Un po’ di sana follia.
The process of denegation in shamanic technologies of self-fashioning

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Tese de Doutoramento em Antropologia

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Tese apresentada para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Doutor em Antropologia, realizada sob a orientação científica do Profº Drª José Mapril (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa) e do Profº Drª Federico Squarcini (Università Ca’ Foscari, Venezia).
Declaro que esta tese é o resultado da minha investigação pessoal e independente. O seu conteúdo é original e todas as fontes consultadas estão devidamente mencionadas no texto, nas notas e na bibliografia.

A candidata,

Lisa Lazzarini

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Firenze, 08/11/2019 de ............ de .............

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O orientador,

[Assinatura]

Lisboa, 18... de Novembro de 2019

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O coorientador,

Federico Squarcini

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Firenze, 07/11/2019 de ............ de .............
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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to explore the role of denegation in activating, directing, sustaining and protecting the process of self-fashioning through specific case study of shamanic practicing. The fieldwork has been based mainly in Florence, Italy, and in Lisbon, Portugal, following the transnational circulation of the global and online shamanic field through a snowball sampling that led me to the practitioners and their cosmopolitan networks. Italian and Portuguese practitioners share a willingness to change their lives and intentionally shape themselves through a shamanization process that is perceived as cultural deprogramming.

In this ethnography with shamanic practitioners, the process of self-fashioning turns out to be an un-ending training which embodies progressive layers of denegation according to the anthropotechnical project. Denegation is here defined as a process of concealment of contradictions whose invisibility activates an otherwise impossible practice and, can lead to paradoxical effects. The unnoticed coexistence of contradictions engenders a perpetual motion of opposite conditions that recursively necessitate each other. In this sense, shamanic denegation processes of taming untamedness are particularly acrobatic and clearly illustrate the very role and mechanism of denegation. This research will show how denegation renders invisible to practitioners that their project of emancipation from socio-cultural conditioning is finely-tuned to neoliberal policies which encourage free choice, individualism, self-responsibility and flexibility.

The thesis identifies how shamanic practices have become over the years an appealing metaphor of the antidote to modernity and a resource for self-fashioning that is nowadays a successful global brand which spans a variety of therapies. The antidote of shamanic self-fashioning is dispensed through different practices precisely because they are grounded on the same layers of denegation. The self-fashioning project is actualized as a form of auto-immunization that, to some extent, is acknowledged among some practitioners. Throughout the thesis, I will trace this process of progressive auto-immunization from beginner to advanced practitioners through different therapeutic plans and in different contexts: how the
shamanic antidote is activated by denegation; how different therapies are applied by individuals to change/heal themselves; how shamanic self-fashioning becomes an ascetic path of chronic healing with the support of the group; and how the circulation in the global field has spread the shamanic anthropotechnic. This analysis reveals how the field of anthropology and shamanism are mutually constitutive, calling for meta-reflection within the anthropological discipline itself.

**KEYWORDS:**

Denegation, Anthropotechnic, Self-fashioning, Embodiment, Shamanic practice.
O principal objetivo desta pesquisa é explorar o papel da denegação na ativação, direção, sustentação e proteção do processo de self-fashioning através do estudo de caso específico da prática xamânica. O trabalho de campo decorreu principalmente em Florença, Itália, e em Lisboa, Portugal. A circulação transnacional do campo xamânico global e online, guiou-me aos praticantes e ao seu networking através de uma amostra por bola de neve. Os praticantes Italianos e Portugueses partilham a vontade de mudar as suas vidas e moldar-se intencionalmente através de um processo de xamanização que é entendido como uma desprogramação cultural.

A partir desta etnografia com praticantes xamânicos, o processo de self-fashioning acaba por ser um treino sem fim para incorporar camadas progressivas da denegação, de acordo com o projeto antropotécnico. A denegação é aqui definida como um processo de ocultação de contradições cuja invisibilidade ativa uma prática impossível de outra maneira e pode levar a efeitos paradoxais. A coexistência invisível de contradições gera um moto perpétuo de condições opostas que se necessitam recursivamente. Neste sentido, os processos de denegação xamânicos de domesticar a inadomesticabilidade são particularmente acrobáticos e ilustram claramente o próprio papel e mecanismo da denegação. A pesquisa mostrará como a denegação torna invisível aos praticantes que o seu projeto de libertação do condicionamento sociocultural é ajustado às políticas neoliberais que incentivam a livre escolha, o individualismo, a auto-responsabilidade e a flexibilidade.

