Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Whatever Happened to Community Music?

Contents

Executive Summary

The aim of the research network on which this document reports was to improve understanding of the historic, current, and potential roles that community music (hereafter CM) can play in promoting community engagement, within the terms of the AHRC's 'Connected Communities' initiative (see: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/). The network's activities consisted of four half-day meetings in 2013 which brought together a range of stakeholders (comprising academics, researchers, funders and commissioners, practitioners and managers). Within the network meetings, discussion was framed around the following themes:

- Individual and collective motivation to participation in CM activities
- CM participation as a pathway towards community engagement/activism
- Evaluation of different models of developmental practice and community engagement
- Community as a site of democratic expression and/or oppositional critique
- Freedom and control in community engagement
- Relationships between intent, process, and outcome in CM activity
- Ethical issues in CM practice
- Future Research

The following summary provides some insight into what the research team has, on the basis of the accounts gathered, found to be the most significant findings:

A Chameleonic Practice
- There remains no agreed definition of CM and a number of recent developments appear to have stretched already-catholic understandings of CM into a further expanded form.
- Adopting a broad definition of CM enables a sense of unity across the profession and provides practitioners with the flexibility to tailor their CM activity to the requirements tied to different sources of funding. We therefore enountered resistance to engaging with questions about what CM is. Instead, delegates sought to retain an understanding of CM as a 'chameleonic practice', capable of responding to shifting policy and funding agendas.
- Problematically however, this situation risks obscuring the aims underpinning CM activity, thereby leading to challenges in clearly communicating the value of CM to external constituencies.

Mythologies of Practice
- There appears to be a degree of 'myth making' around understandings of intent, process and impact in CM activity. This occurs, it seems, in order to maintain as open as possible a view as to how initiatives might achieve outcomes.
- However, given the opportunity, many delegates would prefer a more robust, distinct and accountable identification of CM principles and practices.
- With the National Lottery came the combination of significantly increased resources and apparent political interest in the area of CM. Yet this development created tensions for many in CM, as the personal development aspects of the work became less valued and policy-

driven outcome objectives (particularly in terms of social inclusion and employability) became more pronounced.

- CM interests, purposes and practices (motivated by an ethos and informed by an ethical framework), should not only be situated in an understanding of the present operational context but also informed by an appreciation of the history of CM as an emancipatory practice. Explicit in this is the need for constructs of CM that confuse such a purpose – what we might call 'mythologies' - to be actively discouraged.

Quiet Radicalism

- CM has traditionally claimed to draw on 'radical', 'activist' or broadly 'political' motivations. We found little evidence of this in delegates' accounts of contemporary practice. Rather, delegates provided accounts of how CM practice has come to accommodate itself to – and position its value in relation to – the agendas of formal service providers (in education, health and social services).
- This was figured as 'quiet radicalism'. Here CM practitioners meant that their approach was influencing the work of providers of other (primarily social and educational) services across a diversity of contexts.
- Yet the values of CM, closely allied to what are sometimes termed 'informal education processes', sit uneasily, in certain ways, with the objectives, measures and approaches typically to the fore within, for example, formal educational settings.
- Some delegates were keen to draw attention to the ways work undertaken within certain settings and with certain agencies, threatened to undermine some of the core concerns of CM practice.
- One question which emerged concerned the extent to which CM risks – in the course of its various accommodations, strategic re-configurations and adaptations – divesting itself of those elements and attributes capable of yielding the kinds of personal, social, cultural or community-level benefits which fall outside of the remit of its current funders' scope of interest.

Quality, evidence, and faith

- We encountered contested understandings of quality, evidence, and evaluation. This was reflected in discussions about 'excellence,' and differing views about the relative importance of 'process' and 'product.' Since it was unclear what was meant by 'quality', it was difficult to know what sorts of evidence might be sought to prove value.
- Where can we look for reliable, non-partial accounts of the results of an intervention? Capturing these is likely to be expensive in proportion to the cost of delivering interventions; and would require sophisticated data collection and analysis before and after the event.
- Stories and anecdotes are commonly used to provide accounts of successful practice, but the storytellers are often implicated in the project delivery – and commissioning – and so have a vested interest in the stories having a happy ending.
- It appears to be important to distinguish between outcomes that are 'measurable' and what delegates noted as 'important'

- There seems to be a risk of confusing evaluation with advocacy. Evaluation should be independent and neutral, carrying a risk of uncovering failure; whereas advocacy is all about presenting the best possible case, and, if necessary, suppressing bad news.
- Much/most work is commissioned based on the hope/belief that something good will come of it. This faith, ideally, is shared by all parties to the activity.

Pathways to an elusive consensus

- We encountered a persistent difficulty in drawing together the views of participants into a consistent, coherent account of CM and its activities and practices. The only consistency lay in the diversity of experience. The reluctance to be defined functions as a more or less deliberate strategy for keeping artistic, and most importantly commercial, options open.

The Role of Research

- Considerable methodological difficulties thwart attempts to quantify the outcomes of participation in CM activity. Much of the research carried out to date has been considered anecdotal and has been criticised by commentators for its lack of robustness.
- CM appears to lack either the terminological or pedagogical specificity through which to explain its processes to the uninitiated. As a consequence, potentially valuable dimensions of its practice and outcomes are often not effectively communicated to wider constituencies.
- The field's longstanding resistance to definition and articulation appears to play into the current lack of understanding – both from within and without – of the core processes and mechanisms used in CM.
- The current lack of precise and clear analyses of the processes and mechanisms enacted within CM projects, and of the ways these variably connect with different outcomes in different contexts, therefore leaves the field unable to offer anything but an underspecified accounts of its benefits.
- This challenge appears to be an especially important matter at a time when questions about the delivery of 'value' are – from the point of view of funders and policy makers alike – more pressing than ever.

Acknowledgements

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1. Context

This research network sought to take forward a number of core concerns issuing out of a recent AHRC 'Connected Communities' scoping study on community music (McKay and Higham 2011). As that study's authors noted, 'the UK has been a pivotal national player within the development of community music practice…[and]… there are elements of cultural and debatably pedagogic innovations in community music…[which]…have to date only partly been articulated and historicised within academic research' (ibid:2). While there has been a growing academic interest in CM for some time, the changes affecting CM activity in the UK over recent years, combined with the challenges currently facing CM stakeholders and the communities with which they work, make responding to this opportunity quite pressing.

Accompanying the 'subsidy revolution' (Everitt 1997) which facilitated a notable upsurge in funding for CM activity in the UK from 1997, came a series of increased expectations and pressures for CM activity to deliver outcomes capable of helping tackle social exclusion. Yet with CM practitioners facing the significant challenge of demonstrating the impacts of their work – a challenge replete with practical and methodological difficulties – the nature of much CM activity shifted away from such longstanding concerns as community empowerment, participatory processes and democratic decision-making, towards interventions which typically sought to yield more immediate, visible and measurable outcomes. For a CM movement which was already primarily 'resource-oriented rather than actively reflexive' (McKay and Higham 2011: 6), the upsurge in funding served to engender a 'noticeable shift in focus…from collective to individual outcomes' (Matarasso 2007: 449) and diminish CM's emphasis on community empowerment and grass-roots organisation processes. While CM activity in the UK is today negotiating cuts to the levels of available funding, it should be noted that recent policy shifts (such as the emphases on community empowerment, localism and voluntarism) suggest a number of ways in which a reinvigorated understanding of the potential of community music could make a valuable contribution to broader community-focussed agendas.

It is for these reasons that the network organisers see this moment as a crucial one at which to critically reflect on the contemporary condition of CM and to revitalise understandings of its (potential) role in encouraging community engagement. To this end, the network engaged - through a series of workshops - with a number of central themes whose exploration could reconnect contemporary CM activity with its founding concerns (of community development and empowerment). Further, in bringing together researcher/academics and key CM stakeholders, the network has sought to develop a set of priorities for a future collaborative research programme which will help CM stakeholders to understand and enhance the nature of their work, improve the quality of decision-making relevant to CM activity and disseminate evidence of best practice in the field.

2. Approach

The core themes identified by the network organisers, and endorsed by delegates in advance of the network events, included:

- Individual and collective motivation to participation
- CM participation as a pathway towards community engagement/activism
- Evaluation of different models of developmental practice and community engagement
- Community as a site of democratic expression and/or oppositional critique
- Freedom and control in community engagement
- Relationships between intent, process, and outcome in CM activity
- Ethical issues in CM practice.

The selection of these themes was primarily based on the network organisers' own experience, research and involvement in CM, their prioritisation within the AHRC 'Connected Communities' scoping study on community music (McKay & Higham 2011) and prior research (Rimmer 2009; 2012).

This has been the first network in the UK to bring together, in such a concerted manner, key academics (including scholars with expertise in such relevant areas as community media, music education, cultural policy, participation and social agency, ethnomusicology, popular music, arts management, creativity and participatory pedagogies), experienced and respected CM practitioners (including several figures involved in setting up the first CM organisations in the UK) as well as early career and professional researchers, arts evaluators, CM trainers and representatives from policy communities. The network therefore sought to promote greater cross-disciplinary and cross-domain research in the area of CM, enhancing engagement between research, communities and other stakeholders.

Aims and Objectives

The overall aims of this research network were to:

- Critically reflect on the contemporary condition of CM in the UK and revitalise understandings of CM's potential role in connecting communities (with particular focus on issues of community empowerment, participatory practices and democratic decision-making processes)
- Consider ways in which insights from CM can valuably contribute to a deeper understanding of community art's potential role in community development
- Develop a set of priorities for a future research programme which will help the research community, policymakers and practitioners to understand the impact of CM on participating communities and individuals, improve the quality of decision-making within these groups and disseminate evidence of best practice in the field

The project's main objectives were therefore to:

- Bring together key CM stakeholders and facilitate critical reflection about the shifts affecting CM over recent years

- Address, through a series of bi-monthly one-day gatherings a series of core themes identified by the network organisers.
- Develop a research agenda which will draw on network members' expertise and establish partnership relationships in order to pursue core questions identified in the course of the network's activities.

Timetable of Activities

To realise the aims and objectives outlined above, a total of four workshops were convened with a fifth, public-facing event held in London to address a broader constituency of funders, policy makers and CM stakeholders.

May 2013:	Initial Meeting of network organisers	
June 2013:	Workshop 1	(UEA Norwich)
July 2013:	Workshop 2	(University of Manchester)
September 2013:	Workshop 3	(Yorkshire Dance, Leeds)
November 2013:	Workshop 4	(Cockpit Arts, London)
February 2014:	Report Launch	(Whitechapel Gallery, London)

Network Delegates

Janet Ayers - CM practitioner

Christine Bates – Senior Lecturer, Leeds College of Music

Dr. Caroline Bithell – Senior Lecturer in Ethnomusicology, Manchester University

Ian Brownlie - CM practitioner

Anna Bull - Postgraduate Research Student. Goldsmiths University of London

Kathryn Deane – Director, Sound Sense

Rebecca Gross - CM practitioner

Dr. Fay Hield – Teaching Associate in Ethnomusicology, University of Sheffield

Lee Higgins - Associate Professor of Music Education, Boston University School of Music

Xenia Horne - CM practitioner

Mark Howe – CM practitioner

Graham Jeffery – Reader; Music and Performance, University of West of Scotland

Debra King – Director, Brighter Sound, Manchester

Dr. Douglas Lonie – Research and Evaluation Manager, Youth Music

Holly Marland – Community Outreach Manager, Royal Northern College of Music

George McKay – Professor of Cultural Studies, Salford University and AHRC Leadership Fellow, Connected Communities Programme

Marcus Patteson – Executive Director, Norwich and Norfolk Community Arts

Catherine Pestano – CM practitioner and Chair of Sound Sense

Candida Wingate – Project Officer, Suffolk Artlink

Additional contributors to Session 8 – Research Themes:

Sian Bird - Relationship Manager, Engagement & Participation/Music, Arts Council England.

Adam Jeanes – Senior Relationship Manager, Arts Council England.

Carol Reid – Programme Manager, Youth Music

About the Network Organisers

Tony Brown is a consultant, research facilitator and writer. He is currently Co-Chair of the Board of Trustees of Community Music East, a social enterprise working at the intersection of education, social services and the arts. Previously, Tony held senior academic and managerial posts at UEA including Director of Management Education, Dean of Continuing Education and Business Development Director. Since 2005 he has led curriculum initiatives at Norwich University College of the Arts (NUCA) and undertaken a series of research and development projects for NUCA, the East of England Development Agency and Social Enterprise East of England.

Ben Higham is a consultant, research facilitator and writer. He is one of the leading, indeed founding, members of the community music 'movement', from his establishment of Community Music East in Norwich in 1985, and his work since then. He is a leading expert in the field, as a creative practitioner (musician and teacher), professional trainer and manager. His knowledge of relevant policy initiatives over decades, the international practice of music in the community, and of the 'grey literature' of arts and social enterprise funding programmes is central to a full understanding of the practical dynamics of everyday survival reconciled with ideological purpose.

Mark Rimmer has published work based on his research into community music in a number of respected peer-reviewed journals (including International Journal of Cultural Policy, Journal of Youth Studies, Cultural Sociology and Ethnography) and has also presented his findings internationally. He has worked in CM organizations and trained as a CM facilitator. His most recent research has focused upon the ethical and political dimensions of CM work.

