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An Understanding of the New Age Through the Lens of an Embodied Experience  
of the Sacred

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the Master of Arts

in

Anthropology

by

Guillermo Saldana-Medina

Committee in charge:

Professor Thomas Csordas, Chair  
Professor Janis Jenkins  
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University of California San Diego

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

An Understanding of the New Age Through the Lens of an Embodied Experience  
of the Sacred

by

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The thesis titled *An Understanding of the New Age Through the Lens of an Embodied Experience of the Sacred* is a writing of anthropological character which aims to explain how the New Age phenomenon manifests in the context of globalization.

From an Anthropological stance, the New Age is a cultural phenomenon of religious connotation. It is part of a process of Globalization of Religion (Csordas 2009) in the context of a Global Religious System (Beyer 2006). The New Age phenomenon is

embodied throughout the deterritorialized trajectories of its spiritual foragers (De la Torre 2013) in a quest for an experience of the Sacred as Otherness. The consequence of these trajectories is an intertwined rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) configured by a complex interconnection of eclectic elements gravitating around the experience of the sacred in a global society.

These concepts are used to demonstrate how the New Age manifests in the embodied experience of persons in concrete local contexts, maintaining a constant dialogue with the global dimension of the New Age. Three particular cases are analyzed regarding this objective: Aztec Dancing (Olivas 20014), Neomayanism and Deoceltism (2016,) and Neoshamanism (Itzhak 2015).

## **Overture**

### **Research question:**

How does the New Age phenomenon manifest in the context of globalization?

### **Hypothesis**

The New Age is a cultural phenomenon of religious connotation part of a process of Globalization of Religion (Csordas 2009) which configures a Global Religious System (Beyer 2006); the New Age is embodied throughout the deterritorialized trajectories of its spiritual foragers (De la Torre 2013) in a quest for an experience of the Sacred as Otherness. The result of this is an intertwined rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) configured by a complex interconnection of eclectic elements gravitating around the experience of the sacred in a global society.

### **Objectives**

#### **General Objective**

Understanding the New Age phenomenon in the context of global religiosity.

#### **Specific Objectives**

- Understanding the New Age in the global context of religion.



- Establish a definition of the New Age based on its history and manifestation as a cultural phenomenon.
- Develop a theoretical framework that allows us to understand the phenomenon of the New Age in its global and local dimensions.
- Analyze the phenomenon of the New age in local contexts through research in ethnographic literature.

## **Methodology**

This research paper was grounded in specialized literature about the New Age. In this process, common issues in the New Age phenomenon were identified through concepts from authors in the fields of anthropology, sociology and religious studies. Research of ethnographic papers allowed us to validate some concepts and discard others. Our conclusions are reflected at the end of this paper.

## Introduction

A convenient starting point, aimed at an understanding of the New Age, follows Beyer's (2006) consideration that it 'tends' to be an outsider term; the term has spread in the social imagery mostly due to its being recognized as a category in World Music or as a section in bookstores and libraries filled with books and magazines with spiritual and esoteric connotations. This paper is about the exceptions to this view of the New Age: the experiences and trajectories of the so-called New Age that 'may manifest' beyond reductionism and classifications.

The use of quotation marks in the last paragraph is not in vain, the people involved in the New Age are and are not part of organized Religion, they prefer the term spiritual instead of religious, but they include elements from World Religions ; they are and are not part of the 'nation state', they are inevitable citizens from somewhere, but they try to escape from national identities; they are 'are and are not' part of capitalism; they participate in a free market economy, sometimes they even make a living from their New Age practices, but not necessarily.

The New Agers are and are not part of the New Age itself; they are foragers navigating always an *intermezzo* and it is possible to trace their trajectories as an anthropological phenomenon. The focus of this paper is the quest for the experience of the Sacred in the people involved in the New Age. The persons who live the New Age, who develop it, perform it and renew it: concrete human beings with a human experience. This is why the key to understanding the New Age phenomenon in this paper is the notion of embodiment (1990) and the experience of the Sacred as Otherness (2004) in Csordas'

anthropological research. Upon grounding this phenomenological starting point, the notion of 'spiritual foraging' (Soares 2009) in De la Torre's anthropological papers (2012, 2013) was a means to understand the global trajectories of the New Agers.

The first chapter of this paper demonstrates how the New Age is a cultural phenomenon with religious connotations within the context of globalization; there is a configured 'Global Religious System' (Beyer 2006) from which the New Age emerges. There is a whole process of Globalization of Religion (Csordas 2009) of multidimensional characteristics that has its own autonomy, and the New Age is a clear exemplification of it. As we have stated, the New Age is characterized by the quest of the Sacred, and a pursuit of Otherness; this is the element that spreads and allows the New Age phenomenon to acquire a certain degree of consistency, and become traceable.

The New Age consists of a continuous and multiple flow of symbols, practices, commodities, temporalities, geographical and mythical places, as well as concrete and imagined communities. The New Ager is a forager who navigates through these multiple manifestations, but not as a passive wanderer or consumer; in fact the New Ager is the one in charge of setting the traces, that recreate and reconfigure the New Age. The New Ager is both a consumer and a producer, on this resides its subversive character (Soares 2009).

Chapter 2 sets out a historical path and definition of the New Age phenomenon. The distinction, outlined by Hannegraaff (1996), of a New Age *sensu stricto* and a New Age *sensu lato* is useful to have a clear image of its historical origins and how it derived into the global phenomenon that is present nowadays. The New Age is generally understood as a countercultural movement derived from the global disenchantment of the

post-war period. This historical moment allowed a generation of nonconformist people from hegemonic centers to look to the 'East' and to the 'South' for a new existential ground, towards a Reenchantment of the World (Csordas 2009).

The New Age emerged as a sort of aspiration of collective transformation through the literal 'culture' of Self in the Theosophical communities from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. From then on, the New Age was about a set of discourses and practices about the Transformation of the Self. Hanegraaf also considers this as a psychologization of the Sacred, an overlapping of spiritual and secular thought that derived in a cultivation of Self according to a well-being which did not necessarily mean to detach from the economic and political context of the time: therefore the New Age adapted well to global market economies. But, as was mentioned before, religious phenomena are a given social reality and this does not mean that the New Age depends from the economic market forces: the New Age only depends from the trajectories of its followers as consumers and producers. By mid-20th Century, the New Age had merged with the countercultural movements, allowing new manifestations to arise as a psychedelic variation which expanded to popular culture and made it into some Academic areas, particularly Shamanism and Transpersonal Psychology. The New Age discourse also spread into the Scientific areas of Biology and Physics.

Chapter 3 is about the anthropological and philosophical concepts that allow an understanding of the New Age in the context of globalization. At first, the New Age logic shows a multilineal, multidimensional, uncentered and non-hierarchical logic. This is addressed by the concept of 'rhizome' from the post-structuralism of Deleuze & Guattari (1987); according to these authors, the rhizome works through multiple processes of

deterritorialization, a term that is used in the work by authors of the New Age phenomenon as Beyer (2009), Argyriadis & De la Torre (2012), De la Torre (2013) and Frisk (2001). The concept of 'spiritual forager' is more developed in order to understand the particularity of the authors that trace the trajectories of the New Age, and therefore, its manifestation as a global phenomenon; these trajectories are characterized by the quest of the Sacred. The foragers aim is set towards an encounter with the Sacred; the embodied meaning to Sacred is the experience of Otherness which is mediated by specific practices that intersect with each other in the context of globalization. The New Age is a 'matrix of sense' (De la Torre 2013) that constantly reconfigures distinctive discourses, symbols and practices to ground them in a 'holistic' terrain; according to this, the New Age is set beyond the dualism of cosmopolitan and peripheral cultures. The experience of the Sacred as Otherness (Csordas 2004) involves a transformation that is supposed to transform the Self; there is a notion of wholeness that is present in the work of Rappaport (1999) and Csordas (2001) suggesting a liaison of the self with the Otherness. Being transformed means the awareness of the self about Otherness. The confrontation of the Self with Otherness implies a self-transformation into wholeness.

Once some key elements were identified as a key to understanding the phenomenon of the New Age, Chapter 4 demonstrates how the New Age manifests in the embodied experience of persons in concrete local contexts, maintaining a constant dialogue with the global dimension of the New Age. The main concepts of rhizome/deterritorialization, spiritual/religious foraging and the experience of the Sacred as Otherness are conceptual tools in this chapter to understand the variations of each manifestation of the New Age. The particular cases addressed are Aztec Dancing (Olivas

20014), Neomayanism and Deoceltism (2016,) and Neoshamanism (Itzhak 2015). There was no particular criterion to studying/researching these specific practices; the goal of this chapter was to identify the variations of each local phenomenon through the concepts taken from the anthropologic studies of the New Age. Certainly, this process consisted in a continue process of alterned verification of ethnography and theory about a New Age.

## Chapter 1: Global Context

This first chapter is about the global context from which the New Age has emerged. The first clues to understanding religion as a global phenomenon were found in the ideas described in 'Globalization of Religion' (Csordas 2009) and 'Religious System of Global Society' (Beyer 2006). These references allow an understanding of the conditions from which the New Age currently manifests itself in the context of globalization. (De la Torre 2013, Sælid Gilhus & Suttcliffe 2013).

The notion of 'Transnational Transcendence' in Csordas (2009 1-2) allows for religious phenomenon to be situated in the contemporary context of globalization. It approaches religious intersubjectivity as an experientially compelling social phenomenon which transcends cultural borders and boundaries and is constantly updated. A common ground for the social phenomenon of religion is aspiring towards the sacred; it is necessary to consider that the modalities of subjectivity which compound the religious phenomenon are immersed in an institutional, ideological, cultural, social, and economic context, which nowadays coincides with a global social imagery; suggesting what Csordas denominates a 'reenchantment of the world.'

Besides the 'profane' (Eliade 1959) context, the phenomenon of religion keeps its phenomenological kernel of alterity (Csordas 2004), which allows an understanding of the global religious experience as a matter of 'otherness' into embodied existence. According to Csordas (2009), this means that it is possible to recognize the economic ground of religion and not necessarily stating that this means an absolute process of

commodification of religion. Indeed, religious activities are subject to market forces commodified in manifestations as spiritual services, media, books and icons. Nevertheless, according to Csordas (2009: 3): “It is more productive to understand globalization from the outset as a multidimensional process, with religion, popular culture, politics and economics.” It is necessary for anthropology, social sciences and religious studies to approach the global religious phenomenon as a multidimensional and active process of agency. According to Csordas it is more relevant to talk about the relationship between globalization and religion in terms of globalization of religion and understanding it beyond an unidirectional logic, that is from a globalizing center to passive periphery; the metaphor of a ‘shattered mirror’ (Csordas 2009: 3) is useful here to evoke the reproducibility of master narratives of religion in a ‘fractal’ pattern. On the other hand, it is necessary for the contemporary study of religion to validate how each narrative is updated and instantiated in local cultural settings. According to Csordas (2009: 3-4) it is possible to recognize global religious manifestation throughout a flow of global channels of “symbols, ideas, practices, moods, motivations”; the flow spread in a bidirectional way (center to peripheria and viceversa) and in a multidirectional way. This trait is also noticed by De la Torre (2012, 2013) and explained in processes of deterritorialization, territorialization, and reterritorialization which show the pattern of a ‘rhizome’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987); this last concept will be addressed in detail in the third chapter of this work as a resource to characterize the religious phenomenon in the context of globalization.

