



Humanities

INTERVIEW KNOWLEDGE UTILISATION IN THE HUMANITIES

Pop music heritage: research into the cultural significance of pop music, by Susanne Janssen

Susanne Janssen (professor of Media and Culture at Erasmus University Rotterdam) leads the project **Popular Music, Cultural Memory and Cultural Identity (POPID)**, an international comparative study into the sociocultural and economic significance of pop music heritage. It zooms in on the importance of popular music for the formation of cultural identity and the relationship between cultural memory, pop music history and local identity. POPID falls under the HERA Joint Research Programme *Cultural Dynamics, Inheritance and Identity*.

Where are the opportunities for knowledge utilisation in this project?

'After more than half a century of pop music history, music styles such as rock and punk are perhaps just as strong symbols of national or local identity for the post-war generations as traditional expressions like their cuisine or flags. But how does that musical heritage determine the formation of their cultural identity? How do their musical memories relate to the history of pop music as presented to us by the music industry and experts? POPID is investigating that. The outcomes are relevant for the conservation, dissemination, reception and exploitation of pop music heritage. Policy makers, heritage institutions, organisers of events and music events, media and music producers can use this to better respond to the growing public interest in pop music heritage from the international Top 2000 to local music genres and celebrities.'

How do you establish links with these target groups?

'POPID is a project of media and culture researchers from the United Kingdom, Austria, the Netherlands and Slovenia. In these countries we held about 150 in-depth interviews with the public and almost 200 interviews with the field: policy makers and professionals from the heritage sector, media, music industry and music historiography. This revealed, for example, that the interest in national music products and artists continues to be substantial despite the internationalisation of the music industry and the growing interest in international hits and music icons. That is interesting for local producers and institutions. Thanks to the enthusiastic

participation of those interviewed we had a large number of ambassadors who have brought the research results to the attention of our target groups. In that sense POPID was a real knowledge exchange project: exchange of knowledge, information and experiences.'

Intended results?

'We are showing what pop music means for people, in the eyes of key people from the countries involved. That yields relevant information for the sector. Therefore besides these and scientific articles we publish articles in national professional magazines about music, culture, heritage and policy. We also profile POPID in an accessible form. An example is a conference during the International Film Festival Rotterdam, with expert panels, mini-lectures and discussions with the public about music films shown.'

How has knowledge utilisation benefited you as scholar?

'I have gained a far better understanding of the issues that the media and culture sector struggles with. I have also developed a keener eye for how knowledge, experiences and questions from the field can be translated and used in scientific research and vice versa.'

Tips for fellow researchers?

'Try to gain as good a view as possible of the key issues in the field, pay serious consideration to these, but make sure that you determine the direction, hypotheses and design of your research. Your added value as a scholar lies in this autonomous attitude. That applies to your own discipline but equally for the sector concerned and society as a whole.'