How do we develop social inclusion through musical activities? What is the power of music in enhancing individual inclusion, group cohesion, and cross-community work in post-conflict environments? How can we investigate social music programmes and interventions? This comprehensive volume offers new research on these questions by an international team of experts from the fields of music education, music psychology, ethnomusicology, and community music. The book celebrates the rich diversity of ways in which learners of all ages participate in social music projects in complex settings. Contributions focus broadly on musical and social processes, considering its conceptualisation and practices in a number of contexts. The authors examine how social music projects can be fostered in complex settings, drawing examples from schools and community settings. These critical chapters will inspire readers to think deeply about social music interventions and their development. The book will be of crucial interest to educators, policymakers, researchers, and students, as it draws on applied research from across 14 countries, of which ten are in the Global South.

Oscar Odena is Professor of Education at the School of Education and the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow, UK. His areas of expertise comprise qualitative research approaches, inclusion, creativity, and music education. He has authored over 80 papers, and his monograph *Musical Creativity Revisited* was published by Routledge in 2018. He has been Principal Investigator in four projects on the role of the arts for inclusion and social cohesion. He serves on the boards of leading journals and the review colleges of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council and Irish Research Council.
The theme for the series is the psychology of music, broadly defined. Topics include (i) musical development at different ages, (ii) exceptional musical development in the context of special educational needs, (iii) musical cognition and context, (iv) culture, mind and music, (v) micro to macro perspectives on the impact of music on the individual (from neurological studies through to social psychology), (vi) the development of advanced performance skills and (vii) affective perspectives on musical learning. The series presents the implications of research findings for a wide readership, including user-groups (music teachers, policy makers, parents) as well as the international academic and research communities. This expansive embrace, in terms of both subject matter and intended audience (drawing on basic and applied research from across the globe), is the distinguishing feature of the series, and it serves SEMPRE’s distinctive mission, which is to promote and ensure coherent and symbiotic links between education, music and psychology research.
Music and Social Inclusion
International Research and Practice in Complex Settings

Edited by Oscar Odena
To Lucy, Marta, and Rosa
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Geoff Baker

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Oscar Odena
September 2022
Introduction

This brief introduction gives an overview of the aim, origin, and structure of the book, as well as an indication of the contents of each chapter. The increasing number of publications focused on the social impact of musical engagement evidence the topic’s contemporary relevance. However, this increase in publications does not seem to provide a clearer understanding of how such impact may develop or of its value across settings. How is music and music education for social purposes understood and facilitated across complex community and education settings? What is the power of music in enhancing individual inclusion, social cohesion, and cross-community work in post-conflict environments? How can we research the interactions of those engaged in musical activities aimed at other-than-musical purposes? These are just some of the questions addressed in this book, aimed at offering fresh insights from theory, practice-based research, and methodological analyses, drawing on meticulous investigations focused on complex education and community settings across 14 countries, of which ten are in the Global South.

Although there are studies on the social purposes of music-making, for example with youth orchestras, available investigations tend to focus on self-reported positive outputs and programme reach (i.e. counting heads). This has reinforced the view that music is a ‘magic’ tool that works across contexts, without interrogating how, why, and when, and leaving the process of musical engagement as if existing in a separate realm. This view is unfortunately still prevalent among the general public and often reinforced in academic publications that focus at best on the romantic aspects of social arts projects and at worst on their self-reported ‘positive impact’ without considering how the music processes may have worked. This book challenges this view by offering new empirical investigations and methodological analyses that will advance our understanding of social music project development. More thorough analyses of this topic are required if the public perceptions and academic approaches to social music projects are to change. The chapters in this book shed light on young and adult participants’ inspirational dynamics and creative processes, which are assuming increasing importance in the field of the social impact of making music. This field, and the authors in this book, includes researchers with backgrounds in Education, Music, Psychology, Human Geography, and Political Sciences, with an interest in social music project development in formal and informal settings. The methodical investigations and analyses offered

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in this volume, such as the research of the uses of music by displaced children and ex-combatants deploying sound ethnography and life history in Chapters 15 and 16, are innovative because for the first time social methods are applied to interrogate an arts phenomenon in need of interdisciplinary work. I hope this research will increase our understanding of social music programmes and their development, contributing a primary reference in the field.

