



'Kinshasa Social & Musical'

research, book and podcast

In one of his books, Manda Tchebwa described the DRC as "the land of song". We agree with him, and believe that music can be seen as one of the country's underestimated 'gold mines', as well as an instrument for socio-artistic work with young people.

Lukas Pairon founded the SIMM¹ international research platform which, since 2017, has focused on developing research on social and community music programmes, in order to better understand the role that musical practice can play in social work. He is himself particularly active in Gaza (Palestine) and Kinshasa (DR Congo) with the organisation Music Fund². And since September 2022 he is professor and founder of the Jonet Chair and its CESAMM centre³, which focuses on accompanying research on the practice of music in social programmes and also offers support and training for practitioners (musicians and social workers) wishing to engage themselves in such projects. Thanks to the support of the Foundation Inspiratum of Koen Kessels and Axel Vervoordt⁴, of la Banda da Musica⁵ and the Compagnie Sucrière⁶, it was possible to launch the project 'Kinshasa Social & Musical, in 2024 and 2025:

¹ www.simm-platform.eu

² www.musicfund.eu

³ www.cesamm.eu

⁴ www.axel-vervoordt.com/vision#chapter-inspiratum

⁵ www.labandademusica.com/

⁶ www.finasucre.com/fr/compagnie-sucriere/

1. 'Saved by Music, They Say' - the book

From 2012 to 2016, Lukas Pairon carried out fieldwork in Kinshasa for his doctoral research on the social impact of music on street children (known as 'witch-children' or 'sheghes') and members of violent gangs (known as 'kulunas')⁷. He defended his doctoral thesis in June 2019 at Ghent University (Faculty of Political and Social Sciences). Following his doctorate, Lukas Pairon has written a book (in English) to share with practitioners (musicians and social workers) and researchers interested in discovering what we can learn from this study of music projects in social work in Kinshasa. Thanks to these projects, young people have become musicians. They say they are "saved by music" (the title of the book).

The preface to this book was written by John Sloboda⁸. The book was published in 2020 by Routledge New York. The Fondation Futur 21 contributed to the editing costs.

2. Follow-up research in 2024 and 2025

Lukas Pairon plans to return to Kinshasa for one month in 2024 and one month in 2025 to conduct further research with the young musicians who took part in his research from 2012 to 2016 - former members of violent gangs (*kuluna*) and young people formerly known as 'witch-children' and 'street children' (*sheges*) who have become musicians. During this further research he intends to revisit them and explore with them the role that learning music may have played in their lives - whether they remained musicians or not. The publisher Routledge New York hopes to be able to publish a new short-format book on this further research in their 'focus titles' series.

We plan to also translate this new book into French. The Institute of Sociology at the University of Jena has decided to invite Lukas Pairon for the period 2024-2025 as a visiting scholar, enabling him to develop this post-doctoral research, accompanied by the sociologist Hartmut Rosa⁹ from this institute.

Biologist Olivier Hamant¹⁰ (INRAE, École Normale Supérieure, Lyon University) also decided to accompany this follow-up research.

⁷ www.lukas-pairon.eu/phd - in 2022 he gave a TEDx-talk on the subject which will also be present online [here](#).

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Sloboda

⁹ Hartmut Rosa is interviewed for the 15th episode of the SIMM-podcast on his theory of 'being in resonance': <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1424293/10091559>

¹⁰ Olivier Hamant: www.ens-lyon.fr/en/research/honors-and-awards/olivier-hamant-biologist-rdp

3. 'Kinshasa Social & Musical' - the podcast

The book already mentions many of the people in Kinshasa who are developing these social projects through music, but Lukas Pairon is now also preparing to produce and broadcast a podcast in French, giving a real voice to these young people and to those who are developing these music projects with them in Kinshasa.

The podcast will be in French and will highlight how music is playing a major role in the social projects being studied in Kinshasa.

The projects featured in this podcast are Music Fund partner projects: the Espace Masolo¹¹ brass band (in Ndili-Messina, Kinshasa) and the Beta Mbonda¹² ensemble of percussionists (in Barumbu, Kinshasa) playing traditional Congolese music.

The project is twofold :

On the one hand, the ambition is to give a voice to Congolese working in this field and to learn from their experience. In the book and during the podcast we will not only find interviews with young Congolese who have become musicians and their music, but also with other people from Kinshasa who are familiar with this field of music and social work. During this programme, we will be looking for ways to get closer to the people of Kinshasa and the Congo, and we will be highlighting the usefulness of musical practice in social work, through the two socio-artistic projects studied between 2012 and 2016 and revisited in 2024-2025.

