Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology

Series Editors

Carlo Ruzza
School of International Studies
University of Trento
Trento, Italy

Hans-Jörg Trenz
Faculty of Political and Social Sciences
Scuola Normale Superiore
Pisa, Italy

Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology addresses contemporary themes in the field of Political Sociology. Over recent years, attention has turned increasingly to processes of Europeanization and globalization and the social and political spaces that are opened by them. These processes comprise both institutional-constitutional change and new dynamics of social transnationalism. Europeanization and globalization are also about changing power relations as they affect people's lives, social networks and forms of mobility.

The Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology series addresses linkages between regulation, institution building and the full range of societal repercussions at local, regional, national, European and global level, and will sharpen understanding of changing patterns of attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups, the political use of new rights and opportunities by citizens, new conflict lines and coalitions, societal interactions and networking, and shifting loyalties and solidarity within and across the European space.

We welcome proposals from across the spectrum of Political Sociology and Political Science, on dimensions of citizenship; political attitudes and values; political communication and public spheres; states, communities, governance structure and political institutions; forms of political participation; populism and the radical right; and democracy and democratization.

Manuela Caiani • Enrico Padoan

Populism and (Pop) Music

palgrave
macmillan

Manuela Caiani
Faculty of Political and Social Sciences
Scuola Normale Superiore
Florence, Italy

Enrico Padoan
Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Sciences
University of Siena
Siena, Italy

Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology
ISBN 978-3-031-18578-6 ISBN 978-3-031-18579-3 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3

Cover illustration: rolfo / Getty images

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Emma and Elena

Acknowledgements

This book draws upon data derived from the project on 'Popular Music and the Rise of Populism in Europe' in five European countries (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Sweden), funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, directed by Professor Mario Dunkel (University of Oldenburg). Any opinions, findings and conclusions in this book are only those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the funding institutions. We warmly thank for the great collaboration and exchanges during these years all the scholars involved in the project: Mario Dunkel, Anna Schwenck, Reinhard Kopanski, André Doehring, Kai Ginkel, Emilia Barna, Ágnes Patakfalvi-Czirják, Melanie Schiller. We also want to thank the scholars who shared their expertise as guest-speakers in the different meetings of the project, and particularly John Street, Mary Taylor and Benjamin Teitelbaum.

This project would not have been possible without the enthusiastic participation of volunteers for our musicological group analysis and focus group sessions; for our interviews with militants, activists and representatives of the Five Star Movement, the League and the *Sardine* movement; for our interviews with concertgoers and fans of selected artists. We particularly want to thank all the experts from different fields who offered their (definitely!) educated guesses, as well as the COSMOS (The Center of Social Movement Studies—Scuola Normale Superiore) community for all the exchanges we had on our project. Of course, any weakness of this research is our own responsibility.

Many dear colleagues kindly and crucially helped us to organize focus group sessions in different parts of Italy, and we are very grateful to all of

89 them, who deserve a mention: Gianni Piazza, Federica Frazzetta, Fabio
90 De Nardis, Nicolò Conti, Mattia Diletti, Paolo Graziano, Ekaterina
91 Domorenok, Lorenzo Bosi, Alice Mattoni, Alberta Giorgi, Silvia
92 Bolgherini, Elena Pavan, Carlo Ruzza, Louisa Parks, Fortunato Musella,
93 Raffaella Fittipaldi. Thanks also to the cultural circles and organizations
94 who hosted us during our focus group sessions, and specifically Fondazione
95 Urbana (Bologna), Circolo Culturale Ergot (Lecce), Circolo Cosmos-
96 Porto Burci (Vicenza), Circolo ARCI Radio AUT (Pavia), Centro Studi
97 Ettore Luccini (Padova), as well as the Treviso Province's section of
98 the League.

99 Last but not least, to the anonymous referees, to the series' editors
100 Hans-Jörg Trenz and Carlo Ruzza, to our book editor Elizabeth Graber
101 and to Palgrave Macmillan, we offer our thanks for the extremely useful
102 suggestions and the English editing of this manuscript.

Praise for *Populism and (Pop) Music*

"The book is a methodological feast, insightfully operationalizing the sociocultural approach to populism and problematizing populism's relation with a central element of today's mass culture: popular music. This serious study of the multifaceted, two-way relationship between popular music and populism in Italy transfigures what many political scientists might regard as irrelevant noise into melodic variations calling for serious analytic discussion. In addition to the expected "flaunting of the low", with displays of authentic rudeness and of scandalizing tastes, we learn of the flaunting of the "Italian average" by politicians and of regional identities and dialects at rallies. Travelling aesthetically from appeals to the *popolare* (Rocco Hunt's *pisciaiuoli and fruttaioli*) to the low poetry of *Senza Pagare*, and socio-geographically and perhaps politically from Veneto's local bands to Campania's rappers—all, so different from *Com'è profondo il mare*, branded by the high-left Sardines—the volume not only provides a superb analysis of contemporary Italian culture and society, but also, richer insights into their close relation to pre-political sensibilities and—most crucially—to the current *spatial structure* of Italian party politics than could any cartesian diagram."

—Pierre Ostiguy, *University of Valparaíso*

Contents

List of Abbreviations

5SM	Movimento 5 Stelle (Five Stars Movement)
AN	Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)
CISET	Centro Internazionale di Studi sull'Economia Turistica (International Research Center on Tourism Economy)
COS	Cultural Opportunity Structure
DOS	Discourse Opportunity Structure
EOS	Emotional Opportunity Structure
ESC	Eurovision Song Contest
EU	European Union
FG	Focus Group
FGI	Focus Group Interviews
FIDESZ	Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Hungarian Civic Alliance)
FPOE	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austrian Freedom Party)
MGA	Musicological Group Analysis
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement)
PD	Partito Democratico (Democratic Party)
PM	Prime Minister
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
RAC	Rock Against Communism
SD	Sverigedemokraterna (Swedish Democrats)
TER	Tavolo Editori Radio
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USD	US Dollar

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

Populism, Popular Culture and (Pop) Music: An Introduction

> We see popular culture neither as an unalloyed political good or evil. More importantly, we do not see the answer to the question of how popular culture and politics relate as lying solely in the content of the culture itself, but rather also in the interpretation and use of it by audiences and fans. (…) The way in which people talk about the popular culture they enjoy (and dislike) …it is here that links are forged with the political realm and political thoughts and values are articulated.
>
> (Street et al., 2014: 3)

> The interaction between music and contemporary populist movements can no longer be reduced to marginal phenomena like "Nazi Rock," but rather needs to be extended to include all genres of mainstream popular music. (Dunkel et al., 2018 project)

The rise of populism in Europe in the last two decades has puzzled academic scholars and journalists. Populism has boomed on the left, on the right and even at the centre of the political spectrum in many European countries (Judis, 2016), and consequently the studies on it skyrocketed (Hunger & Paxton, 2022). The phenomenon has been addressed by economists, political scientists as well as sociologists. Its electoral success has been alternatively (or in combination with) associated to a political (Mair, 2013), economic (Roberts, 2017) and migratory crisis (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Typical explanations cite the negative consequences of

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3_1

economic globalization, in terms of the mobilization of the losers as well as ethnic competition (Rydgren, 2005), political dissatisfaction towards liberal democracies (Meny & Surel, 2002), but also a mix of modernization crisis, insecurity and authoritarian legacy (Mudde, 2007). Although populism constitutes a multimodal phenomenon involving institutional, sociocultural and subjective dimensions, most accounts up to now have focused on the study of political institutions (parties, movements, etc.) and ideological orientations (Stavrakakis & Galanopoulos, 2022).

So, what do we know about the sociocultural side of populism? Whilst our study alludes to these aforementioned relevant factors, our volume primarily addresses political mobilization as afforded by popular culture music in the context of populist politics in Italy.[1] That is to say, beyond the factors explaining its success, what do we know about its reproduction and endurance through social cultural practices among which music, and in particular popular music (i.e. pop music), is one?

How much and in which ways do populist actors use music as a tool for their communication, identity building and recruitment/mobilization? How do different populist politicians use pop music for political purposes? How do pop artists, in turn, influence political debates? What is the potential role of pop music, for the emergence, nurturing and spreading of populist messages, ideas, tropes, or, more generally, its role in 'paving the way' (Dunkel et al., 2018) for the emergence and reproduction of populist phenomena? How do citizens receive and reinterpret political (and potentially populist) meanings from music? What are the multiple meanings of music as perceived by listeners/citizens, and how can music be connected to politics/to the political realm, in populist times? Are there reciprocal influences between the (populist) political scene and the music scene?

In this volume we explore these questions, locating the complex, multidimensional, and slippery relationship between music and politics, in the broader scenario of the new challenges and opportunities provided by

[1] This volume is related to a broader comparative project, which includes Italy, Austria, Hungary, Sweden and Germany, led by Professor Mario Dunkel, at the University of Oldenburg, on "Popular Music and the Rise of Populism in Europe" (Volkswagenstiftung n. of project Ref.: 94754–1, PI University of Oldenburg, School of Linguistics and Cultural Studies, Institute for Music). The partners, who we are profoundly grateful to for the common enterprise, are the University of Graz (André Doehring and Kai Ginkel), the University of Groningen (Melanie Schiller), the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (Emília Barna and Ágnes Patakfalvi-Czirják).

populist politics in Europe and in an era characterized by a populist *zeitgeist* (Mudde & Rovira, 2017).

Indeed, while the use of music by social movements along with its role in political electoral campaigns and its role linked to radical right-wing groups (e.g. neo-Nazi music) is quite a well-documented phenomena, comparatively little attention has been given to populism and music, and in particular pop (i.e. mainstream, popular, diffused) music. We know little about how and to what extent populist actors use music for/in their communication and for their mobilization, as well as how the musical and populist political scenes might be connected, even by voters? (for exceptions, see Magaudda, 2020; Caruso, 2020; Dunkel & Schiller, 2022 *forthcoming*).

Yet, Europe has witnessed an explosion of populist movements and parties especially since the economic crisis of 2008 (Zulianello, 2020). Beyond competing in elections they actively operate in and penetrate the cultural and societal sphere, of which popular culture is a crucial component. At the same time, music has, in fact, historically been related, by political sociologists and cultural studies, to various political phenomena. Social movement scholars have emphasized the effect of popular music on political engagement and mobilization (Kutschke & Norton, 2013). Generally speaking, the study of music production and practices has been linked to the analysis of political and cultural 'struggles over meanings, authorities and values' (Hutnyk & Sharma, 2000: 57), as well as power relations (Shepherd, 2012).

This is even truer for *popular music*, which is explicitly, and by definition, produced for mass consumption (Savonardo, 2010), and *populism*, which has its roots in 'the people', in 'doing politics' differently than the traditional mainstream parties, as well as a sense of affinity and belonging with the so-called low (Ostiguy, 2018).

This book, looking at Italy and its varieties of populism, aims to fill this gap.

Based on an interdisciplinary methodology and a triangulation strategy, this volume systematically explores the connection between popular music and populist politics in Italy, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork; interviews with populist parties and concert-goers (46 in total); focus groups with ordinary citizens and populist activists; musicological group analysis (MGA) and discourse analysis of songs, interviews with academic experts. To put it another way, it investigates how *music*, and *pop music* in particular, as part of the *popular culture* (Storey, 2012) and everyday social

practice (DeNora, 2000), can be linked to populism—through the creation, re-signification and diffusion of cultural productions that reinforce populist worldviews.

Our research is based on a *cross time* (a ten year study: 2009–2018) *and cross type of populism* analysis, focusing on a right-wing and left-wing/or hybrid populist party, respectively (i.e. the Lega and the Five Star Movement). Furthermore, in the conclusion, we adopt a *cross-country* perspective, contextualizing our findings on Italy within a broader European scenario of populism and music. As we argue in this volume, contextual grievances and political opportunities can be elicited, emphasized, exploited and even created through various cultural practices, including music, and in different ways by *varieties of populisms*. Moreover, we assume that different relations between (populist) politics and (pop) music can form and operate at the micro (individuals), meso (organizations) and macro (contextual) levels.

In this book we address the potential relationship between populism and pop music focusing on the Italian case, which is considered a 'paradise' for populism and populist phenomena (Roodujin et al., 2019; Zanatta, 2002). The case also offers a great variety of populisms in its history (Biancalana, 2019) and has been considered a 'laboratory', a 'showcase' of populism, for its success and endurance (Albertazzi et al., 2018; Hamdaoui, 2021).

To develop the argument, this study adopted and adapted hypotheses, concepts and methods from party politics studies, social movement research, cultural studies and, to a lesser extent, musicology (for which we were able to benefit from the expertise of the country teams which coordinated the project).

In this chapter, after defining the main concepts (including populism and pop music), we shall discuss some analytical guidelines (at the macro, meso and micro levels) in order to explore the likely connection between popular music and populist politics. We shall also consider some main hypotheses (of the connection) from the literature on political mobilization and social movements (and protest music and/or music in politics) as well as research on parties and political communication (i.e. from the performative dimension of populism, Ostiguy et al., 2021, to the mobilizing role of emotions, Cossarini & Vallespín, 2019), within which this research on the connection between popular music and populist politics is based. In addition to this, we will examine insights from cultural studies and sociology, which will help us to elucidate the reception side. We will look

specifically too at the influence of the political, cultural and 'music market' opportunities in the Italian national context where populist groups operate, the music that is listened to and the characteristics (material and symbolic resources, Della Porta & Diani, 2020) of the different types of populist organizations. Additionally, we will discuss the role of popular music as a space of affordance (of political engagement), emotions and political participation, of music as a collective ritual and celebrity politics.

We shall continue the chapter by describing the research methods and empirical material (sources) on which this book is based, and we will conclude with an overview of the content of the volume.

1.1 Why Study Populism and (Popular) Culture

Macro-Level Perspectives: Popular Culture and Mass Culture, Cultural Populism

As aforementioned, despite the current pervasiveness of populism, it often eludes conventional explanations (such as poverty, crises of political legitimacy, immigration and globalization), while the alleged link between populist politics and cultural productions (and in particular populism and music) has rarely been the subject of empirical scrutiny.

Most definitions of populism do not explicitly address emotional or cultural aspects of populism as constitutive of it, although they may be dealt with indirectly. Indeed, populism tends to trigger reactive and counter-reactive emotions, notably too in the academic community that studies it, as illustrated by the normatively loaded definitions and perspectives of the past decades (Ostiguy, 2018, e.g. populism as bad or good for democracy, Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

A sociocultural approach (Ostiguy, 2018), however, highlights the sociocultural foundations of the populist phenomena, stressing the performative mechanisms of the creation and reproduction of party-society linkages in populist parties (Moffitt, 2016). In this study, we argue that this approach is ideal for exploring the relationship between popular culture and populism, namely the 'why' and 'how' cultural products (such as music) can be linked to populist politics.

In this regard, populism denotes social bonds, affective relations, affinity (concepts which are very often difficult to be invoked and analysed), and conceived as an "affectual narrative…(…) it is the antagonistic flaunting of the low, for political purposes (Ostiguy, 2018, 75). In essence,

populism is a 'low' performative style that appears across the entire ideological spectrum. In contrast, anti-populism is on the 'high' equivalent. Interestingly, according to this sociocultural approach, the high-low spectrum concerns social differentiation; such differentiation, while correlated with class and status, is primarily based on sociocultural markers (Bourdieu, 1984), namely, on indices of specific habitus consisting of patterns of behaviour, manners, consumption, including ways of dressing, speaking, recreating and so on.

AU8 They can be performed by populist leaders too to create an affinity bond with their 'people'.

Populist leaders, thus, claim to represent an authentic people, through the politicization of social-cultural markers. This authenticity is nonetheless socially and politically constructed, while relying on sedimented discourses and practices, and it include ways of interpreting the social reality, such as the Gramscian folklore, but it also includes tastes and aesthetics, and even cultural production: populist leaders celebrate folkloristic aspects in order to appear reliable and trustworthy to their people.

Folklore in this sense is a "conception of the whole world and of the life", which is "implicit within certain social strata, in contraposition (again, implicitly, even mechanically) to the official *Weltanschauung*" AU9 (Gramsci, 1977, 2311). Folklore, too, is, for the purposes of this book, used to refer to the concept of popular culture. Folklore or popular culture, like all cultures in the Gramscian sense, is not distinctive, but rather in constant transformation (Crehan, 2011). Fundamentally, it is not systematic, particularly in its 'popular' form, because "by definition, the people (the sum total of the instrumental and subaltern classes of every form of society that has so far existed) cannot possess conceptions which are elaborated, systematic and politically organized" (Gramsci, 1985, 189): folklore thus may include both progressive and reactionary aspects.

As Dei (2016) has emphasized, the processes of urbanization and the creation of a cultural industry, also in the music realm, have both reduced and expanded what can be defined as folklore. On the one hand, the cultural productions created 'from below'—that is, from subaltern classes—and resisting to the hegemonic bloc were restricted to localist-ruralist areas. Meanwhile, an increasing number of highly heterogeneous social sectors became exposed to mass culture, which still retained some folkloristic aspects (i.e. with their internal contradiction, and thus very different political affordances). In Italy, like in many countries (Frith, 2007), this evolution started a debate on how to treat and to interpret mass culture.

A critical analysis can be made here, from a Gramscian perspective, on the relationship between popular culture, mass culture and political and cultural hegemony, from the Birmingham school (e.g. Hall, 1981), to McGuigan's work on the concept of 'cultural populism' (McGuigan, 1992).

On the one hand, the so-called demologic studies (*studi demologici*) interpreted mass (namely 'pop') culture as something both external and imposed on the subaltern classes, thus stressing the importance to focus on the *loci* of cultural resistance. This strategy runs the risk of developing a paternalistic relationship with their object of study, that is, the popular, the People. On the other hand, some scholars considered pop culture as *the* field of research (e.g. in anthropological studies on the popular, see the Birmingham school) and focused less on the power mechanisms at work within the music industry. McGuigan talks about 'cultural populism' (1992), in effect, a non-critical celebration of low culture, as a reaction against cultural elitism of the early pop culture studies. In other words, an unadulterated support of industrialized pop culture celebrated as an arena of consent and resistance, with little analysis of the ways pop culture can reproduce hegemonic (neoliberal) ideologies.

Beyond being academic debates, these reflections provide us with insights on how to treat pop culture and pop music and its potential role in politics. While pop music can produce (and can be seen by the audience as producing) spaces for resisting the hegemonic elite, it can also support and perpetuate the current power relationships in society. Everything depends—as noted—on the intermediation of both political/social actors and consumers (Savonardo, 2010; Way, 2016). In this sense, populism may be primarily understood, as Ostiguy (2018) suggests, as a political exploitation of this cultural material. Therefore, it is important to analyse this intermediation and examine exactly how, on the recipients' side, different people with different cultural backgrounds argue and position themselves on both populist politics and (pop) music. This would broaden our understanding of populism, its success and endurance. At the same time, a social-cultural approach to populism runs the risk of reductionism in its definition of people as inherently vulgar, rude and unsophisticated with low levels of social and cultural capital. To avoid this, it is important to remember how populism, in fact, politicizes—by portraying it as the enemy—specific, sophisticated, proper (thus socially legitimate) sociocultural markers typical of non-authentic—that is, non-popular—sectors. Populism, in sum, aspires to be seen as the champion of non-socially, legitimate but authentic sociocultural markers and values. Of course,

authenticity in a musical context—as well as in politics—is an 'ideology' and should not be treated as an essential characteristic—even if voters and fans assume it to be (Auslander, 2008; Frith et al., 2001).

Furthermore, some recent empirical studies have investigated populism and its connection with popular culture. For instance, Tomlinson and colleagues (2021) look at populism in sport and leisure with a sociological comparative approach. Moran and Littler, in their special issue on "Cultural Populism" (2020) critically reflect on this concept and its usability, although no empirical contributions are provided on pop music. Anselmi and Blokker (2020) look at multiple populisms mainly from a political theory perspective and address the relationship between populism and culture by exclusively looking at the role of intellectuals in relaunching forms of "cultural populism". Street (2013) deals more specifically with music, exploring the link between politics and popular culture as a way to upscale "from entertainment to citizenship". Vitali's book (2020) is a musicologist overview on new Italian popular and political music exploring Italian political and protest music from the 1960s onward, though it does not focus on populism, on pop music or on the reception side of music. Generally speaking, there is a lack of academic research on populism and pop music, as a part of popular culture, which is what we will try to do in this study. Focusing on the Italian case, we aim to offer an additional contribution to this line of research, focusing specifically on populism, with a variety of empirical data.

Populism and Popular Culture: The Role of the Actors (Meso-Level)

The meanings of the connection between politics and popular culture (and music) will also depend on the intermediation of political entrepreneurs, who can build, even through music, their symbolic construction of the political and social reality around them, articulating in the 'us' and 'them' way, identifying a problem, the possible solutions and the calls for action accordingly. This is where the performative aspect of populism often lays.

From a sociocultural perspective, there are differences between left-wing and right-wing populisms, also with regards to the use of popular culture (i.e. music) as a way to do politics by other means. This would derive from the kind of pieces of popular culture that are selected and

owned by populist projects. Popular culture or *folklore* is often the basis of the populist discursive toolbox, as well as aspects of knowledge that influence cognitive processes for developing political (and 'proto-political', i.e. "the preliminary insights of political comprehension"; see Dahlgren, 2009) opinions; however, the components may be, collectively and individually, internally contradictory. Populism is intrinsically ambiguous because populist leaders acquire and exploit non-systematic and contradictory sets of conceptions for their anti-establishment discourse: populisms are characterized by an antagonism towards an elite that "compensates for the vagueness of their ideology" (Arato, 2013: 160). In this sense, populism can be read as the negation of ideological politics—that is, a politics based on an internally coherent set of principles and proposals. Thus, each populist phenomenon, taken individually, may be chameleonic and depends on the timing and on the leader's inflection. Additionally, the stronger the emotional bond between leaders and their People, the greater the leader's room for manoeuvre in terms of increasing and maintaining deeper contradictions within a political discourse. This is also very similar to the concept of 'party identification' or 'party loyalty', in essence the "affective orientation to an important group object" (Barbalet, 2006, 37).

In our analysis, we will take into account what we refer to as the 'external supply side' (the party politics side of populism) by examining the broad cultural opportunities generated and reproduced through music production, leading to the emergence and the reproduction of populist phenomena. If populism is "a recipe that strongly depends on the quality of the ingredients available" (Stavrakakis, 2020), then we need to start from these raw ingredients, which are made up of pop cultural productions. Secondly, our view requires paying attention to the role of the 'internal supply side' factors in the link between music and politics, namely, to the appropriation and exploitation for political purposes of pop cultural (music) material by populist actors. This role can be conceptualized as twofold. On the one hand, it entails selecting aspects of popular culture that are more consonant with the (political, economic and social) goals of the specific (inclusionary or exclusionary) populist project. This type of use is not inherently and necessarily limited to populist actors, though. Indeed, forms of pop culture 'appropriation' (Jansma, 2019) are typically pursued by political actors from different party families. What is distinct of a populist strategy of appropriation (and arguably creation) of pop culture

productions is not the attempt to pursue strategies that increase the popularity of their messages and public persona.[2] In fact it is the appropriation related to a process of definition of 'peoplehood' (Boyte, 2012)—and their enemies. Pop culture may also be connected with non-populist or anti-populist politics. In any case, the concept of celebrity politics emerges as useful here to understand various likely connections between the music and political scenes. As the widely studied case of Trumpism (Biressi, 2020; Prins, 2020; Street, 2019) showed, both "celebrity *politicians*" and "*celebrity* politicians" (Street, 2019) widely engaged with each other in the last few years, reinforcing the cleavage between a socially legitimated pop scene and populists; they also end by replicating the relationship between pop stars and fandoms (and between different fandoms). As Jonathan Dean (2017: 421) has argued, political scientists need to give proper attention to "fandom as a concept or as an object of study". Moreover, to make the picture more complex, the contraposition between the pop music sphere and populists may occur without any particular role played by cultural productions: celebrities may clearly separate what their songs say from what they personally and publicly opine. In addition, celebrities may either endorse or criticize populist (as well as all other kinds of) politicians, and politicians possess a large set of strategies (from making endorsements to indifference, from self-victimization to counter-attacks) to deal with celebrity interjections in the political realm. Furthermore, we will attempt to capture all the nuances (and paths of the nexus between music and politics) by considering the context and the intermediation by political actors and the individuals.

Populism and Pop Culture (and Music): How Audiences Connect Them (Micro Level)

Insights from social identity theory (Sindic & Condor, 2014; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; van den Scott, 2017) as well as from Bourdieu's theory of social tastes (e.g. Bourdieu, 1979; Nærland, 2018) can help us understand the mechanisms connecting the micro level of individuals to the context, with regards to populism and popular culture—in other words, looking at the mechanisms in play at the individual level in the use of cultural

[2] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'popularity' is the "the state of being liked, enjoyed or supported by a large number of people". Indeed, democratic politics is mostly about convincing as many people as you can to follow you.

products that guides political behaviour while at the same time reflecting on the structural factors influencing the relationship between music and populism.

Importantly, social identity theory, which focuses on how people achieve or maintain a positive social identity, stresses the importance of the in-group—out-group thinking, which is often depicted in stereotyped ways (e.g. Brown, 2000). When applied to musical tastes (Lonsdale, 2020), this suggests that identities (and in group perception) can be perceived among those who share musical tastes—in this sense becoming a 'badge contributing to an individual sense of social identity'. Above all, we can ascertain from social identity theory the importance of music in defining both friendly and antagonistic relationships and the extent to which musical tastes can easily be politicized. Furthermore, if similar musical tastes may be a vector for favouring positive assessments, the political relevance of pop (very popular) music is increased. At the same time, drawing on the Bourdieu theory of social taste (1981), we could assert that tastes are socioculturally determined based on class divisions (cleavage between low and high culture). In this sense, there are structural determinants of social tastes and the reproduction of social identities, and the role of populist entrepreneurs can further reinforce, shape and politicize them.

At the micro level, attention must be given to the ways different audiences approach pop music in all its variants (from pop stars to pop songs). Pop audiences may, for instance, celebrate 'lower-class' socialcultural markers emphasized by Bourdieu, *against* sociocultural markers associated with people with higher statuses. The politicization of these markers, as predicted in the social identity theory (Sindic & Condor, 2014; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), further stimulates group stereotyping and prejudice. Cultural tastes, levels of social capital and social class are often intertwined, often in complex ways: as Naerland observes (2018) commenting on Norwegian society, the "left leaning 'cultural elite' that consider the 'the rich' to be vulgar, tasteless and shallow. Conversely, 'the rich' consider the 'cultural elite' to be elitist and pretentious. Both these groups, in turn, consider the 'lower class types' to be vulgar and ordinary". At the same time, socially legitimated pop culture productions and protagonists may be seen as something non-traditional or distant from the true People, and as part of a cultural elite which populists vehemently oppose. Nor is the consumption of pop culture and pop (i.e. 'highly commercial') music confined to the lower-middle classes: the contrary is true. In the Italian case,

Varriale (2016) found that, similarly to 'high', classical music, pop music consumption is positively correlated with class.

As stated by Jenkins et al. (2002: 39), "when the bourgeois aesthetic takes up works of popular culture, it does so by creating 'a distance, a gap' between the artwork and its perceiver, placing the popular text in the realm of connoisseurship". We can assume that the non-populist parties, politicians and even—and crucially—citizens, in our current pop-politics era (Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009), generally treat popular music with an either explicit or implicit detachment. It is difficult—though not impossible—to imagine that politicians explicitly portray pieces of pop culture in a negative way by adopting elitist arguments, yet quite conceivable amongst non-populist voters (Nærland, 2018). A more interesting hypothesis is that the consumption of pop music occurs through the filter of irony (Drew, 2005), by intimately defining it as a guilty pleasure or with a typically *connoisseur attitude*, thus implicitly 'elevating' pop music from 'low' to *socially legitimated* cultural production.

This book shall enter into this debate on populism, investigating an object of study thus far rarely explored in the literature: the connection between populism with popular culture.

1.2 Music and Politics

Why politics and music? Why music in the analysis of political processes? As aforementioned, the research on music and politics has, to date, been partly selective, fragmented and underdeveloped (Magaudda, 2020), mainly focused on (at least in the beginning) protest politics and social movements (e.g. Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Peddie, 2006) and/or on some specific types of political actors and their communication (Danaher, 2010; Street, 2004, 2014; Way, 2019). These studies so far have, above all, dealt with how music is appropriated by politicians, social movements and other political actors as a tool to perform their political identity, to find support for their political agenda or to reinforce the mobilization of their members or voters (Magaudda, 2020).

Generally speaking, as it has been stressed (Hutnyk & Sharma, 2000), the study of musical production and practices is linked to the analysis of political and cultural "struggles over meanings, authorities and values" (Lipsitz, 1994; Rose, 1994; Taylor, 1997) and, thus, to politics as power relations (Shepherd, 2012).

(Pop) Music and political parties and movements

Many authors looking at the effects of popular music on political engagement (Brown, 2009; Franke & Schilze, 2013; Kutschke & Norton, AU13 2013; Schoening & Kasper, 2012; Street et al., 2008) suggest that, under certain conditions, popular music can galvanize people into political action, influence the public agenda and affect political opinions. In particular, social movement studies (and music) have identified six functions of protest songs for contentious movements (Denisoff, 1970; also Garratt, 2017):

(a) Attempting to solicit and arouse outside support
(b) Reinforcing the value structure of individuals who are active supporters of the social movement or ideology
(c) Promoting cohesion, solidarity and high morale in an organization or movement supporting its worldview
(d) Recruiting individuals for a specific social movement
(e) Invoking solutions to real or imagined social phenomena in terms of action to achieve a desired goal
(f) Pointing to some problem or discontent within the society

Similarly, it has been stressed that music can help protest (fostering collective identity formation, a precondition for enduring collective participation), propaganda (allowing for the diffusion of the ideas of the political movement) and resistance to power (as a form of political communication—both in authoritarian and democratic contexts). Referring to the Live 8 mega concert (for debt relief in the Global South, in 2005), Street et al. (2008) investigated whether participating in music events (as both organizers and attendants) can also mean participating in politics, and noted the essential conditions for this conjunction: the first is the organizational dimension of the link between music and politics, namely, the creation of political networks behind music initiatives; the second is the legitimation dimension (i.e. artists become politicians, in the view of fans, who thus become militants); and finally the third is the performance dimension, which involves the sharing of common aesthetics (Street et al., 2008: 269). For instance, Rosenstone (1969), focusing on the US civil rights movement, and Way (2016) and Bianchi (2018), looking at the Gezi Park movement, found that music fulfilled three key conditions necessary for participation: it helped framing injustice and moral indignation, it nurtured with its symbols the collective identity and it constructed the

agency (2018: 232). Above all, pop music in Gezi Park served a purpose in developing a typically populist discourse, namely, a people versus the establishment argument.

Practically all the aforementioned dimensions refer to the *emotional potential* of music (Collins, 2001, 2004; Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Jasper, 2001; Summers Effler, 2006). Music, it is stressed, can evoke 'vitalizing emotions' for social movement participants (Taylor, 2000), and the participation in musical performance and rhythm of the music can strengthen group identity through emotional mechanisms (Collins, 2004; Flacks, 1999; Kendon, 1990). Riley and colleagues, with a focus on dance music culture (2010: 345), add that youth cultural leisure and consumption practices have the potential to be sites for alternative political participation, an 'everyday politics' (see also Frith, 1988; Street, 1986) that involves a personalizing of politics and an 'aloof' stance regarding official institution". This everyday politics can be defined as those forms of "participation at the local and informal level where one can gain a sense of sovereignty over one's own existence", thus refusing "to engage at some level with institutions of power, even if to demonstrate against it" (whereas social movements, by definition, do, see Harris, 2001). In this study, we will also reflect on this viable function of pop music for populism.

Indeed, some studies have also pointed out that music can foster *(dis) engagement*, as well as political participation. Franke and Schilze (2013), by examining the political worldviews that were manifest in the lyrics of American and German top ten hits from 1960 to 2009, found that one remarkable feature of music—related to international affairs—is the criticism of political institutions and actors, manifest in a mood of alienation and disenchantment, along with a strong appeal to individual action to autonomously tackle societal deficiencies.

In addition, some scholars assert that the repetitive character of popular music inhibits its power to "inspire political engagement or rebellion" (Street et al., 2008: 276). Bennett (2001), nonetheless, stresses that the rhythmic patterns can actually energize people's moral sentiments, as a precursor to their mobilization. Others claim that the production and the political, social and consumptive contexts of music constrain its potential meanings, highlighting that this kind of music merely articulates the everyday. Finally, pop music can be linked to disengagement as opposed to political engagement because of its ambiguity: as pop's political power depends on the listeners, meanings are ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations (Grossberg, 1987; Hebdige, 1979). In fact, as Bennett

et al. (1993) highlight, the very concept of 'authenticity', so central in pop (rock) culture, may be interpreted in very different ways, even as a 'distance from everyday life'.

In this study (especially in Chaps. 4, 5 and 6), we will also look at the various roles that music can play in politics, within a populist context.

Music can also be a key contributor to the *production of knowledge* by social movements (Della Porta & Pavan, 2017). For instance, it has been argued that folk songs associated with the American civil rights movement not only accompanied the movement and spread its message, but also became the movement, particularly in the eyes and ears of politically aware foreigners (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998).

Looking at music and political parties, it has been highlighted that music can serve a political agenda (Taylor, 1995: 504). In this regard, as it does not exist autonomously of other social, economic and political institutions, music is also seen as being able to change the world, whilst reflecting it, "when we talk of music's politics, we are not just talking of the way in which it articulates ideas and emotion. We are also talking of the politics that shape it" (Street, 2001: 254). Politics can shape music, using it during the advertisements of/for electoral campaigns (Christiansen, 2018, on the US; Nyairo & Ogude, 2005, on Kenya; Onyebadi, 2017, for comparative work), by an appropriation of the meaning to its ends—although this remains a surprisingly under-researched topic (Christiansen, 2018: 23). Music can also help in fostering the political party's collective identity, that is, to create, develop and reinforce specific partisan cultures, as some scholars have stated (Freeman, 1986; Paddock, 1997). In this sense, music contributes to shaping parties' imagery and affirming their core values. This also implies, on the normative level, an emphasis on the conflictual and mobilizing dimensions of mass party politics, according to which, "slogan and marching tunes are not accessory to democratic politics, they are the essence of it" (Schumpeter, 1942).

Another form of connection between music and politics is the relationship between the state and the cultural music industry (and vice versa) (Bennett et al., 1993; Lena & Peterson, 2011), which includes authoritarian contexts (Maas & Reszel, 1998; Wicke & Shepherd, 1993). State institutions have vastly exploited music within the processes of national identity building (Hebert & Kertz-Welzel, 2012): "the term 'national identity and music' can be understood as a general process by which individuals and groups may come to perceive, cognize and articulate associations between, on the one hand, specifically musical phenomena and, on the other hand,

wider socio-cultural formations associated with national culture and/or the nation state" (O'Flynn, 2007: 25). National identity, especially in those contexts where its meaning its highly contested, can therefore be socially and culturally constructed through music (e.g. in for the Irish case, see Rolston, 2001; McCann, 1995; also Lausevic, 1996, on Bosniak music).

In a more cultural sense, but still focusing on *institutional politics*, the concept of celebrity politics has been explored to refer to the increasingly strong connection between the music and the political scene (Street, 2004). There are two main variants of this phenomenon. The first is the elected politician or candidate who uses elements of celebrityhood to establish a claim to represent a group or cause (i.e. the celebrity *politician*, with emphasis on the second word). The second is the celebrity—namely the stars of popular culture—who use their popularity to speak for popular opinion (i.e. *celebrity* politician). In this sense, popular music can even serve as a generational phenomenon by launching artists towards the arena of institutional politics (as indicated by Maraszto, 2002, and Englert, 2008, in African contexts). In the first type of celebrity politics, we can include the public use of personal tastes to build a public persona, a public self-image, for political purposes (e.g. Jordan, 2013, on Obama's case). As Rojek (2001: 14) puts it, implicitly linking celebrity politics with populism, "politically and culturally, the ideology of the common man elevated the public sphere as the arena par excellence, in which the dramatic personality and achieved style inscribed distinction and grabbed popular attention [providing] an important integrating function in secular society".

In our study, we will also focus on the various potential roles of music in populist politics, stressing the relevance of the concept of celebrity politics to look at the interactions between the music and political spheres. For further reflections on the links between celebrity politics and populism, in the Italian and European contexts, see Campus (2020).

1.3 (Pop) Music and Populism: 'Mind the Gap'

We know very little about populist actors and music. Eyerman and Jamison (1998), adopting a social movement approach, and looking at historical populist organizations of the nineteenth century, stressed the mobilization of cultural traditions and the formulation of new collective identities through music by various political actors, demonstrating how music has been instrumental in these movements' mobilization.

More recently, the rise of populist politicians and movements in different regions of the world triggered more specific analyses of the populist use of music (Magaudda, 2020). Patch (2016), analysing the role of music in the 2008 and 2012 US election campaigns, shed light on the evolution and changes in the use of music to articulate populist discourses. For instance, he observed the use of music by the presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, using Simon and Garfunkel's song 'America' in his presidential advertisement campaign in an attempt to create affective links and to reinforce collective identities, supporting a symbolic context in which to reinvent the category of 'the people' (Magaudda, 2020).

AU17 Nolan and Brookes (2016) explored the role of Bruce Springsteen's music within American political communication, underlying the populist attempt by the New Jersey governor to appropriate the political meaning and populist appeal of the iconic American singer-songwriter. Jordan (2013) focused on how Barack Obama used popular music during his two terms as US president, as part of an explicit populist communication strategy (ibid.), noting that the Obama-centred aesthetic populism of the 2008 campaign was primed to inspire people to identify with a leader through the shared enjoyment of music. As Obama stressed in an interview "Not only do I love Bruce's music, but I just love him as a person. He is a guy who has never lost track of his roots, who knows who he is, who has never put on a front". This focus on what the music conveyed about the everyday-person was exactly what the Obama communication team would emphasize as they used popular music at campaign events to convey something about the candidate. By doing so, they sent a very populist message that the man and his musical tastes were down to earth; that rather than being elite and aloof (as the opposition framed him), he AU18 enjoyed what average people enjoyed" (Jordan, 2013: 103). In sum, the AU19 focus is on the aesthetics of popular music in order to strategically articulate political identities.

All in all, existing studies on populism and music are few, fragmented and mainly focusing on the US and/or political electoral campaigns, overlooking the more indirect ways through which music (i.e. pop music as part of popular culture) can be significant in political processes and discourses (for an exception, on the Egyptian case, see Abdelmoez, 2020). Furthermore, comparative analyses on different varieties of populism are scarce.

Nonetheless, pop music as an everyday cultural practice (DeNora, 2000),[3] which has been uniquely tied to the construction of ethnicity and nationality (Schiller, 2018), can be a useful tool to investigate populism. Pop music as part of pop culture (Storey, 2012) poses the question whether it reproduces current hegemonies (Adorno, 1950; Banti, 2020) or if it has to be understood as a field where ideas struggle with each other for hegemony, according to the Birmingham school (Hall, 1981). In fact, Savonardo (2010) argues that both claims are true when it comes to (music and) populism (Spaziante, 2016).

Pop music is the most important and widespread form of popular cultural production (Dunkel et al., 2018), "we constantly live within sonic crossroads" (Savonardo, 2010: 187). In this sense, pop music both belongs to and effectively shapes popular culture (Storey, 2012). The link between music and populism appears even stronger when focusing on pop music, being, by definition, produced for mass consumption (Savonardo, 2010), that is, the consumption of 'the people'. In this volume, we argue that populism, with its emphasis on common sense, is inevitably linked to these struggles and conflicts in meanings which can be shaped by and reinforced through music.

In sum, music and politics are very much intertwined: arguing that they are not, is a very political argument (Garratt, 2017; Wall, 2003; Zizek et al., 2000). As illustrated, the literature suggests that music can perform different functions for political actors, and we will not only explore how these are exploited in Italy and their extent but also look more broadly at the 'political' sphere, interpreting music as a primary cultural expression linked to social and political contexts. In line with Rosenthal and Flacks, we start from the assumption that 'political music' forms a bigger set than 'protest music', since "it engenders a sociological imagination (…). It helps [music listeners] to contextualise the social roots in what might otherwise be understood as individual stories or problems" (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2012: 20). In this sense (i.e. the sociological imagination), the link between music and politics demands a sociocultural perspective. Culture, in this way, can be understood either as a "whole and distinctive way of life" (Williams, 1981) or as "the signifying practices of representation set

[3] "Recognizing music as an affordance structure [implies that] music can, in other words, be invoked as an ally for a variety of world-making activities, it is a workspace for semiotic activity, a resource for doing, being and naming the aspects of social reality" (DeNora, 2000: 40–41).

within the social and material contexts of production, circulation and reception" (Barker, 2001: 45), in effect, cultural production. In this research, we also observe how music may be a "metaphor of the society", taking into account the impact of the music industries and the politics of taste (Street, 2013), as well as by scrutinizing the multiple public and political roles that music and artists perform and the multiple usages that political actors make of cultural repertoires (Street, 2013).

Moving to the definitional criteria of our object of study: when we allude to pop music, we refer to the mainstream, "popular […]in the English sense, or 'widely known', [*not*] in the Italian sense of 'folkloric'" (Serra, 2011). With 'pop music cultural productions', we refer strictly to mass-produced music from the pop music industry, thus involving the most widespread productions in the market, in line with our goal of capturing populist messages and affordances from (highly) commercial music. These restrictions rule out from our research what is usually referred to, especially in Italy, as 'political music' (*canzone politica*), 'militant music' (*canzone militante*: Pivato, 2010) or 'protest songs' (*canzoni di protesta*: Vitali, 2020), unless of course the songs were amongst the best-selling hits—which, based on our commercial threshold, was not the case in the period 2009–2018 (see Sect. 1.7 on the selection criteria).[4] In other words, our samples are the so-called *canzonette*, simply to understand to what extent they are 'just playful songs', echoing the well-known Edoardo Bennato's song *Sono solo canzonette* (1980).[5] Neither are the so-called underground scenes part of our study. Underground or, to use more sociological concepts, subcultural and countercultural (Yinger, 1960) scenes are mainly associated with left-wing milieu, although they include the far-right. In any case, all these politicized milieus are outside the scope of this book, not only because they are non-mainstream but also because they are not *populist*. In terms of audience, we focused on different recipients:

[4] To be clear, had this research been undertaken twenty-five years ago, when Italian rap was at its peak amongst Italian youth, mainstream rappers (Spaziante, 2016) such as Jovanotti or Articolo 31 would have been included, while the lively leftist militant phenomenon of the *posse* would have been excluded from our research.

[5] Similarly, 'political/militant' singers and bands have been excluded, if they do not reach the 'top of the pops' music charts, or fail to be captured by our preliminary screening through web data mining (see the section on our methods below) within our set of *celebrity* politicians. However, less well-known songs were considered where relevant in the political use of music by populist (the Five Star Movement and the League) and anti-populist (the *Sardine* Movement) leader and parties.

militants of populist and non-populist parties and movements; fans and concertgoers of selected 'populist' singers; the broader public exposed to pop music in their everyday lives. In this way, we covered two different (partisan and music-related) kinds of *fandoms*—in line with those who emphasize the similarities between 'audiences, fans and citizens' (Van Zoonen, 2005; Brough & Shrestova, 2010) as well as the broader public exposed to, and both passively and actively consuming, pop music productions.

Subcultural Music and the Radical Right Organizations

On the whole, when we talk about populism in Europe, the radical right-wing populism (or simply, the radical right) comes to mind, as it may for our partners of the international project that made this book possible. Connections between radical/far-right and music have been already well documented over the past few years. However, in this scholarship, the focus is on the radical right (not populism) and music subcultures or underground and fringe music (not 'popular', i.e. diffused). This is an umbrella term for musical practices, including ultra-marginal music, sharing radical aesthetics and cultural marginality (Graham, 2016), a definition also well-suited to characterize the far-right music scene. As noted (De Cleen & Naerland, 2016), studies of white power and skinhead music scenes and other radical right subcultures "have tended to focus on very important but extreme and relatively marginal subcultural forms of radical right expressive culture and activism". Richardson, in his overview on the topic, calls for an analysis of contemporary far-right, primarily focusing on its cultural imaginaries (2019). The recruiting function (Bulli, 2020; Miller-Idriss, 2018) and the strengthening of group cohesion through specific lifestyles (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006; Kølvraa & Forchtner, 2019) have been underlined in relation to extreme-right music and fringe political scenes. In other cases, extremist groups aspire to exploit mainstream anti-xenophobic music for processes of victimization and thus to demonstrate how their ideologies and proposals are unfairly ousted from the public sphere (Nærland, 2016).

Moreover, it has been asserted that extremist groups can exploit music for the production and circulation of new music genres with moderated, namely disguised extremist, messages, as a way to mainstream them, with no links with extremist partisan activities (Shekovtsov, 2009).

In fact, the function, use, target and actors who produce subcultural music are different from pop music (and populism). For instance, Pieslak argues that "music within radical culture ultimately aims to bring the listener to the directive of its ideology" (2015: 9); Richardson calls for an analysis of the contemporary far-right primarily focusing on its cultural imaginaries (2019).

On the contrary, Shekovtsov (2013) refers to strategies of normalization used by European far-right utilizing pop genres: "trying to present themselves as mature and moderate forces (…), do not generate or produce music scenes. Rather, they are trying to appropriate or penetrate other music scenes". In this sense, the European New Far Right movement would pursue a strategy of legitimation positioned outside political institutions, in the area of language and objectives (…) as its own cultural manifestation in the domain of sound" (2013: 279).

Nevertheless, we do not intend to explore the radical right and subcultural music in this book. Against this background, we shall reflect on the various potential roles of music for populist politics as well as the multiplicity of meanings of music (and how populist mobilization can work in direct connection with them). Indeed, adopting a sociocultural perspective to populism, we will go beyond these self-evident links between music and politics mentioned above, by starting from the view that "musical meanings are always grounded socially and historically, and they operate on an ideological field of conflicting interests, institutions, and memories" (Walser, 1993: xiii). This also implies that considerations arguing that, for instance, music is essentially connected to specific political (either progressive or conservative) values will be also problematized. Our assumption, implemented in our research design below is that "the value of popular culture, whatever its textual qualities, is in what audiences"—also as mediated by political actors, we add—"do with it" (Kooijman, 2013: 184).

Populisms and Emotions

This also opens the discussion on the role of emotions in politics. Scholars have quite recently (in the last thirty years) brought emotions back into the analysis of social and political movements, power relations and institutions (Berezin, 2004; Goodwin & Pfaff, 2001; Holmes, 2004; Marcus, 2000; Ost, 2004), and this is well suited to the study of populism, being based on mobilizing emotions that populist actors and leaders advocate (Canovan, 1999).

Fear, nostalgia and anger, for instance, have been analysed as essential drivers of populism (Kenny, 2017) in backward-looking, reactionary and anti-liberal political parties (Betz & Johnson, 2004; Hochschild, 2016) as well as in radical left-wing politics (Cossarini & Vallespín, 2019; Magni, 2017; Rico et al., 2017).

Treated for a long time as irrational factors intervening in human beings' actions (Lyngaard, 2019), and therefore difficult to assess, emotions have been recognized to have cognitive, evaluative, motivational and sensitive functions (Barbalet, 2006; Ben-Ze'ev, 2000). Recent developments in the sociology of emotions, for example, have emphasized "the ubiquity of emotions, moods, and affect in social life" and looked at emotions "as potential causal mechanisms, or components of such mechanisms, and not simply as epiphenomena or dependent variables" (Goodwin & Pfaff, 2001: 283). *Social movement studies* have underlined the fact that emotions can have an essential role in *mobilizing or demobilizing motivational factors* for collective action (e.g. Flam & King, 2005; Kemper, 2001). The mechanisms that catalyse political action and drive participation originate from moral outrage (Jasper, 1998), as well as the pleasure to construct a positive image of self (Bonansinga, 2020; Stein, 2001). Collective actors (including political parties) therefore can use emotions to attract recruits, sustain the commitment and the discipline of existing members and persuade outsiders (Jasper, 2011). Indeed, in electoral campaigns (and political communication), they are essential in attracting people (Brader, 2006; Song, 2017). From a neuroscience perspective, there is no complete separation between cognition and emotions (Lyngaard, 2019), as the latter play a central role in cognitive processes, as a 'shortcut' to process a large amount of information and allow people to act more efficiently (Maíz, 2011: 46). Furthermore, emotions are intertwined with judgements (i.e. values and beliefs), and the 'former emerge once an object or event has been appraised in a particular situation' (Bakker et al., 2021).[6] It has been shown that citizens support one party or another, beyond simple policy positions and their identity, but out of emotional attachment (Goodwin & Pfaff, 2001). In addition, studies in *political psychology* emphasized the role of emotions (Lerner & Keltner, 2001) such as the distinction between in- and out-group identification (Huddy, 2013; Sindic & Condor, 2014), a crucial dimension in populism.

[6] Emotions play a crucial role in the formation of political opinions (ibid.).

Populist parties are universally regarded to be communicating with an "extra emotional ingredient" (Canovan, 1999, p. 6). Populism has been widely empirically linked to emotions like hope, anger and resentment (e.g. Rico et al., 2017; Salmela & Von Scheve, 2018; Wagner, 2014; Wirz, 2018), and has even been labelled as 'the politics of fear' (Wodak, 2015).

It is understood that emotions can motivate people towards political action and in different ways in relation to populist politics: they can frame injustice, help collective identity formation and support individual and collective political action (Cossarini & Vallespín, 2019). Emotions can affect trust between people or towards institutions, which is another crucial aspect of populist outcomes.

Salmela and Von Scheve (2018, 449) have tried to identify the different emotions which may lead to right-wing and left-wing populism: repressed shame, resentment, anger and hate in the case of the former; acknowledged shame, indignation, but also joy and pride in the case of the latter. Generally speaking, 'anger' has been demonstrated to be a strong mobilizing feeling (e.g. Searles & Ridout, 2011; Stein, 2001; Valentino et al., 2011). Moreover, the concept of "emotional opportunity structure" (EOS) has been applied to populist politics, vis-à-vis how structural factors interact with (individual and collective) emotions to set the terrain for populist entrepreneurs (who, in turn, can exploit such opportunities), and how populist leaders and parties draw on cultural aspects and shape them to ensure electoral success (Salmela & Von Scheve, 2018, 438).

In this volume, responding to the call for an emotional sociology, we will address these issues, looking at emotions as potential causal 'mechanisms', in the connection between (populist) politics and pop music.

1.4 Populism, Populisms: A Definition (and Its Boundaries)

Empirically, populism is on the rise: from the late 1990s to the late 2010s, the support for populist parties in Europe tripled, and one quarter of voters have voted for populists. At the same time, scholars' interest in populism has increased tremendously: while the number of books released between 1990 and 2000 mentioning 'populism' and which were searchable in Google Scholar was about 21,000, this number reached 51,800 between 2011 and 2020.

Populism is also one of the most contested concepts in current academia (Anselmi, 2017), although the ideational definition has found a common ground based on people centrism and anti-elitism as characterizing features (Rovira et al., 2017), and a charismatic leadership (Stavrakakis, 2017). Often a top-down phenomenon embodied by a charismatic party leader that electrifies the masses, populism is nonetheless polymorphous and can also comprise a social movement (Taggart & Rovira, 2016: 359).

Populism has, in fact, been varyingly defined as a thin ideology (Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008); a political discourse using a specific rhetoric (Aslanidis, 2016; Hawkins, 2010); a political strategy (Weyland, 2001); and a political logic articulating various demands through empty signifiers in order to create antagonism between the People, embodied by a leader, and institutions (Laclau, 2005). These definitions have been the basis for the empirical delimitation of the phenomenon, as in our study, and consequently the research in recent decades, influencing measures, indicators and approaches (Caiani, 2020).

A more recent and promising academic debate recognizes the importance of 'varieties of populism' in understanding the different causes behind the phenomenon and effects on citizens' political behaviour and values (Caiani & Graziano, 2021; Ivaldi et al., 2017; Pappas, 2016). Differentiation occurs along the ideological components of these parties (i.e. left-wing or right-wing) attached to the 'thin' populist ideology: comparative studies have integrated these reflections with the distinction made between the aforementioned inclusionary and exclusionary populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

In this volume, we will consider varieties of populisms vis-à-vis politics and music, focusing on the Lega and the Five Star Movement in Italy. We should accept that whereas the inclusion of the League within the category of right-wing populism is commonplace, the definition of the 5SM as left-wing populist, although adopted by many comparative studies (Font et al., 2021; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019; Padoan, 2020), is more contested. Despite an initial left-wing positioning, the ideological nature of the 5SM has been recognized as rather ambiguous, eclectic and mutating (e.g. Verbeek & Zaslove, 2016), and many commentators have suggested the classification of 'hybrid' or 'valence' populism (Zulianello, 2020) for the party.

As for the boundaries between populism and the radical right, drawing on Arato (2013) and Stavrakakis (2020), populism can be read as the

'negation of ideological politics' as well as a 'a recipe that strongly depends on the quality of the ingredients available' (thus, as moulded by hegemonic blocs, so to speak). While we are aware of the multiple overlaps between populism and the radical right—indeed, the League is a perfect example—we want to emphasize the differences between the concepts (at the theoretical level) and the categories (at the empirical level).

We endorse Giorgia Bulli's clarification (2020): "parties, movements and political cultures with a clear reference to an extreme right ideology (Mudde, 2000) is 'extreme right'", while "radical right" refers to "the right wing populist shift (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995) and to the exploitation of popular resentment typical of radical right populist parties and movements (Wodak, 2015)". Far-right political parties and groupuscules such as *Casapound Italia*, despite their strong, intimate and multifaceted connections with subcultural music scenes (as a lifestyle, as a way of recruiting and of financing, amongst others), are thus outside the scope of this book.[7]

1.5 Populism and (Pop) Music Between Opportunities and Resources: Research Design

AU24

Regarding our working hypotheses, we have proposed an analysis of the relationship between populism and popular music by using a theoretical framework that combines insights from research on political mobilization and social movements on the one hand, and party politics and populism and political communication research on the other, with some guiding cultural study-based and sociology concepts (i.e. affordance and music as a collective ritual, respectively).

To unpack the argument (i.e. pop music leading to populism), the volume has a fourfold structure, through which the potential nexus between pop music and populism occurs (Fig. 1.1):

[7] We decided not to include the nationalist right-wing *Fratelli d'Italia* (the name itself is the Italian national anthem) among our cases of contemporary populist parties. Indeed, when we conducted our research, the party was not electorally successful like the Five Star Movement and the League. Furthermore, FdI is the most direct heir of the post-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano, even if* some scholars include it in the populist radical right family (Bobba & Roncarolo, 2018;), while others emphasize how the party's 'anti-establishment' discourse is less central with more authoritarian, conservative and nationalist features (Albanese et al., 2019).

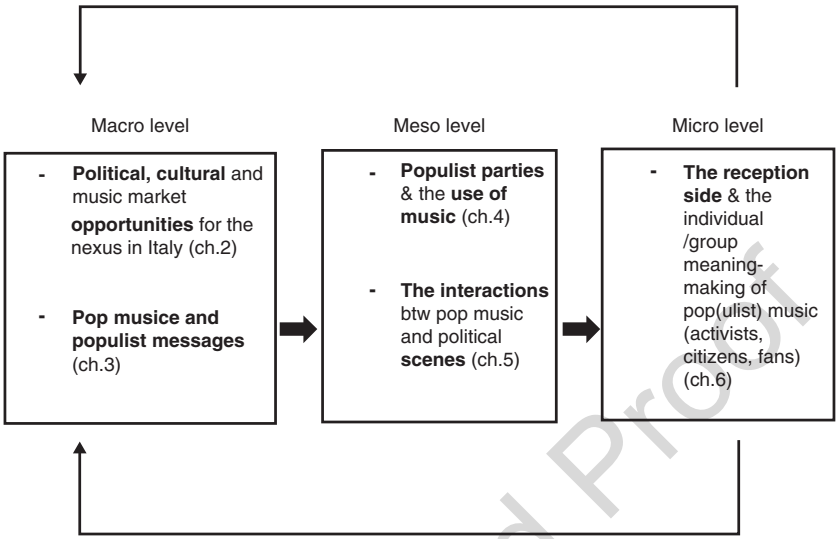


Fig. 1.1 Theoretical model for the analysis of the nexus between populism and pop music

(i) Populist politics by means of popular culture/music, namely, populist messages in pop music (Chap. 3);
(ii) the use of music by populist actors (Chap. 4);
(iii) the interactions between the populist and the pop music 'scenes' (Chap. 5); and, finally,
(iv) the reception of ('populist') music by fans and citizens (Chap. 6).

These paths imply different analytical focus (the context, political parties and singers, citizens, fans and voters) and empirical methods (content and visual analysis, interviews, participant observation and focus groups) to disentangle them.

Firstly, we are interested in the macro-level context of the possible nexus between populism and pop music, that is, using a party politics language, on the external supply side, made up of the political and cultural opportunities for the connection of music and populism. In this sense, we look beyond the so-called political opportunity structure (POS) and cultural/discursive opportunity structure (DOS), and we add—for the purpose of this research—music market opportunities and the constraints in

Italy in recent years; the context will be set by exploring the features of the most popular pop songs in Italy over the last 20 years (2009–2018, that marked the recent populist explosion of varieties of populisms in the country) (Chaps. 2 and 3).

If the literature on collective action and social movements has emphasized that the political and cultural/discursive opportunity structure (POS and DOS)[8] are useful in understanding the emergence and forms of political participation, then we will try to understand the Italian context (conducive or not, open or closed) in terms of the connection between populisms and pop music, or to political engagement and pop music in populist times.

At the macro level of analysis, the historically embedded opportunities that intertwined with Italian politics and (pop) music throughout the years are investigated, taking into account the historical trajectories, drawing on secondary sources (Chaps. 2 and 3).

In social movement studies, the concept has been conceptualized by looking primarily at the degree of 'closure/openness' of a political system (e.g. in terms of the electoral system, configuration of power between allies and opponents) and in terms of more inclusive or exclusive cultural contexts vis-à-vis the challengers (e.g. the political culture and the discourse of the elites).[9] From this perspective, focusing on populism and pop music, it is thus important to assess the extent to which political and cultural/discursive but also music traditions and music market industry opportunities are 'open' and thus conducive to having a positive impact on the connection between populist politics and music.

Secondly, we focus on the meso-level site of the possible connection between populism and pop music, namely, the use of music by populist

[8] Namely, the set of opportunities and limitations offered by the political context and political and discursive culture of the political system in which these groups operate (Della Porta & Diani, 2020). Particularly relevant for a study focusing on music and politics is the analysis of the discursive opportunities and constraints, that is, the "political-cultural or symbolic opportunities that determine what kind of ideas become visible for the public, resonate with public opinion and are held to be 'legitimate' by the audience" (Kresi, 2004, p. 72).

[9] To a certain extent, movement organizations adapt to the public decision-making structure, mobilizing when and where channels of access open up (Tarrow, 1989). Without denying the presence of grievances, social movement studies, however, tend to give more leverage to the capacity of collective actors, such as populist parties and leaders, to adapt to contextual resources and constraints, or, as it has been said, 'to take advantage of the available opportunities' (Rydgren, 2003: 49).

actors (Chaps. 4 and 5). This is what in populism studies is defined as internal supply side, and refers to the ideological and organizational resources at the disposal of populist parties that are used to increase their electoral relevance. We therefore focus on populist political parties and leaders and their use of (pop) music in their political activities, exploring in depth the reciprocal interactions between the political and pop music scenes in Italy. The functions of music for political actors are manifold—from propaganda to mobilization, and to identity building. We will investigate the usages of pop music by Italian populist entrepreneurs (intentionally or not). Additionally, we will investigate if the concept of celebrity politics enhances the current nexus between the two scenes in the country, thus shedding light on possible future trends for the study of party politics, leadership and political communication in populist contexts. The focus will be on the use of music in populist (and anti-populist) party events, in order to grasp how (pop) music serves ideological and mobilizating goals and, in particular, how and to what extent (pop) music helps in shaping the party imagery to the broader electorate and within the 'partisan culture' amongst militants and core supporters. We can conceive music as a part—sometimes a very important part—of the party brand, or at least as an important component in the process of political party branding. Contrasts and comparisons will be illustrated in terms of the use of music for different political purposes and across various types of populist organizations (right-wing vs. left-wing), as well as anti-populist ones.

Indeed, the exact mix of opportunities and constraints that constitute the Italian case vis-à-vis the connection between pop music and populism is, in our view, exploited in different ways by different types of populist organizations. As social movement research has stressed, strategic choices are influenced by the characteristics of specific actors, including the availability of their material and symbolic resources (Della Porta, 1995; McCarthy et al., 1996), namely, the resources that they are able to mobilize.[10] With this in mind, we expect to find key differences in the (degree and forms of) strategic use of music among the two main Italian populist parties and their milieus.

[10] While for some populist actors music may imply a more positive balance of opportunities (e.g. adding new channels to the traditional tools of politics), other groups in the same country may be indifferent to this vehicle or use it for different political purposes and in different forms. Secondly, beyond material resources, symbolic resources and cultural traditions also might play an important role (Della Porta, 1995) in facilitating or limiting the development of political strategies, also based on music.

In relation to the reception side of politics and music, we must also consider the micro level of analysis, at the individual and group 'meaning-making' of popular music in the context of populist politics in Italy, focusing on the individual receivers of music, that is, concertgoers of potentially populist signers and activists of populist parties (Chap. 6).

Here, we will try to understand if, from a sociological point of view, music can be a source of cognitive, emotional and judgemental schemata to interpret (populist) politics, thus testing some illustrated hypotheses and guiding concepts on other popular culture products other than music (e.g. soap TV, Street et al., 2014). Furthermore, from a more political sociological point of view, we look at how meanings are constructed, negotiated and manifested in groups. We will also reflect on theories on the milieu and reception of music (embodiment, affordance), so as to understand the reception of 'populist' music by citizens, asking whether it leads to engagement, disengagement or populist engagement.

AU26 As mentioned in the earlier quotation, since cultural studies and sociology have stressed the ambiguity of the meanings of cultural productions (and popular culture in particular), which can mean different things for different actors, according to social tastes, groups and milieu, as well as the social context in which music is consumed (for social movement mobilization and space, see Della Porta, 2005), the reception side of pop music (in the multifaceted articulation seen in the previous chapters) will be explored, looking at individuals, from a relational, dynamic and situational approach. The guiding hypothesis here is that popular music can play a role in interpreting politics, or, more ambitiously, forms of popular culture can be used by citizens as a source of knowledge, judgement and political feelings (Street, 2014). In this sense, insights from political psychology, that is, social identity theories and the sociology of tastes, as well as notions such as social status and tastes, and politicization of them, will be used (e.g. Sindic & Condor, 2014) to guide the hypotheses in the data analysis.

This three-pronged structure will provide a dynamic and agent-based approach to populism (and music), bridging the authors/senders of the populist political message with the recipients, singers and concertgoers of pop music. In other words, the individual (i.e. activists, fans) micro-level and the organizational party-level sides of populism are understood from a music and cultural/social approach. These interconnected layers of analysis coalesce into an encompassing methodology, which will be illustrated in the next section.

In sum, by reflecting on the role pop music can play in populist support and, more broadly, in the reproduction of populist discourses at a specific time and space, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of what kind of ideas are (mass-) visible, desirable and acceptable (thus constituting a fertile breeding ground for the emergence and consolidation of specific political actors) as well as insights into the ways of performing politics (Ostiguy, 2018) acquiring political knowledge and understanding conduct. This is particularly relevant to the recent debate on the *democratic potential* of means of popular culture and in general entertainment (media) for the (re) engagement of people, especially young people, in politics (e.g. see Street et al., 2012).

The findings underline that populist mobilization can be established directly through a connection with music (and its multiplicity of meanings) in several ways. We also propose, albeit in the limited case of Italy, that music and cultural tastes may be utilized to underpin foundations for the reproduction of a populism/anti-populism cleavage.

1.6 Our Case: Italy

In terms of country selection, populism in Italy is particularly appealing since it is characterized by a prolonged presence of populist parties in government, which have challenged the established party system (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2015). Historically, populism was chiefly found on the extreme or radical right (e.g. the Lega Nord). However, events such as the financial crisis of 2008 propelled non-right-wing, hybrid populist parties, including the Movimento 5 Stelle, into the mainstream (March 2017), and they have become well-established phenomena in the Italian political landscape (the 5SM secured 25% and 33% of votes in the 2013 and 2018 national elections, respectively). Beyond populism on the fringes of the political spectrum, observers have also underlined the importance of a type of "center-right populism" in the case of Silvio Berlusconi (and his party 'Forza Italia'), one of the best examples of this category (e.g. Campus, 2006).

Populism is a prevalent phenomenon in Italy and has been positioned right across the entire political spectrum (Caiani & Graziano, 2016; Panarari, 2020). Since the 1990s, different parties and movements sought to break with the political status quo by adopting populist strategies (Hamdaoui, 2021). Silvio Berlusconi, through his own party Forza Italia, made a major electoral breakthrough in 1994, following the collapse of

AU27 the 'First Republic's party system (Bull & Rhodes, 1997; Diamanti & Lazar, 2018). The Lega, in contrast, emerged in 1991 as a regionalist-populist party, demanding the secession of Northern Italy (*Padania*), followed by a complete reorientation towards an (all-Italian) nationalist party—under the leadership of Matteo Salvini—based on a right-wing populist model (Albertazzi et al., 2018). In 2009, the Movimento Cinque Stelle (5SM) (Five Star Movement) was formed by comedian Beppe Grillo and the web consultant Gianroberto Casaleggio. It was started as an anti-establishment movement with an ideologically 'hybrid' platform (Corbetta & Vignati, 2014; Mosca & Tronconi, 2019; Padoan, 2022). Even the mainstream, centre-left Partito Democratico (PD) experienced a populist moment under Matteo Renzi's centrist and rapid, populist communication style of leadership.

Significantly, contemporary Italian populist parties have, prima facie, some notable connections with the pop music sphere. Grillo has collaborated with some of the most well-known Italian musicians, including the immensely popular hip-hop artist Fedez. In addition, Grillo has a close relationship with the popular singer-songwriter Christiano de André (son of the iconic *cantautore* Fabrizio De André, a personal friend of Grillo). As for the League, we should note the endorsements offered to the party by Giuseppe Povia, winner of the famous and prestigious popular Sanremo Music Festival in 2006. Over the last few years, Povia's songs have become increasingly populist, reflecting the anti-democratic, anti-EU, authoritarian and xenophobic tendencies of exclusionary populism in Italy, casting the European Union as a threat to "the Italian people" (see, for instance, the official video to his song *Chi comanda il mondo/* "Who Controls the World"). Both the tradition and the highly successful varieties of Italian populism make the Italian case ideal for a within-case comparison.

Italy can therefore be understood as an exploratory (and explicative) case study for a broader set of possible cases, on a topic still largely unexplored.

1.7 Data and Methods

In our research we address the interaction between Italian popular music and populism with the intention of combining formalized and qualitative research techniques, mainly derived from social movement studies or party politics and communication. In particular, we shall discuss the aforementioned questions on the basis of four pieces of empirical research, based on

a three-year project conducted within the framework of the Volkswagen foundation award programme. The *mixed-methods strategy* seeks to cover the various aspects of the potential relationship between pop music and populist politics.

Firstly, in order to investigate the presence and forms of 'populism' in popular music in Italy, we conducted a frame and discourse analysis of written and audio contents in the period 2009–2018. We argue that populism is best understood as a collective action frame, which can bridge other frames and which is employed by movement entrepreneurs to construct a resonant collective identity of "the people" and to challenge elites, either national and/or European (Aslanidis, 2016). In this sense we reflected on *i.* mainstream (i.e. "chart-topping") music with explicit populist contents (i.e. tropes, ideas or references), as well as on *ii.* mainstream music influencing popular culture with ordinary, common sense messages that may afford, namely, to serve as layers for spreading populist messages. In particular, we focused on the mainstream (i.e. highly popular, most diffused) *pop songs* in Italy over the past decade (2009–2018), which also coincides with the time of the outbreak of recent populism (i.e. the 5SM and the rebranded Lega) in the country. We analysed them by adopting the various definitions available in populism theory, that is, by broadly speaking and classifying them: populism as (i) ideology, (ii) rhetoric, (iii) communication style, (iv) organization and (v) a political style (e.g. Caiani & Graziano, 2016; Canovan, 1999; Jansen, 2011; Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004; Ostiguy, 2018; Weyland, 2001).

One of our prime aims is to identify all major attributes linked to populism in music and empirically investigate them. We surveyed the most popular Italian pop music in terms of the text (lyrics), but also in terms of the sound, the video and the singer's *persona*, in essence, the main components of a song as a 'cultural and symbolic' product, capable of transmitting norms, values and ideas and mobilizing people. We also analysed the selected songs with the help of visual analysis (Doerr et al., 2013),[11] to grasp the potential reasoning through a logic of 'symbolic associations'/

[11] According to the procedure of the visual analysis method, we approached the images related to the songs in three steps: by doing a i. visual content analysis (extensive description), a ii. deeper iconographic analysis (symbols evoked—disclosing the meaning of visuals in a specific context at a specific time, and, finally, iii. triangulating, in order to contextualize the images (Doerr & Millman, 2017).

through "associations" and metaphors (Polletta, 2006) within pop music communication.[12]

In order to identify the most diffused pop songs in Italy over the last 20 years, as well as to codify their contents and the possible linkages with populism, we applied a three-step process. Firstly, acknowledging the difficulties of the terminological debate, according to which pop music can be understood both as a specific genre and, in a broader sense, as the musical equivalent of 'mass culture' (Tomatis, 2019), we identified our mainstream Italian 'pop songs' as:

(i) the best-selling songs according to the music charts (in the period 2009–2018)[13];
(ii) those broadcasted by the main radio stations (same time frame)[14]; and

[12] Analysing visuals (and music too) also means uncovering the link between emotions and cognitive aspects of a political phenomenon (Doerr & Millman, 2017), as visuals and music can effectively arouse emotions which are—as seen in the previous sections—important in shaping political views and behaviour.

[13] We selected the top ten songs composed by Italian artists, for each year, with lyrics in Italian or in Italian dialect. By this selection, we captured the tastes of the public, especially the young, that is the ones most predisposed to the purchase of musical productions. For the period 2013–2018, we relied on FIMI (Italian Music Industry Federation) rankings (https://www.fimi.it/top-of-the-music/archivio-classifiche.kl#/chartsarchive). For the period 2009–2012, due to the lack of public availability of these rankings, we had to rely on the website http://www.hitparadeitalia.it, managed by an independent team of scholars and experts and already used by academic scholars for similar scientific purposes (e.g. Antonelli 2015). To verify the reliability of the *Hit Parade Italia* website, we compared the results of the selection of the top ten songs by year for the period 2013–2016, with those from FIMI, with almost identical results.

[14] We selected, for each year, the ten most broadcasted songs on the radio, to capture the music which Italian audiences are most exposed to. Here, the influence of media is even more direct. By this inclusion we sought to identify the central role played by radio in the patterns of music consumption in Italy (see above). Furthermore, it allows us to focus on songs that target a much broader market in generational terms. For the period 2013–2018, reference was made to the so-called Annual Airplay Top 100 Rankings drawn up from the site https://www.earone.it and commonly used by sector magazines. Unfortunately, the annual rankings are missing for the period 2009–2012, as only the weekly rankings were available. We therefore proceeded to select the top 10 songs by Italian artists and sung in Italian or regional dialects at the 2nd, 27th and 52nd week. We then picked the songs starting from the top of the three rankings to include ten songs per year.

(iii) those on the podium (the top three places) of the Sanremo Festival (which is considered the popular Italian musical event par excellence).

This selection strategy resulted in a total of 190 highly diffused Italian pop music songs (2008–2019) and their videoclips (for the detailed list, see Table 3.b in the Appendix), which have been analysed with an in-depth content analysis, with the help of a formalized codebook (Table 3.a in the Appendix).

Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures "to make valid inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself or the audience of the message (Weber, 1990: 9). Therefore, for the purpose of a systematic content (and visual) analysis of the Italian pop songs (text, audio, video, persona), we have used a formalized codebook. For its construction we relied on populism research (Stavrakakis, 2020), as well as on studies that use a formalized approach to the measurement/investigation of populism (Borghetto & Lisi, 2017; Hawkins, 2010; Oswald, 2022; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011).[15] In terms of the method applied in our study, we followed Johnston's (2002, p. 77) distinction between content analysis (as "the methodical conversion of textual materials to numerical frequencies and/or intensity of meaningful categories") and discourse analysis (that refers to speech as a vehicle of meaning and understanding"), opting for the second approach. However, if the coding and analysis of complex discourse often presented difficulties (see Johnstone, 2002), we structured the content analysis of the lyrics of pop songs around the main features and indicators of populism models, using a formalized codebook.

Academic focus on populism has sharply increased in recent years (Oswald, 2022). Yet a commonly accepted definition is still absent, with scholars disagreeing on categorization, labels and boundaries between its different manifestations (Mudde, 2004). Some authors also stress that there is an abuse of this term in the public discourse. More specifically, one of the difficulties regarding the definition of populism is that it has been

[15] In the literature, there are two main variants of content analysis of documents (e.g. party manifestoes) for measuring populism (e.g. see Borghetto & Lisi, 2017; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011). The first is a computerized content analysis, which uses an a priori designed dictionary to gauge the degree of populism; the second approach uses trained coders in order to systematically analyse texts by means of a codebook. In this study, we will rely on the second method.

applied (and adapted) to several very different historical phenomena (movements, parties, regimes, intellectuals), across various periods, and often it has been used in a pejorative tone.

From a theoretical perspective (Muller, 2016), populism has been conceptualized as (*i*) a political *rhetoric* that is marked by the "unscrupulous use and instrumentalization of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment" (Betz, 1994: 4; Betz & Oswald, 2022) and appeals to "the power of the common people in order to challenge the legitimacy of the current political establishment" (Abts & Rummens, 2007: 407), or as *(ii)* a 'thin' or 'weak' *ideology*, that considers "society to be ultimately separated in two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people" (Mudde, 2004: 543). Elements of this "thin ideology" (Freeden, 1998) concerning the structure of power in society are the references to antagonistic relations between the people and the elite, the idea of restoring popular sovereignty and a conception of the people as a homogeneous body. A specific feature of this ideology is its "indeterminacy" that "responds to its need to be adaptable" (Ruzza & Fella, 2009: 3). Finally, populism has also been defined as a *(iii) type of organization*, characterized by the presence of a charismatic (new kind of) leadership (Taggart, 2000; Weyland, 2021) and *(iv)* a *special style of communication* (De Vreese et al., 2018; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), namely, without intermediaries. In particular, the presence of a *charismatic leader* adopting a certain style and rhetoric (Hawkins, 2010) is seen as an essential characteristic of populism (Zulianello et al., 2018). In this respect, populists are successful (e.g. see Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2015), due to their role as "taboo breakers and fighters against political correctness" (Mudde, 2004: 554). They usually appeal to emotions of fear and enthusiasm (by employing highly emotional, slogan-based, tabloid-style language), adopt a demagogic style and refer to resentment, offering easy solutions for complex problems, combining "verbal radicalism and symbolic politics with the tools of contemporary political marketing to disseminate their ideas among the electorate (Mazzoleni et al., 2003).