The book’s 16 chapters interrogate the diversity of the many different ways in which adults and children develop a sense of connectedness through participation in musical activities. The book’s research examples and suggestions will be of value to students, researchers, and practitioner-researchers interested in music and social inclusion across disciplines. The chapter authors are members of The Arts of Inclusion network, www.tai.international, supported by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council Global Challenges Research Fund (2019–2022) and Royal Society of Edinburgh, and led by me. Some contributors received additional support from funders including Leverhulme and national councils, which are disclosed at the end of relevant chapters. The Arts of Inclusion started in 2019 as a network of academics and practitioners aimed at building expertise to critically assess the role of performing arts practices for peace education and inclusion in conflict settings. Initially with members from the UK and Latin America, the network has grown ever since, recently with more music specialists with interdisciplinary expertise based in ten countries.

The ideas considered in the book develop novel analytical angles on social music programmes and projects across four continents. The origin of the examples discussed come from original research by network members, often collaborating across countries. Eight chapters are developed from doctoral investigations, providing fresh empirical material and an exciting balance between early career and established authors. The contributions have been organised into three parts: Foundations, Cross-community environments, and Conflict and post-conflict environments. The chapters can be read consecutively or accessed on their own, depending on interest. Following the publisher’s advice, all chapters include a References section, to allow for separate use.

Part I, Foundations, includes two chapters that examine the contested meaning and mechanisms of ‘inclusion’ and ‘social cohesion’ in music education and related disciplines, such as social psychology. It looks critically at how social music programmes have been conceptualised in different contexts and discusses an original model for developing music education for social cohesion in complex settings with multiple dimensions, including level of past conflict. The opening chapter explores the gap between the aspirations and actualities of musical-social projects in conflict-affected settings. Applying a conceptual lens of order and disjuncture and drawing on projects including in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan, the chapter examines episodes where internal and external forces created a rupture in the idealised ‘order’ of a project and argues that disjuncture is an important source of insight about music as an agent of change. In Chapter 2, I interrogate key contemporary trends in the uses of music and music education for other-than-musical purposes, with particular attention to developing cohesion in cross-community
settings. I present an original model for developing music activities in such settings and outline ten innovative principles to facilitate music education for social cohesion. The model and principles matter because they foster theoretical clarity in this contested field. Undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as specialist readers, will benefit from the ideas discussed and the novel theoretical frame provided in Part I.

Part II, Cross-community environments, comprises eight chapters that build on the framework from Part I and offer unique insights into systematic investigations of school and community settings without armed violence across seven countries. This Part also provides a compelling narrative analysis of the role of music for connectedness during the Covid-19 lockdown. Chapter 3 considers the relational aspects of participating in singing groups for homeless people in the UK and Brazil, exploring how such groups become a sanctuary-like safe space where singers construct a positive, able identity. Chapter 4 interrogates ‘participatory songwriting’ to foster transformative encounters with refugees in England, arguing it cultivates safer spaces for sharing vulnerability and offering new thinking about participation in social arts practices. Chapter 5 discusses how music playlists can help understand the Covid-19 lockdown in Mexico City and the author’s own lockdown in Glasgow. Employing a moving narrative style that intertwines self with participants, the chapter discusses experiences of loss and the creation of playlists to connect with others. Chapter 6 examines the ‘Kithara Project’, a USA-Mexico classical guitar programme run by professional musicians, and discusses how the project landmarks challenge some community music conceptions. Chapter 7 interrogates the music activities of two projects for children in social vulnerability in Brazil, focusing on personal, musical, and social aspects as experienced by participants. Chapter 8 examines the Crescendo music programme aimed at creating positive social impact in disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland. The chapter highlights the importance of context with a detailed analysis of the co-creation of the programme’s logic model with local leaders, and advocates for rigorous programme design and evaluation. In Chapter 9, I discuss an innovative enquiry on the potential of Northern Ireland’s school curriculum to contribute to cross-community cohesion, considering 32 music teachers’ approaches to curriculum requirements including ‘Mutual Understanding’, and offer a critique of how sensitive issues are addressed in a still fragile environment. Finally, Chapter 10 considers the lack of Indigenous perspectives in Mexico’s music curriculum and discusses ways in which Indigenous and Western perspectives can coexist to provide richer learning experiences. The research-based chapters in this Part provide current and future practitioners and practitioner-researchers with precise suggestions and examples on ways to enhance their practice.