Music has a central place in the lives of the people of Kinshasa and the Congolese, and it can also play a role in social work which aims to help young people in difficulty to navigate towards constructive positions in society. We hope that our testimonies about the achievements of Beta Mbonda and Espace Masolo will have an impact - encouraging others to set up similar projects in Kinshasa and other towns in the DRC.

On the other hand, the podcast, and the book translated into French, will not only be designed for readers and listeners in Kinshasa and the DRC to discover these quality projects from home: socio-artistic music projects are developing enormously in a whole series of countries in the French-speaking world, in the north and in the south. The practitioners of such projects will also be the readers and listeners for whom this

¹¹ short vidéo (9') by Quentin Noirfalisse on Espace Masolo : <https://vimeo.com/231373494#at=455> + photo reportage by Laurens Nijzink & Rachel Corner : <https://vimeo.com/16083687>

¹² The artist Marie-Françoise Plissart was introduced to this ensemble by Lukas Pairon and released in 2019 her film 'Kinshasa Beta Mbonda'.

book and podcast are intended - the musicians and social workers involved in social music projects outside the DRC.

Because podcasts can reach a wide audience, we intend to produce them in a very accessible, non-academic form. It will therefore be produced as a good radio programme: with ambient sound, the music of the young people themselves, of course the voices of the young musicians and a voice-over. The voice-over will help to compress and clarify certain parts. It could also be the researcher's voice, briefly elaborating on the results of the research and placing the interviews in a context (social and perhaps even theoretical). This will enrich the podcast.

Programme:

The French translation of the book should be available towards the end of 2025, and the podcast episodes should be available from the end of 2024 and during 2025.

Over the course of the multi-episode podcast, the following topics will be covered and discussed:

1. Kinshasa - music omnipresent
2. Presentation of the brass band *Les Jeunes Talents* of Espace Masolo
3. Presentation of the percussion ensemble *Beta Mbonda*
4. Double accompaniment (artistic & social)
5. At the wheel - mastering instruments and repertoire
6. Governance and internal democracy
7. Musical practice as an end in itself (pleasure of playing)
8. The art of 'positive fatalism' of young musicians in Kinshasa¹³
9. The art of *sharing* material and intellectual *property*

Podcast interviewees:

Interviews with podcast interviewees begin in September-October 2024. Between September 2024 and March 2025, a total of several dozen people will be interviewed, most of them living in Kinshasa, including:

Marie-Ange & Richard Banpeta, Djonimbo Bilansa, Jeudi Bofala, Kathryn Brahy, Baudouin Bungu Musoy, Bambi Ceuppens, Maguy Djokaba, Cathy Ekemino, Alhim Eyenga, Rémy Jadinon, Jupiter, Apisson Kapinga, Déo Katulanya Isu, Lema Kusa, Remy Mafu, Hubert Mahela, Mando Mengy Lyve, Patrice Mukulu, Philémon Mukendi, Pamela Mutoke-Pyana, Christian

¹³ Lukas Pairon (2022), "The Art of Positive Fatalism", in Oscar Odena (dir.), *Music and Social Inclusion*, Routledge, chapitre 11

N'dombe, Yannick N'Salambo de Wouters, Paul Ngoie, Cisse Nsituwene, Marie-Françoise Plissart, Manda Tchebwa, Léon Tsambu, Maître Tshamala, Malvine Velo, Gabriel Wadigesila, Felix Wazekwa, André Yoka Lye, and of course the members of the music ensembles of Espace Masolo and Beta Mbonda.

The podcast will be presented by Bambi Ceuppens¹⁴ and Lukas Pairon, who will discuss the testimonies with each other.