Throughout the complex multi-patterned logic of globalization of religion, Csordas (2009) points out a recurrent feature, the primordial sense of alterity or Otherness (Csordas 2004). This characteristic is based on the existential condition of embodiment



in the human subjects who manifest their religion in the context of globalization; As Csordas states, religion is “an inevitable, perhaps even necessary dimension of human experience” (2009: 4). The ‘spiritual’ quest for Otherness then appears as the main characteristic in religion which allows it to ‘travel’ throughout geographic and cultural space in the context of globalization.

An approach to the study of global religion which shows compatibility with the notion of ‘Transnational Transcendence’ in Csordas (2009) is a proposal made by Beyer (2006) who interprets the global dimension of religion as a ‘Global Religious System’. Beyer understands the contemporary dimension of religion as a ‘Modern Function System’, which explains the “specificity and selectivity of religion in the context of a society that has become truly global” (2006: 114). The main criterion to identify religion within this global context is basically “what has been historically constructed as religion; and which particular forms does it take” (Beyer 2006: 256). This notion of ‘Global Religious System’ allows the inclusion of new religious manifestations as the New Age phenomenon which is the central theme of this work. In this sense, Sutcliffe & Sælid Gilhus state that a heterogeneous constitution has, in fact, always been present in any religious manifestation, and that it is not only a characteristic of relatively recent religious manifestations like the New Age movement; in this case, the heterogeneity of religion has been updated in accordance to its specific sociocultural context: globalization, neoliberalism, (post)modernity; the only difference is that the intrinsic characteristics of global interconnectedness and flow of subjects, capital and information, has increased with the raise of global technology and is part of the logic throughout which the New Age

emerges. Sælid Gilhus & Suttcliffe (2013) make a point when referring to the study of contemporary religion adhoc with the one from Csordas and Beyer:

Our starting point is to see religion, as we do culture in general, as something mixed and fluid. This mixed representation appears in both a collective level, and an individual level. The data for religion in Western societies is entangled in different kinds of processes: for example, globalization, pluralization, individualization, secularization, re-sacralization and, of course, capitalism and mediatization. It means that religion situates as inherently dynamic and in a continual process of change; the New Age Spiritualities encapsulate that change. (Sælid Gilhus & Suttcliffe 2013: 12-13).

We will focus specifically on the religious manifestation of the New Age in the second chapter of this paper: first it was necessary to mention the global context from which this contemporary religious manifestation emerges. Other authors who offer a broad overview regarding the issue of the New Age and its relationship with globalization are Argyriadis & De la Torre (2012); who explain the new religious phenomena using Latin America as the starting point of her studies. Argyriadis & De la Torre (2012) base their argument in the work of Csordas of 'Transnational Transcendence' (2009) to state that the contemporary forms of globalization have an unprecedented impact in religious practices collected into concrete traditions and clearly identified territories, as well as specific social groups. Following Csordas, Argyriadis & De la Torre state that the process of transnationalization from the new religious movements contrasts with the global expansion of 'large religions,' which tend to be related to the Nation-State model derived from Imperialism. According to Argyriadis & De la Torre, the particularly new process of expansion regarding the new religious movements is supposed to occur, in her words, in reverse order from 'imperialist logic': "From south to north, from east to west, from the

peripheries to metropolitan centers, from subaltern cultures to hegemonic religions.” (Argyriadis & De la Torre 2012: 13).

The ideas put forward by Beyer (2006), Csordas (2009), Sælid Gilhus & Suttcliffe (2013) and De la Torre (2012, 2013) in regards to the study of global contemporary religion highlighted an intrinsic multidimensional and multilineal logic in which religion has adapted the locus of the religious phenomenon to global processes as the ‘embodied experience of the sacred as Otherness’ stated by Csordas (2004) is the point of inflection in which global practices and concrete subjects intersect. The experience of the Sacred is the fuel of the spiritual quest of contemporary subjects in a global world. De la Torre uses the term ‘spiritual seekers<sup>1</sup>’ (*buscadores espirituales*) to designate the specific actors of the new religious movements. Argyriadis & De la Torre (2012) explain that these particular seekers travel throughout Far East locations and Aboriginal Latin American territories in a quest for “exotic, ancient, magic and connecting-to-nature<sup>2</sup>” (p. 16) practices. These practices of the Sacred are the key of De la Torre’s approach to new religious movements under which the New Age can be included:

These dynamics of Transnational mobilization are object of studies from which we analyze new forms of creating networks, circuits and leaderships, but also new impulses of founding imagined nations which break through and transcend modern Nation-States.<sup>3</sup> (Argyriadis & De la Torre 2012: 16)

De la Torre’s (2013) term, ‘spiritual seekers’ has its basis in the term ‘forager’ (butineur) from the work of Soares (2009) related to religious foraging in Brazil. Soares

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<sup>1</sup>Translation from its original in Spanish.

<sup>2</sup>Translation from the original in Spanish: Exóticas, ancestrales, mágicas, o más ligados a la naturaleza. (Argyriadis & De la Torre 2012: 16)

<sup>3</sup>Translation from the original in Spanish: Esas dinámicas de movilización transnacional son objeto de estudios a partir de los cuales analizamos nuevas formas de crear redes, circuitos y liderazgos, pero también nuevos impulsos de fundar naciones imaginadas que atraviesan y trascienden los Estados-nación modernos.

underlines the productive character of the forager, its distancing from the logic of consumption which he situates on the side of the mere 'practitioner'; conversely, Soares points to a subversive character in the religious forager, at finding themselves in an intermezzo; in Soares's (2009) words, this subversive character "does not neglect the consumer side of the practitioner, but it does not favor it either<sup>4</sup>" (p. 79).

As we will explain in the Chapter 3, De la Torre's (2013) interpretation of the concept of 'religious forager', from which the present work departs to analyze the mobility of the New Agers evokes the multicentered and dynamic trajectories of deterritorialization of the model of the rhizome in Deleuze & Guattari (1987) which will be outlined in Chapter 3 of this work, focusing on the theoretical concepts proposed in this paper to analyze the phenomenon of the New Age.

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<sup>4</sup>Translation from the original in French: Elle ne néglige pas le coté consommateur du pratiquant, mais elle ne le privilégie pas non plus. (Soares 2009: 79)

## Chapter 2: Defining the New Age

The second chapter approaches the historical path of the New Age to allow understanding its solidifying as a global culture; we traced the New Age's transition from its *sensu stricto* to its *sensu lato* (Heelas 1996) and its interactions with the global market, which may derive in an imbrication of New Age and Capitalism, we will address this in Chapter 3. The references of the New Age come from literature which is specialized in his study as a sociocultural phenomenon (Beyer 2006, De la Torre 2013, Hanegraaff 1996, Heelas 1996, Melton 1992, Pike 2004, Sutcliffe and Gilhus 2013)

The New Age is generally considered as a counter-cultural movement that emerged in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the context of an 'epistemological crisis of the West' (Sanson 2009: 441) that came as a consequence of the disenchanting ontology of the Postwar Period. This existential crisis questioned the values and worldviews of the dominant Western Cultures. After both World Wars, the young educated middle-class in economically developed countries looked for alternative ways of living and understanding the world. This existential quest drove this alternative sector of Western Cultures to adopt symbols, practices, and ideologies from Non-Western Cultures (Heelas 1996, Melton 1992).

A common belief about the origin of the term 'New Age' is owed to earth's trajectory of precession, which manifests in cycles according to astrological eras based on the Zodiac signs with an approximate duration of two thousand years. It is assumed that at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the earth shifted from the astrological era of Pisces to the era or

the age of Aquarius. According to Hanegraaff (1996), this astrological transition and its implications of human existential renewal can be defined as New Age *sensu stricto*; it can be identified as a historical arising of the New Age in England and the United States associated with a shift in human consciousness. The so-called 'Age of Aquarius' is characterized by a longing for redemption, renewal and a desire to transcend Western values of modernity.

Authors of the New Age culture, such as Hanegraaff (1996), Melton (1992) and Pike (2002) trace the roots of the New Age *sensu stricto* to Christian Theosophy, an esoteric movement developed in the United Kingdom and the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, according to Pike (2004) the initiator of the idea of the New Age was the Theosophist Alice Bailey in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

Although the idea of a New Age was popularized by Alice Bailey in the early Twentieth Century, the term had been around at least since the American Revolution before it was used self-consciously by Theosophists like her who believed a "Master" would come to enlighten humanity and usher us into a new age. The concept picked up relevance as the 1960s counterculture looked toward the Age of Aquarius' future of peace and equality. Movements aimed at social and personal transformation that emerged or were given new meaning in the 1960s continue to shape New Age and Neopagan religions. Ideas about the expected new era vary among Neopagans and New Agers, just as they ranged in the 1960s from social revolution to communal escape from society. But most agree that it will include a changed dynamic between men and women, healthy diet, holistic healing practices and peacefulness. (p. 145)

This new variant of the New Age that can be identified by its appearance by the 1960s is denominated by Hanegraaff (1996) as the New Age *sensu lato*. It consists of a subjective quest for transformation undertaken by the contemporary individuality which unfolds into symbols, discourses, practices and lifestyles of individuals or groups of individuals in the 'post-modern' world. As Beyer (2006) states, "a fairly consistent trait of

the New Age visions are their emphasis on the individual self as the locus of spiritual religious authenticity and authority.” (p. 279)

New Age as a cultural phenomenon emerges from the classic form of the New Age *sensu stricto* and gradually adapts to the context of globalization and free market of late capitalism of the subsequent decades to the 1960s.

The key to understanding the phenomenon of New Age *sensu stricto* is what Hanegraaff (1996) identifies as the ‘psychologization of the Sacred’ which consists of intertwining secular with religious thought. This new trait of the New Age phenomenon implies a distinction from the first manifestation of the New Age which emerged on the side of American counterculture. The aspect of ‘psychologization of the Sacred’ in the New Age will be approached in detail later; until now, suffice to say that this feature allowed the New Age to be well adapted to the neoliberal economy of post-war capitalism without sacrificing its ideals of redemption, renewal, and the desire to transcend Western values of modernity. The founding ideals of collective transformation in the New Age remain, but not as a central feature. It is possible to state, as it will be demonstrated in this and subsequent chapters, that the aiming of transformation remained in an individual ‘embodied’ way adhoc with the individualistic contemporary culture of global market and late capitalism and became a sort of distinctive beyond the longing for the Age of Aquarius: as a matter of fact, as Hanegraaff notices, the New Age *sensu lato* absorbed and reconfigured the first manifestation of the New Age:

The New Age *sensu stricto* has survived as rather a clearly recognizable part of the New Age *sensu lato* (...) The New Age *sensu stricto*, as it survived into the late 1970s and 1980s, can be regarded as one of its components. In spite of the name, and in contrast to the New Age *sensu stricto* the expectation of an Aquarian Age is not necessary in order for a movement or trend to be part of the New Age *sensu lato*. Furthermore,

the New Age *sensu lato* has a comparatively strong American Flavor and has been profoundly influenced by the Californian counterculture. (1996: 97)