Definitions of the concept, however, generally converge in seeing as a core aspect of populism, its focus on 'the people' and their 'antagonistic relationship with the elite' (being national or supranational, i.e. European). Populist movements attempt to create a direct connection between the people and the political power, bypassing the electoral process. They often consider the voters' aspirations to having been betrayed by corrupt

political elites (politicians both from the government and the opposition) (Rydgren, 2007) and suspect that a conspiracy against the people is taking place (Taggart, 2000). The charismatic leader ('the saviour') is the only one who embodies the will of the 'common people' and is able to speak on their behalf. However, the very definition of the 'people' remains ambiguous in the use of populists, and competing interpretations try to clarify who 'the people' actually are. Indeed, some view the people in terms of class or ethnicity (e.g. Meny & Surel, 2002; Padoan, 2020), whilst others refer to 'the heartland', namely, a place in which "in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides" (Taggart, 2000: 95).

Finally, a fifth definition of populism, similar to the fourth, is based on a sociocultural approach (Knight, 1998; Moffitt, 2016; Ostiguy, 2018) where populism is a *political style* (way of being, way of doing) and a mode of relationship. In this sense, aspects such as relationships, affinity and bonding are emphasized as the significant ones characterizing the phenomenon, which appear as normatively neutral or ambivalent. Moreover, according to this approach, the people of populists would be 'local', 'from here', 'genuine' versus the elites who are described as cosmopolitan, polite, 'distant' (in an antagonism between the two which characterizes as mainly 'low'—the people—vs. high—the elite).

On the basis of this scholarship, we elaborated our codebook (see Table 3.a in Appendix) in order to analyse (the lyrics, videos and personae of) pop songs. We planned to offer a comprehensive overview of the various forms/manifestations populism can take, to grasp all the possible nuances (and roles) of populist messages present in music. This approach starts from the premise that it is more fruitful to talk of degrees (and forms) of populism (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). On top of bearing in mind these five main aspects (*i, ii, iii, iv, v*) of populism, as well as the close empirical association between populism and nationalism, we also have to be aware of the presence (and the forms) of the following aspects in music and discourse (especially for the radical right/nationalist) populism:

(i) the (construction of) the "nation" (e.g. constructed as a community of homogeneous members, defined through ethnic and even racist categories vs. legal citizenship),
(ii) the (construction of) the other (e.g. either my nation vs. other nations) or
(iii) members of my nation versus non-members, and

(iv) the (construction of) sovereignty (e.g. in contrast to international institutions like the European Union).

Furthermore, the aforementioned distinction between *right-wing and left-wing populism* has been taken into account. The distinction is analysed on the basis of three dimensions: material, political and symbolic (Filc, 2010: 128–38). The material dimension concerns the distribution of resources among social groups with inclusionary populist parties in favour of mass welfare programmes to include the poor and exclusionary populisms defending forms of welfare chauvinism that aims to protect established welfare insiders from immigrant outsiders. The political dimension refers to forms of political mobilization that go beyond representative democratic channels such as plebiscitary and local forms of radical democracy. Inclusionary populisms mean for these mechanisms to give a voice to ignored groups, while exclusionary populisms also advocate similar devices but demand the disenfranchisement of immigrant groups. Finally, the symbolic dimension involves setting the boundaries of 'the people', with inclusionary movements highlighting, for instance, the 'dignity' of indigenous populations, while symbolic exclusion often draws on forms of cultural discrimination (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013) (for a guiding codebook on varieties of populism, see Table 3.a in the Appendix).

Finally, we left open strings to detect 'anti-populist' messages in pop music—lyrics; 'i.e. messages that either explicitly attack populist parties or leaders, or (more commonly) that intend to oppose some of the features that are usually associated with populism'. This could ultimately enable us to understand how reactions towards populism may under certain conditions help trigger a process of production and reproduction of a populist/anti-populist cleavage (Stavrakakis & Jaeger, 2017).

All in all, we found 30 (from a total of 190) songs in our sample that, in different degrees and according to different definitions of the concept of populism, included explicit or implicit 'populist messages'. On this subsample we applied a visual analysis of the official videoclips.[16]

[16] As Flam and Kleres (2018) put it, "a good start is to look at the visual asking what it says to its viewers and wherein lies power. This first analytical step draws on our everyday knowledge about the world, its symbols and its feeling rules. 'All' we have to do is to see and to associate. This first step is intensely personal: it calls for emotional and interpretative engagement and may produce very idiosyncratic results".

However, while a focus on music is inherent to the cultural sphere (and ultimately a musicological analysis), such a study cannot focus on the characteristics of music production at the expense of the perceived meanings of it. Secondly, thus, we complemented the content analysis with a comparative analysis—through *participant observation* where music was played in political contexts, and *interviews with party representatives and activists*—of the use of (pop) music by the two Italian populist parties (Lega and the 5SM) from 2009 up to 2019.[17] This addressed the communicative dimension of populist political organizations though popular culture, tracing their specific use of music during their major rallies and political events (e.g. electoral campaigns, congresses and meetings), for diffusing propaganda, promoting identity building and communities, fundraising, and organizing and mobilizing people.

We attended in person or online (through the analysis of 90 hours of videos) all major regional and national rallies and festivals of the two main Italian populist parties, from 2010 until 2019—such as the Festival 5Stelle of the 5SM party and the Pontida meetings of the Lega (for details of the events in which we conducted participant observation, see Appendix, Table 4.b) Participant observation is a method, as Lévi-Strauss (1963) claimed, necessary prior to any historical or epistemological theorization. It has been defined as "research in which the researcher observes and to some degree participates in the action being studied, as the action happens" (Lichterman, 2002, 120). Field notes are written usually on the basis of some research hypotheses, and we focused on the multiple roles (e.g. ideological, emotional, mobilizational) played by music in these populist party events.

In particular, we utilized the following events:

(i) The annual 5SM's festival *Italia a 5 stelle* in Naples in 2019
(ii) The "Interregional 5SM Festival" in Veneto in 2019. An (extremely rare) 5SM local festival
(iii) The League's traditional local summer festival (9–19 August 2019) in Pontida, Bergamo, Lombardy, organized annually by the local sections of the party.

[17] While an analysis of documents (i.e. the lyrics of songs) allows us to single out the formal definitions and concepts of populism-related tropes and their presence, participant observation (Chap. 4) and focus groups (Chap. 6) disclose the "material constitution" of populism and populist actors and discourses (Della Porta, 2005).

The League's local festival that we attended was in the very same highly symbolic venue where the annual national League meeting (*Raduno di Pontida*) *has* taken place each September since the mid-1990s. Due to the pandemic in 2020, our in-person participant observation at parties' event stopped, and we integrated this material with the analysis of 90 hours of video footage, retrieved through the web (mostly from YouTube and from the *Radio Radicale*[18] website), of all the major party events of the two populist Italian parties in the previous years (i.e. the 5SM *Italia a 5 Stelle* editions in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 of *Italia a 5 Stelle,* plus the *Woodstock 5 Stelle* mega-concert, organized by the party in 2010), as well as all the annual editions of *Raduni di Pontida* from 2010 to 2019.

During the participant observation, not only did we focus on which artists were invited or which music they played or was broadcasted, but we also surveyed the kind of atmosphere the events intended (or were able) to create, from the interaction with the militancy, to theatrical techniques that contributed to convey specific messages, values and emotions. This helped us to understand the use of pop music by populist actors to achieve its goal of exploiting its potential to spread the core values of a party and shape and fortify its identity, targeting both its rank and files and, for purposes of political communication, the broad electorate. As a benchmark for comparison, beyond focusing on the use of music by different types of populist parties, we added a participant observation and interviews with anti-populist actors and events (such as the recent Italian 'Sardine' movement).

As for the *semi-structure interviews* (n.5) with (local and national) representatives and management of the political communication of the party and/or main organizers of party events, we asked them for information on the strategic choices of the music selected at party events and opinions on the role played by music, on the whole, during these political rallies.[19]

[18] *Radio Radicale* is a private radio station owned by the small centrist Radical Party. It receives public funds to broadcast and archive major political events and parliamentary sessions.

[19] The interviews were conducted between April and November 2020 (for the list of interviewees, see Table 4.c in Appendix). Each interview lasted an hour on average and focused on the role of music in party events, the reasons behind the organizational and artistic choices, the emotions intended to be elicited amongst participants, the specific cultural image of the party as ultimately shaped by music references (for the questionnaire, see Table 4.d).

In this sense, we approached our participant observation at party events and interviews, starting with the assumption that symbols are important for social movements and political actors because they are markers of rich knowledge and complex frames (Goodnow, 2006). They help protesters to mark their affiliation with a collective and to identify their position in political conflicts (in-group/out-group). Collective actors, such as social movements, use visual and musical language tapping into the shared visual knowledge of the society they are rooted in. They use and reinterpret a pre-existing imaginary to voice critiques and to form a collective actor.

Ethnographic-style research is used in order to understand and filter the information (data) collected, through the researcher's own lenses and experience (Marcus, 1995). In our study, ethnographic methods and interviews with party representatives (and even attendees, potentially party activists and sympathizers at such events—see below) are employed in order to place the collected data in a physical context and filter it through a lived experience in the quest to comprehend the potential connection between politics and music and, in particular, populism and pop music (in Italy).

A third part of the study was focused on the *'reception' side* of pop music, and it relies upon three big interrelated set of data (musicological analysis, focus groups of citizens and individual in-depth interviews with activists at populist parties' rallies and concertgoers of pop singers).

In particular it is based on:

(a) Musicological group analysis of the pop songs emerged, from the previous research steps (from our content analysis and/or from the 'filed'), as particularly related to populism, used to unveil the specific understanding and the cognitive, affective and evaluative interpretations of these songs by ordinary citizens.

Musicological group analysis is an innovative method (Appel et al., 2017; Doehring, 2019) mainly developed in musicological disciplines, which has never been applied to the study of political participation and political sociology. It seeks to analyse the group processes of communication and interaction, starting from the assumption that music is always part of a discursive and historical context (Dunkel et al., 2018) and thus acts as an "agent of meaning". This method therefore appears particularly useful in understanding the meanings of forms of popular culture (i.e. music in the case of this study) as a potential source of political knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Musicological group analysis works in sessions (roughly two hours each), involving 3–5 participants each (i.e. people

who have musical interests and argumentative skills), listening multiple times to a sample of selected songs in an intersubjective way with interactive discussions. For the purpose of our research, we added 1–2 people with a high-level technical-musical education to the groups of each session—conservatory graduates, musicians, workers in the music industry sector—who could guarantee a higher quality of debate, grasping technical aspects constructively introduced in the collective discussion.

At the opening of the session, the participants listen to an audio file of the song for discussion, without mentioning either the title or the authors of the song, in order to not prejudice the discussion. They are then asked to describe the sounds and their perspective in the most accurate way and offer an interpretation that others can take up for their comment on it. The goal of each MGA session is to collect a spectrum of possible affordances of the song. Participants were also asked to take notes of whatever comes to their mind (from adjectives to landscapes, cultural connections—other songs, movies, books—or emotions), as well as to identify potential audiences and cultural, social, even political strategic appropriation that the song analysed was likely to trigger.

We held ten musicological group analysis (MGA) sessions, each of them devoted to a selected song on the basis of different criteria (see Table 3.c in the Appendix). Only at a later stage were the lyrics of the song handed out to the participants. The last session of listening is accompanied by the official video (if available), in order to integrate a discussion on the emotional impact and on the messages conveyed through it.[20]

(b) Eleven focus groups of Italian citizens *(totalling about 110 participants) were* conducted during 2020 all across Italy (from north to south), to apprehend the materializing and negotiated political meanings (if any) attributed to pop music in social interactions and, more generally, the use of forms of popular culture as a source of knowledge, judgement and political feelings.

Indeed, where quantitative data from opinion polls show the presence and spread of some opinions and/or behaviours, focus groups capture the reasons for and meanings given to some behaviours (Della Porta, 2005). Focusing on the interaction in the group, we explore the reciprocal production of meaning and negotiations of political attitudes. Thus, these data serve to investigate how recipients affirm, partly mistrust or even

[20] The first three sessions were in-person, while the remaining seven sessions were conducted online, through an online platform, due to the pandemic restrictions.

oppose ideological contents in music (Hall, 2003, cit. in Dunkel et al., 2018). Our assumption in doing focus groups (and partly MGAs, although it is more a musicological than a sociological tool of analysis) was that recipients are not exposed to an isolated music example, but rather receive music within a social context as part of a nexus of audiovisual signs and signals. More practically, focus groups are discussions within a small group, moderated by a researcher and oriented to obtain information on a specific topic (Blee & Taylor, 2002).

The moderator facilitates the discussion by presenting the main focus of the research, and then stimulates the debate, trying to involve all the participants and cover some main topics. Most of the focus groups were conducted in person, except for one which had to be held online (Gajser, 2008) because of the worsening covid situation. No material incentives were offered (besides cookies and wine); however, participants seemed to be motivated especially by the opportunity for self-reflection (see also Della Porta, 2014).

Our focus groups were composed of 8 participants each (including first-time voters, i.e. people aged 18–23), varying in age, educational level (four graduates and four non-graduate participants), gender and occupation (see Acocella, 2008). The focus groups were conducted between September and October 2020, during the pandemic, and therefore with the limits and constraints of the covid-related measures. We also distributed our focus groups based on geography, to account for the traditional Italian political 'subcultural' variations, as well as distribution of populist parties' constituencies. The eleventh focus group, held in Treviso, Veneto, was exclusively attended by League's local militants and used as a 'test' case of what ideologized people can see in pop music.

In our study, the focus group process, lasting two and a half hours, is conducted as follows: each of the three parts of our focus group session begins with a musical stimulus (video clip/song) that functions as an opening act and a basis for discussion, followed by a guideline of questions that is designed in a way to provide comparable data and open enough to take up group dynamics during the discussion. In particular, the three parts—which we refer to as "from music to politics", "from politics to music", "interactions among the scenes"—were opened with different audiovisual 'stimuli' for the discussion (for the questions stimulating the debate among participants, see Appendix, Table 6.b). The first part was

based on the listening of selected songs relevant to the topic of populism[21] (see Table 6.b in the Appendix), some of which were chosen following our lyrics analysis; others were selected because they were considered particularly relevant for our analysis, such as *Chi comanda il mondo?* ('Who rules the world') by the right-wing and former Sanremo winner and songwriter Povia, who, in recent years, positioned himself as the champion of hard Euroscepticism and conspiracy theories—increasingly since the beginning of the pandemic. The second part was based on videos in which populist politicians use music for strategic purposes such as during electoral campaigns (e.g. including a hymn written by the pop star Fedez for the 2014 electoral campaign of the 5SM) or public performances (e.g. Matteo Salvini singing highly popular songs during concerts, rallies and TV infotainments); for contrast, we also added to our stimuli a video from a demonstration by the *Sardine movement* (an explicitly anti-populist movement who came to the fore between 2019 and 2020 to 'arrest' the mounting populist wave in Italy in view of December 2019 regional elections). The third part was focused on some vignettes (coming from social media and the Internet) shown to participants which pertained to various types of interactions between the political and music scenes (e.g. public interventions by pop stars on politically sensitive topics, and, on the other side, by populist politicians on pop music debates and events)[22] in Italy in recent years, gathering participants' opinions, feelings and perceptions on them.

Moreover, the researcher played the role of the facilitator and introduced various stimuli; each group was opened with general questions such as "what do you like/don't like about this song/video?", "what links this video/music to your daily life?". The debates covered, in different order, topics such as the individual receptions (in terms of tastes) of the songs, the emotions elicited and those that were supposedly intended to be elicited, the narratives, frame imageries and ideological reflections caused by the stimuli, and, at a meta level, the role of political parties and popular culture, the role of individual singers and/or politicians and their "subjectivity", the strategic choices, the common values, the understanding of music, politics and democracy—with particular attention devoted to the mechanisms of the interactions between the political and cultural spheres.

[21] For the list of songs used as stimuli in FGs, see Table 6.b in the Appendix.

[22] E.g. we circulated selected extracts from Salvini's and Di Maio's social media accounts on Sanremo editions, as well as public declarations by national and international pop stars on political campaigns (such as #MeToo or BLM).

In explaining the aim of our research, we insisted that the members of the groups did not have to feel that there is a correct or wrong answer, nor that any kind of knowledge or expertise was required, but participants were invited to talk about their own individual experiences and perceptions as ordinary citizens, at times 'first-time voters'.

Focus groups, as noted, present particular advantages for researchers with a particular interest in the norms that are at the basis of some groups' behaviour and their construction of meaning—it "can yield data on the meanings that lie behind those group assessments" as well as group processes (Bloor et al., 2001, 4). They enable observation of the collective framing of an issue. As stated in our study, they allowed us to investigate the individual and group 'meaning-making' of pop(ulist) music.

(c) Twenty-eight in-depth interviews were conducted at the *individual level*, with *fans* and concertgoers of the most famous Italian pop artists, as well as with *activists of the populist parties*—in order to explore fans' reasoning, emotions and opinions linked to the experience of music (and politics) and to assess the political affordances offered by the music. In particular, we conducted 18 interviews with fans of a sample of 7 selected singers/bands that turned out as carriers of populist messages,[23] 10 interviews with activists of populist parties and 6 with activists of the anti-populist *Sardine* movement (for the lists of the interviews, see Table 4.c in the Appendix).

In fact, as Street et al. (2012) put it, "popular culture's role in developing political understanding is not simply one of conveying information and ideas. Rather, young people bring aesthetic and other judgements to bear upon the sources of their cultural pleasure, discriminating between the 'authentic' and the 'fake', the 'authoritative' and the 'ill-informed'". Debates on pop culture serve to develop 'proto-political' attitudes (Dahlgren, 2009), "the preliminary insights of political comprehension".

[23] These singers were selected based on various criteria. Some of them were deemed as relevant from the field and/or content analysis of pop songs (e.g. J-Ax; Fedez; Ghali); others because they were publicly associated with the 5SM (Lucariello) and the League (Davide Van De Sfroos; Povia); others were chosen for their territorial-identitarian identity as likely to reinforce ethno-populist attitudes (Rumatera). Due to the lack of availability of Povia fans—none of them responded positively to our attempts at contacting them—we opted for substituting in-depth interviews with two participant observations of Povia concerts after the lockdown, held in Bologna, on 23 July 2021, and in Vittorio Veneto, on 15 November 2021. The concerts were within the context of 'no-vax' rallies—relevant for our analysis of the intersection between pop music and populism.

Entertainment and consumption for leisure is "a source of knowledge (cognition), but also of identity (affinity) and emotion (evaluation)" (Street et al., 2012).

Our interviews at the individual level (n. 18), which were conducted between April and November 2020, were designed to empirically tackle these issues: the reasons behind the music preferences, the emotional experience of the live concerts and the eventual political connections claimed to be found in their favourite singer's persona and repertoire (Table 5.b in the Appendix).

In addition to this, we asked the party activists about their perception of the impact of music in the party's events, the emotions elicited by the music and the contribution of music to the party's identity and on the specific event (see Table 5.a). Similar interviews with anti-populist activists were held (six in total, from different local circles in Rome, Turin, Bologna, Florence and Antwerp) belonging to the *Sardine* movement. While populist militants were contacted during our participant observations, the concertgoers were contacted through posts on Facebook groups reserved for the fandom of the selected artists (equally divided between women and men, adolescents, i.e. aged between 15 and 17, and 25 and 55 years). The open-ended nature of the interviews made it possible for the respondents to generate, challenge, clarify, elaborate or re-contextualize their understanding of the topic (…) based on earlier interviews, documentary sources or observational methods" (Blee & Taylor, 2002, 94; see also Della Porta, 2005). During the interviews, we tried to elicit the interpretative capacity of the interviewees, informing our partners about the focus of the research. As we shall see in what follows, the interviews confirmed the high degree of self-reflexivity present in activists and even concertgoers (Melucci, 1989): the link between music and politics emerged as an important topic of discussion, often critically so.

Finally, to better grasp the mutual interactions between the political populist scenes and the pop artistic scene in Italy in recent years, a fourth part of data collection was devoted to *web data mining and interviews with experts.*

As regards the *web data-mining*, a key word search on the Internet was done to look at the interactions between (populist) politics and the pop music sphere (i.e. endorsements of populist politicians by pop artists, usage of pop repertoires by populist politicians, reciprocal critiques/

AU40 attacks).[24] The time frame was 2010–2019. With this data collection strategy, we were able to obtain information that could be easily accessed by the general public, and thus, arguably, the kind of information that web-users would firstly consult in forming their opinions. We qualitatively analysed this material, and in doing so, we aimed to obtain information that constitutes the broader public sphere of the masses in the country, namely, a most visible public sphere. We limited our analysis to the first 3 web pages of each key word combination, that is, Google results (for a total of 163 relevant links analysed from 350 retrieved). These web pages mainly consisted of journal articles from major newspapers and music magazines and, in some cases, social media posts. The results also offered insights on policy proposals advanced by the Italian populist parties on strictly cultural and music issues and the music industry market. As noted by Coleman (2010), ethnography of online communication is particularly important, because these forms of communication have indisputably arisen as crucial sites for the formation of the collective experience as well as for the emergence of socially shared narratives. This part gave us an insight into how celebrity politics may be linked to the spread and reproduction of populist political projects in Italy.

Finally, there were *12 expert interviews* conducted between May and November 2020 with experts on sociology of music, sociology of culture, history of music, ethnomusicology, semiotic and songwriters engaged in social movements which helped us to explore research avenues, collect potentially relevant concepts and ideas, deduce on the specific role(s) of music in spreading populist ideologies and on potential comparisons of the Italian case with other national contexts,[25] as well as to reconstruct the context of political, cultural and 'music' opportunities for the nexus between pop music and populism in Italy (see the questionnaire in detail, Table 4.e in the Appendix).

[24] Keywords used: populist leaders and parties' names (or the word 'populism'), and the words: 'music*', 'singer*'; nine relevant pop music Italian artists used the word: politic*. We did a total of ten Google searches (encompassing the 2010–2018 period).

[25] Questions focused on the relationship between pop music and politics/populism in a historical and comparative perspective (contextualizing Italy within the European panorama) and on the possible mechanisms of this nexus at individual, organizational or larger society levels. All these interviews were extremely fruitful in motivating us during our initial stages of our research and for the propositions of hypotheses, ideas and perspectives to be taken to answer our research questions as well as the literature to be explored, not to mention the informed opinions that we fully consider as valuable pieces of empirical data.

A systematic consultation of secondary sources (academic and journalistic) and documents allows to reconstruct the (political, cultural/discursive and music market) opportunities of the context for the potential nexus between pop music and populist politics in Italy.

The *mixed-methods strategy* aimed at covering the various aspects of the potential relationship between pop music and populist politics.

1.8 The Content of the Volume

In the following chapters, we will investigate several different aspects of political engagement as afforded by popular music in the context of populist politics in Italy. As aforementioned, in Chap. 2 we will analyse in detail the influence of the political, cultural and music market opportunity structures offered by the Italian national context in which populist organizations also operate. Chapter 3 will apply instruments of content, musicological and visual analysis to explore the presence (if any) and forms of populist content in Italian pop music over 10 years (2009–2018), since the emergence and re-emergence of left-wing and right-wing populism in the country. We evaluate how and to what extent the songs' lyrics, videos and music structures and the artist *persona* autonomously contribute to the spread of populist tropes, including anti-elitism, distrust of political institutions, celebrations of an authentic rudeness, articulations of specific grievances and celebrations of charismatic leadership. We argue that it is precisely its seemingly non-political features that enable this kind of cultural production to spread political (and, more specifically, populist) worldviews so effectively.

Chapter 4, still from a supply side, moves to a meso-organizational-level perspective of the potential nexus between music and politics, by looking at the strategic use of (pop) music by populist parties in Italy. The findings will be illustrated, comparing different types of populist organizations. With the help of participant observation and in-depth interviews with key actors, the chapter focuses on the two main populist parties active in Italy today: the right-wing League and the 'polyvalent' (Pirro, 2018), the Five Star Movement. We will explore how these parties strategically use music at their events to shape and reaffirm a partisan culture and discursively build a "peoplehood" (Boyte, 2012) through the appropriation of existing Italian pop culture or the construction of an *ex novo* popular repertoire (Jansma, 2019). In a chronological perspective, we also focus

on how these events deployed music and on the ideological and organizational changes experienced by these parties over the past decade.

In Chap. 5, starting from the concept of celebrity politics, various interactions between the musical and the political scenes will be explored, such as the endorsement of populist politicians by pop singers and/or the intervention of populist leaders in the music debate—relating them to the cultural and political opportunities in the Italian context and historical processes concerning the broader relation of music and politics. With the help of web data mining and experts interviews, we will delve into the most famous examples of Italian pop stars engaging in political debate, especially in relation to populist (and anti-populist) politics. By doing so, populist politicians intend to establish a connection with the people, by mostly performing 'low' sociocultural practices (Ostiguy, 2018).

Chapter 6 looks, from a micro-level perspective, on how recipients understand and negotiate the meanings of contemporary Italian pop music production. Moving to a demand side and drawing on in-depth interviews with fans, concertgoers and activists of the Italian populist (and non-populist) parties, and focus groups, we will explore the use of popular culture music to interpret current politics and how populist forms of political knowledge and engagement can be reproduced in social interactions. We demonstrate that popular culture in general (and pop music in particular) is an important starting point from which people define their identities and contemplate power relations in society. In this sense, forms of cultural production appear to enable different political and proto-political interpretations and, in particular, can reproduce Italy's populist/anti-populist cleavage. We noted that through judgements on the content of (pop) music as well as through emotional responses to it, people tend to express their relationship with politics.

In the concluding chapter (Chap. 7), we discuss the challenges and opportunities of (pop) music for populism and populist actors, highlighting both their capacities and their difficulties in the use of this medium. We synthesize the main findings of our research and position them in relation to the theories and concepts outlined in the first chapter (such as political and cultural opportunities and actors' resources). More generally, we discuss the extent to which our research contributes in understanding the close relationship between popular music (as part of popular culture) and contemporary populism beyond our single national case study. These observations will provide scholars with a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary populist phenomena (and possible trends for the

future), inspiring some ideas for new research agendas in the future. After acknowledging the limitations of our research and suggesting potential avenues for future studies, we finish with a strong claim to take popular music more seriously in political science as a whole, and in populism studies in particular.

AU41

References

Abdelmoez, J. (2020). Music at the nexus of Egyptian pop culture and politics. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication, 13*(3), 300–321.

Abts, K., & Rummens, S. (2007). Populism versus democracy. *Political Studies, 55*(2), 405–424.

Acocella, I. (2008). *I focus group. Teoria e tecnica*. FrancoAngeli.

Adorno, T. (2002). *Essays on music*. University of California Press.

Albanese, G., Barone, G., & De Blasio, G. (2019). *Populist voting and losers' discontent. Does redistribution matter?*. Marco Fanno Working Papers 239. University of Padua.

Albertazzi, D., Giovannini, A., & Seddone, A. (2018). 'No regionalism please, we are *Leghisti*!' The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini. *Regional and Federal Studies, 28*(5), 645–671.

Albertazzi, D., & McDonnell, D. (2015). *Populists in power*. Routledge.

Anselmi, M. (2017). *Populism: An introduction*. Routledge.

Anselmi, M., & Blokker, P. (Eds.). (2020). *Multiple populisms: Italy as Democracy's Mirror*. Routledge.

Appel, R., Doehring, A., Helms, D., & Moore, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Song interpretation in 21st-century pop music*. Ashgate.

Arato, A. (2013). Political theology and populism. *Social Research, 80*(1), 143–172.

Aslanidis, P. (2016). Populist social movements of the great recession. *Mobilization: An. International Quarterly, 21*(3), 301–321.

Auslander, P. (2008). *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. Routledge.

Bakker, B., et al. (2021). Hot politics? Affective responses to political rhetoric. *American Political Science Review, 115*(1), 150–164.

Banti, C. A. (2020). *La democrazia dei followers*. Laterza.

Barbalet, J. (2006). Emotions in politics: From the ballot to suicide terrorism. In S. Clarke, P. Hoggett, & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Emotions, politics and society* (pp. 31–55). Palgrave.

Barker, C. (2004). *The SAGE dictionary of cultural studies*. Sage.

Bennett, J. (2001). *The enchantment of modern life: Attachments, crossings, and ethics*. Princeton University Press.

Bennett, T., et al. (Eds.). (1993). *Rock and popular music*. Routledge.

Ben-Ze'ev, A. (2000). *The subtlety of emotions*. The MIT Press.

Berezin, M. (2004). Secure states: Towards a political sociology of emotion. *The Sociological Review, 50*(2), 33–52.
Betz, H. G. (1994). *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe*. Macmillan.
Betz, H. G., & Johnson, C. (2004). Against the current - stemming the tide: The nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 9*(3), 311–327.
Betz, H. G., & Oswald, M. (2022). Emotional mobilization: The affective underpinnings of right-wing populist party support. In M. Oswald (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of populism* (pp. 115–143). Palgrave Macmillan.
Biancalana, C. (2019). Four Italian populisms. In I. P. Blokker & M. Anselmi (Eds.), *Multiple Populisms* (pp. 216–241). Routledge.
Bianchi, R. (2018). Istanbul sounding like revolution: The role of music in the Gezi Park occupy movement. *Popular Music, 37*(2), 212–236.
Biressi, A. (2020). President Trump: Celebrity-in-chief and the desecration of political authority. *Celebrity Studies, 11*(1), 125–139.
Blee, K. M., & Taylor, V. (2002). Semi-structured interviewing in social movement research. In B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds.), *Methods of social movement research* (pp. 92–117). University of Minnesota Press.
Bloor, M., et al. (2001). *Focus groups in social research*. Sage.
Bobba, G., & Roncarolo, F. (2018). The likeability of populism on social media in the 2018 Italian general election. *Italian Political Science, 13*(1), 51–62.
Bonansinga, D. (2020). Who thinks, feels. *The Relationship Between Emotions, Politics and Populism. Partecipazione e conflitto, 13*(1), 83–106.
Borghetto, E., & Lisi, M. (2017). Populism, blame shifting and the crisis: Discourse strategies in Portuguese political parties. *South European Society and Politics, 23*(4), 405–427.
Boyte, H. (2012). Populism—Bringing culture back in. *The Good Society, 21*(2), 300–319.
Brader, T. (2006). *Campaigning for hearts and minds: How emotional appeals in political ads work*. University of Chicago Press.
Brough, M., & Shrestova, S. (2010). Fandom meets activism: Rethinking civic and political participation. *Transformative Works and Cultures, 10*. https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0303
Brown, C. (2009). Bob Dylan, Live Aid, and the politics of popular cosmopolitanism. In D. Boucher & G. Browning (Eds.), *The political art of Bob Dylan*. Imprint.
Bull, M., & Rhodes, M. (Eds.). (1997). *Crisis and transition in Italian politics* (1st ed.). Routledge.
Bulli, G. (2020). The long evolution of extreme right music in Italy and Germany. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 207–231.
Caiani, M. (2020). Come misurare il populismo. *Polis, 24*(1), 151–164.
Caiani, M., & Graziano, P. (2016). Varieties of populism: Insights from the Italian case. *Italian Political Science Review, 46*(2), 243–267.

Caiani, M., & Graziano, P. (2019). Understanding populism in times of crises. *West European Politics, 42*(6), 1141–1158.
Caiani, M., & Graziano, P. (Eds.). (2021). *Varieties of populism in Europe in times of crises*. Routledge.
Campus, D. (2006). *L'antipolitica al governo*. Il Mulino.
Campus, D. (2020). Celebrity leadership. *When political leaders are stars. ComunicazionePolitica, 2*, 185–203.
Canovan, M. (1999). Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy. *Political Studies, 47*(1), 2–16.
Caruso, L. (2020). Populism and pop cultures: Podemos, the political use of music and the party as a 'pop product'. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 180–206.
Christiansen, P. (2018). *Orchestrating public opinion: How music persuades in television political ads for US presidential campaigns, 1952–2016*. Amsterdam University Press.
Coleman, E. (2010). Ethnographic approaches to digital media. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 39*, 487–505.
Collins, R. (2001). Social movements and the focus of emotional attention. In J. Goodwin, J. Jasper, & F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics* (pp. 27–44). University Chicago Press.
Collins, R. (2004). *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton University Press.
Corbetta, P., & Vignati, R. (2014). Direct democracy and scapegoats: The Five Star Movement and Europe. *The International Spectator, 49*(1), 53–64.
Cossarini, P., & Vallespín, F. (Eds.). (2019). *Populism and passions: Democratic legitimacy after austerity*. Routledge.
Crehan, K. (2011). Gramsci's concept of common sense: A useful concept for anthropologists? *Journal of Modern Italian Studies, 16*(2), 273–287.
Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and political engagement: Citizens, communication and democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
Danaher, W. (2010). Music and social movements. *Sociology Compass, 4*(9), 811–823.
De Cleen, B., & Naerland, T. (2016). Editors' introduction: Populist radical right parties and expressive culture in Europe. *JOMEC, 9*(1), 1–8.
De Vreese, C., et al. (2018). Populism as an expression of political communication content and style: A new perspective. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 23*(4), 423–438.
Dean, J. (2017). Politicising fandom. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 19*(2), 408–424.
Dei, F. (2016). *Cultura popolare in Italia. Da Gramsci all'Unesco*. Il Mulino.
Della Porta, D. (1995). *Social movements, political violence, and the state*. Cambridge University Press.

Della Porta, D. (2005). Deliberation in movement: Why and how to study deliberative democracy and social movements. *Acta Politica, 40*, 336–350.
Della Porta, D. (2014). Focus groups. In D. Della Porta (Ed.), *Methodological practices in social movements research* (pp. 289–307). Oxford University Press.
Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2020). *Social movements. An introduction* (3rd ed.). Blackwell.
Della Porta, D., & Pavan, E. (2017). Repertoires of knowledge practices: Social movements in times of crisis. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management, 12*(2), 297–314.
Denisoff, S. (1970). Protest songs: Those on the top forty and those of the streets. *American Quarterly, 22*(4), 807–823.
DeNora, T. (2000). *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press.
Diamanti, I., & Lazar, M. (2018). *Popolocrazia. La metamorfosi delle nostre democrazie*. Laterza.
Doehring, A. (2019). Group analysis workshop I: Basic ideas.. Unpublished Paper.
Doerr, N., & Millman, N. (2017). Working with images. In D. Della Porta (Ed.), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (pp. 418–445). Oxford University Press.
Doerr, N. Teune, S. & Mattoni, A. (Eds.) (2013). Advances in the visual analysis of social movements. .
Drew, R. (2005). 'Once more, with irony': Karaoke and social class. *Leisure Studies, 24*(4), 371–383.
Dunkel M., Barna, E., Caiani, M., Doehring A., Niederauer, M., Schiller, M. (2018). Popular music as a medium for the mainstreaming of populist ideologies in Europe.. Research Project (Full Proposal) financed by Volkswagen Foundation, Ref. 94 754-1.
Dunkel, M., & Schiller, M. (Eds.). (2022) (*forthcoming*)). *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.
Englert, B. (2008). Ambiguous relationships: Youth, popular music and politics in contemporary Tanzania. *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien, 14*(1), 71–96.
Eyerman, R., & Jamison, A. (1998). *Music and social movements.* Cambridge University Press.
Filc, D. (2010). *The political right in Israel: The many faces of Jewish populism*. Routledge.
Flacks, R. (1999, August). *Culture and social movements: Exploring the power of song*. Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, Chicago.
Flam, H., & King, D. (Eds.). (2005). *Emotions and social movements.* Routledge.
Flam, H., & Kleres, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Methods of exploring emotions.* Routledge.

Font, N., Graziano, P., & Tsakatika, M. (2021). Varieties of inclusionary populism? SYRIZA, Podemos and the Five Star Movement. *Government and Opposition, 56*(1), 163–183.

Franke, U., & Schilze, K. (2013). 'They Don't really care about us!' On political worldviews in popular music. *International Studies Perspectives, 14*(1), 39–55.

Freeden, M. (1998). Is nationalism a distinct ideology? *Political Studies, 46*(4), 748–765.

Freeman, J. (1986). The political culture of the democratic and republican parties. *Political Science Quarterly, 101*(3), 327–356.

Frith, S. (1988). Art ideology and pop practice. In L. Grossberg & C. Nelson (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. University of Illinois Press.

Frith, S. (2007). *Taking popular music seriously. Selected essays*. Ashgate.

Frith, S., Straw, W., & Street, J. (Eds.). (2001). *The Cambridge companion to pop and rock*. Cambridge University Press.

Gajser, T. (2008). Online focus groups. In I. Fielding et al. (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of online research methods* (pp. 290–307). Sage.

Garratt, J. (2017). *Music and politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Goodnow, T. (2006). On black panthers, blue ribbons, & peace signs: The function of symbols in social campaigns. *Visual Communication Quarterly, 13*(3), 166–179.

Goodwin, J., & Pfaff, S. (2001). Emotion work in high-risk social movements. In J. Goodwin, J. Jasper, & F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics. Emotions and social movements* (pp. 282–302). University of Chicago Press.

Graham, S. (2016). *Sounds of the underground: A cultural, political and aesthetic mapping of underground and fringe music*. University of Michigan Press.

Gramsci, A. (1977). *Quaderni del carcere, volume terzo*. Einaudi.

Gramsci, A. (1985). *Selections from the cultural writings*. Lawrence & Wishart.

Grossberg, L. (1987). Rock and roll in search of an audience. In J. Lull (Ed.), *Popular music and communication*. Sage.

Hall, S. (1981). Notes on deconstructing the popular. In R. Samuel (Ed.), *People's history and socialist theory* (pp. 227–240). Routledge.

Hall, S. (2003). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.

Hamdaoui, S. (2021). A "stylistic anti-populism": An analysis of the sardine movement's opposition to Matteo Salvini in Italy. *Social Movement Studies, 21*(4), 436–452. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.1899910

Harris, A. (2001). Dodging and waving: Young women countering the stories of youth and citizenship. *International Journal of Critical Psychology, 4*(2), 183–199.

Hawkins, K. (2010). *Venezuela's Chavismo and populism in comparative perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. Metheun & Co.
Hebert, D., & Kertz-Welzel, A. (2012). *Patriotism and nationalism in music education*. Ashgate.
Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in their own land*. New Press.
Holmes, M. (2004). Feeling beyond rules: Politicizing the sociology of emotion and anger in feminist politics. *European Journal of Social Theory, 7*(2), 209–227.
Huddy, L. (2013). From group identity to political cohesion and commitment. In L. Huddy, D. Sears, & J. Levy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political psychology* (pp. 737–773). Oxford University Press.
Hunger, S., & Paxton, F. (2022). What's in a buzzword? A systematic review of the state of populism research in political science. *Political Science Research and Methods, 10*(3), 617–633.
Hutnyk, J., & Sharma, S. (2000). Music and politics: An introduction. *Theory, Culture & Society, 17*(3), 55–63.
Hutter, S., & Kriesi, H. (Eds.). (2019). *European party politics in times of crisis*. Cambridge University Press.
Inglehart R. & Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash.. HKS Working Paper No. RWP16-026.
Ivaldi, G., Lanzone, M., & Woods, D. (2017). Varieties of populism across a left-right Spectrum: The case of the Front National, the Northern League, Podemos and Five Star Movement. *Swiss Political Science Review, 23*(4), 354–376.
Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research, 46*(3), 319–345.
Jansma, J. (2019). Culture in the name of the people? Towards a typology of populism and culture. *Debats: Journal on Culture, Power and Society, 4*, 119–132.
Jasper, J. (1998). The emotions of protest: Affective and reactive emotions in and around social movements. *Sociological Forum, 13*, 397–424.
Jasper, J. (2001). Emotions and social movements: Twenty years of theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology, 37*, 285–303.
Jenkins, H., et al. (2002). *Hop on pop: The politics and pleasures of popular culture*. Duke University Press.
Johnstone, B. (2002). *Discourse analysis*. Wiley.
Jordan, M. (2013). Obama's iPod: Popular music and the perils of Postpolitical populism, popular communication. *The International Journal of Media and Culture, 11*(2), 99–115.
Judis, J. (2016). The populist explosion: How the great recession transformed American and European politics.. Columbia Global Reports.

Kemper, T. (2001). A structural approach to social movement emotions. In J. Goodwin, J. Jasper, & F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics. Emotions and social movements* (pp. 58–73). University of Chicago Press.
Kendon, A. (1990). *Conducting interaction: Patterns of behavior in focused encounters*. Cambridge University Press.
Kenny, M. (2017). Back to the populist future? Understanding nostalgia in contemporary ideological discourse. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 22*(3), 256–273.
Kitschelt, H. (1995). *The radical right in Western Europe. A comparative analysis*. University of Michigan Press.
Klandermans, B., & Mayer, N. (2006). *Extreme right activists in Europe: Through the magnifying glass*. Routledge.
Knight, A. (1998). Populism and neo-populism in Latin America, especially Mexico. *Journal of Latin American Studies, 30*(2), 223–248.
Kølvraa, C., & Forchtner, B. (2019). Exploring cultural imaginaries of the extreme right: Aestheticization, hybridization and idealised subjectivities. *Patterns of Prejudice, 53*(3), 227–235.
Kooijman, J. (2013). *Fabricating the absolute fake: America in contemporary pop culture*. Amsterdam University Press.
Kresi, H. (2004). Political context and opportunity. In D. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 67–90). Wiley.
Kutschke, B., & Norton, B. (2013). *Music and protest in 1968*. Cambridge University Press.
Laclau, E. (2005). *La razón populista*. Fondo de Cultural Económica.
Lausevic, M. (1996). Illahiya as a symbol of Muslim Bosnian national identity. In M. Slobin (Ed.), *Returning culture: Musical changes in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 117–135). Duke University Press.
Lena, J., & Peterson, R. (2011). Politically purposed music genres. *The American Behavioral Scientist, 55*(5), 574–588.
Lerner, J. S., & Keltner, D. (2001). Fear, anger, and risk. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81*(1), 146–159.
Levi-Strauss, C. (1963). *Structural anthropology*. Basic Books.
Levitsky S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). How democracies die.. Crown.
Lichterman, P. (2002). Seeing structure happen: Theory-driven participant observation. In S. Staggenborg & B. Klandermans (Eds.), *Methods of social movements research* (pp. 118–145). University of Minnesota Press.
Lipsitz, G. (1994). *Dangerous crossroads: Popular music, postmodernism and the poetic of place*. Verso.
Lyngaard, K. (2019). Methodological challenges in the study of emotions in politics and how to deal with them. *Political Psychology, 40*(6), 1201–1215.
Maas, G., & Reszel, H. (1998). Whatever happened to…: The decline and renaissance of rock in the former GDR. *Popular Music, 17*(3), 267–277.

Magaudda, P. (2020). Populism, music and the media. The Sanremo festival and the circulation of populist discourses. *Partecipazione e conflitto, 13*(1), 132–153.
Magni, G. (2017). It's the emotions, stupid! Anger about the economic crisis, low political efficacy, and support for populist parties. *Electoral Studies, 50*, 91–102.
Mair, P. (2013). Populist democracy vs party democracy. In Y. Meny & Y. Surel (Eds.), *De-mocracies and the populist challenge* (pp. 81–98). Palgrave.
Maíz, R. (2011). The political mind and its other: Rethinking the non-place of passions in modern political theory. In M. Engelken-Jorge, P. Ibarra, & C. Moreno (Eds.), *Politics and emotions. The Obama phenomenon* (pp. 29–70). Verlag.
Maraszto, C. (2002). Sozialpolitische Wende? Zur Entwicklung des Rap im Senegal. *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien, 2*(4), 81–104.
Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 24*, 95–117.
Marcus, G. E. (2000). Emotions in politics. *Annual Review of Political Science, 2000*(3), 221–250.
Mazzoleni, G., & Bracciale, R. (2019). *La politica pop online. I meme e le nuove sfide della comunicazione politica*. Il Mulino.
Mazzoleni, G., & Sfardini, A. (2009). *Politica pop. Da «Porta a porta» a «L'isola dei famosi»*. Il Mulino.
Mazzoleni, G., et al. (2003). *The media and neo-populism: A contemporary comparative analysis*. New Publisher.
McCann, M. (1995). Music and politics in Ireland: The specificity of the folk revival in Belfast. *British Journal of Ethnomusicology, 4*(1), 51–75.
McCarthy, J., McAdam, D., & Zald, M. (Eds.). (1996). *Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*. Cambridge University Press.
McGuigan, J. (1992). *Cultural Populism*. Routledge.
Melucci, A. (1989). *Nomads of the present: Social movements and individual needs in contemporary society*. Hutchinson Radius.
Meny, Y., & Surel, Y. (Eds.). (2002). *Democracies and the populist challenges*. Springer.
Miller-Idriss, C. (2018). Youth and the radical right. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 348–365). Oxford University Press.
Moffitt, B. (2016). *The global rise of populism. Performance, political style, and representation*. Stanford University Press.
Moran, M., & Littler, J. (Eds.). (2020). Cultural populism. *Special issue of European Journal of Cultural Studies, 23*(6), 1.
Mosca, L., & Tronconi, F. (2019). Beyond left and right: The eclectic populism of the Five Star Movement. *West European Politics, 42*(6), 1258–1283.
Mudde, C. (2000). *The ideology of the extreme right*. Manchester University Press.

Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541–563.
Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
Mudde, C., & Rovira, C. (2017). *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2013). Exclusionary vs. inclusionary populism: Comparing contemporary Europe and Latin America. *Government and Opposition, 47*(2), 147–174.
Muller, J. W. (2016). *What is populism?* University of Pennsylvania Press.
Nærland, T. (2016). Right wing populism and hip hop music in Norway. *JOMEC Journal, 9*, 92–112.
Nærland, T. (2018). Fictional entertainment and public connection. Audiences and the everyday use of TV-series. *Television & New Media, 10*, e039832. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418796484
Nolan, D., & Brookes, S. (2016). The problems of populism: Celebrity politics and citizenship. *Communication Research and Practice, 4*(1), 349–361.
Nyairo, J., & Ogude, J. (2005). Popular music, popular politics: *Unbwogable* and the idioms of freedom in Kenyan popular music. *African Affairs, 104*, 225–249.
O'Flynn, J. (2007). National Identity and music in transition: Issues of authenticity in a global setting. In I. Biddle & V. Knight (Eds.), *Music, National Identity and the politics of location* (pp. 19–39). Ashgate.
Onyebadi, U. (2017). *Music as a platform for political communication*. IGI Global.
Ost, D. (2004). Politics as the mobilization of anger. Emotions in movements and in power. *European. Journal of Social Theory, 7*(2), 229–244.
Ostiguy, P. (2018). Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach. In P. Taggart, C. Rovira, P. Ochoa, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 73–97). Oxford University Press.
Ostiguy, P., Panizza, F., & Moffitt, B. (Eds.). (2021). *Populism in global perspective*. Routledge.
Oswald, M. (Ed.). (2022). *The Palgrave handbook of populism*. Palgrave Macmillan.
Paddock, J. (1997). Political culture and the partisan style of state party activists. *Publius, 27*(3), 127–132.
Padoan, E. (2020). *Anti-neoliberal populisms in comparative perspective. A Latinamericanization of southern Europe?* Routledge.
Padoan, E. (2022). *Populismo vs Sinistra. Il Movimento 5 Stelle da Beppe Grillo a Giuseppe Conte in prospettiva comparata*. Mimesis.
Panarari, M. (2020). Intellectuals and cultural populism. In M. Anselmi & P. Blokker (Eds.), *Multiple populisms: Italy as Democracy's Mirror* (pp. 148–163). Routledge.
Pappas, T. (2016). Are populist leaders "charismatic"? *The Evidence from Europe. Constellations, 23*(3), 378–390.

Patch, J. (2016). This is what democracy sounds like: Reflections on pop songs in the campaign. In E. Kasper & B. Schoening (Eds.), *You shook me all campaign long: Music in the 2016 presidential election and beyond*. University of North Texas Press.

Peddie, I. (2006). *The resisting muse: Popular music and social protest*. Ashgate.

Pieslak, J. (2015). *Radicalism and music: An introduction to the music cultures of al-Qa'ida, racist skinheads, Christian-affiliated radicals, and eco-animal rights militants*. Wesleyan University Press.

Pirro, A. (2018). The polyvalent populism of the 5 Star Movement. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies, 26*(4), 443–458.

Pivato, S. (2010). La storia leggera. L'uso politico della storia nella canzone italiana. .

Polletta, F. (2006). *It was like a fever: Storytelling in protest and politics*. University of Chicago Press.

Prins, A. (2020). Analysing celebrity politics from Obama to Trump. *Celebrity Studies, 11*(1), 504–507.

Richardson, J. (2019). British fascism, fascist culture, British culture. *Patterns of Prejudice, 53*(3), 236–252.

Rico, G., Guinjoan, M., & Anduiza, E. (2017). The emotional underpinnings of populism: How anger and fear affect populist attitudes. *Swiss Political Science Review, 23*(4), 444–461.

Riley, S., et al. (2010). The case for 'Everyday Politics': Evaluating neo-tribal theory as a Way to understand alternative forms of political participation, using electronic dance music culture as an example. *Sociology, 44*, 345–365.

Roberts, K. (2017). Variedades de Capitalismo y Subtipos de Populismo: Las Bases Estructurales de la Divergencia Política. *Revista SAAP, 11*(2), 225–240.

Rodrik, D. (2018). Populism and the economics of globalization. *Journal of International Business Policy, 1*(2), 12–33.

Rojek, C. (2001). *Celebrity*. Reaktion Books.

Rolston, B. (2001). This is not a rebel song: The Irish conflict and popular music. *Race & Class, 42*(3), 49–67.

Rooduijn, M., & Akkerman, T. (2017). Flank attacks: Populism and left-right radicalism in Western Europe. *Party Politics, 23*(3), 193–204.

Rooduijn, M., & Pauwels, T. (2011). Measuring populism: Comparing two methods of content analysis. *West European Politics, 34*(6), 1272–1283.

Roodujin, M., Van Kessel, S., Froio, C., Pirro, A., De Lange, S., Halikiopoulou, D., Lewis, P., Mudde, C. & Taggart, P. (2019) The PopuList: An overview of populist, far right, far left and Eurosceptic parties in Europe.. www.popu-list.org.

Rose, T. (1994). *Black noise: Rap music and black culture in contemporary America*. Wesleyan University Press.

Rosenstone, R. (1969). The times they are A-Changin': The music of protest. *The Annals of the American Academy, 382*, 131–144.

Rosenthal, B., & Flacks, B. (2012). *Playing for change: Music and musicians in the Service of Social Movements*. Paradigm Publishers.

Rovira, C., et al. (Eds.). (2017). *The Oxford handbook of populism*. Oxford University Press.

Ruzza, C., & Fella, S. (2009). *Re-inventing the Italian right: Territorial politics, populism and 'post-fascism'*. Routledge.

Rydgren, J. (2003). Meso-level reasons for racism and xenophobia: Some converging and diverging effects of radical right populism in France and Sweden. *European Journal of Social Theory, 6*(1), 45–68.

Rydgren, J. (2005). Is extreme right-wing populism contagious? Explaining the emergence of a new party family. *European Journal of Political Research, 44*(3), 413–437.

Rydgren, J. (2007). The sociology of the radical right. *Annual Reviews of Sociology, 33*, 241–262.

Salmela, M., & Von Scheve, C. (2018). Emotional dynamics of right- and left-wing political populism. *Humanity and Society, 42*(4), 434–454.

Savonardo, L. (1999). *Nuovi linguaggi musicali a Napoli. Il rock, il rap e le posse*. Oxiana.

Savonardo, L. (2010). Sociologia della musica: la costruzione sociale del suono dalle tribù al digitale. .

Schoening, B., & Kasper, E. (2012). *Don't stop thinking about the music: The politics of songs and musicians in presidential campaigns*. Lexington Books.

Schumpeter, J. (1942). *Capitalism*. Socialism and Democracy.

Searles, K., & Ridout, T. (2011). It's my campaign I'll cry if I want to: How and when campaigns use emotional appeals. *Political Psychology, 32*(3), 439–458.

Serra, I. (2011). Teaching Italy through its music. The meaning of music in Italian cultural history. *Italica, 88*(1), 94–114.

Shekovtsov, A. (2009). Apoliteic music: Neo-folk, martial industrial and 'metapolitical fascism'. *Pattern of Prejudice, 43*(5), 431–457.

Shekovtsov, A. (2013). European far-right music and its enemies. In R. Wodak & J. Richardson (Eds.), *Analysing fascist discourse* (pp. 287–306). Routledge.

Shepherd, J. (2012). Music and social categories. In M. Clayton, T. Herbert, & R. Middleton (Eds.), *The cultural study of music. A critical introduction* (pp. 239–248). Routledge.

Sindic, D., & Condor, S. (2014). Social identity theory and self categorization theory. In P. Nesbitt-Larking et al. (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of global political psychology* (pp. 39–54). Palgrave Macmillan.

Song, H. (2017). Why do people (sometimes) become selective about news? The role of emotions and partisan differences in selective approach and avoidance. *Mass Communications and Society, 20*(1), 47–67.

Spaziante, L. (2016). *Icone pop*. Mondadori.

Stanley, B. (2008). The thin ideology of populism. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 13*(1), 95–110.
Stavrakakis, Y. (2017). Discourse theory in populism research. *Journal of Language and Politics, 16*(4), 523–534.
Stavrakakis, Y. (2020). *The people is an empty signifier*. A discussion between Yannis Stavrakakis and Lorenzo Zamponi, POPULISMUS interventions no. 6. http://www.populismus.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/intervention-6-stavrakakis.pdf
Stavrakakis, Y., & Jaeger, A. (2017). Accomplishments and limitations of the 'new' mainstream in contemporary populism studies. *European Journal of Social Theory, 21*(4), 547–565.
Stein, A. (2001). Revenge of the shamed: The Christian Right's emotional culture war. In J. Goodwin, J. Jasper, & F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics. Emotions and social movements* (pp. 115–134). University of Chicago Press.
Storey, J. (2012). *Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction*. Pearson.
Street, J. (1986). Rebel rock: The politics of popular music. .
Street, J. (2001). Rock, pop and politics. In J. Street, S. Frith, & W. Straw (Eds.), *Pop and rock*. Cambridge University Press.
Street, J. (2004). Celebrity politicians: Popular culture and political representation. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 6*(4), 435–452.
Street, J. (2013). *Music and politics*. Wiley.
Street, J. (2014). Music as political communication. In K. Kenski & K. Jameson (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political communication*. Oxford University Press.
Street, J. (2019). What is Donald Trump? Forms of 'celebrity' in celebrity politics. *Political Studies Review, 17*(1), 3–13.
Street, J., Inthorn, S., & Scott, M. (2012). Popular culture as a resource for political engagement. *Cultural Sociology, 7*(3), 336–351.
Street, J., Inthorn, S., & Scott, M. (2014). *From entertainment to citizenship. Politics and popular culture*. Manchester University Press.
Street, J., et al. (2008). Playing to the crowd: The role of music and musicians in political participation. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 10*(2), 269–285.
Summers Effler, E. (2010). *Laughing saints and righteous heroes: Emotional rhythms in social movement groups*. University Chicago Press.
Taggart, P. (2000). *Populism*. Open University Press.
Taggart, P., & Rovira, C. (2016). Dealing with populists in government: A framework for analysis. *Democratization, 23*(2), 201–220.
Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relation* (pp. 7–24). Hall Publishers.
Tarrow, S. (1989). *Democracy and disorder: Protest and politics in Italy, 1965–1975*. Oxford University Press.

Taylor, T. (1995). When we think about music and politics: The case of Kevin Volans. *Perspectives of New Music, 33*(1/2), 504–536.
Taylor, T. (1997). *Global pop: World music, world markets*. Routledge.
Taylor, V. (2000). Emotions and identity in Women's self-help movements. In S. Stryker, T. Owens, & R. White (Eds.), *Self, identity, and social movements* (pp. 271–299). University of Minnesota Press.
Tomatis, J. (2019). *Storia culturale della canzone italiana*. Il Saggiatore.
Tomlinson, A., & Clift, B. (Eds.). (2021). *Populism in sport, leisure, and popular culture*. Routledge.
Valentino, N., Brader, T., Groenendyk, E., Gregorowicz, K., & Hutchings, W. (2011). Election night's alright for fighting: The role of emotions in political participation. *Journal of Politics, 73*, 156–170.
Van Zoonen, L. (2005) Entertaining the citizen: When politics and popular culture converge. .
Varriale, S. (2016). *Globalization, music and cultures of distinction. The rise of pop music criticism in Italy*. Palgrave.
Verbeek, B., & Zaslove, A. (2016). Italy: A case of mutating populism? *Democratization, 23*(2), 304–323.
Vitali, G. P. (2020). *Voices of dissent: Interdisciplinary approaches to new Italian popular and political music*. Peter Lang.
Wagner, M. (2014). Fear and anger in Great Britain: Blame assignment and emotional reactions to the financial crisis. *Political Behavior, 36*(3), 683–703.
Wall, T. (2003). Studying popular music culture. .
Walser, R. (1993). *Running with the devil.* University Press of New England.
Way, L. (2016). Protest music, populism, politics and authenticity. The limits and potential of popular music's articulation of subversive politics. *Journal of Language and Politics, 15*(4), 422–445.
Way, L. (2019). Discourse, music and political communication: Towards a critical approach. *Journal of Language and Politics, 18*(4), 475–490.
Weber, R. (1990). *Basic content analysis*. Sage.
Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics. *Comparative Politics, 34*(1), 1–22.
Weyland, K. (2021). Populism as a political strategy: An Approach's enduring — And increasing — Advantages'. *Politics and Society, 69*(2), 185–189.
Wicke, P., & Shepherd, J. (1993). The cabaret is dead'. Rock culture as state enterprise – The political organisation of rock in East Germany. In T. Bennett, S. Frith, L. Grossberg, J. Shepherd, & G. Turner (Eds.), *Rock and popular music. Politics, policies, institutions* (pp. 25–36). Routledge.
Williams, R. (1981). *Culture*. Fontana.
Wirz, D. (2018). Persuasion through emotion? An experimental test of the emotion-eliciting nature of populist communication. *International Journal of Communication, 2018*(12), 1114–1138.

Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean*. Sage.
Yinger, M. (1960). Contraculture and subculture. *American Sociological Review, 25*(5), 625–635.
Zanatta, L. (2002). *Il populismo*. Carocci.
Zizek, S., Butler, J., & Laclau, E. (2000). *Contingency, hegemony, universality*. Verso.
Zulianello, M. (2020). Varieties of populist parties and Party Systems in Europe: From state-of-the-art to the application of a novel classification scheme to 66 parties in 33 countries. *Government and Opposition, 55*(2), 327–347.
Zulianello, M., Albertini, A., & Ceccobelli, D. (2018). A populist *zeitgeist*? The communication strategies of Western and Latin American political leaders on Facebook. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 23*(4), 439–457.

CHAPTER 2

Populism and (Pop) Music: Multiple Opportunity Structures in Italy

There may be several (institutional, political, cultural and music-market) opportunities in the Italian context, which can influence the link between populism and pop music, either directly or indirectly.

AU2

Indeed, the literature on collective action has emphasized that levels and forms of mobilization by social movements, interest groups and citizens' initiatives are strongly influenced by the so-called political and cultural opportunities (or opportunity structure, i.e. POS and COS), namely, the set of opportunities and constraints that are offered by the institutional-political structure and political culture of the political system in which these groups operate (Tarrow, 1994).[1] The concept has been conceptualized mainly looking at the degree of 'closure/openness' of a political system (e.g. in terms of electoral system, degree of centralization, configuration of power between allies and opponents), as well as in terms of more inclusive or exclusive cultural contexts vis-à-vis the challengers (e.g. the political culture of the elites, the way authorities manage collective action). In addition, social movement scholars also emphasize the importance of other contextual characteristics for the spread of specific messages, the 'cultural and discursive opportunities' that determine what kind of ideas become visible for the public, resonate with public opinion and are held to

[1] For a detailed review of the literature on the concept of POS and its operationalization, see Meyer (2004).

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3_2

be "'legitimate" by the audience' (Kriesi, 2004, 72). Instrumentally, or because of their own culture, political actors would tend to make their discourses resonant in the populations they wish to address, by bridging (that is, linking) their own traditional frames with those present in the environment (Snow et al., 1986).

From these perspectives, and focusing on the nexus between populism and music, we therefore look in this chapter at the political, cultural and—we can add to the end of the topic of this book—'music market' (Dunkel et al., 2018) opportunities available for populist and populist messages in Italy, in order to contextualize and better understand the potential mainstreaming of populism through (pop) music, as well as comparing Italy with other European countries (Dunkel & Schiller, 2022, forthcoming). For example, we could hypothesize that the criticism of the political class can have a great resonance in the public domain, and also in the popular culture one (within a context where the wounds of the political scandals of the early 1990s have not yet been healed).[2] At the same time, a resonance of all the three recent crises (economic, political and immigration related), to which usually is linked the 'boom' of populism in Europe in the last two decades (Caiani, 2019), might be expected to be found in pop music productions, since Italy has been sharply hurt by all of them.

2.1 Music-Market Opportunity Structure in Italy

Consumption of Music

Who creates, distributes and listens to pop music in Italy? According to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry's 2019 Global Music Report, a report on the 19 largest national music markets, 59% of Italians identified themselves as 'music fanatics', slightly above the global average (57%). On average, Italians spent more than 16 hours per week listening to music, and they report listening to pop (63%, in line with the global average), Italian pop (61%),[3] rock (54%, in line with the global

[2] Differently for instance than other countries, where an ethno-cultural conception of citizenship and national identity prevails (Koopmans et al., 2005), which might offer a particularly favourable context for xenophobic frames.

[3] This is also confirmed by several reports by FIMI (the Italian Federation of Phonographic Industry). As reported by Antonelli (2015), "at the top of Italians' preferences there is our own pop" (*musica pop di casa nostra*).

average) and singer-songwriters (49%, more than double the global average). Most who listen to this latter category are over 35 years old; hip-hop/trap listeners are mostly under 24 years old. Ninety percent of the Italian sample listen to music on-demand, but even more listen to music on the radio (94%, the second highest national average of countries included in the report).

As elsewhere in the world, live concerts and events are the lifeblood of the Italian music industry. According to *Assomusica* (the Italian federation of promoters and organizers of live music events),[4] revenue from ticket sales reached 589 million USD in 2018, making Italy the sixth biggest national market in the world (although there is a certain tendency of decline in terms of attendance, compensated by the rise of ticket prices). By comparison, revenue from CD sales and legal streaming and downloads totalled 228 million euros in the same year (63% of that figure is represented by digital products, compared to 32% in 2012).[5] Besides concerts, music festivals also generate big crowds and sales in Italy. For example, the pop-rock festival *Heiniken Jammin' Festival* (last held in 2012) drew over 100,000 attendees in 2010,[6] and *Home Festival* boasted 90,000 attendees in 2017,[7] the "indie" festival *Arezzo Wave* attracted half a million ticket-holders between 2004 and 2016 (100,000 in 2017),[8] the folk music festival *Notte de la Taranta* in Apulia drew roughly 700,000 participants in 2017[9] and the traditional *Concerto del Primo Maggio* ("Mayday Festival"), held annually in Rome and organized by the three largest trade unions, is consistently well attended.

[4] http://meiweb.it/2019/07/04/assomusica-unanalisi-dei-dati-sul-live-nellultimo-anno-in-italia/

[5] https://www.hdblog.it/2019/04/03/mercato-musicale-italia-streaming-download-2018/

[6] https://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/2011/06/11/news/flop_festival-17527790/

[7] Data from CISET (2017) (https://www.confcommercio.it/documents/20126/485949/Rapporto+sulle+ricadute+degli+eventi+culturali+e+di+spettacolo.pdf/146d6f67-62aa-0f0f-3e3d-7f49244dc5b0?version=1.1&t=1568883725626)

[8] https://www.arezzowave.com/arezzo-wave-1999/

[9] Data from CISET (2017) (https://www.confcommercio.it/documents/20126/485949/Rapporto+sulle+ricadute+degli+eventi+culturali+e+di+spettacolo.pdf/146d6f67-62aa-0f0f-3e3d-7f49244dc5b0?version=1.1&t=1568883725626)

The Radio Market

Radio remains the most popular way to listen to music in Italy. Of the 21 national radio stations operating in Italy, five are state-owned (by the public company RadioRai), and the rest belong to private groups. In some cases, private radio stations belong to media conglomerates, which also own television and newspaper outlets: Silvio Berlusconi's *Fininvest* owns Radio 101, Radio 105, Virgin Radio[10] and Radio Orbital; *Gruppo GEDI*, which owns Radio Deejay, Radio Capital and M2O, also controls major centre-left, liberal newspapers and magazines, such as *Repubblica* and *L'Espresso*; the peak employers' association *Confindustria* owns the newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore* and Radio 24. According to the 2018 TER[11] Report, 35 million Italians listen to radio, and the three most popular radio stations in 2018 were Rtl 102.5 (7.9 million listeners), Rds (5.5 million listeners) and Radio Italia (5 million listeners). Although state-owned radios are relevant players, most of the top ten most popular radio stations are privately owned (e.g. Radio Deejay, Virgin Radio, Radio 105). In addition, there are several important local radio stations that sometimes even reach the first position, in terms of listeners, at the *regional* level (e.g. RadioKissKiss in Campania, RadioNorba in Puglia e Basilicata, Subasio in Umbria and Marche, RadioBruno in Emilia-Romagna).

The radio market appears quite competitive, and the main public and private actors have undergone only minor changes since the 1990s, when the distribution of radio frequencies was fully liberalized (Tomatis, 2019). In contrast, until the mid-1970s, the state-owned Rai station had a de facto monopoly on Italian airwaves, and it limited the broadcast of pop music—whatever the definition—in favour of more highbrow music (Sibilla, 2003). Beginning in the 1970s, independent radio stations mushroomed, and private stations, typically focused on commercial pop and dance music, gradually acquired a greater portion of the Italian radio market in the 1980s. Public radio stations (whose broadcasts became more and more similar to the private ones) lost their monopolistic role while still remaining relevant actors.

Most Italian radio stations follow mainstream criteria in selecting music to broadcast (e.g. relying on the 'top 40' format [Frith, 1978] and using the software *Selector* [Fenati, 1993]) and, following the high popularity of

[10] Virgin Radio is not related to the Virgin record label.

[11] TER is a private society created by the largest Italian radio stations for the purpose of gathering and publishing data about radio ratings; https://www.tavoloeditoriradio.it/

radio stations such as *Radio Italia—Only Italian Music*, increased the amount of Italian music after an initial period during which Anglo-Saxon pop was played the most (Tomatis, 2019). These considerations match with the very high and quite intergenerational popularity enjoyed by Italian pop music among Italian listeners, thus making such genre extremely relevant for the goal of understanding how political messages may be reproduced through the specific forms of popular culture. Since the 1990s, Italian pop songs (even songs related to the Sanremo Festival; see below) have lost some of their melodic and traditional characteristics and become more similar to international pop (Liperi, 2011, 557).

Listening to Pop Music on TV: The Sanremo Festival

The *Sanremo Festival* is the ideal-typical Italian pop music event. Though it debuted in 1951, the festival was first televised in 1955. Italian musicologists generally consider the Sanremo Festival (simply 'Sanremo') to be the main agent that shaped the prototypical Italian pop song (*canzone italiana*) (e.g. Agostini, 2013; Borgna, 1985; Liperi, 2011; Tomatis, 2019). It typifies an invented tradition that is continuously reinvented in different epochs and influenced by political developments (ibid.).

In fact, Sanremo's songs have shaped and become part of what is known as a 'national-popular' repertoire, which (many leftist) commentators have long equated with 'low culture', implicitly or explicitly following Adorno's critiques of mass culture and its depoliticizing effects. In one of "the most anti-populist [books] ever published in Italy" (Dei, 2016), Pier Paolo Pasolini in 1969 dubbed the Sanremo songs "poor, stupid things" (*povere idiozie*) and complained, "there are protests against how expensive [tickets] for the festival [are]… what is really disgusting is that, if they could afford the ticket, they would attend it… everyone. Workers, students, rich and poor people, intellectuals and farm hands" (quoted in Campus, 2015, 61–62). In this sense, the festival has captured viewers from all walks of life, even if intellectuals tend to adopt filters of sarcasm and irony when discussing the performances (ibid.). The festival's pervasiveness supports Gundle's (1995) claim that Sanremo is "a central element of that conservative mass culture that was the real carrier of the Italian cultural unification", and that Communists paradoxically won the battle for the hegemony of "high culture" (see also Battista, 1995) while losing the battle for the hegemony of "low culture"—a finding that the Berlusconi era would further vindicate (Dei, 2011).

Between the 1950s and mid-1960s, the songs of Sanremo fell into two categories: melodramatic songs, which were derived from the nineteenth-century Italian operas, and cheerful and carefree songs that sometimes even ventured into the satirical. Both categories were "based on the idea of a kind of light music that was easily accessible, moralizing and decent, and that sought a balance between the national-popular tradition and the modern pro-American trend" (Agostini, 2013, 29) and fully in line with the cultural policies of the Christian-Democrat party that was popular in Italy after the war. Umberto Eco (1964) defined Sanremo's music as "gastronomic songs […] supposed to be background music", which can also be "one of the most efficient means for the ideological coercion of citizens" (Eco, 1964, 278–284). In the later 1960s, Sanremo gradually became less central to the Italian pop music scene, and the new songwriters and alternative prog-rock scene gained popularity during the hyper-politicized 1970s (Tomatis, 2019).

In the early 1980s, Sanremo modified its format to adapt to the needs and expectations of its television audience and once again became *the* Italian pop music event and reclaimed its position at the centre of cultural production (despite the popularity of talent shows since the early 2000s). In its more recent incarnation, the Sanremo Festival has introduced music-related issues into Italian political debates and the public sphere, polarizing public opinion (and sometimes even political parties): debates range from discussion about the quality of the songs and alleged "obscenities" in some performances to the presence of controversial guests (such as Eminem's 2001 appearance, which prompted some censorship[12]) and more political topics (such as disagreements between the 'elite' jury and the 'popular vote',[13] and downright scandals like the League leader Salvini directing allegedly xenophobic remarks towards the rapper Mahmood, the Italian-Egyptian winner of the 2019 festival).

However, the multifaceted relationship between Sanremo and the political sphere is not a recent development (Borgna, 1985; Campus, 2015). Even in the festival's second year, the top two songs, both interpreted by Nilla Pizzi, touched politically sensitive issues: nationalism/irredentism (the question of Trieste: *Vola colomba*) and a less than subtle

[12] Corriere della Sera, 27 February 2001: https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Spettacoli/02_Febbraio/27/eminem.shtml

[13] See the statements of Luigi Di Maio (leader of the Five Star Movement) during the Sanremo Festival of 2019.

satirical critique of the ruling Christian Democrats (*Papaveri e Papere*). In 1957, a post-fascist representative denounced the 'outrageous' behaviour of the (Communist Party-affiliated) star Claudio Villa at Sanremo to parliament. In the 1960s, the singer Adriano Celentano provoked both conservatives (in 1961 with his 'scandalous' performance of a song titled *24.000 baci*—'24,000 kisses' in English) and progressives (in 1969, when he sang *Chi non lavora non fa l'amore* / 'Those who don't work don't make love', at the apex of workers' strikes). Rai has intervened as recently as 1996 to demand modifications to the lyrics of a song addressing homosexuality, while other songs touching the issue were presented throughout the two last decades—in one case describing a case of 'rediscovered heterosexuality' (Povia, *Luca era gay*).

Politicians also have a long history of directly intervening in the festival to select singers, contest the voting system and complain about speakers. In 1962, two well-known actors were censored because of their speech attacking a major Christian Democrat politician; more recently, in 2002, some conservative journalists campaigned to boycott Roberto Benigni's speech. In 2000, the centre-right coalition (at the time in the opposition) strongly criticized Italian rapper Jovanotti for arguing for debt relief in developing countries; the following day, an Italian comic presented a humorous rap celebrating Silvio Berlusconi.

The Contemporary Pop Scene

Contemporary Italian pop music is sometimes considered "de-politicized" or "non-political" compared to earlier eras and the international pop music scene; some go so far as to argue that in Italy, "pop artists are afraid of debating political issues in their production" (Rennis, 2019, 15), contrary to artists in other countries (like the USA or the UK), where famous artists actively take sides in the political debate. In Italy, popular political music is often associated with the 1970s (ibid., 17), whereas contemporary political music is considered to be confined to 'indie' productions, which rarely top charts or gain mass appeal. However, indie productions are not necessarily so marginal or niche (Sibilla, 2003; Tomatis, 2019).

The Italian music industry has been dominated, particularly since the 1990s, by the local (Italian) branches of the so-called majors (Sony, Warner and Universal), which occupy more than 70% of the market (Longo, 2014). However, the remaining portion is made of independent productions, although there is a huge internal variation within such 'indie'

category. Some indies, like Sugar (led by Caterina Caselli, teen pop idol from the 1960s), are small majors with huge financial capacities, but most still rely on the majors for distribution.[14] Still other indies are owned by major artists who also become producers. To add complexity, 'indie' label is often more associated to an anti-mainstream genre than to a particular, cohesive segment of the music industry.

In addition to indie artists, many Italian pop artists have also taken part in recent political debates, endorsed politicians and political campaigns and made their views known (e.g. speaking out about the 2016 constitutional referendum or the migratory crisis). Given the intricacies of the industry and its complicated past, defining the contemporary Italian pop music as "non-political" or "apolitical" is dubious (Tomatis, 2019), even if the industry is less ideologically oriented and openly militant than it was in the 1970s.

