

**The SIMM research landscape:
An analysis of research presented at SIMM events in 2017, 2018, 2019**

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It's a privilege to give the final address of this conference. I was given this honour because, since 2017 I have been President of the SIMM Platform, the organisation under whose auspices this SIMMposium is being held. I was privileged to host the 2nd SIMMposium in London in 2017. This was the first of our meetings where open submission of presentations was invited. The first SIMMposium was held in Ghent in 2015 but consisted entirely of invited presentations. Since 2017 we have had two further SiMMposia, one in Porto, and this one in Bogota. In 2018 we also instituted a different kind of meeting, an intensive 4-day seminar for SIMM researchers in training and development, mainly doctoral and post-doctoral researchers.

These four meetings to date have in some way both represented and also defined an emerging field, because research on social impact of making music is a new area, with earlier research scattered over many disparate outlets. The body of presentations at these four meetings is probably the largest concentrated sample of work in this area that we have.

I was able to count 112 presentations based on specific socially engaged projects around the world. This could be the largest number of contributions on the topic that has ever been collected. It seemed to me to be of some interest to look systematically at these 112 offerings. The material which was easily available to me was the submitted abstract of each presentation, and it was on these abstracts that I performed the analysis that I am going to present to you today. The analysis excludes a few general and theoretical presentations that do not mention any specific musical project.

These abstracts are perhaps a unique repository of information which can tell us something about what our emerging field looks like.

Country of study

First, I looked at the country from which each presenter came. When there were two or more presenters, I took the country of the first author. Actually there were rather few joint presentations, and in most cases both authors came from the same institution.

So far, SIMM has received contributions from presenters in 25 countries, as shown in Table 1. By far the greatest number of presentations so far have come from two countries, UK and Colombia, but that can perhaps be seen in part as a function of the location of two SIMMposia in those countries.

Table 1
Country of work of presenters

Argentina	2		Japan	2
Australia	6		Lithuania	1
Austria	2		Mexico	1
Belgium	1		Myanmar	1
Brazil	3		Netherlands	4
Canada	6		New Zealand	1
Chile	1		Norway	4
Colombia	18		Portugal	6
Finland	6		Spain	7
France	3		Switzerland	1
Germany	1		UK	28
Greece	1		USA	7
Ireland	4			

But which countries have the projects studied been located in?

Table 2 shows that projects in 34 countries were studied, a larger number of countries than represented by the location of the presenter. Colombia and the UK again lead in project location. And there are also 10 countries being researched that have not supplied any presenters to SIMM. These countries, shown in bold and yellow highlighting, are Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Nepal, Phillipines, Palestine, Peru, Rwanda, Turkey and Venezuela.

Table 2
Countries in which projects were studied

Afghanistan *	1		Venezuela *	1
Argentina	2		Lithuania	1
Australia	4		Mexico	3
Austria	2		Myanmar	1
Brazil	6		Nepal *	1
Canada	4		Netherlands	2
Chile	1		New Zealand	1
Colombia	26		Norway	1
DRC *	1		Phillipines *	1
Ecuador *	1		Palestine *	4
Finland	5		Peru *	1
France	4		Portugal	6
Germany	1		Rwanda *	1
global	4		Spain	3
Greece	1		Switzerland	1
Ireland	5		UK	16
Japan	2		Turkey *	1
			USA	6

We can explore this a bit more by looking at how many presenters were researching a project in the country where they work, and how many were researching a project in another country.

This analysis shows that 71% of the presentations were on “in country” projects, and 29% were “out of country”. Table 3 lists all the out-of-country presentations, with the country of the researcher on the left, and the country of the project being researched on the right.

