

CfP: Popular Music, Populism and Nationalism in Contemporary Europe (extended version)
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Deadline for submitting proposals: **15th November 2021**

It is largely undisputed that the recent rise of populist-nationalist and far-right parties in Europe, the US, and other parts of the globe poses a challenge to democracies. However, “populism’s toxic embrace of nationalism,” as Lawrence Rosenthal calls it, is more than a party-political or economic phenomenon. Over the last 15 years, Europe has seen large-scale cultural transformations, which remain for the most part unexplored. Regarding music as a ubiquitous cultural practice, this conference addresses such cultural changes 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?

The political significance of music, however, is not limited to its function in party politics. In addition to being a fundamental aspect of party politics, populism and nationalism are both performative phenomena (Laclau, Moffitt, Ostiguy, Stavrakakis, Wodak,) articulated in the realm of musical practices whose political function may not always be discernible. This second perspective on the nexus of music, populism and nationalism, therefore, seems much less tangible and more difficult to explore. However, it is no less relevant, as the public debates over artists such as *Frei.wild* (Italy), *Andreas Gabalier* (Austria), *Povia* (Italy), *Kollegah* (Germany), *Peter Dinklage* (Sweden) or *Kárpátia* (Hungary) demonstrate – to name only a few. 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-polo, Deutschrock, neo-schlager, etc.) enable nationalist and populist performances? How do we address the affective dimension 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. Numerous studies (e.g. Engesser et al., Ernst et al.) 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 degree 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, including in popular music cultures. What is the role of conspiracism in the recent rise of populism and nationalism in Europe? And to what extent do popular music cultures facilitate and critique conspiracism?

We are particularly interested in the following topics:

a. theoretical, methodological and analytical challenges

- theoretical considerations of popular music and populism in Europe
- methodological approaches to populism and popular music
- sociological approaches to community and identity building
- populism and (musical) aesthetics
- populism and (musical) nostalgia
- populism and affect
- popular music analysis
- historical approaches to popular music and populism
- populism, popular music and (cultural) policy
- populism, popular music and the music/media industries
- moral economies of popular music
- intersectional approaches (including explorations of gender, race, ethnicity, and class)

b. political challenges

- the role of music in populist and nationalist contexts in and across different European countries
- norms, values and ethics
- popular music and authoritarianism
- popular music cultures and democracy/human rights
- effects of the pandemic on populism and democracy
- political mobilization through popular music
- popular music and identity politics

c. educational challenges

- (music) pedagogical approaches to populism and nationalism
- studying and confronting far-right educational efforts
- studying and dealing with counterfactual narratives in popular culture
- popular music, populism and conspiracy theories

We invite **suggestions for 20-minute presentations**. The lectures will be open to non-academic publics in order to enable the opening of the discourse and to foster dialogue with NGOs as well as political and cultural educators. 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 can be found on our website: www.musicandpopulism.eu