

CfP: Popular Music, Populism and Nationalism in Contemporary Europe

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Organisation: Mario Dunkel, Reinhard Kopanski, Simon Wehber (University of Oldenburg; Faculty III; Department of Music).

Deadline for submitting proposals: 15th November 2021

It is undisputed that the recent rise of populist-nationalist and far-right parties poses a challenge to democracies, not exclusively, but also in the European Union. However, “populism’s toxic embrace of nationalism,” as Lawrence Rosenthal calls it, is more than a party-political or economic phenomenon. It also has a cultural dimension, which remains largely unexplored. Regarding music as a ubiquitous cultural practice, this conference addresses this cultural dimension from three music-oriented perspectives:

First, we examine the ways in which European populist and nationalist parties and political actors employ musical strategies. What are the repertoires mobilized by populist and nationalist parties in European contexts? What musical icons and musicians do parties associate with, and what are the purposes of these associations? How does music function at party events? Is there such a thing as a transnational populist-nationalist campaign strategy regarding the use of music? And to what extent are the strategies of political parties efficient?

Second, the political significance of music is not limited to its function in party politics. Indeed, populism and nationalism are both performative phenomena (Moffitt, Stavrakakis) articulated in the realm of musical practices whose political function may not always be discernible. Questions that need to be asked in this area of inquiry include: What are populist and nationalist musical performances in popular culture? To what extent do musical developments (such as the rise in popularity of neo-folk, turbo-folk, disco-pol, Deutschrock, neo-schlager, etc.) enable nationalist and populist performances? How do we address the affective dimensions of these musics? How do people experience and interpret performances of populism and nationalism?

Third, as popular music is often received as one aspect of intermedial performances (in music videos, films, computer games, in social networks, etc.), we also need to address the intermedial and digital dimension of populist and nationalist performances. Studies of the use of social media by political parties have demonstrated the extent to which some populist-nationalist parties dominate certain types of social media. To what extent is this true of populist-leaning musicians? Is there such a thing as an intermedial populist or nationalist aesthetic? To what extent do populist and nationalist performances employ strategies such as transmedia storytelling?

Lastly, the field of popular music and populism in contemporary Europe has been heavily impacted by the Covid-19-pandemic. Government measures to contain the pandemic – as well as protests against these measures – have contributed to shaping music cultures on various economic, political, social, media and cultural levels. In particular, the pandemic has resulted in the rise of conspiracism, also in popular music cultures. What is the role of conspiracism in the recent rise of populism and nationalism in Europe? And to what extend do popular music cultures facilitate and critique conspiracism?

We invite **suggestions for 20-minute presentations**. Additionally, there is a possibility to **propose 90-minute workshops** to address problems such as challenges of populism and popular music for aesthetic educational work. The conference language is English. Please send abstracts (max. 300 words for presentations, 900 words for workshops) along with a short CV (50 words), academic affiliation and contact information to Mario Dunkel (mario.dunkel@uol.de) and Reinhard Kopanski (reinhard.kopanski@uol.de).

The conference is part of the international and interdisciplinary project “Popular Music and the Rise of Populism in Europe” – funded by the Volkswagen Foundation since 2019. Information on the project as well as an expanded version of the CfP can be found on our website: www.musicandpopulism.eu