

Roundtable:

The future of culture in more-than-human worlds of being

Editorial

CARSTEN HERRMANN-PILLATH

Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt, Germany;

e-mail: carsten.herrmann-pillath@uni-erfurt.de;  0000-0001-6078-0078

Humanity is eager to explore outer space and anticipates encountering other intelligent beings in the future. However, we are beginning to understand that outer space is also part of the inner space of our planet: a vast universe of co-existing worlds inhabited by myriad living beings, as described in von Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt*: Every species defines a world centred on its capabilities and needs. These worlds are as objective as the physical reality, as they are embodied and evolve by the living beings' actions and interactions with other species. Philosopher Peter Godfrey-Smith notes that there are countless "other minds" here, almost entirely unknown to us. Additionally, the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence, which is evolving beyond human control, is creating entirely new forms of agency and powers to act, as described by Hayek, as a result of human action, but not by human design. Finally, there are the beginnings of creating "co-cultures" (a term coined by Sueur and Huffman) by deploying AI to understand animal communication. However, co-cultures have been with us throughout human evolution, such as humans playing with dogs.

The new transformation of the journal *Cultural Science* is being launched as a platform for the scientific study of these complex developments, indicated by the new subtitle (I do not recount the journal history here, which can be found in the journal mission section on the website). Culture is the medium through which these "other minds" express themselves, and it is no longer solely a defining difference between humans and other beings. We now acknowledge the existence of rich animal cultures and witness AI agents becoming cultural creators in their own right. Therefore, a scientific understanding of culture must move away from the human-centred approach.

The roundtable discussion in this volume sets the stage for this project, bringing together researchers from various disciplines to share their ideas about cultures that extend beyond the



OPEN ACCESS

Copyright: © 2022 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Cultural Science Journal is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Tallinn University, Erfurt University and Sciendo.

human realm. Since the journal is published in an open-volume format, this editorial does not provide an overview of the contributions, which will be the task of an editorial postscript. We have received contributions covering foundational philosophy, AI in music, the role of culture in Earth system sciences, semiotics as a window to animal cultures, and many more. I am grateful to all the contributors for endorsing this project. When considered together, these contributions outline the research program of a more-than-human cultural science.

Author information

Carsten Herrmann-Pillath (*1959) is a Professor and Permanent Fellow at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt and a Distinguished Visiting professor at Beijing Normal University. His transdisciplinary research covers economic philosophy, evolutionary, ecological and institutional economics, and Chinese studies. Over four decades he pursued transdisciplinary research on culture and was one of the founding members of the Cultural Science initiative in 2008. His recent books include *China's Economic Culture: The Ritual Order of State and Markets* (2017), *A New Principles of Economics: The Science of Markets* (2023) (co-authored with Christian Hederer), and *Embodiment, Political Economy and Human Flourishing: An Embodied Cognition Approach to Economic Life* (2024) (co-authored with Frédéric Basso). Forthcoming work includes *HAVINGS: Steps towards a New Economic Philosophy of Property and Beyond*. Websites: www.cahepil.net; technosphere.blog.