Table 3

Out-of-country presentations

Australia;	Afghanistan
Australia;	Japan
Belgium;	DRC
Canada;	Brazil
Canada;	Mexico (x2)
Finland;	Nepal
France;	Venezuela
Japan;	USA
Mexico;	Colombia
Netherlands;	Rwanda
Netherlands;	Brazil
Norway;	Palestine (x2)
Norway;	Phillipines
Norway;	Sri-Lanka
Spain;	Colombia (x4)
UK;	Brazil
UK;	Colombia (x2)
UK;	France (x2)
UK;	Mexico
UK;	Peru
USA;	Colombia (x2)

It is clear is that the researcher is often situated in a more economically developed country than the project being researched. One reason for this is that researchers indigenous to the country being researched go to a more developed country to complete a doctorate, so actually the research is more “in country” than it seems. So, for example, there are nine projects on Colombia that are being researched from an institution in another country. But actually, in the majority of these cases, the researcher is a Colombian national, working outside Colombia.

Clearly this raises some interesting issues about the balance of in-country and out-of-country research capacity which should inform the development of our field.

However, for me the most interesting questions that these abstracts could shed light on are two different ones: first – what kinds of social impact are being described and studied; second: what constituencies of participants are the focus of the music making.

Types of social impact

To answer the first of these questions words or phrases describing social impact were taken verbatim from the abstract of each proposal/presentation (google translate was used for abstracts in Spanish)

These were then clustered into related groups, and tentative group titles were proposed. This is very much a first impressionistic pass, and no doubt a more incisive analysis could be done. I invite others to improve upon it.

However, here follow my preliminary categorisations. The categorisations are not in a particular order, but after presenting them I try to suggest a way of grouping the categorisations into superordinate categories to make more sense of them.

In each case my tentative title for the category is at the top, and then below are the actual words used in the different abstracts. Where the same word or phrase was used more than once, I indicate the number of times in brackets after the phrase.

Category 1: Social inclusion

- Social cohesion (6)
- Social inclusion (7)
- Social integration (5)
- Reconstructing social lives/fabric (4)
- Cultural inclusion
- Social health
- Social transformation
- Community connectedness

Category 2: Social Justice

- Social justice (6)
- Stigma reduction (2)
- Human dignity
- Social visibility
- Women's rights

Category 3: Cultural visibility

- Preservation of local culture
- Protect cultural heritage
- Give voice to communities
- Overcoming cultural stereotypes
- Appreciation of local cultures (2)

Category 4: Peace and reconciliation

- Peacebuilding (5)
- Peace and reconciliation (3)
- Memory of war
- Nation building
- Regional development

Category 5: Collaboration

- Collaboration
- Co-operation
- Intercultural harmony
- Intercultural understanding (2)
- Community engagement
- Solidarity (4)

Category 6: Empowerment

- Empowerment (3)
- Improve confidence
- Agency (3)
- Risk-taking (social, emotional)
- Empower to make positive decisions

Category 7: self-development

- Self-expression (2)
- Self-emancipation
- Self esteem
- Hope
- Openness to the new
- Encourage questioning

Category 8: Identity

- Expression of identity (3)
- National identity
- Strengthen identity (2)
- Professional identity/ career autonomy
- Reconfigure/transform identity

Category 9: Trust

- Creation of attachments (2)
- Sense of security/trust
- Bonding/interdependency
- Exploring relationships
- Empathy (5)
- Pro-social behaviour

Category 10: Violence reduction

- Violence reduction (2)
- Escape from violence
- Crime reduction
- Rehabilitation

Category 11: Health

- Individual and community health
- Recovery from surgery

The final category is what I call “one-offs” that I found difficult to categorise – but maybe a more insightful person could have a go at assigning these to categories.

- Narratives of hope
- Positive emotions
- Nourishing day to day life
- Well-being (3)
- Cultural competence
- Raise aspirations
- Quality of life (3)
- Strengthen resilience (2)
- Improve work opportunities

How do we make sense of all of this? Well, first of all, it demonstrates that social impact has many forms, and that no one form dominates among the projects we have been studying.

But second, it suggests to me that we could begin to place some of these categories into some kind of dimensional space, so that they are not arbitrary, but somehow related to each other.

My first attempt is to propose two intersecting dimensions (Table 4). The first is whether the target of the social impact appears to be the group or the individual. The second is whether the impact is primarily within the group or person being targeted, or whether in some sense it flows outwards from the targetted group or individual to the wider society.