The contemporary Italian pop music scene offers more space for left-wing and/or populist cultural products than for right-wing ones, but that was not always the case. During Sanremo's dip in popularity during the mid-1960s and 1970s, other festivals and, crucially, rock music began to redefine the Italian pop song. In the early 1970s, the term pop music (which was not initially adopted to classify Italian *canzone*) actually denoted Italian rock/prog music deriving from Anglo-Saxon countries, to partially include 'Italian songwriters' (*cantautori*) (Tomatis, 2019). During that hyper-political era, the *cantautori* were considered somewhat 'moderate' and 'bourgeois', as opposed to the folk-revivalists and 'alternative' rock groups that deeply influenced the nascent academic field of Italian musicology (for example, musicologists such as Roberto Leydi, Michele Straniero, Luigi Manconi and Franco Fabbri came from extra-parliamentary leftist and folk or alternative rock milieus: see Liperi, 2011, Tomatis, 2019). However, in the following decades, the *cantautori* movement defined, in the eyes of the broader public, what the *canzone impegnata* ('politicized song') is (Tomatis, 2014) and influenced even less

[14] The dominance of the majors (and of the private market in general) was also supported by the draconian cuts to the *Fondo Unico dello Spettacolo* (a ministerial fund) over the last two decades; the fund now distributes slightly more than 300 million euros to the *entire* cultural industry. By comparison, "in 2009, the turnover of the Italian music industry was about €2.7 billion, increasing to €3.7 billion if one also considers the sale of musical instruments, audio consumer electronics and transcriptions […] much higher than that of cinema (€0.66bn) and videogames (€1.1bn), while lower than the value of books (€3.4bn) and television (€3.9bn)" (D'Amato, 2013: 73).

politically engaged pop musicians since the 1980s, when the milieu became less hotly politicized and the divisions between international music, pop music and *canzone d'autore* blurred (Liperi, 2011, 449–450; 558). In sum, the heritage of *cantautori* inevitably has an influence over the main ideological values that 'can be sung', even in an era when explicitly political contents in the mainstream pop became rarer (also *because* of the very high 'quality standard' set by *cantautori*—said otherwise, writing 'political songs' has become particularly challenging, because of the recognized artistic benchmark set in the past). While the significant influence of (high quality and in general left wing oriented in terms of content) *cantautori* (i.e. songwriters) on the Italian pop music of the past makes less probable that the contemporary scene lends itself to spread right-wing/conservative ideologies, other forms of music-cultural heritage (for example artists and songs focusing on depicting hyper-Italian stereotyped characteristics and commonsensical social critiques)[15] instead maybe serve as a basis for populist and/or anti-political (i.e. generally critical of politicians) messages.

The cultural meta-narratives about Italy and Italians are generally compatible with current populist messaging (see our analysis in Chap. 4). Italians tend to portray themselves as 'good, generous people' (often in very familistic tones) and simultaneously as 'bad citizens, inattentive to the common goods, devoted to frivolous things, and/or to the private sphere' (e.g. Putnam et al., 1993; see also Tomatis, 2019, 558). Hit pop songs (especially from the 1980s) objectified these depictions (Martinelli, 2013), like in Toto Cutugno's *L'italiano*, which pairs conceptualizations of national identity with urban versus rural divides and inter-regional cleavages. These patterns could easily be deployed to sow division between 'the people' and 'politicians' (for instance, by emphasizing the positive traits of the former and excusing them for the problems of the country, which 'politicians' should be blamed for) or to promote other populist sentiments.

Italian pop music continues to reinvent itself, taking different forms. The hip-hop/rap (and, much more recently, trap) scene has come to represent different political orientations (Tomatis, 2019). Although rap in Italy was associated with left-wing squatters and social movements in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a later 'commercial' version emerged from entirely different, middle-class, urban roots (Jovanotti and J-Ax, for

[15] For example, Toto Cutugno (*L'italiano*), Mino Reitano (*Italia, Italia*) and the more recent Franco Battiato (*Povera Patria)* and Edoardo Bennato (*Sono solo canzonette*); see also Tomatis, 2019 and Adriano Celentano (Prato, 2013).

instance). This second sub-genre gained popularity and became associated with centre-left, pacifist and anti-prohibitionist movements (Liperi, 2011; Rennis, 2019). Since 2000, a still newer generation of rappers emerged—sometimes clearly leftist, such as Caparezza, sometimes less ideologized and keener to focus on generational issues, such as Fabri Fibra—with harsher, more provocative lyrics and styles, and gave voice to the anti-system sentiments of younger generations (Liperi, 2011, Rennis, 2019). This generation of rappers has recently come up beside (albeit not replaced by) the trap movement, whose most promising artists are often drafted by the most important phonographic firms and whose production is characterized by individualistic, hedonistic and sometimes nihilistic imageries that would be quite erroneous to define 'anti-systemic' (and that still lend themselves to a plethora of contrasting political affordances).

In sum, the Italian pop music scene offers more opportunities for progressive or populist messages (although those categories are not mutually exclusive) than for exclusionary populist themes (Tomatis, our interview). It is very difficult to find examples of artists or songs promoting, for instance, overtly xenophobic and discriminatory messages. However, many songs implicitly reproduce conservative tropes, like family values. Nevertheless, artists who endorse right-wing politicians are rare, reflecting a historically informed cordon sanitaire. As discussed in Chap. 4, right-wing politicians often exploit this orientation through populist attacks on cultural leftism/elitism (and explicitly link the two concepts). Despite—or perhaps because of—pressure from all sides of the political spectrum, Italian 'pop music opportunity structures' do not prevent artists from adopting antagonistic repertoires that clearly recall populist frames.[16]

2.2 Political Opportunities

Italy can be considered a laboratory for populism's—or populisms'—success (Cremonesi et al., 2019; Verbeek & Zaslove, 2016). Since the 1990s, many social scientists have considered the country to be a populist paradise (Tarchi, 2015) because of its long history of populists' presence

[16] To be clear, recalling populist frames is not the same as endorsing populist parties. As we will show in Chap. 5, the Five Star Movement was able to attract implicit or explicit endorsements from several major pop singers during the past years. However, many singers downplayed their support when the party began articulating controversial, conservative positions (and gaining electoral popularity), and several claimed that they regretted supporting the Five Star Movement after its alliance with the League.

(Roodujin et al., 2019) and variety of populist groups (i.e. left-wing, right-wing and even centrist organizations; Verzichelli & Castaldo, 2020). Within Western Europe, Italy is an outlier in terms of popular support for and diversity of populist parties. However, common explanations of populism do not fully account for the anomalous Italian experience, while country-specific studies often overemphasize anecdotical evidence.

In Italy, the far-right has been ostracized but is represented in Parliament (Ignazi, 1989). In contrast to right-wing groups in other European countries, the Italian radical right reintegrated into the political system shortly after the end of World War II, with the speedy legitimization of the fascist party, Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), and the inclusion of its descendants (including the National Alliance, or AN) in government since 1994.

Populist groups have been located across the entire Italian political spectrum (Caiani & Graziano, 2016; Panarari, 2020). Historically, parties and movements have sought to break with the political status quo, as was the case for Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, which emerged in 1994 as a right-wing populist phenomenon following the collapse of the corrupt former party system of the so-called First Republic (Hamdaoui, 2021). Even the mainstream, centre-left Partito Democratico (PD) underwent a populist phase when Matteo Renzi was prime minister and secretary of the party (Hamdaoui, 2021). Among contemporary populist parties, the League's right-wing orientation is uncontroversial, but the 5SM's position is less certain (many, but not all, comparative studies designate it as a left-wing party) (Font et al., 2021); the 5SM's ideology is ambiguous, eclectic and mutating (e.g. Verbeek & Zaslove, 2016), and it is sometimes referred to as 'hybrid' or 'valence' populism (Zulianello, 2020), as it is in this book.

After the Five Star Movement's astonishing electoral debut in 2013 (with 27% of the vote), it claimed 32% of the vote in 2018. That year, the League (it retired the name 'Northern League' in 2017) renewed its core ideology and leadership[17] and achieved an unprecedented 17% of the vote (and 34% in the 2019 European elections) (Biorcio & Natale, 2018), thereby confirming its full recovery (for further details see Vassallo & Shin, 2019). Together, the two parties formed an all-populist government, an acme of populism for Italian politics. After the coalition dissolved in 2019

[17] In the 2013 parliamentary elections—i. e. one of the two national elections comprised in our time frame of analysis, 2009–2018—the League barely reached 4% of the votes, at that time experiencing a deep crisis of legitimacy of its former leadership, mostly because of budget misappropriation scandals (Caiani & Padoan, 2020).

and the 5SM allied with the PD, the 5SM faced a sharp and steady electoral decline, while Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Lega, became the main figure of populist politics in Italy (ibid.), both offline and online, and increased the personalist characteristics of the party. Since the breakdown of the party system of the first fifty years of the republic, Italian populists established deep roots in the political milieu, and their popularity has increased almost monotonically (ibid.). This sets a clear context of *favourable discursive, beyond political opportunities,* for populism and populist discourses in the Italian public sphere, characterized in contemporary times, but also in the past, by a dominance/prevalence of populist political elites (Kriesi, 2004).

Between 1998 and 2018, Italy was characterized by one of the highest voting shares for populists. In the 2010s, Italy's populists gained even more support than Greece's, where Syriza's success garnered worldwide attention. In the same two decades, only Switzerland was governed for longer periods by at least one populist party. Moreover, Caiani and Graziano (2016, 260) observed a substantial increase in the level of populism in the electoral campaigns for the European Parliament across all Italian parties, and not just populist parties. Similarly, Schworer (2018) found a contagion effect from populists to Italian mainstream parties. Nearly half (6 out of 14) of the members of Italian cabinets between 1994 and 2020 have included a populist party as the largest coalition partner. Five of these cabinets (Berlusconi II, III, IV and Conte I and II) were in office after 2001. Italian populism—a phenomenon larger than any single political party—is a mainstream force of its own.

In the words of Beppe Grillo, "The 5SM is not a rightist nor a leftist phenomenon, it's on the side of the citizens. Proudly populist".[18] The party was founded as an anti-establishment movement in 2009, and its ideology is hybrid and even inconsistent (Hamdaoui, 2021; Mosca & Tronconi, 2019). Despite its incoherence, the party won about 25% of the national vote in 2013, and 21% of the vote in European elections the following year.

The Northern League emerged in 1991, and is currently the oldest Italian party with parliamentary representation. Since Salvini became secretary of the party in December 2013, he led its reorientation and subsequent electoral success, taking the party from securing 4.1 of the vote in 2013 to 17.4 in 2018. The party, formerly known as 'Lega Nord', became

[18] Grillo's blog, www.beppegrillo.it, 12/14/2013.

a nationalist party and revoked its old separationist ideology: the old scapegoat of Southern Italy was replaced with vitriol directed at the European Union and Eurocrats and with strong anti-immigration platforms (Albertazzi et al., 2019; Hamdaoui, 2021). The League positions itself as the voice and leader of 'The people' who are victims of and must fight against the corrupt 'elites' (Rydgren, 2007).

Italy has experienced several 'populist waves' (Padoan, 2020), and it is one of the most important countries in the global music industry, both in terms of consumption and production. Although many studies reflect on the relationship between popular music and political culture (including national identity, a concept closely linked to populism; Brubaker, 2020), the Italian case has yet remained unexplored.

2.3 Discursive-Cultural Opportunities

Diffusion of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment, Anti-Political Attitudes and Economic Grievances

If one buys the hypothesis of the economic, political and cultural-immigration crises as help to populist mobilization (Caiani & Padoan, 2020),[19] Italy seems to represent the 'perfect recipe' of it, having been seriously hit by all of them in the last decades (Di Mascio et al., 2014; Graziano, 2018). The refugee crisis, in 2015, strongly affected Italy and normalized the anti-immigrant populist discourse that undergirds the platforms of Lega and (to a lesser extend) 5SM. Lega espouses an explicitly nativist view that puts 'Italians first', which predates the coalition government but was emphasized under Salvini's leadership. Ultimately, Lega uses immigration to engage in a conflict with the EU. 5SM behaves similarly, clinging to its Eurosceptic credentials in government and aiming to change European institutions from within them (Jones, 2018). If one looks at the survey data on Italian citizens, hostile sentiments against immigrants are linearly on the rise since 2003: those Italians who evaluate immigrants negatively on various indicators such as work, electoral vote and crimes have increased from 40% in 2003 to 65% in 2017 (SWG Data, 2018).

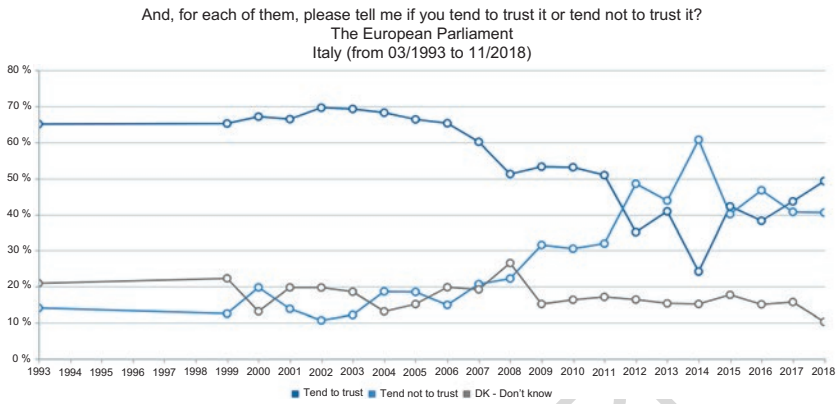
[19] A crisis of political representation (Meny & Surel, 2002; Taggart, 2000), an economic crisis (Kriesi & Pappas, 2015) and a 'cultural clash' crisis linked with immigration processes (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

In terms of political crisis of legitimation, Italy, beyond the 'hands clean' scandals of political corruption in the 90s and the end of the First Republic, shows an increasing citizens distrust in political institutions at the national and European levels and political parties. For example, although a founding father in terms of citizens' attitudes and confidence in the European Parliament (Fig. 2.1a, b),[20] distrust began increasing in 2008 and peaked in 2014. Interestingly, both Italian Lega and 5SM parties are characterized by a strong Euroscepticism, and often organized political campaigns, even electoral, on it (Pirro, 2018). Italian citizens became also increasingly distrustful of political parties and other institutions of representation. According to some surveys, for instance, distrust and detachment against the Union increased from 34% in 2003, to 83% in 2017 (SWG, 2018). Similarly, satisfaction with democracy plummeted in 2008, but rebounded to pre-financial crisis levels following 5SM's first positive electoral results (Eurobarometers 1993–2018).

As for the economic crisis, if one takes various measures of economic performance of the country, such as the Gini coefficient, unemployment rates and per capita GDP, Italy mirrors the situation of other Western European countries between the mid-1990s and 2019. In fact, Italy outperforms other Mediterranean countries (where populism is not successful) on those metrics. On the other hand, Italy also underperformed compared to countries such as Denmark, Norway and Switzerland, where populist parties have become crucial pillars in their respective party systems. Before the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008, the Italian case appeared even more puzzling in that stronger economic indicators were associated with earlier populist successes. However, if one looks at citizens' perceptions, a sentiment of exclusion from the socioeconomic system of the country seems to prevail and increase, especially since the economic and financial crisis of 2008: from 49% of Italians in 2007 to 68% in 2017. This means also that during our time frame of this study (2009–2018)—see the previous chapter, section method—the mood of Italian populations in terms of political, economic and cultural-immigration crises is largely negative, that is, there is a demand side on these grievances as well as discursive opportunities on them potentially mobilizable. In this regard, it is also worth noticing that recent studies, by combining

[20] Italy did not participate in many rounds of the European Social Surveys, so it is not possible to use it in the same way as in other cases. For Italy, data from Eurobarometer provide insight into political opinions after 2013, when the M5S first entered parliament.

a



b

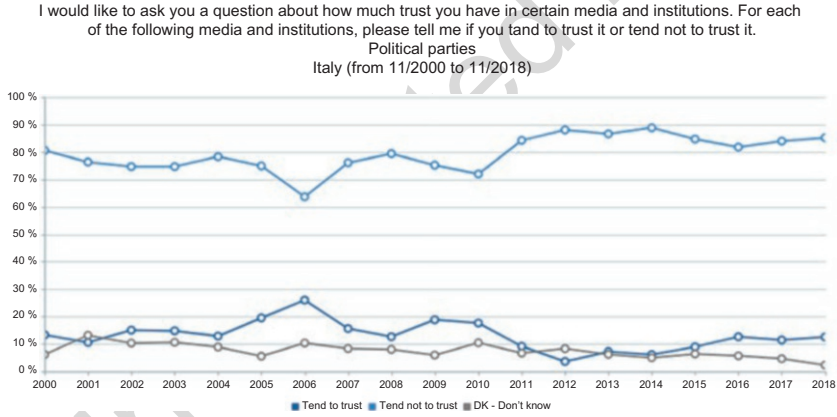


Fig. 2.1 (**a**, **b**)—Trust in the European Parliament and political parties: Italy (1993–2018)

individual-level survey data on voters with organizational-level interviews conducted with national and local representatives and activists of the Five Star Movement and the League, assessed that the role played by these crises in the two different Italian populisms will be disentangled from 'demand' and 'supply' perspectives, which are usually treated in isolation. The findings indicated a coherence between the political parties' message

and their respective potential voters' orientations and attitudes (with regard to the three crises) (Caiani & Padoan, 2020). It has also been demonstrated that the League mostly plays up the cultural crisis, while the 5SM is more concerned with political elements of dissatisfaction in Italian society, and both parties emphasize economic concerns (ibid.). Euroscepticism and negative assessment of the state of Italian economy doubled the probability of voting for both of the 5SM and the League. In sum, all three crises facilitated the resurgence of Italy's populist parties, which, in turn, mobilized different resources (Della Porta & Diani, 2006), including, as we argue in this volume, pop cultural resources.

The Changes of the Radical Right and Its Subcultural Music in Italy

Two major historical trends have underpinned structural changes within the right-wing subcultures in Italy. Firstly, subcultural radical right-wing music has served as an autonomous cultural expression among the neo-fascist youth, being used (and conceived) for political purposes, so as to, for instance, challenge the party leadership of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), the former fascist party that outlived fascism (Antonucci, 2011; Tarchi, 2010). Secondly, recent changes within the radical right-wing subculture have shown an even stronger detachment of the far-right music scene from any party-based influence, in the context of the fragmentation of the political neo-fascist galaxy in light of the transformation of the MSI into a centre-right party (Bulli, 2020). This change in the political opportunity structure, which occurred during the 1980s, entailed the importation, (limited) popularization and appropriation of the skinhead music subculture and, later on, the increasing 'hybridization' (Froio et al., 2020) of the far-right repertoire, even incorporating influences from militant left-wing practices, in terms of the repertoire of protests (such as the fascist squatter movement from which the political movement party CasaPound emerged: Froio et al., 2020), but also in terms of cultural references, appropriated and re-framed towards very different directions (Bulli, 2020; Di Nunzio & Toscano, 2011).

In Italy and elsewhere in Europe, themes of white supremacy, anti-Semitism, chauvinism and cults of violence as well as imagery and lyrics evoking interwar fascist and Nazi ideologies and symbolism featured prominently in radical right-wing music (Cotter, 1999; Kølvraa, 2019). In general, the European far-right and radical right has a long history of links

to music-based subcultures. Scholars have analysed interwar far-right experiences (see Machin & Richardson, 2012; Macklin, 2013, for examples of semiotic-musicological analyses of Nazi-fascist repertoires in Germany and Britain), sociological analyses of post-war far-right music scenes focused on "hate rock" in the US during the sixties (Messner et al., 2007, through lyrical and musicological analysis) and the emergence of the skinhead subculture in the United Kingdom and then throughout Europe since the 1970s (Cotter, 1999; Futrell et al., 2006). Genres such as "White Power music" (Corte & Edwards, 2008) and "White noise" or RAC ("Rock against Communism") were coined by or associated with bands such as the British Skrewdrivers and the network Blood & Honour (present in Italy through the "Veneto Fronte Skinhead": Shekovtsov, 2009; Bulli, 2020), and "Rechtsrock", which took root in Germany (Dornbusch & Raabe, 2002), while "*rock identitario*" formed (later) in Italy (Bulli, 2020).

However, in Italy, the emergence of right-wing subcultures, in which music played a key role (Di Giorgi & Ferrari, 2010), must be firstly read as a cultural wave. It was influenced by the so-called *nouvelle droite* thinking of the late sixties/early seventies, as a reaction against the institutionalized political far-right (represented by the heir of the fascist party), the bureaucratized MSI. Bulli (2020) noted that "the Italian extreme right music scene has been marked for two decades by these tensions that coexisted with a musical production influenced by nostalgic content typical of a political subculture perceiving itself as constrained in a ghetto". This also implied that the development of a far-right subculture in Italy was inspired by political and ideological reasons from the beginning, as opposed to just being an effect of the popularization of skinhead lifestyles imported from abroad. Consequently, music and other cultural practices of this music subculture have always been strictly linked to extremist ideologies—always challenging and in conflict with the official Italian political far-right. It was only in the final years of the MSI (following the transformation into the more moderate *Alleanza Nazionale* in 1995) that the Italian far-right milieu—having become much more fragmented—became significantly influenced by broader lifestyle movements such as the skinhead and punk European scenes (Marchi, 1997). That fragmentation was both cultural and political, since a number of independent record labels initiated the production and the (relative) diffusion of a number of music genres with fascist content, including the so-called *Rock Identitario* linked to CasaPound (Bulli, 2020). In fact, as noted, the Italian far-right began its

organizational re-composition in subcultural music scenes during the 1990s (Marchi, 1997).

Networks of movements with related symbolisms, aesthetics and cultural products (Kolvraa & Forchtner, 2019; Miller-Idriss, 2018) use these cultural referents for the intertwined purposes (Jipson, 2007) of political recruitment and propaganda, in-group cohesion through the celebration of values such as "dignity, pride, pleasure, love, kinship, and fellowship" (Futrell et al., 2006), and fund-raising. This occurred in Italy too, manifested in its radical right subcultural music scene, constituting the links between music and political activities exemplified in the case of CasaPound, whose founder Iannone was himself the frontman of the most popular *rock identitario* band in Italy (Bulli, 2020).

More recently, it has been observed that far-right music has exceeded the boundaries of punk-metal skinhead subcultures of the 1970s (Teitelbaum, 2021). In his ethnographic research on the Swedish case (2017), Teitelbaum highlights the diversity of genres popularized and produced within the far-right milieu, ranging from folk to hip-hop, and the resulting mechanisms of re-signification and re-appropriation that they entail. In German right-wing hip-hop (Putnam & Littlejohn, 2007), "Afrodiasporic roots", a generally "oppositional ethos" (Watkins, 2006), openness to different ideological interpretations and celebrations of hypermasculinity coexist. In Italy, the subcultural music scene of the radical right is not yet mainstream (Bulli, 2020), although its 'hybridizing' evolution may represent discursive or cultural opportunities for synergy between populism and pop music. While Teitelbaum (2017) found that some radical right-wing groups spread their ideologies to the mainstream by using "softer" musical aesthetics, Froio et al. (2020) observed that CasaPound (an Italian fascist movement closely linked to the far-right music scene) "hybridized" far-right cultural imagery by "blurring [the] distinction between party and social movement models of participation, and the styles of extreme-right, left-progressive and pop culture" (Froio et al., 2020: 10–11) while maintaining "a sensationalistic, often violent and in any case ideologically nostalgic mainframe (ibid.)". On the whole, the absence of a process of "poppification" (Schiller, 2022 *forthcoming*) of the subcultural far-right music scene in Italy emphasizes how important it is to look at other, less evident and direct, loci of the possible nexus between radical politics and music, namely, the nexus between populism and pop music.

Popular culture has been a strong object of interest—an 'obsession', according to King and Leonard (2014) of far-right groups and

movements, hence their widespread attempts to reframe popular symbols. Research using online ethnography (Futrell et al., 2006; King & Leonard, 2014, and Wendling, 2018, on the 'alt-right' in the US) has documented the extent to which far-right movements are both consumers and producers of pop culture. Richardson (2019: 243) also highlights how "one of the most important spaces for the contemporary cultivation and expression of [Fascist] meanings and identities are various websites and online forums". However, the Italian case is different and similar to the music scene experience—the far-right organized groups have 'hybridized' rather than 'poppified' their broad cultural imageries, that is, they have attempted to appropriate radical/militant leftist symbolisms instead of entering the pop culture realm (Bulli 2019). This underlines the importance of looking at how mainstream and populist right-wing actors have ultimately pursued a strategy of appropriating pop culture and re-assigning meanings for political purposes. As shown in Sect. 2.1.4, on first impressions, such an operation may appear complicated because of the overall progressive inspiration of pop music scene in Italy. However, other factors—and, particularly, the centrality of different Italian pop music genres (as detailed in Sects. 2.1 and 2.3) for Italian banal nationalism—seem much more conducive for right-wing populist operations of appropriation.

As a result, there is conceivably a case for a potential nexus or appropriation or interactions between populism and pop music in Italy.

2.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, we try to locate our study on the nexus between pop music and populism in the Italian context; a paradigmatic case in Europe for the study of populism and its diffusion in the social and political spheres. We explored the multiple *political, cultural and music (scene and market) opportunities* and constraints in the country that may, in our view, affect the links between pop music and populism. We found that under many respects Italy seems to offer a particularly favourable setting for the connection of the two.

In particular, in terms of *music-market opportunities*, the importance of private actors in terms of production, distribution and the radio market in Italy seems to have discouraged a process of state intervention towards the imposition of (ethno)populist identities, as differently witnessed, for example, in other European countries, such as currently in Hungary (Barna & Patakfalvi Czjriak, 2022). Furthermore, the internationalization

of contemporary Italian pop music, in terms of international impact and sound, may have strengthened the presence of the Italian pop scene on the global market as well as the importation of an 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' (Varriale, 2018), which looks at odds with the populist narratives. On the other hand, however, the centrality of the Italian pop music repertoire in Italians' music consumption, as seen from the data of this chapter, and, crucially, the (consistently high across decades) influence of Sanremese songs may enhance the relationship between (populist) politics and pop music. Sanremo, per se, as the main event of pop culture par excellence, particularly in recent years, has provided a platform to trigger, push and shape political debates (Magaudda, 2020). It can be interpreted, as well as the pop cultural songs nurtured by it, as a collective ritual in which (Italian) collective identities are performed (Alexander, 2004). In this sense, Sanremo represents an aspect of favourable cultural opportunities, in the country, as ritual, a place of negotiation, confrontation and sometimes clashes between tradition and innovation, inertia and change, not only in the realm of songs or television entertainment, but in the intellectual and broad cultural sense (Barra et al., 2019. And in our times, populist actors and visions can be expected to take part in this clash (as we will explore in Chap. 5).

As for *cultural (and music) opportunities,* we also noticed some historically determined opportunities of the Italian context which can help, in our view, a connection between contemporary populist politics and pop music. More specifically, we found a complex relationship between pop music and the concept of 'popular' (*popolare*) in the country, as sedimented across years. The term 'pop' had, in Italy, in the early seventies, a positive, somewhat 'high' and international-oriented connotation, in contrast to what de facto has been and still is a central part of Italian pop music, namely, the Italian nazionalpopolare songs of Sanremo—which stand instead on the side of the 'low', the same associated with populist politics (Ostiguy, 2018). Moreover, 'italianness' in popular songs is intertwined with the legacy of fascism in the cultural industry (Forgacs & Gundel, 2007), and we noticed a conservative political role of Sanremo Festival in the re-establishing of an Italian music tradition of pop music (Liperi, 2011: 165–166; Tomatis, 2019: 47). Moreover, the distance between left-wing Italian parties (and intellectuals) and pop music during the early post-war period was underpinned by critiques of mass culture and society (Tomatis, 2019). Progressive Italian songwriters (*cantautori*) influenced the Italian pop music scene of the 1970s successfully, imposing

AU16

a canon and a poetry (Antonelli, 2015) that simultaneously reproduced a division between 'serious' and 'frivolous' songs within the same category of pop(ular) music (Tomatis, 2019). However, as observed, this 'canonization' of *cantautori* ended with including their repertoire as part of an Italian tradition and, as such, increased the possibility of framing this repertoire as a shared patrimony, a patrimony of everyone and not just a patrimony of left-wing and/or 'high' communities (Dei, 2016). Despite leftists' fingerprints on the genre, the political and cultural context may have created opportunities for (populist) radical right actors to appropriate pop music repertoires for populist political projects. To this picture, other cultural factors, composing favourable cultural opportunities for the nexus between populism and music in Italy, can be seen as the dominant "self-victimizing Italian collective memory" of its fascist past, through "selective amnesias" (Oliva, 2006) designed to liberate Italians from the heavy burden of the past and to regenerate the stereotype (and/or myth) of "Italians as good folks" (*Italiani brava gente*: Del Boca, 2005). We argue that *nazionalpopolari* music repertoires have played, and can play, a central role in the reproduction of these collective memories and the formation of specific Italian self-narratives, also in contemporary politics and society. Moreover, contemporary Italian pop music production may also be positively affected, in their potential connection with populism by—or mirroring—various crises (political, economic and cultural) that have hardly bit Italy, and which are often related to the success of recent populism in Europe (Caiani and Graziano, 2018).

We also argue that the characteristics of the radical right music scene, which has been insofar confined in a subcultural ghetto and unable or unwilling to enter any 'mainstream', increase the opportunity for populist radical right actors to differentiate themselves even in terms of aesthetic and cultural, including music, references from the far-right milieu. In this sense, the appropriation of Italian pop and the celebration of its Italianness (either explicitly or appealing to a tacitly shared repertoire amongst Italians) by populist radical right actors are eased in order to set a clear boundary between populist and far rights.

Finally, in terms *of political opportunities,* beyond the electoral and social success of populism in the country, Italian populist parties are varied, offering different types of symbolic and material resources (McAdam et al., 1988), which can influence the strategy of usage of pop music by political actors: left-wing or inclusionary, and right-wing or exclusionary, as seen in the chapter.

The question arises: are the populist organizations able to exploit favourable opportunity structures, and can they overcome unfavourable ones? As a central aspect of everyday life, popular music may well be part of the culture repertoires that populist political entrepreneurs can politicize for political purposes. And do (different categories of) citizens effectively negotiate pop music meanings in a way that is consonant to populist politics, that is, to populist (or anti-populist!) worldviews? The analysis of the next chapters will try to provide an answer to that.

References

Agostini, R. (2013). Sanremo effects. The festival and the Italian *Canzone* (1950s–1960s). In F. Fabbri & G. Plastino (Eds.), *Made in Italy* (pp. 28–40). Routledge.

Albertazzi, D., et al. (2019). 'No regionalism please, we are *Leghisti*!' The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini. *Regional & Federal Studies, 28*(5), 645–671.

Alexander, J. (2004). Cultural pragmatics: Social performance between ritual and strategy. *Sociological Theory, 22*(4), 527–573.

Antonelli, G. (2015). *Ma cosa vuoi che sia una canzone. Mezzo secolo di italiano cantato*. Il Mulino.

Barna, E., & Patakfalvi Czjriak, A. (2022). "We are of one blood": Hungarian popular music, nationalism and the trajectory of the song "Nélküled" through radicalization, folklorization and consecration. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*. https://doi.org/10.1080/25739638.2022.2089388. Advanced online publication.

Barra, L., et al. (2019). A Martian in Sanremo. Mahmood between television, music, politics and identity. *Studi Culturali, 2*, 329–346.

Battista, P. (1995). Cultura e Ideologie. In G. Sabbatucci & V. Vidotto (Eds.), *Storia d'Italia: L'Italia contemporanea dal 1963 a oggi*. Laterza.

Biorcio, R., & Natale, P. (2018). *Il Movimento 5 Stelle dalla protesta al governo*. Mimesis.

Borgna, G. (1985). *Storia della canzone italiana*. Laterza.

Bulli, G. (2020). The long evolution of extreme right music in Italy and Germany. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 207–231.

Caiani, M. (2019). The populist parties and their electoral success: Different causes behind different populisms? The case of the Five-star Movement and the League. *Contemporary Italian Politics, 11*(3), 236–250.

Caiani, M., & Graziano, P. (2016). Varieties of populism: Insights from the Italian case. *Italian Political Science Review, 46*(2), 243–267.

Caiani, M., & Padoan, E. (2020). Populism and the (Italian) crisis: The voters and the context. *Politics*. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/2F0263395720952627

Campus, L. (2015). *Non solo canzonette. L'Italia della ricostruzione e del miracolo attraverso il festival di Sanremo*. Mondadori.

Chirumbolo, A. (1996). *L'estremismo di destra: un'indagine psicologico-sociale fra diversi attivisti di diverso orientamento politico*. PhD Doctoral Dissertation. University La Sapienza.

Corte, U., & Edwards, B. (2008). White power music and the mobilization of racist social movements. *Music and Arts in Action, 1*(1), 4–20.

Cotter, J. (1999). Sounds of hate: White power rock and roll and the neo-nazi skinhead subculture. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 11*(2), 111–140.

Cremonesi, C., et al. (2019). Political information exposure and populist attitudes in the «Laboratory of Populism». An exploratory analysis of the 2018 Italian general election campaign. *Comunicazione Politica, 1*, 39–62.

D'Amato, F. (2013). Music economies and Markets in Italy. In F. Fabbri & G. Plastino (Eds.), *Made in Italy* (pp. 72–81). Routledge.

Dei, F. (2011). Pop-politica: le basi culturali del berlusconismo. *Studi Culturali, 2011*(3), 471–490.

Dei, F. (2016). *Cultura popolare in Italia. Da Gramsci all'Unesco*. Il Mulino.

Del Boca, A. (2005). *Italiani, brava gente?* Beat.

Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction*. Wiley.

Di Giorgi, C., & Ferrari, E. I. (2010). *Il nostro canto libero*. Castelvecchi.

Di Mascio, F., et al. (2014). The ghost of crises past: Analyzing reform sequences to understand Italy's response to the global crisis. *Public Administration, 91*(1), 17–31.

Di Nunzio, D., & Toscano, E. (2011). *Dentro e Fuori CasaPound: Capire Il Fascismo Del Terzo Millennio*. Armando Editore.

Dunkel M., Barna, E., Caiani, M., Doehring A., Niederauer, M., Schiller, M. (2018). Popular music as a medium for the mainstreaming of populist ideologies in Europe. Research Project (Full Proposal) financed by Volkswagen Foundation, Ref. 94 754-1.

Dunkel, M., & Schiller, M. (Eds.). (2022). (forthcoming)). *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.

Eco, U. (1964). *Apocalittici e integrati: comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa*. Bompiani.

Fenati, B. (1993). *Fare la radio negli anni'90*. Nuova Eri.

Forgacs, D., & Gundel, S. (2007). *Cultura di massa e società italiana. 1936–1954*. Il Mulino.

Frith, S. (1978). *The sociology of rock*. Constable and Company Ltd..

Froio, C., et al. (2020). *CasaPound Italia. Contemporary extreme right politics*. Routledge.

Graziano, P. (2018). *Neopopulismi. Perché sono destinati a durare*. Il Mulino.
Gundle, S. (1995). *I comunisti italiani tra Hollywood e Mosca. La sfida della cultura di massa*. Giunti.
Hamdaoui, S. (2021). A "stylistic anti-populism": An analysis of the Sardine movement's opposition to Matteo Salvini in Italy. *Social Movement Studies, Advanced online publication*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.1899910
Ignazi, P. (1989). *Il polo escluso. Profilo del Movimento Sociale Italiano*. Il Mulino.
Inglehart R. & Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash.. HKS Working Paper No. RWP16-026.
Jipson, A. (2007). Introduction to the special issue: Influence of hate rock. *Popular Music and Society, 30*(4), 449–451.
King, R., & Leonard, D. (2014). *Beyond hate. White power and popular culture*. Routledge.
Kølvraa, C. (2019). Embodying 'the Nordic race': Imaginaries of Viking heritage in the online communications of the Nordic resistance movement. *Patterns of Prejudice, 53*(3), 270–284.
Kolvraa, C., & Forchtner, B. (2019). Cultural imaginaries of the extreme right: An introduction. *Patterns of Prejudice, 53*(3), 227–235.
Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, M., & Passy, F. (2005). *Contested citizenship. Immigration and cultural diversity in Europe*. University of Minneapolis Press.
Kriesi, H. (2004). Political context and opportunity. In D. Snow et al. (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 67–90). Blackwell.
Kriesi, H., & Pappas, T. (Eds.). (2015). *European populism in the shadow of the great recession*. ECPR Press.
Liperi, F. (2011). *Storia della canzone italiana*. Eri.
Longo, A. (2014). *Il mercato della musica digitale*. MA Thesis. Luiss University.
Machin, D., & Richardson, J. (2012). Discourse of unity and purpose in the sounds of fascist music: A multimodal approach. *Critical Discourse Studies, 9*(4), 327–346.
Macklin, G. (2013). 'Onward Blackshirts!' Music and the British Union of Fascists. *Patterns of Prejudice, 47*(4–5), 430–457.
Magaudda, P. (2020). Populism, music and the media. The Sanremo festival and the circulation of populist discourses. *Partecipazione e conflitto, 13*(1), 132–153.
Manucci, L. (2020). *Populism and collective memory: Comparing fascist legacies in Western Europe*. Routledge.
Marchi, V. (1997). Nazi-rock. Pop music e destra radicale. .
McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1988). Social movements. In N. J. Smelser (Ed.), *Handbook of sociology* (pp. 695–737). Sage Publications.
Meny, Y., & Surel, Y. (Eds.). (2002). *Democracies and the populist challenges*. Springer.

Messner, B., et al. (2007). The hardest hate: A sociological analysis of country hate music. *Popular Music and Society, 30*(4), 513–531.
Meyer, D. (2004). Protest and political opportunities. *Annual Review of Sociology, 30*, 125–145.
Miller-Idriss, C. (2018). *The extreme gone mainstream*. Princeton University Press.
Mosca, L., & Tronconi, F. (2019). Beyond left and right: The eclectic populism of the Five Star Movement. *West European Politics, 42*(6), 1258–1283.
Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
Oliva, G. (2006). *Si Ammazza Troppo Poco: I Crimini Di Guerra Italiani*. Mondadori.
Ostiguy, P. (2018). Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach. In P. Taggart, C. Rovira, P. Ochoa, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 73–97). Oxford University Press.
Padoan, E. (2020). *Anti-neoliberal populisms in comparative perspective. A Latin Americanization of southern Europe?* Routledge.
Panarari, M. (2020). *Uno non vale uno. La democrazia diretta ed altri miti d'oggi*. Marsilio.
Pirro, A. (2018). The polyvalent populism of the 5 Star Movement. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies, 26*(4), 443–458.
Putnam, M., & Littlejohn, J. (2007). *National Socialism with Fler? German hip hop from the right*. Elsevier.
Putnam, R., et al. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton University Press.
Rennis, F. (2019). *Patriots: La musica italiana da Berlusconi al sovranismo*. Arcana.
Richardson, J. (2019). British fascism, fascist culture, British culture. *Patterns of Prejudice, 53*(3), 236–252.
Roodujin, M., Van Kessel, S., Froio, C., Pirro, A., De Lange, S., Halikiopoulou, D., Lewis, P., Mudde, C. & Taggart, P. (2019) The Popu list: An overview of populist, far right, far left and Eurosceptic parties in Europe. www.popu-list.org.
Rydgren, J. (2005). Is extreme right-wing populism contagious? Explaining the emergence of a new party family. *European Journal of Political Research, 44*(3), 413–437.
Rydgren, J. (2007). The sociology of the radical right. *Annual Review of Sociology, 33*, 241–262.
Schiller, M. (2022). (*forthcoming*)). Populism in the land of pop: The Sweden democrats and popular music. In M. Dunkel & M. Schiller (Eds.), *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.
Schworer, J. (2018). *"Populistization" of mainstream parties? Evidence for populist contagion in Italy*. Paper presented at ECPR Conference, Hamburg.
Shekovtsov, A. (2009). Apoliteic music: Neo-folk, martial industrial and 'metapolitical fascism'. *Pattern of Prejudice, 43*(5), 431–457.

Sibilla, G. (2003). *I linguaggi della musica pop*. Bompiani.
Taggart, P. (2000). *Populism*. Open University Press.
Tarchi, M. (2010). *La rivoluzione impossibile. Dai Campi Hobbit alla Nuova Destra*. Vallecchi.
Tarchi, M. (2015). *Italia populista. Dal qualunquismo a Beppe Grillo*. Il Mulino.
Tarrow, S. (1994). *Power in movement: Social movements, collective action and politics*. Cambridge University Press.
Teitelbaum, B. (2021). The study of far-right music. *Music Research Annual, 2*, 1–20.
Tomatis, J. (2014). A portrait of the author as an artist. Cantautori and Canzone d'autore: Ideology, authenticity, stylization. In F. Fabbri & G. Plastino (Eds.), *Made in Italy* (pp. 87–99). Routledge.
Tomatis, J. (2019). *Storia culturale della canzone italiana*. Il Saggiatore.
Varriale, S. (2018). Reconceptualizing aesthetic cosmopolitanism: Evidence from the early consecration of Anglo-American pop-rock in Italy. *American Behavioral Scientist*. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/2F0002764218800139
Vassallo, S., & Shin, M. (2019). The new map of political consensus. What is new in the wave of support for the populists? *Contemporary Italian Politics, 11*(3), 220–235.
Verbeek, B., & Zaslove, A. (2016). Italy: A case of mutating populism? *Democratization, 23*(2), 304–323.
Verzichelli, L., & Castaldo, A. (2020). Technocratic populism in Italy after Berlusconi: The trendsetter and his disciples. *Politics and Governance, 8*(4), 485–495.
Watkins, C. (2006). *Hip hop matters: Politics, pop culture, and the struggle for the soul of a movement*. Beacon Press.
Wendling, M. (2018). *Alt-right: From 4Chan to the White House*. Pluto Press.
Zulianello, M. (2020). Varieties of populist parties and Party Systems in Europe: From state-of-the-art to the application of a novel classification scheme to 66 parties in 33 countries. *Government and Opposition, 55*(2), 327–347.

CHAPTER 3

Pop Music and Populist Messages

This chapter, from a supply-side perspective, applies instruments of content and visual analysis, and musicological analysis, to pop songs in Italy (namely popular, i.e. mainstream, most diffused[1]) over the last two decades, to study 'whether' and 'how' populist messages, imageries, *tropes* and ideas can be found in pop music. We do not allude here to populist claims, as if we were working with political party manifestoes, nor do we limit ourselves to the visible manifestation of them, as seen in populist leaders' speeches. We simply aim to understand to what extent contemporary Italian pop music provides 'populist affordances' for both listeners and political leaders. As mentioned, a definitional premise is required: pop music is understood in this volume as a specific genre but also, in a broader sense, as the musical equivalent of mass culture (Tomatis, 2019).

The concept of affordance has been developed in the sociology of music (e.g. DeNora, 2000) and refers to the idea that "meaning, or semiotic force, is not an inherent property of cultural materials, whether those materials are linguistic, technological or aesthetic" (ibid., 40). It is

[1] As mentioned, due to our interest in focusing on Italian pop music, which we defined as 'popular music', namely, the most diffused, mainstream, we selected for each year (in our time frame 2009–2018) the ten most downloaded pop songs, the ten most played on radio stations and the winners (top three songs) of Sanremo Festival, for a total of 190 Italian pop songs included in the analysis.

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3_3

therefore particularly useful to look at the complex relationship between people and the objects they make, between practices of re-appropriation and cognitive processes of reification, with the premise in mind that at the same time, "objects 'afford' actors certain things; a ball, for example, affords rolling, bouncing and kicking in a way that a cube of the same size, texture and weight would not" (ibid., 39). This is what we explore in this chapter. This view implies that the space to assign and circulate political (and populist) meanings through music is significantly wide.[2] However, we also assume that materials are by no means empty semiotic spaces (DeNora, 2000: 40); some songs may afford more than others as 'populist carriers', or for being appropriated for populist usages.

However, language is only one part of the meaning. Beyond the discourse/content analysis of the lyrics, a visual analysis (Doerr et al., 2013) of videoclips[3] helped us to integrate the context of the messages, that is, the role of persona, symbols, images vehiculating/paving the way to 'populist messages'.

3.1 A Surprising Populist Hype in Contemporary Italian Pop Music

In order to look at populist affordances presence in Italian pop music, we used, as mentioned, as benchmark, a codebook guiding the analysis, where the various definitions of populism and its characteristics were taken into account, by focusing, in a song, on the lyrics, the video, the persona, as well as the overall context of its reproduction.[4] Without any ambition of counting, testing or explaining the presence of populist message in Italian pop music, as more proper to political science analyses and measurements of populism applied to other types of sources (Caiani & Graziano, 2016; De Cocco & Monechi, 2022), we firstly found that out of 190 pop songs analysed, a significant number (about 16%) seems to contain certain forms of implicit and explicit 'populist' references, from an ideological point of view, to a sociocultural phenomenon (Table 3.1).

[2] For instance, citizens and political actors can politicize very different repertoires in the same ideological directions, and a single song in very different ways, according to semiotic processes influenced by many factors (geographical context, époque, context of usage, characteristics of the audiences/listeners, characteristics of the political leader).

[3] For songs coded as 'populist' (based on our five different definitions), only.

[4] For more details, see the codebook 3.a in the Appendix, and in Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

t1.1 **Table 3.1** Populism in Italian pop music (2009–2018)

ID.	Title	Author	Year	Rhetoric	Ideology	Organization	Style	Ostiguyean Populism	Visual	Anti-Populism	Libertarianism/ Disengagement	More on Right-Wing	More on Emotions
1	Andiamo a comandare	Fabio Rovazzi	2016	0	0	1	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	0
2	Cara Italia	Ghali	2018	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
3	C'è sempre una canzone	Luciano Ligabue	2015	0.5	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Cigno nero	Fedez ft. Francesca Michielin	2013	0	1	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Cupido	Sfera Ebbasta ft. Quavo	2018	0	0	0.5	0.5	1	0	0	0	0	0
6	Faccia come il cuore	Due di Picche	2010	1	1	0	1	0	1	0.5	0	0	0
7	Fotografia	Carl Brave ft. Fabri Fibra e Francesca Michielin	2018	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0
8	Habibi	Ghali	2017	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	1	0	0
9	Happy Days	Ghali	2017	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	1	0	0
10	Il muro del suono	Luciano Ligabue	2014	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
11	L'amore Eternit	Fedez ft. Noemi	2015	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
12	Maracana	Emis Killa	2014	0	0.5	0	0.5	1	0.5	0	0	0	0.5
13	Maria Salvador	J-Ax ft. Il Cile	2015	1	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	1	0	0.5
14	Ninna Nanna	Ghali	2016	1	1	0.5	0	0.5	1	1	1	0	0
15	Non è l'inferno	Emma Marrone	2012	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	0	0	0.5	1
16	Nu juorno buono	Rocco Hunt	2014	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
17	Nulla Accade	Marracash ft. Guè Pequeno	2016	0	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	0	1	0	1
18	Pamplona	Fabri Fibra ft. Thegiornalisti	2017	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
19	P.E.S.	Club Dogo ft Giuliano Palma	2012	0	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	1	0	0
20	Rockstar	Sfera Ebbasta	2018	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	Sempre noi	Max Pezzali ft J-Ax	2012	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5
22	Senza pagare	J-Ax & Fedez	2017	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	0	0	0	0.5
23	Siamo chi siamo	Luciano Ligabue	2014	0	0.5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
24	Tesla	Capo Plaza	2018	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	1	0	0
25	Tran Tran	Sfera Ebbasta	2017	0	0	0.5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
26	Tranne te	Fabri Fibra	2011	0	1	0	0.5	0.5	1	0	0	0	0.5
27	Vorrei ma non posto	J-Ax & Fedez	2016	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	0	0	0.5
28	Una vita in vacanza	Lo Stato Sociale	2018	0	1	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0
29	Luca era gay	Povia	2009	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
30	Italia Amore Mio	Pupo & Filiberto	2010	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Total				11.5	14.5	8.5	13	13	16	5.5	9	3	11

Overall, populism (or populist ideas, tropes and concepts) seems particularly prevalent in its 'ideological' form (i.e. people-centrist and anti-elitist messages)—at least within our time frame. For instance, in the song from Emma, 'Non è l'inferno', the insistence on the concept of people with their unheard requests is stressed (if you only knew how unacceptable is this fact/there are people having worked perhaps just one day/and they enjoy more rights/than people believing in the future of our country", Emma, 'Non è l'inferno', 2012[5]). However, since 2016, populist messages, as a celebration of sociocultural low versus high, have become more prominent (as, for instance, illustrated in the cases of some J-Ax & Fedez songs, Senza Pagare, 2017).[6] In addition, as a surprise, not searched though in our codebook, instead emerging from the analysis of the various texts, 17 songs (9%) include what we refer to as 'anti-populist' messages. They are claims which emphasize a critique of politics seeking 'popular support' (such as in the song by Ghali, 'Ninnananna' (2018)[7] or a criticism of the stereotypical Italian people, as identified in the song by Due di Picche, 'Faccia come il cuore', 2010),[8] not to mention a position against anti-hate and anti-patriotic messages as evident in Luca Carboni's song, 'Luca lo stesso', 2015).[9]

Finally, we have noted that 9 of the 30 songs alluding to populism, while involved in social and/or political denunciations through the use of potentially populist appeals, tended to deliver a message of disengagement, namely, an invitation to "rely on yourself" with quite pessimistic and anti-political, and sometimes anti-social, tones (as seen in the song by Marracash feat. Gué Pequeno, 'Nulla Accade', 2016).[10] We grouped these pop songs under the category 'disengagement/libertarianism', which can offer an affordance to populism and populist politics, but also not (depending on the framing of the political populist entrepreneurs in the country). In these songs, we observe a call for a kind of individualistic rebellion against some aspects of the system, or to pursue individual success as a form of overcoming the structural hurdles imposed by the system (present in some rap and trap songs such as Capo Plaza, Tesla, 2018).[11] This

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMzNxA81qmE
[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LX7BVLl5wg
[7] /watch?v=s1xbQVNGSPQ
[8] /watch?v=utMHDheXUzw
[9] /watch?v=LPwb1kETSt4
[10] watch?v=Mcg3WqgTnCE
[11] /watch?v=BDx_YTf9x1g

dimension is directly linked to different social malaises which populist phenomena are often able to politicize and exploit, although the link between populist attitudes and civic and political participation is far from clear: is political disenchantment ('anti-politics') beneficial to populism? Does populism fuel or limit political disengagement? (Murat Ardag et al., 2019; Rico et al., 2017).

Moreover (Table 3.2), our analysis also indicated an increase in references to potentially populist elements in pop music over time, which we could relate to the populist *zeitgeist* (Mudde, 2004) in the country as well as contagion with the populist rhetoric to mainstream politics (Schworer, 2021).

All in all, the total number of 'populist songs' increased over the time frame. In 2009, coinciding with the start of the economic and political crises linked to the Great Recession, only 5% of songs contained some signals of populist ideas, concepts, tropes, whereas, by 2018, the percentage had risen to 32%. In 2009, only in one song (*Luca era gay*, Povia) did we trace some (conservative) populist features in our discourse analysis of the lyrics. The song focuses on the history of a young man switching from homosexuality (associated with the trauma of the parents' divorce) to heterosexuality: "I didn't rely on psychologists, psychiatrists, priests or scientists, I went into my past and I better knew myself".

In 2018 (amidst the Italian national elections and the formation of the Lega-5SM government coalition), 18 songs were codified as 'populist' or 'anti-populist', suggesting a sort of politicization of mainstream pop music or polarization along this cleavage (in effect, an increasing lyrical presence of social and political issues framed by populist and/or anti-populist narratives). Moreover, particularly, since 2016, the definition of populism as a politicization of sociocultural tastes and identities—that is, the sociocultural approach—is more appropriate in capturing many of the populist messages found in our analysis.

In particular, we discovered traces of populist tropes, ideas and messages grounded in different understandings of populism. The most prominent type of populism found in a significant portion of the pop songs analysed is populism as *i. an ideology* albeit 'thin'. Here, we found an insistence on the concept of the people (or synonymous, ordinary citizens, average Italians, etc.) and its construction. These people are often presented as victims, oppressed, 'desperate, hoping' (*Il muro del suono* by Ligabue, ID. 10), or people 'who don't look down' (i.e. fierce, proud: ID. 23), as a list of precarious workers (as in ID. 28), as well as with

t2.1 **Table 3.2** Populist and anti-populist elements in Italian pop songs (2009–2018)

Year	Songs with populist affordances (N)	% of songs with populist affordances	Songs with anti-populist affordances (N)	Total Songs Analyzed (N)
2009	1	5	0	21
2010	2	10	5	21
2011	1	5	3	22
2012	3	16	0	19
2013	1	6	5	16
2014	4	24	0	17
2015	3	16	2	19
2016	4	22	2	18
2017	5	28	2	18
2018	6	32	3	19
Total	30	16	22	190

120 references, both in the lyrics and in the videos, to an antagonistic relation-
121 ship between these people and some elite (either economic, political,
122 national or European, etc.).
123 For instance, in the song *Non è l'inferno,* by singer Emma Marrone,
124 winning 2012 Sanremo Festival (ID. 15), we find the celebration of the

'poor people still believing in the goodwill' versus politicians who exploit their privileges at the expense of the people ('working just a day [in their lives] and enjoying more rights than people having served the country'): the people (war veterans, poor pensioners, unemployed, as they appear in the videoclip) desperately calling for some relief ('tell me what I have to do to pay for my food, my rent, tell me what I have to do!'), compatible with both left-wing populist appeals for social justice and right-wing populist claims made in defence of the 'deserving poor' under a familistic frame (see Abts et al., 2021; Otjes et al., 2018; Rathgeb, 2021). The people are described as those dreaming of having an ordinary (heteronormative) life, with a family ("With my son who at 30/Fears the dream of getting married/And naturally of becoming a father", ID. 15), as well as social protection from the state ("I gave my life and blood for my country/And I find myself starving at the end of the month/My prayers are in the hands of God", ID. 15). Much rarer is the description of people exclusively holding conservative and nationalist values—as in the case of the song by Pupo, Filiberto and Canonici, *Italia Amore Mio* (ID. 30): "I believe in traditions of a people who don't give up/I believe in my culture and in my religion".

However, overall, references to oppressed people are less recurrent than anti-establishment messages.

On the latter point (i.e. anti-elitism, quite frequent in the pop songs analysed), we can mention the striking case of the controversial song by singer Povia (in 2015: *Chi comanda il mondo?*, see Fig. 3.a in Appendix), where the European Union is understood as a 'dictatorship of fake economists, owners of the world, worst than Nazis', both in the text and images, and housed within a conspiracy theory. However, also in other cases, the lyrics are less explicit, but still evocative.

They are mostly against politicians and/or economic elites, who exploit their privileges at the expense of the people (i.e. "only rich people are allowed not to pay", as in the cases of the well-known rappers J-Ax and Fedez ID.22). They are accused of being hypocrites and opportunistic ("with voters and to govern you need to have your face like your heart [double sense]", as in the case of *Faccia come il mondo* by J-Ax and Neffa, ID. 6). Similarly, Rocco Hunt calls for a popular revenge against 'the banks which steal' and against polluting industries ('life is sweet but then they poison you': ID. 16), and Ligabue—one of the most important Italian artists often associated with the left—in his *Il muro del suono* (ID. 10), targets economic elites depicted as "patrons/masters smoking"

who "never paid for the silverware", while using repression in the political realm ("their savaging dogs in the street, during his *C'è sempre una canzone* (ID. 3) denouncing politicians as 'firmly sat in their armchairs'. There also features anti-elitist claims which include (more from a class based perspective than a homogeneous conceptualization of the people vs. elite) privileged, bourgeois, conformist people that take advantage of their well-off positioning to commit crimes with impunity ("politically correct/bigoted criminals/and nothing happens", ID. 17), using a nationalist pretext to increase their power and defend their position ("in Milan they drink Piedmont bubbly wine/because Champagne is French", ID. 18).

We also found traces of populism as a *ii. sociocultural phenomenon* in Italian pop songs. In these cases, there are references to actions needed by the poor to overcome their plight against the oppressing powers: at times, the only hope for social mobility is linked to reliance on oneself ("Just believing in you/it is the thing that saves you"), mixing a pragmatic adaptability with an individual commitment; in other cases, the antagonistic relation between the people and the elites is located within an urban-periphery cleavage, and forms of popular inter-class solidarity are emphasized (as in the cases of many songs by rappers and trappers Ghali, Emis Killa and Rocco Hunt). Videos often reinforce this message, ones filled with scenes and cultural references taken from popular local realities (e.g. Naples, with images of environmentalist demonstrations against illegal landfills, ID. 16[12]). These songs can be linked to a populism that exalts a people built on socioeconomic foundations and at the same time call for its mobilization. In all cases, anti-elitism prevails over people-centrism. This also differs from other European pop scenes (such as the Austrian or Hungarian ones, Dunkel & Schiller, 2022), where instead different types of people-centrism prevail, mainly in the form of nationalism and nativism. This depiction of the people in the Italian case is very rare (see, for instance, the exception in the song *Italia amore mio, runner-up* at 2010 Sanremo festival, where old-fashioned, melancholic, melodic with opera-like

[12] www.youtube.com/watch?v=mt2QuQcb2Ou

nationalistic passages can be found).[13] It is noteworthy that the performance was highly contested by the public and the orchestra at Sanremo, yet nearly ignored by the radios.

AU8

Furthermore, the idea of populism as *iii. a style of communication* is also present, although at a lesser extent, as we see from the table, in Italian recent pop music. In these cases, we find a style of communication designed to evoke emotions (such as hate, fear and enthusiasm) offering oversimplified solutions to complex problems along with the celebration of a language which refers to direct and non-institutional/formal style (for more detail on the presence of emotions linked to populism, see the last column of Table 3.1). More generally, we found quite often the adoption of an emergency or dramatizing rhetoric in the pop songs analysed (in the lyrics as well as the images of the video),[14] as in the song of Emma (e.g. "If you, who have a conscience, lead and believe in the country…/Tell me what I have to do to feed myself/To pay me for my stay, tell me what to do", ID. 15). The rhetorical dimension is often emphasized by virtue of the emotionality of the actual videos (e.g. the faces of depressed elderly people, hollowed out by poverty, appear). On the whole, drama is used to show people's oppressed and excluded conditions (e.g. the 'bulls in Pamplona', i.e. trapped and condemned to death, angry but without a precise direction, Fabri Fibra, ID.18). Occasionally, and at odds with populism understood as a form of political (collective) mobilization (Jansen, 2011; Padoan, 2017), we see a call for individual rather than collective action ('let's escape together', ID. 18). Similarly, suburban contexts are described as those areas in which "the blood comes from the pen when the blade enters/destinies written in the face/drama is the mark of our families" (ID.17), and feelings of anxiety are mobilized, brought by perennial competition (as in the anti-prohibitionist song *Maria Salvador* ID.13,

[13] As we read in the lyrics, "*I always believe in the future, in justice and work/in the feeling that unites us, around our family/I believe in traditions, of a people who do not give up/and I suffer from the worries of those who have little or nothing./I believe in my culture and my religion/for this I am not afraid to express my opinion/I feel the heart of a lonely Italy beating faster/that today more serenely, is reflected in its entire history/Yes, tonight I am here, to tell the world and God/of my love, Italy. I won't tire of telling the world and God, of my love, Italy*" (ID. 30).

[14] A visual analysis carried out on the official music videos of the 30 selected songs categorized as 'populist' confirmed the image of potential populist tropes present in Italian pop music over the last 20 years. We implemented the visual analysis according to three steps consisting of iconographic, symbolic and contextual analyses of images (Doerr et al., 2013).

"the envy that devours society"). Likewise, the proposed solution is individual rather than collective ("I ignore the world and its anxiety", ibid.).

In other cases, the emergency-emotional rhetoric is not accompanied by hatred or resentment, but rather with hope and pride (two emotions equally related to left-wing populism, as illustrated in Chap. 1, Katsambekis, 2016): they can be linked to one's socioeconomic condition and territorial belonging. This is the case of Rocco Hunt singing 'for Gennaro who had a child/for the fishermen, the greengrocers/for all the people of the neighbourhood [*rione*]' (ID.16),[15] coupled with strong identitarian appeals ('this place must not die/these people must not quit from here/my accent must be heard/recognizable', ID. 16).

It should be specified that this type of communication is practically always accompanied by populist tropes typical of the interpretation of populism, à la Ostiguy, namely, as a sociocultural phenomenon, illustrated briefly before (point *ii*.), characterized by a certain style of doing politics, behaviour, social bonds and networks aiming to establish a strong relationship with the people.[16] For example, a certain emotionalization-dramatization, combined with nostalgia for an idealized past in its serenity and light-heartedness (a relatively recurring type of emotion: e.g. ID. 21), is found in some pop songs, such as *Senza Pagare* (J-Ax and Fedez, ID.22,[17] Fig. 3.c in Appendix). This song, while including references to contemporary politics, ridiculing both the establishment and the left ('help when you need it, like Trump with Merkel'; 'from class struggle to lots of taxes to pay: Communists with Rolex watches!'), refers mostly to the upward mobility of the singers, through a 'self-made-men' storytelling celebrating their own success ('we enter without paying/and all the people are watching us/but nobody will touch us/like professional footballers/like criminals'). In *Senza Pagare*, indeed, there are elements of almost every definition of populism (including Ostiguy's 'flaunting of the low'). Similarly, in songs such as *Tranne te* (Fabri Fibra, 2010, ID. 26) and *P.E.S.* (Club Dogo, 2012, ID. 19), we identified elements that can be linked to Ostiguy's definition of populism, the former of which mocks middle-class xenophilia ("I will rap in French/so I'll be perceived as more

[15] Winner of Sanremo in 2014.

[16] Through "the [transgressive] use of informal, locally anchored, language, the exaggeration of 'typical' displays […] always directed antagonistically at an Other, manifestly not of the 'national pleb'" (Ostiguy, 2020: 31).

[17] *Senza pagare* is a typical summer hit, which was the second bestselling Italian song in 2017, totalling over 90 million views on YouTube.

elegant") and the latter celebrating a sort of popular laziness ("ready for the videogame/give me just a glass and a beer"). In many cases, similarly to what we have seen earlier, the videoclips are fully compatible with the messages of the lyrics, as in *Maracanà* (Emis Killa, 2014, ID. 12) portraying a typical popular, humble neighbourhood. The politicization of locally anchored sociocultural references, perhaps in a more popular way than properly low is instead central in the pieces of Rocco Hunt (e.g. ID.16), while in other songs, ranging from trap (*Cupido,* Sfera Ebbasta, ID. 5) to melodic pop (*Sempre noi,* J-Ax and Max Pezzali, ID. 21), (male) comradery is celebrated.[18] At other times, a celebration of authenticity was also noted (as opposed to artificial, respectable, proper, conformist or, depending on the context, superficial or frivolous behaviour), albeit with calls for either an individual or non-conformist attitude (as Ghali states: "you only are successful when you don't give a damn …", ID.9), or for detachment ("I stay away from stress/smoke a bit and then I play [the football videogame] PES", a song "dedicated to those who have a diploma and have no job", ID. 19) or, as in trap songs, to celebrate status achievements ("Mom used to be on a pitch, now she lives in a luxury hotel", ID.24). In all these cases, however, there is a lack of collective appeal that we consider inherent to any populist phenomena (and thus should be identified in a 'populist message'). Furthermore, if the classic trap themes (sex, misogyny, excesses) can be traced back, to a certain extent, to a low repertoire, they are nonetheless far from the meaning given by Ostiguy to populism, namely the 'popular mass culture' (as opposed to subcultural celebrations), even if they are potentially functional in the reproduction of stereotypes associated with 'the Low' (which includes a certain anti-intellectualism, e.g. ID. 22, ID. 25). There prevails, in addition, anti-middle-class sentiments, in line with this understanding of populism.

Another important though limited share of the songs contain references to populism in terms of *iv. rhetoric* (see again Table 3.a), alluding to a de-legitimization of the political institutions, of other political actors (and their proposals), although we did not find any references legitimizing or endorsing new political actors (i.e. as 'true challengers' of the status quo). For example, in reference to three well-known recent Italian hits: the trapper Ghali, in his *Cara Italia* ('Dear Italy', 2018, ID. 2, 133 million views on YouTube), targets both traditional left and right ('what kind

[18] In the latter case, in quite an 'innocent', somewhat less masculine way, mixed with nostalgia for the good, pre-digital old times.

of politics is this? What is the difference between left and right/The toilet is on the left the bathroom at the bottom right', ID.2); similarly, the rapper Fabri Fibra, in his song *Pamplona* (2017, ID. 18, 63 million views on YouTube), accuses the political parties of creating artificial divisions amongst the people ('politics wants to divide us'); while Fedez (*L'amore Eternit*, 'Eternal/Asbestos Love', 2015, 33 million views on YouTube) targets the 'Italian State' for being 'very similar to love: first it fucks you and then it abandons you'.[19] In the aforementioned *Pamplona* (ID. 18), we also find evocative critiques against the system in general and the Italian state from a suburban point of view where no one escapes from precariousness ("I was with the Lebanese/when he was shot outside the house/but how much violence goes on television/even if better on television than inside the house/Bro, I worked in an office/I swear I was going crazy/there I barely paid the rent/nothing works in Italy", ID.18), thus mixing both attacks towards a generic system (populism as rhetoric) and insistence on a (not homogeneous, but homogeneously oppressed) people (populism as ideology). We also often noted a direct denunciation of the limits of a (sociopolitical Italian) system that is both non-meritocratic and conformist, including criticisms against the current educational system which fails to guarantee social mobility[20] (e.g. 'You were doing well at school/instead with my head in the air I was a donkey that flies/Then the job market lied to your graduation/And he kept his word to my dreams', ID.22).

Finally we also found traces of populism more related to *v.* an *organizational* interpretation of the phenomenon, chiefly to mobilize support or highlight a charismatic leader/actor, who is supposed to embody a 'popular will'.[21] In these cases, a type of celebration of a 'hyper-leaderistic' relationship is emphasized in the songs, as well as calls for mobilization against the status quo, albeit in small amounts, are made. For instance, there are

[19] The addition of the adjective 'Italian' renders the idea of a criticism not towards public institutions per se, but towards the inefficiencies and corruption characterizing Italy.

[20] The educational system is often considered a *longa manus* of the dominant values and interests in society (ID.14). In one case (ID. 17), there is a critique against classist education, which is accompanied by the celebration of common knowledge linked to everyday life, very much typical of populist rhetoric (Yva-Anttila, 2018).

[21] The leader, presenting himself/herself as a 'taboo breaker' and fighter against political correctness, hence adopts de facto highly vertical organizational strategies—typical of the so-called charismatic party theorized by Panebianco (1982) in order to pursue political mobilization of discontent voters.

songs which refer to a cathartic role of the singer, presenting him as a successful manifestation of individual, materialistic and symbolic struggle against the system: this struggle may be conducted in the symbolic terrain (against the 'taboos of society', ID. 13) or in the materialistic one ('bigoted people who do not know what an empty fridge is [and disgusted by] authentic rhymes', ID. 25). In other cases, songs are characterized by a strong appeal to mobilize against elites, according to a view of populism, as a strategy of mass mobilization (still considered as part of our category of populism as *organization*: Jansen, 2011). In this regard, passages in the lyrics of the selected pop songs stress a need to collectively pursue a desired social redemption, as in the case of Ligabue's *Il muro del suono* ID.10 or in the song by Rocco Hunt, *'Nu juorno buono'* ('Forget the banks, we will lend money to them/Zero master, we will steal his throne', ID. 16). Finally, the title of the song, *Andiamo a comandare* ('Let's go to lead', ID. 1: a parody mocking rappers and trappers' celebration of drug and alcohol abuses), was reused by the League leader Matteo Salvini as the slogan for his 2018 electoral campaign (*Andiamo a governare*, 'let's go to govern'): this is a good example of how pop references are exploited for political purposes, as we will explore further in Chaps. 4 and 5.

Moreover, as we can see from Table 3.1 (last column on the right), we also looked at the types of *emotions* mobilized in Italian pop music (*vii.)*. While some specific emotions have been recently empirically linked to populism politics and populist success in mobilization (as outlined in Chap. 1), our analysis revealed the prevalence of emotions such as anxiety and nostalgia. Anxiety is often triggered by structural oppression brought on by hyper-competitiveness (ID. 13; ID. 18) and lack of social (ID. 15) and environmental justice (ID. 11), and can be read as a potential politicization of grievances—thus more likely to afford left-wing populist interpretations. Nostalgia, on the other hand, refers to a more genuine, pre-digital past (ID. 16; ID. 21; ID. 27) and assumes explicit nationalist-conservative tones in the aforementioned *Italia Amore Mio* (ID. 30). An interesting contrast exists between this song and Ghali's *Cara Italia* (ID. 2), which instead explicitly rejects exclusionary nationalism and engages in a bittersweet declaration of love and pride written by the Italo-Tunisian rapper ("They tell me to 'go home'/I reply 'I am already there'"). Nostalgia is connected to the literature (Elci, 2022; Menke & Wulf, 2021; Smeekes et al., 2021) as a central emotion in right-wing populist communication, particularly when referring to an idealized, 'more authentic' or even glorious national past.

Disengagement and Libertarianism

As mentioned, also calls for *vi. political disengagement* are present in recent Italian pop music. They range from songs stressing the need to 'I ignore the world and its anxiety' (ID. 13), to songs celebrating the individual success of the singer emerging from difficult environments (ID. 14), and stand for a purely individual liberation ('believing in yourself/is the only thing that will save you, ID. 17).[22] In any case, only through a certain interpretative effort from the part of the listener is it possible to link this role to populism as a political phenomenon. Some examples of this type have been found intertwined with other potential interpretations of populism. In a significant number of cases analysed, we noted a total lack of references to collective appeals, which we consider as inherent to any populist phenomena. The main message of 'disengagement' delivered is an invitation to 'rely on yourself', with quite pessimistic, anti-political and even anti-social tones—that is, to summon a kind of 'individualistic rebellion' against aspects of 'the system' (to be understood as the hegemonic set of social and cultural values that accompany different structural stratifications and power relations within Italian society). Another form of this trope found embodies more the pursuit of individual success as a form of 'overcoming' the structural hurdles imposed by 'the system'. For instance, Ghali in his *Habibi* (2017, ID. 8) mixes anti-politics, social criticism and disengagement ('They are on you when you drink/and they don't listen to you when you are thirsty/let's smoke our grief/let's drink our problems'), while in his *Ninna Nanna* (2017, ID. 4), he mocks 'the system' from his acquired high-status position ('my middle finger stays raised/I quit the mud/and I buy a villa for Mommy').

This may chime with an understanding of populism as a 'symbolic' liberation (and revenge) without challenging the ganglia of the hegemonic system (Westheuser, 2020). It seems a push towards disengagement and a fallback towards a private-consumerist and in any case individual sphere, although the effect is to contribute to the creation of a subculture and therefore a collective phenomenon, openly antagonistic towards the traditional bourgeois, respectable morality. The trap genre in particular (for example, see the following songs that we analysed, ID. 24; ID. 25) can be considered a *zeitgeist* of a sceptical and disillusioned youth who seek

[22] In general, hedonistic and vaguely 'libertarian' individualism, although without politicization of the message, is largely present in the pop songs analysed.

luxury and unbridled hedonism, yearned for, but above all justified by the effort made to achieve it, that is to say, emerging from an extremely competitive climate.

Anti-Populism in Italian Pop Music?

We also perceived a feature that we labelled 'anti-populism' in our analysis of the most popular Italian pop songs (Table 3.3).

These are songs containing 'anti-populist' references, in the sense that they implicitly or explicitly target social or political aspects that are part of, or associated with, one of our definitions of populism. These songs may contain, for instance, critiques against an understanding of politics based on mere popular or electoral support (i.e. vote-seeking politics), such as in Ghali's *Ninna Nanna* ('I am not a politician/I do not seek plaudits', ID.14). Anti-populism also includes criticisms of the 'average Italian', that is, a stylization of Italians who lack a sense of civic duty and who focus on frivolous things ('I'm grateful to have a place/in the sexiest country in the world/where both the loincloth and the bank account/are strictly in the red', ID. 6; also ID. 34). We also found songs targeting conservatism, xenophobia and sovereignism, often linked to the populist radical right ('There are people who love their land, its borders/And are so patriotic/ Who dream of a homeland without neighbors/But if two people who hate each other can have children/tell me why love is important', ID. 37),

Table 3.3 Pop songs coded as 'populist' and 'anti-populist' (2009–2018)

Year	*% of songs with **'populist'** elements (N)*	*% of songs with **'anti-populist'** elements (N)*	*Total (N)*
2009	5 (1)	0 (0)	21
2010	10 (2)	24 (5)	21
2011	5 (1)	14 (3)	22
2012	16 (3)	0 (0)	19
2013	6 (1)	31 (5)	16
2014	24 (4)	0 (0)	17
2015	16 (3)	11 (2)	19
2016	22 (4)	11 (2)	18
2017	28 (5)	11 (2)	18
2018	32 (6)	16 (3)	19
2009-2018	16 (30)	12 (22)	190

while other ones celebrate values such as freedom, pluralism (including ethnic and religious pluralism) and openness to dialogue (e.g. 'a way to go/with no hate/without walls nor fears/without flags', ID. 39).[23] Finally, 'anti-populism' appears also in an overtly conflictual sense, that is, through clear attacks against populist politicians, as in the case of Fedez raising the middle finger in the videoclip of *Vorrei ma non posto.* (ID. 27) when mentioning Matteo Salvini. Other politicians are targeted within an anti-populist frame: for instance, *Faccia come il cuore* (J-Ax and Neffa, 2010, ID. 6), which implicitly attacks politicians, namely Matteo Renzi and Silvio Berlusconi, whose communication was characterized by optimistic narratives denouncing their critics as prophets of disaster and magnifiers of the problems of Italy, and thus contributing to a collective mistrust towards the future and a sense of pessimism and dissatisfaction. In this case, the optimistic narration by Renzi and Berlusconi (mocked by J-Ax and Neffa) could be equated with populism as demagoguery, as a simplistic and ultimately detrimental (for the people) way of doing politics.