Part III, Conflict and post-conflict environments, includes six chapters that consider the issues faced in contexts with armed violence in four countries, and offer advances in social research including the use of sound ethnography. Chapter 11 discusses the phenomenon of ‘positive fatalism’ in Kinshasa and Gaza, both extremely complicated environments, as experienced by residents who find a way of exercising some control over their lives through music. Chapter 12
examines arts for peace education in Mexico, focusing on the efforts, outcomes, and challenges of two community music programmes in Chihuahua. Chapter 13 analyses the project *Hip-Hop Transformación* in Mexico City, including lyrics to foment non-violent hip-hop, and raises questions about scalability and agency, by highlighting how the project mediated between the expectations and aesthetic sensitivities of organisers and participants. Chapter 14 cross-examines the Colombian programme ‘Journey through the Senses’ aimed at reconstructing social fabric and outlines how the programme’s orientation changed from a narrow to a positive conception of peace. In Chapter 15, I discuss an innovative sound ethnography approach for investigating the Colombian programme for displaced families ‘Music for Reconciliation’. A study with ten participants is examined with precision, including a discussion of ‘sound postcards’. Their evocative capacity enriched the interviewees’ narratives, illustrating diverse sonorous landscapes throughout their lives that evidenced changes generated by violence and programme participation. Finally, Chapter 16 examines a multi-layered life history approach to uncover the musical and political identities of a Colombian ex-combatant musician, and considers the pertinence of this approach for analysing the uses of music in conflict transformation processes. All chapters in this Part offer suggestions for further research and significant ideas for readers concerned with the uses of music for other-than-musical purposes in contexts with a history of violence. Practitioners as well as experienced and less experienced research, policy and programme leaders should find Part III valuable for their work.

The Afterword offers a critical perspective on the linking of music with the notion of social inclusion. It looks at lessons from research on the world’s largest and most famous music and social inclusion programme, the Venezuelan youth orchestra scheme *El Sistema*. It also examines theoretical critiques of social inclusion from several geographical and disciplinary perspectives and discusses two paths beyond social inclusion: anti-oppression and decoloniality.

I hope this book is of interest to a wide range of readers, including policy advisors, students, practitioners, researchers, and practitioner-researchers across the arts and social sciences, inspiring them to think deeply about the diverse ways in which social music projects can be developed, their purposes, and how to research them.
Part I

Foundations
1 Exploring the order and disjuncture of music projects in places affected by war

Gillian Howell

Introduction: a recollection

In 1997, as a music student at the European Mozart Academy, I was part of a UN-sponsored touring ensemble into Croatia. It was only 18 months after the armed violence between Croatia and Serbia had ended, and our tour itinerary included Vukovar, a jewel of the Habsburg empire situated on the Danube in its eastern stretch. At that time, Vukovar was claimed by both its Serb and Croatian communities. Its population, originally ethnically mixed, had been ‘ethnically cleansed’ first by Serbian fighting forces, and then, some years later, by Croatian fighting forces. The brutality of those successive periods of violence left the town physically devastated (often likened to Dresden after the Allied bombing campaign at the end of the Second World War) and its social fabric destroyed.

Into this setting of unimaginable trauma, loss and violent destruction, our UN-emblazoned minibus drove. Dusk was encroaching and snow lay on the ground, giving Vukovar an eerie, monochromatic quality and heightening the sense of tension we had felt since crossing the Hungarian-Croatian border. Our concert was intended to offer an enjoyable night of music and connection – perhaps even a transcendent experience – for the war-weary and divided population, and as we encountered the physical legacies of war through the windows of the bus, and imagined the depth of their human impact, the mood of the group was sombre. This was not to be an ordinary concert. It was a contribution, an effort to bring some moments of respite into difficult lives.

We played our program of chamber music to an enthusiastic audience. However, it turned out that the audience was predominantly made up of international UN personnel rather than the local community. Where the concert had been conceived and offered as an act of bringing transcendence and entertainment to a beleaguered population, it had ended up a concert for a privileged group of international workers. They were appreciative, but they weren’t the concert audience that we had expected.

This outcome provoked much discussion among our group. Some felt cynical, suggesting that the meaning of the concert had now changed considerably, that it was an exercise in self-congratulation for the interveners, or a performative effort, ultimately shallow in its meaning. Others – including me – were too invested in

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the intention behind the concert, too moved by the destruction of the city and its layers of social trauma, to accept that argument. This concert had held great significance for us. We were, like many other ‘outsider’ musicians who travel to conflict-torn places to share and teach music, ‘believers’ in music as a helpful agent (Beckles Willson, 2011, p. 302). This was a way that we as musicians could contribute to making this part of the world, which had suffered so greatly, a nicer place to be, if only temporarily. And so, we set aside the reality of our absent local audience, instead making the intentions of the project the main story. The narrative of the possible was retained in place of the narrative of what actually happened.

