

CALL FOR PAPERS

IDENTIFICATIONS **Performing Counter Discrimination** Ca' Foscari University of Venice *November 20, 2024.*

Keynote
Prof. Yannis Stavrakakis
(Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

Panel Discussion
Prof. Francesco Della Puppa and Prof. Susanne Franco (Ca' Foscari University of Venice),
Prof. Milija Gluhovic (Warwick University), Amanda Piña (Artist and Cultural Worker,
Vienna-Mexico City), Dr. Goran Petrovic Lotina (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, UC
Louvain, Sciences Po Paris), Aneta Stojnic, PhD, LP (IPTAR, New York)

Ca' Foscari University of Venice is organizing an interdisciplinary conference, *Identifications. Performing Counter Discrimination*, which will take place on the 20th of November 2024, in Venice, in Aula Magna Silvio Trentin. The conference has the aim to explore processes of identification capable of contesting discrimination, xenophobia, and cultural racism, by offering insights from various performance practices.

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For the past two decades, **far-right political parties have been steadily ascending in political power globally**. Europe, home to some of the world's oldest democracies, is a particularly interesting case. It includes numerous examples from across the continent, from the United Kingdom Independence Party, the French National Rally, and Alternative for Germany, to the Swedish Democrats, the Finns Party, and the Hungarian Fidesz, as well as Brothers of Italy, the Dutch Freedom Party, the Flemish Interest, and Enough in Portugal. A recent analysis for the European Council on Foreign Relations forecasts that in the 2024 European Parliament elections, the far-right will most likely top the polls across many EU states (Cunningham, Hix & Denisson 2024). For the first time, a right coalition of Christian democrats, conservatives, and radical right could emerge with a majority inside the European Parliament.

The ascent of the far-right is intricately linked to key developments in recent global and European history, as it has leveraged the increasing embrace of multiculturalism, advancements in gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, and the rise of social media, to advance nationalist agendas centred on identity politics, the preservation of traditional values, and reaching and radicalizing a broader audience. Some of the pivotal events, such as the EU's enlargement (2004, 2007), the debt crisis (2009-18), increased migration dynamics (2015-), and challenges in health (2019-23), protection and energy (2022-), further propelled the rise of far-right. Acknowledging the decline in national, economic, cultural, health, protective and energy

security, far-right parties frequently attribute these challenges to both internal and external immigrants. **By mobilizing stigmata of otherness such as colour, name, language, or religious practice, they cultivate the sense of identification among the people around discourses (languages, practices, and institutions) centred on a singular, monocultural concept of nativist identity. These types of group identification manifest through different symbolic and affective ties that legitimise discrimination, xenophobia, and cultural racism** as self-preservative, defensive mechanisms. Consequently, all discontent with the security situation becomes embodied in dis/identification with the other.

In psychoanalysis, **identification** is understood to involve both symbolic and affective ties with another person or group, as individuals internalize symbolic structures and form emotional attachments (Lacan 1966, Klein 1957, Freud 1921). And, while group identification may promote life-affirming desires for connection, social justice, and equality, among its members, it can also evoke conscious and unconscious feelings of jealousy, hostility, or envy through the exaggeration of differences with neighbouring communities with (dis)similar cultures (De Zavala and Lantos 2020, Keval 2016, Freud 1930). Psychoanalytic political theory also acknowledges the enduring nature of the dual process of **group identification** along the we/they divide, highlighting the profound influence of both symbolic and emotional connections in shaping group identification and the inherent conflict within society (Stavrakakis 2020, 2005). The primary aim of democracy, therefore, is to prevent conflicts marked by a 'us versus them' interactions to take form of antagonism and enmity to one of constructive disagreement where different factions are viewed as agonistics and adversaries (Mouffe 2005).

Taking a cue from psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic political theory, **this conference seeks to examine how far-right practices of identification, which mobilize people around a nativist, monocultural identity, can be contested by fostering a plural and intercultural sense of identification.** Through this exploration, the conference aims to address discrimination, xenophobia, and cultural racism, which stem from the exaggeration of cultural differences in multicultural societies and the cultivation of antagonistic sentiments.

This examination delves into the role of various embodying practices in contributing to this transformative process. Performance studies designates all human inter/actions under the term of 'performance' understood as an embodying practice (Schechner 2002/1966). Embodiment arises at the nexus of bodily actions (Goffman 1956) and speech acts (Austin 1962) through attributive meaning-making operations (Butler 1997) and affective investments (Ahmed 2014, Laclau 2005). Accordingly, group identification stands for an indissociable embodiment of signifying and affective dimensions (Petrović Lotina & Aiolfi 2023), that manifest through various performances choreographed around antagonistic or agonistic political dynamics.

Drawing thus inspiration from a range of choreopolitical performances, including everyday interactions (such as social encounters, education programs, institutional practices), civic engagements (like protests, speeches, and policy initiatives), and artistic expressions (including theatre, dance, music, and activism), the conference seeks to offer a perspective on the processes of meaning-making, discourse, and emotional connections, recognising conflictual dynamics at the hearth of society while fostering group identifications through diversity, internationalism, xenophilia, and inclusion.

Taking into consideration that far-right politics is a global phenomenon, **we invite contributions from different geographical regions and continents** to discuss progressive practices of identification.

The themes could include, but are not limited to issues relating *performance, identification, and:*

- Identity and intersectionality
- Counter-identification and/or disidentification
- Symbolization and/or affective investment
- Conscious and unconscious emotions
- Eros and Thanatos / love and hate / jouissance
- Group narcissism and narcissism of small differences

- Friends vs enemies / agonism vs antagonism
- Peace advocacy vs war promotion
- Liberation, equality, justice, and care vs oppression, discrimination, injustice, and abuse
- Hospitality vs hostility
- Internationalism vs nationalism

- Public/private spaces
- Governance and institutional spaces
- Cultural and artistic spaces
- Cyberspace, the metaverse and/or AI

- Embodied Politics
- Choreography / choreopolitics
- Grassroots, protests, community organizing, activism...
- Dance, theatre, music, activism...
- The audience and/or participation

- Diversity and migration
- Anti-racism and multiculturalism
- Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and knowledge
- Decolonization and resistance
- Culture and nature

- Psychoanalytic theory
- Critical theory
- Discourse theory
- Political philosophy
- Performance studies

Please send 300 words abstract and 150 words bio by May 25th, to goran.petrovic@unive.it
Notification of selection will be no later than June 14th.

The conference will be followed by a special issue of an edited journal.

Conference Organization

Dr. Goran Petrovic Lotina (Ca' Foscari University of Venice | UC Louvain | Sciences Po Paris)

Conference Committee

Prof. Francesco Della Puppa (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Prof. Susanne Franco (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Prof. Milija Gluhovic (Warwick University)

Aneta Stojnic, PhD, LP (Psychoanalyst, IPTAR Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, New York)

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