In some other cases (including the aforementioned ID. 6, ID. 14 and ID. 27), anti-populist and populist affordances coexist in the same song. This often happens when the polemic target is the Italian mass culture (spread by 'politicians who want to distract us', ID. 16), the 'average Italian' or the criminal and corruption-prone Italian society. Such critiques of what we will define as the 'arch-Italian' national character (Chaps. 4 and 5) have been absolutely fundamental within the discourse of the Five Star Movement, whose former leader Beppe Grillo repeatedly targeted the Italian amoral familism (Banfield, 1963), and can be understood either in an anti-elitist way (against "politicians who want us to be distracted", ID.16) or in an anti-populist way (a mere disdain for the 'populace'). However, a third affordance can be advanced when emphasizing the 'harmless' component of such critiques that may even inspire an affinity and proudness of being Italian, despite (or because of) such flaws and a lack of civic sense. All of these considerations lend support to the notion that anti-populism is necessarily viewed through a prism of populist

[23] Among these, we find pieces by Mannoia, Carboni, Gazzè, Mengoni, Vecchioni, Jovanotti, Litfiba, Zucchero, Neffa—intergenerational artists, the majority of which can be ascribed to the category of the 'singer-songwriters' (Fabbri & Plastino, 2013). It is interesting how some of these artists (Mannoia, Gazzè) have been or are associated with the 5 Star Movement, while others (Cremonini, Jovanotti) have links to the Democratic Party. Cremonini in particular, in his 'concept album' centred on New York, seems to be a perfect interpreter of the values of middle-class liberal progressivism.

phenomena so as to capture how reactions towards populism may, under certain conditions, contribute in triggering a process of production and reproduction of populist/anti-populist cleavages (Stavrakakis & Jaeger, 2017). Moreover, we can, in a creative manner, re-read Table 3.2 by dividing our time frame in three sub-periods: 2009–2012 (i.e. during the peak of the Great Recession and before the arrival of the Five Star Movement in Parliament); 2013–2015 (i.e. before the full saliency assumed by the so-called migratory crisis, considered a key political opportunity for the growth of right-wing populism); 2016–2018. We can see how both populism and anti-populism have increased over time, witnessing the progressive saliency of the 'people/elite' frame in contemporary Italian pop music.

In sum, our analysis suggests that the sociocultural approach to populism is particularly useful to capture the presence of populist affordances within Italian pop music, particularly in the most recent years (while in the early years of our time frame the 'ideological' approach prevailed). Celebrations of masculinity, comradery and rudeness, as well as denunciations of hypocrisy (in line with the aforementioned 'ideology of authenticity'), are particularly recurrent in the pop songs under scrutiny. However, anti-elitist and, indeed, quite evidently politicized claims (populism as ideology) are also widespread, more than initially expected, though in line with the structural, socioeconomic crisis shaping Italy in the early aftermath of the Great Recession.

3.2 Musicological Group Analysis: 'Playing Italianness in Italian Pop Music'

Our musicological group analysis (MGA) offered to us clues on how links between music and agency, forms of community and ideas, can come to be forged (DeNora, 2000, 39). For the MGA analysis, we selected the 10 most prominent (i.e. representative') Italian pop song for the potential link between music and populism.[24] This selection was based on the songs where populism was more present according to our previous content analysis, and/or on songs (close to the Lega, 5SM or local dialectic culture)

[24] Emma Marrone (*Non è l'inferno*, 2012 Sanremo winner), the pop-rappers J-Ax and Fedez (with the super-hit song *Senza pagare*, 2017) and Rocco Hunt (*'Nu juorno buono*, 2014 Sanremo winner); *La Grande V* (2011), from the repertoire of the Venetian-rock band Rumatera (plausibly linked to the League's discourse); an iconic song (*Chi comanda il mondo?*, 2016) from the right-wing songwriter Povia.

that emerged as particularly filled with populism from the field. Povia is an Italian singer widely considered as populist, also in the journalistic debate; therefore, one of his song was inserted in the list. Our assumption here was that music is always part of a discursive and historical context (Doehring et al., 2017), and therefore it acts as an 'agent of meaning' (ibid.). This part of the analysis was therefore meant to understand how structural features of a given sound (e.g. melodic, harmonic, micro-rhythmic and auditory aspects) are able to afford observed understandings.[25] We did not explicitly seek or limit our search to 'populist claims', as in the content analysis, instead to define, through the active involvement of the participants, categories and intuitions, different messages, interpretations, potential uses and exploitations (*affordances*) of the piece under examination, as well as potential audiences.[26]

The musicological group analysis reinforced our findings from the content and visual analysis, whilst shedding light on the meanings that

[25] As mentioned, we conducted a musicological groups analysis on Italian pop songs that emerged from the 'field'. In this part, our assumption was that music is always part of a discursive and historical context (Doehring et al., 2017), and therefore it acts as an 'agent of meaning' (ibid.). MGA also enabled us to understand how structural features of a given sound (e.g. melodic, harmonic, micro-rhythmic and auditory aspects) are able to afford observed understandings.

We are grateful to the partners of the research project "Popular Music and the Rise of Populism in Europe" (Volkswagenstiftung, n Ref.: 94754–1) for introducing us to this method, relatively unknown in political sociology and political science. We hope that this section can be a stimulus for new ideas and research agendas in our disciplines. For some details on this method, see Chap. 1. We conducted 10 sessions of MGA, each based on a single song deemed particularly relevant to populism from our text and visual analysis, reiterated/played several times during an interactive discussion. Six out of the 10 songs were included because of their high 'populist' scores in our lyric analysis, while the remaining four songs were scrutinised through MGA in order to explore alternative links between pop music and populism: thus, MGA.4 focused on one of the most important songs from the 'anti-system' repertoire by Giuseppe Povia; MGA 9 analysed the most famous piece by *Rumatera*, a rock band singing in local dialect and celebrating their local roots, the Veneto region, arguably the electoral stronghold of the League; MGA 10 was devoted to the most popular official anthem of the 5SM; we also looked at 'anti-populism' with the inclusion of Lucio Dalla's song *Com'è profondo il mare* ("How deep is the sea?", MGA.8), which became the unofficial anthem of the 'anti-populist' *Sardine* movement.

[26] Participants of the MGAs were asked to elaborate and discuss potential 'affordances' of the songs in an independent and spontaneous manner: in order to let the discussion be driven by different aspects of a song, such as the genre, the persona of the singer—when identified by the participants—the sonic structure, the lyrics and the video, which we only introduced at the end of the session.

AU14

individual recipients may ascribe to a piece of music and its sonic structures in a specific social and cultural setting. In particular, *nostalgia for a lost past, coupled with insecurity and anxiety, and concepts such as simplicity, humility and spontaneity* emerge as those more often quoted and praised by participants of the musicological sessions, while listening our pop music pieces. The participants often highlighted concepts and frames such as nation and nationality *('Italianità')*, 'nostalgia', hedonistic values, an individual rather than a collective approach to politics and authenticity (i.e. the singer as a self-made man, with a strong personality, not following others, not prone to compromises), like the populist leader (Taggart, 2000).

Nostalgia was perceived with different meanings (MGA. 2, 5, 6, 9). 'Nostalgia' for the child-adolescent age, understood as the time of innocence (2) or when 'you were content with little', again with different meanings (5,9), or also, in a more historical and less autobiographical sense, 'nostalgia' for an era that has now gone (6). Closely related to the concept of 'nostalgia' are those of simplicity, spontaneity and humility (1,2,7,9). There is a construction of a pious, godly people (1, partly 5), but also capable of finding redemption, at least (perhaps it would be better to say 'almost exclusively') on a symbolic and collective level (in a rather effective way: 5, 9).

Generally speaking, however, the demand for an individual approach to modern-day problems is perceived in pop songs by MGAs' participants: in any case, there are no observations of invocations to mechanisms of empowerment (1,2). When they do emerge, these invocations have been perceived as 'ineffective' by MGA's participants (4,6), because they are quite disconnected from people's everyday experience and expressed through overtly "political" tones. Thanks to the use of dialect, as well as the sound (e.g. rap with reggaeton sounds [7] or a catchy and polished punk-rock [9]), the creation of a collective imagery based on subnational identities appears much more effective. In particular, the construction of a local identity narrative on the basis of stereotypes such as 'rurality', 'rudeness', 'pride' and 'cult of manual labor' appeals to the producerist (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019) and sexist rhetoric of the League.

More specifically, in the case of *Non è l'inferno* (Emma Marrone), the song was categorized by our participants as "typically Sanremese", because of the "engaged and highly rhetorical lyrics" and because of the "melody and the singing style, emotional and reminiscent of traditional Italian melodic pop". Participants noted heavily loaded words and phrases such as "life, blood, country, God, faith, father, I believe in the country", "it is

a quasi-militaristic imagery", "reactionary" but also "plenty of social critique". The combination of melody and lyrics is said to target Sanremo's (stereo)typical followers. Above all, the perceived *Italianness* of the song was framed in different ways: those who disliked the song described it as "reactionary-populist" because of the references to 'traditional' values, while participants keen on the song (in our MGA, those with lower educational levels or aged above forty) considered it "interesting", "surprising" and an "effective denunciation", although Emma—despite some recent progressive public claims—can hardly be considered a 'politically engaged' singer based on her musical repertoire.

As for Ghali's *Ninnananna*, "the message is that he is someone who has made it, has been successful, nonetheless, always with a middle finger raised attitude"… "It's a fresh genre, to me it conveys the impression of an individualistic society. He does not talk about any integration, because that would mean integrating into a coherent whole. The society depicted—perhaps not desired—is entirely individualistic, so it does not convey any mobilizing message to be taken all together"; instead, "a sense of eternal competition prevails". Thus, the critique of the system's logic starts from implicitly accepting one of the tenets of the same system: individualism is legitimized as the only way to survive, although at the same time people are not blamed for their failures. If populism is a "recipe working with its own ingredients of the hegemonic logic", as Stavrakakis argues, there are some traces of it here.[27]

Rocco Hunt's *'Nu juorno buono'* has emerged from our MGA as a "reassuring" song: a rap song sufficiently melodic to fit the tastes of a broad audience (a catchy melody, centrality of the chorus and appealing as 'background' music). It is "reassuring" also in terms of its lyrics, eliciting "hope" through a "non-divisive, 'light' social critique". The usage of Neapolitan dialect contributes in making the song "neither leftist, nor rightist… it mobilizes territorial identities […] there is a difference with Northern dialects, which immediately makes me think of the League". The persona of the singer is also key: "a fresh-faced [*acqua e sapone*], somewhat nerdy guy singing about local proudness, unity and hope". The MGA participants tended to associate the song with the 5SM (although the author publicly describes himself as 'completely apolitical'): "it is not

[27] Similar comments were made by a participant about *Non è l'inferno*, where the presence of strong 'conservative', 'nationalist' imageries were cited by the listeners, as well as 'a critique of the current political and economic system', for its 'unfulfilled promises'.

the typical leftist songwriter style, it lacks complexity, but it is not right-wing, there is a collective *flatus*. It promotes a sort of 'positive ingenuity'", very much aligned to one of the multiple images of the 5SM: not so much the anti-establishment dimension, but rather the 'kind revolution' the party repeatedly declared to pursue.

In other cases, and particularly when analysing J-Ax's songs (*Senza pagare* with Fedez, and *Faccia come il cuore* with Neffa), the MGAs highlight how catchy melodies contribute in depoliticizing the songs, and, more precisely, in downplaying any anti-elitist, critical messages. As argued by the participants on *Faccia come il cuore* (Fig. 3.b in Appendix), "they are the kind of songs that circulate a lot but you have no idea what they're about. But [J-Ax] is very provocative in his pieces. Literally, it is a denouncement… but language and music do not make it clear. And the message probably wants to be lost… it is a hyper-pop piece". As for *Senza pagare*, minor chords play a part in the "motivation", clearly encouraging collective singing: it "makes you feel powerful". The song is "typical of the J-Ax and Fedez' repertoire", namely, songs where social critique fades away when the chorus starts: again, "transgression pills" are completely overturned by a catchy, entertaining, carefree/light-hearted melody. The participants argued that *Senza Pagare* triggers identification amongst "lower-middle class people, I mean, not particularly well-off but that can afford a night of excess". All in all, as the video confirms, the song is a "justification of the social status attained by the singers: 'we worked a lot for that', so it is well deserved, and we can afford to be rude" (Fig. 3.c in Appendix). One way to link these reactions with the concept of populism is, on the one hand, to consider populism as *mainly* symbolic (thus primarily cultural) 'revenge from the Low', following Ostiguy (2018) and Westheuser (2020). On the other hand, populism is antagonistic but neither 'revolutionary', in the sense that it does not aim to subvert modes of production, nor 'pedagogical', in the sense that, while working with concrete, existing cultural materials and imageries, it ends by reproducing them, and thus consumerist and individualistic patterns of consumption (Stavrakakis, 2020). In other words, the song plays with the ambitions of climbing the social ladder, but, like populism, does not question the roots of social inequality. Both *Senza pagare* and populism do not go beyond a—mostly symbolic—critique of hypocrisy and bourgeois respectability.

Essentially, the picture we draw from the analyses of these 'hyper-pop' songs is, as expected, hard to define. Emerging affordances are multiple: from conservativism and heteronormativity to emotional appeals to social

justice (*Non è l'inferno*); flaunting of local (Southern) identity received as both rebellious and non-conflictual, pathetic and simplistic (*'Nu juorno buono*); mobilizing effects that, however, do not summon politicization and remain constrained to an evasive fantasy opportunistically elicited by the artists (*Senza pagare, Faccia come il cuore* and, in part, *Ninna nanna*).

An anti-bourgeois motive has also been detected in the MGA session focused on Rumatera's *La Grande V*. In this case, "there is quite a tidy rock-metal sound, which seamlessly merges with guttural voices to perfectly describe how Venetian identity is depicted: harsh, rude, whilst still spontaneous and warm. It is not the same warm-hearted hospitality you find in Southern Italy… it is warm because it is spontaneous. It's not only a call for 'accepting who you are': it is a call to celebrate how other people describe you, and what in fact you are no longer… because such ruralist imagery[28] (Fig. 3.d in the Appendix) does not really exist anymore". This is a perfect example of how the concept of heartland (Taggart, 2000) may work. The song is not interpreted as 'divisive' ("it is a choral song because in the lyrics there is a reference to companies, to the culture of being together"), despite its strong identitarian potential ("it talks about roots, running on the road behind the house, carefree living in a rural province"): "a non-Venetian guy would probably have fun in a concert, would even develop a good impression of Venetian people", because such an impression would perfectly fit with the existing stereotypes about Venetians.

At the same time, an exclusionary feature is captured: "I know guys personally who hate Rumatera because they ridicule our identity… and, indeed, I also have a sort of repulsion towards this way of portraying Venetian identity, even if I had fun at their concerts. It is their parochialism, which emerges from the ironic juxtaposition between the rude and guttural voices typical of metal genre and the issues discussed, celebrating ruralism". From these latter considerations, we can acknowledge the enormous pre-political potential of such pop cultural productions, as long as they are not understood as overtly political or appropriated for political purposes. In other words, political appropriation would risk "bringing politics to the fore": "I am thinking about the [*reggaemuffin*] Sud Sound System from Apulia, but even [*reggae*] Pitura Freska from Veneto [both

[28] Such imagery looks "very much like the American frontier—an idea which is fortified by the genre, which is not really something from Veneto, and thus increases the parodic effect", as reported by a participant.

bands singing in local dialects]: in these cases, the effect of the territorial identification is not to oppose the other, broader identities. In the case of Rumatera, you identify with a specific community, and nothing more than that. The integrative dimension of territorial identification is absent. While it is not conflictual, still it is clearly exclusionary".

This is, arguably, one of the main key takeaways of our analysis: to be populist, songs do not have to be explicitly populist. Otherwise, they look sectarian. This is exactly what emerged from the MGAs focusing on two rock songs from very different artists: the aforementioned Povia (*Chi comanda il mondo?*) and the left-wing Ligabue (*Il muro del suono*). These are the most explicitly politicized songs. In the case of *Il muro del suono* by Ligabue, "he's talking about something political, corrupt-mobsters-politicians, but in a confusing way. Not in a clear way, I would say almost, randomly, a bit of a set up. The lyrics feel incomplete and undefined to me, but it motivates you to look for something inside", "a kind of criticism that is isn't clearly directed at anything… Unaddressed rebellion, too abstract; this 'cowboy' slang sounds a bit ridiculous… You struggle to identify with it because it's not about you. It is a politically engaged song, far from being effective, though". Indeed, this is not very different for what was argued on *Chi comanda il mondo?*: "it is an overtly political, anti-EU song; I definitely wouldn't define it as leftist, it is… radical. What makes this song rightist is its conspiracy thinking. It is 'clickbait' because in order to like it you must have a predisposition, in the sense that you must not be particularly sophisticated, and yet you have to command some political interest and competence". In sum, a song like this is more likely to further politicize an 'enlightened minority' than to have some pretensions to become 'commonsensical': "in the first half of the song, while rapping, with words that end in -ists, terrorists, sovereignists, which are all very old twentieth century words, an ideological era, and he repeats, repeats, repeats them… well, he is really telling you that it is a political, militant song", "it aims to further politicize a minority, not to become commonsensical". For these purposes, for a non-sympathetic audience, Povia appears as less than effective: "the rock is associated with something inconvenient, it's like when someone goes on TV and says 'now I'm going to say something inconvenient, albeit nine times out of ten they state platitudes or bullshit. Well, anyway, the fact of presenting yourself as inconvenient provokes a certain expectation in the listener".

3.3 Conclusions

In this chapter, we started exploring the multiple ways in which popular music may contribute in the spreading and reproducing of populist discourses, establishing too that it can reinforce the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Our analysis showed the extent to which the typical populist 'people vs elite divide' becomes 'common sense' through apparently 'harmless', entertaining, 'non-political' recent Italian pop music productions. More broadly, this chapter has shed some light on the articulation of 'populist' frames, as they are traceable in pop music, which can be seen in the double sense of expressing something but also 'linking'—in essence, forging a bond between distinct elements that do not necessarily need to be connected (Hall, 1981; Laclau, 2005).

The findings show that a significant portion of the songs (through their lyrics, videos or the *persona* of the singer) contain—and may contribute in spreading—populist *tropes* and frames, including anti-elitism, the distrust of political institutions, celebrating 'authentic rudeness', articulations of specific grievances and celebrations of personal charisma (as embodied in the charismatic leader/musician). We argue that it is precisely its seemingly non-political features that enable this kind of cultural production to effectively spread political (and, more specifically, populist) worldviews. We also identified in (Italian) pop music the presence of anti-populist messages and calls for political disengagement (various studies based on survey data found a positive correlation between populism—i.e. populist voters—and either apathy or protest, e.g. on Italy, Mancosu, 2018, in particular on the 5SM, Pirro & Portos, 2021).

As we have seen in a diachronic perspective, pop music with 'populist contents' has unquestionably increased over time. Sometimes the frontier between populism and anti-populism is extremely porous, and this has partially to do with some cultural self-narratives about Italy and Italians: Italian people portray themselves as good, generous people (often in very familistic tones), and, at the same time, as bad citizens, indifferent to the common good, devoted to frivolous things and/or to the private sphere. These depictions have been objectified in several hit songs from the past,[29] and particularly from the eighties onwards (Martinelli, 2013), in a negotiation of the national identity as well as the urban/rural and regional

[29] See, amongst many examples, Toto Cutugno's *L'italiano* (1983), or, more recently, Articolo 31's *Italiano medio*, 'Average Italian Guy' (2003).

cleavages, often exploited, reproduced and negotiated even today. This has emerged particularly from our MGAs. Such narratives on Italians can be a fertile breeding ground for anti-political messages, but also for denouncing their own Italian people (and there we identify the eventual 'anti-populist' component) as the responsible of the malfunctioning of democratic institutions.

Moreover, whatever the characterization of populism is as an ideology; a political strategy, a logic of political articulation of the 'people' (as in Laclau) or as a politicization of sociocultural markers, populist phenomena entail a process of *identification*, as shown in our MGA analysis, operating vertically, as shown in the manifestation of a leader (or a party, or a pop celebrity), and horizontally, with the 'people' whom individuals feel that they belong to.[30]

The experience of group analysis in particular has been used as a unique opportunity to address musical properties explicitly, facilitating a discussion on music. It is here where the sociology of music, often criticized for its neglect of the actual sounds of music, and music analysis can meet, and we used this potential for our study. In our analysis, different social and political 'affordances' (DeNora, 2000) are identified: music appears to have the potential for carrying political messages, values, as well as *weltanschauung* through emotions.

Our analysis therefore pointed to the inherent 'active' features of any practice of consumption (not forgetting the 'passive', structurally determined features) to the extent that the cultural object (pop music pieces, in our case) is in fact co-produced by the listener (as producer of meaning) and by the listeners (as negotiators of meaning). This is, indeed, how music fandom works, and how increasingly politics works, as the literature on 'political fandoms' highlights (Erikson, 2008). If "politics, like popular culture is about creating an 'audience'" (Street, 1997: 60), the significant overlap between political and cultural (particularly music) fan communities stays in the "emotional constitution of electorates that involves the development and maintenance of affective bonds between voters,

[30] Moreover, if we look at Italian pop songs affording potentially populist ideas in *terms of genre, as well as emotions*, we have either Sanremo pieces (Emma Marrone, Rocco Hunt, Pupo) or material deriving from Italian mainstream hip hop (such as the cases of J-Ax, Fedez, Marracash, Gué Pequeno, Fabri Fibra, Ghali); we see that the former group makes ample use of a national-popular rhetoric, which includes the use of words and concepts that can be associated with a conservative-nationalist tradition.

candidates and parties" (van Zoonen, 2005: 66), as we will see in the next chapter.

To summarize the findings of this chapter: first of all, we showed the importance of the concept of nation and nationality *('Italianità')* in current Italian pop music—a concept which populist phenomena have often much to do with (Stavrakakis & De Cleen, 2020). This nation, however, is understood mostly as a common, shared cultural repertoire as well as (not necessarily positive) cultural traits (i.e. the nation of the average-Italian), as opposed to an ethno-nationalistic, even revanchist, definition of the people.

Secondly, the importance of 'nostalgia' was a key discovery in our findings, a celebration of 'good old times' characterized by simplicity, humility and 'authentic' values that helped in understanding the current Italian popular music. Indeed, populism as a political phenomenon often entails some nostalgic sense of belonging to (and loss of) an idealized heartland (Taggart, 2000) and, more broadly, a celebration of pre-modern values in times of transformation (and crisis) (Germani, 1965). However, we also observed the presence, somewhat contradictorily, of hedonistic values in the pop messages conveyed by the singer, presenting themselves as 'hero', having been able to attain success in spite of humble or disadvantaged beginnings and backgrounds. In addition, these artists endorse a justification of a luxurious lifestyle, as well as an individual approach to politics, with some feeling of 'hope' for the future, rather than calls for social and political conflict. As we will explore in Chap. 6, this aspect is strongly confirmed by our interviews with fans of selected singers. In addition, as the MGAs and the interviews underlined, populism and pop music are both frequently associated with the concept of authenticity. Foundational studies on populism—mainly focused on European populist radical right parties, including the Northern League (The League) in Italy—have developed and then built upon the concept of 'heartland' (Taggart, 2000), a "territory of the imagination" which embodies the "positive aspects of everyday life" and which serves as a source of inspiration for populist imagery. Authenticity is arguably also connected, as we have shown above, to the 'truth-telling' role that populists (and several pop stars) aspire to be associated with. All of these considerations are remarkably similar to the reflections on *rock* music as characterized by an "ideology of authenticity" (Peterson, 1997).

AU17

References

Abts, K., et al. (2021). The welfare agenda of the populist radical right in Western Europe: Combining welfare chauvinism, Producerism and populism. *Swiss Political Science Review, 27*(1), 21–40.

Banfield, E. (1963). *The moral basis of a backward society*. AbeBooks.

Caiani, M., & Graziano, P. (2016). Varieties of populism: Insights from the Italian case. *Italian Political Science Review, 46*(2), 243–267.

Caiani, M., & Padoan, E. (2020a). Setting the scene: Filling the gaps in populism studies. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 1–28.

Caiani, M., & Padoan, E. (2020b). Populism and the (Italian) crisis: The voters and the context. *Politics, 41*(3), 334–350.

De Cocco, J., & Monechi, B. (2022). Corrigendum and addendum to: How populist are parties? Measuring degrees of populism in party manifestos using supervised machine learning. *Political Analysis, 30*(3), 311–327.

DeNora, T. (2000). *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press.

Doehring, A. (2019). *Musicological group analysis*. Unpublished paper.

Doehring, A., Appel, R., Helms, D., & Moore, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Song interpretation in 21st-century pop music*. Ashgate.

Doerr, N., Teune, S., & Mattoni, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Advances in the visual analysis of social movements*. Emerald.

Dunkel M., Barna, E., Caiani, M., Doehring A., Niederauer, M., & Schiller, M. (2018). *Popular music as a medium for the mainstreaming of populist ideologies in Europe*. Research Project (Full Proposal) financed by Volkswagen Foundation, Ref. 94 754-1.

Dunkel, M., & Schiller, M. (Eds.). (2022). (forthcoming)). *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.

Elci, E. (2022). Politics of nostalgia and populism: Evidence from Turkey. *British Journal of Political Science, 52*(2), 697–714.

Erikson, E. (2008). 'Hillary is my friend': MySpace and political fandom. *Rocky Mountain Communication Review, 5*(1), 3–16.

Fabbri, F., & Plastino, G. (Eds.). (2013). *Made in Italy*. Routledge.

Flam, H., & Kleres, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Methods of exploring emotions*. Routledge.

Germani, G. (1965). *Politica y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas*. Paidos.

Hall, S. (1981). Notes on deconstructing the popular. In R. Samuel (Ed.), *People's history and socialist theory* (pp. 227–240). Routledge.

Ivaldi, G., & Mazzoleni, O. (2019). Economic populism and Producerism: European right-wing populist parties in a transatlantic perspective. *Populism, 2*(1), 1–28.

Jansen, R. (2011). Populist mobilization. A new theoretical approach to populism. *Sociological Theory, 29*(2), 75–96.

Johnston, H. (2002). Verification and proof in frame and discourse analysis. In B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds.), *Methods of social movements research* (pp. 62–91). Minnesota University Press.

Laclau, E. (2005). *La razón populista*. Fondo de Cultural Económica.

Mancosu, M. (2018). Populism, emotionalized blame attribution and selective exposure in social media. A comparative analysis of Italy and UK. *Comunicazione Politica, 1*, 73–92.

Martinelli, D. (2013). Lasciatemi Cantare and other diseases: Italian popular music, as represented abroad. In F. Fabbri & G. Plastino (Eds.), *Made in Italy* (pp. 207–220). Routledge.

Menke, M., & Wulf, T. (2021). The dark side of inspirational pasts: An investigation of nostalgia in right-wing populist communication. *Media and Communication, 9*(2), 237–249.

Muller, M., & Ozcan, E. (2007). The political iconography of Muhammad cartoons: Understanding cultural conflict and political action. *Political Science and Politics, 40*(2), 287–291.

Murat Ardag, M., et al. (2019). Populist attitudes and political engagement: Ugly, bad, and sometimes good? *Representations, 56*(3), 307–330.

Ostiguy, P. (2018). Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach. In P. Taggart, C. Rovira, P. Ochoa, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 73–97). Oxford University Press.

Ostiguy, P. (2020). The socio-cultural, relational approach to populism. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 29–58.

Otjes, S., et al. (2018). It's not economic interventionism, stupid! Reassessing the political economy of radical right-wing populist parties. *Swiss Political Science Review, 24*(3), 270–290.

Padoan, E. (2017). The populist re-politicization. Some lessons from South America and southern Europe. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 10*(2), 517–543.

Panebianco, A. (1982). *Modelli di partito. Organizzazione e potere nei partiti politici*. Il Mulino.

Peterson, R. (1997). *Creating country music: Fabricating authenticity*. University of Chicago Press.

Pirro, A., & Portos, M. (2021). Populism between voting and non-electoral participation. *West European Politics, 44*(3), 558–584.

Rathgeb, P. (2021). Makers against takers: The socio-economic ideology and policy of the Austrian Freedom Party. *West European Politics, 44*(3), 635–660.

Rico, G., Guinjoan, M., & Anduiza, E. (2017). The emotional underpinnings of populism: How anger and fear affect populist attitudes. *Swiss Political Science Review, 23*(4), 444–461.

Salmela, M., & Von Scheve, C. (2018). Emotional dynamics of right- and left-wing political populism. *Humanity and Society, 42*(4), 434–454.

Smeekes, A., et al. (2021). Longing for the "good old days" of our country: National nostalgia as a new master-frame of populist radical right parties. *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology, 5*(2), 90–102.

Stavrakakis, Y. (2020). The people is an empty signifier. A discussion between Yannis Stavrakakis and Lorenzo Zamponi., POPULISMUS Interventions No. 6, http://www.populismus.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/intervention-6-stavrakakis.pdf.

Stavrakakis, Y., & De Cleen, B. (2020). How should we analyze the connections between populism and nationalism: A response to Rogers Brubaker. *Nations and Nationalism, 26*(2), 314–322.

Street, J. (1997). *Politics and popular culture*. Polity Press.

Taggart, P. (2000). *Populism*. Open University Press.

Tomatis, J. (2019). *Storia culturale della canzone italiana*. Il Saggiatore.

Van Zoonen, L. (2005). *Entertaining the citizen: When politics and popular culture converge*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Westheuser, L. (2020). Populism as symbolic class struggle. Homology, metaphor, and English ale. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 256–283.

Yva-Anttila, T. (2018). Populist knowledge: 'Post-truth' repertoires of contesting epistemic authorities. *European Journal of Cultural Sociology, 5*(4), 356–388.

CHAPTER 4

The Use of (Pop) Music by Populist Parties

One way to explore the connection between music and politics is to look at the way music is directly appropriated by politicians (and activists) in order to act out their political identity, articulate their populist agenda and foster popular participation (Magaudda, 2020). While studies on the relationship between music and political actors have mainly focused on social movements (and protest music) or on political communication (ibid.), the various roles music can assume for collective action is significant, such as increasing outside support (propaganda), reinforcing ideology and identity of a group, promoting group cohesion, recruiting, mobilizing, as well as advocating prefigurative politics (Leach, 2016) to solve current social and political problems. In this chapter we will focus on populism, a topic still neglected in the academic debate. Yet the role of popular cultures and symbolic aspects, such as narratives, imaginaries and audio and visual messages, in the emergence, success and development of populism (Caruso, 2020) seems a promising venue of research for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Populist actors often resort to music as a tool to create shared identities and shape the narratives sustaining them (Duncombe & Bleiker, 2015). This is what we explore in this chapter: *to what extent and in which ways do populist parties in Italy use music, and in particular pop music, for the construction of their collective identity and propaganda; to politically educate potential new members and voters; for building networks and communities, as well as for their mobilization*. In

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3_4

this chapter we will try to answer these questions via a participant observation of populist party events (rallies, etc.) and in-depth interviews with party representatives and experts,[1] reflecting on the relationship between the music and political engagement of these organizations.[2] In particular, our participant observation—a method that Lévi-Strauss (Levi-Strauss, 1963) described as necessary prior to any historical or epistemological theorization—has been be a 'multi-sited' research, designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions or juxtapositions of locations in which we tried to establish some form of literal, physical presence, with the explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography' (Marcus, 1995, 105). Some recent studies on populism in Spain (Caruso, 2020) found that the Spanish party Podemos relied on music as a political tool and a base for a cultural debate. By debating the political role of music, Podemos leaders delved deeper into the wider issue of the relationship between political hegemony and popular cultures. In this sense, it has been argued that the selection of a playlist within a rally or a demonstration may constitute a very political act (ibid).

4.1 Music at the Lega Events: Building a 'Partisan Culture' Through Music

From our participant observation, several insights on the relationship between the rank and files of the Lega party and the cultural-musical sphere did emerge. The latter appeared, though not a fundamental component, however, is a relevant part of the construction of the party's public identity (i.e. imagery), as it is linked to the deepest values of the party political project. In our analysis, we did not focus only on which

[1] Key informant interviews are a useful data-collection strategy to deal with the lack of systematic archives and the informality of interactions—which is precisely what occurs in our case.

[2] Regarding the participant observation to grasp the roles and meaning of the use of pop music by populist political, we attended 3 party rallies and public events at the local and national levels, of the Lega and 5SM, in person, in 2019, plus we analysed the videos of the party festivals from 2010 to 2019 (31 events, for a total amount of 92 hours) (for the list of events, see Table 4.b in the Apppendix). These data have been integrated with a number of interviews with party representatives responsible for the communication strategies of the parties (see Table 4.c in the Appendix) to grasp the internal party debate on the (political) use of music and cultural products.

artists were invited to political parties' initiatives or to which music they played or was broadcasted, but also to the kind of atmosphere the events aspired (or were able) to create, to the interactions with the militancy and to theatrical techniques that contributed to vehicle specific messages, values and emotions. In addition to the parties events' participants and organization, we also looked at the demographics of the attendees and the socialization dynamics, as well as some more specific aspects of the presentation of the music, for example, the genre, timing, the space for music and the strategic choices, observing any changes over time.

First, particularly during the local party rallies, such as the '*Feste della Lega'*, the event of 'the Centre Right Coalition' in Rome in 2019 (as opposed to the *Raduni di Pontida* which are national ones), we see the aesthetic construction of the 'people' to which the party refers, as 'ordinary, common worker', who merits "having fun after the sacrifices they make during the working day", as a Lega local organizer explains (Int. 1).[3] Politics is clearly presented to the members and sympathizers who participate in the events, as separate from the private-ludic sphere, even from a spatial point of view (as the space dedicated to music performances, typically by local bands, is purposely separated from the ones devoted to political debates). Although popular music is not entirely central to these Lega local events, we can observe how background music perfectly fits in symbolizing the transformation of the League from an ethno-regionalist party to a nationalist one.

In general, the participants to the Lega local and national events are quite numerous. For instance, in the Pontida events (e.g. the case of the one in August 2019), around 700 people participated. We noted a majority of elderly people and families, with very few people under thirty (who were part of the family demographic). The atmosphere resembled a traditional village festival, with families playing bingo during dinner, surrounded by numerous local and regional flags (such as the northern region's flags of Veneto, Liguria, 'Padania': see Fig. 4.a in Appendix). There was a small book market stall run by the local association *Téra Oròbica* ("Bergamo's land"), virtually neglected by the attendants. Here,

[3] During our interviews we asked populist (and anti-populist) party representatives their opinion on the role of music for the party (beyond the specific event organized); the emotions that the music was designed to elicit amongst members; the rationale behind the choice of the artists invited/or music played; as well as the kind of massages they wanted to spread, also via music (for more details, see the questionnaire in the Appendix, Table 4.d).

it was possible to find some cultural tool playing a role of political education, such as old volumes of propaganda,[4] characteristic more of the Salvini era than of the current populist party national positioning.

The musical event was held in a dedicated smaller tent, where a stage was set for political speeches. It included the exhibition of a local dance school ('Orobic Dance') followed by a DJ. While waiting for the performance of the dance school, waltzes and tangos are suggested (at one point the organization recommends keeping the volume down as the political interventions in the main tent were starting). The secretary of the local section started by addressing some current journalistic debates where the Lega party was at the centre of some critiques (as, for example, the one concerning the names of some pizzas on sale in the festival stands, referring to racist jokes, i.e. the seafood pizzas were given the names of NGOs and ships rescuing migrants at sea). "Work" and "workers" are the keywords during the speech: "we will fix the infrastructure, the trains, for people who work", "thanks to all our volunteers"—who receive a heartfelt applause—"since they are working people, they have the right to call the pizzas whatever they want", "[on the judiciary reforms] everyone is responsible for their work, doctors, truck drivers—I take the opportunity to greet my uncle, who is a truck driver… the magistrates must also take responsibility for freeing rapists and drug dealers", "We want the flat tax, concrete things, while the others talk about philosophy, and happy degrowth, like the 5 Star dumbasses". The political interventions end with two minutes of silence: the first for the local cyclist legend Felice Gimondi, who had passed away the previous day; the second for some local victims of road accidents. In a nutshell, *producerism* (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019) and localism, typical of Lega populism, appeared as hegemonic, with implicit and explicit references created both in speeches and cultural environment. As the national general manager of the Lega party rallies explains, concerning the party music choices 'a unique playlist is put together by the party which is played before and after the leader's (Salvini) speeches, with a national pop genre characteristic and message' (Int. 2). One of these playlists (Lega rally in 2021), for example, was composed of thirteen

[4] E.g. the 25-year-old editions of the *Quaderni Padani* [a sort of academic journal edited by the party], books by the ideologist of the Bossian League, Gianfranco Miglio, volumes dedicated to some South Tyrolean autonomist figure, titles such as *Garibaldi: hero or waffler?*, books on Celtic culture, even translations in Lombard dialect of authors such as Twain, Grimm and Stevenson.

songs, with a number of Italian pop classics by artists from the sixties (Gino Paoli), the seventies (Battisti), the depoliticized eighties (Edoardo Bennato, Gianna Nannini, Vasco Rossi, Ricchi e Poveri, Claudio Baglioni, Pupo), the nineties (883, Lúnapop), as well as more recent hits (Thegiornalisti, Colapesce e Dimartino). Most of the songs invite a sing-along and are, without any exception, part of a widely shared repertoire among population. At least two songs (*Acqua azzurra, acqua chiara* by Battisti, and *Un'estate italiana* by Nannini and Bennato) also feature a nationalist imagery, linked to the colour blue of the renewed nationalist League. In sum, it is worth noticing that, as for the Lega, the use of music, as well as the assessment of its presence, style and so forth, has to be understood as a part of an aesthetic imagery which is constructed in the context of the event, as also explained by our expert interviews (Int. 42), "in order to fully understand the role of music for populist political actors, reflecting on the music is important as it is the context within which the music is played' (ibid.). As the organizer of the League's summer festival at Pontida explains, "…music, at least at party festivals, is uniquely used for recreational purposes, as in the Feste de l'Unità" (Int. 1). In terms of party culture, the League's militants are keen on localist artists singing in dialect (representing their territorial identity). However, at public events, music is entirely depoliticized: "in our festivals, music is deliberately separated from politics. The organiser adds 'If you want to hear music and dance and you don't want to be bothered by some politicians, that's right, I fully understand it… If you just want to relax after having worked all day, that's perfect'" (Int. 1). This clearly fits with a specific discursive construction of their people.

Returning to the space dedicated to music in the local *Festa della Lega* that we attended, it began to fill up as soon as the political part of the evening finished. Bachata-style rearrangements of Italian hits were played (*Meraviglioso* by Modugno, *Né vincitori né vinti* by Arisa), the dance floor was full of people aged over fifty, but also had seventy- to eighty-year-olds, particularly when the *liscio* came on. At the coffee stand, the secretary of the local section is offering his services, evidently proud to show himself 'in the front line' as an ordinary militant. He is a man in his forties, perhaps younger, full of tattoos dedicated to AC Milan and various local symbols (including the flag of the Veneto region).

Then came the time for the dance recital by the group 'Orobic Dance', consisting about 15 dancers—five children, the rest between 30 and 55 years old. It is definitely an amateurish performance. They alternate

AU5 duets and group dances, ranging from merengue, tango, bachata (on the notes of Álvaro Soler), salsa (rearrangement of Ramazzotti, Marc Anthony), to waltz (rearrangement of pieces by Louis Armstrong and Ligabue) to Charleston, and closing with group dances (*Saranno Famosi*'s theme, and *Cotton-Eye Joe*). The duration is about 45 minutes; then a DJ set with ballroom dancing started. This event was the typical Lega case of the use of music for 'simple fun', decidedly 'apolitical', in the purest style of a countryside festival, and, despite the absence of big political names and the date (in the middle of summer holidays), well attended up to midnight.

Our participant observation to various Lega events (with music) has suggested that the populist party strategically uses music references to reify (i.e. solidify and consolidate support, selling this identity of the people as a unique opportunity) its specific people, on which the party builds its main antagonistic discourse, the 'us' versus 'them', as a construction, though this means, of 'essentialized identities', typical of right-wing populist parties (Chinatera & Peto, 2003). Yet, for this purpose, the populist party evidently finds great opportunities in the terrain of popular culture, which is and also emerges from the analysis of the Lega events as "the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific society, including the contradictory forms of 'common sense' which have taken root and helped to shape popular life" (Hall, 1996: 26).

The populist League, similarly to what we will see in the next section for the 5SM, seems to work precisely on these 'contradictory forms' of common sense, articulating those practices and cultural references that serve their specific understanding and construction of the Lega people. And it does so musically.

Moreover, when asking the party representatives 'why' the party's organizers chose to adopt specific music selections, a local versus national differentiation emerges: on the one hand the local events, and on the other those cadres working for electoral campaigns and Salvini's rallies at the national level (see Table 4.1). In the latter case, the choice of music perfectly fits with one of the main slogans adopted by Salvini's League in view of the 2018 elections: "the common sense Revolution". The organizers of the Lega events at the local level, first of all, recognize the absence in the targeted population of a militant music scene, similar to what occurs for the left (Int. 1). As one of our interviewees explained, "you are free to either follow boring political debates or to have fun. You are free to do it

Table 4.1 Local vs. national (use of music) for the League

Type of League event	*Characteristics/Goals*	*Music played and its functions*
Major Party Rallies (e.g. *Raduni di Pontida*)	**Emphatic celebrations** of local identities and of the leader, Matteo Salvini. **Rank-and-files do not «participate», but rather *respond*.** They are part of a **quasi-militaristic** iconography. Prevalence of elderly men.	Music from Italian opera or from pre-WW2 Italian *tenori*/Celtic music/"epic" musi → **chymns, anthems, "motivating" music**
Local Party Festivals	**Informal, fun and relaxed time** in which militants and followers have dinner with people from the «community», having a break from *work*. It's a space for mature families.	• **Polka/mazurca orchestras** playing music for traditional dances for an older audience • **«0 km artists»** → local singers often singing in **local dialects,** with strong celebration of «local roots»

without bothering whoever is there for a purpose that you don't have" (Int. 2). There is, in fact, the explicit goal to avoid such militant music, by instead using music which provides attendees at the party rallies a relaxing experience and an atmosphere consciously and clearly separated from political debates. As noted by an interviewee, music is for hardworking people, for "families", for "older people, pensioners", people who strongly desire "polkas" (*liscio*) and for dancing (Int. 1). Music usage is also understood as a way to celebrate local bands and to offer them a (relatively important) scenario (Int. 1). Overall, the League's political use of music perfectly fits with its celebration of local identities, in a way which is not overtly exclusionary, although it certainly strives to essentialize a people based on an in-group–out-group territorial separation in which only insiders, the 'people from here' (Ostiguy, 2018), can access tacitly shared cultural practices (Fieschi, 2019), regardless of class. Thus, music is an important ingredient in the construction of a social and socializing context—the *Feste della Lega*—where the party acts as the organization providing an opportunity for socialization and/or for political pedagogy.

In the case of Salvini's national rallies, however, music is more (albeit not explicitly) 'political': music is purposely chosen to set a "motivating non-totalitarian" atmosphere (Int. 2). Here, the appropriation of (Italian)

archi-pop repertoire clearly has the goal of promoting *Italianness*, as a type of seemingly innocuous banal nationalism, to prepare the ground for the strongly nationalist, nativist and exclusionary League's rhetoric. This has also been confirmed by our experts, who stress that they were "impressed by the music played at Pontida national rallies—such as the soundtracks of '*Braveheart* and *The Last of the Mohicans*' (…). They are very banal references, unobtrusive to most. It's unlikely that anyone there was able to pick up on the references, yet still effective in a quasi-commercial way, as a soundtrack. Salvini's strategy is nonetheless very different: he behaves like the common man. And he seems credible, to my eyes" (Int. 39). Similarly, music journalist Portelli underlines that Salvini and his music act as 'an *Italian* common man', "using via music every kind of stereotype of what is Italian… and what Italian music is: a sentimentalism which is very prevalent in anthems, in easy listening songs" (Int. 35). According to musicologist Tomatis, "since the eighties, there has been a rediscovery of Italian patriotism and of reflection on what is Italian in pop music: a patriotism-nationalism which is not nostalgic [of Fascism], it is not leftist but perhaps neutral, and can be shaped in different ways, because they have multiple uses… a song such as *L'italiano* by Cutugno can be emotively felt, but also appreciated with ironic detachment" (Int. 36).

This banal nationalistic repertoire is 'powerful' (Int. 36) because it is strongly linked to our 'national character'. Historically, Italians have been portrayed, for decades, primarily by conservative opinion leaders, as "good fellows" and "family-oriented" as well as "generous" but "incapable of respecting the rules" (Patriarca, 2010), "all of which can be easily found in very different pop repertoire, from Cutugno to J-Ax" (Int. 36). Not by coincidence has the leader of the League chosen to open his rallies by picking from this banal nationalistic repertoire, winking at *Italianness* and on the positive traits of this "national character".

On the whole, the role of music is less important for the Lega than it is for the 5SM (as we will see in the next section), although both populist organizations demonstrate awareness of and exploit music to create a specific idea of people and constituencies, as most of our interviews with the parties' representatives stressed (Int. 2, 3, 4, 5). However, over time, the prevalence and importance of music increases in the Lega party rallies (especially during electoral campaigns), while for the 5SM, we see the opposite trend. On the change in the use of music over time, our findings during the various participant observations we made on the use of music

at the party rallies stressed a sharp difference with respect to the old Northern League. The negative traits of this national stereotype (Italians as lazy, individualistic, opportunistic and prone to disrespect the rules and to break agreements,) were often directed at Southern Italians (Patriarca, 2010). Consequently, the cultural references, including music in the pre-Salvini era, were different, exclusively relying on ethnic and regional (not local) music, as emphasized by one of our interviewee (Int. 35). "This does not mean that this musical repertoire is absent in the modern day League, but rather it has been juxtaposed, in a problematic and partially incoherent way, to a repertoire winking at the archi-Italian stereotype" (Int. 35). This stereotype portrays Italians as 'overtly plebeian, vulgar, and misogynist, representative of an 'authentic, traditional, ancient, folkloric and ingenuous Italy' (Patriarca, 2010). The music references adopted by the League are very effective in playing on these stereotypes for political purposes, with the Lega party representing these people.

On the differentiation in the use of music used by the Lega between party local festivals and major party rallies, each of them carrying out different functions, see Table 4.1.

Building the Relation Between the People and the Leader

Populist propaganda via music can take, as said in the introduction of this book, various forms. In particular, the relation between political actors and cultural production can be of 'appropriation' or 'invention of a tradition'. In terms of cultural products, this is the distinction which is made between 'organic' and 'appropriated' authors, based on the notion of the organic intellectual (Gramsci, 1971), which appears particularly useful to understand the use of music by varieties of populism in the Italian case, as emerged from our data. According to Jansma (2019:129), with the former we refer to those authors and cultural productions that were created specifically to support a certain political discourse, and, with the latter ones, to those that were not, but instead are used by the political actor and re-signified in a specific (in our case, populist) political sense.

The populist strategy of politicizing common sense, as we have seen for the Lega, seems linked to the appropriation of cultural material that is not explicitly meant to serve for populist purposes, while it can be credibly used as part of a shared 'popular repertoire'. The 5SM use of music, as we will see in the next section, is instead closer to the logic of the 'organic

populist pop music'[5]: namely providing to participants music and singers during their events explicitly in support of their ideology, who can create a uniquely identifiable party culture through specific musical repertoire.

When analysing how the League's *Raduni di Pontida* (i.e. national party rallies with music) appear, the best concept to describe them is a typical 'mass party': well-organized major rallies with an epic leader, characterized and supported by epic introductions from a speaker and 'epic' music (particularly since the emergence of Salvini), who receives the adulation of his followers, that with their various local identities, symbolized by flags, banners and shirts, merge into a homogeneous body—as the people of the populists. The music selection fills this function.

For example, during the 2019 demonstration organized by the entire centre-right coalition in Piazza San Giovanni in Rome, Salvini's final speech ended on the notes of Puccini's *Nessun Dorma*, and then, to fade out, *Notti Magiche* (the famous soundtrack of the 1990 football World Cup). The emotions transmitted are those of triumphalist opera mixed with national-popularity *par excellence*. The old centrality of the rhetoric of the 'Liberation of Peoples' in the Bossi's *Northern* League, implicit in the choice of the old party's anthem (Giuseppe Verdi's *Va' pensiero*), leaves room in more recent national rallies for a use of music meant to transmit an openly ethno-nationalist *Italian* rhetoric, led by Salvini, the 'captain', as he self-defined himself (arguably echoing a soccer more than a militaristic rhetoric). However, such an all-Italian nationalism is not entirely achieved at the Pontida rallies, not even in the more recent ones, since the old partisan identity heritage based on regionalism remains—arguably hampering, for instance, the organizers from using the national anthem (in this sense, see also Int. 39).[6]

Most importantly we noticed that the presence of local (Northern) identities at the national-level *Raduni di Pontida* has gradually waned over time. For instance, in the case of 2010, some local associations close to the party (e.g. the group 'Padanian Musicians') were called on stage for an opening greeting, including the association. In 2014, during the first national gathering of Salvini leader, localism still dominated. As the official

[5] Organic populist pop music may be recorded for propaganda purposes (that is, targeting the broad electorate, the artist's fandom or the party's rank and files.

[6] The Italian anthem has been, however, performed in some centre-right rallies (i.e. organized by all the three major right-of-center parties, including the League), as, for instance, in the aforementioned rally in Rome, October 2019. The very first Italian flag at *Raduni di Pontida*'s stages appeared only in 2019.

leaflet of the party stated, the goal was to demonstrate "the desire to listen to the music of our land", and to hold "debates and concerts over three days". The programme read: May 1, 'Workers' lunch with the federal secretary of the Northern League, Matteo Salvini, and other party cadres, and in the evening "the concert of May Day" (in clear distinction from the May Day concert organized by the three main trade unions in Rome) with David Van De Sfroos (a popular singer-songwriter singing in Lombard dialect). On the second day, debates were scheduled on the issue of 'independentisms', with speakers from Veneto, Lombardy and South Tyrol. On the final day, there was the "Big Concert of Pontida—Music at Zero Km". On stage, there was a selection of local singer-songwriters,[7] mostly in dialect, and, predominantly 'party-aligned' and fairly well known locally, often with parodic repertoires celebrating rural and local identities. On the final day, the *Raduno*, however, shifted to a more 'pop' vibe: the intro is the classic *Va' Pensiero* launched from the speakers, albeit followed by a dance-style tune,[8] which is replayed at the end of the rally. The fusion of 'Padanism' and 'Italianism' started becoming more visible in the 2017 gathering. In this case, the slogan of the *Raduno* is *Referendum is Freedom*, in deference to the referendum campaigns for the Lombard and Venetian autonomy. The opening *Va' Pensiero* is sung by a duet of singers from Lombardy and Veneto, both wearing T-shirts celebrating their regional autonomies. While the speeches of politicians are introduced with epic-style music, a Celtic intro is chosen for Salvini's ascent to the stage. Though it had never been done with his predecessor Bossi, the word 'Salvini' dominated the stage: when the 'captain' spoke, all those present on stage were wearing a T-shirt saying, 'Prime Minister Salvini', ready to be televised. This 'all-Italian' political ambition was still accompanied by nostalgic (i.e. addressing the northern core-militancy) moment when Salvini, at the beginning of his speech, temporarily leaves the stage and moves onto the surrounding lawn, accompanied by the sound of bagpipes, for a 'hyper-Celtic' tribute to a popular, independentist senator who had recently passed away. The transition to the Salvinian League became, finally, more evident in the imagery orchestrated for the 2018 and 2019 *Raduni*: in 2018, the slogan *Common Sense in Government* triumphs, the dominant

[7] Bepi, Charlie Cinelli, Longobardeath, Simone Zani, Nino Paolone, Giuliano-Berghem Baghet, Viviana Laffranchi, Sergio Bassi, Mario Benetti, Moris, Nando Uggeri and Erika Sbriglio, Matteo Tiraboschi.

[8] *Fourth Rendez-Vous* [1976] by DJ Jean-Michel Jarre.

colour had become blue instead of the traditional green and, as mentioned, the Italian banner appeared on stage at the latter gathering.

The League's militants are proud to be part of an ethnic community, clearly defined in exclusionary terms, and they expect their leader to *lead* them to victory. The music plays a precise and different role (as we saw in this section) to forge a partisan culture, and it serves a specific goal in the League's rallies and festivals. Music is either celebrative and emotional, with recurrent use of anthems, hymns, quasi-military rituals (in the case of major rallies), or an opportunity for the older generation to 'relax' and enjoy the experience provided by the (mass) party, thus stimulating a strong sense of (local) community (in local festivals). Finally, as noted, the use of music by Lega at the party events, also the national ones, has changed throughout the years: from the soundtrack of *Braveheart*—echoing Celt roots—to announce the *Northern* League's founder Umberto Bossi, to the *Nessun Dorma* announcing the leader of the [nationalist] League, Matteo Salvini. The transformation is clear: from Celtic-Padanian to Italian-pop opera references.

However, music is apparently far from being central during the *Raduni di Pontida*: moments of purely musical performances are almost entirely absent. We just found two cases of events of this type: in 2015, when two young rappers commemorated the death of a young militant in a car crash, and in 2016, when a duo performed a song, *Mamma*, by Beniamino Gigli [1941], popularly identified as one of the symbols of the most traditional-conservative Italian familism.

All in all, when we examine, during our participant observation and interviews, the type and role of the music for the party, as well as the context (i.e. the venue, space allocation, setting, the timing, the demographics of attendees, etc.), the Gramscian concept of 'folklore' comes up. We see that selected pieces of popular *weltanschauung,* consisting of fragmented clues designed to give meaning to the world, are appropriated by the party also through the music. It is that kind of folklore that was celebrated in the *strapaese* ("hyper-town") literary movement of the early twentieth century, defending the "bluntly popular-rural traditions against any form of cosmopolitanism or xenophilia" (Patriarca, 2010). In this regard, the Lega makes wide use of this imagery and has, more recently, along with of a pop repertoire aiming to trigger (Italian) banal nationalism, to construct their 'people' so to speak, and, in an implicit way, their 'enemies', that is, those not identifying themselves with such a rural-ethnic repertoire or

with forms of banal nationalism, and those who disdain the processes of essentialization that belong to regional and national identities.

In sum, we can consider here, in the populist Lega, music as a part—sometimes a very important part—of the 'party brand', or at least as an important component of the process of 'party-branding building'. We're not referring to the function of music here as propaganda, according to Street's (2014) strict categorization of the ultimate functions of (political) music as 'resistance', 'protest' and 'propaganda'; rather, we found an implicit function of music in the Lega for *propagating* political party values and image in a more fun and emotive way.

4.2 Music at the 5SM Events: A Different Process of Partisan Culture-Building

Populists may also politicize popular culture as opposed to high culture, in a more anti-elitist sense, as we see in the case of the populist 5SM.

The first concept we want to emphasize is the 5SM's understanding of music as a *pedagogic* tool, which was particularly prominent in the early, 'movementist' phase of the party. As explained by our interviewees, for them, politics is understood as a daily mission, and the militants attend rallies "to inform themselves and to participate to the life of the party" (Int. 8 and 9). From our participant observation—as well as from the interviews with party directors and experts we met—it is clear that 5SM music is not solely intended to produce enjoyment. The aim is to produce engagement, to elicit a sense of belonging. Music also assumes a key 'cognitive' (Street et al., 2011) function in 5SM's events. Music can be a medium for informing people and for raising awareness about social and political inequalities, with some anti-conformist pretensions (often associated with pop genres like rock and rap), although generally avoiding echoing 'old ideologies'. Music plays different roles in the League and in the 5SM cases in forging partisan culture and in serving different goals. In the 5SM case, music is less celebrative and emotional at party rallies and festivals than it seems to be at the Lega events, and the set list is meant to appear more spontaneous and grassroots, in line with this (self)pedagogic inspiration.

Such a pedagogic function was clearly detectable in the first (and the most important in the party's entire history) music event organized by the 5SM, that is *Woodstock a 5 Stelle* (2010). The party was still in its infancy

and indeed was not fully perceived as a *political party* yet: it was, rather, a political movement of 'fed-up citizens'. Militants, mixed with many young people attracted by the high-quality music event, created a humble and relaxed context, which Beppe Grillo described as follows, mocking the accusations against his movement: "we have the separate collection squads here! It is beautiful to see dangerous squatters playing with children"; "here we have different people… someone lost his wallet with 200 euros in it, and when he claimed it, the money was still there!".[9] Among guests were intellectuals, academic scholars, comedians and musicians (generally well-known artists from *cantautorato* and the rap scene, with a leftist, but generally non-militant, background). More generally, music was understood as a cultural activity (in the sense of informing and enriching) under the form of 'high' culture for 'good citizens'—albeit deprived of any bookish accent, but where we can interpret the recurrent presence of songwriters or artists from the genres of blues, jazz and orchestra music.

The values espoused by the artists—when introducing themselves at *Woodstock 5 Stelle*—were often aligned to the environmentalist, post-ideological and participative ethos of the 5SM: "Italy is not changed by politicians but by citizens, especially because everyone gets what they deserve" (Sud Sound System); "we have to focus on problem solving, not on ideologies" (Max Gazzè); "A word holds us together tonight, freedom … the most beautiful revolution is the music revolution, here there is a joyful, non-rhetorical atmosphere … you are the best of the youth!" (Tre Allegri Ragazzi Morti); "we don't care about politics, we live in the future … here there is another Italy" (Fabri Fibra and Marracash). There also featured an important endorsement by one of the more famous guest stars, the leftist songwriter Samuele Bersani:

> "I apologize for my surname" [Pierluigi Bersani was one of the Democratic Party's figures at the time] "I am 40 years old, I have never held back, I have always expressed my views, then the family educated me,… but I have rarely seen this climate of participation … now I'll say something unnecessary from the point of view of communication, but I feel it inside … the 5SM is the only one that adheres to my idea, I do not trust the PDs anymore, I'll vote for the 5SM!". (source: Woodstock 5 Stelle, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U9-yq9y6h4)

[9] Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U9-yq9y6h4

There were also musicians who provide 'quality pop music', like the blues artist Rudy Rotta, or the jazz musician Stefano Bollani. Various indie bands took part, ranging from punk (*Invasione degli Omini Verdi*) to reggae (*Mamasita*) to blues (*Bud Spencer Blues Explosion*, "here is an Italy that I didn't even think existed anymore"), from rock (*Blastema, The Niro*, and at the end of the evening *Il Teatro degli Orrori*, who performed their song dedicated to the murdered Nigerian environmental activist Ken Saro Wiva) to the ironic songwriting with plenty of puns (*Dente, Perturbazione*). *Woodstock 5 Stelle* was therefore an excellent synthesis of the early 5SM, of the galaxy of *MeetUp,* close to the values and beliefs of the environmental left, and in general perfectly suited for an electorate engaged with the Greens, the ecological/radical left and anti-corruption movements—a movement of 'good citizens', who 'know how to have fun with less' and in any case 'having fun learning'.

Again, in 2014 *Italia a 5 Stelle* edition, the pedagogic function of music emerged. The first singer performing was an unknown rapper, Eman, with clear 'militant' lyrics ("If the ideologies you believed in fail/And you think it's okay to keep sleeping/you can't move from the mud around you anymore"). His song *L'amore ai tempi dello spread* sounds like a Five Star Movement's version of the famous working-class song *Cara moglie* by Ivan Della Mea: "My darling, I've been writing to you for months, every night when the snipers from the armored cars/come down today all those assholes ministers, trade unionists, pundits and TV who say that the solution involves agreements and that the broad agreement works better/the exit from the crisis has its costs and the old concept of work is no longer there […] You see, my darling, how can I not be indignant when a well-dressed scoundrel makes fun of me, this summer he will take his mistress for a swim and I will not return to you for my dignity". Eman's performance was followed by the appearance of the mostly (unknown) all-female band Le Gal (introduced by Beppe Grillo as follows: "let's get warmed up with these three girls… I have had just sex with them!"), again characterized by hyper-militant messages ("Parasite! /and you with my taxes are a senator for life! /we are the first movement not the third party/feel the wind/economy, democracy and clean energy"). Overall, the lyrics, in all these songs, and 5SM's most famous slogans were pretty much alike.

Secondly, and connected with our first point, we highlight the 5SM's use of music to deliver a specific *self-description of the 5SM as a political community*: this description targets both the own 5SM's militancy (thus celebrating identity and sense of belonging) and the broader electorate.

According to the party narrative, underpinned through the use of music at its events, 5SM militants present themselves 'good, honest, sincere as well as irreverent citizens' (while the League militants, as we have seen above, depicted themselves as genuine workers). In contrast, the enemies are corrupted politicians, economic powers and hypocritical cultural elites (whereas the Lega militants target 'parasitic citizens', as seen in the reference of the pizza's names at the eating stands). As an interviewee noted, "we took a risk because we also invited [in our festivals] high quality musicians, not only pop, which could have bored the attendees who were not the typical socio-demographic profile of the ideological left-wing militant" (Int. 4, organizer of several *Italia a 5 Stelle* festivals).

The 5SM activists see themselves as proudly honest, strong people despite a lack of resources, who have their representatives within institutions (while the League militants are proud to be part of an ethnic community, and they expect their leader to lead them to victory). In sum, there is a type of 'Franciscan *ethos*' (Vittori, 2019) amongst 5SM militants, where personal authenticity is not linked to ethnic-national tradition, like it is for the League militants, but rather, authenticity is based on the simple life, on frugality and where participation and environmentalism are individual duties to be practised and spread. This idea coexists with a vision of a futuristic utopia and the belief of 'representing the future' of the world, as seen from the futuristic images used during the party events (e.g. Beppe Grillo dressed as an astronaut), emphasizing an inevitable win for the party.

All of this is indeed reflected in the use of music selected by the party. At *Woodstock 5 Stelle* (2010), 'high pop music' (i.e. politically engaged or musically sophisticated pop music) was functional in this narrative, because it was sufficiently highbrow to make listeners feel superior to the 'average Italian' ("we are *a new/another* Italy", as claimed by Beppe Grillo during *Woodstock 5 Stelle*) whilst not being militant/ideological in the 'old' twentieth-century sense. The profile is that of citizens who are both serious and fun-loving, angry but not hateful, rebellious but not violent, utopian because there is no alternative and therefore with their feet on the ground.

Third, while, the 5SM, like the Lega, build strong pride amongst the rank and files, often through music, the music strategies to pursue it are different. At *Woodstock 5 Stelle* (2010), the 5SM was not perceived as a political party. This eased a strategy of 'appropriation' (Jansma, 2019)

towards (leftist) pop music. The 5SM has achieved important parliamentary representation since 2013, and since then the appropriation strategy became more complicated (Int. 3, 4). The 5SM, particularly in the earliest *Italia a 5 Stelle* editions, attempted to parade an organic use of popular music. In fact, this reliance on militant singers has been a constraint to the party, since this type of music and the repertoire do not become mainstream, namely, pop.

Fourth, similarly to the broad switch from 'appropriation' to 'organic' strategy, the 5SM's self-description through party festivals and their music evolved throughout time. Said otherwise, the *diachronic evolution*—from the *movementist* to the *institutional* phase of the party—can be easily captured by looking at the music repertoire of the party in their national events. Music performances were nearly always (the exception was the 2019 edition) scheduled to serve as breaks between political interventions from party figures: at the same time, these performances still add value in showcasing the key features of the 5SM' identity. In a diachronic perspective, we notice the majoritarian presence of poorly known, hyper-militant bands, singers and vaudeville performers in the early years (2014–2015), while in later editions—whilst not completely eliminating these satirical and generally less talented performers—more sophisticated spectacles and important artists become more central. This change perfectly fits with the 5SM' evolution from its movementist, anti-establishment origins to its institutionalization.

In 2015, the 5SM was clearly in its movementist phase. That year, we highlight the presence of unknown artists such as *Formazione Minima* ("turn off the lights /turn on your head /reduce waste and the planet celebrates"); Giovanni Romano ("parties and unions have massacred us"); Tinturia (folk-rock: "People Humiliated/Who sing in installments /Pay Pray Then buy crap/ The modern economy does not forgive/They want us slaves according to these times/convinced that everything is fine and then nothing changes"); Dado (at times unambiguously vulgar)[10] musician, extremely popular amongst militants and given standing ovations, played benevolent jokes on the main 5SM' public figures (for instance, on Luigi Di Maio: "he looks like a dummy, a puppet… but he's not for sale!").

[10] Here (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buAXdlkLt9Q) is the video of Dado's satirical, anti-political remake of the song *Gioca Jouer* (a dance hit from the Eighties). Dado performed his *Gioca Jouer* at the 2015 edition of *Italia a 5 Stelle*.

However, these satirical bands were more complemented (in comparison with 2014 edition) by better music interventions from "artists who enter the music market through the front door and then fortunately understand that there is a message to be sent", as the speaker who introduced the performance of the singer Valentina Tioli in 2015 stated. In 2015, the leftist songwriter Fabrizio Zanotti sang about the lack of job security and immigration (in a way quite different from the hard stances of the 5SM during the "yellow-green" coalition government and even before, during the 2018 electoral campaign), and in his 'If not now, when?' (*Se non ora, quando?*) the lyrics are strongly linked to the 5SM's critiques against the politically indifferent 'average Italians': "*Not using the brain gives exceptional advantages/is also good for the mood of national consensus*". The 2016 edition, in Palermo, was the highest attended and arguably the most effective one, in terms of collective enthusiasm: a genuine 'party's party', boosted by the final concert performance of the techno music star Gigi D'Agostino. More similar to other editions (before and after) are the performances of blues musician Giulio Todrani (the father of the well-known pop singer Giorgia), the Five Star militant singer-songwriter Giovanni Romano or of a local band from Caltanissetta with reggae-pop sounds and a piece dedicated to the memory of the famous Sicilian folk singer Rosa Balistreri. In 2017, the main guest is Giovanni Baglioni, the son of the songwriter Claudio—the artistic director of Sanremo Festival—as well as an imaginative guitarist-percussionist. It is Baglioni who leads the conclusion of the final evening, through virtuosities and solos with his acoustic guitar with purely instrumental music and his own pieces. This was music of high quality, light and simple, fully in line with the Five Star cultural-identitarian self-image of the party.

As Battelli, the main organizer of various editions of *Italia a 5 Stelle,* confirms, the music choices of the early phase of the populist party were in line with its movimentistic phase, with predominantly amateur performances by the militants themselves, while the party's events in the more recent years (like the 2019 edition of the rally) demonstrated the institutionalization of the party manifest in their musical and aesthetic choices:"everything was much more organized, made for the TV, with TV times. A beautiful show, however not really 'from below'. It looked more

like a party convention than a meeting of a movement (…) Perhaps it was the version of the 5SM 2.0" (Int. 4)[11].

In short, the use of music by both the 5SM and the League parties in Italy, similar to the Spanish Podemos, goes hand in hand with the organizational and ideological evolution of these parties.

Fifth, *Italia a 5 Stelle* editions have strong elements of *prefigurative politics* (Leach, 2016; Tornberg, 2021)[12] features, perfectly exemplified by the recurrent invitation (both in 2014 and in 2019) of the *Capone BungtBangt*, a band playing with instruments made of recycled material. The music played at the festivals has evolved from unrefined and irreverent satire to jazz, blues and *cantautorato* performances from important, if not 'popular' (i.e. 'mainstream'), socially engaged artists. This occurred up until the last (2019) *Italia a 5 Stelle edition*, in which music, as said, was exclusively played at the end of the political interventions (as opposed to serving as interludes) in a very serious, institutional (and very poorly attended) setting. Prefigurative politics—this time pointing at showing the closeness between the activists and their representatives at the institutional level—also recurred in that several party figures personally managed the music spectacles in different *Italia a 5 Stelle editions*. Even in this case, we can identify an institutionalizing evolution: from Andrea Tosatto in 2015 playing parodic and 5SM celebrative versions of international pop songs, to Gianluigi Paragone (a former TV journalist) in 2017 singing classic songwriter's repertoires in the middle of his own theatre spectacle while harshly attacking political and media 'caste',[13] to Battelli who

[11] "A cinema-like mode, where you feel inhibited, an institutional place where you were waiting for the performance. (…). If you see the 5SM convention in Naples, or if you see Renzi or Berlusconi… they are similar.(…). If I see our beautiful Di Maio that moves on a galactic stage, lights pointing on him… the impression is that you are part of the system (Int. 4).

[12] "Prefigurative politics' refers to how activists embody and enact, within their activism, the socialities and practices they foster for broader society" (Fians, 2022).

[13] Paragone played a one-man show dedicated to the commingling of banks and politics, criticizing the unfettered power of banks in the current economic system, in line with the producerist ideology that opposes "consumers and small entrepreneurs" big business (see Ivaldi and Mazzoleni, 2018), which can be rejected from very different ideological angles and is often embraced by the nationalist right, from which Paragone also comes from (and did come back recently).

performed—overtly aiming to 'just entertain'—his own version of Green Day's *Basketcase* in 2018.[14]

Sixth, as regards *the local* versus *national spaces* of the use of music by populist parties, we see that the 5SM party mainly organizes national events in which music is played and appropriated.[15] In general, they are political events, in essence rallies during electoral campaigns or public initiatives related to specific petitions. They also try to link these events to the creation of a politically organic music, rooted at the local level and resonating with local identities. However, since they are not territorially rooted, and as a relatively new party strongly based on online participation, they have had very limited success—unlike the Lega party. For this reason, local events are constructed with music presented as entertainment only (as 'a relaxing moment', a 'moment of conviviality', as it was for the local festival in Treviso province in June 2019 by the organizer, Int. 3). However, they failed to achieve even this musical objective at the Treviso event.

In fact, the cultural programme of the event was attended by very few people. The 5 Star Movement, at least in the northeast, is still a small populist party with poor support and reduced militancy. Essentially, the event should have started at 11 am, with an introductory speech that was never delivered, because of the low attendance. A few militants were just sitting down around a beer kiosk, waiting for the visit of national MPs, who gave a couple of speeches in the afternoon, focusing on the national political conjuncture and on the necessity to "fight within the institutions" to achieve concrete policy results. In a sort of replication of the spatial structure of *Italia a 5 Stelle* editions, plenty of stands and tents with books and gadgets featured, with spaces devoted to exhibit the activities of the party in public office at national and regional levels. Three stands (two dedicated for the 5SM' parliamentary groups, the other with bestselling books for a general readership) lay vacant all day. The political speeches were flanked by two musical events: a local guitarist engaging with

[14] Both Tosatto and Paragone, two core activists of the 5SM, who both perform music at various party rallies and exemplify the movimentistic phase through their music and writings, will quit the movement in 2019, during its institutionalization process (and the experience of the 'yellow-pink' government).

[15] An exception is the 'Interregional 5SM Festival' organized in the province of Treviso in June 2019, where we carried out participant observation.

instrumental solos, and the performance of the cover band *Era Battisti*, an attempt to appeal to national-popular 'high-quality' music, as well as "aiming to please everyone there, because everyone likes [Lucio] Battisti" (Int. 3). A regional councillor introduced the last part of the event, a musical performance by the local singer-songwriter Lorenzo Cittadini, a spectacle which was slightly more attended. It was still stressed that Cittadini "is one of ours; he had been active in the local Treviso circle and was even a candidate for a couple of municipal elections" (Int. 3). Cittadini's performance, based on his recent album, alluded to a "road trip" imagery. The tone is that of an intellectual-dreamer, sounding somewhat naive ("it's no time for dreams, yet they are the ones that make us go forward") and appeared quite suited to the 5SM' general message.

To conclude, *to emphasize our cross-time perspective*, during the recent *Italia a 5 Stelle* editions, folk-revival—particularly through traditional sounds from Southern Italy—matched with the overrepresentation of the party amongst Southern Italians, and arguably also to stress its 'alterity' from the other major Italian populist party (i.e. the League). What could be termed 'serious' and 'relatively high quality' pop music has gradually replaced the plethora of 'hyper-activist' (and quite 'artisanal') artists that performed at the major events of Grillo's party during its early years in opposition (2014–2016).

The evolution in the use of music by the 5SM is illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Chronology of the use of music by the populist 5SM and organizational and ideological changes of the party

Use of music	*Party's changes (organizational and ideological)*
• Five Stars' Woodstock → big (leftist) names, first major event organized by the party	• 'Movementistic' and ideologically anti-elites and bottom-up
• Five Stars' Italy (2014–2017) → generally speaking: relatively unknown *militant* artists. Parodies, jokes, vaudeville, provocative and satirical style. The public: banners, flags, chants	• In parliament, in opposition + anti-elites
• Five Stars' Italy (2018–2019) → «Artists have stronger artistic backgrounds, the climate is more «serious», «thoughtful» (anti-mafia rap, jazz, orchestra, folk, songwriters). The party is governing and needs a more «reliable» image to deliver to the broader electorate.	• Institutionalization of the party (in government) and ideology of a party in government (i.e. compromises)

One telling example of such evolution, as seen from our participant observation, is that the musical spaces—more recently—are no longer within the events, as seen in the early movimentistic phases of the 5SM, but rather have been moved to the end of the event, like a convention. There is a strict separation between politics and music (which also leads to a decrease in people attending the musical part).

By focusing on the process of cultural definition within the newly born populist party Podemos, Caruso (2020) also highlights a strong link between its political uses of music and the trajectory of that party, where the latter influences the former. In a way, Podemos itself was launched as a 'pop product', a 'political commodity' that had to break into mainstream politics and be able to compete with the 'majors' of the sector, going beyond niche markets. The 'old left' and 'pop culture' constantly overlapped within the "soundtrack of change", signalling the same uncertainty and ambiguity that lay in the party on the political side. At the end, the political evolution of the party determined a choice between these two musical constellations: the attempt to be popular and 'mainstream' left space to the shared identities and traditions that political history made available. The 5SM, instead, escaped this alternative, although it still had to choose between 'movementism' and institutionalization. Furthermore, in contrast to Podemos, the 5SM representatives and activists stress that, in terms of musical genres, their party is not 'pop', but 'rock or metal' (Int. 8 and 9). All in all, the 5SM tends to deny the "logic of appropriation" of pop culture, dissimilar to the League, as well as references to 'national-popular' repertoires and banal nationalist practices. Indeed, the 5SM both endorses and rejects the aforementioned "archi-Italian national character" which the League explicitly and implicitly refers to. The 5SM endorses it, in the sense that it recognizes the validity of such stereotypes—Italians as family-oriented, individualistic and prone to opaque practices. At the same time, the 5SM presents itself as an antidote to such practices, as the political project capable of leading a "kind revolution" in Italy in pursuit of a more law-abiding ethos. Furthermore, the "Franciscan ethos" of the party (and its militants) are perceivably incompatible with a frivolous, non-socially engaged pop music repertoire. In contrast to Podemos, the 5SM has never theorized nor countenanced 'getting their hands dirty' with a pop music repertoire. It has, instead, proposed its own aesthetics and imageries, thus leading to a difficult relationship between the 5SM and the pop sphere.

Table 4.3 summarizes the main contrasts and similarities in the use of music among different varieties of populism in Italy.

