The production and representation of space in film and (pop-)music has received increasing scholarly attention as of late. However, a surprising blank space appears at the most obvious intersection of these two fields of study: the music video. This conference jumps off from the observation that since their inception, music videos have been highly prolific media of spatial imagination and production.

From lovestruck skating middle-class teenagers in Californian suburbs in Air’s “All I Need” to cartographies of North-American small town childhoods in Men I Trust’s sentimental Super 8 driven video for “Tailwhip;” from attempts to escape similar spaces and accompanying mentalities in Tocotronic’s “Hey Du” to nostalgically rendered images of countercultural nature in Kurt Vile’s “One Trick Ponies;” from the folkloristic imaginations of a Morris dancing British village in Stealing Sheep’s “Apparation” to the ironic, touristic gaze on highly mediatized Icelandic wilderness in Mourn’s “Fun at the Geysers;” from the hypervertical urbanism of Forest Swords’ “Crow” to the Google Street View-inspired white middle class gaze on an African-American neighbourhood in Vince Staple’s “Fun;” from hipsterish mid-century architecture connoisseurship in Delmoro’s “Dove Siamo Finito” to the explorations of contemporary city-scapes through the Mancunian public transport system in Equiknoxx’s “Manchester,” music videos conceive, depict and perform a variety of imaginary, communicative, social and natural spaces.

Though the spatialities of music video production and aesthetics have not been subject to systematic academic scrutiny yet, some solitary case studies pave the way. These give a first impression of the wide scope of spatial entanglements within music videos, covering diverse themes including geographical engagements with the semiotics of high-rise architecture exploring London’s skyline in contemporary British music videos or housing estates in German gangster rap videos. Forays into the spatial intersections of political economy and cultural history have produced important insights into representations of the disruption experienced in post-industrial Chemnitz in Eastern Germany but also the depiction of yachts and islands in 1980s British pop music. Many case studies have zoned in on the role of music video landscapes and their importance for national imaginaries in Iceland. Other reflections on nature and landscape have zeroed in on questions of genre and space, for instance with regard to country music. However, some seminal pioneering work, e.g. Diedrich Diederichsen’s and Kodwo Eshun’s TV essay on the
representation of outer space in music videos (Fantastic Voyages 1999), has almost faded into oblivion.

A systematic engagement with music video spaces bringing together scholarship on music videos with research on the nexus between music and urbanity, nature and landscape is still lacking. The conference aims at contributing to address this gap. Possible paper topics and questions could include, but are not limited to:

- How can connections between local music scenes and their music video production be described? What relation is there between specific varieties of urban habitus, local textures, the mythspaces of renowned music cities and music video production?
- In what ways is the visual staging of space in the pop music video connecting with but also changing the lyrical and musical conjuring of space?
- Genres like hip-hop, grime, country, ambient but also singer-songwriters etc. have always been very sensitive to picking up local atmospheres, soundscapes, ambiances. In what ways have genres developed distinct music video spaces and how have they developed over the decades?
- How are architectural epochs and discourses of landscape and nature enacted and negotiated, especially regarding the imagination and construction of nationally and locally distinct pop music cultures?
- How does the increasingly emphasised conflict between urban/metropolitan and rural, deindustrialized or otherwise marginalized spaces find its expression in music videos? How can music videos be made productive in these times of surging populism, polarization, sharpening levels of inequalities and their spatialized cleavages?
- What is the relationship between pop music as protest music and the spatiality of music videos? How do phenomena like gentrification, racism, classism, urban protest movements or the neoliberal governance of space figure in music videos?
- In which ways are the aligned spatialities and visualities of recently emerging scopic regimes, such as Google Street View or the vertical perspectives of Google Earth or the proliferation of drone footage, enacted and problematised in music videos? How are these enactments related to other highly spatial and mobile aesthetics such as those of video games and contemporary cinema’s computer generated images?
- How are music video spaces related to historical and recent representations of urban space? Do they function as marketing tools within the increasing competition among cities and their accelerating “self-culturalization”? What is their role in processes of touristification and accompanying ways of seeing and producing images?
- How do built spaces and subjective inner spaces or practices and imaginaries of emplacement and embodiment intersect in music video spaces? Is the classical figure of the flaneur still relevant for contemporary explorations of spatial experience?
• How do music videos address — and maybe even challenge — the classical tropes of the sublime and concomitant representations of nature, e.g. forests, mountains, the sea?
• Which speculative and heterotopic (utopic, dystopic) spaces — outer space, say, or imaginations of the natural condition — are mapped out? How did these representations change, especially with regard to the perception that we move towards a state of multiple crises (Anthropocene, climate change, species extinction)?

Please submit presentation proposals (300-500 words) by 15th March 2020 via email to Maximilian Jablonowski at jablonski@isek.uzh.ch and Johannes Springer at j.springer@hs-osnabrueck.de. Please don’t hesitate to contact us under these addresses for questions and expressions of interest. The conference conveners seek to raise funding for travel expenses.

Conference conveners: Maximilian Jablonowski (Zurich) & Johannes Springer (Osnabrück)

Conference website:
https://www.isek.uzh.ch/de/popul%C3%A4rekulturen/veranstaltungen/2020mvs.html