

Call for Abstracts for the Pilot Issue:

Emergence/Emergency
New Approaches and Emerging Topics in the Study of Culture

Emergence is a key term in the study of culture. It is both a structuring principle of academic research and an object of study. It serves as a conceptual nucleus of knowledge cultures and academic approaches that call mono-causal, reductionist explanations and deterministic accounts of complex phenomena and practices into question. With its connotations of creative energies being set free through emergent processes and phenomena, emergence is a marker of novelty, unpredictability and irreducibility.

As a metaphorical concept, emergence not only has a long tradition in the philosophy of mind literature, but also in the scholarly literature on theories of self-organization, cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, chaos theory, connectionism and synergetics, to name but a few disciplines in which the concept is used. Due to the disciplinary stratification of the term, emergence (from Latin: *emergere*: to rise up out of the water) has been used as a metaconcept for theorizing crucial turning points, for conceptualizing the relationship between two different levels and for making sense of subjects within the humanities in general and the study of culture in particular.

Emergency indicates a state, or degree of severity, requiring immediate attention and intervention. States of emergency are often emergent phenomena, and their roots can lie far into the historical, ecological, financial, social and cultural pasts. Many emerging topics in the study of culture (e.g., migration, climate change, demographic change, financial crisis, right-wing/left-wing politics, digitization, globalization, social injustice, precarious working conditions) address 'emergent emergencies.'

We have paired the concepts of emergence/emergency to highlight the degree of urgency with which much research on the phenomenon of emergence and emergent phenomena is conducted. Both terms call for self-reflexivity and cautious intervention in the cultural analysis of processes of transformation. Instances of the interfacing of emergence and emergency are urgent tasks that scholars in the study of culture need to tackle with the help of new approaches.

We would like to invite contributions that put emergent and urgent structures, approaches, hot topics and phenomena in the transnational study of culture on the map. We are seeking academic articles that deal with a specific emergent phenomenon, as well as those that analyze, discuss, challenge, interpret or reframe the phenomenon of emergence from a metatheoretical perspective.

Possible questions to be reflected upon can concern the concepts themselves and/or the reflection/critique of these from a meta-theoretical/self-reflexive perspective. Contributions dealing with the concepts at hand could address the following questions:

- Why is a specific object of study an emergent phenomenon? How can it be explained with the help of a particular theory, or theories, of emergence?

- How has emergence been theorized within a specific discipline and/or across disciplines?
- How have concepts of emergence evolved over time? What cultural and historical circumstances have affected their expression?
- In what ways can emergent phenomena yield situations of emergency?
- How can an understanding of emergence, perhaps, prevent emergencies?
- How do cultures imagine and perform situations of emergence (artistically, narratively, technologically, socially, politically, etc.)? What role do media play both in articulating emergent phenomena and in shaping states of emergency?
- To what extent does theorizing interfaces between emergence and emergency enhance understanding of processes and phenomena pertaining to the study of culture?

Contributions of meta-theoretical, self-reflexive natures could address:

- In what ways can the relevance of the study of culture in the face of emergencies/emergencies be articulated?
- (How) is the study of culture itself in a state of emergency?
- How can the study of culture be read as a vital method of intervention? What work does it actively accomplish?
- How does failure to imagine and cognitively grasp emergence – culturally and theoretically – lead to situations of emergency?
- From the perspective of the study of culture, what are the limitations of theories of emergence?

Contributions can deal with any of the above-mentioned topics, but are by no means restricted to them. *On_Culture* is an electronic platform geared toward all researchers interested in the study of culture. For an overview of the research areas that reflect new approaches and emerging topics in the study of culture:

<https://www.uni-giessen.de/fbz/faculties/gcsc/gcsc/research/research-areas>.

If you are interested in having a peer reviewed academic article featured in the pilot issue, please submit an abstract of 200 words with the article title and a short biographical note to content@on-culture.org no later than 30 September 2015 with the subject line “Abstract Submission.” You will be notified by 15 October 2015 whether your paper proposal has been accepted. The deadline for submitting the final paper is 15 January 2016.

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. Interested in contributing? Send your ideas to the Editorial Board at any time: content@on-culture.org