

Prof. Dr. Omar Gelo



Head of the PhD programme

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- *Why do I work for SFU?*

I work at SFU because of two main reasons. First, SFU is the first institution in the world who had brought the training of psychotherapy into university academics. This is the case since SFU believes that psychotherapy lies at the crossroad between practice and science; in other words, the professional practice of psychotherapy and the scientific knowledge related to it represent the two inseparable sides of the same coin. Second, SFU is the place of pluralism with regard of the composition of its staff (psychologists, psychotherapists, anthropologists, philosophers, etc.), the psychotherapeutic orientations considered (psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, family-system, etc.), the research methods employed (theoretical as well as quantitative, qualitative and/or mixed-method), the research questions investigated (efficacy, process, relationship between process and outcome, history, philosophical foundations, etc.) and more. All this provides me and the students with a unique environment and opportunity to develop both professionally and personally, engaging us with a challenge that I consider extremely fruitful and fascinating for anyone interested in psychotherapy.

- *What is interesting about my discipline?*

I have been always fascinated by how things change over time: seasons, architectures, fashion/styles, but also and especially persons' habits, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. This is maybe the reason why, professionally, I do what I do: in fact, in my research I am mainly interested in identifying the general mechanisms through to which people change as a result of psychotherapy. In doing this, I mainly refer to Dynamic Systems Theory, a meta-theory which tells us that: (a) Change can be explained by the same general principles (e.g., self-organization and emergence) across the most disparate fields (from physics and chemistry through psychology, sociology, and economics until ecology); (b) Phases of turbulence and disorder are necessary (although not sufficient) in order for change to take place. Such an approach has up to now allowed us to find out that: (a) During psychotherapy, people do not change in a progressive and predictable way; on the contrary, their path is characterized by many ups and downs, forths and backs, where moments of progress are constantly interrupted by difficult moments of stops and falls; (c) people who benefits from psychotherapy are able to change over time following a two-step-forward-one-step-back progression change is not. These findings are extremely fascinating because not only because they allow to take into account phenomena which clinicians face in their everyday practice, but because they give us an idea of the extent to which change in psychotherapy resembles change in many other domains of life. I am convinced that a better understand of this has to do with a better understanding of what Fritjof Capra has named the "web of life".