Table 4
Two dimensions of social impact

TARGET	DIRECTION OF IMPACT	
	OUTWARDS	INWARDS
GROUP	Social Justice (11)	Social inclusion (26)
	Cultural visibility (6)	Peace & Reconciliation (11)
	Collaboration (10)	
INDIVIDUAL	Trust (11)	Empowerment (9)

	Violence reduction (5)	Self-development (7)
		Identity (8)
		Health (2)

So, for example, looking at the bottom right, health as an outcome seems to be something targetted at an individual, where the impact is primarily in terms of that individual's improved health, in other words, an internal impact.

At the opposite top left quadrant, cultural visibility seems to be an impact on a group (in this case a cultural group) that goes out from that group – in that the visibility impacts on others not in that group.

Of course, these distinctions are not cut and dried, but maybe it gives us something to start our thinking about how we map out different types of social impact.

Types of participant group

Now we move onto the second question, and explore what kinds of people musicians work with.

Again words or phrases describing constituents were taken verbatim from the abstract of each proposal/presentation (google translate was used for abstracts in Spanish). These were then clustered into related groups, and tentative group titles were proposed.

Category 1: Groups defined by occupational/study status

- School children (3)
- Students (6)
- Trainee music teachers/musicians (4)
- Professional musicians (3)
- Healthcare professionals
- Sex workers
- Afro-Colombian singers
- Non-singing adults

Category 2: Music performance groups

- Named orchestras (3)

- School/youth orchestra (3)
- After school youth music project
- Multicultural collective
- Communitarian choir
- Festival attenders and performers

Category 3: Groups defined by health status

- Hospital patients
- People with HIV
- Autistic people
- Hearing impaired
- Blind people
- Elderly surgical patients
- People with dementia/Alzheimer (2)
- Disabled people (2)

Category 4: Groups in (or emerging from) conflict.

- Refugees (6)
- Victims of armed violence (3)
- Victims of forced displacement
- Ex-combatants (3)
- Former violent gang members (2)
- People in conflict settings
- Young people in societies emerging from conflict
- Survivors of war (2)

Category 5: Displaced and homeless.

- Earthquake survivors
- Asylum seekers / and their children (2)
- Homeless people (2)
- Street children
- Immigrant communities (inc recent immigrants) (3)
- Immigration detainees (2)
- Prison inmates (6)

Category 6: Marginalised and geographically defined groups

- Urban youth in area of high migrant population
- Indigenous people (3)
- (Marginalised) rural populations (2)
- People in ethnically mixed suburb

- Historically denigrated indigenous communities
- Non-dominant cultural and linguistic groups
- Cultural projects in the global south
- Mothers' Society of Aamu Samuho

Category 7: Groups defined socio-economically

- Young people in challenging circumstances
- Young people in financial hardship/ low SE position (5)
- Low income inner city residents
- Women in poor postcodes
- Children from deprived areas (5)
- Upper class white children
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Category 8: Age-defined groups

- Young people with (or at risk of) low attainment (2)
- Young people at risk of exclusion
- Young people (6)
- Vulnerable children (2)
- Older people
- Elderly in the community
- Nursing home elderly residents

Again, I have tried to group these categorisations to provide a provisional conceptual structure. Three groupings emerge:

Groups defined by what they do: (30)

- occupational groups (20)
- musicians/music performers (10)

Groups defined by what they have suffered/experienced: (46)

- Health status (10)
- In or emerging from conflict (19)
- displaced and homeless (17)

Groups defined by what or where they are: (39)

- marginalised and geographically defined (11)
- socio-economic status (14)
- age related (14)

And of course, for each of these groups one could conceive of social artistic projects addressing either individual or group impact, with an internal or an external focus. So that's a 3 by 2 by 2 matrix (12 cells) at a minimum.

IMPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS

What further questions does this analysis raise for our field?

Looking first at who is doing the research, we see that SIMM research and reflection is a global activity. Many countries are involved some three years into the SIMM-platform's existence. Many are still not. Has the platform reached ALL the countries where there is meaningful activity, and if not, how do we do it?