3. Emerging themes

This chapter of the report, divided into four sections, outlines what the network organisers consider to be the core themes which emerged over the course of the network's discussions. In so doing, it incorporates the various viewpoints offered on those core issues by delegates, before stepping back to offer what we consider to be useful contextual information and further implications. Whilst claims, propositions and conclusions are adduced here, we are aware that these were not always necessarily made explicit by our delegates. Rather, the issues discussed in what follows represent our efforts to synthesise the central elements in what were often wide-ranging deliberations.

a. A Chameleonic Practice

Early on within our network discussions, it was evident that understandings of both community music (hereafter CM) and of the terms often used to describe it were not necessarily shared, even between those engaged in delivering, participating in or researching CM activities. While this fact often presented us, as network organisers, with no little difficulty in our effort to pin down ideas and discussions, or assess the degree to which apparent agreements reflected a genuine convergence of understandings, this did not – thankfully – come to us as too much of a surprise. Indeed, it might be argued that one of the most common and enduring features of the different definitions of CM put forth over the years has been a certain ambiguity, characteristic of the term's effort to speak to and encompass a broad array of activities, processes and practices.

While this is not an especially recent phenomenon though, its historical precedents are worth pausing to consider. In his account of the first wave of UK-based community artists and their work for instance, Owen Kelly (1984) highlights the role of the then-burgeoning community arts movement's early interactions with policy makers in the development of understandings of community arts. In 1974, the Arts Council of Great Britain established a working party, led by Professor Harold Baldry, to explore the precise nature and potential role of community arts. According to Kelly, the somewhat hastily established umbrella organisation of community artists, the Association of Community Artists (ACA), responded to this working party with no real manifesto or a clear statement of goals and aims, but rather a loose and general set of statements; part of a conscious and pragmatic effort by ACA to retain its ideological leanings and avoid being pinned down to a specific set of functions. Kelly goes on to characterise this as a 'strategy of deliberate vagueness' (1984: 21), the overall effect of which he considered deleterious for the movement, since it provided Baldry's working party – sympathetic to the work of some community artists – with a platform from which to convince the Arts Council that community arts activities were worth funding. It did so, however, only by excluding the radical elements and contentious practices of some community artists. For Kelly then, the working party fudged its report, with the effect of pigeonholing the movement and, he argues, preventing it from developing.

Here Kelly appears to be at pains to draw attention to an early, and what some might consider an enduring point of tension in the interface between policy makers and community artists.

Indeed, it is a tension which might very well continue to feed into the variable ways in which CM is today understood. That is to say, while the term 'community music' performs the pragmatic function of providing a banner under which professionals engaged in an array of participatory, music-based arts activities might assemble and respond to shared concerns, at the same time it tasks those (agencies, organisations or stakeholders) who remain unaware of the fact and extent of such diversity with the challenge of grappling with a term which can be quite deceptive in its simplicity. It might therefore be said that the price paid for what is, from one point of view, the 'catch-all' utility of the term 'community music', can come in the form of uncertainty, opaqueness and, perhaps, some bewilderment for those looking in on CM from the outside.

That said, it should be noted that the variability and flexibility understood by practitioners as operating within and under the term 'community music' today is justified by much more than a self-regarding pragmatism. A wide range of factors distinguish forms of community music activity from one another. Here we might note, for instance, variability in terms of the participant groups or target groups engaged within projects (group size, age(s), social class, ethnic background, prior musical ability and so on, not to mention variations within single groups or projects); the settings in which activities unfurl ('formal, 'non-formal', 'in-formal'); the musical forms employed; the skills and experience of practitioners; sought-after outcomes and outputs; the modes of participation offered and encouraged; the nature of the partnerships involved in project organisation; requirements of funders; the degree and forms of participant consultation entrained and the principles prioritised (e.g., relative weighting given, within project activities, to 'product' over 'process'). Writing on the issue of CM's diversity and variability, Kari Veblen (2004) suggests five sets of issues[1], each of which might distinguish one project from another in a way which renders straightforward comparison difficult. In apparent recognition of the situation, Phelan (2008) explains that any attempt to define community music 'diminishes the particularity of event-based activities, and strips them of the specificity of cultural, political or social context' (2008: 145).

It is therefore unsurprising that attempts to offer a definitive account of 'community music', unless they employ notably open-ended terms, risk excluding certain understandings of it. Looking across the definitions offered by the International Society for Music Education's (ISME) Community Music Activity Commission for example, it is apparent that official pronouncements have retained certain degrees of openness at their core. Indeed, comparing two commonly cited attempts at defining CM – separated by 12 years – reveals that what falls under the banner of 'community music' might have broadened further still over recent decades. Consider, for

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[1] These include: (a) the kinds of music and music making involved in a CM program; (b) the intentions of the leaders or participants in a program; (c) the characteristics of the participants; (d) the interactions among teaching-learning aims, knowledge, and strategies; and (e) interplays between informal and formal social-educational-cultural contexts.

instance, the first statement of the then-newly established ISME Community Music Activity Commission in 1990:

> 'Community music is characterised by the following principles: decentralisation, accessibility, equal opportunity, and active participation in music-making. These principles are social and political ones, and there can be no doubt that community music activity is more than a purely musical one'   (Olseng 1990)

Of no little importance is the way that the above statement's emphasis on core principles, confidently presented as 'social and political ones', comes, by 2002, to be replaced by a far more descriptive and wide-ranging account:

> 'Music in community centres, prisons and retirement homes; extra-curricular projects for school children and youth; public music schools; community bands, orchestras and choirs; musical projects with asylum seekers; marching bands for street children. All this - and more - comes under the heading of community music…But a single definition of community music is yet to be found'   (ISME Community Music Activity Commission, 2002)

Such a shift might well reflect the development, at an international level, of this ISME commission. Recent years have certainly witnessed a growth, for example, in the number of contributions to the commission's biennial conference proceedings originating from beyond the global north. The establishment, in Beijing during 2010, of the Asia Pacific Community Music Network (APCMN) might also be viewed as indicative of an incremental internationalisation of CM. To some extent then, a broadening out of understandings and definitions might be said to reflect an interest, on the part of the ISME commission, to welcome new international partners into the fold. Important changes have been taking place at the national level too though, as recent years have seen CM practitioners plying their trade within an ever-widening circle of partnerships involving a range of service providers. Changes in the national provision of music education (DfE 2012), including the establishment of Music Education Hubs, have also accompanied 'an increasingly vociferous call for formal and non-formal sectors of music provision to work more collaboratively' (Saunders & Welch 2012: 11).

One of our delegates usefully pointed towards a series of broader developments, intersecting with other fields, which have, as she put it, further 'muddied the waters':

> In the 1980s, I would have connected Community Music as a term, with a capital 'C' and a capital 'M' with [organisations like] 'Community Music East' and 'Community Music Wales' and with a certain political lineage. I think that probably three different strands have muddied the waters in terms of seeing it that clearly now. One is the field being far more open to people coming in and working [within it], from health and wellbeing and from other directions…then there's 'community music therapy', which is that grey ground in between, where a lot of people there have trained as music therapists and then discovered a culture which was really part of a distinctively British tradition of community

music, and they've now also been influenced more by the social side of music therapy that was really a Scandinavian view of music therapy. So they're often working in prisons and with homeless people and they may use different language but they're still talking about a culture of care…and I don't think we can ignore that. It's quite close, in lots of ways, to community music, it has its own politics. And then there's also the recent conversations about community music in a more international context and things like that …then there's Lee Higgins' book ['Community Music' 2012], in which he's still talking about 'boundary walking' but he's also talking about friendship and hospitality and inclusivity in terms that are far more open. And that's not a bad thing, it's just different…But what do we actually want to take forward? And do we therefore need to be more explicit about what we want to take forward? Who else is understanding community music as meaning just what?   (Manchester)

Such developments, it seems, are liable to stretch already-catholic understandings of CM into a further expanded form. Indeed, one of our core concerns in asking 'Whatever Happened to Community Music?', has been to explore the implications of the definitional uncertainty that today seems to haunt CM. Turning to other network delegates' opinions on this matter, it was clear that for some, CM's fluid identity – or 'chameleonic' nature, as one delegate described it – should be understood less as a weakness than as a key strength:

I don't know who, but someone once said "Those are my principles and if you don't like them, I've got others" and I think that is key to CM. If you don't like its values, then it's got others, and they'd be perfectly valid ones because they're all about what music does. We just pick off the shelf the stuff that it does that satisfies what people want it to do. It's one of CM's strengths. Over last few decades, CM's changes in line with politics have been a good thing. In 60s and 70s there was space for radicalism and CM gave you that. In the Blair era, Policy Action Teams et cetera, CM could say, "you want that and we'll give you that", and it's now at the forefront of the non-formal music education agenda and its being very successful at that too. Because it's doing what music does
                                        (Manchester)

This stance echoes what Clive Gray (2002) refers to as 'policy attachment', by which he means to suggest that the arts, constituting an area of policy which commands only small budgets, have increasingly aligned themselves with shifting economic and social agendas in an effort to benefit from the more sizeable budgets (e.g., combatting social exclusion, encouraging employment, regeneration programmes). Emerging clearly here then is the sense in which CM, as an activity dependent upon funding for its sustenance, has developed in a manner which has been described elsewhere as 'resource-oriented rather than actively reflexive' (McKay & Higham 2011: 6). In light of this, we were keen to understand the implications that might also follow from the adoption of an understanding of CM which is, in important regards, oriented around the purposes and aims of funders or policy makers. In the context of this discussion, one delegate offered the following reflection on recent experiences of relationships with funders:

…rather than being about "We will pay for this" [on the part of funders etc.], where the temptation [as CM practitioners] is to say "Yeah, we can deliver that" – when actually CM practitioners can have real difficulties there – maybe it should be that we [as practitioners] can say "We'll, we think that maybe we can deliver this", so actually it should be a two-way negotiation. Instead, it's often [on the part of funders] "We need these hard outcomes" and people [CM practitioners] just buy into it and don't necessarily do the service that is needed, or they do [promise] things that they know, inside, can't be achieved   (Leeds)

Within the same discussion (on the place and function of evaluation), another delegate offered the following, related point:

At the 'What Next?' meeting lots of people were saying what we're saying here, [that] the arts can make a difference to people's lives, they're a great way of connecting into curriculum, working with third sector organisations and so on, so how do we make the case to government? And it has to be an economic case, that was the big message and I guess that's about stuff that we're really bad at as a sector (Leeds)

This led one of us, as network organisers, to ask delegates about the extent to which such long-recognised challenges might have led to a situation in which "the evaluation tail has started wagging, effectively, the CM dog?" (Manchester). One response to this question both recognised this phenomenon and went on to relate it to the uneven ways in which CM is today understood, from both within and without:

I think part of the advocacy is about creating a recognisable entity of this community practitioner…that's partly at the root of the evaluation, the tail-wagging-the-dog kind of thing, this imbalance between how we perceive ourselves and the solidity of the work that we can see and how the outside world views the work
                                                           (Manchester)

The above excerpt also highlights how one of the reflex positions often adopted by CM stakeholders, when faced with challenges related to demonstrating CMs effectiveness in clearly communicable terms, is to point towards the need for advocacy. In the following contribution, another of our delegate's reflections uncovers how some of the challenges bound up with evaluation can feed into a responsive strategy centred on advocacy. Tellingly, perhaps, the adoption of such a strategy is premised on a position of guardedness and caution in respect of shifting government agendas:

I think we need to be careful what we want from advocacy, what we want it to influence and therefore how we would go about the advocacy that would do that, because if ministers say to you that they want an economic argument and proof that every pound spent on community music earns four pounds in social return on investment they are lying to you, because they don't want that piece of information at all. Ministers mostly

want a nice anecdote that they can pat on the head and they will also tell you they don't
want anecdotes, so they lie twice. Another thing we have to be careful of is that we
don't put ourselves in a position where we are self-demanding higher barriers, or lower
bars depending on how you want to look at it, to advocacy and evaluation than anybody
else   (Manchester)

Such testimonies recall elements of Kelly's (1984) historical overview of the early community
arts movement in Britain and its adopted 'strategy of deliberate vagueness'. Indeed, CM's
'fluidic or labile identity' (McKay & Higham 2011: 5), borne of 'definitional…reluctance' (ibid),
has been elsewhere noted for its perceived ability to offer CM practitioners a strategic
advantage (Cahill 1998).

> Practitioners at our colloquium viewed flexibility in adjusting to the demands of external
> policy shifts and funding initiatives as an important organisational feature.
>   (McKay & Higham 2011: 5)

> A willingness to embrace flexibility within working practices and the terms in which CM
> might be understood certainly appears to fall into step, then, with what has been
> described as 'the survival instinct of the cultural worker at the margins when sensing a
> new funding pot'   (McKay 2010: 43).

