Editorial

DIY

DIY, Alternative Cultures & Society
1–6
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DOI: 10.1177/27538702261505994
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The collective turn in DIY: doing it together as cultural resistance in an age of polycrisis

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Launched in April 2023, *DIY, Alternative Cultures & Society* has quickly established itself as a pivotal platform for scholarship on do-it-yourself (DIY) from around the world. Contributions to the journal have come from authors in Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania and North and South America. In addition to featuring the work of established authors, we have published articles by many emerging scholars, thereby furthering the journal's mission of advancing DIY studies as a dynamic and continually evolving field of research. Across the four volumes of *DIY* published to date, there have been three special issues, focusing respectively on the Global South, austerity and precarity, and fanzines, and a fourth, on DIY in arts education, is scheduled for December 2027. Such varied themes underscore the role of the journal in both responding to and facilitating the rapid diversification of DIY studies. A further key aspect of the journal's mission has been to broaden the understanding of DIY and alternative cultures in a way that continues to embrace established perspectives on DIY, such as resistance, activism and protest, while also introducing newer ones, including creative citizenship, equity and social justice, economic and environmental sustainability, space and place, and well-being and mental health.

The practice of DIY has been a deeply embedded aspect of human societies for centuries. Initially born of necessity, in a world that predated capitalism and its concomitant forms of mass production, DIY has in more recent times become an alternative to capitalist production and to the mass dissemination of commercially produced goods and services. Although such contemporary DIY sensibilities are frequently tied to the emergence of punk in the late 1970s, McKay (2024) argues, in an article written specifically for this journal, that such a straightforward association oversimplifies the reach of DIY in both the pre- and post-punk eras. Likewise, although punk proved highly influential in shaping a particular discourse of DIY and its political economy during the late 1970s and early 1980s, current renderings of DIY do not necessarily share punk's polemical reading of DIY as a wholesale rejection of mainstream ideologies (Bennett, 2018; Bennett and Guerra, 2019; Guerra, 2018). Rather, in an era characterised by intersecting political, economic, environmental and pandemic crises, key dimensions of what Henig and Knight (2023) term the 'polycrisis', DIY has evolved into a broad platform for a plethora of activities in which discourses of resistance merge with an emphasis on tolerance and equity, and with support for a range of causes that seek to promote social

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justice across the planet. Such issues are a critical focus of *DIY, Alternative Cultures & Society*, notably in the special issue on DIY, austerity and alternatives (Guerra and Queirós, 2025). As the articles in this special issue show, the failure of governments worldwide to address faltering economies has resulted in rising levels of austerity and precarity. Responses have included widespread street protests and grassroots mobilisation, including around the climate emergency (Strong and Imray Papineau, 2025), as well as anti-austerity movements that extend alternative and DIY practices into areas such as the provision of care and the promotion of wellbeing (Soeiro, 2025).

While such forms of DIY sensibility continue to grow and to challenge the dominant status quo, DIY also maintains a strong foothold in alternative forms of cultural production, consumption and leisure. Indeed, the oppositional, socio-political qualities of DIY and its alternative cultural sphere continue to develop in tandem. As DIY cultural practice diversifies, becoming at the same time increasingly embedded in the fabric of everyday life, it is critical to examine how individuals and communities engage with forms of DIY cultural production, frequently as both producers and consumers, and the value and meaning they derive from doing so. Over the past 4 years, articles published in the journal have collectively examined, among other things, the shifting and dynamic field of DIY culture in relation to music, dance, fashion, cinema, digital and print media, sport, activism, tourism, carnival, playscapes and public, participatory and relational art. Studies of street art and other creative interventions in public space, for instance, have shown how these practices contribute to placemaking and carve out spaces of diversity in contemporary urban settings (Sousa, 2024; Vasileva and Honkatukia, 2023), while also serving as a form of protest against neoliberal encroachment, notably gentrification (Dala Bernardina, 2025). Scholarship on zines, including a special issue devoted to the topic (see Fazli et al., 2026), has examined themes ranging from the history of zines as an alternative print, and latterly digital, media form (Straw, 2023; Watson, 2026) to their role in activism. Several of these contributions bring gender and feminist agency to the fore, from women's science fiction fandom in 1950s Britain (Hockaday, 2026) and ecofeminist fanzine production in the Global South (Guerra, 2023) to women's anti-war samizdat in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Perheentupa et al., 2026).

The body has become a further, and increasingly central, terrain of DIY scholarship. Contributions to the journal have examined how bodies that depart from dominant aesthetic norms are subject to social exclusion, against which DIY strategies of resistance are mobilised (Mello, 2025), and how fashion, as a field in which the hand-making of items prompts a rethinking of design praxis, reconfigures the relationship between aesthetics and sustainability (de Waal and Smal, 2024). Sport has proved an equally productive site of inquiry. Research on the DIY stunts and action sports popularised by *Jackass* shows how ageing unsettles the youthful framing that long dominated the study of alternative cultures, as forms of masculinity and adult play persist, and are renegotiated, into later life (Willing et al., 2024). In a similar vein, practices situated at the threshold of sport, play and performance, such as flow arts, foreground physical skill, embodied pleasure and wellbeing in the city as a form of 'soft rebellion' (Mulari and Hartman, 2024).