A tese mostra como as práticas xamânicas se tornaram ao longo dos anos uma metáfora atraente como antídoto da modernidade e um recurso para o self-fashioning que hoje é uma marca global de sucesso que abrange uma variedade de terapias. O antídoto de self-fashioning xamânico é dispensado através de diferentes práticas, precisamente porque elas se baseiam nas mesmas camadas de denegação. O projeto de self-fashioning é realizado como uma forma de auto-imunização que, em certa medida, é reconhecida por alguns praticantes. Ao longo da tese, traçarei o processo xamânico de auto-imunização progressiva, do praticante iniciante ao avançado, através de diferentes planos terapêuticos e em diferentes contextos:
como o antídoto xamânico é ativado através da denegação; como diferentes terapias são aplicadas pelos indivíduos para mudar / curar; como o self-fashioning xamânico se torna um percurso ascético de cura crónica com o apoio do grupo; como a circulação no campo global espalhou a antropotécnica xamânica. Esta análise revela como o campo da antropologia e do xamanismo são mutuamente constitutivos, solicitando uma meta-reflexão disciplinar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Denegação, Antropotécnica, Auto-moldagem, Incorporação, Prática xamânica.
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Introduction

. My shamanic journey

When I began the PhD in 2014 I presented a proposal to study the oral mythologies of Kamaiurà in the *Xingu Indigenous Park* in Brazil with whom I had a contact through a Brazilian friend. Since this project turned out to be unfeasible, I had to look for another research topic.\(^1\) Meanwhile, I was reading *Tristes Tropiques* (1961 [1955]) and reflecting on the disappearance of Amazonian people under the nostalgic gaze of Claude Lévi-Strauss. This led me to a deeper understanding of the epistemological and methodological problems related to research with ‘distant people’ and for my own research I determined to look for more familiar contexts. At the time, I had already come across shamanic practice though friends who organized *Temazcal*, a steam bath inspired by North-American native traditions, in the countryside near Florence, Italy. The interest of shamanic practitioners in knowing and practicing distant traditions raised the same kind of epistemological issues I noticed in anthropology. I realized that investigating contemporary shamanic practitioners would enable me to research a familiar context, while at the same time investigate ‘our’ interest in ‘other’ cultures; a crucial point in anthropological meta-reflection.

When I had experienced *Temazcal* and psychotropic plants a few years before research began, I had enjoyed them but I had not appreciated the religious/therapeutic context and did not practice as regularly as my friends. Then when ArPo,\(^2\) a longtime friend, went through a process of shamanization I saw many contradictions. In particular, maintaining the same meaning and effect of traditions ArPo himself called *indigenous* in a completely different context seemed to me a pretense. The recurrent reference to ‘indigenous’ practices, rituals, words, divinities by urban individuals who had previously nothing to do with them appeared to me ‘forced’ and in some way ‘artificial’, in open contrast with the manifestly urgent seek for ‘authenticity’.

\(^1\) It was not possible to carry out the project due to economic and time constraints because the Kamaiurà community could not host me for long periods.