Table 4.3 Contrasts and similarities in the use of music among different varieties of populism in Italy

Right-wing populism of the Lega	*Left-wing hybrid populism of the 5SM*
• **Goal:** anti-intellectualism/producerism; provoking "leftists"/ depoliticizing "leftist repertoire"; creation and appropriation of a national-popular repertoire and a concept of *Italianness* in Italian pop music. Separation between music and politics during events (depoliticization).	• **Goal:** creation of a subcultural repertoire (unsuccessful); in the beginning, however, strong attempts to attract leftist singers and to flaunt its *irreverence*. Recreational but also "pedagogic" use of music during events.
• **The People** constructed: → *majoritarian tastes*	• **People** → engaged and non-ideological citizens
• **Partisan culture** → ethno-localist populism, 'true nationals, true workers', music as a 'well-deserved form of relaxation' during party summer festivals	• **Partisan culture** → «Civic Populism»: «Good, active, informed and irreverent citizens»; party rallies as meetings where the rank and files legitimately support their representatives in institutions against the caste; opportunities for learning
• **Main changes:** Raduni di Pontida → music as solemn and explicitly transmitting core party values and imagery (ethno-regionalism under pre-Salvini leadership vs. traditionalist-nationalist values under Salvini)	• **Main changes:** Music evolving from movimentistic to institutionalization (music as satirical or explicitly transmitting core party political and social values vs. high-quality singers).
• **Socio-demographic of the attendees:** families, older people, men in their sixties	• **Socio-demographic:** Prevalence of middle-aged lower-middle-class people

4.3 Conclusion: Different Populisms, Different Usages of Pop Music

As emerged by our participant observation at party rallies, there are various roles played by popular music within Italian populist parties: the common goal is to produce and reinforce the specific populist identity, that is, to fulfil a function of 'party culture-building' (Freeman, 1986). Firstly, in Italian populism's use of popular culture there is a strategic and conscious use of music in some of the party public initiatives, they being truly political rallies, or cultural or commemorative events. Music choices are an important part of a broad cultural repertoire and aesthetic performances

739 which include, among others, the organization of the spaces (e.g. the sep-
740 aration, or not, between political leaders and militants, or between spaces
741 dedicated to political intervention and to recreational activities, including
742 music); the additional recreational activities—food (and which kind of
743 food); bookstands (and which kind of books); the aesthetic image deliv-
744 ered by 'the People' (e.g. the contrast between the more homogenous
745 5SM's activists and the multiple identitarian-local flags displayed by the
746 League's militants at *Pontida*). Secondly, depending on the kind of events
747 (major events, electoral campaigns, rallies, summer festivals, etc.), the role
748 assigned to music varies, which is, for instance, more 'recreational' at the
749 local level (even if the kind of 'recreational music' also tells a lot on the
750 peoplehood—Boyle 2012—performed by the party) and more explicitly
751 'political' and self-celebrative at the national level. Thirdly, although for
752 both parties music doesn't play a central role (especially in the right-wing
753 populist Lega), it plays a significant role as a ludic and playful tool shaping
754 the party imagery and affirming its core values, in a word a tool meant to
755 build specific 'political-partisan cultures' (Paddock, 1997). In this regard,
756 public events are seen as opportunities by promoting the party-specific
757 values and identities through the performances of politicians and activists.
758 Via music, Italian populist parties too, as demonstrated in other studies for
759 other European populist parties (e.g. On Spain, Caruso, 2020), try to
760 build their own innovative symbolism and elaborate new forms of identi-
761 fication with the base (Caruso, 2020).
762 However, we also found some specificities across the Italian varieties of
763 populism. There are different strategies in the use of music: based on
764 nativism and cultural conservatism, in the case of the League; whilst
765 focused on anti-elitist and participative rhetoric in the case of the Five Star
766 Movement. As shown, populist actors articulate various ideas of the(ir)
767 people through music, each of them being 'authentic' in different ways.
768 They celebrate (principally the Lega party) the 'common', 'apolitical' and
769 'everyday' tastes.
770 In the case of the Lega, music is either celebrative and emotional, with
771 recurrent use of anthems, hymns, quasi-military rituals (for the major ral-
772 lies) or an opportunity for older people to relax and have fun within the
773 context of the (mass)party, and, thus, stimulating a strong sense of (local)
774 community (in local festivals). In the case of the 5SM, music is a means to
775 inform and reflect on social and political inequalities, and the impression
776 delivered—although, in any case, music choices at party's rallies still
777 respond to top-down choices—is that, during the 5SM's 'movementist'

phase, the music played was, in fact, grassroots music performed by committed activists.

By focusing on the extent and the forms of the use of music by populist organizations in Italy, this chapter also addressed the broader topic of the ideological and organizational changes experienced by these parties over the past decade. As we found, the use of music changes over time in the Italian populist parties, according to their organizational transformations (i.e. from the more movimentistic to the more institutionalized). This is true especially for the 5SM. In the case of the 5SM, music is increasingly understood as high culture, namely, as the choice of the genres performed in the recent national rallies demonstrates (e.g. many songwriters or artists from the blues, jazz and orchestra music genres). Folk-revival matched with the overrepresentation of the party amongst Southern Italians, also as a means to set the boundaries with the populist party Lega. Comparatively, high-quality pop music has gradually substituted the activist artists of the early years of the left-wing (or hybrid) party (when in opposition, 2014–2016). As for the League, there has been—fully in line with the transformation from a Northern to an Italian nationalist party—a gradual downplaying of Padanian-Celt music echoes, which have been substituted by Italian pop operas and anthems, as well as by the appropriation of *nazionalpopolare* repertoire by the new leader Salvini—as we will further explore in Chap. 5.

As for the Italian specificities vis-à-vis other European countries where populism uses music and popular culture, we notice some similarities and many differences. This can be related to the different contextual opportunities (in terms of political, cultural and even music opportunities of the country, as described in Chap. 2), but also to different organizational resources of the populist actors (McAdam et al., 1988).

In Austria, for example, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPOE) currently organizes party rallies marked by political speeches interspersed with bands playing *schlager* music, as a replication and appropriation of the beer tents typical of rural Austria, where spatial and acoustic atmospheres engender camaraderie and a sense of community (Doehring & Ginkel, 2022). All these factors, including the image of the rural-traditional chimes with the use of music, we found in the Lega (mainly at the local level) and reproducing a remarkably similar atmosphere. In contrast, scholars looking at the Swedish Democrats (SD) and their use of music underline that it is characterized by a strategy of "poppification" of right-wing nationalism (Schiller, 2022), namely a political use of music meant to break with the

extremist, aggressive and scary aesthetics associated with the far-right scene, attempting to clean and bring the image of the party into the mainstream. It has been also stressed in the Swedish case that there is, differently than what we found in Italy, a direct party endorsement from bands with pop, melodic sounds, which has become more central in recent Swedish pop tradition. This appealing and innocuous aesthetics would vehiculate, however, strongly nationalist messages. This 'heroic averageness', as we will see in the next chapter, is a common feature also of the relationship between pop music and populism in the Italian case. Recent studies have finally emphasized that in Hungary, as an increasingly authoritarian political context, the ruling party FIDESZ strives through the use of folk music for the promotion of a rural imagery (Barna & Patakfalvi-Czjriak, 2022). In this case, the celebration of Hungarian folk music has an irredentist aim whilst spreading nationalist values. Moreover, Hungary, unlike Italy, has been characterized as a case of "mainstreamization" of the far-right music scene, with some music endorsed and promoted at the societal and political level by a variety of actors (from social movements to FIDESZ and mass media) and thus completely normalized.

AU11

References

Barna, E., & Patakfalvi-Czjriak, A. (2022). "We are of one blood": Hungarian popular music, nationalism and the trajectory of the song "Nélküled" through radicalization, folklorization and consecration. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*. Advanced Online Publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/25739638.2022.2089388

Blee, K. M., & Taylor, V. (2002). Semi-structured interviewing in social movement research. In B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds.), *Methods of social movement research* (pp. 92–117). University of Minnesota Press.

Caruso, L. (2020). Populism and pop cultures: Podemos, the political use of music and the party as a 'pop product'. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 180–206.

Chinatera, P., & Peto, A. (2003). Cultures of populism and the political right in Central Europe. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal, 5*(4), 1–11.

Doehring, A., & Ginkel, K. (2022) (forthcoming)). "I wanna get back home": Performing the Austrian homeland in popular music. In M. Dunkel & M. Schiller (Eds.), *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.

Duncombe, C., & Bleiker, R. (2015). Popular Culture and Political Identities. In F. Caso & C. Hamilton (Eds.), *Popular culture and world politics* (pp. 35–44). E-International Relations Publishing.

Fians, G. (2022). Prefigurative politics. In F. Stein (Ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of anthropology*. Cambridge University Press.
Freeman, J. (1986). The political culture of the democratic and republican parties. *Political Science Quarterly, 101*(3), 327–356.
Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. International Publishers.
Hall, S. (1996). *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Routledge.
Huxley, A. (1955). *Music at night and other essays*. Penguin.
Ivaldi, G., & Mazzoleni, O. (2019). Economic populism and Producerism: European right-wing populist parties in a transatlantic perspective. *Populism, 2*(1), 1–28.
Jansma, J. (2019). Culture in the name of the people? Towards a typology of populism and culture. *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society, 4*, 119–132.
Leach, D. (2016) Prefigurative politics. In D. Snow, D. Della Porta, B. Klandermans & D. McAdam (Eds.), The Blackwell Encyclopedia of social and political movements. Blackwell.
Levi-Strauss, C. (1963). *Structural anthropology*. Basic Books.
Magaudda, P. (2020). Populism, music and the media. The Sanremo festival and the circulation of populist discourses. *Partecipazione e conflitto, 13*(1), 132–153.
Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 24*, 95–117.
McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1988). Social movements. In N. J. Smelser (Ed.), *Handbook of sociology* (pp. 695–737). Sage Publications.
Ostiguy, P. (2018). Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach. In P. Taggart, C. Rovira, P. Ochoa, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 73–97). Oxford University Press.
Paddock, J. (1997). Political culture and the partisan style of state party activists. *Publius, 27*(3), 127–132.
Patriarca, S. (2010). *Italianità. La costruzione del carattere nazionale*. Laterza.
Schiller, M. (2022) (forthcoming)). Populism in the land of pop: The Sweden democrats and popular music. In M. Dunkel & M. Schiller (Eds.), *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.
Street, J. (2014). Music as political communication. In K. Kenski & K. Jameson (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political communication*. Oxford University Press.
Tornberg, A. (2021). Prefigurative politics and social change: A typology drawing on transition studies. *Distinktion, 22*(1), 85–107.
Vittori, D. (2019). *Il valore di uno*. Luiss University Press.

CHAPTER 5

The Interactions Between Populist Actors and Popular Music in the Public Sphere

This chapter focuses on one of the hypothesized paths through which pop music can act as a vehicle for populism: the interactions between populist actors and popular music in the public sphere. In the previous chapters, we analysed (pop) music as an important tool for populist political actors, yet it is evident that the use of music and politics can go in both directions. In order to do so, we will use the concept of 'celebrity politics'. As Street (2014) argues, it can refer to the increasing political relevance assumed by pop stars in the public debate, or to the exploitation, for political purposes, of references coming from popular culture by politicians. In the first case, pop artists exploit media coverage to enter political debates by expressing opinions that are not necessarily reflected in their cultural productions. Pop artists thus act as public opinion leaders, somehow posing as competitors of professional politicians and contributing to boost their own visibility. In the second case, politicians play *pop-politics* (Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009), that is, exploit pop formats and referents to enter into seemingly 'unserious' public debates, not necessarily related to institutional politics, but often to increase their own visibility, espousing specific ideas and popular values, so as to reach a broader audience and ultimately shape, produce and politically exploit what Gramsci calls 'common sense'. This is what we intend to explore in this chapter, pointing out at the presence of various types of interactions which emerged between the musical and political scenes in Italy in recent years, with each serving a different

AU1

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3_5

purpose, we argue, in terms of pop music paving the way to populism: endorsement (or criticism) of populist politicians by pop singers, intervention of populist leaders in music public debates, but also co-optation, rejection and cooperation, as well as policy actions of populists on the music market of the country. Drawing mainly on our web data mining[1] and expert interviews, we shall demonstrate how pop stars who intervene in politics are more likely to assume anti-populist stances, whereas populist leaders seem to leverage this orientation to reinforce the anti-populist/populist cleavage through strategies of self-victimization and re-signification (De Cleen, 2016). In this sense, populist politicians aim to establish a connection with the people, by performing 'low' sociocultural practices.

5.1 Average Italian Fan: Matteo Salvini and the Politicization of His Music Tastes

Sanremo Festival, as the most important Italian pop music event, has often offered an arena (Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015) to populist discourses to emerge and circulate in relation to cultural spheres (Magaudda, 2020). In 2019, the 69th edition of Sanremo was won by Mahmood, an Italian rapper of Egyptian descent. At that time, Italy was ruled by an 'all-populist government' formed by the ideologically polyvalent Five Star Movement and the right-wing, nativist League. Although the online voting by the public was favourable to Ultimo, a songwriter fully in line with the 'traditional', 'Italian' melodic format, the jury gave the decisive vote to

[1] The web mining was conducted by using specific keywords (such as the name of specific populist politician and the word 'music', or the names of specific pop starts and the word 'populis*': see Chap. 1 for details) on Google to search for the most relevant interactions between pop stars and Italian politicians from 2010 (the time of the emergence of the 5SM in the Italian political scene and the increasing success of the rebranded Lega as a right-wing populist party) to 2018 (for the overall lists of relevant links found, see Table 5.a in the Appendix). These interactions were mainly made up of statements of populist parties and leaders on their social media; public debates and controversies reported in online national and local newspapers; interviews with singers and/or politicians. This collected and analysed heterogeneous set of documents and contents can be considered as a proxy of the Italian public sphere at the intersection between music and politics (for a similar methodological strategy, see Magaudda, 2020). These data have been integrated by a series of expert interviews (with sociologists of music, musicologists, historians of music, semiologists) who were asked about their perceptions and opinions on the interactions between the two spheres in Italy, assessing the specificity of the Italian context vis-à-vis other countries.

Mahmood and his song *Soldi* ('Money'), concerning an autobiographical father-son relationship which included lyrics in Arabic. The League's leader Matteo Salvini tweeted[2]: "#Mahmood…… mah……The most beautiful Italian song?!? I would have voted for #Ultimo, what do you think? #Sanremo2019" (Fig. 5.1).

Salvini, as a perfect representative of the nativist populist right, presented himself as being nostalgic (and a guarantor) of the 'Italianness' of Italian pop music—while winking to xenophobic audiences, as witnessed by many of the reactions from his followers. "He won because his father is an Egyptian immigrant"; "this shows that behind the Festival there is the dirty hand of the Left"; "this has been organised to promote immigration, as usual. They are the true jackals"; "and this Mahmood will represent us at the Eurovision Song Contest? Shut the Rai down".

Fig. 5.1 Matteo Salvini on Mahmood's victory at 2019 Sanremo Festival

[2] https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/1094394837468696578

Few years later, in 2021, the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) returned in a much more direct way at the centre of the political struggle. Thirty years after the 'hyper-Italian' singer Toto Cutugno—whose most iconic song was *L'italiano*, a melancholic, ironic and fond celebration of Italian stereotypes—Italy again triumphed at the ESC, thanks to the rock band Måneskin, edging out the French singer Barbara Pravi. Politicians from the centre-left (the Democratic Party leader and former Prime Minister Enrico Letta), the centre (former PM Matteo Renzi) and the Five Star Movement (with new leader and former PM Giuseppe Conte), among others, all celebrated, with some nationalistic pride, the victory of the progressive (in terms of political leaning) band, while Salvini remained silent for a while, at least until the moment when Måneskin's victory came close to becoming an international political issue: a French tabloid accused Måneskin's frontman Damiano David of having snorted cocaine during the TV show, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs timidly called for revoking the win to the Italian band, while David immediately offered to do a drug test. As soon as the affair was (rapidly) closed, Salvini entered the debate through a Facebook post[3]: "One has to accept the defeat…'… who will explain this to the French?!? P.S. well done Måneskin, well done Damiano, let your appeal to say no to drugs be an example for everybody!".

In the first vignette, Salvini relied on a tacitly shared understanding of what a traditional Italian sound is, and what should not (in this case, a rap-trap sonic structure with Arabic lyrics), to propagate his exclusionary and nativist worldviews. In the second vignette, the League's leader, instead of joining the nationalist chorus celebrating the progressive (in terms of ideological leaning), moderately provocative, rock band Måneskin, opted for triggering the diffused anti-French Italian parochialism. These two cases are just few amongst many examples of the multiple intersections between political—even at the highest institutional level—debates and the pop music sphere. These vignettes also show a couple of very different angles that a right-wing populist leader can take in order to exploit pop music material, and public debates on it, for political purposes. More generally, they immediately express the potential extent through which populism can become tightly connected with pop music. However, the relationships between populist actors and pop music (e.g. endorsement, support, conflict) can be of several types, as our data show.

[3] https://www.facebook.com/salviniofficial/posts/10158684007693155

In November 2018 (Link100), Matteo Salvini's Instagram profile was following just 45 pages—which is a good starting point to understand the building of Salvini as a public figure: two politicians (the League's governor of Veneto, Luca Zaia, and the then PM of the 'yellow-green' government, Giuseppe Conte); several institutional pages (*Carabinieri*, Coast Guard, etc.); his son and his favourite football team, AC Milan; some TV stars from reality and gossip-related shows; inspirational figures from sports; and a few popular comic web pages focusing on football and gossip. The only intellectual worthy of Salvini's attention is Mauro Corona, famous for his plain, rude language and his flaunting of his mountain origins, almost a plastic representation of one of the many heartlands (Taggart, 2000) to which Salvini continuously appeals. Several Italian artists and bands were also followed by Salvini: Giorgia—one of the most popular female pop singers; Max Pezzali, a pop singer and a kind of generational artist amongst those who grew up in the nineties; Vasco Rossi, arguably the most popular Italian rock singer of the last forty years; a band and a songwriter from the seventies, historically associated with the left; and songwriters of iconic songs (which 'everyone knows'): the *Nomadi* and Francesco De Gregori; two more recent pop singers, namely Cesare Cremonini and Bianca Atzei. On the whole, Salvini wants to appear as 'exceptionally normal', as a stereotyped (i.e. according to a gendered vision) Italian male would be: a football fan, a good father, with popular—and in any case non-divisive—tastes, including in the music realm.

This is confirmed by an interview that appeared during the 2019 Sanremo festival, when Salvini "declared his musical tastes" (Interview to Salvini, Link72): the opinions and arguments expressed are mostly banal, 'social desirability' loaded (for the Italian context) and above all tending to avoid any kind of divisive position: for example, "I love Bocelli", "for me Sanremo is Morandi, Tozzi, Tenco",[4] "my mother adored Mia Martini, who suffered a terrible fate, like Marco Masini[5]", "when I was 15 years old I had Baglioni on my walkman for the first flirtations". For any Italian citizen, this may arguably look like a list of clichés. It is the construction of a 'good' character, simple, unsophisticated whilst sincere, even when he admits "not to know Achille Lauro [a singer who became famous for his

[4] Gianni Morandi and Umberto Tozzi famously won the Sanremo 1988 Edition along with Enrico Ruggeri. Luigi Tenco was a Genovese songwriter who committed suicide during the 1967 Edition following his elimination from the competition.

[5] Both Martini and Masini were famously dubbed as 'jinx' by the music industry.

provocative appearances at Sanremo], I had to ask my son". Schiller (2022 *forthcoming*), alluding to the radical right Sweden Democrats' party and its construction of the image outside, as well as through music and cultural means, proposes the concept of 'heroic averageness' (which can be summed up as the rhetorical celebration of what is 'normal' and what is menaced by cosmopolitanism, 'politically correct dictatorship', feminism and so on) to describe its strategy of 'normalization' and 'mainstreamization', namely, the continuous effort to present itself to the public as a 'normal party' (not to be stigmatized, not pertaining just to a subcultural portion, e.g. young, neo-Nazi groups). Heroic averageness is a key discursive strategy used by the party in various political and entertainment events (e.g. electoral campaigns). This strategy also includes self-victimization, whereby the party stresses that they are stigmatized by the media and the mainstream parties. However, in the Italian case, the Lega's communication of 'averageness' via music and cultural practices is overtly present, but there are few instances of such 'heroism'. Paraphrasing Ostiguy's definition of populism as the 'flaunting of the Low', in Salvini we find a specific 'flaunting of the average' instead. The people constructed in the communication of Salvini and the usage of cultural repertoires are not rude, vulgar, irreverent and potentially divisive: in reality, they are the middle-class people deprived of any progressive connotation, marked by mass-mediatization tastes, and by the acceptance of social hierarchies and conformism.

In a slight paradoxical way, Salvini, on his social media, repeatedly refers to Fabrizio De André, the most popular leftist songwriter from the seventies. One example is the twentieth anniversary of De Andre's death, when Salvini tweeted, "In the shadow of the sunset/a fisherman had fallen asleep… Hello Fabrizio, thank you poet!" Salvini just quoted the popular lyrics of the very first song, without going into the meaning of a clearly politicized song (a ballad about the solidarity demonstrated by a fisherman towards a murderer escaping from the police). As with the leftist band *I Nomadi*, such an appropriation of De André is functional to the construction of his public figure: a politician characterized by a wise mix of pragmatism, hyper-popular (as well as 'traditional') culture and 'dreamy spirit' in which almost all of us can identify with at certain times, while also depoliticizing left-wing singers' repertoires by reducing them to the 'patrimony of everyone' (*patrimonio di tutti*) (Dei, 2016). This appropriation strategy seeks to affirm that Italian songwriters, as 'contemporary poets', no longer belong to any political factions: anyone has the right to

appreciate it. This strategy works for both 'high' (i.e. songwriters' tradition) and 'low' popular culture, the latter consisting in tacitly shared material deprived of any political divisiveness. As an example of the latter, we need only look to the position taken by Salvini in 2019 on his social media. Defending two internationally famous Italian pop singers of the past forty years, Al Bano and Toto Cutugno, who were accused by the Ukrainian government of some pro-Putin public statements.[6] The leader of the Lega offered a sarcastic answer: "After Al Bano and Toto Cutugno, who will be next? Pippo Baudo [a popular TV presenter] and Raffaella Carrà? [the football stars] Totti and Del Piero? Mickey Mouse and Pipo de Clown?" (Salvini's Facebook post, Link95). This apparent strategy of depoliticization, or reframing strategy, is recurrent in Salvini's public communications addressing the pop music sphere, as we will see in the next section.

5.2 Salvini Versus Pop Artists: Flattering and Bullying

The League's leader reduces pop music to something non-political, recreational albeit not necessarily frivolous, that is and *should be* innocuous. Indeed, when dealing with public critiques, including insults from pop artists at odds with the League's views, Salvini typically follows a twofold strategy. For the more popular Italian artists (especially amongst older generations), he mainly pursues a flattering strategy (what we call *captatio benevolentiae*) towards the singer, in effect seeking their empathy or approval. For instance, in April 2015 (Salvini's Twitter, Link54), the leader of the League replied to the following statements made by the popular singer Jovanotti on him ("I don't like his horizon. Mine is the multicultural society. I am for xenophilia. I like Europe, the single currency… the dream of single world currency"): "Single World Soup? No thanks" (…) "I like Jovanotti's songs but this idea is tasteless". Jovanotti responded diplomatically, saying: "It's nice to have different ideas and horizons, I respect you and see that you're firm in the conviction of yours", prompting a reaction from Fedez: "When you say firm in the conviction what do you mean? The racist insults and xenophobia?". Salvini couldn't resist the temptation to reply: "Jovanotti and myself have different ideas. But I prefer him to Fedez who seems like a Taliban to me". After the inevitable reference to his own family, by portraying himself as an ironic and

[6] https://www.eastjournal.net/archives/96682

understanding father ("My son went to a concert of Fedez, this is a problem that we have in our family"), Salvini added his invocation to a depoliticized and disengaged music: "Fedez, just sing and you'll feel better" (*canta che ti passa*). Similarly, in 2019, Salvini lambasted the artistic director of the Sanremo Festival, Claudio Baglioni, who had criticized Salvini's immigration policy, to which the League's leader declared: "I like Claudio Baglioni when he sings and not when he plays politics: ministers do politics and singers sing" (Salvini's Facebook post, Link82 and Link91). In addition, when some Salvini fans targeted Emma Marrone, a singer who had cancer, by commenting on her social media accounts, "you are well" (referring to Emma's public criticisms against the League's immigration policy), Salvini intervened with a sample of sexist-paternalistic phrases: "I like Emma's songs", "I will send her a bouquet of flowers", "personal ideologies are different from personal suffering".

Salvini often differentiates 'artists' from his 'respectable people'—a central concept of his political discourse. For instance, on May 2, 2015, he wrote in a Facebook post: "For certain intellectuals, singers, enlightened artists and sincere democrats, the bad guys are those on the right … I'm waiting for you on Monday in Milan, piazza Scala, 6pm! We, the Milanese PERBENE [*decent Milanese peoples*] will be in big numbers" (Link81). This is key to understanding the alternative strategy pursued by Salvini when dealing with criticisms from pop artists that are openly leftist or favour 'transgressive' views at odds with the *gente perbene*'s imagery that Salvini wants to identify his people with. In this case, Salvini has overtly bullied them, tactically—'political bullying'—identified as a central aspect of Salvini's communication approach (Fieschi, 2019), whilst simultaneously displaying detachment as well as self-victimization. "Mr. Fragola doesn't like me? [Lorenzo Fragola, who heavily insulted the League's leader on social media] *Amen*. I will console myself by listening to other music;-). P.S. Lorenzo, *canta che ti passa*!" (Salvini's Twitter, Link97). Again, "the 'singers' Gemitaiz and Murubutu are mad at me. Oh well… P.S.: I prefer Vasco, Battisti and De Andrè" (LINK47). As the musicologist and semiologist Gabriele Marino explained to us in an interview (Int. 41), "there is the concept of unpopular popular music (Frith, 1996), you know… music designed as pop but with no success… well, Salvini would never sing or refer to that stuff!"

Depoliticization, *captatio benevolentiae*, a public image of a 'free and simple' man—with a touch of victimization—and references to his own family encapsulate the relationship between the leader of the Lega via his

public discourses on the web and pop music. This pattern is consistent over time and more recently in the case of Salvini's well-publicized statements in February 2019, after Mahmood's victory at Sanremo Festival, when highlighting his disappointment for a winner with a parent of Egyptian origin: "As for Mahmood, I exchanged some messages with that boy but I unfortunately have other musical tastes, maybe my son likes him but I prefer something else, I hope I can say it without being prosecuted. I heard the last piece of Fedez, it is not bad, I do not like him very much but if he does something pleasant, then it is pleasant" (Salvini's interview, Link71). Instead, another more recent example of Salvini's bullying strategy vis-à-vis music/artists can be found during the May Day celebrations in 2019, when Salvini commented on his social networks: "it is like April 25 [the national day commemorating the liberation from Nazis]: it is the day of all the workers, today, it is not the day of leftist workers or leftist unions or leftist singers. It is the day of all Italians who work, even self-employed workers, artisans, traders, small businessmen" (Salvini's speech, Link94), while he gave the usual criticism to the protesters present at his rally: "I was worried because I had not seen a bunch of communists yet […] Now came the nostalgic guys of Che Guevara and Stalin, please applaud them, you provoke tenderness, you have nothing to do with work but we are democratic and welcome everyone".[7] Attacks against "*gauche caviar*'s singers" had been even clearer in Florence in 2016 (Salvini's speech, Link58): "The lesson of Trump and the free vote of Americans is that you can win against everything and everyone, bankers, lobbyists, journalists, singers": in these statements, the inclusion of 'singers' in the same category as "bankers, lobbyists and journalists" notably stands out.

The identification of enemies of the (Lega) people in certain personalities within culture, entertainment and the music industry is quite recurrent, as in the case of the 'Italians First' rally called by the then 'Northern League' leader in Rome on 8 December 2018 (to mark both the nationalist and Catholic hyper-conservative turn of the party in that period), when a political campaign consisted of publishing on social networks a series of images of 'enemies' who 'will not be present' when the event was launched (Newspaper article, Link55: Fig. 5.2).

[7] In these words we find a claim designed to appeal to the majority, as well as the *producerist* re-signification of the concept of worker, opposed not to the 'capitalist' but to the 'slacker', particularly pertinent being announced on May Day.

Fig. 5.2 Banners convoking the League's demonstration in Rome (8 December 2018): "He won't be present"

Among the banners we found journalists but also rappers (hyper-tattooed and therefore far from the 'decent *leghista* people') such as the aforementioned Gemitaiz as well as Salmo (who, about a year ago, warned his fans that, in the event that they were supporters of Salvini, they should "burn his CDs and rip their T-shirts", to which Salvini responded with a tweet: "my goodness, how sad, open your mind, brother!"). Again, this is a perfect example of the way Salvini applies his 'bullying' strategy and uses pop references for this political purposes, by building a specific 'people-hood' (Boyle, 2012) cemented by the rejection of specific aesthetics.

5.3 Pop Music Artists Versus Salvini: Reproducing the Populism/Anti-Populism Divide

As shown, the contraposition between the 'decent people' and the '*gauche caviar*'s singers' often emerges, with references to the producerist imagery linked by scholars to the core of right-wing populism (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni,

2019).[8] This narrative of Salvini has often provoked a movement/counter-movement reaction. It prompted singers and artists to make public statements, replying to the Lega party on social media, in a game of interactions where the 'populist-anti-populist' frontier was thus strongly reproduced through, and by, the cultural-musical world.

In July 2018, for instance, *Rolling Stone* magazine (Newspaper article, Link90) launched an appeal against "The self-styled 'new' populists [who] are actually ancient and dangerous, cynically ready to exploit ancestral fears and irrational drives". Several prominent artists signed the appeal.[9] Public, harsh criticisms against the (once Northern) League are not new, though. The first singer to write about the Northern League in his lyrics was the Neapolitan songwriter Pino Daniele in 1991 (defining the League as 'a shame'); Daniele would later heavily insult former leader Umberto Bossi for his hypocrisy after the latter sang a traditional Neapolitan song in a pizzeria (Newspaper article, Link16).[10] In 1994, several artists (two leftists Lucio Dalla and Antonello Venditti, but also Enrico Ruggeri, often associated with conservative positions) declined the invitation to participate in the League's rally in Milan, while Nanni Svampa, a prominent Milanese folk-revivalist, accepted and asserted, in line with League's localist identity: "I did not make a political analysis when I accepted the invitation of the League, but when the League proposes a certain type of party,

[8] Producerism, typical of populism (Caiani, 2022), refers to the idea that 'producers' of the nation's wealth should enjoy the economic fruits of their own labour. Individuals and groups driven by work are seen as superior, both economically and culturally. According to producerism, producers contribute to economic prosperity, but they also embody virtue and morality, as opposed to the 'parasites' at the top and bottom of society. Depending on context, 'parasitic' elements may refer to aristocrats, bankers, ethnic minorities over-represented amongst the poorest strata, the 'undeserving poor' and immigrants (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019).

[9] Vasco Brondi, Caparezza, Pierpaolo Capovilla, Diodato, Elisa, Gazzelle, Gemitaiz, Lo Stato Sociale, Fiorella Mannoia, Emma Marrone, Ermal Meta, Francesca Michielin, Motta, Negramaro, Roy Paci, Mauro Pagani, Tommaso Paradiso, Subsonica, Tedua, Tre Allegri Ragazzi Morti.

[10] In 2017, there were musical initiatives celebrating 'Southerness' in an anti-Salvini function, by remembering the frequent racist and anti-Southern statements delivered by the League's leader before the nationalist turn of the party. We recall here the 2017 initiative 'Terroni Uniti' (*terroni* is a derogatory term for Southern Italians), launched by the drummer of the far-left group 99 Posse in view of a Salvini rally in Naples, and resulted in a song (*Gente do Sud*, 3,8 billion views on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVKGGyoUlRo) in which more than 30 Neapolitan artists participated, including Eugenio Bennato, present as special guest at the Italia a 5 Stelle in Naples.

linked to the tradition and culture of Milan, I'm there"(Newspaper article, Link57). Another important singer-songwriter associated with the League (despite some of his denials or statements) is Davide Van De Sfroos (Newspaper article, Link57), at whose concert Salvini did not fail to note his attendance.[11] Even Salvini's strategy of identification of the enemy as the 'non-producers' is nothing new: in 1999, Umberto Bossi had said, "Unlike the Roman parties, the League does not deploy movie stars, singers or former soccer players, but men and women determined to fight for the Europe of identities" (Newspaper article, Link52).

However, while some pop artists contributed to the reproduction of the 'populist-anti-populist frontier', others contrastingly reinforced the idea of the necessity of keeping 'music' and 'politics' separate (as also stated by Fernando Rennis in his book *Patriots* [2019]), in a way that supports the Salvini narrative. One example is during the Salvini-Baglioni controversy in 2019, when journalists invited the participants of the Sanremo festival to take sides, receiving in lieu generic answers 'in favor of freedom of expression', without clear positions on the matter [Newspaper article, Link101].

However, the separation between politics and music is not only praised by Salvini, but also by (pop) artists who indeed took sides politically, especially in a critical function against Salvini himself. It is the subjective concept of 'political music' that is criticized. Salvini supports the separation of music and politics (whilst intervening in the music scene): on the one hand he stresses the entertainment function of music (which should be politically neutral), while on the other hand he stresses the importance to keep the two spheres separated: singers have to sing and politicians have to keep doing politics. Even the political music of previous decades in Italy is cited by Salvini as 'poetry', in a way depoliticizing its conflictual potential. Interestingly enough, this separation of music and politics is generally underpinned by pop music and musicians. As our data show, few singers enter Italian political debates; those who have, however, stress that in their songs they 'do not talk about politics'. The singer Ghali, for instance, prefers to talk about 'social criticism, not politics'. Nonetheless, Ghali, as well as individual listeners—for interviews, see Chap. 6—conceives politics as institutional, party electoral politics, and essentially in pejorative terms. This is indicative of the connection between politics and music in populist times (see Chap. 7). Interestingly, the band *Thegiornalisti* (whose former

[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xG-zSXkj-Wg&t=101s

singer Tommaso Paradiso signed the aforementioned Rolling Stone's appeal) published the following post on Facebook in 2015: "We have never been involved in politics as a band. […] Now we are scared. To describe the figure of Salvini we would need [to evoke] the evil […] The political campaign of hatred, the myth of evil […] The fiery mass that follows the leader of the people, a labile resistance, […] the sordid ignorance, the lack of knowledge. The symbol of the bulldozer, of demolition, of nothingness" (Interview, Link142). The same Paradiso, nevertheless, asserted: "With these people we should try—not through songs because it seems stupid to me—to have a dialogue" (Interview, Link143) […] "[The movie director] Paolo Sorrentino says he will never put a cell phone in his films because he finds it an ugly object. The same goes for me: there will be no politics in my pieces, it would be ugly. I would find it an intrusive element. Of course, if someone asks me what I think, I will say it. But I wouldn't like to have political messages in my concerts" (Interview, Link144). In a similar vein, the rapper Gué Pequeno argues: "In Italy, the outline counts more than the music. Everyone always talks about politics: I'm not interested, it's not my story. In this country, if you are an artist, it seems that you always have to justify and explain yourself. It doesn't work like that abroad" (Interview, Link159). At the same time, Gué Pequeno rejected accusations of being one of the 'privileged' and flaunted a certain anti-intellectualism: "a rapper is actually a reporter: he lives and narrates, the view is that of the street. If you don't live, you don't learn things, so what can you say?"

According to these statements by Paradiso and Gué Pequeno, artists, as opposed to 'politicians', focus on 'real life', and so does their music. Furthermore, politics is something overtly connotated in a negative way; at the very least, it is something impure that does not deserve to be included in artistic work (it is an *intrusive element*, as highlighted by Paradiso). This is fully in line with Salvini's arguments on the separation of politics and music, although singers still assert their right to discuss political topics—while keeping it separated from their artistic repertoire.

The rapper Ghali, of Tunisian ethnicity, publicly and notoriously attacked Salvini for his political stances, declaring that "For me, talking about politics is like going to the accountant: I don't understand anything". In this case, we can see a very specific understanding and usage of the concept of politics by the pop singer—who nevertheless intervenes in politics—as he explains during an interview: "politics is thinking about society, it's not just parties, votes, Parliament (…). In my music I skip that

AU3

passage, I get straight to the point. Once the listener understands, it's as if I've given a political message. Without being explicit (Interview, Link151) […] "I'm an artist and doing politics is not necessarily my job. My music tells my story and rap, which was conceived as a social complaint and has always been my daily bread, was the best way to satisfy my need to take a stand against those who exploit fear to create an enemy […] I do not share Salvini's thinking and I considered it right to express it through my art[12]" (Interview, Link152). Again, and crucially, Ghali argued that politics "is a divisive thing, I want to talk to everyone" (Interview, Link157).

Ghali then claims the right to produce 'political music'—in the sense of "music endangering a sociological imagination […] helping [music listeners] to see the social roots in what might otherwise be felt as individual stories or problems" (Rosenthal & Flacks, 2012). At the same time, however, the pop singer denies that his music is really political, by equating politics with electoral, partisan, institutional affairs, which is, in the eyes of voters, 'divisive' or 'unintelligible'. This way of understanding politics often recurs, as we will see in the next chapter, among the fans of pop music and singers in Italy. It is an understanding of the social and political role of music that is quite far from the 'separation' endorsed by Salvini, while quite close, on the contrary, to the 'anti-political' denouncements of the Five Star Movement, which witnessed in 'politics' something not only inherently but also artificially divisive—an arena built against the 'interests of the people' and for the sake of politicians exploiting artificial or fake divisions to legitimate their role. To be clear, this cannot in any meaningful sense read as a simple association between Ghali and the Five Star Movement: the point is to identify how different 'proper', desired kinds of relationships between politics and music pave the way to different *populist* interpretations—both of them quite at odds with the explicitly political, even militant, goals that have been typically associated to cultural productions from the left.

[12] The reference here is to a song of Ghali's where he depicts Salvini as a 'fascist politician snuffing the environment at the stadium during a football match'. Matteo Salvini again adopted his *captatio benevolentiae*'s strategy: "'There was a fascist politician who sniffed the environment'…He insults me but I like his music, is that bad?".

5.4 Five Star Movement: Too Little Frivolous to Play Pop-Politics in a Credible Way

Our data collection strategy enabled us to focus on several 5SM 'anthems' (Link1), either official and not, composed by songwriters and artists who are not mainstream, such as the rapper Supa and songwriter Leo Pari[13] (who are completely unknown singers). These anthems[14] date back to the movementist phase of the 5SM, and can be considered true political manifestos of the 5SM party. The references to the founding values and watchwords of the party are evident. In other cases, these anthems acquired a more official form, having being written by institutional representatives of the 5SM, as in the cases of one of the most prominent party figures, Max Bugani; the candidate for the 2013 legislative elections Andrea Tosatto—author of *Lo facciamo solo noi*; or the pop star Fedez, who wrote his *Non sono partito* ("I did not leave the country/I am not a party") in view of the 5SM political campaign for the 2014 European elections. These songs are characterized by simple arrangements, with musical bases present in guitar chords and perfectly compatible with the image that 5SM wants to give of itself and which is then featured in the 5SM public events: 'good guys' strumming a guitar, recycling plastic and cans and trying to change the world with small gestures. These anthems are generally very much aligned to both the 'Franciscan' and irreverent ethos of the party's militants.

Unlike the League, the 5 Star Movement assigns a relative centrality to musical moments in its public events, as we have outlined in Chap. 4. However, not many well-known pop music personalities having publicly endorsed the 5SM—although more support it than the League, as we saw previously. Apart from the singer Fiorella Mannoia (e.g. newspaper article, Link30), historically close to the left, we find a few—all of them iconic—artists (5SM's MP Facebook post, Link40) such as Eros Ramazzotti, Renato Zero, Samuele Bersani, Mina and Adriano Celentano, who even wrote a (quite unnoticed) pro-5SM piece during the 2013 national political election: 'If you don't vote you do evil' (*Se non voti ti fai del male*).

[13] One of the songs '*Ho un Grillo per la testa'*, 'I have a cricket in my head', by Leo Pari, was used by the leader of the party Beppe Grillo at the end of one of his theatre tours in 2006 and as the official soundtrack of the first V-Day (Sept. 8, 2007).

[14] As well as independent productions including the video-parodies by the Roman comedian Dado. One of his most viewed videos on YouTube is a reinterpretation of the famous song *Figli delle stelle* by Alan Sorrenti: 'We are the former 5 Stars', an acerbic satire against those MPs who abandoned the 5SM (Link9).

Orietta Berti, a famous eighty-year-old singer who often identified with the 'red' political culture, was particularly explicit in a public debate in view of the 2018 Italian national elections: "The ideas of the Five Stars are so right that, you will see, they will block them. In Italian politics there are too many greedy people ready to put a spoke in their wheels. Making roads, helping small businesses in crisis, removing funding for parties, lowering golden pensions, these are the first things to do" (Interview, Link103). In a post on Facebook (Link40), the 5SM whip at the Lazio, regional councillor Davide Barillari published a home-made collage with several faces of popular singers who would be 'pro-5SM': in addition to those mentioned, we also find Ligabue, Piero Pelù, Gianna Nannini and Raffaella Carrà. In fact, the first two have declared several times their disappointment with Matteo Renzi's PD party (Ligabue publicly argued that "in the current Italian political scenario, the only proposal of the extreme left is the citizenship income [*reddito di cittadinanza*, a means-tested cash transfer] of 5SM", interview, Link126), but they have never explicitly supported Grillo's party, sometimes even making some criticisms. As for Nannini and Carrà, there are propaganda posts on several Facebook groups close to the 5SM in which both singers support the 5SM (Carrà indeed publicly declared, with some reservations, her support for the party) or of the political campaign supported by the 5SM (Nannini, who in any case had written the official anthem for the PD in view of the 2013 elections). Among contemporary Italian pop stars, the most famous endorsements for Grillo's party are from the hyper-pop rappers J-Ax and Fedez. In particular, J-Ax, on several public occasions, admits to having "believed in the 5SM", while being extremely critical of the yellow-green government, defined as 'far-right' (Interview, Link120; see also his famous invective against Salvini during a concert in 2019,[15] Link115). Fedez has been much more organic to 5SM, defended by the rapper in almost every historical phase (when in opposition; in government with Salvini, as well as when forming a new government with the 'archenemy' PD, "because voting every year is irresponsible", Interview, Link114).

Publicizing the endorsements from prominent mediatic figures is part of the unofficial 5SM propaganda which has been considered particularly effective, especially on social media (Cepernich & Bracciale, 2019). Such endorsements witnessed the strength of the party among personalities who increasingly found the courage to declare themselves 'for the change',

[15] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_2aPTY8ixE

something that aimed at reinforcing, we argue, the idea of an inevitability of the 'kind revolution' by the 5SM, as repeatedly stated by Grillo and Casaleggio through their futuristic, utopian and quasi-millenarian discourse (Tronconi, 2018). However, looking at the developments over time, in the ways the populist 5SM approached and dealt with the music scene, we notice that the former leader of the party (from 2017 to 2020) Luigi Di Maio is more direct than Salvini in relating to the world of pop music, and at the same time in engaging much more rarely with the music scene. In line with the more collegial and less personalistic image that 5SM wished to give of itself, compared to the Salvini's League, there haven't been any direct controversies between Di Maio and showbiz personalities of note, and any appropriation strategy of pop music or pop cultural repertoires by the party has been rarely pursued (for an exception, see Fig. 5.3: Di Maio's Facebook post, Link103).

Fig. 5.3 Luigi Di Maio (5SM) defending the singer Orietta Berti from PD's criticisms

This is indeed why Di Maio's comment on the results of 2019 Sanremo Festival, won by Mahmood, was particularly surprising. In his Facebook post, the leader of the 5SM stresses (Fig. 5.4):

> The song I like most about Sanremo is this one and I hoped it would win. I've never been a fan of Cristicchi, but I'm listening to this song endlessly on Spotify. I really like it a lot. […] I see that there is a lot of debate about

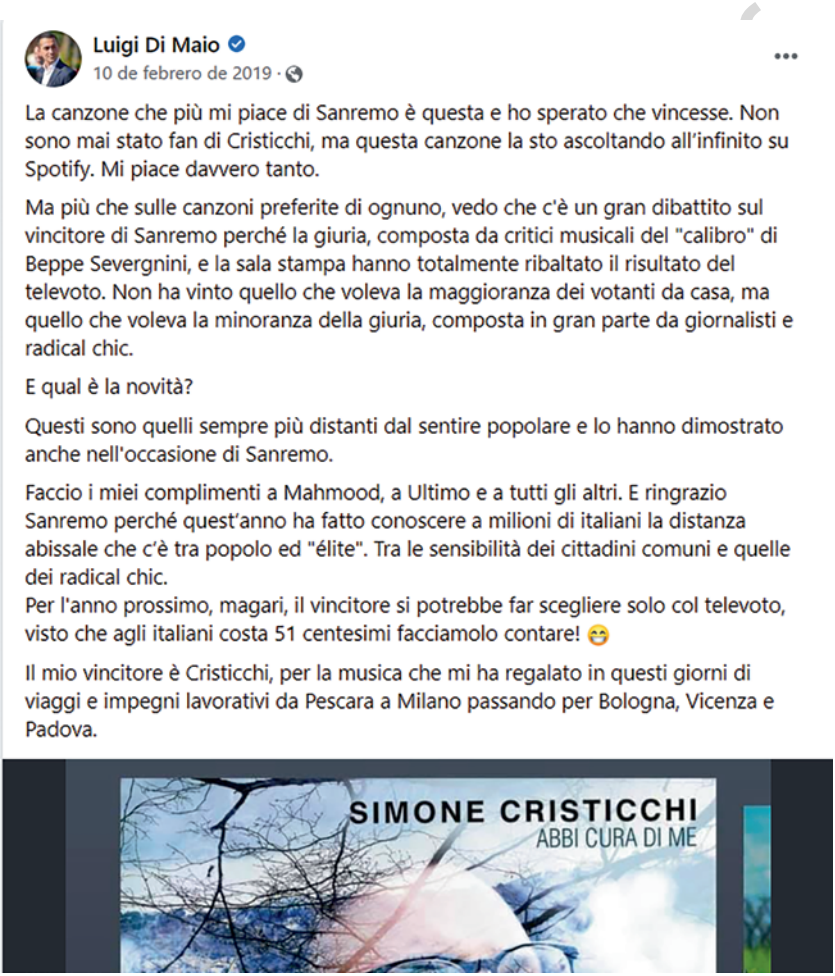


Fig. 5.4 Luigi Di Maio on Mahmood's victory at 2019 Sanremo Festival

> the winner of Sanremo because the jury [composed of 'experts' such as Severgnini] and the press room have totally overturned the result of the popular vote. The winner was not what the majority of the voters at home wanted, but what the minority of the jury did, mostly composed of journalists and radical chic, wanted. […] These are the ones more and more distant from the popular feeling and they have demonstrated it also in this Sanremo Festival. I congratulate Mahmood, Ultimo and all the others. And I thank Sanremo because this year it made millions of Italians aware of the abysmal distance between the people and the 'elite' […].

At least two aspects emerge from this intervention (one new, the other in contrast to Lega) in pop music discussions. The first is the high level of politicization of that Sanremo edition: a politicization attracting strong criticisms even from pop music personalities questioning the opportunity of political interventions on the festival (Magaudda, 2020). The Di Maio's dichotomy 'people' versus 'journalists and radical chic' was quite in tune with Salvini's, who, however, opted for a much more subtle, covert way to join and relaunch the controversy (framed in a nationalist—albeit not overtly xenophobic—way: 'I preferred Ultimo to Mahmood' as the author of 'the most beautiful Italian song'). Di Maio was much less prudent in his overt anti-elitist, anti-intellectualist, plebiscitarian arguments, even expressly naming one of the judges (Severgnini) in a way which triggered harsh personal attacks from Di Maio's followers. The second aspect lies in the choice of endorsing Simone Cristicchi's song. As mentioned earlier, Cristicchi is a singer quite unpopular with the left because of his theatre performances dealing with the Dalmatian exodus of Italian people after the Second World War—a highly controversial issue for the left, as well as notoriously branded by the far right. Di Maio declared to 'not be a fan of Cristicchi', but to admit liking 'really a lot' his Sanremese song. Di Maio, as a good Five Star representative, does not judge with bias; he reflects and evaluates through an 'item-by-item' approach. It is the post-ideological method applied to musical tastes. This is quite the opposite of Salvini's persona, who appreciates a bit of everything that is popular and boosts his popularity through blandishments based on the tastes of the majority.

In our analysis, we also found instances of the Italian populist parties' interventions on the music market policies of the country, which further show how differently they perceive the role of music in society and construct their specific form of populism according to their stance on this cultural debate. On the whole, the Lega party seeks to diffuse 'Italian

music' and insists, based on some law proposals (e.g. the law proposal on Italian music quotas on the Radio,[16] with the goal of devoting a 33% quota of Italian music on the Radio), on the defence of diffusing genuine Italian music; whereas the 5SM party has a different focus, it criticizes the touts online, namely, the 'secondary ticketing' put in practice by big businesses, as well as standing against the SIAE, the Italian institution on the authors' rights whilst calling for the creation of an institution which exports Italian jazz music around the World ('an Italian speciality' as they say) (local 5SM's sections public declarations: Link2, Link4, Link6). Two positions which reflect, on the one hand, a typical nativist populism, and, on the other, a type of populism which is mainly anti-establishment, against powerful economic-political elites and civic in nature, namely educational.

5.5 Between the Political Roles of Singers and Music Appropriation by Politicians: Voices from Experts

The findings from the web mining were confirmed by our expert interviews. As we have seen in Chap. 4—to be further explored in Chap. 6—the League's nationalist turn, while not jeopardizing localist appeals, was overtly made up of cultural strategies of appropriation of Italian 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995), in essence, customary, everyday representations of the nation contributing to reinforce a shared sense of national belonging (ibid., 42). Banal nationalism, pertaining to the relationship between the Lega and pop music, alludes to what is commonly identified as 'popular-national music'—music which everyone is familiar with, therefore producing a sense of common belonging. Sanremo Festival is the main Italian venue for the expression of popular national music. Salvini's references to pop music and pop cultural products that 'everyone knows' and that 'belongs to everyone' perfectly fit with a nationalist rhetoric that not only targets the political appropriation of pop repertoire, but does so by purposely downplaying ideological elements in that repertoire and thus refuting the accusation from political enemies of undue appropriation of music for political purposes. In a seemingly hostile cultural setting, that is, a progressive pop music sphere, and facing a rich heritage of (leftist) a political song repertoire, Salvini focuses on what Umberto Eco defined as

[16] https://www.camera.it/leg18/126?tab=2&leg=18&idDocumento=1578&sede=&tipo=

'gastronomic', easy-to-digest songs, playing with a 'stereotype of Italianness', as the music journalist and historian Alessandro Portelli explained to us in an interview (Int. 35), while at the same time—and essentially—transforming engaged left-wing songwriters into that same patrimony of everyone. Thus, reclaiming them would amount to an unfair, arrogant intellectual operation typical of the left. However, and crucially, a transformation of militant, conflictual music repertoire into a sort of 'canon' (*from Gramsci to Unesco*, as perfectly summarized by Dei, 2016) was already there, and it was not invented by Salvini, who to a certain extent pushed it to its ultimate political consequences. That is to say, the changes in the Italian musical scene and societal approach to it (towards a depoliticization, de-conflictualization of the Leftist music repertoire of 70s music into a 'poetry' and a 'canon') constituted a fertile breeding ground, we argue, for the appropriation of this music also by populist parties including Salvini's Lega. Musicologist Tomatis, when asked about the dialectic between the political left and pop (mass) culture in Italy (Int. 36), asserted that "[leftist] political songs have often addressed the people VS elite divide in odd ways, sometimes paternalistically, other times marginalising anything popular because it is too commercial". Tomatis notes a sea change in the last decade. Firstly, a renaissance of the 'national-popular' in music: much liked because it's Italian, celebrates Italianness and is against the elites. But secondly, such 'nazional-popolare' extends to the *canzoni d'autore*: high-pop songs that are, at the same time, key part of an accredited, consecrated domain, which has to belong to everyone.

Salvini's strategy, as our data suggest, has counter-posed the 'Italian music repertoire' (i.e. songs) to the leftist music icons (i.e. their public personas)—and this presented an opportunity for Salvini to eventually depict celebrities opposed to his image as elites. This is confirmed by the semiologist Lucio Spaziante (Int. 42), who, when asked about the ways that lead to different forms of political appropriation of pop material, explained that the 'pop icons' as such are often re-signified, regardless of their intention or lack of. When something becomes pop, it becomes re-signifiable by anyone; hence, it is possible to attribute various meanings and uses for it. In this regard, he sees as emblematic, "a televised controversy between Salvini and the leftist songwriter Antonello Venditti. 'I like your songs', Salvini told Venditti, who replied denying to Salvini a sort of right of being his fan. This happens because in the political arena the fan and the artist clash by claiming the freedom of being a fan and the freedom of defending one's own message. Indeed, Venditti's position, to a

certain extent, doesn't make sense… when a work of art is given to the people, people end up giving it the use they want. I don't find this strange. I see populism as a denial of the left-right dimension, and I find these phenomena obvious". In this sense, rather than a denial of the left-right dimension, it seems better—following Arato (2013) and Ostiguy (2018)—to understand populism as a way of playing politics that triggers antagonisms based on sociocultural identities and not a clash between coherent ideological platforms. As historian Alessandro Volpi notes (Int. 43), "populism is putting together the popular in many ways. Building, appropriating, putting together a national-popular story. Juxtaposing quotes. The old, mass-parties had their history, they wanted to build it, they didn't take the pieces that already existed. We need to 'build the literature of the new left', they said. They didn't nibble here and there. There was a pedagogic goal, that is completely absent today in politics and political parties".

Data from our focus groups confirm this picture. In the last part of our sessions, we circulated amongst participants, a selected sample of vignettes (i.e. images and sentences of mutual interactions between Italian populists and the pop music scene, see Table 6.d in the Appendix for details), for example, statements by pop stars on political issues such as the recent Black Lives Matter movement, asking the participants opinions on them (their attributed meanings, their reactions, etc.). First, many participants observed that 'antagonism' is nurtured by many of Salvini's declarations ("his people are built *a contrario*, through the identification of an enemy… Salvini's people are the people who are scorned because of their unsophisticated tastes, and in turn they counter their disgust" FG. 10). Similarly, according to a female teenager, "a lot of my friends were hoping for a win for Ultimo's rather than Mahmood's… I was surprised by that. I think Salvini there got a point" (FG. 6). While some participants identified 'xenophobia' in Salvini's tweets (when for instance he criticized Mahmood's triumph at Sanremo), other participants disagreed ("you say this because it's Salvini tweeting… but it's not *per se* a xenophobic tweet") and emphasized instead Salvini's goal of defending "Italianness"—suggesting that Mahmood's song (*Soldi*, 'Money') did not really sound as 'Italian'. Salvini thus appeared both successful and credible, in the eyes of the focus groups' participants, in his role as defender of the Italian Sanremese tradition, namely, the defender of Italian identity, precisely one of the frames adopted by the populist radical right to avoid accusations of blatant racism (Hanakka et al., 2017; Wodak, 2013). Furthermore, while some participants indicated a lack of coherence (even 'authoritarianism') by Salvini, who takes

part in the pop music debate while disqualifying singers' public statements on political issues, others (League's militants, but also radical left-wing militants) defended Salvini's right to express his opinion, because "he is free to argue" (FG. 11) and "Sanremo, as a social fact, is a political topic, and he is a politician" (FG. 8).

Second, the concept of populism is often brought to the fore by our interviewees to make sense of Salvini's and Di Maio's actions and strategies. On the one hand, it is stressed, there is the celebration of the 'willingness of the people', of its 'sovereignty' and the attack against 'elites' (as in the case of Di Maio). Thus, following Mudde's definitional approach to populism (2004), anti-elitism (even more than people-centrism) is clearly recognized during our focus groups as a constitutive feature of both parties, particularly for 5SM—commenting in particular on Di Maio's intervention on the 'Mahmood controversy'. On the other hand, another common aspect which emerges when the focus groups are shown examples of controversies between politics and the music scene, is the concept of the common sharing of an 'Italian' identity, which is equated with the cultural repertoire of the pop music realm exemplified in the typical 'Sanremese' songs. This does not imply, in our view, that 'Sanremo paves the way to right-wing populism', which would be quite a simplistic and in any case misleading statement. Rather, we can state that Salvini's strategy of appropriation is: i) immediately captured; ii) potentially powerful because it targets a tacitly shared repertoire; iii) is 'credible', in the sense that Salvini's persona is generally seen also by his critics, as compatible with such popular tastes and with this defence of an Italian tradition (identified with Sanremo). This simplifies processes of identification and credentials of 'authenticity' for public declarations by the League's leader. Indeed, as it has been argued by one participant at the FG in Pavia, "Salvini here is acting as any other Italian citizen: like everybody else, he comments on Sanremo" (FG. 6); similarly, "he is also a provocateur, because he knows that many people were waiting for his comment to attack him, and he is expected to have an opinion on everything" (FG. 4). The reactions on Di Maio's intervention on Mahmood's triumph were, in contrast, interpreted differently by our FG participants. His post is mainly considered as a "perfect summary of the 5-star political culture: digital democracy, anti-elitism, critiques against *gauche caviar*", and yet "his post is somewhat clumsy… he was evidently mimicking Salvini" (FG. 4).

While some older participants point to the fact that "politicians did not argue on Sanremo in the past" FG. 4), other respondents find it normal or

even argue that "this may help to talk about politics in a more understandable way" (FG. 1), although critics point to Salvini's "populism… this is pure populism, the anxious search for easy 'likes'" (FG. 8). Populism here is understood as inauthentic demagoguery. In contrast, the League's political militants, interviewed during our focus group in Treviso, defend Salvini's statements, confirming the xenophobia behind the critiques against 'political correctness' and celebrating the populist leader as a 'truth-teller', and acting accordingly: "hey [when reading the tweet], this is the Moroccan homosexual guy! [referring to Mahmood, son of an Egyptian] … well, isn't it true? He's Moroccan and homosexual! Am I not allowed to say this?", "the real discrimination is to award him because he's African" (FG. 11).

To summarize, Salvini is often described as attempting to 'appear like everybody else', more than 'appropriating' Sanremese tradition. Salvini's interventions on the pop culture arena attracted two main critiques from our focus group participants: his xenophobic opinions and the (lack of) appropriateness of engaging with such easy and non-political topics. Participants addressing this second critique shared, in fact, an anti-populist critique, which suggestibly entails the separation between high and populist/low politics: in this sense, the very core of 'celebrity politics' is targeted. Contrastingly, the critiques against Di Maio allude to a lack of credibility when he is trying to play celebrity politics (he is defined as 'clumsy', 'mimicking Salvini' (FG. 4). In this sense, it is not a matter of Di Maio's persona, rather it is the broader party's established imagery—namely, the 5SM' ideology and aesthetics—that makes such attempts non-credible and thus less than efficacious, at least in the eyes of our FG participants.

In sum, by entering the debate on pop culture, which has also been defined as the "battlefield of consent and resistance" (Hall, 1981), Salvini does emerge as a politician reinforcing his own persona. The leader of the Lega opted for engaging with pop material, albeit without a strategy of proper appropriation, while following a strategy of depoliticization (of pop music) to attack any 'intrusion' of (progressive) pop stars in the realm of politics. *Each to their own*: everyone should fulfil his own role in the society. Having said this, most of our FG participants consider political interventions by pop singers as an exception in the Italian music scenario, which is almost unanimously seen as 'apolitical' (a word often used to react to the vignettes) and focused on 'intimate, introspective topics' (FG. 4; see also Chap. 6 on this)—"in contrast to the US, here we have

Table 5.1 Four main categories of relationships between the populist and pop music scenes

- **Populist politicians intervening on music debates** (e.g. case: Salvini and Di Maio on Mahmood's victory, Sanremo 2019)
- **Populist politicians announcing their musical tastes** (e.g. cases: Salvini quoting songwriters and rockers, Fabrizio De André, Vasco Rossi, Lucio)
- **Artists endorsing populist politicians** (e.g. cases: Fedez, pop-rap; Orietta Berti, Al Bano, Italian *canzonetta*; Fiorella Mannoia, pop-rock; Samuele Bersani, songwriter for the 5SM; Fausto Leali, Sanremese pop for the League)
- **Artists attacking populist politicians** (e.g. cases: Fedez, J-Ax, Gemitaiz, Salmo, rap; Antonello Venditti, songwriter; Emma Marrone, pop)

now a lack of politically engaged popstars" (FG. 5, 7), "we have Jovanotti who organizes concerts on climate change on the beach and leaves the beach dirty and polluted" (FG. 4). Interestingly, the participants reproduce some of the narration which populist politicians use to build their discourses on music: "Attacking Trump has become fashioning" (FG. 4, 6); "I would say that it is not a matter of being leftist or right-wing… it is a matter of being progressive. Being progressive is a status… singers need to live in a globalized society, and they consequently target a progressive scene, it's like Hollywood" (FG. 4). Again, the frontier between populism and anti-populism as portrayed by Salvini arguably finds fertile ground to appear credible in broader society. Table 5.1 summarizes the main findings in the chapter.

5.6 Conclusions

Against the background of increasingly blurred boundaries between the realms of politics and entertainment, we have explored in this chapter the ways in which the popular music sphere can interact with the political sphere, confirming the phenomenon of celebrity politics (Street, 2004) for Italy in recent times. According to this concept, the phenomenon is at play when there is an increasing political relevance assumed by pop stars in the public debate; exploitation of references from popular culture by populist politicians (for political purposes); media inclined to devote more attention to the statements and opinions of pop artists (which are not necessarily reflected in their cultural productions); pop artists exploiting their privileged position in the media system and 'acting' as public opinion leader. Our data from the web mining search, from the coexistence of pop

singers and politicians in the Internet sphere, in fact illustrated these factors at play. The chapter delved into several famous examples of Italian pop stars engaging in political debate, especially in relation to populist (and anti-populist) politics, and vice versa. Examples include Claudio Baglioni (director of Sanremo Festival and songwriter) criticizing Salvini for his 'closed ports' policy during the 2019 Opening Press Conference of the Festival, or the appeal appeared on *Rolling Stone* magazine in 2018 against the 'all-populist' coalition government League-5SM and signed by many Italian pop artists.[17] Moreover, our data have shown that politicians are often acting in a populist way: both as a strategy of (direct and unmediated) mobilization (à la Weyland, 2001) and as a way to establish a connection with the people, by performing 'low' sociocultural practices (Ostiguy, 2018). Italian politicians, at least those analysed, enter into apparently unserious (easy) public debates (e.g. related to the pop music scene), not necessarily related to institutional politics, to reach several different goals, as we have demonstrated: namely, to increase their visibility, circulate specific ideas and appealing popular values in somewhat innocent ways to reach a broader audience, and shape, produce and politically exploit what Gramsci calls common sense. A perfect example of that was the case of the critiques by Matteo Salvini and Luigi Di Maio in 2019 against Sanremo's jury and the Festival winner—the Italo-Egyptian rapper Mahmood.

Our expert interviews have confirmed and deepened the view of an enduring relation between music and politics in the country. Looking at the relationship between high and low pop music, our interviews have stressed how the leftist music repertoire (particularly from the sixties and seventies) has become 'pop' in the sense of being included as part of a respected, venerated, even mythized popular musical repertoire among people (Dei, 2016). The 80s have been instead considered the key point of the relationship between politics and (pop) music in Italy, since hedonistic, individualistic, as well as nationalistic values started spreading even through pop musical productions, as a sort of reaction, according to some, against the austere left (Tomatis, 2019; Volpi, 2022). In sum, what was considered leftist for its conflictual potential, more recently has become

[17] E.g. Vasco Brondi, Caparezza, Pierpaolo Capovilla, Diodato, Elisa, Gazzelle, Gemitaiz, Lo Stato Sociale, Fiorella Mannoia, Emma Marrone, Ermal Meta, Francesca Michielin, Motta, Negramaro, Roy Paci, Mauro Pagani, Tommaso Paradiso, Subsonica, Tedua, Tre Allegri Ragazzi Morti.

leftist because it was considered as 'high'—in contrast to easy, entertainment type of music. At the same time, the successful canonization of the leftist repertoire paved the way for attempts of appropriation from the populist right because of its Italianness.

The analysis in this chapter also highlighted the need to focus on the 'imagery' (Sindic & Condor, 2014) projected by the populists on their enemies, according to the suggestions of social identity theory, in order to understand how pop culture (and pop music in particular) is signified.

In sum, investigating the interactions between music and populism showed that the public controversies between the two scenes, anchored on populist references, pave the way to populist discourses to be constructed and circulated in a non-/pre-political sphere. This underlines the role of the aesthetic, cultural and symbolic phenomena, as well as digital media technologies, in reshaping the collective possibilities to articulate social and political identities (Magaudda, 2020).

Some emerging concepts came up from our focus groups and expert interviews as particularly recurring and useful for attributing meaning(s) to the relationship between the populist and music scenes in Italy. They are frames such as 'authenticity' (namely, spontaneity, being direct, even telling the truth, the real things), 'populism', the importance to look at 'social media', since they enable authenticity, for being direct in the political discourses, and, finally, 'pop music' as well as a type of music which unites different generations, much more than class—something which resonates with one of the core values of populism, the homogeneous people as well as nostalgia for an idealized past—a typical emotion elicited by generational appeals. Differences between anti-populist and populists have also emerged, with right-wing populists who are perceived as more direct (in their interactions with the music scene), even banal, but also more effective. This resonates with the different usages of pop music by different varieties of populism present in the previous chapter.

Furthermore, we argued that these strategies and interactions can be linked to some specific cultural and political opportunities in the Italian context and historical processes such as the equation of the Italian *canzone d'autore* as a pop repertoire, with the left but also with anti-populism due to the opposition against the more frivolous *canzonette*; the gradual depoliticization of pop music (see Dei, 2016); and, contrastingly, the politicization of specific tastes as crystallized in specific sociocultural *and* political identities—as we will explore further in the following chapter. Populism transpires in this sense as a 'toolbox' where, politically and culturally, the

'ideology of the common man' elevates the public sphere as the arena par excellence, in which the dramatic personality inscribes distinction and grabs popular attention (Rojek, 2001). To this extent, the chapter shows that celebrity culture provides an important integrating function in secular society, but, additionally, the link between pop artists' public role and populism is undoubtedly more complex than expected.

AU4

References

Arato, A. (2013). Political theology and populism. *Social Research, 80*(1), 143–172.

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. Sage.

Caiani, M. (2022). (forthcoming)). Populism/Populisms. In D. Snow, D. D. Porta, B. Klandermans, & D. McAdam (Eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of social and political movements*. Blackwell.

Cepernich, C., & Bracciale, R. (2019). Digital Hyperleaders: Communication strategies on social networks at the 2019 European elections. *Italian Political Science, 14*(2), 93–113.

De Cleen, B. (2016). The party of the people *versus* the cultural elite. *Populism and* nationalism in Flemish *radical right* rhetoric about *artists. JOMEC Journal, 9*, 1–15.

Dei, F. (2016). *Cultura popolare in Italia. Da Gramsci all'Unesco*. Il Mulino.

Duyvendak, J. W., & Jasper, J. (2015). *Players and arenas. The interactive dynamics of protest*. Amsterdam University Press.

Fieschi, C. (2019). *Populocracy: The tyranny of authenticity and the rise of populism*. AgendaPub.

Hall, S. (1981). Notes on deconstructing the popular. In R. Samuel (Ed.), *People's history and socialist theory* (pp. 227–240). Routledge.

Hanakka, N., et al. (2017). Confrontational yet submissive: Calculated ambivalence and populist parties' strategies of responding to racism accusations in the media. *Discourse & Society, 28*(3), 262–280.

Ivaldi, G., & Mazzoleni, O. (2019). Economic populism and Producerism: European right-wing populist parties in a transatlantic perspective. *Populism, 2*(1), 1–28.

Magaudda, P. (2020). Populism, music and the media. The Sanremo festival and the circulation of populist discourses. *Partecipazione e conflitto, 13*(1), 132–153.

Mazzoleni, G., & Sfardini, A. (2009). *La politica pop. Da 'Porta a Porta' all "Isola dei Famosi"*. Il Mulino.

Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541–563.

Ostiguy, P. (2018). Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach. In P. Taggart, C. Rovira, P. Ochoa, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 73–97). Oxford University Press.

Pirro, A. (2018). The polyvalent populism of the 5 star movement. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies, 26*(4), 443–458.

Rennis, F. (2019). *Patriots: La musica italiana da Berlusconi al sovranismo*. Arcana.

Rojek, C. (2001). *Celebrity*. Reaktion Books.

Schiller, M. (2022). (forthcoming)). Populism in the land of pop: The Sweden democrats and popular music. In M. Dunkel & M. Schiller (Eds.), *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.

Street, J. (2004). Celebrity politicians: Popular culture and political representation. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 6*(4), 435–452.

Street, J. (2014). Music as political communication. In K. Kenski & K. Jameson (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 885–896). Oxford University Press.

Taggart, P. (2000). *Populism*. Open University Press.

Tomatis, J. (2019). *Storia culturale della canzone italiana*. Il Saggiatore.

Tronconi, F. (2018). The Italian five star movement during the crisis: Towards normalisation? *South European Society and Politics, 23*(1), 163–180.

Volpi, A. (2022). *1980. Una lunga estate italiana. La musica che ha cambiato il consumo della politica*. Pisa University Press.

Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics. *Comparative Politics, 34*(1), 1–22.

Wodak, R. (2013). 'Anything goes!': The Haiderization of Europe. In R. Wodak, M. Khosravinik, & B. Mral (Eds.), *Right-wing populism in Europe: Politics and discourse* (pp. 23–37). Bloomsbury.

CHAPTER 6

Between Music and Politics: The Reception of ('Populist') Music by Fans and Citizens

> The value of popular culture, whatever its textual qualities, is in what audiences do with it (Kooijman, 2013: 184).

Authors looking at the effects of popular music on political engagement suggest that, under certain conditions, popular music can galvanize people into political action, influence the public agenda and shape political opinions (Brown, 2009; Franke & Schilze, 2013; Kutschke & Norton, 2013; Schoening & Kasper, 2012; Street et al., 2008).

In this chapter, shifting towards a 'demand side' (to use the language of party politics rather than that of cultural sociology) and drawing on in-depth interviews with concertgoers (i.e. fans of 'populist' pop music/singers), activists of populist and anti-populist movements, as well as focus groups with Italian citizens,[1] we explore the individual and group (populist?) meaning-making in popular music (i.e. reception analysis). We also explored the relationship of our interviewees with politics and how they read the relationship between artist and politics. That is to say, how

[1] For details on the questionnaires used for the different categories of interviewees, see Tables 6.a and 6.b in the Appendix, as well as the lists of the interviewees quoted in the analysis.

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3_6

recipients[2] understand and negotiate the meanings of contemporary Italian pop music production, how they use forms of popular culture music to interpret current politics in populist times and, finally, how populist forms of political knowledge and engagement can be reproduced in social interactions.

While surveys might only provide general information about activists' and citizens' attitudes, in-depth interviews and focus groups reveal a symbiosis between the realms of music and culture on the one hand, and politics on the other, leveraging on the agency and the interpretative capacity of the actors themselves.[3] Focus groups, like group interviews, spur collective interpretation whilst creating an experimental environment to observe interactions between people and emerging concepts in context (Della Porta, 2005).[4]

Musical meanings are always socially and historically entrenched, and "they operate on an ideological field of conflicting interests, institutions, and memories" (Walser, 1993: xiii). As Hutnyk and Sharma (2000: 57) stress, the study of musical production and practice should be inserted in a broader analysis of political and cultural "struggles over meanings, authorities and values" (see also Gilroy, 1993; Lipsitz, 1994; Rose, 1994), and thus power relations (Shepherd, 2012). Therefore, we need to look at how audiences may receive messages from music, based on a belief that "music and politics are constructed as antithetical, except when the composer or patron intend them to mix", is the wrong way to set the debate (Taylor, 1995: 505).

This chapter suggests that popular culture in general (and pop music in particular) is an important starting point from which people define their identities and think about power relations in society. In this sense, forms of cultural production can produce different political and proto-political

[2] Reception analysis is oriented towards the qualitative exploration of audiences' sense-making (e.g. from media content) (Schrøder, 2016). It is usually described in contrast to textual analysis and as a 'result of the transition from a mass media society to a culture of participation and ubiquitous media, where citizens are prosumers (producers and consumers) of cultural and pop cultural material' (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2019).

[3] In fact, in our focus groups, the recipients are not exposed to an isolated music example, but rather receive music within a social context as part of a nexus of audiovisual signs and signals (Dunkel et al., 2018).

[4] In particular, the audiovisual material proposed for the discussion during the focus groups is linked to previous parts of this study by a common research design, namely, the sample of pop music songs offered as stimulus was selected among those emerged as relevant for the topic at stake from our content analysis (of Chap. 3).

interpretations, 'through reasoned judgements about the content' of music as well as the 'emotional response' to it, and where people may express their relationship with politics (Street et al., 2014).

6.1 'I Like Him Because He Got What He Wanted': Authentic, Rebel, 'Not Political' (i.e. Not Ideological or Partisan)

During our interviews with (pop) fans and concertgoers,[5] we explored their reasons for appreciating and following the artists—the role of the artist in their everyday life, and their broader opinions on the artist's public statements, messages and issues debated, as well as how the interviewees justified their interest and passion in multiple ways. The first main aspect that emerged is the importance of the artist's *persona* rather than any specific message that they convey through the music. One of the principal appealing aspects is that "she/he sets a positive example" (Int. 16, 19). The singer is often seen as an 'older brother', or is an example of individual redemption, even a 'rebel' (Int. 20), as an interviewee explains: "I like Ghali because he has that light way of saying things, very free. Fedez for his frankness, his way of thinking, everything he thinks, he says regardless of the consequences. J-Ax for having become J-Ax, for never giving up, for his determination".

Notably, a frequent fan response vis-à-vis the artist is that 'he/she does not give up', often framed by fans as a very individual, even intimist interpretation of the artist-fan relationship, with the latter seeking edifying characters to illuminate their life. In particular, some fans appreciate and admire 'self-made artists', those overcoming difficult socioeconomic backgrounds—or perceived to—such as J-Ax, Fedez (who "has paid his parents' mortgage"), Lucariello[6] or Ghali. As one respondent explains, "the

[5] The interview partners were selected among fans of a number of pop artists/bands (J-Ax; Fedez; Fabri Fibra; Davide Van De Sfroos; Rumatera; Ghali; Lucariello and Povia) chosen as representative of contemporary Italian pop music and emerged as particularly relevant from the field, with regard to populism. We interviewed 18 fans in total, ranging from 15 to 60 years old (mainly young or very young, i.e. potential fist-time voters), balanced in terms of gender, educational background and geography.