Hanegraaff's distinction of *sensu lato/sensu stricto* is important to understand the cultural history of the religious phenomenon of the New Age; the religious dimension of the New Age had been already explained in the last chapter of this paper. Accordingly, the historical distinction between an ideal emerged from Theosophy known as 'The Age of Aquarius' (Heelas 1996, Pike 2004) and its transformation into an entire cultural phenomenon of expanding dynamic practices, services, commodities and aesthetical styles; yet the New Age transformed into a way of life. As it is described by Heelas (1996), the New Age's transition from *sensu stricto* to *sensu lato*, as a consequence of the counterculture of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, is manifested and performed in embodied practices such as meditation and energy healing; in lifestyles in communion with nature and cosmos; and in cultural activities such as literature, music, and crafting. According to Heelas (1996), the New Age as movement agglutinated emergent religious movements inspired in different traditions:

One's initial impression is of an eclectic hotch-potch of beliefs, practices, and ways of life. Esoteric and Mystical Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Taoism enter the picture. Elements from 'pagan' teachings including Celtic, Druidic, Mayan, and Native American Indian. An exceedingly wide range of Practices —Zen meditations, Wiccan rituals, enlightenment intensive seminars, management trainings, shamanic activities, wilderness events, spiritual therapies, forms of positive thinking fall into the rubric. (p. 1)

Coinciding with Heelas' *sensu stricto/sensu lato* transition of the New Age phenomenon, Drury (2009) provides a wide tracking to the historical movement of the New Age and its further derivation into an extended cultural phenomenon. The New Age movement, combining its early influence from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Western Esotericism with mid-



20<sup>th</sup> Century counterculture, consolidates a compound of phenomena in one sole cultural manifestation with the label of 'New Age'. One of the more controversial aspects of the New Age which is currently particularly active is its psychedelic branch, which was promoted by 1960s counterculture intellectuals, such as Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, Richard Alpert and Terrence McKenna<sup>5</sup>. Besides the psychedelic branch, the influence of meditative practices from Buddhism, Taoism, Tai Chi and Yoga was also crucial in the quest for new embodied experiences of the Sacred; also, a renewed interest in 'occult' knowledge from practices such as Tarot and Kabbalah inherited from 19<sup>th</sup> Century esotericism must be taken into account.

According to Drury (2009: 72), the New Age shares a linkage with modern established academia since the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As far as the History of Religion, Mircea Eliade's work on Shamanism and Ancient Religions influenced to New Age seekers; Michael Harner's anthropological study on Shamanism and Neo-Shamanism (Hanegraaff 1996) is also relevant to the connection between New Age and academia. Another important source of interest, both for academics interested in spirituality and newagers interested in some sort of dialogue with academia, was the work of Carlos Castaneda. This work is supposed to be derived from Castaneda's own ethnographic research with Yaqui esoteric knowledge, a fact that has raised strong skepticism in academia. The main writers of a generation of scholars interested in

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<sup>5</sup>This paper is not focused, in a great extent, on the spread of the New Age through the internet, but in the trajectories and experiences of its actors. Nonetheless, an important actual characteristic of the New Age in actuality is its diffusion through social media in sites like Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, and even in documentaries in the Netflix platform. It is possible to find a vast quantity of forums, writing and audiovisual material about the authors of psychedelia mentioned here and the use of entheogens as Ayahuasca, DMT (the active substance from Ayahuasca taken from the toad *Bufo Alvarius*), LSD, Mushrooms, and Peyote. (The terms have capital letter because in the discourse of psychedelic culture entheogens are considered as sacred beings.)

spirituality are part of the constituent element mentioned by Hanegraaff (1996) in the New Age *sensu lato* mentioned before: the psychologization of the Sacred. A paradigmatic example of this aspect is Transpersonal Psychology, epitomized in authors such as Stanislav Grof, and Ken Wilber. This esoteric branch of psychology, and psychological branch of the New Age, show influences from the already esoteric psychoanalysis of Carl Gustav Jung and other Western and Eastern esoteric traditions such as Neoplatonism and Buddhism. Haegraaff suggests that another connection between science and spirituality, which show great influence in the New Age discourse, can be traced to the work of David Bohm and Fritjof Capra in Physics; and Francisco Varela, Ilya Prigogine, and Rupert Sheldrake in Biology.

The emergent tendency in the New Age *sensu lato* of psychologization of the Sacred, and conversely sacralization of Psychology, will be referred to here as psychologization/sacralization from now on. This process, according to Hanegraaff (1996) is inherited from Jungian Psychoanalysis, the American psychological movement of the New Thought of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and the Human Potential Movement of the 1960s:

What I referred to as psychologization of religion and sacralization of Psychology, in its various dimensions, is highly characteristic of New Age religion. It implies that the evolution of consciousness leads to a perfect gnosis or illumination, in which Self-realization and God-realization are one and the same. In order to assist in its own evolution, the mind creates “meaningful illusions” which hold spiritual lessons. Ultimately, all realities (inner realms, “higher realms”, as well as “normal” reality) are created by the “mind.” The fundamental New Age tenet that we “create our own reality” (a tenet, again, with various dimensions) is directly based on this fourth tendency. (p. 366)

The process of psychologization/sacralization defined by Hanegraaff coincides widely with an emerging ideology of free market characterized by a capitalist aim of

consumption embodied in the individual. Accordingly, throughout the material context of the New Age, the individual subject embodies part of the experience of the Sacred mediated by the processes of consumption and advertising from marketing media technologies. In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, globalization exponentiated the intrinsic complexity of the New Age by spreading the phenomenon globally through technology and free market. According to Frisk (2001), the New Age's context of communication and globalization is characterized by a shared system of meanings that are not restricted to a specific territory. In order to refer to the global logic of the New Age, as De la Torre (2012, 2013), Frisk uses the term of 'deterritorialization' from Deleuze & Guattari (1987) to explain the explain New Age's dynamic, multicentered and multidimensional characteristics:

One of these deterritorialized transnational cultures is the New Age. What we call 'New Age' (I will no longer address here the problem of definition) may look slightly different in different places around the globe, but the main characteristics are almost identical everywhere. The New Age could, for example, be seen as a large-scale, decentralized religious subculture that draws its principal inspiration from sources outside the Judeo-Christian Tradition, as eclectic teachings and practices centred [sic] around Self-spirituality, as a transformative vision of a New World and a New Human Being or as a smorgasbord of concepts from different cultures, with a focus on healing and multicultural methods to reach the healed condition (Frisk 2001: 32)

Throughout the process of deterritorialization in the New Age phenomenon, the transformative vision of Self-Spirituality is the element of psychologization/sacralization (Hanegraaff 1996) which travels (deterritorializes and reterritorializes) and remains among the multiple global manifestations of the New Age. Csordas' (2009) metaphor of the shattered mirror is quite relevant when trying to understand the reproducibility of the

common pattern of the New Age, which appears to be the quest for transformation throughout the experience of the Sacred as 'Otherness' (Csordas 2004).

The New Age as *sensu lato* originated as a critique of Western dogmatic values adopting Non-Western visions of the world. Through a new process of syncretism in its later *sensu stricto* variation, the New Age adapted Non-Western elements to the capitalistic idea of freedom, individuality, differentiation and consumption. These aspects began to emerge since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century and were consolidated at its end and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with free market globalization. According to Hanegraaff, the New Age *sensu lato* is an aspect of 'global americanization' (2001), a vehicle of the dominant values of modernity from North Atlantic hegemonic cultures. Hanegraaff (1996) also states that the Western values of Democracy and religious freedom converge in the New Age in consonance with the dynamics of global market:

While this market system is based upon the recognition of individuality and diversity, its basic rules are themselves not subject to negotiation by any of its customers: the global market system as such is essentially imposed upon individuals and cultures, whether they like it or not. They are free to choose within the limits of the system in the first place. Clearly, it would be a sentimental misconception to perceive the global market as of the various cultures of the world 'growing closer to one another' (Hanegraaff 2001: 16)

Heelas (1996) suggests that the New Age phenomenon in general "epitomizes central features of modernity" (p. 4). The New Age highlights relevant aspects of Western modern "cultural values, assumptions and difficulties, all set in connection with cultural change" (Heelas 1996: 4). Hanegraaff's definition (2001) of the New Age as secularized esotericism through a process of psychologization/sacralization (p. 486) makes an emphasis on the empirical "primacy of the religious experience" as a rejection of reductionism, such as dualism or materialism. The New Age in its contemporary

manifestation embraces a holistic approach to the Sacred through its process of psychologization/sacralization. The holistic stance of the New Age is coextensive to a postmodern multi-lineal, anti-hierarchical and non-dualistic logic (even ideology) addressed by Deleuze & Guattari (1987) through the concepts of 'rhizome' and 'deterritorialization'

The New Age may appear as a paradigmatic, spiritual manifestation of late capitalism, which performs multiple logic across its processes of commodification, expansion and hybridization. The New Age could be seen as a type of Western 'spiritual imperialism' or 'spiritual marketplace' (Finke, Stark, and Rook in Csordas 2009) in charge of commodifying and setting spirituality *à la carte* to consumers. The idea that the New Age is a spiritual marketplace may be valid but it is also reductionistic. The core of the New Age—as religious creativity and as a spiritual phenomenon—remains intact independently of its political system and economic mode of production because the experience of the Sacred is grounded in a particular and existential dimension of a body or an intersubjective connection of bodies with all its materiality. The Sacred is embodied as an experience of the mystic, the transcendent, the ultimate unity, and Otherness (Csordas 2004). According to Csordas (2009) it is necessary to understand religion as a "given social reality" (2009: 3) and as a multidimensional autonomous process as it was stated in Chapter 1. Global markets and Global religious systems may share the same multidimensional and multicentered logic but this does not mean that religion in the context of globalization is a mere epiphenomenon of global economy. They may overlap and share strong connections as in the more commodified aspect of the New Age *sensu stricto* but the existential quest of the Sacred within the trajectories of the New Age

'foragers' seems to navigate even beyond the logic of free market—as it will be explained in Chapter 3, and demonstrated in Chapter 4.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

Chapter 3 sets a theoretical framework which will be demonstrated in the ethnographic works addressed in Chapter 4. This theoretical framework was developed from researching the literature of global religion, the New Age movement itself, and the specific ethnographic cases addressed in this thesis.

Once the global context and the definition and the history of the New Age were grounded, it becomes possible to recognize specific anthropological concepts which allow one to characterize and understand specific local manifestations of the New Age. The suggested key to understanding the New Age is a compound of three concepts:

- Rhizome/Deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari 1987): Concepts referred in the anthropological/sociological work of Argyriadis<sup>6</sup>, Beyer, Frisk, Argyriadis and De la Torre.
- Religious Foraging (Soares 2009, De la Torre 2013)
- Embodied Experience of the Sacred as Otherness (Csordas 2004, Eliade 1959, Rappaport 1999)

#### **Rhizome/Deterritorialization**

The notion of rhizome/deterritorialization is useful to understand the logic of multiplicity and interconnectedness of globalization. In the contemporary world, the phenomenon of religion is part of this context, and the New Age is an important point of

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<sup>6</sup>In her work together with De la Torre. (2012)

reference to understand the global variations of religious experience. The locus of this thesis about the New Age is the embodied experience of the Sacred (Csordas 2004) which can be found in the discourse of its actors and ethnographic work about them (Farahmand & Rouiller 2016, Olivas 2014 and Itzhak (2015). In fact, the quest for this experience of Otherness is what fuels the global and local trajectories of the actors of the New Age as foragers. It is necessary to consider that New Agers are both consumers and producers in a context of a global market, but also their 'foraging' character will sometimes allow them to navigate outside from global capitalism in a certain way.