At the same time however, the point presented by the delegate cited below (an advocate of
some of the more all-inclusive understandings of CM detailed above), appears to disclose one
problematic side-effect of CM's chameleonic nature and deliberate vagueness:

> for some of us thinking right now about a project we're working on, we're very keen to try
> and wrap up notions of how CM does its thing as a notion of pedagogy which we can
> absolutely sell to, or at least start having the dialogue with [Music Education] Hubs and
> the trouble with Hubs and us [CM practitioners] at the moment is that we can't even have
> a decent scrap because we don't have the language to have a scrap in.
>   (Manchester)

At other points within our network discussions the enduring value of adopting an all-embracing
definition of CM were questioned more explicitly:

> For an organisation like Sound Sense[2] though, a more inclusive definition [of CM] is a
> good thing because this means more power, and it has resulted in a confusing dialogue
> because everything seems to fall under that [definition]   (Norwich)

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[2] Sound Sense is the UK professional association promoting community music and supporting community musicians. It
is a membership organisation that provides support to organisations and individuals who help people make music in
(footnote continued)

An issue raised within the context of the nominal group process activities that we employed also appeared to question the effects of such 'confusing dialogue', but here in terms of the effects of this on how CM is understood by wider constituencies:

> To what extent do people doing CM want their practice and ideas to be visible or to be understood by the mainstream? This is perhaps questionable
> (Norwich)

Indeed, on a number of occasions delegates appeared to question the contemporary value of the term, recognising good reasons for stepping away from 'community music' altogether:

> I think the phrase 'community music' is a difficult one. We don't use it in our literature at all. I don't know if it's because of the rise in individualism or whatever but 'community music', because it's got the 'community' bit, is almost something that you wouldn't say because its maybe not cool enough or it doesn't resonate with young people or a younger generation, or it's not urban. So I think the term has got a difficulty
> (Manchester)

> …the term [CM] is thought to have connotations which I would think of as an abuse, mainly to do with 'poor music', and that has been used as a stick for Arts Council to beat us with over the years   (Manchester)

> Personally I prefer to call it 'participatory'. The term is, I think, a bit broader and you kind of get away from some of the assumptions of 'community music'
> (London)

Such issues notwithstanding, it is perhaps especially telling that our attempts to clear some ground around the problematic matter of definitions (by asking delegates about the fundamental ideals and principles which underpin CM activity today), met with a good deal of pragmatically-informed resistance:

> …it feels paradoxical to be looking at fundamentals, ideals and principles when many organisations back in the field are busy dumping theirs as fast as they can. I don't really mean that, I think what they are really doing is struggling with trying to maintain some values and principles…but this is true right across the voluntary and community sector within this country…and we are also facing this dilemma of how do we stick to our values

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their communities by supporting their professional development and providing opportunities to network; giving information and advice and helping people make contacts and raising awareness of issues in community music [See: http://www.soundsense.org]

and principles, which are really quite expensive ones to have, at a time of austerity.
(Leeds)

The foregoing discussion has sought to bring to light some of the complexities and tensions at play within considerations of how CM is understood. Here there appear to be a number of competing and uneven forces in operation. On one hand, adopting a broad definition of CM enables a sense of unity within the profession and provides individual practitioners with the flexibility required to tailor their CM delivery in line with the requirements tied to different sources of funding. In a sense then, the term 'chameleonic' seems a most apt one, since it suggests a wilful strategy based on the need to access the resources necessary to secure survival. At the same time however, this situation means that CM appears to have become ever more 'open' as a field, in terms of what falls under its rubric. An important effect of this, it seems to us, concerns the scale of the challenge facing anyone keen to respond to calls made by those such as Coalter (2001) for community arts need to do more to 'identify best practice, understand processes and the type of provision best suited to achieve particular outcomes' (2001: 5).

- Mark Rimmer

b. Mythologies of Practice

Our discussions revealed, and for some confirmed, that the appeal of a lack of definition of CM, identified as a sometime conscious strategy elsewhere in this report, does encourage what might be called 'myths' surrounding understandings of intent, process and impact. These myths appeared to be attractive to some of our delegates because they suggest the notion of the organic, bottom-up, people-focused, 'other' and non-institutional nature of CM activity. This mythologizing may discourage any detailed analysis of elements that (a) might make CM more accountable as a profession (another difficult identity), (b) narrow its focus in terms of the nature of activity identifiable as CM, and (c) constrain CM's claims to meet a broad range of outcome expectations.

The mainstreaming of CM-type activities, began in earnest in the late 1990s with the advent of the National Lottery, realising a large pot of funds strategically managed to implement government policy and objectives and leading to the establishment of Youth Music, amongst other institutions. These developments created the expectation within the CM sector that activity might now be more significant in scale, better recognised and better funded, only to find the apparently distinctive qualities of this work being appropriated by the very institutions to which CM had always imagined itself to be an alternative. So there is a tension between on the one hand recognition and success - CM-type activity's adoption into mainstream statutory education and its (apparent) methods taught in tertiary education - and on the other, the rationalisation of project design, cost and income that comes with operating in an expanded but under-resourced single market. This tension has encouraged a degree of distinctive mystery as both a defence mechanism and a useful unique selling point.

In addition the apparent blurring of lines across formal, informal and non-formal music making and learning and CM activity has resulted in CM organisations and practitioners arguing for an essence of distinctive purpose and practice but often falling back on the claim that 'music is good for you'; virtually the only currency across all these areas of activity in the contemporary context (Hallam 2010). The distinction appears to be that within the mainstream activity (including the informal) this belief is almost a given cultural value of the activity (DfE 2011b, Krakovsky 2005) and is implicitly demonstrated by participation leading to measured achievement (often in the form of product and performance), whereas in CM activity such a particular interpretation of achievement may not be an effective measure given other intended effects. As a result, claims for CM's purpose and impact can be a bit vague if defined in this way.

In a discussion exploring potentially defining qualities of CM in relation to formal music activity one delegate observed:

> community music values and formal music values are, in that formal sense, almost that we as individuals are the vessels for great music to be produced by and I think the other thing is that the music is just a vehicle for human expression, it is just a tool for allowing people to express themselves and grow   (London)

Certainly there is an argument of sorts here for the external influence of music, by whatever criteria defined as 'great', on the personal development of participants, though it is not clear how the objective 'greatness' of the music links to the subjective purpose of individual growth, or how this might be achieved and understood by responsible management of the activity. And another suggested:

> …talking about bringing together formal and non-formal…there has to be a recognition of the difference so that…[the difference] has added value somehow…I don't think there is anything wrong with distinction and difference if your idea is to bring together…the sibling position, pathways for the individual and so on, if you bring that together it is fine because it is about the understanding of what the difference is and the value of that difference   (London)

This is an interesting description of this complicated relationship, identifying the closeness of the activities within the broader family of music making and learning and yet recognising an inevitable degree of rivalry and a desire for independence.

The mainstreaming of CM activity, and the opportunity for work with certain kinds of participant, predominantly young people (since they are the focus of Youth Music's investment and they are the primary funder in the current context), has challenged the currency of CM's diverse radical roots. As one delegate put it:

> community music has a distinctive nature, purpose and value…but there is a counter argument that says [there is a] sort of purist nostalgia…[which is] actually holding us back and that really we should embrace the mainstream, forget about distinctions, allow them to be blurred. But then I don't know what community music is at all anymore if that process is kind of consummated really   (London)

The attraction of recognition and work for some practitioners in mainstream circumstances, particularly those who identify with primarily musical aims, needs to be understood in relation to some other practitioners and managers who have been active for a while for whom this poses an ideological problem. As the discussion continued, another said:

> the intent and purpose of…formal music values [is] to teach music, so the music's centred value is actually the intent of it, of the work, whereas, as we know, community music intents and purposes, as we discussed last time, can and should be about a lot broader than that and would be person-centred because the intent is to make change
> (London)

So, as the argument progressed, the need to identify distinctive qualities for CM developed. The contemporary rhetoric surrounding music making and learning (particularly if funded) adds to the difficulty of identifying a distinctive CM identity as key terms are recognised as redefined; for instance, 'excellence' which, post the McMaster Report to the DCMS (2008), emphasised the

term's use as relating to artistic and technical achievement (an exclusive definition that cost many community music and arts organisations their ACE funding at the time). In the dialogue about intents and purposes our delegates explored this definition of excellence in relation to their own understanding and experience, and challenged such an exclusive interpretation:

> It is interesting that, you know, the word excellence the way it is, we are saying it is
> political   (London)

This was said by one delegate as the group reclaimed the term for CM activity and recognised an emerging understanding of its use to describe effective learning and developmental processes in engaging with participants. Another delegate stated provocatively:

> Well why wouldn't you use the word, why would you say you are anything but, why
> would anyone say [CM practitioners] aspire for anything less than excellence?
>   (London)

This emerging awareness – some might argue re-awareness – amongst delegates of their potential authority was in relation to all aspects of their practice, particularly those with an emancipatory purpose, such as collective good and individual development. However, though there may be a strong agreement about the need for, and intention to provide, emancipatory activities how such a purpose might be achieved becomes difficult to define even at the level of principle. The issue of strategies and practices employed to achieve such purposes proved to be a difficult one to pin down often because the implicitly 'good' intentions of the CM activity and, by definition, of the CM practitioner managing such an event are sometimes apparently at odds with ideas of learning process principles that might reflect such 'goodness'; such as equity, social equality and equality of opportunity and their relationship to aspects of practice such as negotiation and responsibility.

When discussing the conditions for excellence in both CM and formal music one respondent proposed:

> I think it is a question of intention and purpose and the nature of the process
>   (London)

So, as the mechanism for defining purposeful quality in both formal and CM activity is the same (i.e., a desirable outcome achieved through appropriate activity), the burning question therefore is to consider how to define the particular intentions and purposes of CM, and identify the necessary qualities of the process used to achieve them, in order that excellence be achieved, or at least striven for. Another respondent described an example of 'best practice' as practitioners using a particular genre-based approach engaging with participants in that:

> they did say 'yes we do band music, we are also here to think about what you [the
> participant] need to think about your learning journey more generally and how we can

> support you to do that'. So there was an acknowledgement that there was an instrumental aim in that programme and in that process and in that relationship and I think that we as community musicians [understand] in terms of informed success, in terms of efforts, in terms of people actually saying 'OK I am up for it, let's do it' and I think that is interpreted by involving people in all different types of projects and also in different types of community settings from all different musical ability backgrounds. But as long as there is an explicit acknowledgement of what you are there to do, I don't think that is much of a problem   (London)

This description provides a useful insight into the complexity of such work when practitioners have to manage such a range of understandings and agendas. However, yet another was concerned that the autonomy of the practitioner might be undermined by such a concrete agreement recognising such a range of responsibilities to participants, managers and sponsors.

> I think that does sound like a practical way of addressing the issues [managing expectations, particularly with participants] and trying to pre-empt the problems as much as possible. The only difficulty that immediately comes to my mind when I hear you describe that process is sometimes well there is both the kind of unintentional unpredictability in the process which you can't be expected to create entirely other than that you have seen what is in my hand but also it is kind of, I want to have up my sleeve an element of surprise that I know about, and that you don't know about, because I think that is going to be a valuable part of the process maybe…and I know I have been involved in activities where I have had consciously [and] deliberately wanted to disguise from my participants quite what is going to happen to them because I think it is going to have more of an effect if they don't know it's coming. So I don't know if that is unethical, I suppose the potential upside is better than the potential downside
>   (London)

This reaction highlights something of an issue for some practitioners in that their capability as tutors in a CM context can become confused with, rather than informed by, their identity as artists. The charismatic quality of the practitioner's technical and creative prowess can appeal to the trusting participant (and the practitioner him/herself) resulting in reluctance to recognise any professional educational constraints on this relationship. The 'good intentions' of their activity are more attractively upheld through the use of a bit of magic, using their status as artist in the learning situation to contrive a mysterious moment leading to some somehow understood beneficial development that the practitioner might even claim they are not directly, or consciously, responsible for; but that wouldn't have taken place if they hadn't contrived to allow the situation.

A further example of the potentially 'magical' impact of the efforts of the charismatic practitioner, or sympathetic dictator as tutor, was described as follows:

Within the room…you want people to feel that.. often emotive music can create an emotional [response] that you [the practitioner] didn't expect so in a sense it is about not so much that sort of leader in that room, the person who is running that session being able to say 'well this or that or this or that will happen in the session' before the session begins – because quite frankly that is just impossible – it is just that sense that if something does happen, there is something there to, you know, catch that person, to make that person, so it is about that sort of trust being there

(London)

This statement seems to suggest that predicting the likelihood of emotional responses, and the need for the practitioner to manage these and support participants, as a result of processes employed in activity, is somehow unreasonable. If such a situation should occur it is suggested that what will 'catch that person' is some sort of trust established within the group, and not the specific responsibility of the practitioner. However, it was generally agreed that the purpose and process of any CM activity must require the recognition of a duty of care for the participants. The way in which practitioners engage with participants and manage the educational process for whatever agreed aims and objectives is a key professional responsibility. Delegates reflected on this issue speculating on the nature of participant trust in this context. One said:

I think [for the participants] there is a kind of personal trust in the facilitator…and then there is also a kind of trust in the process, that the process has some kind of credibility and you can't always necessarily articulate why it has credibility…and in advance you probably don't know, but it is a beautiful act of faith that you have chosen for yourself [as a participant] to come into one of these experiences, it is an act of faith that you think it is going to do something for you (London)

Expressions such as 'beautiful acts of faith' do indicate the practitioner's expectation of the participant's trust in the 'credibility of the process' that 'is going to do something for' them. Clearly, such an expectation of faithful participant engagement informs the way this practitioner prepares and delivers activity.

More discussion prompted responses that were inching closer to expectations of accountability for the strategies and procedures adopted by practitioners. This included an exploration of the nature of trust as the basis of an agreement between actors in a situation with different roles and powers and what is understood to be said and not-said in this situation.

Yes, and [whatever] that process [of activity delivery] is, whether it is dialogical or whether its facilitator led, the trust is that you will get there. And during the process you are forever sort of recalibrating that relationship and asking yourself how does it continue to have credibility? (London)

It is interesting that the qualification 'whether it is dialogical or whether it is facilitator-led' seems to suggest that these are mutually exclusive processes. This again identifies a bit of discomfort about the emancipatory purpose of most of this work that has to be achieved through directive methods, almost charmingly described as facilitation. However, many reflective practitioners do recognise the ideological expectations of this work - greater confidence and autonomy for participants and a consequent beneficial impact on individuals and community - and propose that the learning management strategies they do adopt are legitimate in learning situations that are complex; even before the pressures of management and sponsor expectation are factored in.

