Semi-virtual conference formats to reduce academic flying

Renee Timmers
Department of Music, The University of Sheffield
Central idea of semi-virtual conference

- Distribute conference hubs across multiple locations to reduce travel distances and increase accessibility
- Connect hubs virtually through live-streaming
- In line with *Climate action policy*
Pilot: GAPS 2017

April 2017, Global Arts & Psychology Symposium

5 hubs, 4 continents – Graz, Boston, La Plata, Sheffield Sydney

Sheffield:

4 rooms booked

Good WIFI speed

Technician to organise streaming onto Youtube and switch between Youtube and Zoom
Main international conference

Around 650 attendees

4 hubs, 1 conference

Morning: communicate in real time toward the East. Evening: toward the West.
Program, example

Global 24-hour program

Morning: communicate toward East
Evening: communicate toward West

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## The regular conference talk

*Structure of a 30-minute timeslot in a 2-hour session with sessions at different hubs running in parallel*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Software</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>One-way (YouTube)</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Two-way (Zoom)</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change rooms</td>
<td>Internet page</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
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To achieve reliability and mutual backup:
Both YouTube and Zoom ran constantly.
Presentation technology

High-quality, one-way communication

**Image:** Use “OBS” software to mix talking head and PowerPoint

**Sound:** Small audio mixer for microphones and sound files

→ YouTube live stream
Discussion technology

Medium-quality, 2-way communication
- Zoom, Skype or similar
- Wireless microphones + audio mixer
- Remote audiences see each other
→ Feeling of live presence

If internet speed is low:
- Stay in YouTube
- Audience writes comments
- Speaker reads/answers them
Main technical set up

## Main format innovations and try outs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Type of meeting</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAPS2017, April 2019</td>
<td>Pilot student conference 40-50</td>
<td>5 conference hubs, 4 continents</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICMPC15/ESCOM10, July 2018</td>
<td>Major international conference 600+</td>
<td>4 conference hubs, 4 continents</td>
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<td>CIM19, Sept 2019</td>
<td>International conference 80</td>
<td>1 location, 40 virtual attendees and 35 virtual presentations</td>
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<td>ESCOM online, Nov 2019</td>
<td>Virtual meeting</td>
<td>Interviewee in Hannover</td>
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<td>Life streaming on Youtube</td>
<td>Interviewer in Sheffield</td>
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<td>Online attendance only</td>
<td>Broadcast from Sheffield</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCOM Summer School, July 2020</td>
<td>Cross-European Summer School</td>
<td>4+ locations</td>
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<td>Presenters virtual and life</td>
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<td>Local and streamed workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCOM11, July 2021</td>
<td>International conference</td>
<td>Around 8 locations</td>
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<td>Sheffield, conference hubs, and satellites</td>
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Music-Colour Synaesthesia: a sensorimotor account

Caroline Curwen
PhD Candidate
Department of Music, The University of Sheffield
Report from conference attendees (ICMPC)

I missed face-to-face interaction with more colleagues (Montreal)

Exciting to hear talks from La Plata and get questions from Australia (Graz)

It allows us to travel less (Sydney)

It allowed us to participate (La Plata)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oagyWf55Kfc
Discussion and conclusion

- Technical realisation is fully feasible
- Main indicated issue is reduced face to face interaction
- Technology opens a range of innovative possibilities
- Main point is to induce a culture-change in conference organisation

Technicians: Daniel Reissinger (Graz) and colleagues, Tim Metcalfe (Sheffield)
ESCOM 2016-2018 President Richard Parncutt, Vice-President Renee Timmers
ESCOM 2019-2021 President Renee Timmers, Vice-President Andrea Schiavio
CIM2019 Conference organiser Andrea Schiavio