Anthropologists state that the New Age is a cultural manifestation of religious connotation. It is possible to develop an anthropological study of the New Age considering the practices, the symbols and the discourses embodied by its actors. It is possible to identify an eclectic background of cultural manifestations in a unique cultural and religious phenomenon. The term religious bricolage<sup>7</sup>, introduced by Beyer (2006), has not been introduced in vain. It is used to identify the complexity of the New age which represents a clear epitome of the Global Religious System he identifies in the contemporary religious phenomenon:

The existence and even increase of phenomena like the New Age, the proliferation of new religions (together with their occasional disappearance), and personal or informal group religious *bricolage* are prime symptoms of the dynamism and social importance of this religious system [The Global Religious System], not just occurrences that highlight the contingency, historicity, selectivity and out-and-out ambiguity of the entire affair. (Beyer 2006: 297)

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<sup>7</sup>In the *Savage Mind* (1966), Lévi-Strauss defines a bricolage as a process from structural logic which consists in accumulating heterogeneous fragments in a same unity for indistinct goals. It is possible to find this structure in myths, in ancient artwork, in indigenous medicine and in contemporary art settings. Deleuze & Guattari (1980) refer to this concept in the first volume of the work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, The anti-Oedipus*, for explaining the 'weak' epistemology that would be developed in the second volume 'A thousand plateaus' (1987) with the notion of rhizome.



Beyond the commodification and technologization processes from globalization in which religion has been immersed, there is still a human agency deciding what to take and what to leave from all the possibilities offered by the media and the market. The New Age, itself, manifests as an authentic creative process of new spiritualities. As it was stated in the last chapter, even though religion may be subject to commodification and market forces in certain aspects which configure an economy of religion as “global travel (...), films, tapes, books, icons, holy pictures, statues, or relics” (Csordas 2009: 3), as Csordas states, religion is not determined by its economic dimension (2009). It is possible to affirm that in there is still a space for agency and re-appropriation of meaning in the New Age as religious phenomenon beyond the market forces.

According to the suggestion of the New Age as a *bricolage*, expressed by Beyer (2006), the New Age can be considered an instance provider of meaning that re-conceptualizes and agglutinates the religious practices while keeping the embodied experience of the Sacred as Otherness, which from Phemonenological Anthropology can be considered as the kernel of religion (Csordas 2004). The condition of the New Age as a source of meaning allows the conceptualization by De la Torre (2013) of this phenomenon as a ‘matrix of sense’:

[the New Age] is a matrix of sense which translates and re-semanticizes the practices as holistic ones (the broad content into particular): therapeutics for healing body and spirit, psychologies which guide to individual growth and establish harmony with cosmos and nature, generators of energy flows and vibration potentialities which connect the inner self with nature and the cosmos (p. 34)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Translation from its original in Spanish: [New Age] es una matriz de sentido que traduce y resemanticiza las prácticas como holísticas (el todo contenido en lo particular): terapéuticas para sanar el espíritu y el cuerpo, psicologizantes que guían hacia la autosuperación individual y establecen armonía con el cosmos y la naturaleza, generadoras de flujos energéticos y potencialidades vibratorias que conectan el yo interior con la naturaleza y a ésta con el cosmos. (De la Torre 2013: 34)

As Csordas (2009: 3) states, there is an economy of global processes in which 'global religious actors must contend'; the actors of the New Age are the ones in charge of 'translating' and 're-semantizing' (De la Torre 2013) the spiritual practices which a globalized world provides. The New Agers, according to De la Torre (2013) are explorers of alternative spiritualities and spiritual seekers; the author states that "the New Agers looked for answers beyond likeness, and directed themselves to the encounter with Otherness, specially within those realities which have been underestimated and even denied by the Western glance: The East, nature, the aboriginal world" (p. 37). It was in this way that the New Agers undertook a spiritual quest throughout the esoteric and Otherness.

### **Religious Foraging**

De la Torre (2013) provides an illustrative explanation of Soares' concept of 'Religious Foraging' (2009) as an analogy for the process of pollination in nature, it resembles the spiritual quest of the New Agers throughout the multiple manifestations of religion in its global context:

The metaphor of religious pollination *butinage religieux*, adapted by Edio Soares (2009) to illustrate the religious experience in Brazil as a journey in which the religious process assemblages, results extremely suggestive to illustrate that the bees and the hummingbirds not only look for feeding from the pollen from flowers, thus generating their own 'multi-pollen' meal (in analogy to buffet and *à la carte* menu), conversely, it also suggests that at wandering and tasting flower-by-flower, they [the bees and hummingbirds] become transmitters of pollen which transmit from one specie to another, in such a way generating mutations and hybridizations between different kinds of plants. Similarly to the pollinators, the New Age seekers not only experiment ritual and borrow scraps from the religious traditions which they visit to assemblage their *à la carte* menus, yet, through

their trajectories, they knit<sup>9</sup> connections, circuits and cultural exchange networks. (De la Torre 2013: 38)<sup>10</sup>

The way in which De la Torre (2013) uses the term of 'religious foraging', taken from Soares (2009), strongly evokes the concepts of Rhizome and Deterritorialization from Deleuze & Guattari (1987), therefore it is relevant here to define the way these terms from French Post-Structuralism try to provide a common ground to the contemporary anthropological approach to the phenomenon of the New Age. The term of 'Deterritorialization' is also used by Argyriadis & De la Torre (2012) to explain the process of transnational mobility of the actors of these new religious movements. Argyriadis & De la Torre affirm that international exchange networks and 'imagined communities' are "involved in a movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization which is often nurtured from an 'original' nation or a 'promised land.'"<sup>11</sup> (2012: 23)

The New Age, as an alternative manifestation in the context of a Global Religious System (Beyer 2006) and Transnational Transcendence (Csordas 2009), shows a multilinear, multidimensional, uncentered, and non-hierarchical logic which spreads globally through the trajectories of the spiritual foragers in their quest for the Sacred, the ultimate Otherness. The concept of 'rhizome' from Deleuze & Guattari (1987) defines this

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<sup>9</sup>The act of knitting an heterogeneous patchwork of scraps of cloth also resemble the idea of *bricolage*.

<sup>10</sup>Translation from the original in Spanish: La metáfora de la polinización religiosa *butinage religieux*, adaptada por Edio Soares (2009) para ilustrar la experiencia religiosa en Brasil como un viaje en el que el proceso religioso se va armando, resulta sumamente sugestiva para ilustrar que las abejas o los colibríes no sólo buscan alimentarse del polen de las flores, y con ello generar su propio platillo "multipolen" (en analogía con el bufet y menú a la carta), sino sugiere también que al andar probando de flor en flor, se convierten en transmisores del polen que transportar de una especie a otra, generando así mutaciones e hibridaciones entre distintas clases de plantas. De manera similar a los polinizadores, los buscadores *new agers* no sólo experimentan rituales y toman prestado retazos de tradiciones religiosas que visitan para armar sus menús a la carta, sino que con sus tránsitos tejen conexiones, circuitos y redes de intercambio cultural. . (De la Torre 2013: 38)

<sup>11</sup>Translation from the original in Spanish: [redes internacionales de intercambio y] "comunidades imaginadas" involucradas en un movimiento de desterritorialización y de reterritorialización que a menudo se nutre del imaginario de una nación 'original' o de una Tierra Prometida. (Argyriadis & De la Torre 2012: 3)

kind of logic, a rhizome is a compound of multiple deterritorializations and reterritorializations; it is not in vain that authors such as Argyriadis (2012), Beyer (2006), Frisk (2001) De la Torre (2011, 2012, 2013) make use of these concepts in order to explain the new religious manifestations in the context of globalization, particularly in the case of the New Age in Frisk and De la Torre<sup>12</sup>. But how are the concepts of rhizome and deterritorialization outlined in their authors? The rhizome is a kind of underground horizontal stem in botany which is the image that Deleuze & Guattari use to resemble an intertwining of uncentered multiplicities. These multiplicities consist of lines which are defined by the 'outside' in which a process of 'abstract lines', 'lines of flight' or 'deterritorialization(s)' is traced; throughout this 'outside' process the lines are able to change nature and trajectory, as well as connect with other multiplicities. In the words of Deleuze & Guattari (1987):

Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad. (p. 9)

The function of deterritorialization is explained by Deleuze & Guattari (1987: 508) as "the movement by which 'one' leaves a territory" and the "operation of a line of flight." The authors affirm that deterritorialization itself has many conceptual connotations. This is the reason why in some parts of this work the concept was referred as a triad:

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<sup>12</sup>Beyer (2006) uses the term of 'deterritorialization' to explain the 'exile' status of the relatively new Bahai'i religion, which has demonstrated a good adaptation to the process globalization:

The formative periods of Baha'I development occurred, not only 'in exile', but without the movement having its authoritative and demographic centre of gravity in only other place. While that made it comparatively easy for it to fashion itself immediately as a 'world' religion, this deterritorialization also emphasized its de-traditionalized quality. (Beyer 2006: 262)

deterritorialization-territorialization-reterritorialization. According to Deleuze & Guattari (1987), “deterritorialization may be overlaid by a compensatory reterritorialization obstructing the line of flight: deterritorialization is then said to be negative” (p. 508). This clarification means that a ‘line’ or element in deterritorialization abandons a territory or a ‘state of being’, it may stabilize in a new territorialization which can be considered a Reterritorialization, and then it may deterritorialize again: in the process of Deterritorialization there is always an element which travels becoming itself a sort of line: a line of flight.

As it has been stated before, a Rhizome is intertwined by a multiplicity of trajectories; the New Age can be understood in general throughout processes of geographical deterritorialization (Frisk 2001, De la Torre 2011), understanding its trace from North Atlantic hegemonic centers, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, to local reterritorialization(s) in non-hegemonic societies, such as Latin America, as De la Torre observes:

Despite the New Age emerges in Anglo-Saxon countries with a high industrial development, counting with traits that identify it as a movement of mobility, proclaiming a culture based in individualism and self, cosmopolitanism, universality and cultural relativism; in ethnographies realized in Latin America we can see its adaptation to the practices of popular religiosity, which confers it new traits: it enroots and contributes to recreate the territory. [New Age] is practiced in an individual manner and it is celebrated in a collective way, it traditionalizes and re-ethnizes; Finally, as it generates hybridism, it can contribute to the relativization of frontiers and cultural differences, and to the essentialization of ethnic, national and racial [sic] traces of religiosities as well. Nonetheless, it is also truth that neither all the countries nor the traditions assimilate and embody it in the same way, neither with the same intensity and receptivity (De la Torre 2015: 35).

Following De la Torre, is possible to assume that the process of deterritorialization intrinsic to the rhizomatic logic of the New Age seems to reproduce *ad infinitum* : New

Age re-appropriations from the 'peripheral cultures' seem to emerge re-territorialized among the cosmopolitan cultures, and conversely; the process continues indefinitely.