[6] "He is against the Camorra, and above all he is someone who made it. Others have grown up in the Camorra's milieu, but he, as well as Luchè and others, are the few who have made it. They redeem themselves through music and escape this world. This is what I find striking" (Int. 33).

thing I like about [Ghali] is his desire to succeed. As a child he was unfortunate, but managed to reach his goal, following his passion and becoming a singer. Showing hunger and belief to reach his goal, he is an example and the music impressed me, especially the last album, which I liked a lot, but I was struck by his desire to succeed" (Int. 31). Social mobility is thus always seen in an individual way.[7] As such, in not giving up and succeeding to cope with social problems with an individual approach, the collective action is sometimes viewed by our interviewees as negative, out of a fear of conformism. Conversely, individualism is emphasized. Fans are comfortable with artists addressing social problems, but only if they appear non-partisans/non-ideological. In this sense, non-partisanship is an additional appeal.

The perceived perfect correspondence between the person and the character (i.e. the myth of authenticity, a classic example of the artist-fan relationship, Frith 1981) often recurs as a motive for fans to appreciate and follow a singer, at times linked to references of shared local traits, *strengthening the affinitive bond*: "I had the opportunity of meeting him personally and spending some hours drinking and chatting (…), when I touched the person with my own hands. Furthermore, he has relatives living close to my town, he did his military service here, in the end we found each other and it is not a coincidence, I went looking for him and he was there at the bar" (Int. 27, on Van De Sfroos); "J-Ax, his charisma, his way of relating to people, their [J-Ax and Fedez's] way of approaching people, their desire to sing, to express various thoughts, they are real people. (…) I follow Fedez a lot on Instagram, he likes to joke, make fun of his wife, he is really real, in concerts and in everyday life, and J-Ax is the same" (Int. 19); "his frankness, his way of thinking, everything he thinks he says without thinking of the consequences" (Int. 16). As regards the mechanisms

[7] In terms of political translation, one can tie this prevailing frame to a type of discourse and praxis compatible with those of the 5SM, arguably closer to prefigurative political practices (Tornberg, 2021). This is close, for example, to the idea of the 5SM to give back MP's salaries. As founding guru Gianroberto Casaleggio repeatedly remarked, "One can believe words. But one will always believe in examples". Similarly, the charity campaigns launched by Fedez and his wife (the entrepreneur and top influencer Chiara Ferragni) are not seen in a negative way, rather as very positive by our interviewees. In an era in which an all-encompassing (i.e. ideological) political discourse is struggling to establish itself, the importance and especially the effectiveness, in terms of public support, of these forms of public social engagement seem to arise (also as forms of celebrity politics—see Spaziante, 2016 and Grant, 2015).

through which entertainment and leisure can be related to pre-political and political attitudes, Street et al. (2011, highlight affinity as 'the affective feelings that people have about the reality they imagine and the affinities they share'.

We can conclude that the myth of authenticity is very pervasive in popular culture, with links to the political sphere—understood in the sense of a sphere marked by power relations—as noted by Anttonen (2017): "Harvard Business Review stated in 2015 that 'authenticity has become the gold standard for leadership'". In the words of our interviewed fans, there is also a desire to investigate the link between public and private persona, as explained by a fan referring to singer Fabri Fibra, "when he talks he sounds hypnotic and very intelligent… if I am a little angry his songs calm me down. Hearing him at concerts is great. I make my parents listen to him, and they tell me that they think he's interesting. I'd love to have a coffee with him and find out what he's like, I'd love that" (Int. 24).

When asking about the artist's role in their everyday life, fans often underline a sort of 'integrating function' played by the artist (Rojek, 2001).[8] This can be part of the process of identity construction (Buckingham, 2008). As explained by an interviewee: "I discovered Fabri Fibra in 2006 as a ten year old. I didn't understand everything but he was talking about life in small towns to me, a marginalized small-town boy […] I didn't see myself neither [as a] nerd, nor as a [successful guy]… I had no identity but Fibra gave me one. […] Now, at 25, I see myself in his first albums: the girl breaking up with him, misogyny, false friends, work, politics, the irresponsible employer, now I see it all again. Listening to his recent records, he seems to be showing me my future" (Int. 23). AU3

In other cases, especially if we consider songwriters (like Van De Sfroos) or rappers who explicitly tackle social issues (as in Lucariello), the topic ("how to live in the middle of the street" and "values of brotherhood", Int. 23) or the artistic skills ("the beat, the way he sings", on Lucariello Int. 33; "he builds poetic images, he's a great storyteller", on Van De Sfroos, Int. 25, 27) are the key factors in determining one's tastes. In these cases, cognitive mechanisms appear to trump affective ones in spurring fans' interest.

[8] As it has been stressed "politically and culturally, the ideology of the common man elevated the public sphere as the arena par excellence, in which the dramatic personality and achieved style inscribed distinction and grabbed popular attention. To this extent, celebrity culture provides an important integrating function in secular society" (Rojek, 2001: 14).

Regarding the internalization of the main values conveyed by the artists, affinity dictated by a common imagination seems to be prevalent. Such affinities are also strengthened, as underlined by our interviewees, by the intimacy produced by singing in the familiar, popular, vernacular language, as in the case discussing concrete things, while disregarding political correctness. The issues they discuss may be "similar to other singer-songwriters, but they say it in Venetian language, so it's your own thing, that people from other countries can't fully understand" (Int. 30). Similarly, referring to Lucariello, one asserts, "I like it a lot, I prefer it, because we always speak in dialect here, even if we sing a song, we prefer to speak in dialect. It is a form of identification, to make people understand, feel, that you come from this place" (Int. 33): in fact, these same words are used by Rocco Hunt in his *'Nu juorno buono* ("My accent must be heard"). In this sense, the attachment to territorial identity emerges for our data, as well as the search for recognition of own local culture, which is seen as positive.

If one understands populism—according to a sociocultural approach to the phenomenon—as a form of relationship between a leader and his people based on identification around specific sociocultural appeals (Ostiguy, 2018), one could be tempted to see a parallelism here. However, this is risky in our view: too simplistic and problematic. Rather, what needs to be stressed from these data is the high potential, in terms of strength of the ties and the strong emotions elicited, of cultural productions working on a localist-nationalist imagery. The quotes also show the extent of an exclusionary potential there, even if innocent and understood as a proudness for local identity, or as a sort of nostalgia of simplicity associated to a local way of life.

In sum, as some political sociologists point out talking about 'epistemological populism' (i.e. an epistemological perspective "valorizing the knowledge of 'the common people', which they possess by virtue of their proximity to everyday life": Saurette & Gunster, 2011: 199), our interviews with pop music fans seem to suggest that personal experience is more important than general knowledge.

6.2 Pop Artists and Politics in Fans' Daily Lives

Is the artist recognized as having some influence or relation to fans' (broadly understood) political views? When asked whether they believe the artist is 'political' (why and how), most of our interviewees answered

'no'. A common trait among our pop music fans interviewed is the absolute separation between the two spheres: that is, they advocate it, and they perceive this in reality. Yet, within the sample of artists they are fans and communities of, three of them are publicly associated with (populist) political parties (Fedez and Lucariello for the 5SM, and Van De Sfroos for the Lega).

In general, however, our interviewees argued that music is and 'must' be separate from politics, albeit for many reasons. On the one hand, some concertgoers emphasize that they appreciate the singers' 'catchiness', 'funniness', and non-alignment to politics, highlighting the role of music as pure entertainment (Street et al., 2014). As one of our interviewees explains when referring to politically engaged artists, "Fedez doesn't give me that impression, he's a showman, then he'll have his ideas, but I don't know anything about them (…) when you give someone a little bit of visibility, he misuses it immediately. Nor do I believe much in 'politically engaged' songs [because they are primarily] written to be successful" (Int. 21). Similarly, another fan stresses that she personally does not get anything from artists such as trappers, "they are not frivolous people, but they don't convey much to me (…); not essential messages of life, of everyday life (…). If anything, they transmit to me negative things, drugs, stuff like that" (Int. 31).

On the other hand, other interviewees—in line with non-partisanship trends as a form of political identification (Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2020)—note that being politically uncommitted increases the chances of communicating, and of being heard on political and social claims. As stated by one interviewee, "Fedez in some of his songs, especially in the past, was very attached to politics, attacking politicians. Ghali does the same but in a lighter way, so that everyone understands but no one can go against him (…) Also because you don't want to hear only or too much about politics, after a while you want something softer, but not banal either, there has to be a balance between the two things" (Int. 19).

Secondly, politics is mainly understood as merely the 'electoral-partisan-institutional sphere' (and evaluated as 'negative' in this respect), while at the same time a positive, idealistic, ethical-moral meaning is assigned to the 'engaged messages' of artists (this is also connected to the point of the integrative function of artists aforementioned) and to the very fact that the artist is 'engaged'. As regards singer Fedez, one interviewee says that "he brings young people a little closer to politics, he talks about it in his stories. (…) Anyway it's right that he has a political role, maybe not so strong,

but so that people know about these issues" (Int. 22). Politics as an electoral-political sphere is perceived by the interviewees as having low significance ("How interested am I in politics from 1 to 10? Very little": Int. 19; "politics is not part of my world": Int. 23), although, on the other hand, most respondents like when artists 'deal with serious issues', also addressing politically important topics (Int. 19, 32), even if respondents are not aware ("I don't know… but it suggests to that he is interested". Int. 16) of the political positions of their favourite artists. The artists' public positions are, in any case, more "influential" than their own artistic productions: "I think Fedez influences more through what he says than through his music. Because the music, well, maybe you don't listen to the lyrics. Other genres may influence more" (Int. 19). In other words, celebrity politics impacts much more on public opinion than politically engaged music, particularly when 'mainstream pop music' (approached as easy listening songs) is concerned.

Often, the interviewees simply perceive that the singer in question deals with social issues and is appreciated for this, as long as he/she does not openly take sides with a party. The singer is perceived as someone who 'tells the truth', a truth-telling aspect which is also related to the view of successful populist communication (Sorensen, 2021).

In general, collective action is rarely associated with music (and mainly negatively evaluated). Even when the artist and the music are appreciated in terms of the messages that are conveyed in the songs, the individual dimension prevails. The fans tend to see collective political action as something that would undermine their individuality to the logic of the 'herd', of the 'mass', namely, conformism ("a group makes choices following a leader, without expressing ideas", Int. 33), as well as utopian: "It depends on each person if you want to join forces to accomplish your goals or if you have in your head that you want to do it all by yourself. I am for the latter strategy. The whole nice thing, give strength together…nah. I don't really believe in that" (Int. 24). Indeed, as a Fabri Fibra's fan explains, "Anyone listening to Fibra can identify with certain situations, so they find themselves. As he lives his personal battle against (…) absent parents, problems with brothers, with relating to women… so too do many people who grew up alone, have always been very independent, without help, without creating solidarity with others, very direct, and so they understand what Fibra speaks about. They look with contempt at what is 'the collective' because they do not trust 'the collective'" (Int. 23).

There is, however, an exception to this. When asked about the meaning of listening to pop music and singers, one fan, talking about the rapper Lucariello, states that the meaning is *not* "trying to escape from this world (…) but rather to try changing it, either collectively or individually (…) this can be done also through music, beyond other things" (Int. 33).[9] This type of message can also be read as consistent with the 'voluntaristic' aspect of 5SM communication (Turner, 2013, i.e. the focus on good practices or examples to be followed). As said, fans mainly conceive their preferred artists as examples of individual redemption.

The literature on populism has demonstrated a lack of political efficacy among citizens as one of its main drivers (Geurkink et al., 2020). It is not only the perceived lack of effectiveness on politics, but also, more profoundly, distrust in politics (understood as collective action, not only as 'distrust of politicians') that could reproduce, we argue, populist attitudes.

Among the interviewees of locally oriented artists, such as Davide Van De Sfroos, Rumatera and Lucariello, the theme of territorial identity emerges. Pride of belonging prevails, and the use of dialect is associated with the dimension of authenticity (Int. 27). Above all, the nexus between pop music and politics is much more present in this latter aspect namely, the local-celebrating pop music which emphasizes territorial identity and the pride that goes with it. This is perceived as more 'political'[10] according to pop fans than any appreciation of the singer as a self-made man who 'doesn't give up'—the political aspects of which are not recognized at all.

6.3 Music as a Collective Ritual

Another way to explore the relationship between music and populism is to look at how music and music-related functions build distinctively symbolic events, where the attention of a large audience can be channelled into a ritual form. This perspective addresses the degree of autonomy of cultural

[9] Lucariello has been also a 5SM local candidate, beyond than a singer.

[10] Rumatera, according to their fans, while appropriating and reproducing stereotypical descriptions, also takes charge of making room for "Venetian culture in the world"—a sort of "revenge of places that don't matter" (Rodriguez-Pose, 2017)—in a way that is quite politically compatible with *leghismo storico*, and more generally with a form of cultural-territorial demarcation, as stressed by one interviewee, "We [Italians] know almost nothing about the Veneto region, and they have certainly tried to show what we are, sometimes in a stereotyped way, which our way of thinking is, always on the borderline between exaggeration and reality, because the final aim is entertainment" (Int. 30).

and aesthetic phenomena in shaping collective identities and meanings, including political ones. More specifically, music events and experiences could represent powerful forms of collective rituals, during which constructions of collective identities (including distinctions between "us" and "the others") are performed (Magaudda, 2020).

During our interviews with pop fans and concertgoers, as well as with activists attending populist rallies, we observed the emotions they felt at the concerts (e.g. the sense of belonging to a community, the elicited memories), as well as their personal experience at concerts (not only the music), in addition to the role of the music within the event. The interviewees mainly characterize concerts as comfortable places, like a "Sunday lunch at grandma's" (Int. 25) or "a stadium atmosphere, but without the rivals, a passionate and at the same time quiet atmosphere, a feeling of well-being emanating from being among similar people, in which the feeling of inclusion prevails and each person has their value" (Int. 23). Moreover, the sentiment is enhanced through the concert performers' 'storytelling', 'poetic nature' and 'communicative power' (Int. 26). The atmosphere at pop concerts (with a few exceptions such as local bands like Rumatera) came in a 'playful' and 'calm' form, appreciated by fans, as well as the 'crazy graphic' (by Fedez), which helped to involve people ('you could jump and dance and everyone was very involved (…) people of all ages, from 6 to 8 years olds accompanied by mothers and grandmothers, people of our age', a 'relaxed atmosphere. Almost a place for families' (Int. 19). They are described also as 'energetic, surrounded by all these guys… positive energy', 'creative' (Int. 17; Int. 20).

Some concerts were described as having a strong collective dimension, an occasion to find a community to identify with, with like-minded people, where you do not feel alone anymore. One concertgoer affirmed: "I was amazed at the first concert. I didn't have any close friends who listened to Fibra, and so to have up to 3000 people singing his songs, or being able to talk about his music…. We were all very similar, with similar stories, we had something in common that went beyond Fibra. Social and political criticism, discontent, experiencing certain personal problems…. and we were all together. It was amazing… it made us proud" (Int. 23); "I remember the unity in particular. We all sang the songs; I was voiceless the next day" (Int. 24).

Activists and/or participants in populist and anti-populist events with music were asked about their opinions on the relevance assigned to music within the event, as well as the role of music in the party's culture and

public image. Here, a clear distinction emerges again between the 5SM and the Lega, which resonated (and confirm) with the different uses of music of the two types of Italian populist parties. For the former, rallies are an opportunity to learn (i.e. political education), and the music performed is rarely simply described as 'playful' or 'pure entertainment'. As explained by one activist: "I remember the Democratic Party rallies that have become pop music festivals. We want to avoid this" (Int. 8). In the 5SM rallies, participation and 'involvement' is the key word, as many interviewees highlighted (Int. 8, 9), and this affects how the music is understood, approached and experienced: "the 5SM is always talking about cultural revolution (…) artists playing at our events simply do not create something pop like the left. Instead, performers play because they share our opinions on some issues, for example the environment (…) this goes beyond the entertainment aspect. Thanks to 5SM' events I became aware of groups that I still follow, such as the *Capone Bungtband*, playing music with recycled materials" (Int. 9). As shown by these quotes, music is also used to develop a party's culture identity marking the alterity of the 5SM against the political enemies, *in primis* the centre-left, often and interestingly associated with 'pop music'—that is, mainstream, but also 'hypocrite' (Int. 8), in celebrating progressive values for opportunistic reasons (profit in the case of the pop music scene, votes in the case of the Italian centre-left). 5SM activists also remember how the music played in party rallies was often 'satirical' or 'irreverent' (Int. 9) in a way identified by the interviewees as fully coherent with the anti-establishment soul of the party. Music played, thus, is understood as perfectly suited to convey the party's core values.

In contrast, for the activists of the League, rallies and local fests are occasions for listening to political interventions, and consequently music is only perceived as having mere recreational purposes. Some interviewees stressed that "music must be played, it is part of a popular event like ours. And people can choose to be there either for politics or for fun, or both" (Int. 6), "as occurs at the [Democratic Party's] *Feste de l'Unità* indeed" (Int. 7). In other words, these musical moments can help to symbolize the *popularity* of the League: 'the people', here, is the *local* people ('*gente del paese*', people from small towns and villages: Int. 6) joining the fest organized by the 'only party still present in the territory' (Int. 7). Thus, while the relevance assigned to music within the event is always described as 'negligible' (Int. 6, 7), music still contributes indirectly to reproduce this public image of the League, which, as we saw in Chap. 4, purposely aims

to bury, so to speak, the reminiscences of the old mass-party era when local festivals were overwhelmingly organized by the left: "once there was just the *Feste de l'Unità*, now there are the *Feste della Lega* and the *Feste de l'Unità*" (Int. 1).

From a diachronic perspective, some changes in the role of music during the populist parties events were identified by the interviewed activists. As one activist of the 5SM remarked, as time went by, the aesthetics of the rallies changed: "I remember that at an *Italia a 5 Stelle* a guy went around singing vaudeville choruses (*stornelli*) celebrating our politicians; others played Neapolitan folkloric songs with castanets […] however the educational and informative aspects always prevail. But once this was delegated to local groups, the Meetup, now there is the government at the centre of the rallies, there is Di Maio who says 'tomorrow in government we will do …'" (Int. 9). As this quote shows, the interviewee traced a parallel between the party's evolution and the aesthetics (marked by music) visible at the party events. Previously, the 5SM was a party in which local groups stimulated participation with a bottom-up approach, and at the *Italia a 5 Stelle*, the activists autonomously engaged with satirical and joyful choruses in an enthusiastic atmosphere. More recently, such participatory self-narrative was superseded by the new (governing) role of the party, and the changes in the *Italia a 5 Stelle*'s aesthetics were perceived and interpreted by the own activists as in line with the broad 'maturation' of the 5SM.[11]

Music can serve as a way to stimulate a sense of belonging especially amongst *leghisti* (*Lega supporters*) and, partially, amongst 5SM activists. Militants from both populist parties (Int. 6, 9) acknowledge this lack of a shared cultural-musical repertoire capable of unifying their party communities. Conversely, this is central for the anti-populist movement activists. Generally speaking, the interviews with participants attending anti-populist events where music was played revealed some striking aspects of the reception of music that were in sharp contrast to what we saw with the recipients at the populist events. In particular, the 'Sardine' activists interviewed describe the role of music during their demonstrations as 'leading back to an emotionally strong experience' (Int. 15), eliciting a 'sense of collective belonging' ('it was a sort of collective reunion': Int. 11) in which 'songs

[11] Another quote captures these changes: "I remember that with Gigi D'Agostino [a very famous deejay playing at the 2016 edition of *Italia a 5 Stelle*] I went crazy, I was flailing excitedly. Then I remember the Grillo-Bennato duet in 2014. But in 2018… an extremely formal evening. An atmosphere combed, arranged, a bit bourgeois" (Int. 9).

that every (leftist) person knows, such as *Bella Ciao or I Cento passi from the* leftist band *Modena City Ramblers'*, find their place (Int. 14), together with songs that are not necessarily political in themselves but still associated with a left-wing political culture. As explained, they are 'songs that are more cultural than political (…), stimulating emotions linked to family memories, particularly for those who come from more politicized contexts (…). These songs are also considered void of militant and conflictual tones (e.g. Int. 10). The listening to the song *Com'è profondo il mare* (by Lucio Dalla) which was adopted as the Sardines' hymn, is in fact described as 'wonderful (…), very emotional'. It is said that "it triggers anxiety and then calm, openness… it celebrates the differences between people. But it also celebrates the power of people from below" (Int. 13). However, this does not necessarily imply a rejection of a more national-popular repertoire by these participants, who also appreciate the set list by the demonstrations' organizers of 'fresher', 'non-ideological songs escaping old categories in *Sardines*' rallies (Int. 14). The *Sardine*'s rallies are in fact read as a moment of 'collective reunion', by participants (e.g. Int. 11), almost a ritual ("in that moment all the people around me, although having different ages, political ideas, backgrounds and experiences, felt united by one song and one music. This is the power of music and words, and everyone in that moment felt moved, because no one was singing to sing, but was singing to give more strength and an extra voice to that song", Int. 11).

If, on the one hand, these interviews with anti-populists show some specificities and differences with the way activists of populist parties interpret music at their political events, on the other hand, this can reinforce, we argue, a division of the political spectrum based on the politicization of tastes and aesthetics—very much in line with the description of the '*Sardine*' as a case of 'stylistic anti-populism' (Hamdaoui, 2021).

In sum, according to approaches rooted in cultural sociology (Alexander, 2004), culture is made up of narrative and discursive structures that organize the understanding and intelligibility of social life. As our data point out, the performative nature of culture and the collective discourses require the performance of symbolic events in order to unfold fully in society (Magaudda, 2020). In this regard, our findings show that music can be key in collective events that are able to indirectly shape collective identities.

6.4 "Populists Seek the Vote of Those Listening to This Kind of Music": Cementing the Anti-Populist–Populist Divide Through Pop Music

The previous picture is confirmed and enriched by our focus groups.[12] In fact, focus groups are "an ideal strategy to explore social construction processes" (Johnston, 2002, 83). Multiple affordances, in addition to what emerged from our musicological group analysis (in Chap. 3), emerged from the eleven focus groups we conducted throughout Italy with about 110 participants.

On the whole, several aspects and nuances of the connection between popular culture and pop music in particular, and politics (as well as populism), are elaborated on by the participants discussing our music stimuli. In particular, some main recurring 'frames', or schemata of interpretation, enabling, we argue, individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label

[12] The focus interviews were conducted in the following way. Each session began with a musical stimulus that functions as an opening act and basis for discussion, followed by a general series of questions that is structured to provide comparable data, and sufficiently open to take in group dynamics during the discussion. The general questions asked were: 1.What do you like/don't' like in this song/video? 2.How does this music/video link to your daily life? 3. What emotions do you feel/does the music evoke in you? 4. (*exploring*) What are the narratives/frames/words/concepts that participants in general create and use in order to define, describe and give a meaning to this video/song? 5. What do these songs make you think of? 6. (*stimulating*) The various and heterogeneous pictures (e.g. what about simplicity in these videos/songs? What about anti-intellectualism in these video/songs?) that come out when you listen to these songs/videos. 7. Who is the target here? (i.e. who are the 'people' they are talking to?), 8. At the end of the session a battery of concepts linked to populism was put forward (such as nationalism, people, charisma, anti-politics) and participants were asked, 8.1. how they relate (if at all) to these concepts with what they have seen and listened to, 8.2. which songs or artists come to their mind when thinking about these concepts and 8.3. if and how music can play a role in expressing these concepts to society. In the second part, there were selected videos (electoral ads, key party rallies, emblematic public and musical performances of populist leaders) with the following questions: What is the impact that each of the video has had on you? What have they transmitted/communicated to you? What have they made you think about? What do you like/don't' like about this song/video? What emotions did you feel? (*explore*) What are the 'narratives' (or frames?) in general that they create/use in order to give a meaning to this video/song? In the third part, some visual examples (i.e. vignettes drawn from social media posts) of debated interactions between the music and political scenes were shown (see the results of this part in Chap. 5). In the analysis, main themes were selected from this material, and excerpts from each focus group were listed together.

occurrences within their life space and the world at large (Goffman, 1974, 21), emerged. They are authenticity (or lack of it), credibility (or lack of it), the focus on the market/profit as the main goal (i.e. the commercial reward of these songs), the comparison with past music, entertainment, but also music as slogans, the relationship between 'appearance' and content, lack of proposals/contents (i.e. 'similar to current politics'), as well as protest but also the consensus seeking of pop music, music not engaged/positioned (see Table 6.1).

First, participants frequently contrasted 'old' and 'contemporary' Italian music, often associated with the differences between the politics of old and modern-day politics. 'Old' music, linked to the songwriters of the seventies, is said to be 'like poetry' and more 'serious' than pop music (FG. 2). According to a belief which is constructed in the interactions between the participants, music of the past is described as 'politically engaged', similarly to the "political debates from the ideological era when politicians did not merely try to mobilize people's instincts/immediate reactions (…), but rather the brain and reason" (FG. 1, 4), when 'parties mediated between citizens and the institutions' (FG. 5). Now, in contrast, "these singers (i.e. pop music) are the link between the people and the institutions: what they sing is what people have on their mind" (FG. 1).

A common recurrence in our focus groups is that the keyword of current pop music is "marketing, artists say what people want to hear" (FG. 3); "this is the effect of Instagram, the goal is to be popular for some brief periods… politics is the same, no one can remember what happened two days ago" (FG. 4), "this is just a superficial critique: stuff you can say in an elevator" (FG. 10), "it is something already cheated in order to be more rapidly digested (FG. 8), "even the rebellious parts of these songs

Table 6.1 Emerging recurring frames in the focus groups sessions

- 'Credibility', 'authenticity' (or lack of it) by pop stars ('similarities with current politics')
- Music as 'marketing' ('like politics today')
- Emotions versus reason, ignorance vs culture, low/mass versus high culture ('Italian songwriters' as benchmark)
- Victimhood/welfarism as opposed to do-it-yourself attitude
- Rebellion versus conformism
- Pop as 'inherently populist' (and populism equated with 'easy support', demagoguery, simplistic solutions to complexity)
- 'Italianness' ('average Italian')

vanish because they are too catchy" (FG. 2). Neither surprisingly nor coincidentally, these claims primarily come—albeit not exclusively—from older participants: a sort of nostalgia often accompanied by progressive arguments (the "loss of political engagement") and, in a few cases, by conservative ones ("contemporary songs are not reassuring nor poetic, it is just scandalous claims", FG. 4).

Second, 'Credibility' and 'authenticity' (or lack of it) by pop stars are also often highlighted in the discussions, as well as 'similarities, in this respect, with current politics'. A quest for authenticity emerges. Both categories, politicians and artists, are far from being authentic in their behaviour or statements (since the goals they have are to *convince*), although certain artists and politicians are more credible than others (FG. 1, 4). Credibility, thus, according to many participants, is the key (successful) feature, in both (the musical and political) spheres.

Third, what we can call as 'anti-politics' was another recurrent concept in the focus groups reflections, where an immediate connection between pop music and politics was usually established—more directly, sometimes, between pop music and populism. For instance, some songs (e.g. the one of Emma Marrone) are defined "anti-political" because of the critiques against the political class they espouse (in the perception of focus groups participants), (…)..but, well, we the Italians are anti-political" (FG. 4). "Anti-politics" is also associated with the presence of sterile, "superficial" social critique, which is at the same time considered both a strength and a weakness: "it is very easy to see yourself in these songs. Such a distrust towards politics is easy to understand, but it is trivialised. It leaves you hanging in the middle of nowhere… and such a 'nowhere' is very easy to be channelled for political purposes" (FG. 2).[13]

Moreover, many participants stressed a conflictual potential of 'anti-political pop music' together with its inherent ambiguity. As explained, "these songs may well fit in a number of contexts, I was thinking about a students' demonstration… the context is definitely an inseparable factor here" (FG. 2), while at the same time "when you exploit a song for political purposes, the music loses its meaning" (FG. 3).

Fourth, some ideas linked to a potential intergenerational cleavage were also elaborated by focus groups participants to refer to music and

[13] Fedez, in particular, has been described as "the symbol of anti-politics" (FG. 4), and as symbolizing "the arrogance of the power" (FG. 3) and of "careerism" (FG. 5) as well as, according to some League militants, the "typical *gauche caviar*" (FG. 11).

politics. A differentiation between 'low' and 'high' culture is made (as well as emotions vs. reason, ignorance vs culture) when discussing the pop music stimuli and videos, which is often intertwined with different generations (of people, namely, potential voters, music genres, types of political parties and actors in Italy). The division is also connected to people' political attitudes: "this is pop music, so the content is popular. Who listens to this kind of music tends to vote for two or three parties. People with a middle-to-high level education have better sources of information, whereas other people just rely on information from friends and relatives. The same applies to music" (FG. 6). Derogatory comments target both the quality of the overall music ("this is not art, it is just consumption"; FG. 8) and specific artists.[14] Recurringly, songs used as stimuli are described as "aiming at the belly, not at the brain", just as "populists do" (e.g. FG. 1).

Fifth, different (and sometimes conflicting) conceptions of what politics is were proposed in the various focus groups. After listening to the pop music songs, claims such as "there is a lot of politics here" and "I can't see anything related to politics" were both present, according to the multiple meanings assigned to the concept of 'politics' by participants. When understood as party politics and ideology, the reaction is often that pop music is not associated with politics ("I can't see politics here apart from Povia, because I've read somewhere that he's a fascist", FG. 1), and participants dubbed pop music as 'non-ideological' (FG. 6). Other times it is stressed: "they (i.e. these songs) don't talk about politics, they talk about abstract things, they target young people that are fed up with precariousness", FG. 5). Alternatively, politics is interpreted as a potential arena for the search of support ("the videos are about certain ways of doing politics, such as going amongst the people, in the streets", FG. 6), or as an arena of potential ideological contrapositions: as explained by one participant, "this song makes you feel powerful, collectively too, it pushes you to go against the established rules. It is something *pre-political*, not necessarily linked to a specific ideology… but in my view it can push you towards the intimate belief that politics is all about hypocrisy and that it is in the end useless" (FG. 6).

[14] The frame rebellion/conformism emerged here to describe current pop music. For instance, Fedez is defined as "incoherent, superficial, commercial […] an invented, artificial rebellion" (FG. 10), "self-celebrating" (FG. 4), "the typical Communist with Rolex, the worst of the worst" (mocking Fedez's album's title: FG. 11). In this latter sense, he is "the symbol of anti-politics" (FG. 4), namely, conformism, in the words of some participants.

In sum, our focus groups confirmed the exponentially numerous affordances of pop music and political purposes. As Street (1986: 47) stresses, ambiguity is an essential characteristic of pop music, and our focus groups confirmed that much of pop's political power lies with listeners, since its meanings are constitutively ambiguous and open to individual interpretation.

This is directly connected to the concept of populism (sixth), another concept that, surprisingly, although never mentioned by us when introducing the focus group sessions, emerged frequently while listening pop music. Pop songs listened to were described as 'populist' because, as noted by one participant: "if you take every single phrase and you decontextualize it you will agree on that" (FG. 6). Furthermore, it is said that "there is no vision, no artistic research. It is just a matter of indulging people. And this is populism: I feed you with what you like, and I feed you more and more. I give you just answers that you already know and that satisfy you" (FG. 7); "these songs are sycophant, ambiguous, they look for consent, for easy support" (FG. 1). Specific singers are targeted as populist, such as Povia ("the Marx of populists: he delivers something pre-wrapped and prevents you from thinking" [FG. 1]), or J-Ax and Fedez ("in the video you can see them amongst the populace, as celebrities… it looks so much like Salvini", FG. 4, 7). Another participant explained that "all the songs were populist: they praise simplicity, humility and ignorance" (FG. 5), in a way consistent with Ostiguy's sociocultural approach and the way non-populists trace the primary frontier between populists and themselves. Populism is also placed in contrast to ideological thinking, as "these songs are populist because they avoid ideological barriers and are catch-all" (FG. 6). However, populism is not only negatively viewed: "it is not necessarily negative thinking. Emma in her song talks about a real problem" (FG. 8); "it is a very much used word which may mean a lot of different things, I don't like it, however I think it brings some real problems to the fore, such as precariat, lack of job opportunities, the difficulties in bringing up a family… then, well, the point is how politics responds to this. It doesn't respond, or it responds in a way I don't like" (FG. 5).

Moreover, the focus groups participants also emphasized often the centrality of the materialist dimension ("money, money is the key issue here in these songs") and of the own 'people' as the "true protagonist" (FG. 6) of contemporary Italian pop repertoire. As one participant explains, "in all these songs, the people, the direct point of view of the people, is at the centre. Once there was the elite, now everyone feels legitimised to argue",

although "the exercise of one's own freedom simply stops with self-expression in public, whereas politics remains very far from the people as such" (FG. 8). Furthermore, "in songs such as Emma's one, we don't really see the collective dimension of the people: we just see isolated, suffering individuals", thus making *Non è l'inferno* "paternalistic as well as gendered" (FG. 7); however, precisely because it refers to a conservative imagery, "it works" (FG. 7), particularly amongst "people enjoying pop culture" (FG. 4). Rocco Hunt's portrait of the 'people' also opened various debates: on the one hand, "he brings conflict between classes and sectors to the fore" (Fig. 6.1) and "is able to talk about politics in a different way from the traditional songwriters" (FG. 6); on the other hand, "it is reassuring, there is always space for reconciliation" (FG. 7). It has been argued that "Hunt represents the usual Southern victimhood" (FG. 4, 5), whilst others (both from Southern and Northern FGIs) claim that "he credibly represents the Southern rebel spirit" (FG. 2) and "he greatly demonstrates love for his land", "not like Rumatera who thinks they are fun but they are just ridiculing our own culture" (League's militant, FG. 11).

Finally, our focus groups confirmed a shared conception of the 'average Italian', as associated with the pop music listened to (*Italiano medio*, which is also the title of a famous J-Ax's song). These Italian people are often said to be well-represented in the songs played as stimuli as well as likely to appreciate such a repertoire (FG. 6, 8). In many cases, 'homogenized' and 'essentialized' descriptions of the typical traits of the Italian people emerge (like in the videoclip showed in Fig. 6.1), even according to regional specificities of our focus groups, as in the case of the focus groups with the Lega sympathizers.

We also noticed that in most of our focus groups, a recurrent pattern emerged. The more the participants demonstrated some genuine interest in the contemporary Italian pop scene, the more they contributed to the discussion and plainly expressed themselves in terms of tastes, emotions ("rage" and "frustration" the most recurrent ones) and interpretations. In contrast, participants showing more 'sophisticated music tastes' tended either to explicitly position themselves as distant from the pop scene or to adopt a more analytical approach. Amongst the latter group, either irony (Drew, 2005) or theoretical abstraction was used as filter to set a barrier between the objects under analysis and themselves.

As for the second part of our focus group sessions, exploring participants' reaction to partisan hymns and related videos (in the case of the

Fig. 6.1 Video *Wake Up!* (Rocco Hunt), 0.52: one of the 'stimuli' of our focus group sessions

5SM) or of public performances featuring musical elements (in the case of the League's leader Matteo Salvini and the anti-populist *Sardines* movement), some main recurring themes appeared prominent, in the interpretation of the link between populist politics and music. As showed in Table 6.2, they are money, political class (and market), progressive versus conservative politics, sexism, celebration of popular stereotypes of local identities, immediacy (vs. reflections).

To focus on a few, first, a contrast is noticed between the League and the 5SM—the latter attempting to build "their own material", "militant music to circulate ideas" (FG. 6) and "identities" (e.g. FG. 4, 5), while the League (personified by Salvini) aiming at "appropriating pop" FG. 1, 6).[15] This also confirmed our previous findings, relying—with the words of participants—on Jansma's distinction (2019) between populist logic of either "appropriation" or reliance on "organic" cultural products. Salvini's public performances (singing along to a concert or singing pop repertoire on

[15] It must be mentioned that this was definitely not the case for the 'pre-Salvini' League, when the party consistently worked to build a true 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983)—the "Padania" fatherland—with the production of a vast galaxy of cultural (including musical) references from pre-Roman, Celtic past to, famously, the re-signification of Giuseppe Verdi's *Va' pensiero* (written to represent the process of Italian reunification and reused as the anthem of the Northern League representing the liberation of the '*popoli padani*').

Table 6.2 Recurring key themes in the participant reaction of partisan populist hymns and populist playing music

- 'Money', individual socioeconomic condition is often considered the key theme; also intergenerational clash
- Political class is targeted; much less the socioeconomic elites
- Mix of progressivism and conservatism → having a family, living with stability, 'respecting old values' have been reduced to something for rich people → the ambition is to go back to forty years ago. Such a mix provokes contrasting reactions
- Even in trap music → sexist music in which the only positive female figure is the mother
- Celebration of popular origins (from a perspective of individual success)
- 'Praising the people' is commercially successful → there is a market for pop(ulist) music. 'These songs do not stimulate doubts, they reinforce what you think', 'once upon a time protest music was not commercial!'
- Several elements of (*right-wing*) 'anti-bourgeoisie'
- 'Complaining' prevails over 'struggling'; 'shouting at' prevails over 'reflecting', songs about 'immediacy'
- (Critique of) stereotyping of local identities → local identities are strong sources of attachment for participants. Localism is extremely powerful because it is not perceived as 'exclusionary'

TV or during party rallies) that we used as stimuli in our focus groups were unanimously considered "fully coherent" with his public persona. Some participants still highlight some opportunism in the strategy of Salvini: "he declared to be a fan of De André because everyone knows De André… he wouldn't have chosen another anarchist songwriter, if they were unknown", "indeed, any other living songwriter! [and thus able to disallow any appropriation]" (FG. 7). Interestingly, Salvini's singing performances do not seem to be particularly appreciated by League's militants (FG. 11), who are quite worried that these personalized forms of political communication could undermine the 'serious', mass-party identity of the League.

Some participants highlight how Salvini exploits the unifying function of music along ethnic and across class divisions: "he sings in Italian, he invites you to sing along…it is a sentiment like 'we are all sons of the same song'" (FG. 7). The contrast with the 5SM is primarily understood in strategic terms: "while Salvini aims to appropriate pop music, the 5SM wish to build its own repertoire, its own symbols, its own identity" (FG. 2, 6, 7), and it is quite effective in this: "these videos perfectly capture what the early 5SM was… however, these videos primarily targeted militants instead of the electorate" (FG. 4, 9), because the videos are so 'artisanal' that some participants initially thought they were a parody (FG. 4): "this

is ludicrous" (FG. 5, 8). The 5SM, in any case, failed to develop a successful 'organic' music culture, since all the videos were totally unknown: nearly all the participants were not even aware of the existence of a Fedez-written 5SM's anthem.

Second, populism was a common concept used to interpret the different strategies, as well as emptions. Issues of credibility ("only if you are a populist can you afford these kinds of performances and productions", FG. 5) are brought to the fore, as well as considerations on the centrality of the leader's figure. This centrality is read as implicitly antidemocratic—from participants who tend to be critical of populist parties—(FG. 8) and as a form of manipulating political relations based on "emotions: it's irrational" (FG. 1). And yet, mechanisms of identifications based on public, collective performances and on a common cultural repertoire are not at all absent in the case of an anti-populist movement like *Sardine*. When watching the *Sardine* videos (in which an actress sang the lyrics of one of the most iconic songs of the progressive songwriter Lucio Dalla), the participants in virtually all focus group sessions who recognized the song began smiling and nodding at each other. In our Bologna session, where several participants personally joined the *Sardine* demonstrations, some of them reported to have felt "strong emotions" like "joyful nostalgia" when watching the video. In contrast, participants who did not identify with the movement dubbed the demonstrators as "the typical *gauche caviar*", "so snobbish" and "populist, because they were targeting emotions too, not reason". Indeed, McAllister argues (2001: 228–229): "Whether or not we think persons or groups are *emotional* is really a statement about our own feelings toward them". And, in our focus groups, this often holds when substituting *emotional* with *populist* in the McAllister quote.

Several participants argued that "pop music is inextricably linked to populism" (e.g. FG. 7), since "when something becomes very popular, and then shared by the people, that's when populism arrives…because populism looks for a connection with the people" (FG. 6). While the signifier "people" almost invariably is implicitly or explicitly associated to the 'populace' (citizens lacking political awareness and attracted to mass cultural productions), some disagreed with the inescapable connection between 'pop' and 'populism': "I think it's not that easy. I think pop material becomes populist when it is directly produced or used by the people to represent themselves" (FG. 6). In this latter sense, populism is seen as something more—and different—from a manipulative, bottom-up strategy but, instead, a certain mobilizing and empowering (while not

necessarily progressive) potential is captured. Pop music has similarities to Gramscian *folklore*, yet is initially an industrial product, even if the following multiple uses and appropriations are cultural processes of intersubjective negotiation of meanings, still within historical modes of production. Indeed, this is also where the transformative potential of populism (and its limits) lies: to requote Stavrakakis (2020), "populism is a recipe that [still] strongly depends on the quality of its ingredients even if it re-shapes them to some extent". This is remarkably similar to Hall's (1981) famous qualification of pop culture as an "arena of consent and resistance".

Finally, some peculiarities emerged, as expected, with right-wing populist recipients of pop music (Table 6.3). Here, in particular anti-intellectualism, as a typical treat of populist politics, is also frequently used to related to music (e.g. "I don't need to appear an intellectual for the type of music I listen to") (FG. 11).

Politics is mostly conceived as something detached from the pop cultural realm. Politics is 'serious', while pop music is not. Even pop music celebrating local identities is criticized, since "this may perhaps bring some votes to the League, but it is detrimental to *our cause*, because it depicts us [Venetian people] as foolish, ignorant people". Participants also link pop music to the enemy left since it 'occupies' the music ("with their intellectual, bourgeois, snobbish ways") and, broadly speaking, the artistic spheres. The Lega militants target progressive pop artists for their 'hypocrisy' since, it is said, they act as both wealthy and superficial, as 'celebrities' indeed, without any credentials as 'proper' politicians, but also because

Table 6.3 Recurring emerged frames among right-wing populists listening contemporary Italian music (focus group with League militants only)

- depoliticization of music
- Pop is not 'political' → pop is spectacle, politics is a serious thing (reminding mass-party culture)
- Self-victimization, through at least two mechanisms: a) enemies are only capable of hating, b) against stereotypes (vehicled by cultural elites, *gauche caviar*) such as «League-Venetians are idiots»
- Anti-communism ('communist' becomes a catch-all word predominantly standing for 'hypocrisy' / leftist singers are 'hypocrites')
- Overtly xenophobic stances, against «politically correct», for «free speech» ("that artist is Egyptian and gay. Am I not allowed to say that he's Egyptian and gay?")
- Cultural nationalism, conservative values, but against pompous patriotism, «banal nationalism» (Billig, 1995)

they contribute to impose the "politically correct dictatorship" and politicize the artistic sphere, which should instead be 'apolitical' and 'belonging to everyone'. Listening to pop music songs, the League's militants also complain about the 'uncritical xenophilia' of that repertoire, as stressed in the case of Mahmood who "won Sanremo not because he's good, but because he's Moroccan [he is in fact Italian of Egyptian origins]; he is just Moroccan and gay…am I not allowed to say that he's Moroccan and gay?". In sum, debates on pop music within this specific focus group offered a platform to several central features of the self-narrative and core ideology of the populist radical right party (resonating once again with the use of music made by the Lega illustrated in the previous chapter).

Beyond the content we also focused on the context of *interactions* (*horizontal* vs. *vertical*) of our focus groups discussions, as well as the apparent emotions and body language. On a smaller scale, in fact 'artificial communities/portions of society', the participants interacted with each other, communicating on central issues. The mood of the discussion was at times relaxed, though not without potential conflicts (such as the one between populist and anti-populist), and while the context of the discussion was occasionally more dialectic/consensual, it was at other times based on a centralized network in which conformism around one or two central positions trumped over pluralism.

Most importantly, for the topic of this volume, generally speaking, the heterogeneity of the focus groups' references ('frames') expressed with regard to pop music (and politics) appears lightly interwoven with the *Italian political subcultures*. We did notice some contrasts, mostly referring to different receptions of songs' stimuli with a focus on regional identities. A telling example is the pop singer Rocco Hunt, who was curiously appreciated in our focus groups in Southern Italy for his 'efficacious' and 'proud' repertoire on the 'Southern social question', while being criticized a few times in the North for his sense of 'victimhood' and for his 'superficial' and 'stereotypical' social critique. Hunt's example is interesting because his supposedly 'stereotyping' repertoire has been identified as such by participants from the Centre-North—that is, *not* from 'the people' that the artist primarily aims to talk to, thus in a way confirming the strong identitarian potential of pop music material. Apart from such relatively minor features, our focus groups' discussions did not seem to differ according to political subcultures in any significant way, while other individual-level variables (age, education and, as far as we could speculate, ideological preferences) appeared much more relevant in influencing participants' opinions.

6.5 Music, Politics and Audiences: Conclusion

In-depth interviews with concertgoers and political activists, and focus groups with ordinary citizens, helped us to capture the intersubjective process of meaning-making of both the contemporary Italian pop music production and the political usage of pop music repertoire by populist and non-populist actors. In this chapter, we showed how, and to what extent, tastes, meaning negotiations, identification processes by 'consumers' (i.e. music recipients) of (pop) cultural productions help us understand the process of emergence (of proto) political interpretations and even identities in Italy in populist times. Our findings suggested that for fans and concertgoers, the *persona* of the singer is more important than the content of the artist's lyrics. It is an example of 'individual rebellion' or 'success', while collective action is perceived as conformity, and non-partisanship (i.e. ideological) and apolitical stances are positively viewed. Interestingly, fans interpreted flaunting local culture as positive, inspiring reflection on which sociopolitical collective identities are likely to resonate in the future. Recipients affirm, partially mistrust or even oppose ideological contents in music.

Moreover, the music at concerts (as well as party events) serves as a 'space' that combines elements of subjectivity and, sometimes, political action. The interacting affordances of these spaces generate possibilities for potential community organizing and community building that are qualitatively different than political spaces alone. Communicative complexity, the embodiment and activist self-narration are in this case key elements of the potential nexus between music and politics that emerged in our analysis.

Conversely, the interviews with politically engaged individuals highlight a divide in relation to the potential role of music at political events: those who attended populist events did not perceive music to be particularly influential, while anti-populist Sardine activists did emphasize the link between music and political identities. This is not to say that musical aspects are not important for populist militants, though: they are not *perceived* as important because music *perfectly fits* with the broad strategy of construction of a 'peoplehood' (Boyte, 2012) which characterizes the populist party's rallies. For 5SM militants, music serves the purpose of plastically representing and reproducing the core (ideological) values of the party. For the League militants, music achieves the goal of making the League rallies *popular,* that is, targeting the broad electorate and

positioning the party as a mass organization capable of building communitarian ties. For the *Sardine movement*, music is politicized through sociocultural, more than ideological, arguments. The 'high', but still pop, music repertoire played at the *Sardine* rallies is functional, going beyond partisan divisions and uniting people that identify themselves with a broad leftist symbolism. The 'stylistic anti-populism' (Hamdaoui, 2021) approach of the Sardine movement thus can rely on a vast, oven-ready politicized pop material, re-signified to set the 'populist-anti-populist divide' as central: to equate the 'left' signifiers with the 'anti-populism' signifier.

Finally, as the focus groups clearly demonstrate, it is possible to identify a number of recurrent themes when people listen to pop music, which reveal that popular culture can act as a source of political knowledge and can be used to evoke feelings on the conduct of politics. In this sense, this chapter showed that popular culture, in particular pop music, does not directly act as a source of political knowledge and motivations on politics, but rather through aesthetic and other judgements made by people, for example, of the 'authenticity' and 'realism' of the sources of their cultural pleasure.

As Street et al. (2011) put it, people might use forms of entertainment to reflect upon the wider world of politics and their role within it in different ways. Entertainment and consumption for leisure is a source of knowledge (cognition), but also of identity (affinity) and emotion (influencing evaluation). It is thus an activity that may be extremely important for studying how political attitudes are developed, built and reinforced or reproduced. They may fortify, strengthen or even shape nearly *ex novo* pre-political and political attitudes. As the data illustrated in this chapter suggest, all these different dimensions are present in the process of assigning politically relevant meanings to pop music repertoire, at least in Italy. Moreover, the concept of populism appears as a central concept to interpret our data.

In particular, the identity and emotional dimensions emerge as particularly relevant among fans and concertgoers when talking about music. This may play a vital role in ultimately reproducing political attitudes, which might be potentially compatible, but far, as our data showed, from overlapping entirely with populism. Nonetheless, the celebration of the artist for their authenticity, the role of 'truth-teller' and 'free thinker' may be in fact linked to some typical features of the rhetoric and organizational forms of populism. The same can be said for the heroic description of the

singer. The centrality of processes of identification with the biography (not only with the concrete repertoire) of the artist is prominent, as well as with the other concertgoers, who, with their own presence, nurture a sense of belongingness the fan is not alone, their personal drama is shared and understood by many other people). However, we also found little or no presence of references to a collective dimension of action to cope with problems, as protest music or the roles of music played in social movements have stressed (as mentioned in Chap. 1). Moreover, our analysis also revealed that music can be a source of knowledge in the intertwined relationship between consumption of popular culture and political attitudes. Italian contemporary pop music is described without having a political position and direction (as opposed to the Italian music of previous decades) and thus ready to be appropriated for different political purposes. Additionally, plenty of populist tropes and frames make such repertoire affording, in a relatively straightforward way, populist appropriation and interpretations. Such affordances explain why emotional (negative) judgements on current pop music are often accompanied by broad negative assessments of current Italian politics, while the latter (in a 'simplistic', populist way) deals with the grievances often relaunched by the contemporary pop music repertoire: such grievances are perceived as well-founded as well as presented in a simplistic and opportunistic way. Put plainly, citizens see little difference in how pop celebrities and politicians deal with social problems.

Finally, a populist/anti-populist divide clearly emerges, related to pop music listening and evaluations of it. Citizens who dislike the pop music repertoire for a variety of reasons (commercial imperatives, the unsophisticated sounds and lyrics or just the pop artist's *persona*) often tend to project their negative assessments on to people who enjoy that repertoire. Conversely, such attitudes attract criticisms because they appear snobbish to other participants, who did not necessarily express any particular appreciation towards pop music's stimuli but still showed more positive predispositions to capture some 'denouncing' potential in that repertoire. All of this is quite understandable and even perhaps obvious to many readers: and yet, in our focus groups, both these different groups of participants ('critics of pop music' and 'critics of the critics of pop music') divided themselves accordingly when debating, in a normative way, on the characteristics and consequences of populist politics. Different predispositions towards pop music as a complex cultural repertoire seemed to, at the very least, integrate the effects of ideological attitudes, in the sense that, while

'critics of pop music' were overwhelmingly 'anti-populist' and clearly tended to identify with progressive values, 'critics of the critics of pop music' showed a greater ideological heterogeneity.

In any case, the most heated debates, very often leading to the creation of an 'anti-populist/populist divide' between focus group participants, were based not so much on specific interpretations and assessments on specific songs, singers or 'pop politicians', but rather on participated, conflictual and even polarizing debates on metadiscourses on how to deal with pop culture, and to what extent it should be (or not) considered and analysed 'seriously' or, to the contrary, if it should be entirely dismissed and derided, or filtered by sarcasm and detachment, as if it were a sort of 'guilty pleasure'. Politics, especially populist politics, is mostly about conflict, and the fact that conflict emerged when debating on how to deal with pop culture is, in our opinion, the clearest indicator of the extent to which pop culture has much to do with populism—and with how citizens fully understand and use this concept, even if implicitly, in their everyday lives.

AU11

References

Alexander, J. (2004). Cultural pragmatics: Social performance between ritual and strategy. *Sociological Theory, 22*(4), 527–573.

Anttonen, S. (2017). From justified to illogical: Discourses of (self-)censorship and authenticity in the case of two Finnish metal bands. *Popular Music and Society, 40*(3), 274–291.

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. Sage.

Boyte, H. (2012). Populism—Bringing culture back in. *The Good Society, 21*(2), 300–319.

Brown, C. (2009). Bob Dylan, Live Aid, and the politics of popular cosmopolitanism. In D. Boucher & G. Browning (Eds.), *The political art of Bob Dylan*. Imprint.

Buckingham, D. (2008). Introducing identity. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity, and digital media* (pp. 1–24). The MIT Press.

Della Porta, D. (2005). Deliberation in movement: Why and how to study deliberative democracy and social movements. *Acta Politica, 40*, 336–350.

Dunkel M., Barna, E., Caiani, M., Doehring A., Niederauer, M., Schiller, M. (2018). Popular music as a medium for the mainstreaming of populist ideologies in Europe. Research Project (Full Proposal) financed by Volkswagen Foundation, Ref. 94 754-1.

Franke, U., & Schilze, K. (2013). 'They Don't really care about us!' On political worldviews in popular music. *International Studies Perspectives, 14*(1), 39–55.

Geurkink, B., et al. (2020). Populist attitudes, political trust, and external political efficacy: Old wine in new bottles? *Political Studies, 68*(1), 247–267.
Gilroy, P. (1993). *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double-consciousness*. Harvard University Press.
Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.
Grant, J. (2015). Live Aid/8: Perpetuating the superiority myth. *Critical Arts, 29*(3), 310–326.
Hall, S. (1981). Notes on deconstructing the popular. In R. Samuel (Ed.), *People's history and socialist theory* (pp. 227–240). Routledge.
Hall, S. (2003). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.
Hamdaoui, S. (2021). A "stylistic anti-populism": An analysis of the Sardine movement's opposition to Matteo Salvini in Italy. *Social Movement Studies*. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.1899910
Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. Metheun & Co.
Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
Hutnyk, J., & Sharma, S. (2000). Music and politics: An introduction. *Theory, Culture & Society, 17*(3), 55–63.
Jansma, J. (2019). Culture in the name of the people? Towards a typology of populism and culture. *Debats. Journal on culture, power and society, 4*, 119–132.
Johnston, H. (2002). Verification and proof in frame and discourse analysis. In B. Klandermans & S. Staggenborg (Eds.), *Methods of social movements research* (pp. 62–91). Minnesota University Press.
Kutschke, B., & Norton, B. (2013). *Music and protest in 1968*. Cambridge University Press.
Lipsitz, G. (1994). *Dangerous crossroads: Popular music, postmodernism and the poetic of place*. Verso.
Magaudda, P. (2020). Populism, music and the media. The Sanremo festival and the circulation of populist discourses. *Partecipazione e conflitto, 13*(1), 132–153.
Mazzoleni, G., & Bracciale, R. (2019). *La politica pop online*. Il Mulino.
McAllister, J. (2001). Animal rights and the politics of emotion: Folk constructions of emotion in the animal rights movement. In J. Goodwin, J. Jasper, & F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics* (pp. 212–229). University of Chicago Press.
Muirhead, R., & Rosenblum, N. (2020). The political theory of parties and partisanship: Catching up. *Annual Review of Political Science, 23*, 95–110.
Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2017). The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 11*(1), 189–209.
Rojek, C. (2001). *Celebrity*. Reaktion Books.

Rose, T. (1994). *Black noise: Rap music and black culture in contemporary America*. Wesleyan University Press.
Saurette, P., & Gunster, S. (2011). Ears wide shut: Epistemological populism, Argutainment and Canadian conservative talk radio. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique, 44*(1), 195–218.
Schoening, B., & Kasper, E. (2012). *Don't stop thinking about the music: The politics of songs and musicians in presidential campaigns*. Lexington Books.
Shepherd, J. (2012). Music and social categories. In M. Clayton, T. Herbert, & R. Middleton (Eds.), *The cultural study of music. A critical introduction* (pp. 239–248). Routledge.
Sorensen, L. (2021). *Populist communication: Ideology, performance, mediation*. Palgrave.
Spaziante, L. (2016). *Icone pop*. Mondadori.
Stavrakakis, Y. (2020). *The people is an empty signifier*. A discussion between Yannis Stavrakakis and Lorenzo Zamponi, POPULISMUS Interventions No. 6. http://www.populismus.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/intervention-6-stavrakakis.pdf
Street, J. (1986). Rebel rock: The politics of popular music. .
Street, J., Inthorn, S., & Scott, M. (2011). Playing at politics? Popular culture as political engagement. *Parliamentary Affairs, 65*(2), 338–358.
Street, J., Inthorn, S., & Scott, M. (2014). *From entertainment to citizenship*. Manchester University Press.
Street, J., et al. (2008). Playing to the crowd: The role of music and musicians in political participation. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 10*(2), 269–285.
Taylor, T. (1995). When we think about music and politics: The case of Kevin Volans. *Perspectives of New Music, 33*(1/2), 504–536.
Walser, R. (1993). *Running with the devil*. University Press of New England.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Challenges and Opportunities of (Pop) Music for Populism

> From a viewpoint of its utility in politics, the most important feature of music such as is: emotiveness,
>
> moodiness and the ability to communicate figuratively. (Massaka, 2013, pp. 325ss.)

Throughout the world, the use of music by political actors is on the rise. For many social movements, political parties and leaders, music can represent a crucial instrument of propaganda. Music political contestation, starting in the sixties in the United States and western European countries, and since the beginning of the nineties in the states of Central and Eastern Europe, has become expressive and tends to intensify. However, music serves not only a purpose of contention, but also consolidation of current states and phenomena in politics.

Disciplining and indoctrination of totalitarian communities at the beginning of the twentieth century involved the use of music (Massaka, 2013, 229ss). Modern consumer society is controlled using popular music (ibid.). Yet, the issue of influencing societies and individuals by means of music, with the intention of maintaining political order and the correlating social relations, is rarely addressed in democratic contexts.

In parallel, the specific literature on populism (and political communication in general) indicates that political parties are increasingly exploiting cultural and social habits to attract new voters, infiltrate society, spread

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3_7

their message, produce and reproduce a sense of crisis (political, cultural and economic) (Mouffe, 2015), while presenting their leaders as one of the people, stressing the importance of relationships, affinity and bonding—all aspects closely related to music. In fact, the literature on music and social movements stresses that music can be most political 'when it is not talking about politics, but when it is giving voice to the social relations and the play of power and resistance that shape our collective experience'. It is here that the song—like any art—can generate new types of knowledge, grasping what cannot yet be conceptualized in thought (Hampton, 2019: 2).

Although in the last two decades the field of studies concerning the relation between music and political actors has sharply developed,[1] however, as mentioned, the use of this medium by populists has been partially neglected, when not underestimated. Moreover, while cultural aspects, such as art and visuality, now occupy a legitimate space in social science research on political phenomena, music analysis has been, up until now, to the contrary, partly neglected among the methods and data of political research.

This is the reason why in this book we sought to offer an empirical contribution to this debate—that is, politics and music, populism and pop music—shifting from the observation that while there is a long history of protest songs (mainly focused on progressive social movements) and an empirical research on subcultural music (mainly focused on radical right-wing actors), popular culture and the political arenas cannot be conceived as two separated entities (Street, 2021). Rather, if we focus on current populist politics and popular culture, under the configuration of interrelated pop music, we can better understand populism, and how (populist) mobilization can work in direct connection with music and its multiplicity of meanings.

We also moved from the assumption that beyond the causal factors of populism emergence and electoral success (Caiani & Graziano, 2016), it is worth today, in an age of consolidated populism in many political systems, to focus on its potential production and reproduction in society. *What about their endurance instead of initial success? What about the sociocultural mechanisms contributing to (re)producing populist phenomena? And the role of pop music, in this process?*

[1] Sociological research on music has been carried out in European research centres, since the beginning of the 1970s, and in the field of political science since the end of 90s.

This volume aimed at filling this gap with reference to Italian contemporary pop music, and it did it 'systematically' through the analysis of three levels of interaction between music cultural productions (macro-level), pop stars, political actors (meso-level) and audiences (micro-level), and one of our main finding is the correspondence/resonance/alignment of the results among the three parts.

Indeed, we considered that if music can assume such an important role for political actors, of any kind, from protest and revolutionary social movements (in authoritarian contexts) to radical right organizations (including violent ones), from political parties during electoral campaigns to the greater possibilities it offers for collective identity building and belonging, spreading propaganda, fostering and supporting mobilization, by galvanizing people into political action, then a critical topic for scientific enquiry, as well as for political theory, is to investigate empirically—in detail, with systematic and formalized analyses—the role of this medium, in its most diffused form, that is, pop music, for a significant contemporary political phenomenon: populism.

We have therefore looked at the current relationship between populism and pop music in Italy, providing a detailed comparative (including left-wing and right-wing populist parties) and cross-time map of emergent tendencies towards an increasing role of music for the identity formation and mobilization of these groups, but also reflecting on the cultural and symbolic elements, from a sociocultural conceptualization of populism, that may play a part in the growth and diffusion of populist appeal—namely, the means through which popular music makes populist ideologies popular, socially diffused, shared and legitimate within the country. We also reflected on the opportunities and the challenges offered to populism by this medium. In order to offer our readers a comprehensive picture of populism and music, beyond focusing solely on the use of music by populist parties and leaders, we decided to include in our study society at large, individuals and citizens, at a macro-, meso- and even micro-level analysis, a significant object of research for both scholars and practitioners of political communication today.

In this concluding chapter we summarize our findings, highlighting the main characteristics of *the usage of music* by populist parties and leaders found, but also how people relate to music and therefore the possible *political effects* of music on them; and we stress how our results can be related to the scientific literature on music and social movement studies on the one hand, and populism, on the other hand, outlined in the first

chapter. We will also address the possible normative implications of our results, referring to the controversial debate on the use of music beyond entertainment in a democratic context (Street et al., 2014).

7.1 Music 'as Action': Speaking Out Versus Speaking As

Moving from some recent reflections on music and politics (Street, 2021), music can be understood 'as action' and 'as organization'. This distinction fits well with our results on the Italian case. In particular, music (in action) is 'speaking as', namely music as a form of (political) representation,[2] as well as speaking 'out'. The singer sings as if they are the spokesperson of a specific community (i.e. constituency), sector of society, even 'people', through an emotive representation of the people, symbolizing these communities. Moreover, music is also 'speaking out', as it provides a vocabulary for political struggles (e.g. 'we don't need no education' by Pink Floyd became a slogan used in the political arena), namely, it provides the cognitive dimension via the specific content of music.

Speaking out through music involves more a case of 'bearing witness' (as Eyerman & Jamison put it), or testifying to an issue or cause. Music as organization, however, refers to the use of music in mobilizing and organizing people.[3]

Overall, we found that pop music is 'action' for Italian populism.

As shown in our data concerning *populist messages in pop music* (Chap. 3), a significant and increasing portion of recent Italian pop music contains (in its lyrics, videos or singers' *persona*) populist *tropes* and frames: including anti-elitism, distrust of political institutions, celebrations of an 'authentic rudeness', articulation of specific grievances under the form of 'unheard demands of the people' (unsatisfied) and celebrations of charisma (as embodied in the charismatic leader/musician). We argue that it is precisely its apparently non-political features that enable this kind of cultural production to potentially spread political (and, more specifically, populist) worldviews. This is also done using the power of images and

[2] "music and musicians attempting to authenticate or legitimise their claim to speak on behalf of a group or identity" (Street, interview 19/07/22).

[3] "the way in which music—especially rhythm—choreographs collective behaviour on demonstrations. For instance, Kimwei provided some of the drumming for Extinction Rebellion demonstrations, (…) the different uses drums have in political action" (ibid.).

visuality, as the analysis showed, but also the symbolic context of the sings, as the persona of the singers.

We have demonstrated in particular the boost that pop music can provide in constructing 'nation' and nationality—an essential concept for populism (Stavrakakis & De Cleen, 2020), as well as in representing the people (for similar results, see Street, 2021). Music may serve as a cognitive scheme for the identification of their 'people' (and the outgroups), either for inclusionary or exclusionary populists. In our case, however, unlike other European countries, this constructed, imagined and communicated nation/people via music is depicted mainly as 'Italianness' (i.e. the nation of the common or average Italian), rather than overtly ethno-nationalist (as in the Swedish or Hungarian cases, see Barna & Patakfalvi Czjriak, 2022).

Moreover, if song lyrics of Italian pop music in the last decade (2008–2018) are a potentially fertile breeding ground for various understandings of populism, in the most recent years (since 2016), a form of *sociocultural* populism appeared particularly prominent in music, to be understood as a politicization of sociocultural tastes and identities. That is to say, we found that under the form of either explicit, covered or potential 'populist messages' in Italian pop music, a form of populism which shifts from the ideological people-centrism and anti-elitism, to a celebration of people as bonds of affinity and similar social tastes and relations, prevails. An 'Us' opposed to distant and technocratic elites is described as a disillusioned, disenchanted youth, flaunting scandalizing tastes against the ossified middle-upper classes. This may be interpreted as the kind of 'symbolic class struggle' associated to populism (Westheuser, 2020), in which class divisions are mostly set by cultural—rather than economic—cleavages. Interestingly, however, this rarely takes, as seen in this volume, a right-wing, exclusionary populist form, as nativistic and localistic messages are rare in music. The focus is mainly on the socio (cultural)-economic deprivation of these people.

We argue that this is not actual populism per se. It is, however, a cultural repertoire, spread and mainstreamed in Italian society, that can be politicized by political (populist) actors who appear as the most credible appropriators of this political discontent.[4]

[4] This cultural repertoire may also lead to political disaffection. The current fate of the Five Star Movement, as indicated by recent surveys (July 2022), is revealing: it is still the most popular party amongst the vulnerable sectors of society, who, nonetheless, mainly prefer to abstain. https://www.ipsos.com/it-it/sondaggi-politici-pagnoncelli-previsioni-voto-italiani

Typically, explanations for the development of populism have highlighted the negative consequences of economic globalization, political discontent and a mix of modernization crisis, insecurity and authoritarian legacy (Mudde, 2007). Moving from (and within) a constructionist perspective, which gives more leverage to the symbolic construction of the political and social reality to understand political phenomena, we also found that the expression of grievances on material-cultural issues seems to play a special role in the connection between pop music and populism. The number of pop 'populist' songs (namely, ones containing some traces of populist frames) increased over time, particularly since the eruption of the economic and political crises linked to the 2008 Great Recession. These findings, in our view, may have implications vis-à-vis the more classical explanations of populism, complementing them from a sociocultural perspective.

Furthermore, while searching for populism, we also found *anti-populism* in Italian pop music (and the way people understand it, individually or collectively, and offer opinions on it; see below). Or, to be more precise, we found signals in music, of a populist versus anti-populist cleavage. In fact, we observed in Italian pop music a quite significant presence of anti-populist messages, as well as calls for *political disengagement*, sometimes but not always linked to populism (Pirro and Portos, 2020), emphasizing a sense of lack of political efficacy among citizens and discrediting politics as a means to solving collective problems. It is hybrid pop culture material which can be directed both in populist or non-populist paths: the political agent will make the difference as shown later. Claims criticizing politics as vote-seeking, by presenting easy solutions for complex problems; or targeting the (Italian) people as ignorant and irrational, describing them in negative pejorative terms against the positive (also normatively) people-centric narrative typical of populism.

These findings not only suggest caution in linking the mainstreaming of populism via pop music, but also invite to seriously take into consideration the multiplicity of meanings that music, as any other artistic tool, assumes in different contexts. As shown, anti-populism is directed towards typical self-narratives about Italy and Italians, portrayed both as good and generous, but also towards ill-mannered citizens lacking civic sense: anti-populist narratives mock the (essentialized) positive basic traits and stress the (essentialized) negative features of the Italian national character. These depictions have also been objectified, as seen in Chap. 2, in several hit

songs from the past[5] and particularly from the eighties onwards (Martinelli, 2013) and have served, as cultural-discursive opportunities, to negotiate and construct the (Italian) national identity. As we have argued in this volume, these messages—resulting in positive, or at least benevolent, narrations of some Italian traits, and which can be therefore seen as reassuring for Italian citizens—are important ways through which popular music discusses the world of politics to audiences and fans (i.e. citizens, potential voters) and may align with some populist rhetoric. Undoubtedly, this suggests that pop music cannot be understood as non-political or apolitical, and this is our second main finding—confirming some historical musicological analyses (Tomatis, 2019).[6] On the other hand, as showed in our analyses, anti-political criticisms and distrust towards politicians have become more prevalent over time and more evident in Italian pop music, 'normalizing' these tendencies, as part of the popular culture. In this sense, we can talk about a process of 'populistization' of contemporary Italian pop music.

Therefore, there is politics in pop music, and a connection can be made between pop music and populism, at least in the Italian case.

Political scientists have long examined the political communication of populist parties and movements, exploring populist rhetoric in various arenas (from party manifestoes to social media, Di Cocco & Monechi, 2022), measuring the degree of 'populism' (Caiani & Graziano, 2016) and the contagion effects on mainstream parties and the overall society. However, as the quotation at the beginning of these conclusions stresses, when looking at the potential mainstreaming of populism via popular culture, it is impossible to determine the real dimension of populist meanings without the agency (i.e. the populist actors using popular culture) on the one hand, and the recipients (i.e. citizens giving meaning to this popular culture within a specific context) on the other one.

In this regard, as our *musicological analysis* in Chap. 3 has firstly illustrated, there seems to be a coincidence between potential pop(ulist) messages we found in Italian pop music and the interpretations of this music

[5] E.g. Toto Cutugno's song '*L'italiano*', or, more recently, the song by the band Articolo 31 '*Italiano medio*'.

[6] As seen, contemporary Italian pop music is certainly less ideological than some pop music productions from the seventies, although there are many *pop* artists—as we showed—who take part in important political debates. We have also found numerous examples of mainstream songs addressing sensitive political issues, although they very rarely adopt traditional leftist, classist perspectives.

by Italian citizens, referring to various ideas and concepts not so far from the populist appeal. In particular, nostalgia for a lost past, coupled with insecurity and anxiety, as well as concepts such as simplicity, humility and spontaneity (echoing some right-wing populist appeals) are often referred to by Italian listeners when describing this pop music. In addition, condemnations of social inequalities, grievances and unequal power stratifications in society have been often cited as themes people use to interpret music. Resultant calls for social change, however, mostly stop at the symbolic (sociocultural) level: the underdogs' will of revenge remains mostly circumscribed to the provocative flaunting of tastes (including music), behaviour and manners considered as improper—while distrust of collective action (as opposed to individual success) prevails.[7]

Various social and political affordances to populism views (DeNora, 2000) are further identified, and music appears to have the potential for carrying political messages, values, as well as *weltanschauung* through emotions. In sum, while the analysis of musical documents (i.e. the song lyrics in our case) allowed us to single out the formal definitions and concepts of populism, *our interviews and focus groups* with different kinds of music recipients (from populist activists to fans of 'populist' singers) disclosed the 'material constitution' of populism and populist discourses (Della Porta, 2005).

In fact, our findings regarding how citizens assign and negotiate (both individually and collectively) meanings to Italian pop music and how they discuss it (Chap. 6), confirmed earlier studies on popular culture (i.e. entertainment media). Pop music appears to offer to citizens *cognitive, affective, as well as evaluative* schemes for the interpretation of politics. This is our second main result of the book.

In this sense if *music is action in terms of speaking 'as'*, hence, music as a form of representation, lyrics can be seen as drama, depending less on slogans and arguments and more on characters and stories (Frith, 1988: 106–28, cited in Street, 2021).

As shown in detail in Chap. 6, firstly, as evidenced by our interviews, ordinary citizens (i.e. concertgoers) in Italy seem to use pop music to reflect upon the wider world of (populist) politics and their role within it. As for the *cognitive* side, in particular, the *persona* of the singer (and the bands) is more important than the content of the artists' lyrics. They are

[7] Rebellion and conflict are also often moderated and disarmed as seen by other technical music elements (e.g. happy choruses).

representative of the people ('speaking as') because they speak on behalf of them: they are examples of individual rebellion and success, and at the same time, collective action, nicely coupling our text analysis of pop songs, is considered as conforming, often 'negative, while non-partisanship, non-ideological stances are positively evaluated. Moreover, fans saw the flaunting of local cultures by pop music as positive. This may also hint at which sociopolitical collective identities are likely to be resonant (namely exploitable by politics) in the future—that is, mobilizations eliciting territorial belonging (not necessarily in a conservative way). On the other hand, the interviews with political activists (i.e. those attending populist events with music) highlighted a distinction between populists and anti-populists on the role of politics in music, with the former ones (especially by the Lega) not perceiving music to be especially important for politics, nor for their politics. In the populist Lega, music and politics are two different and distinct things, which can bring about, as we argued, a depoliticization of music, allowing a better appropriation by populist *entrepreneurs* (i.e. popular culture as useful to construct the people of the Lega). The 5SM's activists (and their representatives) instead recognize the importance of music as a tool for political education and propaganda, in particular about anti-elitism—albeit not with the same emphasis shown by anti-populists (i.e. the Sardines). The link between music and (their) political identities is, however, strongly emphasized. As a result, music appeared, mainly for left-wing populism (but also to anti-populists), to fulfil a 'form of knowledge' function, because it helps explaining and elaborating the core values of these groups.

Secondly, pop music seems to act, beyond a source of political knowledge, as a source of *emotions though which to address politics*, helping the political positioning of citizens. As seen, indeed, it seems to foster a sense of belonging connected with pride, feelings of common and shared frames and interests, as well as common interpretation of the social and political reality, and increase the sense of political efficacy. All this can be related, in our view, to the concept of 'emerging movement fields and agendas' (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011), in our case, in the populist camp, which would therefore be helped by music. This concept refers to a strategic action field as "a constructed meso level social order" based on "shared understandings of the purposes of the fields, as well as relationships to others in the fields and the rules governing legitimate action in the field", which may help greatly the mobilization. In this regard, as noted in the chapters of this book, audiences and fans not only see themselves as part

of a collectivity, but also invest emotionally in their shared identity. In this sense, music turned out to play a key role, also in party events, confirming a potential, although indirect, for mobilizing purposes and for nurturing new political identities.

Finally, pop music appeared to offer to citizens *evaluative (namely judgement) schemes for the interpretation of the political reality*: made up of good and bad, of allies (those who have the same musical tastes) and enemies, as sociocultural markers who play a role in the construction of 'the People' (and also reproduce the populism/anti-populism cleavage). Positive and negative, sometimes stereotyping, *cultural and aesthetic* identities were found to be at the core of contemporary politics, and these, even emotive, reactions are an important factor influencing political appraisals ('I can't stand him, so I can't agree with him').

However, for concertgoers, the affinitive dimension in the relation between music and politics is prevalent, namely, what is crucial (even in politics) is the way in which they identify themselves with the singer and the characters portrayed in the song (for similar results, see Street et al., 2014).

These findings may also lead to some *normative reflections*, on the potential role that pop stars and music may have in influencing the political debate and broader political attitudes. Indeed, while pop music can contain more or less explicit populist tropes that may act as a source of political knowledge shaping citizens' positions and behaviour on politics, it can also, as seen particularly during our focus groups around Italy, communicate and help reproduce typical populist interpretations of politics.