The expectation of order and the rise of disjuncture

In its capture of the gap between the possible and what actually happened, this personal recollection offers an illustration of the slippery and unpredictable terrain that musical-social projects in conflict-affected sites occupy. This unpredictability is not always captured in official project accounts, which invariably present positive interpretations of events (e.g. ‘we gave a concert in a war-torn city’). The desire to focus on the positive is also connected to widespread and widely replicated convictions about the beneficial, socially transformative, and universal powers of music. These contribute to what Baker observes to be ‘the dominant ideology of our age’ in public discussions of the social impact of music (Baker, 2021, p. 244), and their pervasiveness can inhibit critical engagement with experiences that directly contradict the expectation of music’s benefits and positive outcomes.

This tendency means that the multitude of ways that a project can fall short of its aims when translated into actions on the ground are often unreported or underexamined (Baker, 2021). However, accounting for the limitations and competing interests of musical-social projects is a necessary task if we are to fully understand the potential benefits of these projects to war-affected people.

There can be countless reasons why projects may unfold differently to what was intended. Interventions of any kind interact in complex ways with the local social context, introducing actors and actions that will both respond to the existing socio-political-economic web of relationships and power structures and be interpreted through them (Greiff and Greiff, 2014). Far from being independent of its surroundings, an intervention becomes a part of the context, embedded within its structures and politics (Anderson, 1999). Aspirations and plans take on an emergent, iterative life of their own when they start to interact with organisational decisions and the complexity of external realities.

The gap between aspirations and actual events has received considerable attention in the field of critical anthropology of development. Lewis and Mosse (2006) use a conceptual framework of order and disjuncture to examine these gaps in the organisation of international development projects. I adopt their terminology in this chapter. Here, ‘order’ refers to the apparatus of institutions, networks, and actors and their rationales for action under the rubric of ‘development’. This apparatus declares the rational or idealised order of how things shall unfold and how
change shall be realised. Meanwhile, and paradoxically, the confluence of interests and logics and ‘multiplicity of practices’ (Rossi, 2004, p. 556) that arise when these actions are placed within highly complex sites of operation invariably create disconnects between what is expected and what actually unfolds in context. This gap between ‘rhetoric and reality’ creates an experience of disjuncture, a rupture in the meaning and experience of the development endeavour and the encounters between actors (Lewis and Mosse, 2006).

This chapter is focused on examples of order and disjuncture in musical-social projects, considered from the point of view of learners and teachers. Following an overview of methodological considerations, I present and discuss three examples of disjuncture. Each example describes a situation where the ‘order’ of a project as participants had expected or understood it to be, failed to be realised. The full scope of these experiences of disjuncture often went unvoiced, set aside in favour of narratives that followed the stated ‘order’ of the project. Nevertheless, they were powerful in their capacity to re-write the project experience and its meaning for the participants concerned. Frequently – and significantly – they led to an exit, and/or the cessation of good relationships, thus undermining the overarching transformative intentions of the music intervention.

I conclude by summarising the implications and challenges of these participant experiences for researchers and practitioners, arguing that disjuncture offers an important source of insights about music as an agent of change and that anticipating disjuncture is a key step in researching, implementing, and understanding musical-social projects.

Methodology – centring participants

This chapter considers experiences of disjuncture from the point of view of project participants, recognising them as a key group for understanding where projects might have fallen short of their target. Bergh and Sloboda (2010) argued the importance of studying music projects with social change goals from a range of perspectives, noting that ‘artists and organisers . . . tend (rather unsurprisingly) to report success’ (p. 8); participants on the other hand are well-placed to know whether a program has made a difference in their lived realities. Baker, in his critical ethnography of Venezuela’s El Sistema program of social action through music (2014), concurred, pointing out that any attempt to understand the good of a musical-social project is incomplete if it does not engage with the experiences of those who, for whatever reason, choose to exit. Correspondingly, focusing only on those participants that succeeded and thrived can create inaccurate perceptions of a program’s effectiveness (Baker, 2021).

Thinking critically about musical-social work and the model of ‘intervention’ with which it often aligns brings to the fore the unequal power structures and colonialist constructs that can proliferate in this work. Addressing these fully is beyond the scope of this chapter (my earlier work, for example Howell, 2017; Korum and Howell, 2021, has given considerable scrutiny to these aspects and proposes frameworks for critically engaging with music interventions). Rather, in
this chapter I confine my interest to examining events in the gap between project rhetoric and participant realities, in order to argue for more complete consideration of disjuncture in both researcher and practitioner accounts of musical-social action.