\(^2\) Since some practices are illegal, I decided to use pseudonyms for the majority of shamanists, except for those who have already used their names in public arenas such as the *Festival du Chamanisme*, published books, established schools, etc.
Other aspects puzzled me, for instance the use of psychedelics translated into therapeutic idiom. The psychedelic journey was no longer a pleasant adventure, but a ‘ceremony’, ‘work’ or ‘healing’. What before did not have a precise aim, became for the ‘shamanized’ ArPo, a practice determined by clear ‘intention’. What was done in order to lose control, was now performed to acquire control. Psychedelic visions that brought incomprehensible and mysterious images were now explained and became tools of interpretation. I had many discussions with ArPo about the therapeutic idiom because it particularly annoyed me. I pedantically asked him why he used the word ‘healing,’ was he ‘sick’? And what was then the ‘sickness’? The answer was something like, ‘We are all sick, this society make us stressed and contaminated’, and that after a Temazcal he felt relaxed and ‘cleansed.’ He concluded that perhaps some trauma in my childhood prevented me from using the words ‘sickness’ and ‘healing’. He seemed changed in a way that I did not fully grasp; he applied a moral code that divided the world into healed/right and sick/wrong. Carrying out this research gave me the satisfaction of figuring out this use of therapeutic idiom that puzzled me by identifying the pervasive emic use of the healing/sickness dichotomy not only by ArPo and his fellow Tuscan based practitioners, but across the global shamanic field. Shamanic practice for many practitioners represents an ‘indigenous’ antidote to sickening ‘western’ lifestyles and, for this reason, is considered a way of changing and starting a self-fashioning built on a completely different worldview.

What struck me most about these contradictions was that practitioners did not seem to notice them. As I entered the shamanic field, it became increasingly evident that this was not just a peculiarity of my friends. For example, I was amazed at shaman training courses, and even online courses, that applied a highly formalized and rationalized methodology to teach topics and practices with the aim of undermining ‘rational-western’ thought. In 2014, I found online a three-year distance learning course by Francesco Tsunki de Giorgio, a shaman based in Switzerland and trained by the Shuar in Ecuador (Cfr. Pict. 0.1). An experiential course by email was in itself an oxymoron.

The recurrent unnoticed presence of this kind of contradictions among practitioners led me to pay particular attention to this aspect. During three years fieldwork with shamanic practitioners in Italy and Portugal I realized that unnoticed contradictions were part of the

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3 An example of this formality is the test for people with doubts about their ‘shamanic calling’. The calling is considered ‘certain’ if one matches four items of the approximately 20 distinctive traits of the shaman, but actually to enroll in the course it is enough to answer ‘yes’ to the final trait: ‘the urgent will to become shaman’ (https://www.sciamanesimo.com/eventi.php#apprendistato 16/10/14). Formalized teaching is also evident in the online course Xamanismo gnostico by the Brazilian Alexandre Tadeu; Cfr. Pict. 0.1.

4 For example, a subject was ‘to transform reality through the shamanic journey with the body’ (idem).
APPRENDISTATO SCIAMANICO A DISTANZA

L'apprendistato sciamanico a distanza, ormai da più di dieci anni offerto nel nostro sito, è molto celebrato tra i soci del Tamburo dello Sciamano e in generale tra coloro che seguono i Cerchi o s'interessano seriamente di sciamanesimo. Chi segue il Forum avrà letto molte volte che tutti i partecipanti abituali consigliano vivamente questo corso a chiunque voglia impegnarsi.

CHE COSA è l'Apprendistato a distanza?

È un vero apprendistato sciamanico individuale dove si ottengono le conoscenze e i Poteri necessari a diventare sciamano. Lo offro a tutti coloro che si sentono chiamati a essere sciamani. L'addestramento, condotto da me, Tsunki, è quello delle culture tribali, che ho seguito io stesso.

Consisterà in numerose “lezioni” visitati in un’area riservata di questo sito, in verifiche e insegnamenti diretti da parte mia, attraverso email e, quando necessario, telefonate.

Al termine dell’apprendistato non si diventa automaticamente sciamani, poiché per questo è necessario un cambiamento della visione del mondo che non in tutti accade; dipende dalle resistenze personali e da una decisione finale degli Spiriti più alti.

Una volta ultimato con successo il corso, l'apprendista mi incontrerà personalmente per un "esame" dove potrà dimostrare i suoi Poteri e

Anzitutto dovresti dirmi perché vi sentite chiamati a diventare sciamani e, affinché io ne sappia più sulla vostra vocazione, rispondete con un po' di pazienza alle domande sugli eventuali segni degli Spiriti.

Questionario

Perché ti senti chiamato a diventare sciamano?