A second related question is this. Much research involves "out-of-country" researchers. How do we best support international research co-operation which gives maximum power to local capacity and local voices?

In relation to social impact, many kinds of social impact have been named in presentations. Can the research field move towards a useful typology (e.g. which assists in determination of suitable research methods)?

In relation to target groups, many constituencies are recipients of SIMM-type projects. What challenges does this breadth pose to generalisable research conclusions? Is there any commonality between, say, hospital patients on the one hand, and historically denigrated indigenous communities, on the other?

How will questions such as this be developed and further discussed? Well, that is what the SIMM platform exists to encourage and facilitate. Let me briefly therefore summarise the role of the SIMM-platform.

THE ROLE OF SIMM

SIMM is above all a RESEARCH platform;

It exists to bring researchers together to advance the field through

- Connecting them to each other
- Connecting them to developments in research
- Connecting them to practitioners
- Supporting and stimulating research training initiatives (mainly at doctoral level)

And in this context it is perhaps necessary to clarify what we mean by research.

Research is a systematic and in-depth investigation of some question or issue that arises when trying to understand better a particular phenomenon. In our case, that phenomenon is the engagement of particular constituencies with active music making in order to achieve both artistic and social outcomes.

Research is different from evaluation. Many projects require outcome indicators to satisfy funders or stakeholders. They need to answer questions such as how many people were reached, what measurable outcomes were achieved, and by how many? Discovering and reporting such facts is not research in and of itself until such facts are placed into a broader, and often comparative framework, which is more concerned with the why, and the how, as well as probing what DIDN'T work and what that tells us about the potentialities and limitations of any particular approach.

In other words, research tends to bring a critical perspective to the table, and helps practitioners understand how to improve their practice.

An example of a research question might be “how do we best assess self-confidence, and what are the precise conditions under which a musical activity could increase it?” That would require an understanding of the psychosocial constructs that underlie the term self-confidence, the different kinds of threat to self-confidence that exist, and an analysis of the types of musical activities that could address those threats. Although the focus of the research could be one particular project, some of the most valuable insights come from comparing different projects, and that requires standing outside the particular project that you might be connected to or committed to. For that reason, researchers are often independent, and external to the project being studied. It is not impossible to be a researcher within a project that you yourself are delivering, but even then you will probably need outside guidance.

So this is one function of SIMM. It tries to connect researchers to practitioners that could be open and willing for research partnerships. More and more practitioners (musicians and social and community workers) show an interest in being ‘visited’ by external scholars who come critically study their practice, as understanding their realities better this may help them to improve their practice.

Although SIMM does have the traditional functions of a scholarly society (e.g. conferences and publications), it does aim to go beyond that to be a catalyst and change agent, creating and supporting new research partnerships and alliances where none existed before, thus making the field stronger and more visible.

I'd like to finish with just one example of what SIMM has done, which has impacted particularly strongly on me and my research pathway. This is a project that wouldn't exist without the SIMM-platform:

THE AHRC PROJECT "MUSIC FOR SOCIAL IMPACT"

In June 2019 the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) announced that it had approved and agreed to majority-fund a three-year research project *Music for social impact: practitioners' contexts, work and beliefs*. It will start in January 2020, and will focus on four countries. The researchers who are going to collaborate on this project were brought together through the SIMM-platform – we didn't all know each other before: Colombia (Geoff Baker and Gloria Zapata Restrepo); Belgium (An De Bisschop); Finland (Heidi Westerlund); UK (John Sloboda)

Not only did SIMM bring us together, but it reached out to its Belgian funders (the Fund Baillet-Latour and the Fund Future 21) to fill a funding gap to allow the Belgian part of the project to be fully supported. I give this example now because it shows what power exists in a well-organised network. It does not only bring people together, it empowers them to create new alliances, new projects, leading to new understandings.

My main hope is that this SIMMposium will have been the stimulus to some new creative research alliances, such that in two or three years' time we will be hearing about the results of research whose seeds were sown in Bogota this week, maybe from collaborations of people who never met each other till now.

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