These embodied concerns cannot be separated from the planetary and technological conditions under which DIY is now practised. Whether the present is named the Anthropocene or, with the emphasis placed on capitalism's organisation of nature, the Capitalocene (Moore, 2016), it confronts DIY with the question of what making, repairing and sharing can mean on a damaged planet. Work published in the journal has shown that environmental commitment in alternative cultural production is often more symbolic than material and remains exposed to the risk of greenwashing (Duester, 2023), while posthuman approaches have recast DIY scenes as entanglements of bodies, sounds, places and technologies rather than as bounded human communities (Woods and Ortega, 2025). At the same time, the digitalisation of cultural life, and in particular the spread of algorithmic mediation and artificial intelligence, is giving rise to new forms of artistic creation that are hybrid and collaborative, as in DIY performance devices in which a neural network

converts brain activity into sound and co-design becomes part of the work itself (Koutsomichalis, 2025). If DIY once defined itself against the culture industry, it must now also situate itself in relation to the platforms and automated systems that increasingly shape what is made, heard and seen.

Articles on music published in the journal have likewise addressed a broad range of themes. These include the ways in which digital technologies and platforms have expanded the possibilities for DIY musicians to reach audiences, while also making it harder to secure a reliable income and to reconcile artistic integrity with economic sustainability (Frenneaux, 2023; Oliver, 2024; Venema and Wijngaarden, 2024). Other studies have shown that DIY music careers, once readily associated with genres in the (post-)punk and indie domain, now have a far broader currency, including in the realm of classical music (Prokop and Reitsamer, 2023), while also being reconfigured within indie rock itself, as seen in the example of Portuguese independent music scenes (Oliveira, 2023). Further work has stressed that DIY musicking is never a solitary undertaking but a collective accomplishment, sustained by networks of cooperation, mutual support and shared resources (Crossley, 2023). Beyond the scene as a unit of analysis, recent work has also turned to the wider cultural and creative ecosystems on which DIY practice depends: the venues, labels, collectives, funding schemes and urban policies that sustain, or erode, alternative cultural production. Gentrification and the COVID-19 pandemic have made plain how exposed these ecosystems are to pressures originating outside the scene itself, and have prompted a belated, and not unambiguous, recognition of grassroots music spaces on the part of cultural policymakers (Kuchar, 2025). Seen in this light, alternative artistic initiatives appear less as isolated enclaves than as nodes in a relational fabric, in which resource sharing, multi-skilling and informal management operate at once as survival tactics and as forms of resistance (Januário, 2025).

Another important contribution of *DIY, Alternative Cultures & Society* has been to demonstrate how inextricably DIY cultural production and practice are bound up with the local spaces in which they take shape. This is evident in studies of music scenes in Global North settings such as Liverpool (Anderson, 2024) and Olympia and Bellingham in the U.S. Pacific Northwest (Feldman-Barrett, 2024), in research on the role of cultural entrepreneurs in music placemaking in China (Fung and Zhang, 2023), and in work on DIY in peripheral contexts such as Zimbabwe (Butete, 2023) and, more broadly, on the digital infrastructures of music scenes across the Global South (Barone, 2026). Indeed, as the journal's special issue on DIY cultures and the Global South made clear (Bennett and Chakravarty, 2023), the experience of DIY culture and practice on the global periphery often differs markedly from how it unfolds in the global centre. Thus, while DIY across the industrialised world is often, though not exclusively, informed by aesthetic choices to reject dominant forms of cultural production and their associated hegemonic ideologies, in many Global South contexts DIY emerges out of necessity, owing to a lack of hard and soft cultural infrastructures (Barone, 2016). Scholarship on DIY in the Global South also highlights the additional threats to sustainability posed by oppressive regimes, which frequently seek to suppress DIY and alternative cultural activities because of their counter-hegemonic character (Golpushnezhad, 2023; Imray Papineau, 2023). At the same time, research on semi-peripheral contexts such as Portugal, where independent labels have moved from doing it yourself to doing it together as a strategy of organisational survival (Moura, 2025), suggests that centre and periphery are better understood as a continuum than as a binary, with necessity and aesthetic choice frequently coexisting within the same scenes.

Looking ahead, the forthcoming special issue on DIY in arts education (Smith-Lee et al., forthcoming) will extend the field into pedagogy and learning, where the DIY principles of self-organisation, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and collective making meet formal and informal educational settings. As DIY continues to move between margins and mainstream, between necessity and choice, and between local scenes and global networks, *DIY, Alternative Cultures & Society* will remain a space in which these tensions can be critically examined, and in which scholars, practitioners and activists can continue to shape the field together.

In closing, we, the Editors, wish to thank all the authors for their high-quality and innovative contributions to *DIY, Alternative Cultures & Society* over the past 4 years. We also thank the members of the journal's Editorial Board for their invaluable support. Finally, we thank the many colleagues who have peer-reviewed submissions to the journal and so generously given their time and expertise.

Andy Bennett and Paula Guerra, December 2026.

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