The empirical examples discussed are drawn from several research projects into music initiatives in war-affected settings. My PhD research into music education initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina (2013), Timor-Leste (2014), and Afghanistan (2015–2017) is an initial source (Howell, 2017). Across these three case studies I conducted semi-structured, longform interviews with former and current participants, former teachers, and founding directors/administrators. Disjuncture in response to disappointed aspirations or experiences that contradicted the stated organisational values emerged through inductive analysis as a subject of interest, given the study’s critical approach to investigating the practices of international music interventions in war-affected places. Additional data relating to Afghanistan are from a 2020 to 2022 study into the post-school lives of young musicians in Afghanistan. This project involved semi-structured online interviews with a small cohort of recent music graduates and teachers from a music education provider in Afghanistan. The interviews sought to understand the scope of their musical lives since completing formal music studies, asking about opportunities, barriers, and how their aspirations had evolved. Also included are interview excerpts from evaluation research I undertook for an inter-ethnic music project in Kosovo in 2019 (Howell et al., 2021).

While some of those interviewed in these research projects were happy to be identified by name, others requested pseudonyms or full de-identification. Given the small pool of research participants in each site, I have chosen to de-identify all the informants and schools. Quotations are thus attributed with reference to the perspective (student or teacher), country, and year of interview.

**Disjuncture 1: social reproduction and the ‘safe space’ of music-making**

Living in the aftermath of armed conflict means living with the multiple tangible and intangible legacies of the war, including the destruction of the built environment, the damaged social fabric, and the changed spatial geographies that render previously neutral sites as ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’ (Howell, 2016; Howell et al., 2019). Because of this, those organising arts projects across war-related divisions will work to ensure a physical and metaphorical sense of the gathering place as ‘safe space’.

Safety has many dimensions, including physical safety; safety from discriminatory or oppressive activities or policies; the safety that arises through familiarity with the practices and relationships that exist within a particular space; and creative safety, which refers to the rules of engagement for creative processes that enable creative risks to be taken without fear of vulnerability or exposure (Hunter, 2008, p. 8). We might expect to find characteristics such as an unconditional welcome, recognition of complex identities, and practices that scaffold the
development of interpersonal trust among group members. Safe spaces for creative practices protect the members of the group from unsafe experiences while maintaining space for aesthetic risk and possibility (Higgins, 2012).

But space is also socially produced (Lefebvre, 1991), so that social relations ‘both within the workshop/performance context and across the particular communities involved’ will shape the safety of the space and its contingencies (Hunter, 2008, p. 7). The mutuality of the space – that all participants will benefit from its safety, while also contributing to and ensuring its maintenance – is a protective factor in maintaining the sense of safety. However, absolute safety is never a certainty, as the prejudices that have been normalised in the wider context can enter the space with the participants. Importantly, this can lead to a reproduction of the social norms of the wider context, as the following examples show.

The incursion of the external political conflict into supposedly safe arts space can happen insidiously. For instance, a community music centre I researched in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina had worked hard to create an inclusive, welcoming culture, situated as it was on one side of a city that the war had left ethnically and spatially segregated. It had been built with international donations for the youth of the city and was promoted through word of mouth and official public statements as a welcoming space for anyone, regardless of their ethnicity, and regardless of which side of the line dividing the neighbourhoods of the two main ethnic groups they lived. The music centre attracted young people interested in making music, hanging out, and being part of an alternative contemporary culture that rejected ethnic divisions. Several people called it a ‘bubble of safety’ (former participants, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2013). While young people from both sides of the city participated in its activities, those from the ‘other’ side of the city to where the music centre was located were in the minority, because of the many forces that converged to inhibit their travel to the ‘other side’, and their participation in inter-ethnic activities.

But despite the rhetoric of inclusion, and organisational values that staunchly rejected inter-ethnic segregation and discrimination, former participants recalled episodes where the wider ethnic conflict entered the shared social space. On one occasion, a local staff member was heard declaring that ‘people from the other side’ were unwelcome, that this music centre was not really for them. The comments caused considerable upset for those from the minority side. While the informants agreed that the Centre Director had ‘dealt with it’ promptly and sensitively (participant, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2013), the episode marked the end of their regular participation in the music centre’s activities. The safety of the space had seemed real at first, but it became utopian and unachievable once the rhetoric and social conditions of the external world had entered in such an unambiguous, even if momentary and unsanctioned, way.

An event such as this may not always result in a participant’s exit, but it undoubtedly diverts their experience from the declared project ‘order’ and intentions. Research participants from an inter-ethnic music project in Kosovo in 2019 described the discomfort and anger they felt when fellow participants shared offensive nationalistic content on social media. One informant said it did not