> I don't care how many Arts Awards projects get, what I care about is the project working in the best way for that young person, a case by case basis for them to get to the negotiating space that they want to get to, their learning journey together but I know that that won't beat the system…So you (as a practitioner) are constantly negotiating and bending the rules [that might define certain specific project outcomes] to try and make good things happen for people, you know, and I think that is a key issue, that is the way we like to make that happen   (London)

So, recognising these descriptions of best intentions does begin to identify that broader operational environment where the demands and expectations of project managers and sponsors start to have an influence. Such influence was often, but not exclusively, felt by our practitioner delegates to be inappropriate at worst and misguided at best, since the effect on project design and delivery is generally felt to be too outcome-oriented and simplistic, as in the example described above. Some feel that they have the knowledge and experience to make the best of such situations, indeed some believe that is where whatever influence they may have sits; the opportunity to turn a project, designed by managers in response to a funding opportunity, that is perceived (by the practitioner) to be a flawed concept into a practical and demonstrable success, and thereby offer some critique.

> …as long as there is an explicit acknowledgement of what you are there to do, I don't think that is much of a problem…[but] I think it might need some working out when there is a community project thing…a young girl was sort of being forced into performing because [the project was] funded to do a performance and I was appalled really at that, I thought that was awful and that actually should not be happening and so there are multiple layers of responsibility and interpretation of where consent sits and I think at practitioner level all you can do is kind of reveal the strings as much as possible…and say some of this is for the funder, some of this is just tick a box, but most importantly it is very much what you [practitioner] want from it and what we can co-deliver [with participants]
> (London)

As delegates began to explore ethical issues in relation to their experience of CM and its 'development' the degree of sophisticated rationalisation at play became increasingly apparent as the complex and multiple relationships related to each piece of work were explored. Such

issues included the influence of ethics on the purposes and practices of organisations and individual practitioners, including their influence on the nature and intent of CM activity and the outcomes that it might be expected to achieve, as well as any tensions identified in relation to external pressures reflected in policy directions and funding imperatives.

Critically, one key rationale for degrees of conscious recognition of ethical dimensions was closely allied to the issue of funding, or rather fundability.

> …there are no absolute systems of ethics or morals, you have the morals you can afford, you have the ethics of the society you are in…It makes it possible then to build your own ethical code from scratch or from [other] ethical codes but it also means that you end up with different ethical codes depending on where you aspire from. So some people will clearly say "the importance for me is that I do this work, if I am stuck for a funder to do that, that is perfectly ethical because the work is more important than the funding" [and therefore will be done without funding]   (London)

This reflection argues that for some practitioners in some situations the work is more important than the money and that if suitable funding conditions cannot be negotiated or, indeed, it is inappropriate to even consider sourcing funding if it might compromise the nature of the activity, for instance, undermine the autonomy of the people involved or adversely affect the activity's developmental nature, then the work is better done without financial resource. We might speculate that such a view might be easier to adopt by an individual practitioner prepared to subsidise such an important piece of work than for an organisation, unless developmental resources have been put aside for just such a purpose.

Other delegates reflected that ethical issues were somehow implicit in the ethos of their organisation (or the ethos of their own practice though this was rarely stated explicitly). As they reflected on the ethical dimensions surrounding elements such as responsibility for and to participants, suitable educational practices, a duty of care and accountability to project purpose they observed:

> I think as an organisation we have got strong ethos but I never framed it as an ethical question, it's about practice and about putting the child at the centre of our activity and the right ways of doing that   (London)

> …we tended to talk a lot about ethos organisationally but not necessarily always, well not in my memory have we translated into the 'what does that mean for ethics'
>   (London)

These observations seem to suggest that the discussion and negotiation of ethics, particularly in relation to the activities and operations of organisations, do not take place as part of an explicit process of organisational development. Clearly many delegates believed their work has an ethical basis but the lack of a professional ethical framework indicates that exploration of these

issues with all actors (practitioners and managers) involved in delivery is a rare occurrence. For freelance practitioners their circumstances may cause them to reflect more in isolation but this may lead to some frustration when employed in certain circumstances as we have seen.

However, the adoption of a 'chameleonic' (see elsewhere in this report) identity for CM, allowing it to redefine itself according to opportunity, has the impact of recognising an apparent common ground through broadly similar expressions of ethos (particularly for organisations), whilst retaining a very flexible approach to how needs are determined and projects designed, possibly leading to compromises in the process of delivery. However, one delegate made the following case:

> I think [this] is key to CM; if you don't like its values, then it's got others, and they'd be perfectly valid ones because they're all about what music does. We just pick off the shelf the stuff that it does that satisfies what people want it to do. It's one of CM's strengths
>
> (Leeds)

This perspective may appeal to organisations and practitioners alike partly because the opportunity, or need, to recognise the inter-changeability of values, as the term is used here, requires a flexible attitude to ethics-driven prescriptions of tutor practice principles, what might be termed pedagogy. So, an overarching ethical mission might be achieved by whatever practical means is deemed acceptable to meet required project conditions.

That said, increasingly issues of quality, here meaning the best efforts of all to achieve the greatest impact for the investment, understood and shared by organisation and funder and by organisation and practitioner, are informing the dialogue about project development and, more broadly, the case for CM practice rather than something else. One delegate, reflecting on the difficulties facing fund-holders with regard to decisions on an organisational suitability for project funding, observed:

> The…issue with that is with people understanding what quality is and that's also around different pedagogies and sharing, and this came up at a recent conference where there was just this sense of people not really understanding the quality of the work that CM delivers, and measuring how to understand that and how to measure it. That is a huge area which is difficult. We might have our own understandings of it but in the formal sector, they're at a bit of a loss, I think, as to how to [understand that]
>
> (Manchester)

Another delegate hoped that:

> What CM is moving towards, in some respects, is a way of talking about the tactics that legitimise the effort that makes it equivalent to more formal practices in learning and teaching and it's a slow process…The aim is to make it legitimate to those parties and thinking about principles and so on might enable us to do some of this together
>
> (Leeds)

And another reflected:

> There is the issue of pedagogy which most of us have been reluctant to talk about, and for some of us thinking right now about a project we're working on, we're very keen to try and wrap up notions of how CM does its thing as a notion of pedagogy which we can absolutely sell   (Manchester)

The notion of pedagogy, apparently so attractive to sell CM, is probably going to require a bit more work to develop into a robust and convincing unique selling point. Delegates, given the opportunity to discuss these issues in some detail here, do seem to recognise a need for a more accountable practice in order to more clearly distinguish CM and give the people and organisations that do this work a more clear and positive identity, or even brand. For the practitioner (and those that employ her or him) this will require the need to distinguish more clearly between their artist and educator personas and confidently clarify their considered and informed practice.

The inconsistencies and slightly fuzzy thinking identified in this section is symptomatic of a practice seeking a more robust consensus than that based on a collection of worthy ideals, however passionately held, and a savvy level of pragmatism. Our dialogues clearly identified that CM interests, purposes and practices, motivated by an ethos and informed by an ethical framework, should be situated in an understanding of the present operational context informed by an appreciation of the history of CM as an emancipatory practice. This development suggests such activity should be developed and managed by practitioners and project managers together through contextualised experience and knowledge, combined as expertise and expressed as accountable practice. This insight is as valuable to the organisations getting the work as it is to the practitioners doing it. It is in all their interests to present a more clear and robust case for the effective, significant, distinct and reasonable impact of CM activity to funders and sponsors. If such a circumstance were the case there may be no further need for strategic mythologies of practice.

- Ben Higham

c. Quiet Radicalism?

In an effort to gain insights into the ways in which the values operating at the heart of CM activity had undergone change over recent years, we were keen to consult our delegates about how they understood what we termed its 'political' or 'activist' dimensions. For us, this approach held out the potential of revealing where CM today stands in relation to conceptions of community development and, in particular, the extent to which notions of community 'empowerment' and processes of deliberative decision making continue to figure prominently within various incarnations of CM activity. Here we uncovered, once again, an array of perspectives on the part of our network delegates. While delegates remained keen to align their practice with certain values (see p.43), the terms 'political' and, in particular, 'activist' were generally approached with some caution. Thus we found, across all of our network events, only one delegate who considered her understanding of CM to connect with notions of 'activism'. Indeed, there was clear recognition on her part that a notion of 'activism' was one nowadays retained only by particular practitioners engaged in a certain vision of CM practice:

> Many of my former self-employed [CM practitioner] colleagues don't do CM anymore because they've all got QTS [qualified teacher status] and they are now teaching. Actually, all they were doing was responding to funders. The community musicians that are still engaged, I think, really are activists. And I think that is one of the things that makes you say "well I am a community musician because my personal mission, my vocation, is to make life better for people that I am working with"   (Manchester)

Elsewhere, delegates were unwilling to align themselves with notions of activism. The impulse here, once again, appeared to issue from a primarily pragmatic point of view:

> Might being seen as an 'activist' be a barrier to getting funding?
>   (Norwich)

> Activism seems to suggest the political. I could call myself, and I am, a musical activist, [although] I'm not overt about that…   (Norwich)

> Surely a key issue which arises for CM, in relation to the question of activism, is who pays for this?   (Norwich)

Undoubtedly then, the contemporary resonance of the term 'activist/ism' sat uneasily with many our delegates and the ways they understood their practice. What this discussion did lead to however, was a broader consideration of the ways in which and the extent to which today's incarnations of CM, and of the field as a whole, maintained a connection with ideas of 'the political'. In the context of a discussion about the ways this field has undergone changes over recent decades, for instance, one delegate offered the following reflections:

> One thing that's occurred is more people working in similar areas who have got there by different routes, so one thing that's disappeared is the exclusivity of the [CM] framework,

that's changed. I don't think it's good or bad necessarily, but it's quite a big thing, in terms of conversations to be had and assumptions not to be made perhaps. It's partly to do with resourcing, with who is identifying the things that need doing, who is then responding to that call and what political affinities they're bringing to that job. So if we're concerned, as I am and others are, about a central core and a political imperative, then maybe it's a slightly bad thing that that has been dissipated or the wind had gone out of its sails.

(Norwich)

To some extent, the above account, with its allusion to those 'responding to the call and [the] political affinities they have', resonated with the idea, discussed by other delegates, that the expansion of work for CM practitioners, occurring around the turn of the millennium, encouraged a kind of opportunism on the part of some:

my little kind of coterie of self-employed colleagues don't do it [CM] anymore…[but]…all they were doing was responding to funders who have got some money to disseminate, "Great, oh, I can do some of that work, I'm really good on the violin, I am sure that means I can sing a nursery rhyme, I am going to go and do it".   (Manchester)

…all sorts of things have changed, so then it's how you reinvent it [CM] or keep it alive or revive it in a way that meets contemporary situations. But then what do you do about people who have a different motivation? Do you worry about that or do you celebrate the fact that that stuff is getting done for different reasons, but it's still helping people? I don't know. I spend a lot of time wondering what I think about that.

(Manchester)

Allied to this idea that the profession has begun to open itself up to those with 'different motivations', we encountered a clear sense in which the political dimensions of CM activity had certainly diminished over the course of recent decades:

What is the imperative today for the 20 and 30 year olds? There's not that political urgency. There was a political urgency in the 70s…

(Manchester)

It doesn't have the same kind of political element that it had in the 80s because it has now become rather widespread   (Manchester)

Dave Price[3] wrote a piece in *Sounding Board* three or four years ago in which he said "I can feel the politics coming back into CM". Well he's been writing that piece every five

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[3] An experienced public speaker, project manager, strategic adviser and education consultant. In 1994 he helped establish the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA), where he was Director of Learning for 7 years. He has *(footnote continued)*

years previously and we're still waiting, certainly for the return of the political dimension in CM. I don't see it.   (Manchester)

Despite this widespread feeling amongst delegates, some examples of what might be considered more 'political' forms of CM practice were nevertheless offered. One of these, based around a project based in a Brighton community centre (and funded by HSBC), centred around a CM practitioner offering rap music activities in order to provide young people with alternative ways to talk about and write about their environment and the social structures to which they found themselves in opposition:

> The collective identity that came as a result was palpable. What they [participants] had to say was very oppositional to what HSBC sees itself as. It was explicitly political and the provision was about collectivism and doing something to your local community on a small scale.   (Norwich)

Such examples were largely notable by their absence however, as, indeed, was delegates' apparent willingness to talk in terms of the 'political' (unless the terms was proffered by one of the network organisers). Most typically then, CM was figured as being either very loosely or inevitably 'political' ("even if there is not an explicit intent there, there is still a social intent and thereby political intent"), or else its relationship to a 'politics' was left very much as an open matter:

> Organiser: So in order to move towards ideas of CM as democratic expression and oppositional critique, let me ask, is CM always or usually animated by social and political principles?
>
> Delegate: I would say 'yes' but its wide ranging. From very, very small 'p' political and very, very small 's' social, to giant 'p' and 's'
>   (Manchester)

In line with the picture (previously outlined) of CM as a 'chameleonic practice', delegates appeared more conscious of the intersection between 'politics' and recent incarnations of CM in terms of the ways in which the latter has:

> …responded to the politics of the day quite well. So in the 60s and 70s there was space for radicalism and radicalism is what community music gave you. Then when Tony Blair came into power and we had all the Policy Action Teams, community music was at the forefront of being able to say "You want that? We will give you that" (Leeds Event)

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since led national projects in arts and education in the UK (including 'Musical Futures'), and advised companies, third-sector organisations and government departments internationally. In 2001 he was made a fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts and received the O.B.E. in 2009, for services to education.