The shift of the New Age from *sensu stricto* to *sensu lato* can be regarded as some sort of 'conceptual' deterritorialization. Following the idea that the process of deterritorialization is polymorphic and is not restricted to mere geographical territories. It can be assumed that the New Age was embodied as a concrete historical movement among the Theosophical community at its beginning, and then it transformed into an extended cultural 'rhizomatic' phenomenon potentiated by its secularization through the American 20th-century psychology influenced by Theosophy, the New Thought and Carl Jung (Hanegraaff 1996); in such a way the New Age was ready to 'travel': to adapt and keep deterritorializing in the context of globalization that was consolidated at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This process changed the experience of the Sacred (Eliade 1959, Rappaport 1999, Csordas 2004) from the early Apocalyptic New Age and the religious manifestations in general. Furthermore, the New Age phenomenon emerges nowadays from the material and political conditions of the globalization era (Hanegraaff 1996, De la Torre 2003, Sutcliffe & Sælid Gilhus 2016, Frisk 2001). The New Age is a conundrum; it appears to be decentralized and rhizomatic spirituality which manifests through a wide set of symbols, commodities, and practices; yet is understood as a linear dialectical reconfiguration of modernity and capitalism itself: a negation of the negation.

It is, at this point, necessary to mention that New Age indeed can be explained from its transformation from *sensu stricto* to *sensu lato* as a process of deterritorialization. According to Deleuze & Guattari (1987) the process(es) of deterritorialization may refer literally to processes of mobility and change through specific geographical territories, but

these are not necessarily restricted to these areas: “Anything can serve as a reterritorialization, in other words, ‘stand for’ the lost territory: one can reterritorialize on a being, an object, a book, an apparatus or system” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987 508). In this way, the processes of commodification present in the New Age *sensu lato* can be considered as multiple reterritorializations which were deterritorialized from New Age *sensu stricto*.

What globalization has done to religion in our era is to codify or deterritorialize its symbols and practices, blurring frontiers and expanding knowledge and visions of the Sacred in the form of commodities and services, or even the more deterritorialized and intangible manifestations such as the ones that can be found with social media as forums and virtual communities. But as it has been stated before global market does not determine the New Age as a religious manifestation because it is yet a given social reality (Csordas 2009). In the terms of Deleuze & Guattari (1987) New Age cannot be a ‘representation’ of global market; New Age and Capitalism are both rhizomes which in some sectors may intertwine a New Age Capitalism. The foraging trajectories of the New Agers navigate an *intermezzo*, they can subscribe to the commodification of spirituality generating imbrications throughout their trajectories with global market, but also escaping from it.

A particularly newfangled way to understand the imbrications between New Age and contemporary capitalism is the proposal of Mikaelson (2013). Following Weber’s view on the relation of protestant ethics and capitalism, Mikaelson affirms that neoliberal capitalism, throughout its global marked manifestation, pursues a logic that coincides broadly with that of the individualistic, multidimensional and fluid New Age. This particular

logic can be found in the notion of 'energy' in the New Age, which implies that its discourse and practices can become a currency capable of being commodified and monetarized. Mikaelson (2013: 166-167) identifies the capitalistic ethics of the New Age in authors who inherited the Theosophical teachings of Krishnamurthi like Deepak Chopra, Shakti Gawain, and Stuart Wilde. The tracing of Mikaelson of the New Age to its Theosophical influences is analogous to the stance of Hanegraaff (1996) and Heelas (1996). The specific doctrinaire aspect of the New Age that is compatible with some of the ethics of late capitalism is referred to by Mikaelson (2013) as 'Prosperity Teachings':

The argument made (...) is that the character and function of money is projected onto the concept of energy in New Age. This becomes particularly visible in prosperity teachings, which have become increasingly important since the 1960s. Prosperity teachings propose that money is energy and that handling money is therefore a question of using energy laws, like "flowing" and "magnetism" (p. 166)

Another mention of energy in the literature about the study of the New Age can be found in Hanegraaf (1996) which addresses the same overlapping that Mikaelson (1996) is advertising within New Age and capitalism; it is not that money and energy in the New Age, but as Mikaelson states, the function of money is projected to energy. Once that energy can be commodified through services and products the possibility of setting a price emerges, in such a way that money and energy overlap. This coincides with the argument stated before that religious manifestations sometimes intertwine with capitalism, but the nomadic character of the religious forager is capable of tracing 'lines of flight' from the process of commodification of capitalism.



The New Age capitalism quantifies money as several possibilities of access to the Sacred: 'Do it yourself' and holistic books, forums, tutorials, spiritual goods, healing services, alternative entertainment, spiritual tourism. Nonetheless, the practices and commodities of the Sacred of the New Age go beyond the mediation of commodities, and from the 'services' provided by neoshamans, healers and priests in the socio-political contexts of dogmatic and institutionalized religion. The 'line of flight' of the spiritual foraging, the element of deterritorialization that is un-attainable for capitalism and dogma is his nomadism<sup>13</sup>, his openness into a multidimensional and autonomous process of globalization of religion (Csordas 2009). The spiritual forager navigates always an *intermezzo* state, being part of continuous a process of deterritorialization. The rhizomatic trajectories of the religious forager are the epitome of the current Religious System of Global Society' (Beyer 2004); the New Age would only have been possible in this context.

### **Embodied Experience of the Sacred as Otherness**

The phenomenon of the New Age manifests due to the spiritual quest of its actors searching to experience of the sacred. This experience is a phenomenological state that Csordas (2004) defines as the experience of Otherness; this issue will be approached

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<sup>13</sup>Following De la Torre (2012) the new ager can be considered as a nomad in the broad sense of the word; it is interesting to notice the parallelism with Deleuze & Guattari (1987) in their own notion of nomad in which can be found some religious connotations:

It may be observed that nomads do not provide a favorable terrain for religion [in this case, institutional religion]; the man of war is always committing an offense against the priest or the god. The nomads have a vague, literally vagabond "monotheism," and content themselves with that, and with their ambulant fires. The nomads have a sense of the absolute, but a singularly atheistic one. The universalist religions that have had dealings with nomads—Moses, Mohammed, even Christianity with the Nestorian heresy—have always encountered problems in this regard, and have run up against what they have termed obstinate impiety. (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 383)

deeply at the end of this chapter, but here it is necessary to state that this state of being implies a transformation which is aimed and embodied by the spiritual quest of the New Age. Accordingly, Melton (1992) explains that transformation is a constant within the phenomenon of the New Age:

The message of the New Age movement is its aim of transformation. Exponents of the New Age have undergone a personal transformation which changed their lives. They have witnessed a similar change in others and believe it possible that every person can also be transformed. Very real spiritual energies are available to create change and numerous techniques function to harness that energy to produce change. Most of the various New Age activities aim at facilitating that personal transformation through diverse activities such as bodywork, spiritual disciplines, natural diets, and renewed human relationships. (...) But if personal transformation on a large scale is possible, argues the New Age, then social and cultural transformation is also possible. The world can be changed from the crisis-ridden, polluted, warlike, and resource-limited world in which we live into a New Age of love, joy, peace, abundance, and harmony. (Melton 1992: 19)

The argument of Melton coincides with Hanegraaff's (2001) approach towards to the New Age, which identifies a shift in consciousness that can even be traced back to the New Age's origins towards its rhizomatic consolidation through 20<sup>th</sup> Century until nowadays:

Countless authors have repeated the same message: we need to 'heal the world,' put an end to global fragmentation by a new vision of planetary wholeness, and bring the cultures and religions of the world together by overcoming dogmatic boundaries and emphasizing the universal wisdom traditions common to all of them. (Hanegraaff 2001: 16)

De la Torre (2013: 32) notices that the New Age is 'disperse spirituality'<sup>14</sup> (espiritualidad dispersa) which implies heterogeneous experiences of the Sacred. Through different experiences of the Sacred and the relative accessibility to a great variety of practices in a globalized world, the New Age spreads the ideal of transformation

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<sup>14</sup>Translation from its original in Spanish.

of individuals and the promotion of a collective self-transformation with global, political and even environmental implications.

The New Age is a new vision of the world, it implies a 'new age' in the broad sense of the word. According to De la Torre (2013), "it's way to relate with the Sacred is strictly personal and non-institutional, it operates as a system of informal networks, in which sympathizers share universal utopias which can be granted through the transformation of individuals.<sup>15</sup>" (p. 32) The process of transformation that the New Age aims to achieve is a matter of self-transformation. It starts with human subjectivity and then tends to spread towards human collectivity, the environment, and the world. The transformation of the New Age can be understood through a phenomenological approach towards the experiences of the Sacred in the New Age, which is a process of embodiment (Csordas 1990, 1993).

The proper way to understand the 'rhizomatic' New Age is through the embodied experience of transformation in consciousness, which is mediated by the discourses of its masters, the practices of its healers and neo-shamans, as well as the interaction with sacred objects that can be commodified (but not necessarily) in the context of a New Age capitalism. The heterogeneous identity of the New Age adepts is a result of this; after all, a hybrid multicultural subjectivity seems to be well adapted to the postmodern ethos. The transformation aimed by the New Age does not detach spirituality from capitalism, but it neither ossify them: New Age's transformation allows its foragers to navigate an

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<sup>15</sup>Translation from its original in Spanish: Cuya forma de relacionarse con lo sagrado es estrictamente personal y no institucional, opera como un sistema de redes informales, cuyos simpatizantes comparten utopías universales, que podrían ser logradas mediante la transformación de los individuos. (De la Torre 2013: 32)

*intermezzo* it allows to gain knowledge of the sacred Otherness beyond the mundane, and to adapt to a globalized world at the same time.

The process of transformation pursued in the New Age practices is a consequence to the experience of the Sacred itself, which differs from the common experiences of the profane world. These experiences may be conceptualized as 'hierophanies' (Eliade 1959) and consist in the manifestation of a supreme otherness (Csordas 2004). According to Eliade (1959):

The Sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from "natural" realities. It is true that language naively expresses the *tremendum*, or the *majestas*, or the *mysterium fascinans* by terms borrowed from the world of nature or from man's secular mental life. (p. 10) The manifestation of the Sacred, regardless of its appearance in an object, a being or an event, is constitutive of the horizon of experience, and a phenomenological reality worth being approached through the anthropological notion of embodiment (Csordas 1990, 1993).

The difficulty when approaching the New Age is due to the degree of decentered heterogeneity, dynamism and fluidity shown in its manifestation as a global phenomenon. Nevertheless, New Age's ontological core as the embodied experience of the Sacred remains and adapts to the biopsychosocial and environmental context of human subjectivities.

The experience of the Sacred is fundamental in the esoteric knowledge of religion, and it is regarded in religious studies as 'gnosis'; Hanegraaff refers to gnosis as constitutive of the process psychologization/sacralization which pursues an evolution of

consciousness granted by the direct knowledge of the ineffable. Consequently, Hanegraaff establishes an epistemological definition of the concept:

Gnosis. According to this, truth can only be found by personal, inner revelation insight or “enlightenment.” Truth can only be personally experienced: in contrast with the knowledge of reason or faith, it is in principle not generally accessible. This “inner knowing” cannot be transmitted by discursive language (this would reduce it to rational knowledge). Nor can it be the subject of faith (in the above sense) because there is in the last resort no other authority than personal, inner experience. (p. 519)

The notion of embodiment is useful to understand the phenomenon of the New Age because the experience of the Sacred by the criterium of gnosis is experienced by the body in its relationship to the world and its existential conditions; this ‘inner knowing’ is explained in the field of phenomenological Anthropology by Csordas (2004) as an experience of ‘intimate alterity’. Based in the philosophical phenomenology of Merleau Ponty, Csordas (2004) states that this intimate experience of alterity corresponds to the reversibility of the ‘distance’ between the Self and Other.