Uno dei vostri genitori ha doti paranormali? Ad es. sogni premonitori, doti telespatiche o talento effettivo di cartomante? Oppure ha capacità di guarire con le mani o di far passare i dolori fisici? Questo segno è più forte se il genitore dotato è la madre, poiché la trasmissione in linea materna è più frequente. Può valere anche il caso in cui queste doti siano in uno dei nonni.

☐ Sì  ☐ No

Siete nati "con la camicia" ossia avvolti del tutto o soltanto la testa in una sottile membrana? Questo in tutte le tradizioni del mondo - sciamaniche e no - è segno di rapporto speciale col mondo degli Spiriti.

☐ Sì  ☐ No

Siete nati con uno o più dita di troppo alle mani o ai piedi? E' un segno tipico dei futuri sciamani.

Pict. 0.1. A: https://www.sciamanesimo.com/eventi.php#apprendistato (16/10/14)
Pict. 0.1. B: Online presentation of the course Xamanismo Gnostico with video streaming, slides and chat broadcast on 01/03/15; http://www.ceudecapella.com.br/coursode-xamanismo-gnostico/
The recurrent unnoticed presence of this kind of contradictions among practitioners led me to pay particular attention to this aspect. During three years fieldwork with shamanic practitioners in Italy and Portugal I realized that unnoticed contradictions were part of the same mechanism that engendered a perpetual motion among opposites. The same mechanism then neatly rendered a contradiction invisible. This mechanism is *denegation*. Extending Pierre Bourdieu’s theories (1977, 1992 [1980], 1994, 1997), denegation is a collective process of concurrent affirmation and negation of an assumption, where the resulting contradiction is in some way hidden from the perspective of the denegator.

Denegation proved to be particularly useful in order to understand the shamanic self-fashioning. Practitioner intention is often formulated in the contraction ‘re-becoming indigenous’ or ‘re-learning to be human’. The manifest contradiction of ‘learning’ something that should be ‘natural’, not to mention of ‘re-learning’ it, is invisibilized to practitioners by denegation processes. This invisibilization activates shamanic self-fashioning in the presumption the natural human condition has been lost by ‘westerners’ and can be re-learnt through ‘indigenous’ practices. This enables to frame the shamanic project of self-fashioning as a return to the ‘true’ human nature, without any cultural conditioning. What is significant in denegation processes is not so much the contradiction as its invisibility that activates an otherwise impossible practice.

Denegation, however, is not specific of shamanic practice but it is inherent to self-fashioning. Foucault’s studies on technologies of the self (Foucault 1988a, 1988b, 2005 [2001]) and Sloterdijk’s theory of anthropotechnics (2009) describe the process of self-fashioning as a practice aimed to intentionally give shape to oneself through a program of training. The active subject chooses to dismantle his previous way of life and to work on himself in order to become *another person*. The denegation is here apparent: the subject has to consider himself inadequate but, at the same time, perfectly adequate to choose how to change.

The main purpose of this research is to explore the role of denegation in activating, directing, sustaining and protecting the process of self-fashioning through the specific case study of shamanic practicing. Shamanic denegation processes often lead to paradoxical effects that illustrate the very role of denegation. For example, shamanic technologies of self-fashioning are focused on de-activating rationality through a rational plan of self-training, according to the project of not having a project. This research will also show how denegation renders invisible to practitioners that their aim of freeing themselves from socio-cultural

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5 This emic use of western/indigenous categories will be clarified later in the thesis.
conditioning is actually very finely-tuned to neoliberal policies which encourage free choice, individualism, self-responsibility and flexibility.

.. Taking a position

As a classical anthropological subject, ‘shamanism’ has contributed to structuring anthropology and vice-versa for over 200 years, especially because shamanic practices have been made popular and widespread by many anthropologists (Cfr. Chapter Four). The two fields have therefore been mutually constitutive, forcing from the beginning of my research self-reflexivity as an apprentice anthropologist. Moreover, many topics and debates in anthropology circulate among practitioners. This includes what is considered authentic or inauthentic shamanism and widespread disagreement on the definition of what is ‘shamanism’. The struggle for the definition of what is ‘shamanism’ is a crucial stake for scholars as well as for practitioners because the fields of studies and practices are deeply interconnected.