Partners:

The colleagues from Lukas Pairon's doctoral research team in Kinshasa will again be actively involved in carrying out the follow-up research and the interviews for the podcast in Kinshasa, to enable the young musicians from Beta Mbonda and Espace Masolo to express themselves in Lingala during the podcast. Sociologist Jeudi Bofala Mboyo and Pamela Mwabila Mutoke will accompany the interviews with the young musicians.

contact:
Jeudi Bofala Mboyo, sociology teacher and research secretary,
Departement Sociology, Université de Kinshasa

The Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles in Kinshasa will be one of the places where those who cannot count on a good enough internet connection can go when they have an online interview appointment for this podcast.

contact: Cécile Djunga, director

Radio Okapi would like to work closely together to produce this podcast on socio-artistic music projects in Kinshasa.

contacts: Christophe Boulhierac, director
and Jean-Marc Matwaki, head of programmes

We also plan to collaborate on this podcast with the Brussels based Africa Museum, in particular when we talk to the musicians from Kinshasa about the music they play in these socio-artistic projects (the brass band and the percussion ensemble). The Africa Museum will be a regular feature of this series of podcast episodes, giving the floor to researchers Bambi Ceuppens and Rémy Jadinon. See this interview that Bambi Ceuppens and Lukas Pairon gave together in 2019 to the magazine Recto-Verso (in Dutch):

<https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/gered-door-de-muziek>.

contacts: Bart Ouvry, director
Bambi Ceuppens, Research department

Preliminary experience:

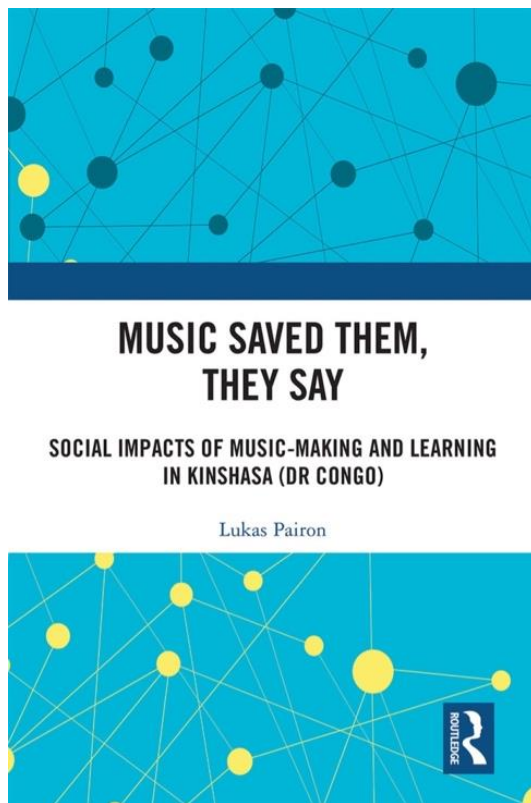
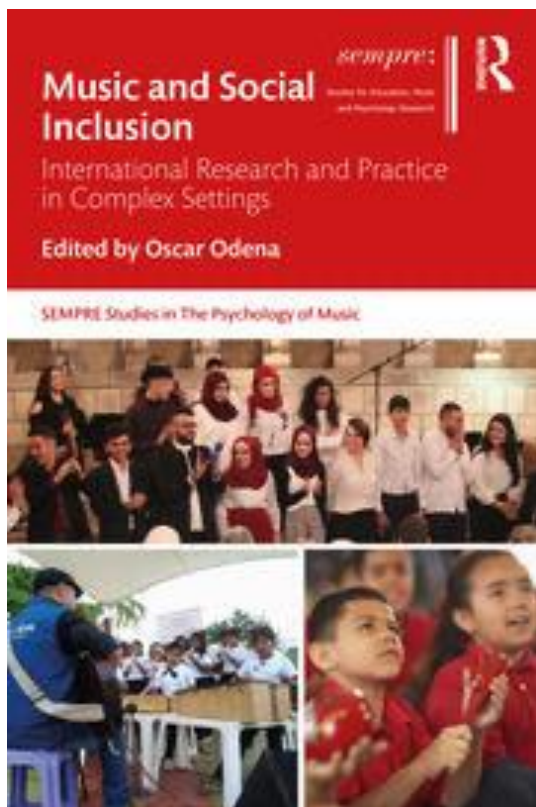
Lukas Pairon has experience with podcast production, because he has been producing one since January 2021 for the SIMM search platform (see: www.simm-platform.eu/simm-podcast). This

¹⁴ Bambi Ceuppens: www.researchgate.net/profile/Bambi-Ceuppens

podcast is easy to find online, as it is already distributed by 10 different podcast directories, including the biggest (Apple, Spotify and Google). After 2 years on the air, the SIMM-podcast has 18 episodes and can currently (September 2024) count on more than 2,600 listeners.

Calendar:

Release of new book in English and in French: end of 2025
Broadcast of podcast: 5 episodes between February 2025 and November 2025



+ "Towards a 'pluriversity' inspired by participatory music"
(article published by the Canadian magazine [Circuit](#), September 2024)

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