Nevertheless, while some delegates did appear to recognise this sort of policy responsiveness as characteristic of CM, others were keen to highlight how it represented but one perspective on the matter (note, for instance, the response – immediate offered by another delegate – to the above statement: "Not all community music was at the forefront of saying that"). Indeed, some delegates clearly lamented the demise of what they considered to be the "radical principles behind CM's history: self-management, decision-making, empowerment, and so on" (Leeds). This delegate elaborated as follows:

> The sector has now aged, and people have become more resource-intensive as they get older, and become less radical. But I wonder if there must come a time for more radical demands to be made. People want to be part of an infrastructure and they want to have value and they get locked into funding streams. But I wonder if there is something basic about the value of reasserting the importance of being involved in making music
>
> (Leeds)

Mediating between these two somewhat polarised positions on the matter of CM's 'radicalism' or 'political' dimensions (as they were variously figured), came a viewpoint which pointed towards the idea that CM's 'radicalism' is to be found neither in a strict adherence to particular forms of practice, nor in a willingness to relinquish these, but rather in what was termed a 'quiet radicalism'. This, it was suggested, is nowadays evident in the ways in which CM practitioners collaborate, across a diversity of working contexts, with providers of other (primarily social and educational) services, in a manner which brings the influence of a number of CM's long-standing principles to bear on other professionals. The following testimony, which emerged in the context of a discussion about evaluation and the measurement of project outcomes, illustrates the issue at hand neatly:

> For a whole year four of us [CM practitioners] have been working in four different PRUs (Pupil Referral Units) in *place name* and we had a feedback meeting yesterday and we were thinking about measurable outcomes which are valuable to schools in terms of attracting funding. All of the children involved in [the] projects had measurable improvements in their numeracy, literacy, participation and enjoyment of being in the setting, enthusiasm for what they were doing. I mean, these are all the kind of outcomes from community music that you might expect, except that it was being measured against national attainment and measured in terms of capturing the academic criteria. And the conversation then turned to "how can we help these projects to continue?", and we talked about the Pupil Premium and Arts Award, Trinity Communication Skills[4] and

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[4] Trinity College London offers examinations in Communication Skills for candidates of all ages at all levels; for individuals from grades Initial (pre-foundation) to 8, and for groups from Grades 1–8. The syllabus is suitable for children and adults, and has proved a popular resource for specialist communication teachers and tutors who have *(footnote continued)*

Performing Arts exams. So you're talking about building in, I mean I know this can be seen as controversial, however, you're giving added value to the children in terms of building their own portfolio for their futures. So there's a very clear partnership between external accreditors, accreditation and the children in the project…in the two different PRUs where I've been working, we were constantly working with the behaviour managers to radically restructure their approach to work. So the radicalism is happening quietly I think.

(Leeds)

We've done, and I know a lot of other organisations have as well, we've worked with children at risk of knife crime and looked-after children where you share ways of working and you can see the difference of approaches from music workers and care workers, and you can see it evolve through a project. So I think there is that quiet radicalism going on.

(Leeds)

Stepping back from specific examples of project work, one of our delegates offered a useful broader contextualisation of such recent developments:

I think there's a history to be looked at here…and you can either go forwards or you can go backwards to the 70s when it was all 'smash the Tories' and the work was highly political and we were happy to do that and community music was very busy then. And I remember the day that Tony Blair walked into Number 10 and the almost immediate change there was in language and activity and so on, and we were encouraged to get engaged with Policy Action Teams and look at how the arts addressed the social inclusion themes of New Labour. And most of the arts howled of course, they thought it was dreadful and we, of course, thought it was quite good and we were able to get involved in a lot of that work…and now were talking about social return on investment, as the Musical Inclusion website is precisely doing at this moment, and everybody is saying "where can I get a slice of that action?". And I'm intensely relaxed about all this because I think this just goes to show that music does things and you can pick off the shelf the thing that it does, at the time when people want it to do that, and I think that's what makes CM both powerful and resilient. So we can now be talking the language of formal education quite markedly in a way that we weren't 10 years ago.   (Leeds)

The kind of partnership working discussed here appears to highlight an increasingly common feature of the contemporary work of community musicians. As changes across the funding landscape have both set limits on, and increased the levels of competition for funds which have – for a number of years – supported CM activity, today both organisations and freelancers alike increasingly undertake work in collaboration with other providers across the social and

successfully used it to increase confidence and skill in all modes of speech communication [see: http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk/site/?id=305]

education services. Some recent research (Rimmer & Phillips 2013) has already begun to explore the ways in which arts-based community organisations have sought to develop ever-closer relationships with the commissioning arms of local authorities in an effort to access the funding streams tied to statutory service provision. Within education, meanwhile, the recent National Plan for Music Education (2011a) set further store by the previously-made argument (DfES 2004) for formal and non-formal sectors of music provision to work more collaboratively. Indeed, the Henley Review of Music Education (2011b), which provided a number of arguments on which the proposals in the National Plan are based, proposed the need for schools to make quite stringent demands of the organisations with which they work such that any arts programmes bought in by schools correspond with the latter's pre-existing learning outcomes and curriculum. Indeed, a key funder of youth-focussed community music activity, Youth Music, has also adopted the role of attempting to 'bridge the gap' between formal and non-formal providers responsible for the local delivery of music education as one of its strategic goals (see, e.g. Saunders & Welch 2012).

Such shifts across the funding and policy landscape cannot, therefore, be ignored in any effort to assess the current state of play in the field and its import for CM, for its practitioners and for their work. For a number of our delegates, the situation was one to be viewed as indicative of the contemporary health of CM:

> [CM is]…now at the forefront of coping with a non-formal music education agenda and it does all of these things very successfully I think precisely because it follows the line of doing what needs to be done…there are still funders who will react to that idea of you saying "I want to do this work in this part of the field because it is important and interesting and I would like your help with that" and will react to that, and at the same time it has become an extremely professional activity and is reacting to that in changing as well. So I think I had better agree with *other delegate* in saying that the sector is very healthy at the moment [although] it is a lot more complicated.
>
> (Manchester)

Indeed, as was noted by another of our delegates, there have been a number of innovations relevant to CM over recent years, not to mention an upsurge in interest on the part of scholars and researchers:

> …El Sistema[5]…Big Noise[6]…there are important and innovative things still going on and there are different ways of us thinking about the successes of community music over the decades…[and]…there has been quite a number of research projects [around community arts] funded by the AHRC since then [2011]…if you want a strong and historical

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[5] See: http://www.ihse.org.uk/
[6] See: http://makeabignoise.org.uk/

> understanding of community practice go and read [Lee] Higgins's recent book
> 'Community Music' or go and read the journal, 'International Journal of Community
> Music'. So yes, there is actually a bit of an explosion of academic interest in community
> music at the moment.   (Manchester)

As was also noted by several delegates, the field has witnessed developments in terms of professionalization, training, skills development and qualifications available to those interested or involved in CM practice. 'MusicLeader', an initiative which ran from 2005 to 2012, provided a national network supporting the development of community music practitioners and other 'music leaders' by providing information, advice and guidance, training and networking opportunities alongside online resources. A number of HE institutions across the UK currently offer masters level courses which either focus directly upon, or else relate closely to CM[7]. In addition, Arts Council England has recently announced the launch of a new qualification, the Level 4 Certificate for Music Educators (CME), aimed at music educators who are involved in musical learning activities for children and young people. The National Foundation for Youth Music has also recently published a quality framework (Youth Music 2013) aimed at organisations involved in the delivery of music-making sessions with young people. It should perhaps also be noted, however, both that many longstanding and highly experienced CM practitioners lack any formal qualifications and it still remains to be seen how far such initiatives will go in altering the picture, described by Rogers (2002), in which the 'provision of appropriate professional development courses, especially in music leadership, has failed to keep pace with the increasing opportunities for education and community work for musicians' (Rogers 2002: 15). It is perhaps also worth taking note of research findings suggesting that both cost and time constitute important barriers to community musicians' access to training (Dobbs et al. 2005)[8].

There can be little doubt however, given the perspectives of a number of our delegates, that in a number of significant ways, CM has witnessed what might be considered a certain institutionalisation or formalisation across several dimensions of its activity, particularly, it would seem, in terms of the extent to which CM activity today takes place both within settings, and in collaboration with organisations and institutions, which are less oriented towards the encouragement of civic cultural activity (such as youth or community centres) than formal service provision of various kinds (education, health, social services and so on). In this way, CM practitioners appear to have not only become increasingly involved in working within and across formal educational settings, but have found themselves encouraged, as one of our delegates noted, to 'start wearing the clothes of social care, health and welfare' (Manchester).

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[7] These include: Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (MA Community Music), Leeds College of Music (MA Community Music) University of York (MA Community Music), The University of Edinburgh (M.Sc. Music in the Community), Goldsmiths College (MA Participatory and Community Arts).

[8] Dobbs *et al.* note that since community musicians are typically either freelance or self-employed 'it is not only an issue of having to pay the course fees for the training, but while they are training they are not earning money' (2005: 22).

In light of such developments, it was perhaps unsurprising to note that the contemporary relevance and value of the 'radicalism' or 'radical roots' often touched upon in discussions of CM was subject to some questioning within our network discussions:

> there is another part of me thinks maybe this is just, you know, the radicalism is just part of the problem, it is just a pure piece of nostalgia and which is profoundly unhelpful and which even may stop us seeing successes in community music. For example, we presented the institutionalisation of it potentially as a problem in community music, right? Well maybe it is radical that community music has changed the curriculum for music education, and maybe that is an achievement, not a problem, not a weakness, not a fault, maybe that is a good thing…actually there are lots and lots of qualities, I think, in community music and maybe the sort of radicalism, the Stevens thing you know, John Stevens[9], that sort of aspect of it, that presence could become a dead hand on how one moves forward.
>
> (Leeds)

This is an important point. Indeed, formal music education certainly appears, if only to take the National Plan for Music Education as one example, to nowadays set greater store by the value of 'informal provision', 'informal routes' and 'informal partners' (2011a). There seems to be little doubt then, that the work of CM practitioners and the values bound up with CM practice, have made important inroads and gained a new level of recognition in recent years. That said, a number of delegates were keen to draw attention to the ways in which work undertaken within certain settings, with certain agencies or through the adoption of certain forms of music-making activity threatened to undermine what continued to be understood by some – it appeared – as enduringly core concerns of any CM practice meriting the name. One delegate, for instance, posed the following provocation:

> Just a question: Can there be radicalism when inclusion projects are being run by institutions like the police and the council that strive to conformity of behaviour?
>
> (Manchester)

Elsewhere there was a certain unwillingness to cede understandings of CM to modes of musical engagement which, despite enabling music making activities on the part of project participants typically denied these, were seen as out-of-step with key ideals underpinning CM practice:

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[9] John Stevens was a drummer and one of the most significant figures in early free improvisation. From 1983 he was involved with Community Music (CM), an organisation through which he took his form of music making to youth clubs, mental health institutions and other settings. Notes taken during these sessions were later turned into a book for the Open University called *Search and Reflect* (1985). This has been seen by many as the foundational text of community music practice.

> El Sistema…I have questions about actually whether any of that is really community music
> at all   (Leeds)

> I want to go back to what you [other delegate] were talking about, about how one of the
> points of continuity in terms of what community music is, is 'what music does' and that is
> the thing that hangs it together according to all these different government agendas…
> [and]…we have been talking about negotiation as one of the things that community music
> does and for me it is voice, giving people voice that community music does, and not all
> music does this. I have just read the [draft] manuscript of a book that is coming out next
> year on the El Sistema project and it is very, very critical of the project. There is no space
> for voice, no space for negotiation…this kind of music doesn't give space for negotiation,
> there isn't a sense of empowerment. So I would like to see us talking about values, in
> terms of 'what music does'.   (Leeds)

Such concerns about the extent to which some of the core values of CM activity are able to
endure within formal settings and partnerships with formal service providers were also echoed
by other delegates. In detailing the evaluation processes of a project partnered with a formal
education provider's PRU (detailed earlier in this section of the report), one delegate's account
of the extent to which 'quiet radicalism' actually implies an attenuation of what were elsewhere
recognised – almost unanimously – as core elements of CM, did became apparent:

> So the schools were measuring numeracy and literacy against national attainment for
> their ages, looking at Vauxhall profiles and changes in behaviour between the start of the
> project to the end of the project…there was a mixture of measurable data, anecdotal
> evidence, photographic evidence of pupils participating in activities, sound recordings.
> What we didn't have, which I really regret, was ongoing voices of the children in the
> projects feeding back. We couldn't make that happen because of the micro-behaviour
> management by the behaviour managers. And that's what it boiled down to. And that's
> this thing about radical working…we were working towards it, but it's a very, very long
> term thing.   (Manchester)

Our discussions also uncovered other ways in which projects partnered with formal providers
and involving staff from those organisations could prove problematic at the level of:

> …working with people who have been trained into a particular way of working, have only
> got that way of working, and cannot see that anything else will begin to do what they're
> trained to do.   (Manchester)

Such testimonies resonate with recent research commissioned by Youth Music which uncovered
ways in which the alignment of the approach adopted by CM practitioners (termed 'nonformal
providers' in that report) sat uneasily with the pedagogical parameters of formal music
educators:

> The process of 'joining up' music education provision would appear more complicated than previously expressed. There is a need to consider the process not only from a structural perspective, enabling formal and nonformal providers to work more effectively together, but also from a pedagogical perspective. (Saunders & Welch, 2012: p9)

The way in which a number of our network delegates discussed this matter gave the clear impression that while both CM practitioners and practices have increasingly found their way into more formal settings over recent years, the manner in which CM activity functioned within them could risk denuding it of what – in the eyes of many of our delegates – can be considered as some of CM's most vital attributes and significant outcomes.

