

Popular Music and the Rise of Populism in Europe

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As an everyday cultural practice music is intricately tied to self-expression, collective identity, spatial belonging, ethnicity, nationality, and authenticity. Hence, music is central to significant cultural and political transformations such as the recent rise of populism in Europe. In recent years, popular tunes have been increasingly appropriated for populist political ends. At the same time, mainstream sounds with populist messages have gained widespread popularity. However, researchers know very little about how audiences actually receive these musics, which are open to diverse interpretations. In a nutshell, this empirical research project explores the interactions between music and its listeners in a societal context which is increasingly shaped by populisms. To account for the transnational variety of populisms the applicants examine cases from Hungary, Austria, Italy, Germany, and Sweden from a comparative perspective. The project concentrates on the following questions: How does popular music afford populist interpretations across Hungary, Austria, Italy, Germany, and Sweden? How is popular music that affords populist interpretations received at the micro-level in these countries? What are the similarities and differences between the interactions of music and populism across Hungary, Austria, Italy, Germany, and Sweden? In order to address these questions, the applicants combine musicological with sociological methods, including musicological group analysis, field research, narrative interviews, and focus groups. By so doing, they intend to illuminate the cultural underpinnings of a fundamental societal transformation in the European Union. Moreover, whilst they focus on five specific countries, the results will also be relevant for other European polities facing similar challenges. Finally, the insights gained from their investigation will be useful for cultural educators to advance new methods to deal with music's multivocality and build critical awareness of populist cultures.

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Setting the Scene: Filling the Gaps in Populism Studies. Special Issue: The Cultural Side of Populism: Politics, Emotions, Music and Subcultures in Populist Times , eds. M. Caiani and E. Padoan