According to Csordas (2004) this sentiment of alterity “in all its multitude of forms” (p. 171) can be considered the kernel of religious manifestation, thus “religion is predicated on and elaborated from a primordial sense of “otherness” or alterity (...). Alterity is the phenomenological kernel of religion (p. 164). Another approach to the Sacred, compatible with Csordas (2004) conceptualization of Otherness as the kernel of religious experience, can also be found in anthropological work of Rappaport (1999) in which he denominates the “Ultimate Sacred Postulates”:

Those crowning bodies of religious discourse, typically possess certain peculiar features. On the one hand, they can be falsified neither logically nor empirically. On the other hand, they can be verified neither objectively nor logically. And yet they are taken to be unquestionable. I take this characteristic to be on the essence, defining sanctity as the quality of

unquestionableness imputed by congregations to postulates in their nature objectively unverifiable and absolutely unfalsifiable. (Rappaport 1999: 281)

Csordas (2001) links the conceptualization of the Sacred in Rappaport with his conceptualization of embodiment as “the existential ground of our being in the world” (pp. 232-233). According to Csordas (p. 242), the Sacred in Rappaport can be considered in the context of cybernetics, mostly from the influence of Bateson’s epistemology (1979), which is characterized by integrating the mind, culture, and environment in a continuum.

From this approach, the Sacred may be considered a matter of ecology, and it links spheres of existence that appear to be dissociated such as the cultural and the environmental, the material and the ideal, through the embodiment. It is relevant in order to understand the ‘holistic’ stance of the New Age, which has a common premise of recognizing the Sacred in the environment; the idea of earth as Gaia, for instance, and the unity of humanity with nature. Rappaport himself remarked the etymological relation from the holy to ‘whole’ and ‘health’ (Csordas 2001: 241), and also reinforces, from his perspective, the argument previously stated that New Age is an authentic religious manifestation that has been updated to the contemporary phase of modernity. When referring to the planetary religious phenomena Csordas (2009) suggest that “in its religious dimension the edifice of globalization is a new babel”, and it is possible to affirm that the New Age is its ultimate ‘dialect’.

## **Chapter 4: Ethnographies of the New Age**

In the fourth and last chapter, the concepts stated in the theoretical framework are identified in three ethnographies of the New Age phenomenon.

1. Olivas, Olga (2014) *Danzando la identidad: apropiaciones de la tradición de la danza Azteca en la frontera de las Californias.*
2. Farahmand, Manéli. Roullier Sybille (2016) "Mobility and Religious Diversity in Indigenusness-Seeking Movements: A Comparative Study between France and Mexico."
3. Itzhak, Nofit. (2015) "Making Selves and Meeting Others in Neo-Shamanic Healing."

These particular ethnographies were the concrete manifestations that made it possible to develop the theoretical framework that is proposed within these pages, and it is possible that it can be used for future ethnographic research and anthropological analysis.

### **The Case of Aztec Dancing**

Danza Azteca —or Aztec Dancing— is a Tradition that has a long process of syncretism between Pre-Hispanic Cultures from in Mexico's Central Valley and European Christianity; now the New Age is part of the dynamics of globalization of Religion. It is possible to find an intertwining of identity and historicity in the elements which configure Aztec Dancing: the ritual aspect, the speech, the ritual objects, the clothing. From the

point of view of phenomenological Anthropology, Danza Azteca or Aztec Dancing is a manifestation of the Sacred as alterity or Otherness. Aztec Dancing embodies an intersubjective reality with other human bodies, with nature, and with the cosmos; all of it is reflected in the work of Olivas (2014) who has analyzed the practices, the discourse, and the imaginary of dances in California and Baja California.

### ***Rhizome/Deterritorialization in the Case of Aztec Dancing***

Aztec Dancing is an adaptation of the ancient dances inherited from the Aztec culture of central Mexico; several cultural and religious elements converge within Aztec Dancing such as the specific discourse, the symbols, the outfits, the rituals and the offerings to Mother Earth and to the Cosmos. Since these elements are reconfigurations from the original ancient dances, Aztec Dancing presently manifests itself as re-territorialized (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) in a contemporary context from its original practices. The current manifestation of Aztec Dancing also demonstrates a multilinear intertwining of cultures and temporalities from distinct origins: Aztec, Catholic, and the New Age itself.

The New Age shows its presence in Danza Azteca through the concepts expressed in this introduction. Olivas notices the relationship between Aztec Dancing and the New Age in the hybridity that characterizes its tradition of Mexicanity which is a consequence of the globalization of religion (Csordas 2009) from which New Age emerges. Olivas relates the case of Aztec Dancing with the understanding of De la Torre (2013) in regards to the New Age as a *sense matrix*.



[*Danza Azteca* tradition] throughout the 1980s the tradition related with the New Mexicanity or Neomexicanity, a hybrid expression which aims to integrate beliefs and practices manifested among the rituals of mexicanity with different cultural religious traditions (specifically, with traditions of oriental spirituality) in a same spiritual unity, which is resignified by the New Age matrix (Olivas 2014: 8)<sup>16</sup>.

As it has been stated in the previous chapters, the rhizomatic logic of globalized religion is embodied in the hybrid status of the foraging of its actors. The ‘Neo-Mexican’ identity form the Aztec dancers also known as *concheros* or *danzantes* documented in the ethnographic work of Olivas (2014) shows an inherent multiplicity throughout the hybridity of their shared discourses, practices and symbols. The *danzantes* demonstrate an appreciation which spreads beyond the border territory of Mexico and the United States.

Among the Aztec dancers’ communities it is possible to find the element of ‘foraging’ that sets a critical distance with capitalism; it is possible to recall here that the quest for the Sacred allows the foraging to navigate an *intermezzo* between the spiritual and the material, religion and capitalism. In the criticism of capitalism from Aztec Dancers, Olivas (2014) documents that they verbalize slogans such as ¡Vivan las luchas de liberación de todos nuestros pueblos! [Hurrah to the struggle for liberation of our peoples!] ¡Abajo el capitalismo! [Down with capitalism!] ¡Que muera el racismo! [Death to racism!]” (p. 214). It is necessary to consider that capitalism is a socioeconomic system that tends to negate itself and reconfigure; as long as the material conditions of capitalism remain, its critics only contribute to some degree of transformation.

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<sup>16</sup>Translation from the original in Spanish: Hacia los años ochenta la tradición se relacionó con la nueva mexicanidad o neomexicanidad, expresión híbrida, la cual busca integrar creencias y prácticas presentes en los rituales de mexicanidad con diferentes tradiciones culturales y religiosas (específicamente con tradiciones de espiritualidad oriental) en una unidad espiritual, resignificada por la matriz de lo new age. (Olivas 2014: 8)

### ***Religious Foraging in the Case of Aztec Dancing***

Olivas (2014) carried out an ethnography among three groups of dancers from different places respectively along California and Baja California: Tijuana, San Diego and Los Angeles. All groups share substantial similarities since they practice the same kind of dance, but each one has a differentiating factor specifically in the orientation and intentionality of their performance. In the case of Tijuana, the dancers consider their dance as a spiritual practice; in San Diego, the group characterizes itself by a search for identity rooted in the ancient Mesoamerican cultures; the group from Los Angeles shows a more political and activist agenda, which reinforces the Latin-American indent with the revindication of the ancient native.

The spiritual dimension is more evident in the case of the dancers that Olivas documented in Tijuana, but all the groups manifest hybrid symbols and practices regarding the dimension of the Sacred, which mainly consists of a veneration to Nature and Cosmos. The Aztec dancers conceptualize nature as a feminine being or as a mother, represented in the figure of Guadalupe/Tonantzin, which consists of the syncretism of mother Mary from Catholicism and Coatlicue the mother of the Aztec gods.

Additional ritual practices are common to the dance itself, performed by the groups of Aztec dancers. Documented by Olivas are the rituals of *Xilonen*, *Xochipilli* and *Xochiquetzalli*, where the young members of the community of dancers embody a performative act throughout their transition to adulthood; these rituals evoke cycles in nature. Another common practice is known as *siembra de nombre*; it is analogous to

baptism in Christianity, alluding to a rite of passage or transformation that is experienced by the initiated and supported by their collective community. All the groups documented by Olivas make offerings to nature; Aztec Dancing can be considered an embodied ritual offering as well. Through Aztec Dancing the subjectivity of the religious forager is part of a collective performance in relation to Nature and Cosmos: A liaison with the dimension of the Sacred as Otherness (Csordas 2004). Another recognizable aspect of ritual among the communities of Aztec Dancing that is important to mention is the tribute to the ancestors, a practice that traces back to the evidence of the first human settlements around the world, and a suggestion of belief of life after death which is a clear reference to the Sacred as a counterpart of the profane in mundane life.

### ***Embodied Experience of the Sacred as Otherness in the Case of Aztec Dancing***

The performative act of the Aztec dancers studied by Olivas shows the spiritual quest of their foragers moving towards the experience of the Sacred, and the transformation derived from its gnosis or sacred knowledge, an issue that has been approached in the third chapter of this work. Olivas documents in the groups of Aztec Dancing the ceremonies of *Temazcal* and *Velación*, previous to the performance of dance as part of a process of continuous transformation that extends to the dance itself. The group from Tijuana has a relationship with the spiritual growth of its members, and in the group from San Diego, each ceremony revendicates the pre-Hispanic identity still present in the Mexican and the Chicano imagery. The group from Los Angeles views Aztec

Dancing as a manifestation of struggle and political performance, part of a process of transformation in a multicultural and inclusive society.

The group of dancers from Tijuana express more defined spiritual connotations in their practices in comparison to the others. This group shows traits of Spiritual Foraging when embodying the Aztec Dancing “as part of a process of internal quest and inner work. (Olivas 2014: 371)<sup>17</sup>” Olivas also states that several members of the group from Tijuana participate in other practices that need to be considered as part of the New Age, such as the Western practices of Yoga and Reiki techniques. Another common practice that can be related to the psychedelic branch of the New Age, referred to in the second chapter, is the non-indigenous use of peyote aiming to modify consciousness. These New Age practices are part of the quest of the Sacred, characterized by the spiritual foragers which conduct themselves as some sort of nomads of consciousness.

The three groups of Aztec Dancing share important symbolism of spirituality. The ceremonies of preparation --such as *velación* and *temazcal*, constitute a variation of passage rites which prepare dancers emotionally, physically and spiritually for their performance. *Velación* is a ceremony in which dancers stay awake for extended periods of time the night before a dance performance. In this ceremony, the *danzantes* carry out chants and prayers and present offerings to the ancestors.

The group documented by Olivas in Tijuana has a practice of *velación* that is related to the *temazcal*, in which people gather in a closed room where water pours on incandescent rocks, and herbs are burned. A *temazcal* is supposed to purify the body, mind, and spirit. High temperatures and the lack of air lead *the danzantes* to a state of

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<sup>17</sup> Translation from the original in Spanish: [práctica de la danza azteca] como parte de un proceso de búsqueda espiritual y de trabajo interior.(Olivas 2014: 371)

modified consciousness, Olivas comments on the cosmic symbolism and the allusions to the womb of Mother Earth. These kinds of ceremonies are representations of the process of gestation and the birth of humankind, a clear experience of the Sacred, which is well documented in several perinatal matrices in the research of Grof (2002), about modified states of consciousness. This author was referred before in this work, regarding his relationship with the process of sacralization/psychologization of New Age, which is present in Transpersonal Psychology.

