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NEW RELIGIOUS CULTURES IN LATE SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET RUSSIA: IDEOLOGIES, SOCIAL NETWORKS, DISCOURSES

This research project is dedicated to the socio-anthropological study of a new religious cultures that attracted global attention at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries and that in modern scientific literature is often referred to as "New Age". The term *New Age* or *New Age spirituality*, as it appears in studies on popular culture, in para-scientific practices and ideologies, is closely linked to other terms, such as *esotericism*, *cultic milieu*, *occultism* / "*occulture*", refers to a number of significant developments and movements which are characteristic for contemporary "post-secular" societies. The term became widespread in Western cultic milieus of the 1970s and 1980s, also adapted as an analytic category and is used by specialists as an umbrella term for a variety of at first sight diverse ideas, concepts, practices, and narrative forms in contemporary culture. As an emic term of self-identification, *New Age* refers to the astrological meaning of "*The Age of Aquarius*" which is linked to the expectance of a new historical era which brings about a radical change of psychological and physiological possibilities to mankind.

The project focuses on the history and social dimensions of *New Age* culture in the USSR of the 1960s–1980s, as well as in post-Soviet Russia. Even though *New Age* culture in the late Soviet and post-Soviet countries should be analyzed in the context of global social and cultural trends, it seems important to respond to the question, which factors did exactly determine the genesis and the evolution of ideas and practices in the *New Age* of the Soviet culture. At the same time, it seems extremely important to learn the role of culture in the context of *New Age* social and ideological continuity between the late Soviet and post-Soviet eras, as well as social functions and ideas of *New Age* practices in modern Russia.

In what way some specific configurations within socio-political and moral ideologies of the late Soviet Union did affect the formation of identities and public expectations of different *New Age* groups and their followers? How has the culture of the late Soviet *New Age* been connected to the dissident movements and underground religious groups? To what extent did the evolution of *New Age* ideas and practices of the late Soviet and post-Soviet culture relate to the features of nature scientific knowledge and technologies, as well as to the social image of science in general? How does the *New Age* ideology connect to economic, demographic and ecological

processes of the late Soviet and post-Soviet period? To what extent had the genesis and evolution of the *New Age* in the USSR been defined through contacts between the Western countries and states of the Eastern bloc? Finally, it seems extremely important to learn the role of *New Age* culture in the context of social and ideological continuity between the late Soviet and the post-Soviet eras, as well as social functions and ideas of *New Age* practices in modern Russia.

Subprojects:

1. *The Culture of New Age in Soviet Russia, Central Europe and the USA: A Comparative View* (Birgit Menzel)
2. *Astrological Schools and the Cultic Milieu of the Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods* (Anna Tessmann)
3. *The Mystical Anarchism Movement in Early 20th-Century Russia from a Translation Studies Perspective* (Romina Heim)