the Authors

**Suzy Adra**, Ph.D completed her dissertation entitled *The States of Presence and Insight in The Painting Process* at the California Institute of Integral Studies, in May of 2016. She is a frequent presenter at the Science & Non-duality (SAND) Conference where she shares her academic research, and artwork. She is a freelance art curator, a painter, and has been studying, and teaching yoga since 1998.

To see more of Suzy's art and writings, visit: <https://ciis.academia.edu/SAdra>

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is a member of the Academy of Management and serves on the board of its Management Consulting Division where she chairs its Doctoral Consortium. Nancy is a Visiting Scholar in Organizational Leadership at Pitzer College and lecturer at Danube University Krems.

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