Scholars themselves have become shamans, shamanic teachers, experts, intermediaries and points of reference for contemporary practitioners, among whom there are many drop-out from academia (von Stuckrad 2002: 773). The most famous anthropologist linked to shamanic practices, Carlos Castaneda, strongly illustrates the controversial and mysterious charm of shamanic practices. His first best-seller The Teachings of Don Juan (1968) was published as an ethnography later recognized as fiction and later Castaneda himself, on the basis of his fictional books, established himself as an international new age guru (De Mille 1976). Castaneda has been widely recognized as the main global disseminator of shamanic practices (Znamenski 2007, Boekhoven 2011). 'Shamanism' for the vast majority outside of academia is associated with Latin America because Castaneda’s books initiated the search for shamans in Mexico (Znamenski 2007, Boekhoven 2011, Botta 2012). Nevertheless this dissemination of the practices to European and North-American practitioners outside the original context, namely Siberia, has put into question the very notion of ‘shamanism’. In the struggle to form new academic definitions, these unprecedented and challenging uses have often been rather simplistically labeled as ‘abuses’ or ‘appropriations’ (Cfr. Francfort and Hamayon 2001). At the same time, many practitioners have been deeply involved in the theorization of their practices. This condition often created the looping effect described by

6 In a similar way, “religion has grown up with anthropology” and has been interpreted over time through different theoretical frameworks that contributed to structure the discipline (Berliner and Sarró eds. 2007: 5).
Hacking (1995), where reflecting on a given practice induces the subject to change his way of practicing and thus the object of his reflection recursively (Cfr. also Cunha).

The word ‘shamanism’ has often provoked curiosity and interest through the popularization of etic concepts. A combination of artistic, ecological, psychedelic and psychological concerns has richly nourished fantasy around the ‘shaman’. From this vague and fascinating entanglement, before my fieldwork began, I had amalgamated my own personal idea about shamans. Both the literature and the practice of my friends forced me to challenge and analyze my own representation, naturalization and expectation with respect to ‘shamanism’. My implicit assumptions mainly derived from the artistic milieu that shaped the mythical image of the shaman as a ritual operator from a distant displaced tradition. This representation is widespread among acquaintances and non-specialized people as well as anthropologists and other scholars. I remember at the beginning of fieldwork, the difficulty of explaining the object of my research and the surprise I felt when non-practitioners projected strong expectations on me. When I specified that my fieldwork would be in Italy and Portugal, almost always it was assumed I was researching ‘ancient’ local practices derived from the Celts, the Etruscans, or the magical practices of Southern Italy studied by Ernesto De Martino. ‘Shamanic’ here, was synonymous with something distant; the association with something near was problematic as it challenged the most popular touchstones of ‘shamanism’. Discovering I was not studying local traditions the most frequent reaction was disappointment or disbelief, often accompanied by a negative or ironic judgment about these ‘new’ versions.

Similar misunderstandings occurred with some anthropologists at international congresses as they framed the focus of my research as ‘appropriation’, ‘westernization’, or ‘commodification’. Sometimes the assumptions have been very embarrassing; some scholars refuse to accept the use of ‘shamanism’ in the context I studied, even when faced with Italian and Portuguese practitioners using this denomination to identify themselves. The main objection however, was the fieldwork focus on ‘inauthentic’ (made-up) ‘shamanism’ and, that by solely focusing on this form of shamanic practices, I support its legitimacy. Ironically, many practitioners also asked me, why I was studying them instead of going in Peru or Mongolia which would have made more sense. Other anthropologists encouraged me to go native, since only through immersive practice would I be able to describe the practitioner’s perspective. Others still warned that it was impossible not to be involved in the struggles of the field and still participate in it, as I intended to do, and participation implied decisions to stand as an anthropologist or practitioner. I noticed at the time, that my position of not
wanting to give a definition of shamanism was perceived as anomalous, risky, tricky, or even impossible. Nowadays I read this as a consequence of the harsh struggles experienced during fieldwork.