Aztec Dancing suggests an embodied experience of the Sacred as Otherness throughout the preparation from the *velación/temazcal* at first, to the performance of dance which occurs afterwards. The entire activity in itself is full of connotations about the connection between human subjectivity and nature and cosmos. The gnosis of the Sacred is facilitated with the burning of incense of and the sound musical instruments that are well known for inducing trances, such as drums and rattles. According to Olivas, the dancers express how music and movements make them feel like they are in a different state of consciousness, embodying and in complete harmony with Mother Earth and the cosmos. Olivas makes a reference to the concept of embodiment in Csordas 1990, 1993) to explain the phenomenology of the experience in the performers of Aztec Dancing. In the words of Olivas (2014):

I analyze the body dimension, focused on the process from which subjects recreate themselves and their cosmovision by the experience of the body in tradition, through the paradigm of embodiment [Csordas 1990]. To incarnate or embody the tradition of Aztec dancing integrates the physical, mental and spiritual experience, objectively, as well as

the subjectively and inter-subjectively of the dancers, relating to a way of being-in-the-world bound to tradition. (p. 34)

The cybernetic conception of the Sacred in Rappaport (1999) was acknowledged earlier in this work. This stance considers the Sacred from an ecological approach which integrates the mind, culture, and nature. Csordas (2001) interpretation of Rappaport's proposal links is linked to the existential condition of embodiment and coincides with his explanation of the Sacred as the religious experience of otherness. We may consider that when the mind, culture, and nature are integrated into the phenomenological embodied experience, we experience the manifestation of the Sacred. According to Csordas (2004), this is a manifestation of otherness that can be considered as the kernel of religion; certainly, it can be found in New Age practices; according to Olivas, the Neomexican element from Aztec Dancing makes it part of the New Age as Matrix of sense (De la Torre 2013). Aztec Dancing attempts to embody the community with the supreme otherness nature and cosmos from the ancient Aztec rituals

To different extents, the groups documented by Olivas displayed an embodied experience of Otherness throughout the performance of their dances. The experience of the Sacred is present as a conciliation with otherness, embodying the mind, culture, nature, and cosmos, bringing them together as one. Aztec Dancing clearly illustrates transformation, and the complexity of cultural phenomena in the era of globalization becomes part of flows of symbols entangled with processes of commodification, but it also creates a sense of awareness of the intertwining of subjects with their cultural roots as well as with nature. The adepts of the New Age embody values of environmentalism and multiculturalism in their practices.

## **The Case of Neomayanism and Deoceltism**

Farahmand & Rouiller (2016) carry out a compared ethnographic analysis of Deoceltism in France and Neomayanism in Mexico. The authors provide evidence of the aspect of Religious Foraging through the “spiritual discourse and practices” (p. 56) in the actors of focalized groups of deoceltisms and Neomayanism, and most particularly in the case of their leaders. The existence of sacred objects becomes relevant in both cases, however there is an important difference related to the process of commodification that can be found in the New Age; sacred objects in this particular case of neo-mayanism are purchased, while in the case of Deoceltism some Sacred objects are gathered or self-made, thus they are not subject neither to a monetary price nor to commodification.

### ***Rhizome/Deterritorialization in the case of Neomayanism and Deoceltism***

Farahmand & Rouiller analysis the “mobility of religious figures’ using three concepts inspired by the work of De la Torre (2011): “delocalization, translocalization, and relocalization” (Farahmand & Rouiller 2016: 69). It is important to notice the fact that the concepts outlined in their analysis have a broad match with the notions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (and intermediate phase as ‘territorialization’ in between) from Deleuze & Guattari (1987). As has been previously mentioned, regarding to the analysis of the New Age and contemporary religiosity, De la Torre (2012, 2013) uses derivations literal and non-literal from the post-structuralist concepts of

deterritorialization and rhizome from the philosophical work *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) by Deleuze & Guattari.

Following the concept of deterritorialization, the phase of ‘delocalizing’ addressed by Farahmand & Roullier demonstrated how symbols and practices which are part of indigenous traditions spread through esoteric tourism, migration of healers and shamans, and the ethnographic literature.

The second phase of ‘translocalization’ coincides with the process of a compensatory reterritorialization, but it can be addressed here as an intermediate phase of constitution or simple ‘territorialization’ which can be understood in Deleuze & Guattari (1983, 1987) as the settlement of a plane or a *plateau* (tray)<sup>18</sup>, or as the metaphor of the process of solidification of volcanic lava. This whole process manifest in which Farahmand & Roullier refer to as “the birth of a new movement or stream that is geographically more widespread.” The communities of Deocelts and Neomayans carry out new manifestations of festivals, internships, and large-scale rituals and journeys.

A third phase is necessary here to explain how a deterritorialized element gets ‘territorialized’ again or reterritorialized with a different constitution from the beginning, this would be the difference of reterritorialization with the mere ‘territorialization. This third phase in the work of Farahmand & Roullier, referred to as relocalization, is shown in the remodeling of practices and discourse from Celtism and Mayanism into Deoceltism and Neomayanism respectively. This process according to Farahmand & Roullier (2016), “govern the dynamics of receiving, appropriating and resignifying in reterritorialized cultural contexts” (p. 57).

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<sup>18</sup> The translation from French to English is the term of geological tray. This term in Deleuze & Guattari (1987) is an influence from part of the work of Bateson (1979).



Throughout translocalization, as referred to by Farahmand & Roullier, it is possible to find an implicit rhizomatic logic whether the processes of commodifying and publicizing from the global market are taken into account. Throughout the adherence to the logic of the marketplace the Deoceltists and Neomayans perform their practices at various levels, according to Farahmand & Roullier (2016):

They create the need for initiates to educate themselves by asking them to do readings related to their internships. They require initiates to own certain objects in order to participate in initiation activities, and the number of these objects continues to grow the further along initiates proceed on their spiritual journeys. The groups promote a kind of “humanitarian” consumption by selling objects specifically designed for militant association activities (e.g. environmental and indigenous rights movements). These spaces, pertaining to commercial transaction are highly visible at large social events, such as festivals and conferences, but they are also accessible via the Internet. (p. 67)

Farahmand & Roullier address the existence of some objects in the practices of Deocelts and Neomayans that are crucial to the embodiment of the Sacred which are commodified into the global market economy, with the exception of gathered and handcrafted objects. According to Farahmand & Roullier (2016):

The processes of accessories significations reveal a range of influences, which raises the question of how the movement articulates the local and the global (...) the two groups [Deoceltists and Neomayans] adhere to the logic of the marketplace through commodifying and publicizing their activities while developing their customer loyalty (p. 67)

An intertwining of rhizomatic trajectories into the spiritual quest of their actors: the sacred objects, both commodities and non-commodified mementos are proof of this spiritual foraging is demonstrated throughout the work of Farahmand & Rouillier (2016)

### ***Religious Foraging in the Case of Neomayanism and Deoceltism***

Throughout their ethnographic work, Farahmand & Roullier (2016) “trace the life pathways” (p. 56) of two leaders who are at the head of the Deoceltism and Neomayanism movements: Patrick Dacquay and Mother Nan Kin, respectively. The life pathways of these leaders are approached through the notions of ‘transnationalization,’ which was addressed before, and ‘spiritual foraging’.

From the ethnographic work of Farahmand & Roullier (2016), it is possible to identify the elements of foraging in which they call “dual mobility” (p. 66) which is both spiritual and physical, and can also allude to the status of the forager of being both a consumer and a producer in the context of a New Age marketplace, we must keep in mind that the forager always navigates an *intermezzo*.

The leaders Patrick Dacquay and Mother Nah Kin are spiritual foragers moving from one spiritual path to another, expanding into hybrid contexts of practices and symbolic criteria. During this process of expansion of their symbolic territories, they add elements from other territories to their own: a multiverse of meaning. Following Farahmand & Roullier (2016) it can be stated that the religious forager “circulates among religious streams multi-directionally and synchronically, over time and across space” (p. 66). It coincides with the issue addressed in the third chapter about the rhizomatic intertwining of temporalities and territories from the New Age; when navigating throughout the New Age, the forager embodies a multiplicity of space(s) and time(s).

Farhamand and Roullier (2016) address the interconnectedness of transnational mobility in the spiritual foraging of Patrick Dacquay and Mother Nan Kin; particularly, they show “evidence of diachronic mobility” (p. 40) which allows them to develop complex and hybridized systems of belief that are part of the New Age. In the work of Farhamand and Roullier, the deterritorializing element of New Age manifests in the mobility of the New Age leaders and their “initiation meetings” in different religious traditions; borderlands and static identities from Indian traditions and South American forms of shamanism are blurred as a consequence. Referring to the New Age leaders in the case of Neomayanism and Deoceltims, Fahramand & Roullier (2016) state:

The dynamic of their movement through local space extends not only from their transnational mobility (movements for single events, pilgrimages, professional travel, migration) but also from national and international mobilizations (political, environmental and identity-related demands) (p. 67).

The aspect of a ‘rhizomatic foraging’ of the New Age, in the context of global capitalism, has been addressed widely in this work; moreover, the political, environmental and identity demands adverted by Fahramand & Roullier demonstrate the existence of an ethic stance among Deoceltism and Neomayanism. It is possible that the aiming of transformation of the New Age is a way of adaptation to the world in the era of globalized capitalism and a global environmental crisis, and also a possible reconfiguration.

### ***Embodied Experience of the Sacred as Otherness in the Case of Neomayanism and Deoceltism***

The gnosis of the Sacred in the case of Deoceltism and Neomayanism, documented by Farahmand & Roullier (2016) is given by the embodiment of the practice

of spiritual foraging in its relation to 'Sacred' objects from different contexts through the mobility of the actors. The authors state that beyond its commodified aspect, the ritual objects of Deoceltic and Neomayan practices play a fundamental symbolic role:

For both groups, owning or using these objects was essential to participating in the rituals, even during practice sessions and the Shamanism Festival. If participants arrive without the required objects, they must quickly find someone from whom to borrow them. Once the ritual is over, they are encouraged to buy or make their own. Initiates who frequent these settings understand the important role the objects play and typically find out in advance from the leader, other members or in books what supplies they will need to bring (Farahmand & Roullier 2016: 67).

The nature of the objects varies according to each of the cases documented by Farahmand & Roullier; all of them are evidence of nomadism of the foragers. Both the Deoceltic and the Neomayan demonstrate their adherence to the New Age market by having their own business where they sell diverse spiritual commodities like clothes, body accessories, books, CD's archetypical symbols and figurines, and musical instruments. The elements that are the most compelling for Farahmand & Roullier are the ritual objects, which are necessary to create a sense of belonging among the adepts of Deoceltism and Neomayanism, respectively.