The discussions among members of the focus groups, stimulated with sounds and various informative material related to pop music (e.g. about the interactions between Italian politicians and stars), confirmed the emergence of collective norms and meanings linkable to populism, via the discussion on music. Normally, "non-articulated normative assumptions" (Bloor et al., 2001, 5) concerning politics were expressed during our focus groups. Among the recurrent ('populist') themes, we saw the centrality of 'authenticity' and 'credibility' (or lack thereof, in both artists and politicians), tensions between the emotional and the rational (the former linked to populist politics), vote-seeking behaviour and competence (pop music being associated with the former), low/popular culture (often adopted as a synonym for ignorance, unrefined tastes) and high culture; rebellion and conformity (in commercial Italian pop music) and the difficulty of the latter to propose real alternatives to the system—once again, the concept of

Italianness, often equated to a lack of civic culture and, in musical terms, to the Italian *canzonette*. Populism as a political phenomenon often involves a nostalgic sense of belonging (or lack of) to an idealized heartland (Taggart, 2000) and, more broadly, a celebration of pre-modern values in times of transformation (and crisis) (Germani, 1965), and our analysis underpinned that. Authenticity in particular emerged as a central concept, highlighting to us the importance of 'credibility' for the success of frames and framing (see above the reflection about credible politicians appropriating pop culture) (Caiani & Della Porta, 2011). The 'truth-telling' role that populists, as well as pop stars, appear to have in the eyes of the people can be easily associated with that. We also found some specificities, as in the songs discussed in focus groups associated with the Five Star Movement: here, in line with the political party public rhetoric, an imagery of voluntarism and utopian thinking is frequently evoked by our interviewees, as well as local pride and the celebration of humble and respectable people. All in all, as the focus groups confirmed, helping us to link our micro-, meso- and macro-level research design, several mainstream songs appear to possess a very broad spectrum of sociopolitical affordances, and thus constitute a fertile 'raw material' for populist political entrepreneurs.

Moreover, as for the populist–anti-populist cleavage, it is not only present in music but also appeared, during our focus groups, to emerge though music. 'This is the music listened to by the people populist parties want to reach', 'a music made of slogans', 'market oriented', 'this is very different from the politicized music of the past'. These were the most common frames, through which people were addressing Italian pop music. We discovered that "through reasoned judgements on the content" of pop music, as well as through the "emotional response" to it (Scott et al., 2011), participants express their relationship with politics, often with a populist/anti-populist approach. Some citizens, such as fervent 'anti-populists', flag a division between 'low' (identified in a negative term with current Italian pop music) and high culture (the music of the past, the political music) and link it to the difference in current politics between populist and anti-populists. However, we argue that this contraposition contributes to the legitimization of populists' ambition to perform as the representatives of the people, since these songs are popular, 'low' and therefore 'of everybody'. Our findings, on the controversial debates among citizens on pop music, demonstrated the contradictions (but also possible multiple affordances) within popular culture—which is exactly,

we assume, where populists political actors can capitalize on. In fact, popular culture in general, and pop music in particular, as seen in this volume, are important starting points from which people define their identities and think about power relations in society. As underlined by previous studies, the role of popular culture in developing political understanding is not simply one of conveying information and ideas. Rather, especially young people bring aesthetic and other judgements to bear upon the sources of their cultural pleasure, discriminating between the 'authentic' and the 'fake', the 'authoritative' and the 'ill-informed' (Street et al., 2011). As we have seen through the pages of this volume, debates on pop culture serve to develop proto-political attitudes (Dahlgren, 2009), which are preliminary insights of political comprehension. Entertainment and consumption for leisure can be a source of knowledge (cognition), but also of identity (affinity) and emotion (evaluation) (Street et al., 2011).

This is the reception side of politics and music, namely, the individuals' and groups' understanding and communication of music, and how it can contribute to the meaning-making of popular music in the context of populist politics in Italy.

7.2 Music as Action: 'Organizing'

Secondly, our data point out that pop music is also 'organization' for the Italian populism. Rather than examining the content of social movement songs and how they are heard, some scholars suggest understanding the song as action, namely, as creating relationships that reinforce commitment to collective action and that enable collective political actors achieve their aim (Roy, 2010). This aspect of the potential link between pop music in Italy and Italian politics proved to be particularly important for the populist parties, as we have seen in Chaps. 4 and 5, in the analysis of their use of music.

Our findings, based on interviews with representative of populist parties as well as responsible for the communication events, together with our participant observation at populist party rallies in the last 10 years, and web mining showed that Italian populist organizations are also, constantly, active participants on the popular culture public sphere, skilfully exploiting the advantages of the music medium as a tool for strengthening their political identity, organizational potential and even political mobilization. If music has a "well-documented communicative capacity to generate a sense of community, articulate ideas, and communicate emotional insights"

(Street, 2014: 892), our study has demonstrated that mainly the use of (pop) music to construct and reinforce a collective identity emerged as relevant. Both our cases of populist parties use strategically (pop and not pop) music in their political action and events to shape and reaffirm their respective 'partisan cultures' (Paddock, 1997). They do that by adopting specific songs (and genres) as representative of the party, using famous (or relatively unknown) artists contributing to the creation of pro-party music productions, using music with the aim of recruiting and reinvigorating partisan identity amongst core supporters, and to the end of discursively build their conception of people.

We have also found specificities among the two Italian cases. Both of them articulate ideas through the use of music during their political and cultural events which appear 'authentic' in different senses. They sometimes, as in the case of the 5SM, present a 'rocker' mentality and imagery, primarily to attack 'commercialism' and to project a self-image as 'defiant', disturbing, even proudly awkward—a self-image consistent with the low versus high dichotomy which, according the sociocultural approach to populism, is the core of the phenomenon and of its success. Other times, as in the case of the League, they use music to celebrate common, apolitical and everyday tastes. Moreover, the use of music by our two varieties of populism emphasized two different uses: the 'civic populism' use of the music by the 5SM on the one hand, and the 'folklore-identitarian' use by the right-wing League on the other. The League largely reappropriates popular culture and music, whereas the Five Star Movement (unsuccessfully) attempts to create its own organic repertoire. The League targets 'archi-pop', while the 5SM opted for the 'rock' genre. These orientations towards popular culture reflect the parties' broader discursive strategies of imagining the people. The Five Star Movement portrays its members as engaged, active citizens, while the League's members embody an essentialized imagined community (Anderson, 1981) of hardworking people. Especially for right-wing populism, the use of music, and popular culture broadly, is a tool to reify regional and national identities, as confirmed by our interviews with party representatives. As explained by Lilleker (2006: 163), "at the heart of true propaganda are three key elements: rhetoric, myth and symbolism. Propaganda tends to use all of these to talk to our base emotional impulses". Our analysis has showed that all of them are used in the Italian populist usage of music, and they can work *through the mechanisms of emotions,* as our reception data have confirmed.

As social movement studies stress, music can disseminate and reinforce a shared ideology and become an impetus for political mobilization (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). On the whole, on the basis of these analyses, we found that cultural communicative strategies in the realm of music may offer an extremely clear portrayal of the ways in which populist phenomena have solidly built up their boundaries and put strong processes of identification in motion.

Indeed, as our *web data mining* and *experts' interviews* have illustrated (in Chap. 5), the boundaries between the popular culture and the political sphere in Italy are increasingly blurred over time. As shown when exploring the reciprocal interactions between populist politicians and pop music and starts in Italy, we saw that populist leaders often utilize the pop music scene to showcase their initiatives, actions and positions. As in the case in 2014, when Beppe Grillo, the founder and leader of the populist Five Star Movement, attended the Sanremo festival giving some interviews in which he attacked the Italian media 'regime' and the corruption of the RAI (the Italian national broadcaster). This is just one example of the different types of interactions between the two spheres we found. Other examples include pop stars acting like populist politicians endorsing populist leaders; participating in the public debate supporting or criticizing populist positions; populist politicians exploiting pop music (not necessarily containing populist messages), sometimes even anti-populist artists, for party brand-building, for example.

We also found some specificities according to our two varieties of populism, with the right-wing Lega referring to pop music as mainly the 'heritage of everyone', and the left-wing populist 5SM developing more ideological interventions in the music scene. In the case of Salvini, and in line with the uses of music during party rallies, we are fully within the politicization of 'low' culture, of the culture 'from here' (Ostiguy, 2018), of 'Italianness', according to an ethno-nationalist conception of the people typical of European right-wing populism. The Five Star Movement, instead, has a more complex relationship with the (progressive) Italian pop music scene changing during time, depending on its institutionalization (once in power). The different approaches to pop music between the two different types of Italian populism lay on their differences in presenting themselves as the authentic representation of 'the people': the 'heartland' (Taggart, 2000) of the Lega versus the 'truth-telling' role of the 5SM—which is remarkably similar to the reflections on rock music as characterized by an "ideology of authenticity" (Auslander, 1999). However, the name most

AU14 frequently used for rock's 'Other' is 'pop'" (Auslander, 1999: 68–69), that is, commercial, frivolous and/or mainstream 'politically correct' music. The 5SM is more 'rock' than 'pop': the party parades its diversity, and, consequently, it finds it difficult, we argue, to work with pop material.

Both of them emphasized that the phenomenon of celebrity politics is highly present in Italy, particularly with regards to populism, and it broadens their action repertoire.

Finally, if a distinction between 'organic' and 'appropriated authors' (Jansma, 2019) has to be made when looking at the use of pop culture by political actors, our data emphasized that the populist League, in its trajectory from an ethno-regionalist party to a nationalist one, steadily switched AU15 from 'organicism' to 'appropriation'; while the 5SM, in its evolution from 'movimentism' to institutionalization, kept its (poorly effective) 'organicist' strategy, although the party clearly changed its 'organic' pop references throughout its history.

To sum up, according to Joseph Schumpeter, "slogans and marching tunes are not accessories. They are of the essence of politics. So is the political boss" (Schumpeter, 1942). Despite his elitist approach, Schumpeter understood the centrality of passions, leadership and pop culture references in democratic politics—especially in the context of representation—nearly eighty years ago. In our populist times, these aspects are even more central AU16 to understanding how politics works. Our analyses focused on popular musical and cultural practices as a means for understanding the articulations of national populism in the contemporary Italian context, showing how pop music can be conceived as action, through speaking and organizing. These findings underline the importance of paying attention to discursive and performative approaches to the study of populism. Stavrakakis (2020) argues that populism operates out of common sense, and it is more efficacious than normal, ideological politics because one cannot choose or artificially create the background against which she/he has to act politically. This study is an empirical contribution to that.

7.3 Between Music and Politics (in Italy): Towards an Explanation?

Beyond the descriptive effort, our study has also some explanatory ambitions. Indeed, we argued that the connection between pop music and populist politics is also helped by some conducive characteristics of the Italian context, the so-called political, cultural and music market

opportunities. If musical meanings are always grounded socially and historically, and "they operate on an ideological field of conflicting interests, institutions, and memories" (Walser, 1993: xiii), as showed in Chap. 2, Italy offers a context of favourable opportunities for the nexus between populist (mobilization) and pop music for a number of reasons.

AU17 The first is the historic tradition of Italian populism and the joint presence of different variants of it, which offers exceptionally high level of popular support.[8] Secondly, Italy is also one of the most important music markets in the world, ranking sixth in the world for concerts and live events. Thirdly, in terms of cultural-discursive opportunities, the widespread presence of populist discourses among the political elites and the political role of popular music in Italy have been widely addressed in the literature from multiple angles, from studies on populist communication and contagion effects (Schwoerer, 2021) to the process of national identity-building (Sorce Keller, 2013)—including a specific construction of an 'ideal typical' Italian song (*canzone italiana*: Borgna, 1985; Liperi, 2011)—to the links between state and cultural (both private and state-owned) institutions (see Fabbri, 2014), from the voluminous repertoire of protest music (see Vitali, 2020) to the links between mass parties and pop music (Fiori, 1984; Volpi, 2017).

The way Italian populist parties rely on music and related cultural products during their activities echoes the Gramscian concept of 'folklore' and 'common-sense' fragments that give meaning to the world. This raises the important issue of the influence that historically determined (cultural) opportunities of the context may have on the connection between politics and music. Our expert interviews confirmed this aspect for Italy. As seen, the traditional tensions between «high» and «low» (specifically pop) music prepared a fertile breeding ground for the association (and appropriation?) of pop music by populist politics. Moreover, the transformation into 'pop' of the «leftist repertoire» of the past (Dei, 2016), the «mythification» of the leftist repertoire and its critical relationship with the

[8] The coexistence of electorally relevant left-wing and right-wing populist parties has marked other European party systems, such as Greece (where the first 'all-populist' government was formed in 2015 by the leftist Syriza and the rightist ANEL), France and, more recently, Spain. However, in none of these countries did populist parties reach a global level of voting share like in Italy, where, moreover, the two partners of the 'all-populist government' formed in 2018 between the Five Star Movement and the Northern League were much more balanced, in terms of voting shares and of parliamentary seats, than in the Greek precedent.

political left, the fragmentation of different usages of protest and political music and the influence of the eighties (characterized by hedonism and nationalism) on Italian music, as well as the role of pop music as a unifying tool through generations (instead of class)-close to the homogeneous people of populists: all these are part, as we argued, of favourable opportunities for the connection between populism and pop music in the country, and eventually for its mainstreaming via music.

While the relevance of such a political role of music is widely recognized (Tomatis, 2019), it has not been systematically addressed from a political science perspective. Neither has the relationship between the rise of populism in Italy and pop music (and culture) been addressed, apart from key contributions referring to the Berlusconi era (Campus, 1997; Dei, 2011; Mingioni, 2006; Panarari, 2010).

Moreover, still in terms of political opportunities, Europe has been rocked by multiple crises over the past decade. Populist parties and leaders successfully mobilized citizens who—in the shadow of a persistent economic crisis, with political parties suffering from a deficit of legitimacy, and a revival of cultural conservatism fuelled by the issue of migration—felt threatened and unsatisfied with the current (political) situation (Kriesi & Pappas, 2015; Kriesi & Schulte-Cloos, 2020). Italy presented to these parties a perfect mix of economic, political and cultural-migration crisis (Graziano, 2018) Furthermore, the broad conformation of the Italian pop music scene lends itself to several considerations for our purposes, because of both the centrality of pop music in the patterns of consumption in Italy and the complex links between Italian music and politics, which have been characterized by a distinction (and distance) between 'high-intellectual music' versus popular ('light', i.e. 'low) music.

In this sense, against the background of this context,[9] a derogatory understanding of the category of 'pop' is functional to the recurring distinction between high and low culture, in the Italian music traditions, with pop music representing the low, where also populism claims to stand since it represents the voice of the people. The strategies and interactions between the populist and music scenes, as seen in Chap. 5, but above all the connection between populist politics and pop music at various levels (meso and micro), can be linked to specific cultural and political

[9] Since institutions are path-dependent, we expected some resilience of the historical discourse on politics and music in Italy, as this defines which 'frames', i.e. discourses, rationale on music and politics, can resonate better with internally deep-rooted traditions.

opportunities of the Italian context and historical processes, such as the equation of the Italian *canzone d'autore*—technically speaking, inherently part of pop music—with the left but also with anti-populism, due to the hostility against the more frivolous *canzonetta* (on the contrary widely acknowledged as 'pop'); the gradual depoliticization of 'high pop music' (i.e. *canzone d'autore*) and of popular folk music (see Dei, 2016) and the politicization of specific tastes as crystallized in specific sociocultural *and* political identities, related to the specific context.

As illustrated, firstly, pop music, as seen in the festival of Sanremo (Chap. 2), is one of the main expressions of pop music in Italy and—has had an *ideological* (purposeful) function by contributing to the process of Italian nation-building, both in cultural (e.g. Campus, 2015) and in linguistic terms (Antonelli, 2015). As argued in this book, such processes of nation-building can occur in a way that was compatible with, and dictated by, the conservative (familistic, inter-classist, *petit bourgeois* and intergenerational[10]) values characterizing the Italian ruling party during the 'First Republic', but also characterizing (right-wing) populists. For example, the centrality of the 'Nation' in the songs of Sanremo (and in Italian pop songs) has not disappeared, and has been even reaffirmed since the eighties. It is the musical side of the "Italian self-reflection genre" in the literature (Di Gesù, 2015): Italians talking about what Italians are (and are not).

Secondly, Sanremo (pop music) and politics (populism) are linked through an *affective* dimension. For example, as seen in our historical reconstruction and in the analysis of pop songs (that finished on the podium of Sanremo that were analysed since 2009—the boom of new and old rebranded populism in Italy), Sanremo's most famous songs, as primary representatives of the Italian pop repertoire, have become the 'songs that everybody knows', forming one of the bases of a tacitly and implicitly shared culture and thus of forms of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) ready to be politicized—at the very least, through its re-appropriation for 'pop-politics' purposes (Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009). *Pop* does not equate with *populism*, though: neither in the sense of 'pop music', nor in the sense of 'pop-politics'. To frame pop material for populist purposes, a celebration of 'the people' against an 'elite', either in socioeconomic or in cultural terms, is needed. The appropriation of the pop repertoire must serve, following Ostiguy (2018), to establish boundaries between those belonging

[10] As noted by Antonelli (2015), the recurrence of the use of 'We' in generational terms (i.e. to describe the youth) in the lyrics of Italian pop songs is a recent phenomenon, dating back to the sixties.

to the 'low' and those belonging to the 'high'. Here some parallels, but also some differences, with a *nationalist* (rather than populist) appropriation of pop material can be traced, in the sense that a nationalist appropriation may be pursued to divide people 'from within' and people 'from outside' (see De Cleen, 2020). 'Songs that everybody knows' are turned into 'songs that each Italian knows' (and *should know* to be truly Italian).

The agency is needed, as shown in this book, for the use of pop music by populists. However, the alignment with the cultural stock of the context as well as the resonance with the culture of the organization is needed for frames to be credible and successful (Caiani & Della Porta, 2011). This means that, to be successful, the use and appropriation of pop culture by political actors must possess these qualities.[11]

As we have stated, to be populist, such appropriation should be 'genuine', neither bookish nor adopting an overtly sarcastic filter. This is exemplified by the failure of the Democratic Party's anthem for the 2008 elections, a parody of the Village People's *YMCA* ("I am PD") versus the rival anthem of Forza Italia, the iconic *Meno male che Silvio c'è* (Thank goodness Silvio Berlusconi is here). As Schneider (2014) put it: "The video for *Meno male*, which has been widely distributed, parodied, and ridiculed around the web, features mostly generic images of 'typical' Italians in 'typical' contexts singing the praises of Berlusconi as the song lyrics appear as subtitles, encouraging sing-alongs to the anthem's catchy refrain".

Moreover, as well as Italy offering a favourable context of opportunities for the connection between populism and pop music, there are also—at the meso-organizational level—different symbolic and material resources that the actors possess and which can, in turn, explain the strategies. In Italy, similarly to other European countries, there is traditionally a marked difference between the radical right and populism in the way they interact with pop music as scope for mobilization. Both radical right and populist parties have at times pursued the development of their own 'domain of sound' in contraposition with the 'mainstream' (pop) music, often criticized as elitist (Marchi, 1997; De Cleen, 2016, e.g. Flemish populist Vlaams Belang party in Belgium). They criticize "individual artists, particular music scenes and genres for 'sins' like not singing in their native languages, or not producing the 'right music'" (Shekovtsov, 2013: 279). On the other hand, both far-right and the populist right have pursued

[11] As it has been underlined, in developing their frames, actors attempt to gain resonance, which is a function of the consistency of the frame, of its empirical credibility or cultural compatibility, and of the relevance of the addressed issues (Johnston & Noakes, 2005).

strategies of abandoning, or downplaying, subcultural aesthetics and imageries, in the attempt to produce music material closer to pop, rock and roll aesthetics (De Cleen, 2016).

However, they differ since music within radical culture ultimately aims to bring the listener to the directive of its ideology (Pieslak, 2015: 9), while in the case of populist strategies, this doesn't necessarily occur. This also applies to our Italian case and explains the connection found between populism and pop music, with the hybrid 5SM with its 'Franciscan' subculture engaging much more than the right-wing League in overtly political messages through music events.

These findings confirm the importance of the context in explaining the political consequences of music and art, and the forms the connection can take. Music is the typical tool that can have different meanings in different contexts, and therefore it is important to reflect on the effects of the re-contextualization of art by various political actors.

Finally, our empirical research is part of a broader international project, looking at popular music and populism in various European countries. In our case, similarly to the others, we have seen a strong increase in populist parties and movements over the last few years, playing a major role in shaping the immigration policies of the EU during the so-called refugee crisis, while showing signals of interactions between populism and popular music (Dunkel et al., 2018). In this respect, trying to locate our case in a comparative perspective, we can highlight some Italian similarities and differences with other European countries. In contrast to Italy, the long Orbán era in Hungary has been characterized by a precise cultural policy aimed to impose state control on the cultural industry and financing of specific cultural (including music) productions with the goal of celebrating Hungarian ethno-nationalism and irredentism. Nationalist artists and repertoires, once on the fringe, have become mainstream and even 'consecrated' (Barna & Patakfalvi Czjriak, 2022) as respectable bearers of Hungarian identity. In Italy, we have not experienced such an overt state political control by populists (even when in power), nor have ethno-populist imageries been conveyed in any comparable forms. Similarly, in Germany, where state attention and repression towards far-right cultural and political scenes have been historically strong (Bulli, 2020), we have witnessed in recent times the rise of pop stars (such as Andreas Gabalier and Xavier Naidoo) approving, or at times explicitly endorsing (right-wing) populist views (Dunkel & Kopanski, 2022). Even the complete mainstreaming of bands—such as the South Tyrolean *Frei.Wild*—belonging to the so-called grey

zone—a concept used within the extreme right to describe bands at the margins of its music scenes, which present it in a more publicly acceptable form (Garratt, 2018: 196)—contrasts with Italy. Nothing like this happened in Italy, where perhaps a sort of cultural *cordon sanitaire* in the pop scene has been more effective, while the music industry is mostly mediated by progressive actors (in terms of the industry itself and journalism) as asserted in our interview by Tomatis, the music anthropologist.

Also dissimilar to Italy is the US case, via the alt-right—an important face of the populist Trumpist movement—which has been the most successful case in mainstreaming the far-right through "modifying and expanding the range of acceptable options and ideas seen as publicly acceptable" (Mondon & Winter, 2020: 113). This was done by exploiting and producing pop material, including music (Wendling, 2018). There was, in fact, a clear repurposing of accessible musical symbols to suit a particular worldview and to create deliberate confusion and debate, which serve solely to amplify the reach of far- and extreme-right ideas. Through these strategies, the US far-right populist movements engaged in a type of 'cultural training', allowing users to make their ideas "more palatable to wider audiences" and to more easily escape censorship (DeBoise, 2021).

Similarly, in Sweden, we have witnessed a "poppification" of the populist radical right via music. As reported by Schiller, the Swedish Democrats tried to promote a sort of 'pinkwashing' of the far-right, while, in contrast, the Italian radical right populism (i.e. Salvini) more aggressively sought to appropriate what in this book we called the archi-Italian "national character" (masculine, conservative, familistic). The latter was much more sedimented in Italian culture, as seen in Chap. 2 (due to its reproduction over decades by multiple cultural productions from mass-media to movies, from books to music), and therefore the poppification was not necessary to pursue: the connection between right-wing populism and pop music had a more open cultural opportunity structure to manifest. In Italy, unlike other European countries and different too from left-wing populism (i.e. the 5SM), right-wing populism has not pursued any "logic of organic culture" in recent times.

To conclude, by referring to our third big research question addressed in this volume, that is, whether pop music gives rise to populism, or are populist actors using (among other things) music for their political purpose: (i.e. 'cultural form or cultural Style causing political effect?' Street, 2021). With this study we argue that it depends on the agency, as our data have showed, but it (the agency) also depends on the context (on whose opportunities and constraints the agency must draw).

7.4 Populism and Pop Music: Scientific Added Value and Some Normative Reflections

So what?

Our findings turned out to be particularly useful for the current debate on contemporary populism, as they were able to contribute empirically and shed light beyond our single case study, to some aspects of the phenomenon somewhat neglected by the scholarship on the topic.

First, our findings, such as the performative aspects of populist parties' musical spectacles, the populists' creation of their people during entertainment, the different mechanisms determining the populist parties' creation of populist symbols though music or, that is to say, their re-signification of pop music may add empirical contribution to various current theoretical debates, which, in turn, may also help us to better understand populism, its success and endurance, at least in the Italian case. One is the close relationship between the 'logic of spectacle' and the 'logic of populism' (Sutherland, 2012), as both (populism and spectacle) trigger a "particular set of aesthetic relations defined around the distinctly visual and spectatorial conditions of excess that qualify a representation as spectacular" (Sutherland, 2012: 333), while also potentially enacting a form of representation quite different from the 'institutionalist' one (Laclau, 2005). On the other hand, the concept of 'peoplehood' (Boyte, 2012), as constructed by populists, seems to be better understood through 'language, stories, symbols, traditions, food, music and memories' (Chinatera & Peto, 2003).

Moreover, the debate on populism and its definition seems endless. Reflecting on its multiple aspects, including its performative features (Ostiguy et al., 2021) and the role played by emotions to explain its success (Cossarini & Vallespín, 2019), we have illustrated in our book the great potentialities of conceiving *populism as a sociocultural phenomenon, and as a frame* (rather than an ideology). In this sense, the chapters of this book demonstrate how politicians—through (and thanks to) music—act in a populist way, based on an understanding of populism as a strategy of (direct and unmediated) mobilization (à la Weyland, 2001) or as a way of establishing a connection with people by performing 'low' sociocultural practices (Ostiguy, 2018).

Pop-politics has been linked to populism as a political phenomenon. Without doubt, changes in the media landscape, the progressive hybridization between different political communicational arenas (Chadwick, 2018), as well as broader tendencies of political personalization (Calise, 2000) have moved towards pop and celebrity politics. Moreover, the

relative lack of mediation implicit in social media eases those strategies of direct and unmediated mobilization, for populist, but also for non-populist parties. However, not all the politicians exploit (nor wish to exploit) the 'pop-politics' toolbox in a *populist* way, by performing 'low' sociocultural practices. Furthermore, as we have seen from our analysis, not all political leaders have the credibility to play pop-and-populist politics, even if they had been willing to do so (nor should this be assumed to be rewarding in electoral competition, as the recent French presidential elections seemed to underline. We can conclude, in terms of celebrity politics, that the link between pop artists' public role and politics is definitely more complex than expected, when we reflect on the interactions between populist actors and popular music in the public sphere, as we have seen in the Italian case.

Approaching populism as a sociocultural phenomenon, linked to cultural practices (as we have done in this study), can offer innovative analytical tools to the academic research on party changes (in populist times and mediated politics).

Our results confirm that popular culture is evidently to be understood as the "arena of consent and resistance in the struggle over cultural meanings" (Barker, 2004). The description of populism as a recipe that strongly depends on the quality of the ingredients available, although it may be able, up to a certain point, to shape them (Stavrakakis, 2020), resonates across our chapters—in which no songs that have been analysed are per se political. As the chapters have demonstrated, pop music is mere ingredient, familiar to millions of people, citizens and voters, which affords (DeNora, 2000) multiple uses, and which is exploited by populist actors to reaffirm the latter's core political values. People-centrism, anti-elitism (Mudde, 2004), nativism (Mudde, 2008), banal nationalism (Billig, 1995; Sassatelli, 2019), all call for the retrieval of popular sovereignty (Gerbaudo & Screti, 2017; Padoan, 2020) and for the defence—and even self-definition—of national identity. And yet, academic research on these and many other multiple mechanisms connecting populism and popular culture is extraordinarily scarce.

Finally, this study confirmed the heuristic validity of looking at populism in terms of *frames rather than of ideology* (Caiani & Della Porta, 2011), as ideology is too monolithic a concept to address the broad discursive variations among different groups, and also lacks the flexibility required in order to link ideas, actions and events (Snow & Byrd, 2007). We also preferred to refer to the concept of frames, in our chapters, analysing the way people discuss and think about politics via pop music, rather

than as a 'thin ideology', which has recently been used in research on populist parties. In fact, in this book, we have found that looking at frames enables us to stress both the articulation (and fragmentation) of the populist discourse—whose eclecticism has often been stressed—and the cognitive function of popular musical and cultural practices analysed, as it provides individuals (i.e. the potential voters of right-wing and left-wing populists) with an immediate tool to make sense of their external reality. Pointing at structuration and complexity, the term ideology seems less useful for these purposes. In this sense, articulation in this chapter is seen in its double sense of "expressing" something but also of "linking" (or "forging a connection" with) distinct elements that do not necessarily have to be connected (Hall, 1981; Laclau, 2005). Populist ideas must be communicated in order to energize their desired effect on the audience. Accordingly, populism is "mostly reflected in the oral, written, and visual communication of individual politicians, parties, social movements" (Reinemann et al., 2017, 13). Finally, conceiving populism as a collective action frame empowers a better identification of the *emotional elements* (Goodwin & Pfaff, 2001) that cultural practices (as we have seen in various chapters) provide for interpreting and making sense of populism (in Italy and beyond)—a topic that is increasingly finding a place in the study of populism (Widmann, 2021).

To this point, a further one is connected: examining populism through music and in the context of general popular culture and aesthetic may help in differentiating—empirically—populism from similar but distinct concepts, such as *nationalism* and the radical, enduringly a difficult task for political research. Analysing populism and pop music has indeed emphasized that if nationalism is defined by the reference point or signifier "nation", which is constructed in a specific way (Freeden, 1998; Sutherland, 2005), as limited (namely, in opposition to the other), as a community (which shares a sense of belonging at the core of their identity) and as sovereign, studying music and populism, we clearly understood that in order to understand populism, they may remain two separate concepts, or conflated. Thus, the seemingly symbiotic relationship between the nationalist and populist dimensions of the identity-building process of the radical right must be problematized, as brought to light throughout our chapters dealing with the construction of nation and nationalism via music.

Looking Ahead to Future Research: What Indications for Future Studies?

As in any honest scientific research, beyond the contributions of our work, we have to acknowledge some pitfalls in our study.

This book stresses the importance of looking at '*culture' (art, aesthetic,* etc.*) not only for social movements but also for political parties and in particular populism* (beyond subcultural far-right culture and music). In doing that, it also calls for the re-composition of the scholarship between cultural and political social movements, which currently seems affected by a division of labour. Despite the cultural turn in social movement studies in the nineties, social movement scholars have paid little attention to the movements' actual cultural and artistic productions (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995), as 'if politics and culture were pursued on different planets' (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998, 8). Social movements, however—we could also add political parties—are to various degrees both cultural and political actors (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998, 160). With this study, although circumscribed in time and space (and type of political party in question, i.e. populist), we argue that bridging theoretical insights from both scholarship of cultural and political movements could provide scholars with a broader set of tools (including the appreciation of political and historical contexts for cultural expression) to better understand current party politics action repertoire of political struggle, which, like any other collective actors, has greatly expanded in recent times, from contentious politics to the Internet, including various creative resources (such as traditions, music and even art expressions). We also suggest that this applies particularly well to the case of populism, often populated by organizations which can be labelled as 'movement-parties' (Caiani & Cisar, 2018). More research, however, truly comparative across countries and different types of populisms, is needed in the future to explore this aspect.

Our study addresses the research on the *production of knowledge by political actors* (Della Porta & Pavan, 2017), proposing thus a bridging between political science, cultural sociology and social movement studies. In this regard, our findings on the links between populism and pop music suggest considering the role of emotions as a causal mechanism of this connection—in particular the mechanism: does music complement populism because it mobilizes emotions? (Flan, 2014). More theoretical reflections and developments of hypotheses are necessary on the role of emotions

as mechanisms between macro-level causes and macro-level outputs (e.g. the sympathy or vote for populism).

Our *mixed-methods approach*, including some methods and techniques from musicology, social movements studies and ethnography applied to party politics, can put forward new venues for future research in the field of populism, which, once again, in our view eludes a rigid typological classification (party vs. movement) in its politics. Considering the multidimensionality of the populist phenomenon, we think that approaching it with a triangulation of methods and sources, including a new space for music in political science (Massaka, 2013),[12] could be rewarding. Research on music as a phenomenon relating to politics should unite political science, sociological, musicological, psychological, anthropological, historical, philosophical and semiotic views (ibid.). While our research is methodologically innovative (ethnographic accounts of populist party events and focus groups on the topic of music and politics are even more rare), it may also offer some data and pilot methodological tools (see the Appendix) to scholars, practitioners and the broader public interested in music and politics. Research into music and politics usually entails presenting music as a background aspect of political events, circumventing the cause-effect discussion and treating the relationship between music and politics through elucidative (but often anecdotal) vignettes (Massaka, 2013: 325). In this book, via our tools of analysis and integrated research design across various analytical level (the micro, the meso and the macro), we offered a first endeavour with a more comprehensive framework. Further empirical studies are needed, maintaining, simultaneously, the context, agents and the audiences.

Finally, current social movement and contentious politics research (both focusing on progressive and regressive social movements and waves) increasingly focus on the trans-nationalization and diffusion of mobilization. From movements protesting on climate change around the world (i.e. Fridays For Future) to anti-gender movements, the anti-vaccine movement and the spread of conspiracy theories, we are witnessing a global increase in common frames, the repertoire of actions and networks on several, often highly sensitive, political issues. This is even more salient today amidst a democratic backlash and a conservative shift worldwide,

[12] From an American research perspective, music belongs more to the traditional rather than innovative subjects of research in social sciences, in which political science also has its place.

especially in terms of class and gender, mobilizing on the right. Music, like any art form, is, without doubt, a 'powerful globalizer' (Della Porta, 2022, Cosmos talk SNS, May) the impact of transnational campaigns of various kinds can be stronger with music. However, music, and art in general, are the typical tools that can acquire multiple meanings in different contexts, as is highlighted in cultural studies. More research in the future is needed to reflect on the effects of the re-contextualization of aesthetic tools (ibid. 2022), including music by various political actors.

We also have to admit some weaknesses, which future studies, focusing on similar topics, could better address. In this study, we did not do a proper and systematic social media analysis of social communication of pop singers and political leaders. The use of social media by pop starts and pop politicians should be the matter of future comparative research, at the intersection of communication studies and political sociology.

In terms of data collection, the pandemic prevented us to fully conduct our ethnographic methods as participant observation at concerts and party rallies—which, although fragmented in time and space and mixed with online social research, proved to be fruitful to address themes related to culture and party politics. Future studies, looking in particular beyond ordinary citizens, with focus groups conducted on various types of 'fandom', both of political parties and cultural *enterpreneurs* (i.e. pop singers in our case), are needed.

Moreover, in our study, 'pop music' received a broad conceptualization. Further studies should instead, in our view, explore the role of specific musical genres on politics (like for instance, in recent years, trap genre and politics) and differentiate among them.

Finally, our findings also open further theoretical questions, worth to be explored in future research: where is the frontier between pop-politics and populism? In fact, Salvini is not the only Italian politician making wide use of pop cultural references to vehicle political messages (or define his own public persona). We can find examples in the centre-left (and clearly anti-populist) Democratic Party: from the PD's anthem of the 2008 election campaign to the multiple pop references provided by Matteo Renzi in his speeches (Battista, 2012). Is this 'populism'? If we draw on Ostiguy's definition, the answer is no. We just have a newish style, in which the use of pop material is marked by connoisseurship and by a 'rampant, middle-class' imagery (Drew, 2005).

The Democratic Potential of Music (and Its Risks)

This brings us directly to a final aspect related to the potential political effect of music. Political science studies often focus on the topic of communication between authorities and the subjects (in authoritarian regimes), and between representatives of a nation or people claiming their role and the electorate (in democratic regimes) (Massaka, 2013). In parallel, the political science research into music poses two research questions: how could listening to and performing music have political consequences? How feasible is it to change people's social attitudes through music (and the collective behaviour from their outcomes) towards political issues and their agents?

However, many operational questions still remain unanswered. In what way could it be done by means of music? Is there a kind of music that tends to work better and what determines its effectiveness as a regulator of the level of legitimacy of power? One of the most important aspects of its authorship—it is said—is the increase or decrease of support for the current political decision-makers by means of music.

On the one hand, important works on the consolidation of power using music in authoritarian regimes have been produced, and vast studies on the use of music (mainly pop, rock, rap, punk, hip-hop and film soundtrack genres) for political purposes in democratic regimes have been written (examples abound from protesting against the political order to studies on social manipulation by means of musical material). On the other hand, there are not enough analyses overall, particularly from historical and comparative perspectives. Research on music as an instrument for political influence is in short supply and much needed at this time. The development of political marketing (and studies on social manipulation by means of musical material in commercialized mass media) makes the topic even more salient.[13]

A decade ago, Street et al. (2011) revealed how entertainment media has an impact on the constitution of political citizenship and political

[13] Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have become significant tools for musicians and their audiences to connect in less mediated and more direct ways. Accordingly, future research is needed to better conceptualize, analytically, social media vis-à-vis populist and popular culture. The integration occurring between music circulation and social media platforms today, as well as other forms of people's direct involvement in music events though the mediation of online tools, is a critical factor in understanding the role of digital media in current politics (Magaudda 2019).

thought and action—in essence, the political engagement of people. With this book, we aimed empirically to offer an additional contribution to this line of enquiry.

This may have policy implications in attempting to re-engage young people in politics by means of popular culture and 'celebrity politics'. However, it may also have policy and normative implications for political (populist) actors in their attempt to use music as a medium in their political activities. In any case, it raises the delicate issue of the (controversial) role and interactions between music and (populist) politics in current 'celebrity politics' and 'fandom' democracies. Social research, offering the latest material and findings, can contribute in this debate and offer empirical food for reflections. This makes the call for taking popular music seriously even more salient in the field of political science in general, and in populism studies in particular.

References

Anderson, B. (1981). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.

Antonelli, G. (2015). *Ma cosa vuoi che sia una canzone. Mezzo secolo di italiano cantato*. Il Mulino.

Auslander, P. (1999). *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. Routledge.

Barna, E., & Patakfalvi Czjriak, A. (2022). "We are of one blood": Hungarian popular music, nationalism and the trajectory of the song "Nélküled" through radicalization, folklorization and consecration. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/25739638.2022.2089388

Battista, P. (2012, June 24). Da Mary Poppins ai Righeira, icone «post». *Il Corriere della Sera*. https://www.corriere.it/politica/12_giugno_24/da-mary-poppins-ai-righeira-icone-post_f3c16982-bdcc-11e1-a8f4-59710be8ebe6.shtml

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. Sage.

Bloor, M., et al. (2001). *Focus Group in Social Research*. Sage.

Borgna, G. (1985). Storia della canzone italiana. .

Boyte, H. (2012). Populism—Bringing culture Back in. *The Good Society, 21*(2), 300–319.

Bulli, G. (2020). The long evolution of extreme right music in Italy and Germany. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 207–231.

Caiani, M., & Cisar, O. (Eds.). (2018). *Radical right movement parties in Europe*. Routledge.

Caiani, M., & Della Porta, D. (2011). The elitist populism of the radical right: A frame analysis of radical right-wing discourses in Italy and Germany. *Acta Politica, 46*(2), 180–202.
Caiani, M., & Graziano, P. (2016). Varieties of populism: Insights from the Italian case. *Italian Political Science Review, 46*(2), 243–267.
Calise, M. (2000). *Il partito personale*. Laterza.
Campus, D. (1997). *L'antipolitica al governo. De Gaulle, Reagan, Berlusconi*. Il Mulino.
Campus, L. (2015). *Non solo canzonette. L'Italia della ricostruzione e del miracolo attraverso il festival di Sanremo*. Mondadori.
Chadwick, A. (2018). *Hybrid media system: Politics and power*. Oxford University Press.
Chinatera, P., & Peto, A. (2003). Cultures of populism and the political right in Central Europe. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal, 5*(4), 1–11.
Cossarini, P., & Vallespín, F. (Eds.). (2019). *Populism and passions. Democratic legitimacy after austerity*. Routledge.
Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and political engagement: Citizens, communication and democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
De Cleen, B. (2016). The party of the people *versus* the cultural elite. *Populism and* nationalism in Flemish *radical right* rhetoric about *artists. JOMEC Journal, 9*, 1–15.
DeBoise, S. (2021). Digitalization and the musical mediation of anti-democratic ideologies in alt-right forums. *Popular Music, 45*(1), 48–66.
Dei, F. (2011). Pop-politica: le basi culturali del berlusconismo. *Studi Culturali, 2011*(3), 471–490.
Dei, F. (2016). *Cultura popolare in Italia. Da Gramsci all'Unesco*. Il Mulino.
Della Porta, D. (2022, June). *Transnationalization and social movements: Scuola Normale Superiore's roundtable on comparative political ecology*. p. 14
Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction*. Wiley.
Della Porta, D., & Pavan, E. (2017). Repertoires of knowledge practices: Social movements in times of crisis. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management, 12*(4), 297–314.
DeNora, T. (2000). *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press.
Di Cocco, J., & Monechi, B. (2022). How populist are parties? Measuring degrees of populism in party manifestos using supervised machine learning. *Political Analysis, 30*(3), 211–227.
Di Gesù, M. (2015). Una nazione di carta. Tradizione letteraria e identità italiana. .
Drew, R. (2005). 'Once more, with irony': Karaoke and social class. *Leisure Studies, 24*(4), 371–383.
Dunkel M., Barna, E., Caiani, M., Doehring A., Niederauer, M., Schiller, M. (2018). Popular music as a medium for the mainstreaming of populist ide-

ologies in Europe. Research Project (Full Proposal) financed by Volkswagen Foundation, Ref. 94 754-1.

Dunkel, M., & Kopanski, R. (2022). Pop stars as voice of the people? Affect, popular music and the normalization of populism in Germany during the Corona crisis. In M. Dunkel & M. Schiller (Eds.), *Popular music and the rise of populism in Europe*. Routledge.

Eyerman, R., & Jamison, A. (1998). *Music and social movements*. Cambridge University Press.

Fabbri, F. (2014). I gruppi raccontano la storia. Paper presented at the conference *Cantare la storia*, University of Urbino.

Fieschi, C. (2019). *Populocracy: The tyranny of authenticity and the rise of populism*. AgendaPub.

Fiori, U. (1984). Rock music and politics in Italy. *Popular Music, 4*(1), 261–277.

Flam, H., & Kleres, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Methods of exploring emotions*. Routledge.

Fligstein, N., & McAdam, D. (2011). Toward a general theory of strategic action fields. *Sociological Theory, 29*(1), 1–26.

Freeden, M. (1998). Is nationalism a distinct ideology? *Political Studies, 46*(4), 748–765.

Frith, S. (1988). Art ideology and pop practice. In L. Grossberg & C. Nelson (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. University of Illinois Press.

Garratt, J. (2018). *Music and politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Gerbaudo, P., & Screti, F. (2017). Reclaiming popular sovereignty: The vision of the state in the discourse of Podemos and the Movimento 5 Stelle. *Javnost, 24*(4), 320–335.

Germani, G. (1965). *Politica y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas*. Paidos.

Goodwin, J., & Pfaff, S. (2001). Emotion work in high-risk social movements. In J. Goodwin, J. Jasper, & F. Polletta (Eds.), *Passionate politics. Emotions and social movements* (pp. 282–302). University of Chicago Press.

Graziano, P. (2018). *Neopopulismi. Perché sono destinati a durare*. Il Mulino.

Hall, S. (1981). Notes on deconstructing the popular. In R. Samuel (Ed.), *People's history and socialist theory* (pp. 227–240). Routledge.

Hampton, T. (2019). *Bob Dylan's poetics: How the songs work*. Zone Books.

Jansma, J. (2019). Culture in the name of the people? Towards a typology of populism and culture. *Debats. Journal on Culture, Power and Society, 4*, 119–132.

Johnston, H., & Klandermans, B. (1995). *Social movements and culture*. University of Minnesota Press.

Johnston, H. & Noakes, J. (Eds.) (2005). Social movements and the framing perspective. .

Kay, S. (2017). *Rockin' the free world! How the Rock & Roll Revolution Changed America and the world*. Rowman & Littlelfield.

Kriesi, H., & Pappas, T. (Eds.). (2015). *European populism in the shadow of the great recession*. ECPR Press.
Kriesi, H., & Schulte-Cloos, J. (2020). Support for radical parties in western Europe: Structural conflicts and political dynamics. *Journal of Electoral Studies*. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ELECTSTUD.2020.102138
Laclau, E. (2005). *La razón populista*. Fondo de Cultural Económica.
Lilleker, D. (2006). *Key concepts in political communication*. Sage.
Liperi, F. (2011). *Storia della canzone italiana*. Eri.
Marchi, V. (1997). *Nazi-rock. Pop music e destra radicale*. Castelvecchi.
Massaka, I. (2013). Music in the field of political science. Research questions and trends. *Polish Political Science, 42*(1), 317–330.
Mazzoleni, G., & Sfardini, A. (2009). *Politica pop. Da «Porta a porta» a «L'isola dei famosi»*. Il Mulino.
McDonald, K. (2006). *Global movements: Action and culture*. Wiley.
Mingioni, L. (2006). *Una storia italiana. La comunicazione politica di Forza Italia e del suo leader Silvio Berlusconi*. ProspettivaEditrice.
Mondon, A., & Winter, A. (2020). *Reactionary democracy: How racism and the populist far right became mainstream*. Verso.
Mouffe, C. (2015). *For a left populism*. Verso.
Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541–563.
Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2013). Exclusionary vs. inclusionary populism: Comparing contemporary Europe and Latin America. *Government and Opposition, 48*(2), 147–174.
Ostiguy, P. (2018). Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach. In P. Taggart, C. Rovira, P. Ochoa, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 73–97). Oxford University Press.
Ostiguy, P., et al. (Eds.). (2021). *Populism in global perspective: A performative and discursive approach*. Routledge.
Paddock, J. (1997). Political culture and the partisan style of state party activists. *Publius, 27*(3), 127–132.
Padoan, E. (2020). *Anti-neoliberal populisms in comparative perspective. A Latin Americanization of southern Europe?* Routledge.
Panarari, M. (2010). *L'egemonia sottoculturale. L'italia da Gramsci al gossip*. Einaudi.
Pieslak, J. (2015). *Radicalism and music: An introduction to the music cultures of al-Qa'ida, racist skinheads, Christian-affiliated radicals, and eco-animal rights militants*. Wesleyan University Press.

Pirro, A., & Portos, M. (2021). Populism between voting and non-electoral participation. *West European Politics, 44*(3), 558–584.
Reinemann, C., et al. (2017). Citizens and populist political communication: Cross-National Findings and perspectives. In T. Aalberg et al. (Eds.), *Populist political communication in Europe* (pp. 381–394). Routledge.
Rosenthal, R., & Flacks, R. (2012). *Playing for change: Music and musicians in the Service of Social Movements*. Routledge.
Roy, W. (2010). *Reds, whites, and blues*. Princeton University Press.
Sassatelli, R. (Ed.). (2019). *Italians and food*. Palgrave.
Schneider, B. (2014). *Berlusconi between politics and popular culture*. PhD Thesis in Italian Studies in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley.
Schumpeter, J. (1942). *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. Harper and Brothers.
Schwoerer, J. (2021). *The growth of populism in the political mainstream. The contagion effect of populist messages on mainstream parties' communication*. Springer.
Shekovtsov, A. (2013). European far-right music and its enemies. In R. Wodak & J. Richardson (Eds.), *Analysing fascist discourse* (pp. 287–306). Routledge.
Sorce Keller, M. (2013). Italy in music: A sweeping (and somewhat audacious) reconstruction of a problematic identity. In F. Fabbri & G. Plastino (Eds.), *Made in Italy* (pp. 17–27). Routledge.
Stavrakakis, Y. (2020). *The people is an empty signifier*. A discussion between Yannis Stavrakakis and Lorenzo Zamponi. POPULISMUS Interventions No. 6. http://www.populismus.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/intervention-6-stavrakakis.pdf
Stavrakakis, Y., & De Cleen, B. (2020). How should we analyze the connections between populism and nationalism: A response to Rogers Brubaker. *Nations and Nationalism, 26*(2), 314–322.
Street, J. (2014). Music as political communication. In K. Kenski & K. Jameson (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political communication*. Oxford University Press.
Street, J. (2021, April 15). *Songs that change the world? The protest song as political communication and political action*. Scuola Normale Superiore's Lunch Seminar Series.
Street, J., Inthorn, S., & Scott, M. (2011). Playing at politics? Popular culture as political engagement. *Parliamentary Affairs, 65*(2), 338–358.
Street, J., Inthorn, S., & Scott, M. (2014). *From entertainment to citizenship. Politics and popular culture*. Manchester University Press.
Sutherland, C. (2005). Nation-building through discourse theory. *Nations and Nationalism, 11*(2), 185–202.
Sutherland, M. (2012). Populism as Spectacle. *Cultural Studies, 26*(2), 330–345.
Taggart, P. (2000). *Populism*. Open University Press.
Tomatis, J. (2019). *Storia culturale della canzone italiana*. Il Saggiatore.
Vitali, G. P. (2020). *Voices of dissent: Interdisciplinary approaches to new Italian popular and political music*. Peter Lang.

1194 Volpi, A. (2017). *Fare gli italiani, a loro insaputa. Musica e politica dal Risorgimento*
1195 *al Sessantotto.* Pacini Editore.
1196 Walser, R. (1993). *Running with the devil.* University Press of New England.
1197 Wendling, M. (2018). *Alt-right: From 4Chan to the white house.* Pluto Press.
1198 Westheuser, L. (2020). Populism as symbolic class struggle. Homology, metaphor,
1199 and English ale. *Partecipazione e Conflitto, 13*(1), 256–283.
1200 Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of
1201 Latin American politics. *Comparative Politics, 34*(1), 1–22.
1202 Widmann, T. (2021). How emotional are populists really? Factors explaining emo-
1203 tional appeals in the communication of political parties. *Political Psychology,*
1204 *42*(1), 163–181.

Appendix

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3

Appendix Table 3.a (Chap. 3). Codebook Used for the Analysis of Italian Pop Songs (2009–2018)

t1.1	*Populism*			
t1.2	*Attributes*	*Description*	*Codified Indicators (0–1 string)*	*Examples*
t1.3 t1.4 t1.5 t1.6 t1.7 t1.8 t1.9 t1.10 t1.11 t1.12 t1.13 t1.14 t1.15 t1.16	*Rhetoric*	Instrumentalization of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment The sublimation of the "redemptive" side of politics (opposed to the "pragmatic" side: Canovan 1999) The power of common people vs. legitimacy of the current political establishment (a discursive challenge to "institutions", Laclau 2005) Challenge to both the political and economic establishments and elite values of the type held by opinion-formers in the academia and the media' (Canovan, 1999: 3). The primary goal of these statements is to 'delegitimize established structures of interest articulation and aggregation' (Barney and Laycock 1999: 321).	– delegitimation political institutions – delegitimation other political actors and their proposals – legitimation of new political actors	*"Bro, I used to work in an office/I swear I was going crazy/I was barely paying rent/Not a f***ing thing works in Italy"* (Fabri Fibra, 2017)
t1.17 t1.18 t1.19 t1.20 t1.21 t1.22 t1.23 t1.24 t1.25 t1.26	*Ideology*	Society: two homogeneous and antagonistic groups/bodies ('the pure people' vs. 'the corrupt elite') Manichean: for the people against the elite (Mudde 2004) The structure of power in the society: antagonistic relations between the people and the elite; the idea of restoring popular sovereignty (a way to give voice to 'people in excess', Aibar 2007). Economic protectionism	– insistence on the people (with certain characteristics, e.g. as 'good'; who have 'unsatisfied demands', Laclau; as 'authentic', Ostiguy) – insistence on the elites (corrupt or cosmopolitan, politically 'correct') – antagonistic relation – conspiracy theory – anti-pluralism	*"The vampire does not change/Gun to the temple/No apologies for all that blood/Who had to pay never paid for the famine/Who had to pay never paid for the silverware/Who had to pay never paid"* (Ligabue, 2014)

Organization	The presence of a charismatic (new kind of) leadership (who) embodies the will of the common people and is able to speak on their behalf • taboo breakers and fighters against political correctness a strategy of "political mobilization" (Jansen 2011)	– leader direct mentions (e.g. claims for a strong leadership) – leader role description (e.g. raw tastes, folksy, local accent; see Ostiguy, 2018) – leader relationship with voter/ party members (centralization)	"*I avenge your income/I don't hear rappers rhymes, cause I'm not ticklish*" (Marracash and Gué Pequeno, 2016)
Style of communication	• without intermediaries • appeal to emotions of fear and enthusiasm • adoption of a demagogic style and refer to resentment, offering easy solutions for complex problems. • unconventional style of campaigning ("unmediated and not institutionalized way of representation" Weyland 2001)	– references to hate – offering of easy solutions to complex problems – appeal to emotions of fear and enthusiasm – direct and non-institutional/ formal style	*"How beautiful is my land/I miss it when I leave/I bring a spare postcard/This place must not die/My people must not leave/My accent must be heard/The waste massacre/ The rise of tumors/We are the land of the sun/Not the land of fires"* (Rocco Hunt, 2014)
Political style	Way of being, way of doing, mode of relationship (Ostiguy, 2018) • Importance of relations, affinity, bonding: search for building collective identities • Comradery • Personalist, affective view of political relations • "Flaunting of the low", celebration of people's authenticity, rudeness, ignorance (Ostiguy, 2018)	– comradery – celebration of people's authenticity, rudeness, ignorance	*"We enter without paying/ Like big league footballers/ The whole place is watching us/But in the end no one will touch us/Like criminals"* (J-Ax and Fedez, 2017)

Appendix Table 3.b (Chap. 3). List of Italian Pop Songs Included in the Analysis (2009–2018)

ID.1, *Andiamo a comandare*, Fabio Rovazzi (2016), URL:/watch?v=Kifn_WVGReM t2.1
ID.2, *Cara Italia*, Ghali (2018), URL:/watch?v=z3UCQj8EFGk t2.2
ID.3, *C'è sempre una canzone*, Luciano Ligabue (2015), URL:/watch?v=3PjtyKZfQuw t2.3
ID.4, *Cigno nero*, Fedez ft. Francesca Michielin (2013), URL:/watch?v=cd7fZTqYYmg t2.4
ID.5, *Cupido*, Sfera Ebbasta ft. Quavo (2018), URL:/watch?v=jkveo88JgrA t2.5
ID.6, *Faccia come il cuore*, Due di Picche (2010), URL:/watch?v=utMHDheXUzw t2.6
ID.7, *Fotografia*, Carl Brave ft. Fabri Fibra e Francesca Michielin (2018), t2.7
URL:/watch?v=m2mfY9Ku0jI t2.8
ID.8, *Habibi*, Ghali (2017), URL:/watch?v=fgt6luBwzz0 t2.9
ID.9, *Happy Days*, Ghali (2017), URL:/watch?v=AeNk3SBl5m0 t2.10
ID.10, *Il muro del suono*, Luciano Ligabue (2014), URL:/watch?v=LzwFATThj1I t2.11
ID.11, *L'amore Eternit*, Fedez ft. Noemi (2015), URL:/watch?v=DUGMfUysMlU t2.12
ID.12, *Maracana*, Emis Killa (2014), URL:/watch?v=MlHXpxbqjuo t2.13
ID.13, *Maria Salvador*, J-Ax ft. Il Cile (2015), URL:/watch?v=Yrtpl9aDDrk t2.14
ID.14, *Ninna Nanna*, Ghali (2016), URL:/watch?v=s1xbQVNGSPQ t2.15
ID.15, *Non è l'inferno*, Emma Marrone (2012), URL:/watch?v=pMzNxA81qmE t2.16
ID.16, *Nu juorno buono*, Rocco Hunt (2014), URL:/watch?v=mt2QuQcb2oU t2.17
ID.17, *Nulla Accade*, Marracash ft. Gué Pequeno (2016), t2.18
URL:/watch?v=Mcg3WqgTnCE t2.19
ID.18, *Pamplona*, Fabri Fibra ft. Thegiornalisti (2017), URL:/watch?v=dDxxZmIxNqc t2.20
ID.19, *P.E.S.*, Club Dogo ft Giuliano Palma (2012), URL:/watch?v=84aJv0NelEU t2.21
ID.20, *Rockstar*, Sfera Ebbasta (2018), URL:/watch?v=x8fDlAunwAE t2.22
ID.21, *Sempre noi*, Max Pezzali ft J-Ax (2012), URL:/watch?v=_qdpVtFU52k t2.23
ID.22, *Senza pagare*, J-Ax & Fedez (2017), URL:/watch?v=8LX7BVLl5wg t2.24
ID.23, *Siamo chi siamo*, Luciano Ligabue (2014), URL:/watch?v=C08OHLkaa14 t2.25
ID.24, *Tesla*, Capo Plaza (2018), URL:/watch?v=BDx_YTf9x1g t2.26
ID.25, *Tran Tran*, Sfera Ebbasta (2017), URL:/watch?v=tU_KbOs8w2o t2.27
ID.26, *Tranne te*, Fabri Fibra (2011), URL:/watch?v=qrM0z3v3LUY t2.28
ID.27, *Vorrei ma non posto*, J-Ax & Fedez (2016), URL:/watch?v=yKT_euhimTk t2.29
ID.28, *Una vita in vacanza*, Lo Stato Sociale (2018), URL:/watch?v=eUZdR0G20Qs t2.30
ID.29, *Luca era gay*, Povia (2009), URL:/watch?v=13NuzVOVSKA t2.31
ID.30, *Italia Amore Mio*, t2.32
Pupo & Emanuele Filiberto (2010), URL:/watch?v=0c4_mSqnXx8 t2.33
ID.31, *Chiamami ancora amore*, Roberto Vecchioni (2011), t2.34
URL:/watch?v=z8L-84d84yM t2.35
ID.32, *E' un peccato morir*, Zucchero (2011), URL:/watch?v=c-0nwrP3DaI t2.36
ID.34, *Italiana*, J-Ax & Fedez (2018), URL:/watch?v=OjkfOX-g6Js t2.37
ID.35, *La nuova stella di Broadway*, Cesare Cremonini (2013), t2.38
URL:/watch?v=Nb1-vi2lCQI t2.39
ID.36, *L'essenziale*, Marco Mengoni (2013), URL:/watch?v=unRjK82bDLw t2.40

(*continued*)

(continued) 15

ID.37, *Luca lo stesso*, Luca Carboni (2015), URL:/watch?v=LPwb1kETSt4
ID.38, *Mondo*, Cesare Cremonini (2010), URL:/watch?v=QZQ1S4wRvpA
ID.39, *Nessuno*, Neffa (2010), URL:/watch?v=6GgX2X8FuuU
ID.40, *Se si potesse non morire*, Modà (2013), URL:/watch?v=d_PMhFuEnu0
ID.41, *Sole nero*, Litfiba (2010), URL:/watch?v=RXDRM6K_5FM
ID.42, *Sotto casa*, Max Gazzè (2013), URL:/watch?v=Ej0ME8xdiF8
ID.43, *Tutto l'amore che ho*, Jovanotti (2011), URL:/watch?v=D3HwnYbU_1A
ID.44, *Una grande festa*, Luca Carboni (2018), URL:/watch?v=C3lYiGzuJoA
ID.45, *Malamoreno*, Arisa (2010), URL:/watch?v=HAPxAfJpe8Q
ID.46, *Molto calmo*, Neffa (2013), URL:/watch?v=bp5oAy482ZQ
ID.47, *Buon Viaggio*, Cesare Cremonini (2015), URL:/watch?v=1pRPXIC4Vtk
ID.48, *Che sia benedetta*, Fiorella Mannoia (2017), URL:/watch?v=u6fbLKY6IfI
ID.49, *Ad ogni costo*, Vasco Rossi (2009), URL:/watch?v=z2DtEh-pW4E
ID.50, *Briciole*, Noemi (2009), URL:/watch?v=q_ufVJHMPz4
ID.51, *Come foglie*, Malika Ayane (2009), URL:/watch?v=3LgBfE-u9XY
ID.52, *Con la musica alla radio*, Laura Pausini (2009), URL:/watch?v=X_p8MLxxuZc
ID.53, *Domani*, Artisti Uniti per lAbruzzo (2009), URL:/watch?v=kaiekFL69dM
ID.54, *Il mio amore unico*, Dolcenera (2009), URL:/watch?v=baMBZ5bIYdo
ID.55, *Il regalo più grande*, Tiziano Ferro (2009), URL:/watch?v=d3MvacAiXqM
ID.56, *Immobile*, Alessandra Amoroso (2009), URL:/watch?v=axPsHUT-BQw
ID.57, *Indietro*, Tiziano Ferro (2009), URL:/watch?v=SEJCzvOWH14
ID.58, *La forza mia*, Marco Carta (2009), URL:/watch?v=-msSyWcO8Ys
ID.59, *L'amore si odia*, Noemi ft Fiorella Mannoia (2009), URL:/watch?v=MUWl1LDQFfk
ID.60, *Lontano dal tuo sole*, Neffa (2009), URL:/watch?v=DGfNskXpD3g
ID.61, *Ma il cielo è sempre più blu*, Giusy Ferreri (cover Gaetano) (2009), URL:/watch?v=ExrF-wZKsko
ID.62, *Meraviglioso*, Negramaro (cover Modugno) (2009), URL:/watch?v=EikicSEKi4M
ID.63, *Non è mai un errore*, Raf (2009), URL:/watch?v=y70iaqDYonQ
ID.64, *Parla con me*, Eros Ramazzotti (2009), URL:/watch?v=bThSI666jJY
ID.65, *Per dimenticare*, Zero Assoluto (2009), URL:/watch?v=6I_gY_fyY_8
ID.66, *Primavera in anticipo*, Pausini/Blunt (2009), URL:/watch?v=qTK0KkJnMzw
ID.67, *Salvami*, Nannini ft. Giorgia (2009), URL:/watch?v=btHXf7PKraU
ID.68, *Ti vorrei sollevare*, Elisa ft Sangiorgi (2009), URL:/watch?v=_7q0skpXPIs
ID.69, *Alle porte del sogno*, Irene Grandi (2010), URL:/watch?v=Ff-lUOJokCI
ID.70, *Baciami ancora*, Jovanotti (2010), URL:/watch?v=jsCCnpcGEWI
ID.71, *Credimi ancora*, Marco Mengoni (2010), URL:/watch?v=SP7tOIFyKnk
ID.72, *La notte*, Modà (2010), URL:/watch?v=R3Ob_fTaWmI
ID.73, *Per tutta la vita*, Noemi (2010), URL:/watch?v=7KrOOlK01Yo
ID.74, *Per tutte le volte che…*, Valerio Scanu (2010), URL:/watch?v=9PRT5NSpPCA
ID.75, *Respiro*, Le Vibrazioni (2010), URL:/watch?v=wdiYHPVvMw0
ID.76, *Ricomincio da qui*, Malika Ayane (2010), URL:/watch?v=sTqZQuu24aU
t2.41 ID.77, *Salvami*, Gianna Nannini (2010), URL:/watch?v=btHXf7PKraU
t2.42 ID.78, *Sei sempre stata mia*, Gianluca Grignani (2010), URL:/watch?v=Jgn1-0DKmsM
t2.43 ID.79, *Sono già solo*, Modà (2010), URL:/watch?v=PdTEBPGNpKM

(*continued*) 16

17 (continued)

t2.44 ID.80, *Sto pensando a te*, Vasco Rossi (2010), URL:/watch?v=DsEcrVP1w6w
t2.45 ID.81, *Ti vorrei sollevare*, Elisa ft. Giuliano Sangiorgi (2010), URL:/
t2.46 watch?v=_7q0skpXPIs
t2.47 ID.82, *Un colpo all'anima*, Luciano Ligabue (2010), URL:/watch?v=TIfoWnH7QhQ
t2.48 ID.83, *Amanda è libera*, Al Bano (2011), URL:/watch?v=vEuEpS36pds
t2.49 ID.84, *Arriverà*, Emma e Modà (2011), URL:/watch?v=g1vveTJN8Do
t2.50 ID.85, *Ci sei sempre stata*, Luciano Ligabue (2011), URL:/watch?v=HYrZ8F7v2OU
t2.51 ID.86, *E da qui*, Nek (2011), URL:/watch?v=wOFa0sE4fXE
t2.52 ID.87, *Eh già*, Vasco Rossi (2011), URL:/watch?v=1CydZtP_XlA
t2.53 ID.88, *Fare le valigie*, Luca Carboni (2011), URL:/watch?v=kbk-HyFG9lM
t2.54 ID.89, *Hello*, Cesare Cremonini (2011), URL:/watch?v=qeNWbjjLeSA
t2.55 ID.90, *Il mio giorno migliore*, Giorgia (2011), URL:/watch?v=xBcmW-VumaQ
t2.56 ID.91, *Il peso della valigia*, Luciano Ligabue (2011), URL:/watch?v=_ER3SnabAJQ
t2.57 ID.92, *Il più grande spettacolo dopo il Big Bang*, Jovanotti (2011), URL:/
t2.58 watch?v=RruDYGIx1Ak
t2.59 ID.93, *La differenza fra me e te*, Tiziano Ferro (2011), URL:/watch?v=_KN_nyGehek
t2.60 ID.94, *La pazienza*, Luca Dirisio (2011), URL:/watch?v=fanrVEdbYgY
t2.61 ID.95, *Le tasche piene di sassi*, Jovanotti (2011), URL:/watch?v=Y4QepFkJQ-s
t2.62 ID.96, *My girl*, Mario Biondi (2011), URL:/watch?v=kwcc7_INi7A
t2.63 ID.97, *Ogni tanto*, Gianna Nannini (2011), URL:/watch?v=Ij1ItpSW3YU
t2.64 ID.98, *Un giorno bellissimo*, Francesco Renga (2011), URL:/watch?v=YoXKB2S6WEk
t2.65 ID.99, *Vedo nero*, Zucchero (2011), URL:/watch?v=Z43t5mXB4Mo
t2.66 ID.100, *Vuoto a perdere*, Noemi (2011), URL:/watch?v=ixcYhTRRLyY
t2.67 ID.101, *Come un pittore*, Modà ft Jarabe de Palo (2012), URL:/watch?v=RuYbA55IWGs
t2.68 ID.102, *Distratto*, Francesca Michielin (2012), URL:/watch?v=oFkMFrhfPdo
t2.69 ID.103, *Il comico*, Cesare Cremonini (2012), URL:/watch?v=enQo1ghR5Jk
t2.70 ID.104, *Il pulcino Pio*, Il pulcino Pio (2012), URL:/watch?v=juqyzgnbspY
t2.71 ID.105, *La fine del mondo*, Gianna Nannini (2012), URL:/watch?v=EdH6rz4ekfA
t2.72 ID.106, *La notte*, Arisa (2012), URL:/watch?v=PWu71JMwGWE
t2.73 ID.107, *Le cose che non mi aspetto*, Laura Pausini (2012), URL:/watch?v=Gi0QL20jc20
t2.74 ID.108, *Natura umana*, Gianluca Grignani (2012), URL:/watch?v=cJHClUan6HI
t2.75 ID.109, *Non vivo più senza te*, Biagio Antonacci (2012), URL:/watch?v=XxCso8WgvGg
t2.76 ID.110, *Ora*, Jovanotti (2012), URL:/watch?v=F63w4j0huPw
t2.77 ID.111, *Ora e allora*, Luciano Ligabue (2012), URL:/watch?v=Uv9OR4cNt-c
t2.78 ID.112, *Sole*, Negramaro (2012), URL:/watch?v=F4p0JQLHdFc
t2.79 ID.113, *Sono solo parole*, Noemi (2012), URL:/watch?v=HPVSB8kOWrM
t2.80 ID.114, *Stammi vicino*, Vasco Rossi (2012), URL:/watch?v=s23t6cMWzP4
t2.81 ID.115, *Tu mi porti su*, Giorgia ft Jovanotti (2012), URL:/watch?v=HZcYTQfovYs
t2.82 ID.116, *Un angelo disteso al sole*, Eros Ramazzotti (2012), URL:/
t2.83 watch?v=-Oo_73SlOwk
t2.84 ID.117, *Amami*, Emma Marrone (2013), URL:/watch?v=QSrfnxMGqeQ
t2.85 ID.118, *Due respiri*, Chiara (2013), URL:/watch?v=Nea5bcU4w08
t2.86 ID.119, *Fino all'estasi*, Eros Ramazzotti (2013), URL:/watch?v=omPsnsh8d5M
t2.87 ID.120, *I love you*, Cesare Cremonini (2013), URL:/watch?v=KpZV0Yt_GRM
10

18 (*continued*)

(continued) 19

t2.88 ID.121, *La canzone mononota*, Elio e le Storie Tese (2013), URL:/watch?v=lRq0TzYBris
t2.89 ID.122, *L'anima vola*, Elisa (2013), URL:/watch?v=MqhxIQD16EA
t2.90 ID.123, *L'universo tranne noi*, Max Pezzali (2013), URL:/watch?v=p7WVqQhfMgM
t2.91 ID.124, *L'uomo più semplice*, Vasco Rossi (2013), URL:/watch?v=bw4pjP-jFIc
t2.92 ID.125, *Pronto a correre*, Marco Mengoni (2013), URL:/watch?v=ZvrJafIrgIA
t2.93 ID.126, *Ti porto* via *con me*, Jovanotti (2013), URL:/watch?v=x117CurlaB0
t2.94 ID.127, *Controvento*, Arisa (2014), URL:/watch?v=wPrKYs2iDKQ
t2.95 ID.128, *Dannate nuvole*, Vasco Rossi (2014), URL:/watch?v=2-jYScNwyLo
t2.96 ID.129, *Grey Goose*, Cesare Cremonini (2014), URL:/watch?v=FKgwlMKrpKA
t2.97 ID.130, *Il mio giorno più bello del mondo*, Francesco Renga (2014),
t2.98 URL:/watch?v=cVbwhOBfT4Y
t2.99 ID.131, *Io fra tanti*, Giorgia (2014), URL:/watch?v=Tz59ZIH4jrQ
t2.100 ID.132, *Liberi o no*, Raphael Gualazzi (2014), URL:/watch?v=4KBkDzFbw-0
t2.101 ID.133, *Logico #1*, Cesare Cremonini (2014), URL:/watch?v=-rg_3nf-1u4
t2.102 ID.134, *Non mi ami*, Giorgia (2014), URL:/watch?v=090f8pSd6yI
t2.103 ID.135, *Ora*, Renzo Rubino (2014), URL:/watch?v=xgT4h-Fv7l8
t2.104 ID.136, *Per sempre*, Luciano Ligabue (2014), URL:/watch?v=apdyOsgt7xQ
t2.105 ID.137, *Ti penso raramente*, Biagio Antonacci (2014), URL:/watch?v=M_dxOrImTM0
t2.106 ID.138, *Un amore così grande*, Negramaro (2014), URL:/watch?v=71IGqqAU
t2.107 ID.139, *Vivendo adesso*, Francesco Renga (2014), URL:/watch?v=5f7gYim4f9g
t2.108 ID.140, *#fuori c'è il sole*, Lorenzo Fragola (2015), URL:/watch?v=1rekwTmhYtQ
t2.109 ID.141, *Fatti avanti amore*, Nek (2015), URL:/watch?v=jFxtn_Bqauk
t2.110 ID.142, *Grande amore*, Il Volo (2015), URL:/watch?v=w1f6o1HQBvg
t2.111 ID.143, *Guerrero*, Marco Mengoni (2015), URL:/watch?v=fK8LrzzC4-8
t2.112 ID.144, *Il gioco*, Negrita (2015), URL:/watch?v=PNfne7I-nEc
t2.113 ID.145, *Io ti aspetto*, Marco Mengoni (2015), URL:/watch?v=Ww7RHpetMSE
t2.114 ID.146, *L'estate addosso*, Jovanotti (2015), URL:/watch?v=VHcAusNO3L4
t2.115 ID.147, *Lo stadio*, Tiziano Ferro (2015), URL:/watch?v=iaioAfWr42M
t2.116 ID.148, *Magnifico*, Fedez ft. Francesca Michielin (2015),
t2.117 URL:/watch?v=RELQXv8m_cc
t2.118 ID.149, *Pieno di vita*, Jovanotti (2015), URL:/watch?v=Dfif4e90G8U
t2.119 ID.150, *Roma-Bangkok*, Baby K ft. Giusy Ferreri (2015), URL:/watch?v=GCPQ6_F-xfo
t2.120 ID.151, *Sabato*, Jovanotti (2015), URL:/watch?v=PiFrP5qWw7I
t2.121 ID.152, *Senza fare sul serio*, Malika Ayane (2015), URL:/watch?v=CtvxNJHCrCc
t2.122 ID.153, *Siamo uguali*, Lorenzo Fragola (2015), URL:/watch?v=3OjZYv4yb4U
t2.123 ID.154, *Comunque andare*, Alessandra Amoroso (2016), URL:/watch?v=_Q-TkT3RwJw
t2.124 ID.155, *Intro*, J-Ax ft. Bianca Atzei (2016), URL:/watch?v=X3olyGfqaUQ
t2.125 ID.156, *L'estate di John Wayne*, Raphael Gualazzi (2016),
t2.126 URL:/watch?v=2CZUY-bV0V0
t2.127 ID.157, *Nessun grado di separazione*, Francesca Michielin (2016),
t2.128 URL:/watch?v=NXE-aTIIG30
t2.129 ID.158, *No Hero*, Elisa (2016), URL:/watch?v=Ya2Rl1fiJzw
t2.130 ID.159, *Piccoli miracoli*, Tiromancino (2016), URL:/watch?v=NiA4Ur0Th-0

11

(*continued*) 20

21 (continued)

t2.131 ID.160, *Ragazza magica*, Jovanotti (2016), URL:/watch?v=xuNMU3dduvw
t2.132 ID.161, *Ti ho voluto bene veramente*, Marco Mengoni (2016),
t2.133 URL:/watch?v=ARqpqyA49y0
t2.134 ID.162, *Ti sembra normale*, Max Gazzè (2016), URL:/watch?v=vgBmn1S8Hus
t2.135 ID.163, *Tra di noi*, Tiromancino (2016), URL:/watch?v=ke2XEj55IO0
t2.136 ID.164, *Tutto qui accade*, Negramaro (2016), URL:/watch?v=3KXq_4jMmTA
t2.137 ID.165, *Un giorno mi dirai*, Stadio (2016), URL:/watch?v=wDAYFVr_LRE
t2.138 ID.166, *Uno di questi giorni*, Nek (2016), URL:/watch?v=M4tVZIxm7Nk
t2.139 ID.167, Via *da qui*, Caccamo (2016), URL:/watch?v=kPjjMXIojIg
t2.140 ID.168, *Come nelle favole*, Vasco Rossi (2017), URL:/watch?v=UrN3-lDk9Rs
t2.141 ID.169, *Credo*, Giorgia (2017), URL:/watch?v=iFLrnLRzqto
t2.142 ID.170, *La musica non c'è*, Coez (2017), URL:/watch?v=I5cL3rpp4SU
t2.143 ID.171, *Lento-veloce*, Tiziano Ferro (2017), URL:/watch?v=0FP_BmEvMxc
t2.144 ID.172, *Occidentali's karma*, Francesco Gabbani (2017), URL:/watch?v=-OnRxfhbHB4
t2.145 ID.173, *Partiti adesso*, Giusy Ferreri (2017), URL:/watch?v=NZrd4RQrYWs
t2.146 ID.174, *Riccione*, Thegiornalisti (2017), URL:/watch?v=nrgMQ88jHj0
t2.147 ID.175, *Tra le granite e le granate*, Francesco Gabbani (2017),
t2.148 URL:/watch?v=cycKV8o0eZ8
t2.149 ID.176, Tutto per una ragione, Benji & Fede (2017), URL:/watch?v=izttIKfEzr8
t2.150 ID.177, *Vietato Morire, Ermal* Meta (2017), URL:/watch?v=4WMejmcT9ZY
t2.151 ID.178, *Voglio ballare con te*, Baby K ft. Giusy Ferreri (2017), URL:/
t2.152 watch?v=YprBWiUAKgE
t2.153 ID.179, *Volare*, Fabio Rovazzi ft. Gianni Morandi (2017), URL:/watch?v=MtJ0lrIGSAE
t2.154 ID.180, *Amore e Capoeira*, Takagi & Ketra (2018), URL:/watch?v=N4pqF-hwFM4
t2.155 ID.181, *Da Zero a Cento*, Baby K (2018), URL:/watch?v=XzuV0_cot-g
t2.156 ID.182, *Faccio quello che voglio*, Fabio Rovazzi (2018), URL:/watch?v=qwezlIJXMqo
t2.157 ID.183, *Il mondo prima di te*, Annalisa (2018), URL:/watch?v=fZGGmO9dXxs
t2.158 ID.184, *La prima volta*, Negramaro (2018), URL:/watch?v=-jvLm8kZBTM
t2.159 ID.185, *Le canzoni*, Jovanotti (2018), URL:/watch?v=qM9zMgbVlFQ
t2.160 ID.186, *Nera*, Irama (2018), URL:/watch?v=ZSLewGyjhiw
t2.161 ID.187, *New York*, Thegiornalisti (2018), URL:/watch?v=PKydNDN8YM8
t2.162 ID.188, *Non mi avete fatto niente*, Ermal Meta & Fabrizio Moro (2018), URL:/
t2.163 watch?v=V4zO_1Z_1S8
t2.164 ID.189, *Non ti dico no*, Boomdabash ft. Loredana Berté (2018), URL:/
t2.165 watch?v=iU2X8n2Eo1U
t2.166 ID.190, *Torna a casa*, Maneskin (2018), URL:/watch?v=ZZjnfWx0cvw
22

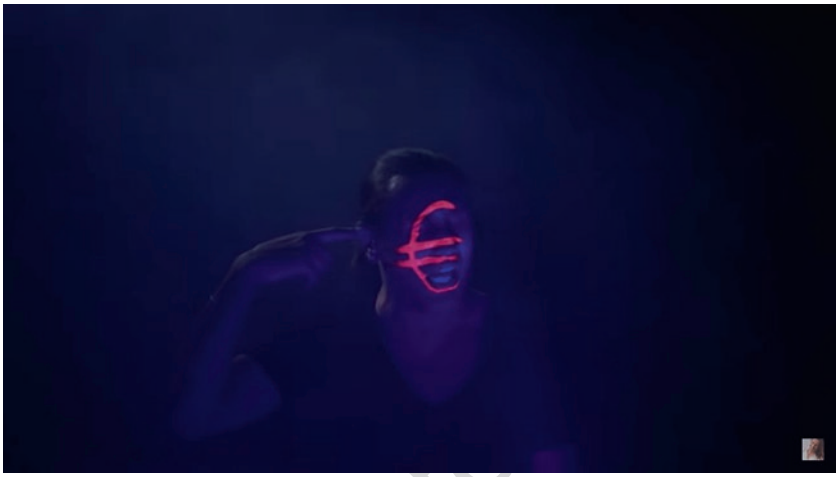
Appendix Table 3.c (Chap. 3). Musicological Group Analysis Sessions

MGA #	*Song Title*	*Singer and year*	*Date and place*	*Composition of the group*
1	Non è l'inferno	Emma Marrone (2012)	27/12/2019, Treviso	N of participants = 4 3 females (civil servant, age 32; pensioner, age 64; guitarist, age 26) and 1 male (blue-collar worker, age 35)
2	Ninnananna	Ghali (2016)	03/02/2020, Treviso	N of participants = 5 2 females (employee, age 23; yoga teacher, age 37) and 3 males (drummer, age 35; guitarist, age 35; engineer, age 32).
3	Faccia come il cuore	J-Ax & Neffa (2010)	18/02/2020, Treviso	N of participants = 5 2 females (teacher, age 33; civil servant, age 32) and 3 males (bass player, age 35; blue-collar worker, age 35; technician, age 41).
4	Chi comanda il mondo	Povia (2016)	25/03/2020, Online	N of participants = 33 males (drummer, age 35; bass player, age 35; entrepreneur, age 35).
5	Senza pagare	Fedez & J-Ax (2017)	30/03/2020, Online	N of participants = 42 females (vocalist, age 28; employee, age 23) and 2 males (bass player, age 32; engineer, age 32).
6	Il muro del suono	Ligabue (2014)	14/04/2020, Online	N of participants = 31 female (photographer, age 36) and 2 males (drummer, age 35; bass player, age 35).
7	Nu juorno buono	Rocco Hunt (2014)	21/04/2020, Online	N of participants = 41 female (vocalist, age 26) and 3 males (student, age 29; engineer, age 32; entrepreneur, age 35).
8	Com'è profondo il mare	Lucio Dalla (1977)	23/04/2020, Online	N of participants = 42 females (vocalist, age 28; teacher, age 33) and 2 males (entrepreneur, age 32; technician, age 41).
9	La grande V	Rumatera (2011)	28/04/2020, Online	N of participants = 32 females (vocalist, age 26; photographer, age 36) and 1 male (employee, age 28).
10	Ognuno Vale Uno	Supa & DJ Nais (2013)	30/04/2020, Online	N of participants = 32 females (employee, age 23; unemployed, age 26) and 1 male (drummer, age 35).

