

Call for Abstracts for Issue #8 (Winter 2019)

Distribution

This issue of *On_Culture* aims to explore the concept of *distribution* across disciplines, opening the scope from media studies and global history to the study of culture at large. By combining it with broader issues such as agency, digitality, or knowledge production, the issue will seek to capture distribution in its multiplicity of (political) implications, contexts, infrastructures, and applications.

As a concept and topic for the study of culture, distribution, from Latin *distribuere* (= to scatter, to deliberately share, or to hand out a unit of something to some recipients), can point to a variety of flows of objects. These may range from material goods and media formats to ephemeral opinions, but can also point from power structures or the dissemination of knowledge to the traveling of cultural works and theoretical concepts. Distribution is thus ideally situated to grasp changing landscapes of cultural production, academia, knowledge institutions, and social relations more generally. How is distribution conceptualized, how is it structured, and which agents can influence the direction of movement? Distribution opens up associations to hierarchical systems and traditional forms of supply. It, however, also allows to broaden the scope to non-linear processes of circulation, to egalitarian forms of sharing and mobilities against the grain.

In recent years, media studies have shifted questions of distribution into sharper focus, especially in regard to media productions and the emergence of digitally distributed audiovisual content. Points of interest have not only been the narrative innovations this entailed, but also the power structures which these new networks of content dissemination inevitably include – and the possible means of subversion. This complex also includes the establishment of new economies that rely on self-distribution, as for example YouTube or Twitch performers navigate dynamic media ecologies seamlessly. Moreover, content has become accessible through highly transmedial story-worlds that make use of multi-faceted distributing systems, from toys, websites, and comics to TV series, video games, and various avenues of feature films. This poses questions of media specificity and challenges the ways we can address this specificity across formats, platforms, and materialities.

Distribution, from the perspective of the study of culture, can also help to shed light on varied processes in the political realm in the last years, touching upon the ubiquity of “fake news,” walled-off filter bubbles, live-streaming of protests and altercations with police, or other forms of non-hierarchical sharing. These processes, although different in form, all point towards a revolution of means of distribution of knowledge, experiences, and ideologies – be it via algorithms, personal preference, or innovations in technology. New media distribution opportunities and patterns carry with them a great emancipatory potential, as they allow for the breaking up of traditional power structures, possibly even for the reversal of long-standing power hierarchies. For the case of the distribution of knowledge, this extends well into the digital realm: Disruptive elements such as, for instance, the open access and open science movements that call for a democratization of access to knowledge shake up traditional forms of knowledge distribution by powerful publishing houses with their long-established gate-keeping mechanisms.

Such current processes can be placed within a historical lineage of increasing global exchanges and circulations of people, ideas, and resources. The international or global turn in the study of history has emphasized a focus on transnational connections and on negotiations taking place between global and

local scales. Many historical examples need to be seen against the background of highly hierarchical colonial models of distribution, with mobility between continents determined by Western economic and political interests. Taking major historical transformations since then into account, the continuing exertion of neo-colonial power is nonetheless still reflected in questions of political interference, migration, and access in the digital age – and thus central to the issues under discussion.

Further possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Historical surveys of distribution patterns – from material goods to cultural artefacts
- State regulation of distribution and censorship
- Subversive forms of distribution: counter-publics, fan cultures, black markets
- Forms of distribution and their ability to shape, alter, or arrange content
- New critical and theoretical approaches to distribution, e.g. platform studies
- Global circulations from a historical perspective: e.g. knowledge exchange, colonial negotiations
- Labor of distribution
- Digital distribution and questions of access (Open Access, Open Science, Open Data, etc.) and critical responses

If you are interested in having a peer reviewed academic article featured in the next issue, please submit an abstract of 300 words with the article title, 5–6 keywords, and a short biographical note to content@on-culture.org (subject line “**Abstract Submission Issue 8**”) **no later than March 31, 2019**. You will be notified by April 15, 2019 whether your paper proposal has been accepted. The final date for full paper submissions is July 15, 2019.

Please note: *On_Culture* also features a section devoted to shorter, creative pieces pertaining to each issue topic. These can be interviews, essays, opinion pieces, reviews of exhibitions, analyses of cultural artifacts and events, photo galleries, videos, works of art ... and more! These contributions are uploaded on a rolling basis, also to previous issues. Interested in contributing? Send your ideas to the [Editorial Team](#) at any time: content@on-culture.org

About *On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture*

On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture (ISSN: 2366–4142) is a biannual, peer-reviewed academic e-journal edited by post/doctoral researchers and professors working at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) Giessen. It provides a forum for reflecting on the study of culture. It investigates, problematizes, and develops key concepts and methods in the field by means of a collaborative and collective process. *On_Culture* is dedicated to fostering such engagements as well as the cultural dynamics at work in thinking about and reflecting on culture.

The journal consists of three sections: peer-reviewed academic *_Articles*, *_Essays*, and the aforementioned *_Perspectives*. *On_Culture* brings new approaches and emerging topics to the (trans)national study of culture ‘on the line’ and, in so doing, fills the gap _____ between ‘on’ and ‘culture.’ There are numerous ways of filling the gap, and a plurality of approaches is something we always strive for.

Contributions to the *_Perspectives* Section are possible at any time. So if you’re interested in contributing also to one of the previous issues, please get in touch with our Editorial Team at content@on-culture.org. Find our Call for Abstracts Archive here: <https://www.on-culture.org/submission/call-for-abstracts-archive/>

Please note: As a commitment to the open access to scholarship, *On_Culture* does not charge any Article Processing Charges (APCs) for the publication of your contribution!

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