

Call for Papers

Metadata | Meta information

Popular Music and its Metamorphoses.

6th IASPM D-A-CH Conference
University of Zurich, 07-09 November 2024

In recent years, the term metadata has evolved from a technical IT term to a commonplace and buzzword referring to fundamental cultural semantics and technological dynamics of the present - also and particularly regarding popular music. In the context of digital systems, machine learning (AI), ubiquitous internet availability in the global North, streaming possibilities, etc., "data about data" and the labelling of other data are of considerable importance for the infrastructures of popular music. At the same time, they also affect the production side because genre boundaries and other conventions are shifting - and act as a heuristic starting point for attempts to intellectually explore and criticise respective processes. Streaming services and their music recommendation algorithms are a prime example for the current significance of metadata. Musicologists and scholars of cultural studies have recently increasingly studied such digital systems and their effects. Both ethnographically and using quantitative methods, substantial insights have been gained into the technical (infra)structures, ideologies, and redistribution effects in the environment of platform capitalism - although many (research) questions remain unanswered.

Given the conjuncture of metadata - as a phenomenon, as a term - and, more generally, of those phenomena labelled as "meta", socio-technical constellations, shaping the current production, circulation, and reception of popular music in a particular way, become tangible. Labelling as "meta" (metadata - but also, for example, metatags, meta-trend, metamaterial or even the renaming of the Facebook umbrella company to meta) also evokes a zeitgeisty ambiguity and vagueness. "Meta-" is therefore at least as much a phenomenon of the cultural imaginary as of technological materiality. As the leitmotif of the conference, "meta" (in the sense of the ambiguous Greek prefix μετά) refers to that which lies beyond the audible aspects of popular music, that which accompanies it, that which exists in the spaces in between.

The conference will therefore focus not only on metadata and metatags in digital systems, but also on other meta information of popular music: although audible materiality - referring to affordance theory - offers reference points for extra-musical attributions of meaning, the conference will focus on aspects of popular music that go beyond sound. Popular music is inevitably linked to its spatio-temporal context; it unfolds in the coordinate system of socio-cultural, economic, ecological, media, technological and political axes. It is characterised by the multidirectional flow between different sources of information. Popular music's meta information such as artist images, genre classifications, performative qualities, fashion, design, charts positions, marketing-related communication, social symbols, lifestyle-related codes etc. therefore also

enables us to explore the current expansion and concentration of the multi-layered reference system surrounding popular music cultures. The prefix additionally describes change, the alteration of a state, e.g. in the sense of metamorphosis. It references the constant flux of the content labelled as popular music, but also the fundamentally dynamic nature of its forms and the fluidity of its production and reception.

We look forward to contributions from academics, artists, journalists, and practitioners on the conference theme and welcome both thematically and formally free submissions dealing with relevant questions on popular music cultures. The latter will be considered within the time frame of the conference.

Exemplary topics

Metadata

- Metadata in music platforms (streaming, alternative platforms, shops)
- Classification of popular music in digital systems (genre classifications, moods, contextual classification, classification methods, etc.)
- Copyright in digital systems (royalty assignment, CMO's, General Data Protection Regulations, systematics etc.)
- Findability of music in digital systems and recommendation algorithms
- Bias in digital systems (gender and race imbalance, success parameters, etc.)
- MIR (Music Information Retrieval) and AI in digital systems
- Power relationships in digital systems (Who has the power to decide on terminology? Who defines methods? Who possesses respective tools?)
- Data management and transparency (Who has access to which data? Who has the power of disposal over metadata?)
- Digital humanities topics in the context of music-related metadata
- Metadata in and from popular music studies (e.g. coding interviews, dealing with AI, MIR, ML etc.)
- ...

Meta information

- Interconnections between popular music and fashion, design etc.
- Memes, TikTok and their non-musical reference systems
- Artist images, music press and magazines, blogs, websites etc.
- Advertising industry, brands and music industry (music in commercials, brand collaborations with artists, brand presence at music events, artist communication and marketing, etc.)
- Genre classifications and further categorisation of popular music forms (e.g. context-related playlists)
- Physicality/corporality in popular music (e.g. communication through performative qualities)
- Social symbols and lifestyle-related codes (subcultures, distinction from others, layers of meaning)

- Interactions of meta information and content transfer by recipients (e.g. influencing variables on image generation, categorisation of recipients, transfer of non-musical qualities to musical content, etc.)
- Hierarchies and relationships between human and non-human entities and information
- ...

Metamorphoses

- Production and texture of popular music forms
- Influence of metadata and meta information on the construction of meaning in the reception of popular music and changing reception environments
- Changes in the audible content subsumed under the term popular music over time and reflection with regard to associated meta information and holistic contextual variables
- Artistic research (e.g. exploring the influence of meta information on the production processes of popular music or critical reflection on its production and communication)
- Critical evaluation of established paradigms in popular music cultures and popular music studies
- Changes in the medial functionality of popular music within the context of predominantly digital reference systems
- ...

We particularly encourage contributions on all these topics addressing power structures and effects and, for example, questions of transnational inequality research, gender and sexuality studies or racism research. As an explicitly interdisciplinary conference, researchers from all disciplines working in the broad field of popular music studies are invited to present current research.

Contributions can be submitted in German or English in the following formats:

- Individual papers (30 minutes presentation & 15 minutes discussion),
- Panels (min. three presentations on a common topic, total 60 minutes presentations & 30 minutes discussion).

Participation in the conference is free for members of all IASPM branches and students/lecturers of the University of Zurich and the University of Bern. The following participation fees apply to all other participants (to be paid by invoice/bank transfer after registration):

- Full conference: 100.00 CHF
- Thursday, 07.11.2024: 40.00 CHF
- Friday, 08.11.2024: 40.00 CHF
- Saturday, 09.11.2024: 30.00 CHF

IASPM membership is not required to submit a paper or panel.

The publication of individual contributions as part of the IASPM D-A-CH ~Vibes series is intended.

Submissions must contain the following information:

- Paper and/or panel title
- Abstract (or individual papers max. 300 words, excluding references to the authors of the abstracts; for panels max. 300 words on the panel topic and max. 200 each on the papers)
- Five Keywords
- Name, contact information and institutional affiliation if applicable
- Short biography (max. 150 words)
- Apply for travel grant yes/no (see below)

Please submit your proposals online using [our form](#) by 15 February 2024 at the latest.

The evaluation and selection of the anonymised contributions will be carried out by the executive committee and advisory board of IASPM D-A-CH as well as the conference steering committee. We will endeavour to provide you with feedback by April 2024 at the latest.

Contacts: [Andreas Schoenrock](#); [Moritz Ege](#)

We are planning to provide travel and accommodation reimbursement or grants for presenting IASPM-D-A-CH members, provided that third-party funding is available. We furthermore intend to reimburse students for travel and accommodation expenses if they produce a conference report (text and/or audio/visual/audiovisual formats are possible).

Looking forward to your submissions and fruitful discussions in Zurich,

Andreas Schoenrock (MAS Popular Music, University of the Arts Bern)

Britta Sweers (Institute of Musicology, University of Bern)

Inga Mai Groote (Institute of Musicology, University of Zurich)

Moritz Ege (Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies, University of Zurich)