The Deoceltism practiced by the partisans of Patrick Dacquay's in France, according to Farahmand & Roullier (2016: 63), requires a minimum of five objects for the 'training' process: "a broom, a golden sickle, a drum, a rattle and a medicine stick. These objects are not necessarily purchased, it may mean that they are set outside of a direct process of commodification, they could be given, received or made by the user; however, these objects may still be part of an indirect processes of commodification in the New Age market because they tend to be related with sites of spiritual pilgrimage of the

Deoceltic tradition which are promoted by the 'New Age tourism'. Regarding the significance invested in the objects, Farahmand & Roullier (2016) state:

In this way, the objects represent an individual's social evolution within the group, progress along the spiritual path (a sign of learning and revelation) as well as access to a new practice (a therapeutic practice for others, a relationship to specific entities). Each object is invested with a particular meaning, and the set of tools as a whole symbolizes each person's spiritual pathway. Despite the discourse on "returning to Celtic origins", these objects also reveal a diversity of references and therefore reflect the phenomenon of mobility of actors, concepts, and objects. (p. 63)

Farahmand & Roullier (2016) show that the Deocelts provide an animistic meaning to objects, describing how stones used in their rituals are believed to hold telluric energy that allows the removal of heavy and negative energies from the body. According to the nature of the site where the stones were found as a sacred site, a river or a forest the degree of 'vibration' may vary according to the potential healing of different diseases. A description of the embodiment of objects in the Deoceltic practices is provided by Farahmand & Roullier (2015): "Dacquay, for example, has an owl's wing whose feathers, he says, allow him to work much like an acupuncturist using the energy of birds. The feathers free up blocked energy points and help restore fluidity and lightness." (p. 65)

The mentioned animism in the objects of the deoceltism, as part of the New Age religious phenomenon, suggests how sacred objects allude to a gap between the Sacred and the Profane world and the terrain for the manifestation of a 'hierophanie' (Eliade 1959); in this case a 'hierophanie' would be the manifestation of Otherness (Csordas 2004) in the horizon of experience by the mediation of sacred objects

In the instance of mother Nan Kin's Neomayanism in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, (Farahmand & Roullier 2016: 60), the adepts are required to purchase purification accessories such as essences, liquids, sprays, and balms. These objects are required for

their ceremonies, in addition to other items for altar preparation and ceremonial clothing. Farahmand & Roullier (2016) describe how the experience of the Sacred as Otherness (Csordas 2004) is embodied with the help of the Neomayan ritual objects:

During the workshops, participants who receive a dose of “negative energy” or experience “heavy tiredness” spray their environment and immediately purify their table companion. Cards are used for visualization exercises, where participants contemplate them, breathe them in, and tilt their head to “allow in the image.” The images vary. They may be geometric or archetypal female figures from different cultures (e.g., Mary Magdalene, Young Ixchel, Kali, Venus, Isis, Gaia). (p. 62)

The ritual aspect of the Deoceltic and Neomayan traditions addressed by Farahmand & Roullier, demands that the adepts ‘be prepared’ as consumers of spiritual goods as a ritual prerequisite; this is a requirement “to receive the teaching, the care, and the “energy” that comes from taking on an active role in the ritual” (p. 67). The authors also remark the importance of the ‘experiential dimension’ in its spiritual and physical correlates, which resembles what has been stated in chapter in respect to how in its connection with the ‘market forces’ the objects in the New Age works as a mediator of the embodied experience of the Sacred.

### **The Case of Neoshamanism**

Itzhak (2015) carries out an analysis to the phenomenon of neo-shamanism in the United States; the approach of embodiment allows to explain the experience of shamanic healing through to experience of the Sacred of Otherness (Csordas 1990, 1993, 2004). In the proposal of Itzhak, the body is the ground of self which allows the experience of self as Otherness through the body techniques provided by the shaman; this can be

identified in the phenomenon known by shamanism as 'soul-loss' that is documented by Itzhak. The soul-loss consists of a sort of psycho-spiritual dissociation that is caused by a psychological trauma; the way that the shaman or the neo-shaman, in this case, effectuates the healing is through a shamanic trance. The phenomenological approach from Itzhak understands this trance as an embodied technique; the author distances himself from the structuralistic approach of Levi-Strauss of the 'effectiveness of the symbols' proposing a deeper and pre-symbolic understanding of the shamanic healing.

### ***Rhizome/Deterritorialization in the Case of Neoshamanism***

According to Sanson (2009), the term 'neo-shamanism' is coined by Rothenberg, consisting in a functional distinction of new western shamanism from indigenous shamanism; thus neo-shamanism can be considered a western version of deterritorialized indigenous shamanism from the approach that is proposed in the present work. Itzhak (2004) decides to use the term neo-shamanism "not as a diluted imitation of shamanism, but as a practice in its own right which is anchored and contextualized in the culture within which it operates, regardless of its supposed origins" (p. 292). The opinion about whether or not neo-shamanism can be placed within the New Age terrain may be divided among scholars and neo-shamans themselves. Nevertheless, following Heelas (1996), Sanson (2009) affirms that at considering 'self-spirituality' as the lingua franca of the New Age it is possible to categorize neo-shamanism as part of the New Age; this coincides with the observation of Beyer (2009) that the individual self is the "locus of spiritual religious authenticity and authority" (p. 279), as it was mentioned in the first

chapter of this work. These assumptions show a parallelism to Itzhak by situating the experience of self as a sacred Otherness throughout the process of shamanic trance:

The shaman aspires to [the embodied experience of Otherness], which is also the experience of an alterity that is both intimate and radically alien. The fact that it is the self which is experienced as the sacred other, and not an objectified, external figure, aligns with the New-Age ethnopsychology that posits the self as a seat of the divine (Lindquist 2004). This experience of self as other that we observe here is also tantamount to an elaboration of alternatives on a global scale, as the patient experiences, in effect, another way of being herself and another way of being with others (Itzhak 2004: 204).

### ***Religious Foraging in the Case of Neoshamanism***

The main actor in the ethnographic work of Itzhak (2004: 293) is Elena, a woman born in the mid-20th Century who has been being practicing and teaching (neo)shamanism for about a decade. Elena is not just a mere 'seeker' a term that Itzhak (p. 294 seems to associate with superficiality; as a matter of fact, it may be more accurate to define Elena as a 'spiritual seeker' (De la Torre 2013) or as a 'spiritual forager' (Soares 2009); these analogous terms have been used throughout this body of work and suggest a deeper degree of commitment in the quest for the Sacred.

The trajectory of spiritual nomadism in the quest for the experience and knowledge of the Sacred is evident in the case of Elena; some of the workshops she has attended as a master and as a student have been grounded in Southern California, but she was also trained in Europe for several years by a collaborator of the anthropologist and Shaman Michael Harner, who is part of the imbrication between the New Age and the Academia that was mentioned in the second chapter of this text. Nofit explains that Elena



does not refer to herself neither as a shaman nor as a neo-shaman, she prefers the variant term of 'shamanic counselor' to denominate her work and her spiritual pathway.

Elena also demonstrates the evidence of hybridity in her appearance and performance as a healer; she does not wear any special dress associated with a particular shamanic tradition in the healing processes, but she makes use of some sacred indigenous elements such as a rattle, a drum, and other power objects such as crystals. According to Itzhak, Elena is a spiritual services provider who has a majority of white middle and upper class students and clients.

Itzhak (2004) evokes the notion of 'shamanic flight' in Eliade to point out a journey to the spirit or word as "the heart of any shamanic healing" (p. 294); this notion of journey is important to understand the process of healing as part of the deterritorialized trajectory of the spiritual forager, in this with an innovative connotation: the spiritual trajectory of the forager can be launched towards the external and the internal world. Itzhak explain the way the healing process within the shamanic journey can be recognized and relates it to is the embodied feeling of a corporal heft, this a projection of the body as alterity that is documented in the work of Csordas (2004). According to Itzhak (2004):

We can recognize the way in which this intimate embodied alterity is both highlighted in the course of the healing and plays a crucial role in its facilitation. While neo-shamans do not conceive their practice as religious, the shamanic trance, as a technique of the body, amplifies the alterity inherent to the self, making it "determinate and objectified." The "heft" Csordas (2004) talks about is the "letting go." (Itzhak 2004: 304)

## ***Embodied Experience of the Sacred as Otherness in the Case of Neoshamanism***

Following Itzhak, it is possible to affirm that there is a potential of transformation throughout the shamanic journey; this trajectory, plus the multiplicity of trajectories that have been traced throughout this work about the New Age suggest that the forager is always a navigator of an intermezzo. For Itzhak the healing shamanic journey unfolds beyond the mere act of resignification of memories or a manipulation of symbols. The journey itself implies a “global experience of self as other that amounts to an opening of a new phenomenological ‘horizon,’ a new way of being, and glimpse of a new possibility of being with others.” (Itzhak 2015 304) The specific technique of the body that Itzhak established to be implemented by neo-shamans is the shamanic trance: “an opening to an alterity that is at once radically intimate and radically alien.” (p.-305)

Itzhak (2015) exemplifies the experience of neo-shamanic healing from the discourse of Ana, Elena’s client, who was healed from a phenomenon of ‘soul-loss’. The soul recovery is felt as a sensation of ‘tingling’ when Elena the ‘shamanic counselor’ blows into Ana’s chest. In the ethnographic interviews Itzhak is told by Elena’s patients that they experience sensations as tingling, soft electrical currents, warmth, smooth heaviness or simply energy. According to Itzhak (2015):

The soul, then, is not an already existing object, which the shaman introduces into the person through a series of symbolic actions, which are then (even if not consciously) interpreted by the patient. It is the patient as a body-subject that constitutes the soul, objectifying it and pulling it out of the indeterminacy of experience in the course of the ritual. (p. 297)

Itzhak concludes that it is throughout the experience of healing, that the patients are able to feel the presence of something which is foreign to them, an experience of

alterity that is set beyond the operation and constitution of the relation between body and self in a normal state of consciousness. Finally, Itzhak affirms that “it is within those brief encounters with alterity, within the surprising presence of difference, when attachment to the self is momentarily shaken, that the transformative potential of the ritual can be located” (p. 305). The encounters with an Otherness can be part of an internal or an external quest, the alterity seems to be grounded in an intermezzo as the trajectory of the forager, it is possible that in the end Otherness is the quest itself.

## Conclusions

New Age is a term that defines a complex rhizomatic intertwining of phenomena related with the quest for the experience of the Sacred in individuals in the age of globalization. The term has its own trajectory grounded in the Theosophical movement from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century: carrying the ideal of an internal and external quest for transformation. The term New Age survived through time and adapted to different social, political and economic contexts. Nowadays, the New Age clearly evokes the spiritual dimension of globalization and implies a whole universe of practices, objects, symbols, discourses, places and aesthetic values which connote the Sacred to the embodied experience of its diverse adepts.

The *New Agers* can be considered foragers in the quest for the experience of the Sacred. This experience is mediated by body techniques, prayers, sacred objects, and ingestion of substances; a common ground for understanding the experience of the Sacred is its conceptualization as Otherness. Alterity is a traceable element that is part of the experience of the Sacred documented in ethnographic cases of Aztec Dancing, Neomayanism, Deoceltism, and neo-Shamanism; but also as the element of internal and external quest and the tracing of global trajectories towards the experience of the Sacred. The New Age foragers are consumers and producers at the same time, they seem to be well adapted to market forces, but they also evoke spiritual forces that are set beyond the material realm. The New Age foragers seem to be situated at the margin of all time classifications, nevertheless, a spiritual kernel is maintained always through the relation

Self—Otherness; that liason is supposed to transform the Self into new forms of understanding, through the experience of the Sacred, even as it is supposed to heal it.

The trajectories of the *New Agers* transcend space and time, which is reflected in the hybridity of their practices and identities; they deterritorialize and re-territorialize constantly through their quest, they transform themselves and each other, and their influence may transform that disenchanted world that surrounds them. The New Age has its own overlap into economy, politics and science and it is not derived from any of them: the spiritual realm of the forager is always inside and outside the world, it is the navigation of an *intermezzo*. The embodied experience is the deterritorialized journey of the forager, the Infinite Quest. Otherness is on the way.

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