



# Transform

NEW VOICES IN COMMUNITY MUSIC

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**Editorial**  
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## EDITORIAL

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I am delighted to welcome you to the December, 2024, 5th edition of Transform, an open-access, peer-reviewed journal published by the International Centre for Community Music (ICCM). The nine articles in this edition emerged from the presentations given at the 8th ICCM student research symposium, *'Not a puppet on strings': Tension and freedom within practitioner-researchers*, held in November 2023. Developed with my colleague Nicola McAteer, we aimed to bring together early career researchers from across the globe to discuss and explore the potential 'tensions' felt as a community musician engaged with research, inviting researchers to respond to one or more of the areas of enquiry below:

Identifying and inhabiting  
Advocacy vs criticality  
Navigating and responding  
Impacting and influencing

The authors of this journal provide thoughtful and insightful consideration of the decisions and approaches that community music researchers may take to navigate the multifaceted and ever-changing contexts and tensions that arise when working with people and institutions through research.

For instance, Laura Curtis's article, 'Empowering Who? A Critical Examination of 'Giving Voice' in Group Singing Contexts', critiques the dominant notion of 'giving voice' within theoretical frameworks of empowerment. Through a comprehensive literature review and a case study of the Childless Voices Choir, Curtis underscores the significance of reflective practice and the notion of vulnerability within community music practice. This acknowledgement and exploration of these two areas is essential for community musicians and community music researchers in navigating the potential different power dynamics that may hinder participants' sense of empowerment.

In her article 'Embodying Artistic Citizenship in Addiction Recovery Musical Contexts', Kate Daly considers the role and use of Arts Practice Research (APR) as an approach to community music research. Daly outlines an emerging conceptual framework for artistic citizenship and reveals how applying APR can create a symbiotic process when undertaking research. This process not only enhances practitioner-researchers' awareness and insights regarding their facilitation practices but also serves as a site for data collection and theoretical development. Through discussing the application of APR in her own research, Daly considers some of the critical decisions that she has made and the implications that this has had on her approach to research and the construction of her theoretical framework.

Meanwhile, Pulaporn Sreewichian's article, 'Reflection on the Social Prescribing of Music Activities: Examining the Current Challenges, Limitations, and Future Pathways', offers a fresh perspective on the challenges and limitations confronting the social prescribing of musical activities. As the number of socially prescribed activities continues to rise, Sreewichian's paper comes at a pivotal moment, addressing critical challenges such as lack of funding, access and availability issues, and the difficulties of establishing and maintaining partnerships—relevant concerns across various community music contexts. Sreewichian's article opens the floor for



discussions on potential steps to tackle these issues and improve the social prescription of group music-making activities. In highlighting these issues, Sreewichian invites community musicians to consider how they too may navigate these potential boundaries and barriers within social prescribing activities.

Within Marieke Slovin's article 'Migration Songs': A Community Music Project for Hearing Migrant Voices', we return to this notion of the 'voice' to explore how community music practice may be used as a means for enabling asylum seekers to share their stories. Reflecting on her songwriting approach employed within a music programme working with asylum seekers, Slovin highlights how community artists may develop spaces for enabling opportunities for agency, empowerment and a feeling of internal asylum for participants. Through reflecting on this process, Slovin identifies a shift in her perceptions of empowerment and its connection with creative processes. This idea of shifting thoughts and processes is a prime example of the symbiotic relationship that Daly (2024) identifies as a product of employing APR methodologies and undertaking research. Slovin identifies how this shift in thought impacted her approach to working with the participants and understanding the impact of the work.

Maria-Rosario Bravo Collado's article, 'Harmony in Discord: Unveiling Auditioned Practices in Chilean Community Choirs through Facilitator Perspectives' invites us to explore, through an ethnographic lens, the relationship between individuals' and groups' cultural rights to create music on their own terms in Chile. Throughout the article, Collado examines themes of inclusion and cultural democracy while discussing four community choirs. She addresses the tensions associated with auditioned choirs, noting that the practice of holding auditions is deeply rooted in Chilean choral culture, often driven by the artistic expectations of both participants and facilitators, as well as external pressures from collaborating or sponsoring institutions. However, the insights gathered from the four case studies reveal that approaches to developing and sustaining choirs are evolving. Facilitators are increasingly navigating these expectations through recognising the non-musical motivations that lead participants to join choirs leading to small changes in many choir leaders approaches to auditioning and facilitating choirs. By acknowledging this shift, Collado emphasises developments that may be essential for promoting participant agency and facilitating the enactment of cultural democracy.

In Steve Ryan's article '"Songs build little rooms in time": constructing sustainability through reciprocity within community music songwriting practice', we explore autoethnography as an approach to community music research. By examining his own songwriting practices involving children and young people, Ryan delves into the concept of vulnerability, laying the groundwork for a framework practitioners may find applicable to their work within these contexts. This consideration of the notion of vulnerability harks back to Curtis's (2024) acknowledgment of the importance of acknowledging vulnerability as a step towards empowerment.

Continuing the discourse on vulnerability, Rafaela Trolou's article, 'My Threefold Nature in a Community Music Intervention: Exploring the Ethical Dilemmas as a Researcher, Practitioner, and Human Being', investigates the ethical complexities that community music researchers encounter during their investigations. Trolou reflects on her experiences as an early-stage researcher and practitioner working with older adults in Greece. She contemplates the multifaceted positionalities—researcher, practitioner, and human being—that researchers bring to their work. Through her analysis, Trolou elucidates the interconnections among these three identities, the ethical dilemmas that arise from their convergence, and the implications for the research process. To navigate these challenges, she advocates for researchers to incorporate reflexivity into their approach as a way to make sense of the ethical considerations they face within their work.



The subsequent articles in this edition of *Transform* focus on the impact of researcher positionality. Charlotte O'Donoghue's contribution, 'Exploring the Dual Identity of the Community Musician-Researcher: Challenges and Opportunities in Youth Orchestra Participation Research,' examines the challenges and opportunities afforded by the dual positionality that community music researchers adopt when undertaking their research. O'Donoghue reflects on how the 'insider-outsider' perspective can yield significant insights into research contexts, fostering trust with participants. However, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges, including concerns related to subjectivity, bias, and issues of trust and confidentiality. By probing the dual identity of the researcher, O'Donoghue offers nuanced perspectives that address some of the ethical dilemmas identified in Trouloulou's (2024) work.

This edition concludes with Cynthia Kinnunen's paper 'Weaving and untangling identities: exploration of a midlife journey as practitioner-researcher-student', which presents an autoethnographic and a/r/tography exploration into the experiences of a mature student undertaking PhD studies. Kinnunen explores the complexities and tensions inherent in the research journey, encompassing feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, belonging, disconnection, and moments of optimism and reflection. In a candid and insightful article, Kinnunen brings to light the vulnerability many of us experience as community music researchers, alongside the sheer joy that attracts many of us to research community music.

As the guest editor of this edition of *Transform*, I have felt joy working alongside these fantastic authors, watching their ideas emerge and develop throughout the past year. At this point, I would like to thank the authors for their excellent contributions to this edition of *Transform* and their engagement with the process. I would also like to thank the reviewers for this edition of *Transform*, who have supported and guided the authors throughout the process. Finally, I also want to thank Fran for all of your support in pulling the digital aspects of this journal together.

All that is left to say is that I hope you, as a reader, will enjoy engaging with these authors' ideas as much as I have over the past 12 months.