> …this came up at a recent conference where there was just this sense of people not really understanding the quality of the work that CM delivers…that is a huge area which is difficult. We might have our own understandings of it but in the formal sector, they're at a bit of a loss, I think, as to how to understand it (Manchester)

> There's a whole body of work to be done about raising our own self-belief in the way that we come across to all of the people we interact with…There are so many aspects of [CM] practice that are not recognised by formal agencies…[and]…so many ways of viewing the work that's done and, on the whole, I'm afraid that it's not taken seriously
> (Manchester)

> I suppose everybody is answerable to somebody… so it's all about people knowing what information they need to present to somebody to say that they are worthwhile but in that you lose the crux of the community musician…it gets lost in translation somehow
> (Manchester)

What emerges from the foregoing discussion of 'quiet radicalism' appears, we would suggest, to accord with several other developments relevant to CM over recent years. Some of these appear to be double-edged in terms of their implications for the future and potential of CM activity. That is, we recognise that one way of understanding CM's increasing alignment with formal service providers of various kinds is in terms of success; here consider, for example, the way CM's capacity to act as a 'hook' which can be used to re-engage 'young people, particularly vulnerable young people' with learning (Saunders & Welch, 2012: p113) has been taken up within formal music education circles. At the same time though, the pedagogical values of CM, closely allied to what are sometimes termed informal education processes (see, e.g., Jeffs & Smith 2005), sit uneasily alongside the objectives, measures and approaches typically to the fore within formal educational settings. While we recognise the enduring 'resilience' of CM and its ability to responsively position itself in relation to 'what needs to be done' from a policy perspective, the matter of which or whose 'values' it embraces in order to endure in what seems to be an increasingly nebulous form, emerges as a vexed one. Within this context, the notion of a 'quiet radicalism' therefore appears to us an interesting one to highlight since its consideration offers some insight into the broader conditions of the field. That is, it is a term

which performs, in discursive terms, a number of positive functions at once: it retains the sense of an enduring connection to the CM movements 'radical' roots (apparently valued by practitioners, if 'quietly' so) whilst, at the same time, acknowledging the ways in which CM practice has come to accommodate itself to – and position its value in relation to – the agendas of formal service providers. A key question which emerges within this context however is to what extent CM risks, in the course of its various accommodations, strategic re-configurations and adaptations, divesting itself of those elements and attributes capable of yielding the kinds of personal, social, cultural or community-level benefits which fall outside of the remit of its current funders' scope of interest.

- Mark Rimmer

d. Palpable or Proveable? Some reflections on quality, research, advocacy, evidence, and faith

'The music could be crap or not crap… other things were happening and you sought to capture what those things might be…'

'… personal wellbeing, getting gangs off the streets, dance for people with dementia – they're all valuable.'

'The collective identity that came as a result was palpable.'

'The way people apply to us is that they provide evidence of need and then describe how they are going to meet that need.'

'…what I've been trying to do is encourage practitioners to change their minds about what counts as evidence and what not. I really want to see a shift away from stories or anecdotes or accounts, towards well-thought-through, well-presented expositions of subjective experience whether from participants or practitioners or an organisation overall… there is a job to do to shift from that [ethnographic/subjective] towards something that is more validated'

'I'd forgotten that the Arts Council aren't allowed to look at the quality of delivery at the Music Education Hubs…I guess the reason is that they [ACE] are not music education specialists'

'…the other issue with that is with people understanding what quality is… there was just this sense of people not really understanding the quality of the work that CM delivers and measuring how to understand that and how to measure it. That is a huge area which is difficult. We might have our own understandings of it but in the formal sector, they're a bit at a loss, I think, as to how to [understand that].'

'Quality is not visual, you cannot see it, particularly in the fluid nature of the aims of community projects. How measurable is it in terms of seeing something tangible? And are we fighting a losing battle with funders there? If we can't prove the quality, then we're not proving that we need the funding'

Delegate:	So it's not about the funders and organisations and commissioners, it's about the people who are out there with the intention of making things happen.
Organiser:	Then it sounds like a personal credo
Delegate:	I think it is…
Organiser:	…a leap of faith?'

The above fragments were all spoken by network participants with a strong personal and professional commitment to CM. They may even share an understanding of what constitutes 'quality' in this context. They would agree on the beneficial outcomes associated with CM, and probably agree that different approaches might be successfully employed to achieve those outcomes. But within the network we struggled to articulate a shared sense of what might constitute compelling evidence of quality or success. Because quality is not 'visual' or 'tangible,' it is hard to satisfy the impulse to look away from 'stories or anecdotes,' for something that is more easily 'validated.'

And even in urging the shift away from the 'ethnographic/subjective' in one of the quoted excerpts, our contributor describes her/his alternative as 'well-thought-through, well-presented expositions of subjective experience' (which sound a bit like stories…). This issue may turn on whose 'subjectivity' we are referring to. Who, in the context of a CM intervention, has, or have reliable, non-partisan viewpoints? Perhaps not the practitioner who delivered the intervention.

The challenge to seek a more readily 'validated' methodology is familiar from controversies about the relative reliability and salience of qualitative and quantitative approaches. This old dialogue is recalled in the use of the terms 'measuring' and 'measurable' in relation to the concept of 'proof.' There is a dishonourable tradition (e.g. in the study and practice Management) of equating what is measurable with what is important. This has the attraction of convenience (see, for example, Bartlett & Ghoshal (1993), for a critique of this convenient assumption). But it should not be allowed to absolve us of the responsibility of identifying what really is important. This will indicate the values associated with the practice under consideration.

Some of our participants were happy not to question the repeated assertion that 'music does what it does.' But that does not seem to add to our understanding, nor to represent a very 'critical' approach to the topic. We discuss some of the values which we believe are associated with the concept and practice of CM in the 'Pathways to an Elusive Consensus' section of this report.

It has been suggested, within our network discussions, that it is important to identify the values associated with CM, not least, in order to be able to select or design the appropriate evaluation processes – on the grounds that evaluation enables you to discover whether your espoused values are being expressed by the practice(s) you engage in. The group has also reflected that effective evaluation of the 'messy' and to some extent contested intentions and practices labelled as CM is always likely to be complex and costly. The project team will suggest, in our chapter on future research opportunities, that a legitimate research aim would be to develop a better understanding of what sorts of evidence should be sought in order to establish the effectiveness of CM interventions – and how, methodologically – that sort of evidence might be found.

But as well as being difficult and expensive, evaluation faces another challenge:

> 'We need to be very careful that we don't confuse advocacy and evaluation, because evaluation may find out all sorts of things you don't want to know…'

Two points arise from this observation from a participant. The first is the perceived danger of a potential confusion between evaluation and advocacy. This arises from the suspicion that (self-) evaluation processes can be managed and disseminated to ensure a favourable outcome, reflecting glory on the provider, and underpinning subsequent bids for project funding. This kind of 'evaluation' could be said to lack the rigour or objectivity of, for example, an independent academic evaluation.

The other, apparently contradictory warning – that we 'may find out all sorts of things we don't want to know' – might be said to occupy the territory of inconvenience. As our contributor says, evaluation should not be confused with advocacy. Evaluation should be applying the most appropriate, affordable research methods to learn from the experience of engaging in CM activities, with a view to improving our understanding and practice. Even if it tells us things which it is inconvenient to hear.

Advocacy is surely closer to marketing, which would involve selecting the most favourable findings, or judgements offered by the evaluative process, and communicating them persuasively to policymakers, funders, and client groups.

Finally, in this section, a word on the matter of Faith. It is the observation of the project team that a significant number of CM projects have been enabled over time by the shared faith of providers and funders that valuable beneficial outcomes will be achieved. We have compared this with the relationship between a client and an advertising agency. The client uses her/his best judgement in the engagement of an agency, hoping/believing that the advertising service provided will be effective and competitive. The judgement will be based on the agency's track record, its reputation, the perceived value of the service, and, often, personal chemistry, and, maybe, hunch. There can be no proof, ahead of the fact, that the appointment will work.[10]

Confident clients/commissioners may be found who share the faith. But advertising agencies work very hard to make potential clients aware of their credentials, and can afford to invest in the relationship development activities that potentially lead to commercial engagement. For CM providers, this investment is very difficult to afford to do – and very difficult to afford not to do.

- Tony Brown

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[10] Despite the bureaucratic and/or ethical safeguards associated with contemporary tendering processes, subjectivity, experience and faith continue to be important factors in bidding for and awarding contracts.

4. Pathways to an elusive consensus

In the previous section we have reviewed the major themes which emerged from our 16 hours of critical interaction with network participants. In this section we will offer a more impressionistic summary of the journey we have been on, and include some of the reflections which have characterised the many hours of discussion the project team has engaged in during the planning and review of the network events.

We have attempted to facilitate a process of progressive focusing through the structuring and review of our events. Earlier discussions generated very wide-ranging accounts of participants' experiences and insights. As we moved through the events we tried to create a tighter focus – to move from a highly divergent and inclusive account of contexts and practices, towards a more consensual understanding of the defining principles, and key achievements of CM; and to generate a shared sense of the challenges and priorities this community of practice needs to confront if it is to be sustainable.

In the early phase of the project we were pleased by the enthusiastic responses of the practitioners and researchers we invited to participate in the Network. We also gained common support for the thematic structure we suggested, enabling us to identify two salient topics to be addressed at each event. All involved agreed that the network programme offered us a rare and privileged opportunity to reflect on the concepts, practices, and intellectual uncertainties associated with CM in a context which was unusually free from 'instrumental' requirements or expectations.

However, as suggested earlier, for all the positive engagement we encountered a persistent difficulty in drawing together the views of participants into a consistent, coherent account of CM and its activities and practices. The only consistency lay in the diversity of experience. In fact participants were determined to keep definitions as loose as possible, to keep alive an open-ended interpretation of the potentials and manifestations of CM. Some contributors asserted that CM is an ever-widening domain of practices. Contributors seemed content with this reluctance to prescribe or define. While we are inclined to respect this open-minded attitude, we have experienced some frustration at the difficulty of tying down, however loosely, the elusive corners of this big tent.

So we have characterised the experience and disposition of contributors as highly divergent. In terms of creating a platform from which to better understand the practice and potential of CM, we are faced with fragmentation, diversity and elusiveness: what participants started to refer to as the 'chameleonic' nature of CM. This divergent approach to the whole topic is reflected, we believe, in a field of practice where it is difficult to identify shared understandings of quality. And the reluctance to be defined is also a more or less deliberate strategy for keeping artistic, and most importantly commercial, options open. This has enabled CM to respond flexibly to the changing demands and opportunities presented by policymakers and funders.

Purpose, Process, Outcomes and Evidence

In our second event we attempted to provide some more structure to the discussion. We sought to explore and compare experience of CM activities in terms of Purpose, Process, Outcomes and Evidence.

If we were hoping that patterns would start to appear that would bring some coherence to the discourse, these were not readily apparent in our early encounters. Rather than a generalisable set of purposes and approaches to practice and evaluation, what seemed to emerge was an appetite for a shared understanding of pedagogy. This might provide a generalisable understanding of CM as a developmental process, and some indication of the motivations and activities which are likely to lead to positive outcomes.

A pedagogy perhaps hints at a commonly accessible process of accountability. However, as we imply above, there is some doubt as to whether even the term 'pedagogy' has been used with a shared understanding. Practitioners continued to wriggle unhappily in the face of constraining generalities.

One area where some agreement seemed to emerge was the evidence of success. Participants offered examples where the successful outcome of a CM intervention was reported by third parties – headteachers, probation officers, care managers and so on. Improvements in participant motivation and behaviours were observed by these third parties who may, or may not have been involved in commissioning the intervention. These parties may offer an under-utilised source of evidence for the efficacy of CM activities.

One participant reported that improvements in literacy and numeracy scores had been directly attributed to a CM intervention at a Pupil Referral Unit, by the Unit's Head. The Head had not negotiated the intervention, but was able to provide an authoritative – and relatively independent – account of benefits which the participants themselves may not have been able to articulate.

Formal and nonformal

Our next attempt to develop a more generalisable account of CM's agency involved the potentially provocative association of a polarised set of values associated with formal and non-formal methods of music education.

We had been exploring whether/how CM differs from 'formal' music (education). It sometimes sounds as if you could argue there is not much difference. Some priorities are claimed by both camps – collaboration; rigour; professionalism; excellence. However, many of these are slippery concepts, and at best highly context specific. The professionalism of the concert hall may look very different from the professionalism of the CM workshop. And the nature of 'excellence,' as articulated in, for example, the Henley review (DfE 2011b), may be a much narrower – some would say purer – construct than the 'excellence' achieved by, for example, a Community Choir.

As well as these uncertain comparabilities, there is a sense in which CM has been preoccupied with denying its connection with formal music education, preferring often to define itself as distinct from, or in opposition to a purist, or elitist model of 'excellence.'

So we started to think of a 3-sided model:
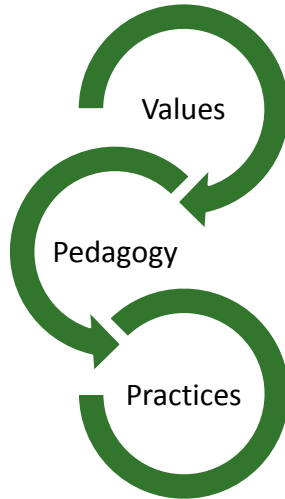
In this model pedagogy and practices are informed by values. We started to speculate that distinctive values are what separates CM from 'formal' music (education). What emerges are parallel sets of values. These may be expressed as below in an artificially binary way (although these distinctions are reflected in the data we have collected from primary and published sources).

