

Invitation  
to a [Baltic Worlds](#)' Special Section  
Journal Editor-in-chief: Ninna Mörner & Guest Editor: Anna Tessmann

## **New Age Spirituality in Socialist Societies**

The recent studies on the history of religions in Eastern Europe's socialist period have continued to explore new, partly bizarre pieces in the large and still obscure picture of how the secular, the religion-suppressing environment was reproducing religious forms. Hence, it can be ultimately stated that the popular ideas of a spiritual "vacuum" and a religious "boom" in the post-socialist mass media do not sufficiently describe the Eastern European religious history and do not replicate the state of affairs. Neither Communist anti-religious propaganda nor global secularization processes had been able to make religion extinct there. Moreover, after Second World War and especially during the late decades of the socialist era, it came to a development of numerous Eastern European subcultures, which had adapted holistic teachings and mystical self-realization practices of diverse cultural origins. Those rapidly spreading and gradually institutionalizing *neosoteric* ideas and attitudes on a global scale became known since the late 1960s under (still in many aspects problematic) designation of *New Age* spirituality. Now, *New Age* is understood not as a strictly separated domain of religiosity but rather an essential feature of global mass culture that permeates all spheres of the public and private life in contemporary societies. Undoubtedly, Eastern Europe can be seen as one of the most generating places of global *New Age* creativity. Scholars' future responses to the following questions will certainly impact both a general theory of *New Age* spirituality and regional interdisciplinary studies: What have been material manifestations, local dynamics, transfers of new forms of privatized religiosity inside socialist Eastern Europe? How could needs and ways of *New Age* spiritual belonging in the aftermath of the collapse be explained? How have politics, culture, and *New Age* spirituality been intertwined with each other? How should we interpret these socially relevant connections from the perspective of the thirty years-post-socialist research and a range of theories of new religious movements, *New Age*, and esotericism?

In this special section in the memorial year of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the [Baltic Worlds](#) journal invites the scholars from different countries and disciplines to address the following topics which can be placed in a broader context: the growth of new religious beliefs and groups in Eastern Europe and Baltic countries during the socialist period and afterwards; re-awakening of old religious and esoteric teachings and practices; gurus, their invented/real biographies; (dis)continuities of fluid forms and genres of (post-)socialist *New Age*; Eastern European *New Age* networks and transfers; the appearance and distribution of popular esoteric and parascientific literature; political events and conflicts with symbolic responses of new religious movements and *New Age* groups in the late Socialism; the memory of religious underground and reinvention of the past; discourses of a "new age" and their instrumentalization; sacred places, both geographical and constructed by the mass media and fiction; *New Age* spiritual market and consumption in the region.

For this special section, we expect to gather **five peer-review articles** with different perspectives on the topics mentioned above as well as publish fragments of interviews with insiders and witnesses of the socialist *New Age* underground during the 1970s/1980s and the religious entrepreneurs of the 1990s.

We welcome **200-word abstracts** from the scholars of humanities and interdisciplinary fields (anthropology, history, sociology, religious, political, environmental studies et cet.), history of nature sciences in the Eastern European and Baltic countries, and journalists working on themes of religion in this region.

Please submit your abstract to [ates sman@uni-mainz.de](mailto:ates sman@uni-mainz.de) by **20 February 2021**. The notice of acceptance will be given by **1 March 2021**.

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