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Cultural Science

A multidisciplinary journal for the study of more-than-human culture

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Special issue: “With or Without Agency? More-than-human beings in science and traditional figurations”

Guest editors: Lena Springer (King’s College London) and Tony Milligan (King’s College London).

A hallmark of human civilization has been to see ‘culture’ as a defining feature of humanity, epitomized by approaching the ‘humanities’ as the study of culture. The open access journal ***Cultural Science: A multidisciplinary journal for the study of more-than-human culture*** radically breaks with this tradition and extends the domain of the study of culture beyond the human, to include multi-species and machine culture, and all forms of cultural hybridization in a more-than human world. ‘Cultural Science’ investigates structures, interactions, and processes of cultural systems at all levels of analysis and scales of application.

This special issue of Cultural Science will look at non-human and more than human agency, and why boundaries between actual agency and lacking, unfulfilled agency might not always be hard boundaries. Our understanding of agency has broadened in recent years, shaped by finer-grained descriptions in the biological sciences, and by concerns that historic Eurocentric dichotomies of causality versus choice, and mere teleology versus individual agency, may be obscuring our ways of thinking and making it harder to engage with indigenous cosmologies. Agency is difficult to pin down when lifeforms need to be discussed in relational terms, in the context of place, wider ecosystems, symbiosis and more-than-human cultures. Biology has already provided inspiring cases of quasi-agency, or what looks very much like the precursors of agency, such as reactive capabilities and even forms of problem-solving. A move of rejecting the concept of agency beyond the human, or at least restricting the agency concept to some subset of all animals, may still be tempting. Just as it is tempting to restrict the concept of culture in similar ways. Talk about agency and about cultures seem to go well together. However, it is not clear that we can engage in any such restriction without distorting our understanding of what human agency itself is like, and how it too involves a complex set of relations, a culture reaching beyond the individual (human) act. The aim of the special issue is to explore agency in more-than-human contexts, including *being without agency*. Authors may draw upon expertise in any agency-relevant field, from literature, art, philosophy, history, and religion, through to ethology and biology.

The journal adopts an open peer review process in which submissions are published as pre-prints on the journal pre-print website <https://culturalscience.org/>, after a first-round editorial check and approval. The editors decide whether or not the article fits the journal's scope and is a suitable fit for the special edition's peer discussion stage. After the public pre-print stage of debating with peers, the editorial board decides whether to accept a submission for publication in the regular online version of the journal <https://sciendo.com/journal/CSJ>.

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