CM values	Formal music values
Engagement	'Excellence'
Inclusive	Exclusive
Participation	Expertise
Democratic	Directed/led
Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Negotiated	Prescribed
Facilitated	Managed/dictated
Enquiring/exploratory	Pre-ordained
Radical/subversive	Conformist/obedient
Open-ended	Pre-determined
Concerned with quality of process	Concerned with quality of output
Person-centred	Music-centred
Personal development	Musical/skill development

For some participants these distinctions helped to express a clearer characterisation of CM. We recognise that there are some oversimplifications here. In particular it is somewhat disingenuous to suggest that CM has a robust claim to being 'democratic, egalitarian, negotiated.' These attributes are relative, and do not accurately reflect the complex power

relationships that exist within any CM activity. That said, it does seem fair to claim that top-down dictation is more strongly associated with the formal, concert hall tradition.

On the subject of traditions, we should also note that CM – operating within the non-formal values framework – has traditionally claimed to draw on radical, or subversive motivations. We found little evidence of this more oppositional stance in contemporary practice. We did not encounter much political motivation at all. This may be because the apparently monolithic social norms which the hippy alternative, and later the punk rock impulse, and perhaps the early community music-as-a-tool-for-social-change all sought to challenge has in fact been successfully undermined over time. It may also be because CM has had to align itself with the mainstream in order to survive in a marketplace increasingly dominated by statutory funding.

We also do not intend to suggest that either set of Values is more valuable than the other. Our hope, perhaps is that the value of the non-formal values might be more widely understood and acknowledged – that the two value sets might be seen as more equally valuable by more people. It seems that the value of the formal values is increasingly dominant in policymaking and the allocation of resources (see below).

Overall, we feel that it is legitimate to use these distinctive sets of values, or priorities, as at least a partial expression of what is distinctive about CM.

Outcomes

If patterns of purpose and practice proved elusive in our extended conversations, it is possible at least to trace some consistent experiences of the outcomes of engaging in CM activity. Practitioners believe – and can draw on a variety of evaluative approaches to confirm – that their practice can confidently be expected to generate valuable benefits for participants. These are normally expressed in terms of personal development; and are manifested as self-awareness and confidence, the ability to communicate and collaborate, and enhanced ability to think and act creatively (also related to confidence). It may be noted that participants in CM activities are often untypically lacking in these sorts of confidence and/or the inclination to engage in collaboration. It is also commonly the case that CM participants have been denied – or have rejected – the opportunity to engage in more formal learning environments. These circumstances, it could be said, add positively to the social value which is associated with the outcomes achieved by an informal approach to music education.

The priorities we associate with CM, as listed above, seem to be far removed from those articulated in the National Plan for Music Education (DfE 2011a). In their foreword, the ministers refer to 'the greatest music the world has ever heard…'; 'scaling the heights of artistic greatness…'; and offering opportunities 'for exceptionally talented young people to progress to high levels of musical excellence…' and to join 'elite ensembles' (ibid: 3-4). Although they offer a rhetorical nod towards 'informal' methods, it is clear that what is proposed is overwhelmingly a traditional model of formal music education developing the musical skills necessary to perform the acknowledged classics of the western canon.

So it is interesting to find the National Plan (DfE 2011a) summoning in evidence the extensive body of research which emphasises the non-musical educational and social benefits of engaging in musical activity. This work – summarised below – justifies music (education) in much the same terms as the participants in our network did.

The Benefits of Music

'Music can make a powerful contribution to the education and development of children, having benefits which range from those that are largely academic to the growth of social skills and contribution to overall development. It is a unique form of communication that can change the way pupils feel, think and act… Involvement in music engages and re-engages pupils, increasing their self-esteem, and maximising their progress in education and not just in music.'

'Research has shown a direct link between music and improved reading ability… certain types of music instruction had improved reading comprehension…evidence that music education can have a significant effect on the reading ability of pupils who had been experiencing difficulties… and also enhance language development.'

'Studies have also shown a connection between music and increased scores in IQ… other studies have demonstrated a link between music and creative skills, particularly musical improvisation and lessons which require children to be imaginative.'

The social value of music – the evidence

A number of studies have demonstrated the positive impact music can have on personal and social development, including self-reliance, confidence, self-esteem, sense of achievement and an ability to relate to others.'

'Other studies have shown different benefits from participating in music groups and needing to work together towards a common goal… These include discipline, teamwork, cooperation, self-confidence, responsibility and social skills.'

(from DFE 2011a: 42-43)

The quotations from the review of academic literature in that document (ibid: 42) powerfully confirm the experience of CM practitioners and researchers who participated in our critical conversations over the past 8 months. That shared experience is that engaging in CM activities – in all their diversity of context and process – does lead to valuable personal development, communication and relationship skills, self-awareness and confidence, and an enhanced ability to think and act creatively.

The National Plan adduces this evidence in support of a model of music education which is overwhelmingly formal, competitive, and unapologetically elitist. A tiny number of participants in the activities it envisages will end up playing in the National Youth Orchestra, which is several times identified as the longed for pinnacle of achievement and reward.

And – persuasive though it seems to be – the evidence of all these beneficial social and educational outcomes only generates the resources to offer perhaps *one term* of collective, participatory music education (rendering any broader positive impact on individuals, or the wider institution unlikely, and the pinnacle impossibly remote for almost everyone).

But the important thing for us has been to arrive at a point where a degree of consensus has at last been achieved. After the months of searching for patterns – of purpose and practice – we seem to have arrived at a point where adherents of both sets of Values, or priorities can agree on a set of expected outcomes. And we can agree that these expected outcomes – self-awareness, self-confidence, ability to collaborate, enhanced creativity – create **social value**, and that **this impact can be expected across a range of formal and informal practices, and in any, or all social contexts.**[11]

So if we agree on '*The Importance of Music*', as the National Plan brands itself, and argues we should, what role might further research play in helping to promote an understanding of the value, and values which CM can deliver?

- Tony Brown

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[11] While the National Plan (2011a) is aimed at schools and school-aged participants, the social value observed by CM practitioners applies equally to diverse adult 'client' groups.

5. The Role of Research

One of the network's main objectives has been to develop a set of priorities for a future research programme aimed at helping the research community, policymakers and practitioners to understand the impact of CM on participating communities and individuals and thereby improve the quality of decision making within these groups. We reminded our network delegates of this objective within each of the network events. We also dedicated the second half of the final event in London to the matter of research in relation to CM. In a number of ways however, thinking about the question of research threw up a series of challenges for our delegates, several of whom appeared to display some scepticism and trepidation about the ways in which research might be of value to them. In order to help readers understand this situation it is worth saying a few words about the recent development of research and evaluation in relation to community arts.

Community Arts Evaluation – recent history

As has been mentioned elsewhere in this document, since the late 1990s, the level of interest in community arts on the part of policy makers, educationalists and community development agencies alike increased considerably in the UK. Such a growth in the attention devoted to community arts fell in line with the Labour government's recognition of the potentially significant role of culture in urban regeneration and more especially in its desire to see the community arts playing a part in tackling social exclusion. The oft-cited PAT 10[12] report to the Social Exclusion Unit (DCMS 1999), for instance, made the government case clear when it concluded that the arts, cultural and recreational activity 'can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities' (DCMS 1999: 8). This document suggested a number of reasons why this was the case: such activities appeal directly to individuals' interests, develop their potential and self-confidence, encouraging collective effort and building positive links within the wider community. That said, the PAT 10 report also recognised the lack of evidence on the regeneration impact of arts and cultural experiences. This situation gave rise to a growing policy and research interest in the social impact of the arts with the focus turning ever more on the contribution of the arts to social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal.

Since the PAT 10 made such bold yet largely unsubstantiated claims, arts organisations, evaluators and numerous commentators subsequently turned their attention to the matter of demonstrating how participation in arts activity can result in positive effects for participants and their communities, with a number of research reports emerging between 1997 and 2001 (e.g., Matarasso 1997; Moriarty 1997; Williams 1997b; Blake Stephenson Ltd 2000; HDA 2000; Hill & Moriarty 2001; see Jermyn 2001 for a review). These reports claim that the outcomes for

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[12] "PAT" stands for Policy Action Team. Numerous policy action teams were set up by central government in 1998 to look, in an integrated way, at the problems of poor neighbourhoods. The PAT 10 report to the Social Exclusion Unit focussed on the contribution that sport and the arts can potentially make toward neighbourhood renewal.

participants of arts activities can range from increased self-confidence, educational attainment and health, to the development of practical and social skills, well-being and social capital. At the level of the local neighbourhoods or communities, benefits including improved social cohesion, community empowerment, self-determination, local image and identity as well as the development of local enterprise, improved public facilities and reduced offending behaviour were cited. Indeed, such was the recognition received by one report, Francois Matarasso's influential *Use or Ornament: The social impact of participation in the arts* (1997), that it was cited by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, in his public speeches (Smith 1999).

Subsequent reports and research projects focussed ever more closely on the scope, effectiveness and role of arts activities in countering social exclusion (DCMS 2001; *Long et al*. 2002). Jermyn's (2004) *The Art of Inclusion*, for instance, drew together findings from 14 project case studies that focussed exclusively upon the practice and outcomes of arts activities seeking to foster social inclusion. While reiterating many of the findings of previous research, Jermyn's offering also provided a sober reflection on the numerous difficulties associated with understanding the effectiveness of arts activities that seek to produce social inclusion outcomes in stating how her research had 'possibly raised more questions than it answers' (Jermyn 2004: xi). Jermyn was not alone is seeing the need for greater precision, clarity and specificity in research into the outcomes of community arts activity; numerous commentators pointed to significant difficulties over subsequent years.

As was noted by Matarasso back in 1996, considerable methodological difficulties face any attempts to quantify the effects, on actors, of participation in locally-based, small-scale creative arts projects. Even in instances where methodological problems have been recognised and attempts made to accommodate them, much of the research carried out to date has been considered anecdotal and has been criticised by commentators for its lack of robustness and occasionally simplistic and misleading use of statistics (see, e.g. Coalter 2001; Merli 2002). Others have also noted the ideological bias and advocacy purposes lurking in many claimed attempts at researching the field (Belfiore 2002; Hansen 1995; Merli 2002; van Puffelen 1996; Selwood 2002). In terms of the extent to which this has created a serviceable knowledge base, it must be noted that definitions of key concepts are often missing from community arts-focussed research reports and many of them present case study findings in a somewhat generalised manner. Indeed, some commentators have recognised that one of the major problems with many community arts reports issues from the fact that they have often appeared more concerned to simply advocate the work rather than to actually provide substantiated findings:

> Despite - or perhaps because of - what is now the prevailing orthodoxy, it has become increasingly pressing for a distinction to be drawn between advocacy and evidence, potential and actual fact.   (Selwood 2002: 10)

> Discussions of the impacts of the arts and their measurement have become entangled in debates around funding, so that the two are rarely considered independently from one

another. As a result, advocacy considerations have often encouraged an uncritical
research agenda in this area   (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010: 124)

Nevertheless, impact evaluation, and performance evaluation more generally, remain common
research approaches adopted within the field. Recent years have seen the development of what
Belfiore and Bennett have referred to as the 'toolkit approach' which seeks to offer 'a
straightforward method of impact evaluation, easily replicable in different geographical contexts
and equally applicable to different art forms and diverse audiences' (2010: 122). For these
authors however, this approach must been seen as 'inherently flawed' (ibid: 126) since while it
might serve short-term ends for specific arts projects, it fails to meaningfully respond to the
research challenges facing a field which is today embroiled in much broader debates about
public value:

> The development of a "toolkit mentality", and the quest for matters of value (and
> especially matters of public value) are more complicated and politically sensitive than any
> toolkit or one-size-fits-all approach could ever hope to deal with
> (ibid: 125)

Given the difficulties experienced by professional researchers in their attempts to understand
the outcomes of community arts activities, it is unsurprising that CM practitioners and
organisations are no less challenged by the need to provide evidence of, and justify the value of
their work. Indeed, on the basis of our network discussions, it appeared that this situation is
compounded by the fact that the abiding culture of the sector means that, more often than not,
practitioners are both relatively unused to and can be quite disparaging of evaluative and other
research procedures. In light of these issues, the fact that network delegates referred, as much
as they did, to the need for advocacy was perhaps to be expected.