Note: The songs were selected because they emerged as relevant for populism from the content analysis and/or from the ethnographic field.

APPENDIX FIGS. 3 (A–D). (CHAP. 3). (POPULIST) IMAGES FROM VIDEOCLIPS

(a)



Source: Giuseppe Povia, Chi comanda il mondo? 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-ecOmENIhM

(b)

Source: J-Ax and Neffa, Faccia come il cuore, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utMHDheXUzw

(c)

Source: J-Ax and Fedez, *Senza pagare*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LX7BVLl5wg

(d)

Source: Rumatera, La Grande V, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ITNhNXTmmU

Appendix Table 4.a (Chap. 4). Participant Observation in Party Events with Music: Outline

- **Background context:**
  - Attendance
  - the organization of spaces and of interventions
  - socio-demographic characteristics of participants
  - Personal styles (wearing, etc.)
  - Interaction between party actors and participants and amongst participants
- **Role of Music Events within the Festivals:**
  - Who (genres, popularity of the artists)?
  - When (at the end? During? Before? In areas separated from «political events»)?
  - Why («which self-image does the party want to deliver»)?
  - Which variations in a diachronic perspective?
- **More in details:**
  - Organization of the event (how the stage[s] is/are set? Length? Organization of the spaces? Formal/informal/regimented setting? Which cultural/pop products are present in the events?)
  - Purpose/Goals (party rally—close to militants? Recruitment—open? Propaganda—for broader public?)
  - Who are the artists invited? (Famous/unknown? 'organic' or not to the party? Genre, repertoire, persona)
  - Role of music within the event (When? Where? In separated stages? Central role vs. ancillary, recreational role?)
  - Looking at *relationship* between goals and role of music/artists involved
  - Longitudinal analysis (how the same kind of event changed over time according to dimensions mentioned above?)
  - How *attendants* look like? Socio-demo, banners, collective behaviour, closeness vs. reverence towards politicians (vertical vs. horizontal relationship with 'the party')

Appendix Table 4.b (Chap. 4). List of Party Events Included in the Analysis (Participant Observation)

1. *Italia a 5 Stelle* ('Italy 5 Stars'), Festival 2017 Edition, Rimini, Parco Fiera, 22–24 September 2017, FSM
2. *Festa Interregionale del Movimento 5 Stelle* ('Interregional Festival of the Five Star Movement'), Festival, Oderzo, Treviso, Parco Salacè,16 June 2019, FSM.
3. *Italia a 5 Stelle* ('Italy 5 Stars'), Festival 2019 Edition, Napoli, Arena Flegrea e Mostra d'Oltremare, 12–13 October 2019, FSM.
4. *Festa della Lega di Pontida* ('Pontida League's Festival'), Pontida, Bergamo Province, Area Eventi, 16 August 2019 (Festival lasting from 9 to 19 August), Lega.
5. *Woodstock 5 Stelle*, Party's Concert, Cesena, Parco Urbano dell'Ippodromo, 25–26 settembre 2010, FSM. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U9-yq9y6h4
6. *Italia a 5 Stelle* ('Italy 5 Stars'), Festival 2014 Edition, Rome, Circo Massimo, 23 May 2014, FSM. Radio Radicale, http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/411943/europee-2014-chiusura-della-campagna-elettorale-del-movimento-5-stelle/stampa-e-regime
7. *Italia a 5 Stelle* ('Italy 5 Stars'), Festival 2015 Edition, Imola, Autodromo, 17–18 October 2015, FSM. Radio Radicale, http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/456092/italia-5-stelle-2015-manifestazione-nazionale-del-movimento-5-stelle-1a-giornata/stampa-e-regime; http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/456093/italia-5-stelle-2015-manifestazione-nazionale-del-movimento-5-stelle-2a-ed-ultima[a]
8. *Italia a 5 Stelle* ('Italy 5 Stars'), Festival 2016 Edition, Palermo, Foro Italico, 24–25 September 2016, FSM. Radio Radicale, https://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/487179/italia-5-stelle-2016-manifestazione-nazionale-del-movimento-5-stelle-prima-giornata/stampa-e-regime; http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/487180/italia-5-stelle-2016-manifestazione-nazionale-del-movimento-5-stelle-seconda-giornata; YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mA_1_Y3OMuA; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02TQfoLCZL4
9. *Italia a 5 Stelle* ('Italy 5 Stars'), Festival 2017 Edition, Rimini, Parco Fiera, 22–24 September 2017, FSM. Il Fatto Quotidiano, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/09/22/italia-5-stelle-segui-la-diretta-streaming-dellevento-di-rimini/3872016/; Il Blog delle Stelle, https://www.ilblogdellestelle.it/2017/09/diretta_italia5stelle_a_rimini_secondo_giorno.html; Il Fatto Quotidiano, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/09/23/italia-5-stelle-in-diretta-da-rimini-lo-streaming-della-terza-giornata-della-kermesse-grillina/3872815/; YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxbkqY-gWYA; YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bhyEPqXO2E
10. *Italia a 5 Stelle* ('Italy 5 Stars'), Festival 2018 Edition, Rome, Circo Massimo, 20–21 October 2018, FSM. M5S Official Facebook Page, https://www.facebook.com/movimentocinquestelle/videos/in-diretta-dal-circo-massimo-la-grande-festa-di-italia5stellecollegatevi/177908933131303/; M5S Official Facebook Page, https://www.facebook.com/movimentocinquestelle/videos/247294682809453/; M5S Official Facebook Page, https://www.facebook.com/movimentocinquestelle/videos/vb.174457180812/248224312710846/?type=2&theater; Il Fatto Quotidiano, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/10/20/italia-5-stelle-segui-la-diretta-dal-circo-massimo/4707471/; Radio Radicale, http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/555012/quinta-edizione-di-italia-5-stelle/stampa-e-regime

(*continued*)

(continued)

11. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2010 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 20 June 2010, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/306116/pontida-26deg-raduno-della-lega-nord
12. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2011 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 19 June 2011, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/330117/pontida-27deg-raduno-della-lega-nord
13. *Raduno dei Popoli Padani* ('Padanian Peoples' Rally'), 2012 Edition, Venice, Riva degli Schiavoni, 7 October 2012, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/362152/prima-il-nord-festa-dei-popoli-padani
14. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2013 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 7 April 2013, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/377067/pontida-29deg-raduno-della-lega-nord
15. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2014 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 4 May 2014, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/410131/pontida-30deg-raduno-della-lega-nord
16. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2015 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 21 June 2015, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/445700/pontida-2015-siamo-qui-per-vincere; YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZNCTNnqIpI
17. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2016 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 18 September 2016, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/486451/festa-di-pontida-2016-liberta-identita-sovranita; YouTube; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er5zuNzCEWY
18. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2017 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 17 September 2017, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/519536/referendum-e-liberta-pontida-2017/stampa-e-regime; YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pM_FG_c7ufQ
19. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2018 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 1 July 2018, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/545422/pontida-2018-la-festa-del-sorriso-il-buonsenso-al-governo-manifestazione-della-lega; YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1WDIIo0cmQ
20. *Raduno di Pontida* ('Pontida's Rally'), 2019 Edition, Pontida, Area Eventi, 15 September 2019, Lega. Radio Radicale: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/584258/la-forza-di-essere-liberi-pontida-2019-manifestazione-della-lega; YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6OaLKf46Nc
21. *Orgoglio italiano* ('Italian Pride'), Rally of the three main Italian right-wing parties, Rome, Piazza San Giovanni, 19 October 2019, Lega. YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6OaLKf46Nc

[a]In most cases, multiple web sources covering the same event from different perspectives or focusing on specific or different parts of the events were available

Appendix Table 4.c (Chaps. 4–6). List of Interviews Quoted in the Analysis (with Party Representatives, Militants, Concertgoers and Experts)

Populist party representatives (local/national)[a]	t6.1
Int. 1 Christian Colleoni, organizer of *Festa di Pontida 2019*, League's local branch secretary, online, 30/04/2020	t6.2 t6.3
Int. 2 Andrea Barabotti, Tuscany League's organization secretary, online, 24/11/2020	t6.4
Int. 3 Marco De Blasis, organizer of Festa *Interregionale 5 Stelle Nordest*, municipal councillor in Oderzo, online, 20/04/2020	t6.5 t6.6
Int. 4 Sergio Battelli, organizer of *Italia a 5 Stelle 2018*, MP, online, 5/05/2020	t6.7
Int. 5 L.Z., organizer of *Italia a 5 Stelle 2019*, online, 6/05/2020	t6.8
Populist (and anti-populist) activists	t6.9
Int. 6 M.R., League activist, female, Bergamo, online, 25/11/2020	t6.10
Int. 7 Z.F., League activist, male, Treviso, online, 28/11/2020	t6.11
Int. 8, G.A., Five Star Movement activist, male, Naples, online, 29/04/2020	t6.12
Int. 9 D.P.A., Five Star Movement activist, male, Naples, online, 18/05/2020	t6.13
Int. 10 F.S., Sardine member, female, PhD student, Bologna, online 20/04/2020	t6.14
Int. 11 V.D., Sardine [expatriate], female, architect, Amsterdam, online, 26/04/2020	t6.15
Int. 12 F.M., Sardine member, male, video-maker, Florence, online, 22/04/2020	t6.16
Int. 13 D.D.R., Sardine member, female, deejay and librarian, Florence, online, 1/05/2020	t6.17 t6.18
Int. 14 A.A., Sardine member 02/05/2020	t6.19
Int. 15 E.B., Sardine [expatriate] (Bruxelles, Anversa), online, 04/05/2020	t6.20
Concertgoers/Fans of pop singers	t6.21
Int. 16 R.M., J-Ax fan, female, student, Bari, online, 7/05/2020	t6.22
Int. 17 C.L., J-Ax fan, male, employee, Conegliano (Treviso), online, 12/05/2020	t6.23
Int. 18 S.G., J-Ax fan, female, student, Rozzano (Milan), online, 23/05/2020	t6.24
Int. 19 B.Z., Fedez fan, female, student, Conegliano (Treviso), online, 24/04/2020	t6.25
Int. 20 M.R., Fedez fan, female, student, Bari, online, 7/05/2020	t6.26
Int. 21 L.C., Fedez fan, male, accountant, Treviso, online, 12/05/2020	t6.27
Int. 22 G.S., Fedez fan, female, student, Milan, online, 23/05/2020	t6.28
Int. 23 A.K., Fabri Fibra fan, male, barman, Sorrento (Naples), online, 11/05/2020	t6.29
Int. 24 B.R., Fabri Fibra fan, female, student, Fidenza (Parma), online, 20/05/2020	t6.30
Int. 25 F.L., Van de Sfroos fan, male, engineer, Milan, online, 4/05/2020	t6.31
Int. 26 F.V., Van de Sfroos fan, male, sales manager, Mendrisio (Switzerland), online, 5/05/2020	t6.32 t6.33
Int. 27 P.B., Van de Sfroos fan, male, small business owner, Valli del Pasubio (Vicenza), online, 13/05/2020	t6.34 t6.35
Int. 28 L.P., Rumatera fan, female, employee, Montebelluna (Treviso), online, 11/05/2020	t6.36 t6.37
Int. 29 B.P., Rumatera fan, male, small business owner, Verona, online, 13/05/2020	t6.38

(*continued*)

(continued)

t6.39 Int. 30 A.D.N., Rumatera fan, male, PhD student, Vittorio Veneto (Treviso), online, 19/05/2020
t6.41 Int. 31 M.M., Ghali fan, female, student, Bari, online, 7/05/2020
t6.42 Int. 32 G.G., Ghali fan, female, student, Pavia, online 23/05/2020
t6.43 Int. 33 A.N., Lucariello fan, male, student, Santo Stefano del Sole (Avellino), online, 4/06/2020

t6.45 *Experts*
t6.46 Int. 34 Emanuele Bozzini, Sardine member, songwriter, Bruxelles, 25/05/2020
t6.47 Int. 35 Alessandro Portelli, musicologist, journalist, writer, musical critic, expert of US pop music, Rome, 5/06/2020
t6.49 Int. 36 Jacopo Tomatis, professor of ethnomusicology at University of Turin, expert of Italian pop music, Turin, 27/05/2020
t6.51 Int. 37 Antonio Fanelli, professor of ethno-anthropology at University of Florence, expert of Italian folk culture, director of De Martino Institute, Florence 27/05/2020
t6.53 Int. 38 Lello Savonardo, professor of sociology of cultural and communicative processes, expert of sociology of music and pop culture, Naples, 7/11/2020
t6.55 Int. 39 Jacopo Conti, professor of musicology and music history at University of Turin, member of IASPM (*International Association for the Study of Popular Music*), Turin 17/11/2020
t6.58 Int. 40 Francesco D'Amato, researcher in Science of Communication at La Sapienza University, Rome; Rome, 19/11/2020
t6.60 Int. 41 Gabriele Marino, researcher in philosophy and language theory at University of Turin, Turin, 18/11/2020
t6.62 Int. 42 Lucio Spaziante, professor in philosophy and language theory at University of Bologna, expert on *Pop Culture theory*, Bologna, 11/11/2020
t6.64 Int. 43 Alessandro Volpi, professor of contemporary history at University of Pisa,[b] 23/11/2020

t6.66 [a]Note: when not specified otherwise, anonymity (full or partial) was requested
t6.67 [b]Also author of *Fare gli italiani a loro insaputa. Musica e Politica dal Risorgimento al Sessantotto* (Pacini, 2015)

AU1

Appendix Table 4.d (Chap. 4). Questionnaire for the Interviews with Party Representatives

Q.0 General

- Who: cadres in charge for the organization of major party cultural and/or events t7.1
- What: t7.2
- role of music for the party (beyond the specific event organized) t7.3
- emotions music was intended to elicit amongst participants t7.4
- the rationale behind the choice of the artists invited/or music played t7.5
- Music and the spread of a party's message t7.6

Q1. In your opinion, in general, what role does music play for your party (beyond the event you eventually organized), compared to other types of instruments? Is it primarily an entertainment/accompaniment tool for party events, or what else?

Q2. How was the event you organized? Who and how was it determined what type of music to play at the event? Who and on what criteria determined the event lineup? How was it funded? What role did the financial aspect play in choosing the artists?

Q3. In particular, in the event you organized, what role did the music play, and what 'effect(s)' do you think it had on the event participants? What emotions do you think it aroused?

Q4. How (if at all) do you think this music connects to the everyday experience of the people who come to the party events (or who came to the particular event you organized)?

Q5. What are the motivations that generally lead you to choose the music to play at the party event you organized? (or is it a random choice?)

Q6. In your opinion what is 'cool', beautiful, well done in these songs (or the singer and his performances related to them) that you chose for the event, or in general that the party chooses as an accompaniment to its events?

Q7. Do you think music can also convey a message of the party? If yes, which one?

Q8. In your opinion did the experience of this party event (or in general of your party's events), accompanied by (this) music, change something in the participants about the party (and about the song/singer listened to)? Basically, what do you think the participants took home from the event plus the music?

Q9. How does popular music culture afford the mainstreaming of populism?

Appendix Table 4.e (Chap. 4). Questionnaire for the Interviews with Experts (Musicologists, Academic Professors, Journalists)

Q1. How are, in your view, populism and popular music connected in Italy? Can you make some examples?.	t8.1 t8.2
Q2. Namely more specifically, how does popular music afford/might afford populist interpretations in our country?	t8.3 t8.4
Q3. Any difference between left wing and right-wing populism in this respect?	t8.5
Q4. Do you see some Italian specificities vis-à-vis other European countries, in the way pop music is linked to populism?	t8.6 t8.7
Q5. How in your view do people relate to the popular music with a strong populist potential in our country?	t8.8 t8.9
Q6. How is popular music that affords populist interpretations received at the micro/individual level in Italy?	t8.10 t8.11
Q7. What is specific about the 'popular music' and 'popular culture' in Italy vis-à-vis other European countries?	t8.12 t8.13
Q8. If I say "the relationship between pop music and populism in Italy", what comes to your mind, beyond what we have discussed previously? Where would you start to look at, in order to analyse these relations?	t8.14 t8.15 t8.16
Q9. Which are in your opinion the sociological 'mechanisms' that may contribute to understanding this relationship?	t8.17 t8.18
Q10. Populism is a very polysemic concept. It is often associated to very different meanings and concepts: *qualunquismo,* nationalism, anti-elite critiques, celebration of People's virtuousness and so on—how pop music may feed these different understandings—also indirectly, through appropriation, mediations, negotiations of meanings?	t8.19 t8.20 t8.21 t8.22 t8.23
Q11. Which of the different understandings of populism are the most "afforded" by Italian pop music? Could you give some examples?	t8.24 t8.25
Q12. How has the relationship between political parties and pop music changed since the end of the mass parties era (think about party events, relationship between parties and artists, the public role of the artists and so forth)?	t8.26 t8.27 t8.28
Q13. Which are, in your opinion, the main micro-sociological mechanisms (e.g. being part of a subculture, sharing certain aesthetics, identifying with a singer/band, different emotions elicited) linking the listening of pop music and the political preferences of the listeners?	t8.29 t8.30 t8.31 t8.32
Q14. How do different *genres* relate with populist ideologies/rhetoric - "national-popular" repertoire, songwriters, Italian pop-rock, rap and so on?	t8.33 t8.34
Q15. Do you think that the Italian pop production and scene has strengthened the cleavage between populism and anti-populism, even in detriment of other cleavages, such as left-right, progressivism vs. conservatism?	t8.35 t8.36 t8.37

Appendix Fig. 4.a (Chap. 4). League's *Festa di Pontida*, 18 August 2019

AU2

Appendix List 5.a (Chap. 5). Full List of Weblinks Retrieved and Analysed Through Google Keyword Research (Time Frame 2010–2019)

Link1. Movimento 5 Stelle Alghero. 5 May 2014. http://www.movimento5stellealghero.it/colonne-sonore-per-movimento-5-stelle/. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link2. Movimento 5 Stelle Formia. December 2013. http://www.movimento5stelleformia.it/il-proggetto-di-legge-del-m-5-s-contro-la-s-e/. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link3. YouTube, Mattia Siviero. 21 October 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We3Vu1p2ohw. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link4. Movimento 5 Stelle. November 2019. https://www.movimento5stelle.it/parlamento/2019/11/musica-italia-sia-al-passo-con-il-resto-deuropa-al-lavoro-per-istituire-un-ufficio-per-lexport-del-j.html. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link5. Huffington Post. 1 October 2014. https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/10/01/italia-5-stelle-chi-sono-musicisti-grillo_n_5912140.html. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link6. Il Tempo. 7 August 2019. https://www.iltempo.it/politica/2019/08/07/news/sergio-battelli-nuovo-singolo-canzone-parlamentare-m5s-somebodyelse-secondary-ticketing-1196385/. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link7. Repubblica. 2 September 2019. https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/09/02/news/m5s_vasco_rossi_bacchetta_paragone_giu_le_mani_dalle_mie_canzoni_-235022247/. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link8. Il Blog delle Stelle. October 2019. https://www.ilblogdellestelle.it/2019/10/italia-5-stelle-sabato-sera-una-grande-festa-prenota-il-tuo-posto-allarena.html. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link9. Adnkronos. 20 April 2015. https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/politica/2015/04/20/noi-siamo-gli-stelle-dado-virale-con-canzone-sui-transfughi-del-movimento_ZscLNqk48CJPPY7sy7RoBI.html. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link10. Fanpage. 10 October 2019. https://napoli.fanpage.it/italia-a-5-stelle-a-napoli-programma-della-festa-per-i-10-anni-del-m5s-il-12-e-13-October/. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link11. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 2 September 2019. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/09/02/vasco-rossi-contro-gianluigi-paragone-giu-le-mani-dalle-mie-canzoni-non-autorizzo-a-usarle-per-fini-politici/5425803/. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

Link12. Il Sole 24 Ore. 3 September 2019. https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/dopo-l-ira-vasco-rossi-quando-musica-si-smarca-politica-ACtNSih. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Musica".

(*continued*)

106 (continued)

Link13. Facebook, Matteo Salvini. 10 July 2019. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=350662158956636. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link14. La7. 2 July 2018. https://www.la7.it/coffee-break/video/il-video-emozionale-su-matteo-salvini-trasmesso-al-raduno-di-pontida-02-07-2018-245543. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link15. Giornale della Musica. 18 February 2019. https://www.giornaledellamusica.it/articoli/perche-la-proposta-della-lega-sulle-quote-italiane-radio-non-ha-senso. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link16. Repubblica. 4 January 2019. https://www.repubblica.it/le-storie/2019/01/04/news/quando_pino_daniele_cantava_questa_lega_e_una_vergogna_nero_a_meta_-215751936/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link17. Il Sito di Firenze. 17 February 2019. https://www.ilsitodifirenze.it/content/310-da-sanremo-alla-ghettizzazione-della-musica-la-lega-chiede-un-brano-italiano-ogni-tre. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link18. Affaritaliani. 18 February 2019. http://www.affaritaliani.it/entertainment/musica-morelli-una-canzone-su-tre-in-italiano-588560.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link19. Felix Lalù. 2 March 2018. http://felixlalu.blogspot.com/2018/03/innografia-leghista-i-migliori-10-inni.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link20. Il Sole 24 Ore. 3 September 2019. https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/dopo-l-ira-vasco-rossi-quando-musica-si-smarca-politica-ACtNSih. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link21. Fidelity News. 20 February 2019. https://news.fidelityhouse.eu/politica/lega-nord-una-canzone-su-tre-trasmessa-in-radio-deve-essere-italiana-399706.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link22. Facebook, Matteo Salvini. 7 September 2019. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1175184592673934. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link23. Liguria Oggi. 6 February 2019. http://247.libero.it/lfocus/37686866/1/radio-costrette-a-trasmettere-almeno-il-30-di-musica-italiana-la-proposta-di-legge-della-lega/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link24. Daily. 20 February 2019. https://daily.veronanetwork.it/cultura/musica/lega-la-proposta-di-legge-sulla-musica-italiana-divide-i-veronesi/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link25. Ziomuro. 17 February 2019. https://ziomuro.com/2019/02/17/proposta-di-legge-della-lega-alla-camera-una-canzone-su-tre-in-radio-dovra-essere-italiana/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link26. Lario News. 27 July 2017. https://www.larionews.com/lario/colico-al-via-la-festa-della-lega-nord-tra-musica-politica-e-cucina. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
Link27. Rockit. 6 June 2016. https://www.rockit.it/articolo/gusti-musicali-politici-italiani. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".
t9.39 Link28. All Music Italia. 11 August 2018. https://www.allmusicitalia.it/news/
t9.40 rapper-matteo-salvini.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Musica".

107 (*continued*)

(continued) 108

t9.41 Link29. Agi. 2 October 2019. https://www.agi.it/cronaca/baldelli_tu_sai_
t9.42 perche-6276495/news/2019-10-02/. Keywords: “Lega Nord” AND “Musica”.
t9.43 Link30. Linkiesta. 19 May 2017. https://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2017/05/19/
t9.44 economisti-artisti-e-intellettuali-ecco-lintellighenzia-cinque-stelle/34311/. Keywords:
t9.45 “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.46 Link31. Espresso. 24 September 2010. http://espresso.repubblica.it/
t9.47 palazzo/2010/09/24/news/grillo-e-la-woodstock-romagnola-1.24217. Keywords:
t9.48 “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.49 Link32. Il Giornale. 25 May 2019. http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/
t9.50 politica/i-vip-rossi-abbandonano-i-5s-1701184.html. Keywords: “Movimento 5
t9.51 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.52 Link33. Huffington Post. 1 October 2014. https://www.huffingtonpost.
t9.53 it/2014/10/01/italia-5-stelle-chi-sono-musicisti-grillo_n_5912140.html. Keywords:
t9.54 “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.55 Link34. Huffington Post. 28 May 2016. https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2016/05/28/
t9.56 ferilli-mannoia-raggi_n_10181020.html. Keywords: “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND
t9.57 “Cantanti”.
t9.58 Link35. Fanpage. 22 May 2019. https://music.fanpage.it/addio-m5s-fiorella-mannoia-
t9.59 dona-il-peso-del-coraggio-al-pd-e-firma-appello-per-la-sinistra/. Keywords:
t9.60 “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.61 Link36. Blasting News. March 2019. https://it.blastingnews.com/cultura-
t9.62 spettacoli/2019/03/fiorella-mannoia-si-dichiara-arrabbiata-con-il-movimento-5-
t9.63 stelle-002880935.html. Keywords: “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.64 Link37. Infosannio. 27 August 2019. https://infosannio.wordpress.com/2019/08/27/
t9.65 tirano-un-respiro-di-sollievo-artisti-e-cantanti-sedotti-e-poi-delusi-dal-m5s/.
t9.66 Keywords: “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.67 Link38. Giornale di Sicilia. 25 January 2015. https://gds.it/articoli/
t9.68 politica/2015/01/25/m5s-in-piazza-con-attori-e-cantanti-e-grillo-dice-no-alle-
t9.69 consultazioni-per-il-colle-1fe70b17-1136-4451-8e0c-2b2bd7d11a43/. Keywords:
t9.70 “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.71 Link39. Il Resto del Carlino. 17 September 2010. https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/
t9.72 cesena/spettacoli/2010/09/17/386129-woodstock_beppe_grillo.shtml. Keywords:
t9.73 “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.74 Link40. Il Mattino. 22 May 2014. https://www.ilmattino.it/societa/persone/m5s_
t9.75 elezioni_grillo_venditti_carr_cantanti/notizie/704745.shtml. Keywords: “Movimento
t9.76 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.77 Link41. Today. 6 February 2019. http://www.today.it/rassegna/guccini-5-stelle.html.
t9.78 Keywords: “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.79 Link42. Il Sussidiario. 8 September 2019. https://www.ilsussidiario.net/news/
t9.80 adriano-celentano-bene-franceschini-su-grandi-navi-venezia-il-tifo-pro-pd-
t9.81 m5s/1923771/. Keywords: “Movimento 5 Stelle” AND “Cantanti”.

95

(*continued*) 109

110 (continued)

Link43. Dagospia. 10 June 2015. https://m.dagospia.com/vecchioni-pro-meloni-scanzi-tra-i-cantanti-l-unico-pro-renzi-e-jovanotti-tutto-dire-102399. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Cantanti".
Link44. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 28 November 2018. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/11/28/j-ax-credevo-nel-movimento-5-stelle-ma-oggi-non-riesco-ad-accettare-lunione-con-la-lega-e-un-governo-di-destra-che-fa-proclami-come-50-anni-fa/4798261/. Keywords: "Movimento 5 Stelle" AND "Cantanti".
Link45. Corriere della Sera. 22 September 2018. https://www.corriere.it/politica/18_September_22/lega-cantanti-quasi-tutti-contro-ma-qualcuno-ci-ripensa-7699226e-be48-11e8-b1b9-790a44cac897.shtml. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link46. The Submarine. 1 October 2018. https://thesubmarine.it/2018/10/01/povia-lega-sovranismo/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link47. Facebook, Matteo Salvini. 5 August 2018. https://www.facebook.com/252306033154/posts/10155966613883155/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link48. Facebook, Matteo Salvini. 5 August 2018. https://www.facebook.com/252306033154/posts/i-cantanti-gemitaiz-e-murubutu-ce-lhanno-con-meah-beh-alloraps-io-preferisco-de-/10155966613883155/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link49. Blasting News. April 2018. https://it.blastingnews.com/politica/2018/04/effetto-amendola-su-matteo-salvini-altri-apprezzamenti-vip-al-leader-della-lega-002480635.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link50. Blasting News. June 2015. https://it.blastingnews.com/tv-gossip/2015/06/i-cantanti-piero-pelu-e-fedez-contro-salvini-hanno-bisogno-d-aiuto-00449991.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link51. Rockit. 6 June 2016. https://www.rockit.it/articolo/gusti-musicali-politici-italiani. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link52. Lega Nord. April 1999. https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/04_lega_nord_storia1999.pdf. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link53. Bergamo News. 23 April 2014. https://www.bergamonews.it/2014/04/23/la-lega-nord-varalanti-primo-Maycon-van-de-sfross/188822/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link54. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 2 April 2015. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/04/02/matteo-salvini-come-apertura-mentale-preferisco-jovanotti-al-talebano-fedez/356183/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link55. Wired. 3 December 2018. https://www.wired.it/attualita/politica/2018/12/03/lega-manifestazione-roma-poster-fazio-salmo-renzi/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link56. Il Mattino. 9 March 2017. https://www.ilmattino.it/napoli/cronaca/terroni_uniti_contro_salvini_il_singolo_degli_artisti_partenopei-2307158.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".

t9.82 96

111 (*continued*)

(continued) 112

Link57. Repubblica. 8 June 1994. https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1994/06/08/no-dei-big-della-canzone-alla-festa.html. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link58. Barbadillo. 12 November 2016. https://www.barbadillo.it/60921-politica-salvini-da-firenze-il-voto-libero-puo-battere-tutti-banchieri-lobbisti-cantanti/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link59. BitchyF. 10 February 2019. https://www.bitchyf.it/salvini-vittoria-mahmood-sanremo/. Keywords: "Lega Nord" AND "Cantanti".
Link60. Frammenti Rivista. 12 February 2019. https://www.frammentirivista.it/populismo-spiegato-da-sanremo/. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Musica".
Link61. LaPresse. 16 June 2019. https://www.lapresse.it/spettacoli/musica/madonna_contro_destre_e_populismo_stiamo_sprofondando_in_un_nuovo_medioevo_-1549740/news/2019-06-16/. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Musica".
Link62. Wired. 7 January 2019. https://www.wired.it/attualita/politica/2019/01/07/elettori-pentiti-populismo/. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Cantanti".
Link63. L'Occidentale. 15 February 2012. https://loccidentale.it/tra-sclero-e-vuoto-populismo-ecco-il-tristissimo-festival-di-celentano/. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Cantanti".
Link64. Il Populista. 9 May 2016. http://www.ilpopulista.it/news/9-May-2016/756/La-politica-secondo-Povia.html. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Cantanti".
Link65. Il Populista. 11 February 2019. http://www.ilpopulista.it/news/11-February-2019/32167/il-nuovo-idolo-della-sinistra-tifa-forza-italia.html. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Cantanti".
Link66. Rollingstone. 21 September 2018. https://www.rollingstone.it/musica/interviste-musica/thegiornalisti-lamore-e-lunica-risposta-allodio-e-al-populismo/429196/. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Cantanti".
Link67. Democratica. 29 January 2019. https://www.democratica.com/focus/flop-grillo-celentano-televisione/. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Cantanti".
Link68. Il Giorno. 13 October 2017. https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/politica/ambrogini-povia-1.3460165. Keywords: "Populismo" AND "Cantanti".
Link69. Mei. 20 February 2019. http://meiweb.it/2019/02/20/musica-italiana-in-radio-matteo-salvini-il-governo-non-puo-imporre-la-musica-che-va-in-onda/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".
Link70. Rockol. 20 February 2019. https://www.rockol.it/news-701145/musica-italiana-e-radio-salvini-governo-non-puo-imporre-canzoni. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".
Link71. Fanpage. 20 February 2019. https://music.fanpage.it/matteo-salvini-la-politica-non-decidera-la-musica-in-onda-in-radio-mahmood-preferisco-fedez/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".
Link72. Agi. 9 February 2019. https://www.agi.it/spettacolo/salvini_la_stampa-4974880/news/2019-02-09/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".
Link73. Ansa. 10 May 2019. http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cultura/musica/2019/05/10/gucciniincolpevole-se-piaccio-a-salvini_76ce21be-9d72-4011-935b-65ba233349c2.html. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

t9.83
t9.84

97

(*continued*) 113

115 (continued)

Link74. Il Giornale. 7 September 2019. http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/spettacoli/bennato-e-selfie-salvini-ho-risposto-musica-ai-moralisti-1749649.html. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

Link75. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 3 August 2019. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/08/03/matteo-salvini-sale-in-consolle-a-petto-nudo-al-papeete-tra-musica-dance-cocktail-e-inno-di-mameli-video/5367061/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

Link76. L'Opinionista. 22 February 2019. https://www.lopinionista.it/quote-di-musica-italiana-nelle-radio-lopinione-di-matteo-salvini-35433.html. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

Link77. La Verità. 7 September 2019. https://www.laverita.info/il-selfie-con-salvini-ai-moralisti-ipocriti-ho-risposto-in-musica-grillo-vate-da-circo-2640236694.html. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

Link78. Repubblica. 12 August 2019. https://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/people/2019/08/12/news/lorenzo_fragola_il_tweet_insulta_il_vicepremier_e_salvini_non_gli_piaccio_scatena-233489676/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

Link79. Mediaset Play. 21 June 2018. https://www.mediasetplay.mediaset.it/video/staseraitalia/salvini-la-musica-e-cambiata_F309002901063C04. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

Link80. Radio Deejay, Ciao Belli. February 2019. https://www.mixcloud.com/ciaobelli2/matteo-salvini-la-musica-italiana-in-radio/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Musica".

Link81. Facebook, Matteo Salvini. 2 May 2015. https://www.facebook.com/252306033154/posts/per-certi-intellettuali-cantanti-artisti-illuminati-e-sinceri-democratici-i-catt/10152937496753155/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link82. *Huffington Post*. 11 January 2019. https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/claudio-baglioni-e-matteo-salvini-i-cantanti-fanno-e-i-ministri-cantano_it_5cc20e47e4b089c3424a39b8. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link83. Tpi. 5 July 2018. https://www.tpi.it/news/rolling-stone-salvini-20180705140786/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link84. Tpi. 13 January 2019. https://www.tpi.it/news/salvini-cantanti-morale-20190113232156/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link85. Zon. 5 July 2018. https://zon.it/cantanti-attori-salvini-rolling-stone/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link86. Open. 1 May 2019. https://www.open.online/2019/05/01/matteo-salvini-il-primo-May-e-la-festa-di-tutti-non-solo-dei-cantanti-di-sinistra/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link87. Corriere della Sera. 22 September 2018. https://www.corriere.it/politica/18_September_22/lega-cantanti-quasi-tutti-contro-ma-qualcuno-ci-ripensa-7699226e-be48-11e8-b1b9-790a44cac897.shtml. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link88. Agi. 1 May 2019. https://www.agi.it/politica/salvini_primo_May-5418197/news/2019-05-01/. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

Link89. Ultimenotizieflash. 5 July 2018. https://www.ultimenotizieflash.com/cronaca/attualita-italiana/2018/07/05/cantanti-e-attori-contro-il-leader-della-lega-noi-non-stiamo-con-matteo-salvini. Keywords: "Salvini" AND "Cantanti".

t9.85 98

116 (*continued*)

(continued) 117

t9.86 Link90. Urban Post. 5 July 2018. https://urbanpost.it/noi-non-stiamo-con-salvini-
t9.87 cantanti-e-attori-si-dissociano-dal-ministro-dellinterno-ecco-liniziativa/. Keywords:
t9.88 “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.89 Link91. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 10 January 2019. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.
t9.90 it/2019/01/10/governo-salvini-se-prendo-impegno-lo-porto-fino-in-fondo-baglioni-
t9.91 cantanti-cantano-ministri-fanno/4887244/. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.92 Link92. Quotidiano.net. 5 July 2018. https://www.quotidiano.net/politica/rolling-
t9.93 stone-salvini-1.4019503. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.94 Link93. Il Giornale. 13 January 2019. http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/spettacoli/
t9.95 sangiorgi-i-cantanti-pensano-ed-io-sto-baglioni-1628236.html. Keywords: “Salvini”
t9.96 AND “Cantanti”.
t9.97 Link94. Agi. 1 May 2019. https://www.expo-fiera.it/salvini-1-May-e-festa-di-tutti-non-
t9.98 di-sindacati-e-cantanti-di-sinistra/. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.99 Link95. Sputniknews. 16 March 2019. https://it.sputniknews.com/
t9.100 italia/201903167425008-Vicepremier-Salvini-reagisce-alle-misure-di-Kiev-contro-i-
t9.101 cantanti-italiani/. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.102 Link96. Radio Norba. 19 September 2019. http://radionorba.it/musica-politica-non-
t9.103 vanno-daccordo-vasco-rossi-salvini/. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.104 Link97. Elle. 13 August 2019. https://www.elle.com/it/showbiz/gossip/a28685353/
t9.105 lorenzo-fragola-salvini-twitter/. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.106 Link98. Affaritaliani. 22 June 2015. http://www.affaritaliani.it/entertainment/
t9.107 salvini-litiga-con-i-cantanti-da-fedez-a-piero-pelu-372039.html. Keywords: “Salvini”
t9.108 AND “Cantanti”.
t9.109 Link99. Secolo d’Italia. July 2019. https://www.secoloditalia.it/2019/07/il-rapper-
t9.110 ghali-difende-i-migranti-e-spara-contro-salvini-fascista-lui-gli-risponde-cosi/.
t9.111 Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.112 Link100. Viagginews. 15 November 2018. https://www.viagginews.
t9.113 com/2018/11/15/calcio-donne-e-cantanti-ecco-le-passioni-seguite-da-salvini-su-
t9.114 instagram/. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.115 Link101. Mediaset. 2 October 2019. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/other/
t9.116 corti-onnis-sanremo-i-cantanti-stanno-con-baglioni-o-salvini-ecco-la-canzone-del-
t9.117 festival/vp-BBTq2nY. Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.118 Link102. Fidelity News. 26 June 2019. https://news.fidelityhouse.eu/politica/
t9.119 da-valeria-marini-a-riccardo-scamarcio-ecco-i-vip-che-tifano-per-salvini-421453.html.
t9.120 Keywords: “Salvini” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.121 Link103. Huffington Post. 19 March 2018. https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/
t9.122 io-lenin-e-luigi-di-maio-orietta-berti-racconta-il-suo-lato-nascosto_it_5cc2026be4b0aa
t9.123 856c9f2946. Keywords: “Di Maio” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.124 Link104. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 11 February 2019. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.
t9.125 it/2019/02/11/sanremo-2019-tommaso-paradiso-sul-post-facebook-di-di-maio-
t9.126 ditemi-che-e-un-sogno-sposta-i-ca-del-paese-sul-festival/4964603/. Keywords: “Di
t9.127 Maio” AND “Cantanti”.
t9.128 Link105. Agi. 10 February 2019. https://www.agi.it/spettacolo/sanremo_vince_
t9.129 mahmood-4978501/news/2019-02-10/. Keywords: “Di Maio” AND “Cantanti”.

99

(*continued*) 118

119 (continued)

t9.130 Link106. YouTube, La7 Attualità. 31 March 2015. https://www.youtube.com/
t9.131 watch?v=NVCTcUvRv1c. Keywords: “Fedez” AND “Politica”.
t9.132 Link107. Repubblica. 10 October 2014. https://www.repubblica.it/
t9.133 politica/2014/10/10/news/fedez_al_pd_chiedere_mia_testa_per_idee_politiche_
t9.134 fascismo-97779445/. Keywords: “Fedez” AND “Politica”.
t9.135 Link108. Repubblica. 21 January 2019. https://www.repubblica.it/
t9.136 le-storie/2019/01/21/news/fedez_dopo_l_avanspettacolo_di_berlusconi_e_renzi_
t9.137 questo_governo_lavora_su_temi_concreti_-217125850/. Keywords: “Fedez” AND
t9.138 “Politica”.
t9.139 Link109. *Vanity Fair*. 23 May 2016. https://www.vanityfair.it/news/
t9.140 politica/16/05/23/fedez-politica. Keywords: “Fedez” AND “Politica”.
t9.141 Link110. Il Giornale. 21 January 2019. http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/
t9.142 fedez-difende-governo-almeno-fa-cose-concrete-1632254.html. Keywords: “Fedez”
t9.143 AND “Politica”.
t9.144 Link111. Trendit. October 2019. https://www.trendit.it/fedez-dice-la-sua-sugli-ultimi-
t9.145 sviluppi-politici-e-lancia-un-sondaggio-su-giuseppe-conte-e-matteo-salvini/.
t9.146 Keywords: “Fedez” AND “Politica”.
t9.147 Link112. Blasting News. January 2018. https://it.blastingnews.com/politica/2018/01/
t9.148 sferaebbasta-spiega-perche-non-parla-di-politica-e-lancia-frecciatine-a-
t9.149 fedez-002285489.html. Keywords: “Fedez” AND “Politica”.
t9.150 Link113. Blasting News. January 2019. https://it.blastingnews.com/cultura-
t9.151 spettacoli/2019/01/fedez-attacca-saviano-e-precisa-la-situazione-con-j-ax-ce-un-
t9.152 accordo-di-riservatezza-002825193.html. Keywords: “Fedez” AND “Politica”.
t9.153 Link114. Huffington Post. 7 August 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.it/entry/
t9.154 fedez-intervistato-da-j-ax-su-millennium-ho-provato-tutte-le_
t9.155 it_5cc1aedbe4b0e68bc67b8bdf. Keywords: “Fedez” AND “Politica”.
t9.156 Link115. YouTube, La7 Attualità. 4 May 2015. https://www.youtube.com/
t9.157 watch?v=Nbj2pUw1Yos. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
t9.158 Link116. *LaPresse*. 3 January 2019. https://www.lapresse.it/politica/salvini_j-ax_e_
t9.159 solo_un_poveretto_-1010847/video/2019-01-03/. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND
t9.160 “Politica”.
t9.161 Link117. La7. 24 September 2018. https://www.la7.it/otto-e-mezzo/
t9.162 video/j-ax-di-salvini-mi-preoccupa-la-sua-propaganda-riesce-a-distorcere-la-realt%C
t9.163 3%A0-24-09-2018-250845. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
AU3 t9.164 Link118. Rollingstone. 3 January 2019. https://www.rollingstone.it/opinioni/
t9.165 salvini-di-j-ax-non-ha-capito-niente/440465/. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
t9.166 Link119. *Secolo d’Italia*. September 2018. https://www.secoloditalia.
t9.167 it/2018/09/j-ax-nel-salotto-di-la7-sono-un-libertario-con-idee-di-sinistra-ma-anche-
t9.168 di-destra-video/. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
t9.169 Link120. *Blasting News*. November 2018. https://it.blastingnews.com/
t9.170 politica/2018/11/j-ax-scarica-i-5-stelle-credevo-in-loro-ma-questo-governo-e-di-
t9.171 ultradestra-002785025.html. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
t9.172 Link121. BlogO. 23 July 2019. https://www.soundsblog.it/
t9.173 post/578389/j-ax-matteo-salvini-dichiarazioni. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
100

120 (*continued*)

(continued) 121

t9.174 Link122. Adnkronos. 2 January 2019. https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/
t9.175 politica/2019/01/02/botta-risposta-tra-salvini_sN8buy1rVCLV3CfgSNdnII.html.
t9.176 Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
t9.177 Link123. *Vanity Fair*. 3 January 2019. https://www.vanityfair.it/news/
t9.178 politica/2019/01/03/j-ax-salvini-botta-e-risposta-al-veleno-su-twitter. Keywords:
t9.179 “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
t9.180 Link124. *Corriere della Sera*. 2 July 2019. https://video.corriere.it/
t9.181 politica/j-ax-si-schiera-carola-rackete-duro-attacco-salvini-prima-concerto/99a447fa-
t9.182 9d0b-11e9-b87c-e5d25052c984. Keywords: “J-Ax” AND “Politica”.
t9.183 Link125. BitsRebel. 7 November 2018. https://www.bitsrebel.net/2018/11/07/
t9.184 la-trap-la-politica-e-la-voglia-di-fermarsi-salmo-si-racconta-a-rolling-stone/. Keywords:
t9.185 “Trap” AND “Politica”.
t9.186 Link126. *Huffington Post*. 16 February 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.
t9.187 it/2017/02/16/ligabue-reddito-cinquestelle_n_14789440.html. Keywords:
t9.188 “Ligabue” AND “Politica”.
t9.189 Link127. Novella 2000. 8 February 2019. https://www.novella2000.it/ligabue-politica-
t9.190 moglie-figli-canzoni/. Keywords: “Ligabue” AND “Politica”.
t9.191 Link128. Ansa. 15 February 2017. http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cultura/
t9.192 musica/2017/02/15/ligabue-comunista-ormai-non-ha-senso_19ee7cbd-f660-4cb7-
t9.193 ab5e-c889826fb00c.html. Keywords: “Ligabue” AND “Politica”.
t9.194 Link129. Radio 105. 25 November 2013. https://www.105.net/news/music-
t9.195 biz/116704/Ligabue-tra-politica%2D%2Dracconti-e.html. Keywords: “Ligabue”
t9.196 AND “Politica”.
t9.197 Link130. Il Giornale. 22 November 2013. http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/
t9.198 ligabue-mette-pd-e-sceglie-beppe-grillo-969869.html. Keywords: “Ligabue” AND
t9.199 “Politica”.
t9.200 Link131. Fanpage. 7 March 2019. https://music.fanpage.it/sfera-ebbasta-contro-i-
t9.201 politici-gente-pagata-da-noi-che-punta-il-dito-su-di-me/. Keywords: “Sfera Ebbasta”
t9.202 AND “Politica”.
t9.203 Link132. Blasting News. January 2018. https://it.blastingnews.com/politica/2018/01/
t9.204 sferaebbasta-spiega-perche-non-parla-di-politica-e-lancia-frecciatine-a-
t9.205 fedez-002285489.html. Keywords: “Sfera Ebbasta” AND “Politica”.
t9.206 Link133. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 13 January 2019. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.
t9.207 it/2019/01/13/sfera-ebbasta-indagato-i-senatori-in-cerca-dattenzione-gli-hanno-
t9.208 offerto-una-grande-opportunita/4893016/. Keywords: “Sfera Ebbasta” AND
t9.209 “Politica”.
t9.210 Link134. Linkiesta. 9 May 2018. https://www.linkiesta.it/it/blog-post/2018/05/09/
t9.211 sfera-ebbasta-al-primo-May-e-un-evento-politico-decisivo/26902/. Keywords: “Sfera
t9.212 Ebbasta” AND “Politica”.
t9.213 Link135. Dagospia. 7 January 2019. https://m.dagospia.com/salmo-responsariale-x-
t9.214 factor-fedez-sfera-ebbasta-la-politica-e-salvini-196877. Keywords: “Sfera Ebbasta”
t9.215 AND “Politica”.

101

(*continued*) 122

123 (continued)

Link136. Rollingstone. 2 November 2017. https://www.rollingstone.it/musica/news-musica/il-rap-italiano-ha-dimenticato-la-politica/389114/. Keywords: "Fabri Fibra" AND "Politica".
Link137. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 8 February 2018. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/12/08/salmo-e-il-numero-uno-e-per-fortuna-se-ne-frega-di-chi-gli-dice-di-non-parlare-di-politica/4811744/. Keywords: "Fabri Fibra" AND "Politica".
Link138. *Repubblica*. 14 October 2014. https://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/musica/2016/10/14/news/fabri_fibra_compie_40_anni-149763447/. Keywords: "Fabri Fibra" AND "Politica".
Link139. *Repubblica*. 10 October 2017. https://www.repubblica.it/venerdi/interviste/2017/10/10/news/fabri_fibra_rap-177901017/. Keywords: "Fabri Fibra" AND "Politica".
Link140. Blasting News. April 2019. https://it.blastingnews.com/cultura-spettacoli/2019/04/salmo-parla-di-sfera-ebbasta-e-fabri-fibra-poi-si-confonde-su-salvini-capo-di-stato-002898357.html. Keywords: "Fabri Fibra" AND "Politica".
Link141. Libero. 5 July 2018. https://www.liberoquotidiano.it/gallery/politica/13357198/matteo-salvini-rolling-stone-manifesto-vergogna-sinistra-vip-negramaro-subsonica-thegiornalisti-tommaso-paradiso.html. Keywords: "Thegiornalisti" AND "Politica".
Link142. Facebook, Thegiornalisti. 5 June 2015. https://www.facebook.com/thegiornalisti/posts/897073643667680/. Keywords: "Thegiornalisti" AND "Politica".
Link143. Rollingstone. 21 September 2018. https://www.rollingstone.it/musica/interviste-musica/thegiornalisti-lamore-e-lunica-risposta-allodio-e-al-populismo/429196/. Keywords: "Thegiornalisti" AND "Politica".
Link144. Tgcom. 21 September 2018. https://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/spettacolo/thegiornalisti-puntiamo-sui-sentimenti-lasciamo-fuori-la-politica-_3164497-201802a.shtml. Keywords: "Thegiornalisti" AND "Politica".
Link145. Jacopo Peruzzo. 9 September 2018. https://jacopoperuzzo.it/i-thegiornalisti-completamente-per-nicola-zingaretti-segretario-del-pd/. Keywords: "Thegiornalisti" AND "Politica".
Link146. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 2 April 2015. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/04/02/jovanotti-salvini-fedez-botta-risposta-politico-impazza-twitter/1560641/. Keywords: "Jovanotti" AND "Politica".
Link147. Dagospia. 13 November 2017. https://m.dagospia.com/jovanotti-si-racconta-oggi-seguo-meno-la-nostra-politica-tanto-e-come-beautiful-160553. Keywords: "Jovanotti" AND "Politica".
Link148. Rockol. 10 February 2017. https://www.rockol.it/news-682378/jovanotti-oggi-non-presterei-piu-mia-canzone-alla-politica. Keywords: "Jovanotti" AND "Politica".
Link149. Radio Italia. 3 December 2012. https://www.radioitalia.it/news/jovanotti/evento/5034_jovanotti_twitta_oh_io_in_politica_non_ne_azzecco_una!.php.
t9.216 Keywords: "Jovanotti" AND "Politica".
t9.217 Link150. Il Tempo. 19 July 2019. https://www.iltempo.it/politica/2019/07/19/
t9.218 news/ghali-testo-salvini-fascista-1190537/. Keywords: "Ghali" AND "Politica".
102

124 (*continued*)

(continued)

t9.219 Link151. Repubblica. 4 June 2017. https://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/
t9.220 musica/2017/06/04/news/ghali_il_ragazzo_della_via_rap_che_canta_l_islam_l_
t9.221 isis_e_i_migranti-167196276/. Keywords: “Ghali” AND “Politica”.
t9.222 Link152. Repubblica. 19 July 2019. https://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/
t9.223 musica/2019/07/19/news/ghali_ecco_perche_ho_realizzato_un_rap_contro_
t9.224 salvini_-231599482/. Keywords: “Ghali” AND “Politica”.
t9.225 Link153. New Sic. 19 July 2019. https://www.newsic.it/stormzy-e-ghali-un-remix-
t9.226 insieme-contro-la-politica-di-johnson-e-salvini/. Keywords: “Ghali” AND “Politica”.
t9.227 Link154. Virgilio Notizie. 19 July 2019. https://notizie.virgilio.it/ghali-stormzy-vossy-
t9.228 bop-nuova-canzone-matteo-salvini-twitter-polemica-636233. Keywords: “Ghali” AND
t9.229 “Politica”.
t9.230 Link155. Tgcom. 19 July 2019. https://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/spettacolo/
t9.231 ghali-e-stormzy-insieme-per-un-singolo-contro-la-politica-di-matteo-salvini-e-boris-
t9.232 johnson_3221048-201902a.shtml. Keywords: “Ghali” AND “Politica”.
t9.233 Link156. Blasting News. July 2019. https://it.blastingnews.com/politica/2019/07/
t9.234 ghali-definisce-fascista-salvini-che-risponde-mi-insulta-ma-sua-musica-non-mi-
t9.235 dispiace-002951735.html. Keywords: “Ghali” AND “Politica”.
t9.236 Link157. Internazionale. 3 May 2019. https://www.internazionale.it/bloc-notes/
t9.237 giovanni-ansaldo/2019/05/03/ghali-intervista. Keywords: “Ghali” AND “Politica”.
t9.238 Link158. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 22 March 2019. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.
t9.239 it/2019/03/22/la-confessione-nove-gue-pequeno-la-mia-famiglia-borghese-di-
t9.240 sinistra-io-penso-a-come-fare-soldi-perche-sono-il-motore-che-fa-andare-avanti-le-
t9.241 cose/5048473/. Keywords: “Gué Pequeno” AND “Politica”.
t9.242 Link159. *Repubblica*. 9 June 2015. https://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/
t9.243 musica/2015/06/09/news/gue_pequeno_italia_deprimente_un_paese_per_
t9.244 vecchi_-116455651/. Keywords: “Gué Pequeno” AND “Politica”.
t9.245 Link160. Il Giornale. 22 July 2019. http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/spettacoli/
t9.246 gu-pequeno-successo-trap-tutto-possibile-c-salvini-governo-e-1730171.html.
t9.247 Keywords: “Gué Pequeno” AND “Politica”.
t9.248 Link161. Il Giornale. 28 April 2019. http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/gaber-secondo-
t9.249 cremonini-non-ideologico-politico-lui-parlava-1685581.html. Keywords: “Cesare
t9.250 Cremonini” AND “Politica”.
t9.251 Link162. Il Fatto Quotidiano. 29 June 2012. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.
t9.252 it/2012/06/29/cesare-cremonini-si-racconta-%E2%80%9Ca-bologna-o-fai-
t9.253 cantautore-o-suoni-nei-centri/279404/. Keywords: “Cesare Cremonini” AND
t9.254 “Politica”.
t9.255 Link163.
t9.256 Linkiesta. 5 October 2015. https://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2015/10/05/cesare-
t9.257 cremonini-il-mio-ventennio-sul-palco-tra-baggio-beyonce-e-berlu/27664/. Keywords:
t9.258 “Cesare Cremonini” AND “Politica”.

Appendix Table 6.a (Chap. 6). Questionnaire for Interviews with Populist (and Anti-Populist) Activists

Q1. Did you like the music played at the event? If yes, why, what did you find in it, or in specific songs or artists present at the event?	t10.1 t10.2
Q2. How did that music connect with your everyday life? And in general with your life (e.g. your political or social life)? What was 'cool' in your opinion about playing that music during the event? Can you elaborate a bit on this?	t10.3 t10.4 t10.5
Q3. During the musical moment, what did you feel with respect to the other participants around you? (Or even beyond the physical square you were in: i.e. did you feel united in that moment of music also with all the other party's militants in Italy)?	t10.6 t10.7 t10.8
Q4. After the event, but particularly after that music was played, did you feel closer to the artist? (Or to the song itself)? And to the party? And if so, in what way/form? Basically, did following the political event with this music change your perception of the political event itself? In what way?	t10.9 t10.10 t10.11 t10.12
Q5. Do you feel/do you feel these same feelings, experienced here collectively, on other occasions/events? If yes, which ones?	t10.13 t10.14

Appendix Table 6.b (Chap. 6). Questionnaire for Interviews with Concertgoers and Fans of Pop Singers

Q1. Socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education) of interviewees	t11.1
Q2. Why this singer? What do you like of him/her? In other words, what is it that makes you go at her/his concerts? What do you find there?	t11.2 t11.3
Q3. How does this music/ artist connect with your everyday life?	t11.4
Q4. What is important for you during concerts? What parts of the performance do you usually like more?	t11.5 t11.6
Q5. What is actually cool and well-made about this music/ performance/ event in your opinion? (e.g. positive feelings, collective mourning, sharing a clothing style/ subculture, being part of the crowd, feelings of participation in "history", creating memories vs. literature on frustration, anger, shamelessness)	t11.7 t11.8 t11.9 t11.10
Q6. During these concert-experiences, what do you feel with regards to the other participants (or beyond)? Or was it mainly an individual experience for you?	t11.11 t11.12
Q7. After the concert did you feel closer to the singer(s), and if yes in which forms (e.g. to his /her persona; to the messages of their songs; to the 'family' of people that his/her is able to group together)? In sum, does the experience of the concert (s) as such change something in you with regard to the singer/songs at stake?	t11.13 t11.14 t11.15 t11.16
Q8. How do YOU deal with public criticism of the artist, mobilizations against concerts (if any)?	t11.17 t11.18
Q9. Why would it make sense to be a fan of this specific singer/band in today's world?	t11.19
Q10. Where else can you collectively enact such specific feelings?	t11.20 AU4
Q11. How is it to visit such big events? (costs, organization, infrastructure)	t11.21

Appendix Table 6.c (Chap. 6). Focus Group Sessions

Overall characteristics of purposive sampling: 6–8 participants per FG, varying per gender, level of education, age, profession, geographical distribution.Total amount of focus groups 11: held in Northern, Central and Southern Italy (+ Sicily Island), plus one with only Lega militants in TrevisoOverall duration 2.30–3 hours.

FG. 1., Florence, Tuscany, location: courtyard of a private house, h. 18.00–20.00 02/09/2020[1]

FG. 2 Location: room at *Drogheria Vladivostok*, Catania, h. 18.00–20.00, 04/09/2020[2]

FG.3 Location: room at *Circolo Culturale Ergot,* Lecce, h. 18.00–20.00, 10/09/2020[3]

FG.4 Location: room at *Istituto San Pio X*, Roma, h. 18.00–20.00, 18/09/2020[4]

[1] Participants: F.R., age 36, male, blue-collar worker, non-graduate; E.M.T., age 70, male, pensioner (librarian), non-graduate; E.M., age 44, female, graphic designer, non-graduate; M.C., 70 years old, female, pensioner (teacher), non-graduate; G.L., 18 years old, male, university student, non-graduate; S.M., 29 years old, female, educator, graduate; C.F., 42 years old, female, psychologist, graduate; E.L., 21 years old, female, university student, non-graduate.

[2] Participants: G.P., age 59, male, university professor, graduate; E.V., age 30, female, events' organizer, graduate; F.F., age 29, female, PhD student, graduate; S.M., age 22, male, university student, non-graduate; I.S., age 22, female, university student, non-graduate; A.F., age 82, male, pensioner (university professor), graduate; M.L.R., age 52, male, shopkeeper, non-graduate; R.A., age 54, female, civil servant, graduate.

[3] Participants: M.L.D.A., age 23, female, university student, non-graduate; M.S., age 22, male, university student, non-graduate; A.D., age 25, male, university student, non-graduate; G.C., age 27, male, musician, university student, graduate; S.M., age 28, female, vocalist, non-graduate; R.L., age 70, female, pensioner (brand manager), non-graduate; R.P., age 20, female, university student, non-graduate; M.M., age 68, male, pensioner (journalist), non-graduate.

[4] Participants: M.G., age 25, male, university student, graduate; S.M., age 25, female, university student, graduate; C.N., age 47, female, architect, graduate; P.A., age 48, male, musician, non-graduate; D.M., age 55, male, civil servant, non-graduate; P.C., age 70, male, shopkeeper, non-graduate; L.P., age 40, female, insurer, graduate; E.F., age 23, female, university student, graduate.

FG.5 Location: room at *Centro Studi Luccini*, Padova, h. 18.00–20.00, 24/09/2020[5]

FG.6 Location: room at *Circolo ARCI Radio AUT*, Pavia, h. 18.00–20.00, 06/10/2020[6]

FG.7 Location: room at *Circolo Culturale Porto Burci*, Vicenza, h. 20.00–22.00, 07/10/2020[7]

FG.8 Location: room at *Fondazione Urbana* Headquarter, Bologna, h. 18.00–20.00, 08/10/2020[8]

FG.9 Location: Online Focus Group, Napoli, h. 20.00–22.30, 20/10/2020[9]

[5] Participants: V.P., age 59, male, employee, graduate; E.T., age 23, female, civil service, non-graduate; F.Z., age 24, male, university student, graduate; M.C., age 33, male, employee, graduate; M.M., age 25, female, university student, graduate; A.T., age 26, female, university student, graduate; E.R., age 21, male, civil service, non-graduate; A.M., 73 years old, female, pensioner (teacher), graduate.

[6] Participants: L.C., age 60, female, entrepreneur, graduate; M.C.B., age 55, female, academic researcher, graduate; D.M., age 60, female, teacher, graduate; D.P., age 52, male, civil servant, non-graduate; D.L.G., age 23, female, university student, non-graduate; R.L., age 52, male, unemployed, non-graduate; W.P., age 16, female, high school student, non-graduate; D.R., age 25, male, university student, graduate; S.F., age 18, male, high school student, non-graduate.

[7] Participants: L.C., age 67, female, psychotherapist, graduate; L.M., age 68, male, psychologist, graduate; C.P., age 34, female, usher, non-graduate; F.M., age 37, male, architect, graduate; B.S., age 26, female, pharmacist, graduate; F.F., age 21, male, university student, non-graduate; C.C., age 24, female, university student, non-graduate; F.I., age 24, male, shop assistant, non-graduate.

[8] Participants: F.B., age 34, female, lawyer, graduate; C.B., age 36, female, lawyer, graduate; N.C., age 24, male, university student, non-graduate; C.C., age 41, male, post office employee, graduate; A.Z., age 55, female, employee, non-graduate; T.F., age 23, male, university student, graduate; P.B., age 42, male, technician, graduate; V.V., age 26, female, educator, graduate.

[9] Participants: A.S., age 36, female, deejay, graduate; A.S., age 29, female, employee, graduate; R.C., age 36, male, radio speaker, graduate; D.D.B., age 40, male, bank clerk, graduate; A.N., age 37, male, bank clerk, graduate; C.Z., age 63, female, pensioner, non-graduate; M.S.D.C., age 48, male, self-employed worker, non-graduate; M.F., age 55, male, building administrator, non-graduate.

FG.10 Location: room at *Hotel Accademia*, Trento, h. 19.00–21.00, 23/10/2020[10]

FG.11 (all League's militants) Location: Room at Treviso Province's League's Headquarter, Villorba (Treviso), h. 16.30–19.00, 21/10/2020[11]

[10] Participants: R.T., age 54, male, computer technician, graduate; E.M., age 26, female, lawyer, graduate; E.M., age 23, female, university student, non-graduate; M.F., age 32, male, engineer, graduate; R.A., age 63, female, pensioner (teacher), graduate; R.D.R., age 27, male, university student, non-graduate; E.Z., age 51, female, software developer, non-graduate.

[11] Participants: V.S., age 36, female, lawyer, militant, graduate; M.S., age 53, female, shop assistant, president of municipal council, non-graduate; L.D., age 75, female, pensioner, militant, non-graduate; D.T., age 63, male, health public sector employee, militant, graduate; R.B., age 36, male, employee, secretary of organization at the provincial level, regional councillor, graduate; E.T., age 28, female, real estate agent, member of the BoD of a bus public company, non-graduate; G.C., age 57, male, pensioner, militant, non-graduate; N.M., age 24, male, university student, militant, non-graduate.

Appendix Table 6.d (Chap. 6). Focus Group Guide

Part I. From music to politics:	t13.1
Guide for discussion and data collection:	t13.2
1. What do you like/don't' like of this song/video?	t13.3
2. What links this video/music to your daily life?	t13.4
3. Which emotions do you feel?	t13.5
4. (exploring) What are in general the 'narratives' (or frames?) that participants create/use in order to give a meaning to this video/song?	t13.6 t13.7
5. What do these songs activate in your mind?	t13.8
6. (*stimulate*) the various and heterogeneous pictures (e.g. What about simplicity in these videos/songs? What about anti-intellectualism in these video/songs?) emerging with regard the reception of these songs/videos	t13.9 t13.10 t13.11
7. Who is the target here? Which is the 'people' they talk to?	t13.12
8. At the end of the session: h1) proposing a battery of concepts linked to populism: nationalism, people, charisma, anti-politics (see 'Concepts' in the table above),. how do you relate these concepts with what you saw and listened to? h2) Which songs or artists come to your mind when thinking about these concepts (even beyond the artists listened)? h3) How can music play a role to vehicle these concepts in the broad citizenry?	t13.13 t13.14 t13.15 t13.16 t13.17 t13.18
Length: approx. 60 minutes.	t13.19
Examples of songs/videos proposed with key concepts to be explored during the discussion (Parts I and II):	t13.20 t13.21
1. Non è l'inferno, Emma Marrone	t13.22
2. Ninnananna, Ghali	t13.23
3. Faccia come il cuore, J-Ax/Neffa	t13.24
4. Chi comanda il mondo, Povia	t13.25
5. Senza pagare, J-Ax/Fedez	t13.26
6. Il muro del suono, Ligabue	t13.27
7. 'nu juorno buono, Rocco Hunt	t13.28
8. Com'è profondo il mare, Lucio Dalla	t13.29
9. La Grande V, Rumatera	t13.30
…….	t13.31
10. Video per Italia 5 Stelle 2015 ("Lo facciamo solo noi", Andrea Tosatto)	t13.32
11. Video per Italia 5 Stelle 2016 ("Un amore così grande", Il Volo)	t13.33
12. Anthem Movimento 5 Stelle 2014 ("Non sono partito", Fedez)	t13.34
13. Wake Up!, Rocco Hunt	t13.35
…….	t13.36
14. Salvini sings at Van De Sfroos' concert al concerto di Van De Sfroos	t13.37
15. Salvini sings "Io vagabondo" (Nomadi) in a League's rally	t13.38
16. Salvini sings "Albachiara" (Vasco Rossi) in a TV show	t13.39
17. Salvini sings "Come Mai" (883) during a radio interview	t13.40
18. Salvini on the stage of Piazza del Popolo, Roma ("Nessun Dorma", Puccini)	t13.41
19. Povia sings "Italia Ciao" (Bella Ciao revisited), 25 aprile 2019	t13.42
….	t13.43
20. Matilde De Angelis plays "Com'è profondo il mare", Bologna, 14.01.2020	t13.44

Concepts to be discussed/explored in the FG	**Relevant videos (ID.)**	t13.45
Anti-politics /Anti-caste	1; 3; 6; 10; 11; 12; 13	t13.46
Political disengagement /"Rely on yourself"	2; 5; 7; 10; 12; 13	t13.47
Anti-intellectualism	2; 5; 9; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19	t13.48
	By contrast (anti-populism) 8; 20	t13.49
Nostalgia for "good old times"	1; 5; 7; 9; 11; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18	t13.50
Common sense, exploitation of popular culture	14; 15; 16; 17; 18	t13.51
Authenticity	2; 4; 5; 7; 9; 10; 14; 15; 16; 17	t13.52
Simplicity/Spontaneity	1; 5; 7; 9; 10; 14; 15; 16; 17	t13.53
Territorial identity (Subnational-National)	6; 7; 9; 13; 14	t13.54
Cult of manual work/Celebration of rural values/	5; 9; 18	t13.55
Rudeness/Pride		t13.56
Complot theory	4; 19	t13.57
People (exclusionary)	19	t13.58
People (inclusionary)	6; 13; 1	t13.59

Note: Relevant videos for the focus groups have been selected by and are intertwined with the previous part of the research: song text analysis, MGA, systematic web data mining; participant observation of party rallies. t13.60 t13.61 t13.62

162

Part II: from politics to music t14.1

The meanings and functions of music in political contexts. Questions: t14.2

9. What impact each of these videos had on you? What did they transmit/communicate to you? What did they activate on your mind? t14.3 t14.4
10. (if not clear, repeat) t14.5
11. What do you like/don't' like in this song/video? t14.6
12. Which emotions did you feel? t14.7
13. (explore) What are in general the 'narratives' (or frames?) that they create/use in order to give a meaning to this video/song? t14.8 t14.9
14. (*not necessary if already emerging*) Which are the differences on the use of music by League, M5S and *Sardine* t14.10 t14.11

Length: approx. 50 minutes. t14.12

164

Part III: politicians on music and artists on politics t15.1

Showing to participants vignettes of quotes from popstars on political issues or from politicians on musical issues/event (e.g. for Italy: debates over Sanremo 2019 from Di Maio and Salvini, see examples 1 and 3). Questions t15.2 t15.3 t15.4

9. What about these interactions between political and music spheres? t15.5
10. Are they legitimate (politicians should/shouldn't intervene; singers should/shouldn't intervene)? Do you agree with…? t15.6 t15.7
11. Why does this happen? t15.8
12. Which are the goals? t15.9

Length: approx. 20 minutes. t15.10

165

Example Vignette 1

Note: Trad. [#Mahmood… uhm… the most beautiful Italian song?!? I would have opted for @Ultimo, what do you think?? #Sanremo 2019]

170 **Example Vignette 2**

171

172 Trad. [League's candidates for the European elections come mostly
173 from experiences as local administrators. "In our electoral slates there are
174 interesting names of mayors, deputy mayors, municipal councilors, local
175 administrators. We don't have actors, football players, singers, we have
176 exceptionally normal people", the Ministry of Internal Affairs Matteo
177 Salvini said].

Example Vignette 3

Trad. [#Baglioni? Sing and you'll feel better. Let those in charge of security, immigration and terrorism to look after these issues]

Index[1]

[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

M. Caiani, E. Padoan, *Populism and (Pop) Music*, Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18579-3