

On_Culture Issue 20: Celebration (Spring 2026)

Deadline: Jun 1, 2025

Isabella Kalte

On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture.

Call for Abstracts for Issue 20 (Spring 2026): Celebration.

Celebrations—far more than mere expressions of joy or commemoration—function as complex social phenomena that reveal power dynamics, cultural transformations, and evolving relationships between humans and their environment. From a toddler’s birthday party with family and friends, to New Year celebrations with fireworks or public water fights (Songkran Water Festival), to pilgrimage festivals that attract up to 400 million pilgrims (Kumbh Mela), celebrations around the world and across cultures bring people together in appreciation and/or remembrance.

This forthcoming issue marks the 20th publication of On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture. Taking this anniversary as a cue for the issue’s focus, we invite scholars to examine contemporary social, political, and environmental dynamics through the lens of celebrations. For this issue, we invite contributions that move from analyses of birthdays and anniversaries to explore celebration’s more challenging dimensions: its complex cultural history, its environmental impact, its potential for exclusion, and its performative power in political contexts.

Research in cultural memory studies and related fields has provided valuable conceptual tools for investigating the role of celebration in community formation and temporal ordering. Scholars have drawn attention to such aspects of celebratory practices as rhythm (Lefebvre 2004), affect (Rusu & Kantola 2016), the role of interpersonal relations (Leeds-Hurwitz 2005), rites of passage (Redlich 2020), biodiversity and celebrations (Krishnamurty & Sahoo 2024), the perspective of minority communities and Indigenous peoples on established (national) celebration cultures (Drozdowski 2016).

The intersection of environmental pressures and minority experiences reveals particularly complex dimensions of celebratory practices. Climate-induced displacement, for example, impacts and transforms traditional celebrations. Such as in the case of Indigenous communities in the Arctic who are forced to adapt their seasonal festivities due to melting ice and, thus, face not only environmental challenges but also questions of cultural preservation and identity. Similarly, the discussion of Columbus Day celebrations in the United States reveals how national celebrations can serve as sites of contestation and revision. For many Indigenous peoples, such celebrations represent lingering (neo)colonial relations leading to movements to rethink commemorative practices like Indigenous Peoples’ Day. These dynamics raise crucial questions: How do communities negotiate between preserving traditional practices and responding to cultural/environmental imperatives? How might the very concept of ‘traditional celebration’ evolve in an era of rapid envi-

ronmental change and growing awareness of mechanisms of exclusion?

Furthermore, the role of media and narrative representations in shaping our understanding of celebration demands closer examination. From newspaper coverage of national holidays to literary depictions of personal celebrations, these representations contribute to our collective understanding of what constitutes appropriate or meaningful celebration. Leeds-Hurwitz's (2005) analysis of wedding anniversaries as the public component of private relationships demonstrates how celebrations navigate between personal and social spheres. The performative aspects of celebration manifest particularly clearly in political contexts. Presidential inaugurations, military parades, and state commemorations function as carefully choreographed performances of power and national identity. These events, through their staging, participant selection, and ritual elements, reveal how celebration can serve as a tool for political legitimation and community formation.

The nexus of symbolic order, ritual, performativity, social practice, and collective imagination at the core of celebrations invites a series of key questions concerning the cultural construction as well as the role of narrative, place and space, ritual settings, the cultural histories, economic relations, and the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion at work in celebrations. We invite contributions to engage with these issues and beyond.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Transcultural and historical perspectives of celebration
- Celebration as elements of cultural theory and practice
- Construction of (national) communities through practices of celebration
- Environmental impact of celebratory practices
- Evolution and adaptation of celebratory practices
- Media representations and narrative constructions of celebration
- Celebration as a tool of inclusion/exclusion in (minority) communities
- Performance in political celebrations (inaugurations, military parades, state commemorations, etc.)
- Impact of digitization on celebratory practices
- More-than-human dimensions of celebration (interactions with animals, plants, digital entities)
- Celebrations and Aesthetics/Aisthesis
- Queer interpretations, practices, and perspectives on celebrations
- Materialist perspectives and commodification of celebrations

If you are interested in having a peer reviewed academic article featured in this issue of *On_Culture*, please submit an abstract of 300 words with the article title, 5–6 keywords, a short biographical note, and your email address to content@on-culture.org (subject line "Abstract Submission") no later than June 1, 2025. You will be notified by June 15, 2025 whether your paper proposal has been accepted. The final date for full paper submissions is September 15, 2025 and the issue will be published in May 2026.

Please note: *OnCulture* also features *Perspectives*, 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 and can be connected to every one of *On_Culture*'s issues. Interested in contributing? Send your ideas to the Editorial Team at any time:

content@on-culture.org

OnCulture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture (ISSN: 2366-4142) is a biannual, Open Access peer-reviewed scholar-led journal edited by doctoral researchers, postdocs, and professors working at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) at Justus Liebig University 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. OnCulture 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*, as well as *Essays*, and the aforementioned *Perspectives*. *OnCulture* brings new approaches and emerging topics in 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 for which the journal strives with each new issue.

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.

Works Cited:

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Reference:

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