That said, it was also the case that some delegates were willing to reflect critically on the
tendency for CM organisations to seek to conduct internal project evaluations which, as the
below quotation suggests, should be seen as primarily serving an advocacy function:

> they [CM organisations] tend to like evaluations that are a sort of internal
> evaluation…there are evaluations within the organisations that have said how good it [a
> CM project] was, [but] it comes into advocacy when you know it [a CM project] is looking
> to be funded   (Leeds)

Delegates' Research Discussion
In light of the probing nature of our network discussions however, there did appear to be a
growing recognition, on the part of a number of delegates, that the need tackle thorny
questions about value through an engagement with research – especially in the context of biting
austerity – are more pressing than ever. One of the ways in which this was framed by delegates
was in terms of 'complex' (and thereby often unseen or unrecognised) outcomes of CM activity.

the complexities of outputs I think is interesting there and there are individual ones that never get out I think, that is quite an interesting one   (Leeds)

One of our delegates, an academic involved in researching community arts, highlighted reasons why such complex outcomes of CM remain unrecognised. These, it was suggested, relate to both CM practitioners' lack of ease with academia and associated research practices, as well as the fact that many of the kinds of reflective practice embedded in CM facilitation are not necessarily things that practitioners are able to articulate easily:

> …the project that we are doing is co-researched, so it is [about] getting practitioners to tie their thinking to their practice and it is really difficult, we [research team] are finding it really tricky…[so] where are the practitioner voices that aren't as comfortable with academia? The people that we are working with are really struggling with this. They are clearly doing their job, they are having experiences, their ways of thinking are changing through that experience and it affects the thing that they do next, but…for them to realise it themselves and then put it in a format that they can share within a group, that is the really problematic bit   (Leeds)

In some respects the foregoing statement chimes with other delegates' espoused wish to see CM develop a much clearer understanding of its 'pedagogy' (or pedagogies?) and to establish, as was noted above, 'a recognisable entity of this community practitioner'. Indeed, as was clear from other delegates' statements, some experienced CM practitioners do rely on a store of knowledge and are active in developing and refining their approaches over time and through experience. These approaches, furthermore, often connect directly to the outcomes that can emerge from CM activities:

> I will almost certainly have far more outcomes that I want to see from the project than the ones that are put in at the start and I think that is something that you can only come to with lots of experience…I see my whole long journey as cumulative, so I will look at a project and go, "well actually I have done this before, when I did it then this happened, I wonder if the same thing will happen, will it be different, and what is that thing I really wanted to know and I didn't touch on, I am going to find that out this time" so I have my own whole kind of range of outcomes that I am personally interested in, I suspect you [other delegates] do as well   (Leeds)

Interestingly, further discussion around the matter of outcomes and research, revealed examples of music activity in which significant outcomes were generated yet which, due to the absence of a formal evaluation or reporting structure (allied to the absence of funding) remained largely unacknowledged:

> I do lots of work with adult community choirs who don't get any funding from anywhere. They are community choirs, multiple groups, they benefit from engaging in community music making. They have voices within their community groups, they in turn then have

voices within their communities, in some cases they are community building groups, some of them are extending their reach and providing education, running junior choirs properly and well, with quality provision, without getting any funding from anyone…[so]…they are meeting outcomes but not in a language, coming back to that, not in a language that they understand…[and]…I don't need to report that to anybody because nobody has invested in it. So from the one hand, that is lost isn't it? Because nobody has invested in it, what you could find from that will never be found.   (Leeds)

What emerges from this picture then is the sense in which CM activity often goes under-articulated (since practitioners cannot always easily verbalise what they do, however well they do it), that it lacks the terminology and pedagogical framework through which to explain its processes to the uninitiated and that, as a consequence, potentially valuable dimensions of its practice and outcomes go unrecognised and unrewarded. It therefore comes as no surprise that the best intentions of CM funders, tied as they often are to desirable yet largely fixed or set project outcomes, can have the effect of constraining project development in certain respects. Of direct relevance to this matter, in relation to the above example, the same delegate continued as follows:

…if somebody was investing in it, what is being achieved in that group might not be being achieved because their outcomes are being planned from elsewhere.
                                                        (Leeds)

Undoubtedly connected to the way that a number of CM's most valuable outcomes can often go unnoticed or unrecognised is the fact that, by encompassing such a wide and diverse range of activities which can differ from one another in significant regards, different CM projects typically instigate different process and mechanisms, each liable to lead to different kinds of outcomes within specific settings and contexts. This was referred to by one of our delegates as "what sometimes, from the outside, seems like the 'black box' or the 'magic' that goes on in CM" (Leeds). This unpacking of the processes and mechanisms enacted – to differing extents and in differing ways – within CM activities was something that a number of our delegates pointed towards. One, for instance, suggested that the approaches employed by different CM practitioners 'shouldn't be lumped together for everybody, all the time' (Leeds Event), while a number of delegates, across each of our events, made mention of the shortcomings of CM's currently scattered knowledge base and the absence of a deeper understanding of outcomes:

Just going back again to evaluation…isn't there an opportunity there to do some redefining and reinterpreting, because those outcomes have to be expressed in such broad terms that there is an opportunity to then leap in and unpack what exactly that might look like   (Manchester)

If we still think that we don't know what the impacts are, or how they are achieved, or how to make them more achievable, then that would be a very strong candidate for research   (London)

While the need for gaining greater understanding about the outcomes arising from CM activity certainly proved a compelling starting point for some, the questions lying behind this matter of outcomes, about modes/models of CM working, about process and mechanisms, about social contexts and such variables as class, race and socio-economic status were issues that delegates returned to with increasing frequency over the course of our network discussions:

across a series of contexts you are going to get some things that do apply across all and some things that don't   (London)

But then there's another argument about particular ways of working with music [in CM], and that's at another level, at which you might want to be able to refer to another project, in similar context, with similar aims, with people with similar needs, desires, motivations…   (Manchester)

The models being drawn, where the principles are the same, but the practice is different, maybe that is the [research] study which would be of most help. I think there are other forces in this which are really, really crucial because the world is not shaped by music, it is shaped by poverty and class and by race and things like that. Those issues are part and parcel of the lives of some of the people who are involved in community music and…you come up against that in your practice   (London)

…what are the motivations that people have about engaging in community music? What are they looking for? And consequently what are some of the models, the practices, that do that and to the largest degree? So I think it would be really interesting to understand some of that participatory work that is going on out there where it really is having the biggest impact in the ways that we all know community music can
                                                    (London)

I think it really is [a matter of] finding out the particulars about how certain projects work and the individual things about them, and then that is the inspiration for a really strong document   (London)

On the research agenda thing, maybe there is a thing about very much more precise, clear, good analyses of these sorts of things   (Leeds)

There did appear then, to be some consensus around the matter of research needs amongst a number of our network delegates. Indeed, the pragmatic value of such work was also recognised in light of the desire to develop 'tactics that legitimise [CM]…make it equivalent to more formal practices in learning and teaching' (Leeds), or, as it was otherwise framed, 'take some of that type of research and make it palatable to Ed Vaisey and certain people in the Arts Council, certain people on the political side' (Leeds).

The Role of Research: conclusions

As is noted above, the current lack of precise and clear analyses of the different processes and mechanisms which are enacted within CM activities (albeit in variable ways and across importantly divergent settings) is rooted, to some extent, in the field's longstanding resistance to definition and articulation. An enduringly significant problem, related to the matter of under-articulation, is that attempts to understand arts projects often reflect a presumption that many of the mechanisms and processes involved are generic ones, equally applicable to all circumstances and contexts. In truth, there appears to be great variation across not just community arts projects but also between community music projects, in terms of working practices and principles, aims and objectives, contexts and settings, the nature and quality of experiences, artist-participant relationships and so on.

This situation therefore appears to be an especially pressing issue at a time when questions about 'value' are – from the point of view of funders and policy makers alike – more important than ever. As has already been noted elsewhere in this report, external understandings of CM and its (potential) value appear to be currently misaligned. As a consequence the value of actual impacts may be under-appreciated whilst expectations of outcomes may be over-estimated. Possible responses to this situation might be the production of research which is capable of generating a better understanding of what forms CM activity takes, how it (variably) functions and what corresponding outcomes it generates.

Such a research activity might be most fruitful by:
- incorporating a range of CM projects (by sampling across, for instance, the five sets of variables noted by Veblen (p9))
- accounting for the perspectives and intentions brought to projects by participants, practitioners, funders and other relevant stakeholders and finally, exploring questions of value in a way which goes beyond pre-set objectives)
- Paying close attention to the processes and mechanisms enacted within CM activities and seeking to connect these to activity outcomes, where relevant.

- Network Organisers

6. Network Organisers' Reflections

This project was developed and undertaken by a team with complementary interests in generating an informed, contemporary understanding of the practices, value(s), and potential associated with Community Music. We were greatly encouraged by the AHRC's willingness to support a reflective, exploratory approach, and by the enthusiastic endorsement of our plan by practitioners and researchers in the field.

It was always our intention to try to articulate a future programme of research which could harness and build on the enthusiasm of our Network, and the wider CM community. We were also motivated to ask, and start to answer, some of the questions which preoccupy us in our own involvement with the practices and understandings of Community Music.

This report records some of the broader themes which emerged from our sustained discourse and reflection over the past eight months. It reflects, if anything, an even more elusive set of priorities and practices than we might have predicted. We tried to resist the obsessive search for Definition. But participants evoked such an inconsistent range of purposes and practices that we found ourselves dealing with – if not a crisis of identity - at least a strong resistance to being pigeon-holed.

We feel – without wanting to seem self-obsessed – that it is legitimate to suggest the different, overlapping motivations which the research team/facilitators brought to the project, which may help explain our responses to the ambiguous insights and uncertainties which the process provoked.

The Marketing Manager

Like one of our participants – from a prominent funder of CM activities – I am looking for a 'Manifesto.' This will explain, in fairly simple terms:

- What Community Music is
- Who can expect to benefit from participating
- What benefits can they expect
- Why they should believe what we tell them.

This explanation should allow us to respond to the known/understood needs of our client groups, and those with the political/social responsibility to underwrite access to the claimed benefits. It should help us to plan/design suitable activities; and to communicate persuasively to participants, third parties, and funders. We need to do these things in order to ensure there is a substantial and hopefully growing market for CM.

This would perpetuate the availability of, and funded demand for, the benefits we believe CM is capable of delivering to its participants and stakeholders (including, of course, CM practitioners themselves: marketing will be inclined to act in support of provider interests as well as

customers). Experience in competitive markets – for CM is certainly in competition, even if we don't always know, or agree, what with – indicates that you need this kind of convincing pitch to be understood and valued by the consumer. I had hoped, naively as it now seems, that the experience provided by our network would provide some workable explanations, which we could summarise in the preparation of our manifesto.

I know of no other framework for the sustainability of a product, a service, a practice, or an idea. Find some people who need something; find some people (not necessarily the same ones) who will pay for it; design and deliver something that meets their needs; get them to pay a price which reflects the full cost of delivery; and keep the product/service constantly under review in order to keep validating and improving it in affordable ways. All of this can be dismissed as 'packaging' – a descriptor with deliberate connotations of superficiality. And some CM practitioners are indeed rather precious about what they do, and would in any case resist the crude reductions of the marketing approach.

But this resistance does – it seems to me – inhibit the understanding and acceptance of the value of CM activity. And it does risk limiting the potential of this Market to grow and thrive.

- Tony Brown

The Musician/Practitioner/CM Manager
My interest in exploring this area is that I believe that the particular value of CM activity is not really understood both outside and inside the profession; if it can be described as such. My experience as a practitioner, a trainer, a manager and negotiator working in CM for the last 30 years or so informs a view of a sector that has struggled to define the particular value that it provides and promotes and the useful identity that it then might claim. As a consequence any compelling political purpose, in terms of a radical influence on the improvement of the circumstances and opportunities of the beneficiaries of CM activity, has been diffused through a lack of rigorous reflection on the development of practice that might have identified its particular development from what are commonly described as CMs radical roots in the 70s and 80s.

This is, in part, due to an eagerness among some in CM to refute this past influence, this 'purist nostalgia' as one of our delegates described it, as it might seem an impediment to getting work. And with the degree of uncertainty surrounding CM activity generally it seems far more desirable to invent the new, rather than promote the improving solution to whatever might be the problem. The mainstreaming of investment in CM activity, and the rationalisation of its purpose in order to make it understandable and, therefore, fundable in a mainstream context has, I believe, proved a reductive process that has coincided with an outcome-driven approach to initiatives by government and its agents with the intention of supporting desirable solutions – crime reduction, improved literacy, social cohesion and so on. A solution requires a problem. A problem is not the same as an opportunity, the development of which was generally CM's purpose previously.

Along with the more simplistic expectations and constraints of CM activity as a result of the mainstreaming process there would appear to be little time, resource or incentive to devote to developing an understanding of evolving practice and what this might mean for CM. A positive proposition for significant and reflective continuing professional development informing and defining a distinctive practice would need some significant investment as well as major commitment from people and organisations involved in CM activity. This would appear to be a significant challenge at this time.

However, as with all reductive ideological analyses, over time gaps in provision occur for which simplistic solutions may prove ineffective. Our network reflections on the (re-)emerging nature and value of CM activity may prove an opportunity to identify the subtle and complex personal development outcomes for participants that will have the most valuable long term impact on society.

- Ben Higham

The Researcher
As might be expected from a researcher perspective, I approached this research network with a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the contemporary status of CM and to uncover explanations and clarity where I had previously encountered opaqueness. I was therefore keen to discover more about how (and how far) CM has retained what have been propounded amongst its core values; I sought deeper insight into the ways CM stakeholders go about what can be broadly understood as community development activities and I was also interested in uncovering the practices nowadays employed in such an effort. Lying behind such questions was a concern that while recent years might have witnessed a blossoming of certain understandings of CM, at the same time others (whose value has gone largely unrecognised) have withered. What then, had been usefully taken forward and what, of value, might have been lost?

Hopefully, the foregoing text has illuminating some of the challenges faced in searching for answers to these questions. Adding further complexity to the whole process was the fact that those who we have herein referred to (rather crudely) as 'CM stakeholders', 'practitioners', or else simply 'delegates' represent perspectives from what, as has already been noted, is a broad and varied field. Many of our network participants therefore offered – at various points – perspectives which appeared to provide something like a firm foundation for a deepened and more precisely located discussion, only for that foundation to subsequently be (politely and respectfully) challenged or at least partially undermined by others. While it was far from easy to drill down into a number of matters though, the very fact of such a multiplicity of viewpoints, each making claims to an image of 'CM', has offered no little grist to the mill in terms of the bigger picture. It is also hoped, that the challenge presented by this diversity provides something of a platform for the proposition of solutions to some of CM's current dilemmas.

- Mark Rimmer

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