Notably, many scholars, not unlike practitioners, often use the distinction ‘indigenous’ and ‘westerner’ without questioning or precisely defining these terms (Cfr. next section From shamanism to shamanisms). This opposition is fundamental to the field and is often taken for granted.\(^7\) I intended to acknowledge the pervasive presence of these categories without essentializing them. This required a training in perspective; I had to learn to focus alternately on the background and on the foreground to understand the performative effect of these categories without assuming them. Specifically, in shamanic self-fashioning, the terms ‘western’ and ‘indigenous’ serve as mutually dependent touchstones for identity and change; they define the ideal point of departure and destination that activate each other. Practitioners in my fieldwork represent themselves as ‘westerners’ and consider shamanic practices a dispositive to change and ‘become indigenous’. But the same activation works the other way around as well: by labeling themselves as ‘indigenous’, natives acquire symbolic capital over needy ‘westerners’. This strategy by the way, is also used to affirm ethnic identity and local rights on the global scene (Hamayon 1998, Comaroff 2009, Boekhoven 2011, Botta 2012; Cfr. Chapter Four).

\[...\] From shamanism to shamanisms

As research progressed, I realized the definition of ‘shamanism’ changes according to the position and agenda of the definer. Definition itself is in fact one of the most important stakes in the field, since it demarcates the border between ‘true’ and ‘false’ shamanism. According to the criterion adopted, different maps of authenticity are created which become important references pitched in direct competition with each other according to the aligned definition of shamanism. These maps coexist, overlap and change dynamically; as a consequence observation is complicated. Studying shamanic genealogies has been invaluable in this sense to understanding the peculiar genesis of the field that led to the present situation.\(^8\)

The literature on shamanic practices is extensive and varied with a significant increase in the last few years. Jane Atkinson remarked that in the 1980s there was a “resurgence –

\(^7\) This also supports the distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘western’ shamanism, the latter being a reinvention of the former.

\(^8\) A similar struggle for the definition is also crucial in yoga practices, as Squarcini and Mori (2008) highlight through a genealogical analysis of the discursive productions around the term.
some call it a renaissance – in scholarship on shamanism” (Atkinson 1992: 307). The analysis of contemporary research on the topic by Thomas DuBois confirms that until 2010 the scholastic trend has continued with a “marked increase in scholarly and popular publication venues, including new presses and journals and a burgeoning Internet presence for shamanic topics” (DuBois 2010:1). As an indication, the bibliographical review by Santiago López-Pavillard (2010), limited to the academic publications between 1993 and 2010, makes reference to a corpus of about seven thousand texts. In this section I present a general problematization of the literature, starting from some valuable bibliographical reviews (Atkinson 1992, von Stuckrad 2005, DuBois 2010, Lopez-Pavillard 2010, Botta 2018), and I confront on specific topics related to my research.

Since the term ‘shamanism’ is applied to an ensemble of practices with no shared academic definition, it is generally agreed to refer to a plurality of ‘shamanisms’ making clear in each instance the context (Holmberg 1983, Hamayon 1993, Jones 2006, Botta 2018). David Holmberg outlines the advantages of a pluralist approach when he points outs, the reference to a singular ‘shamanism’ runs the risk of reducing it to “an artifact of anthropological history and an illusion” (Holmberg 1983: 41). In order to dispel the illusion of homogenization that hinders the study of local and globalized versions, Håkan Rydving suggests using vernacular terms for “indigenous” traditions, while the popularized notion of ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ are to be used only for “western” contexts and adaptations (Rydving 2011: 8). The aim of re-contextualizing different traditions by resorting to vernacular terms is, however, difficult to apply nowadays where natives and ‘non-natives’ use the words ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ when defining themselves. So although considering context and designation of terms is helpful to an extent, any illusion of shamanic homogenization cannot be easily avoided through a simple change of names. Discourse on contemporary ‘shamanisms,’ in fact, has to pay attention to both the homogenized concept and its particular uses.

Many scholars have pointed out that the academic field is characterized by an heterogeneity of interpretative categories and models (Francfort and Hamayon 2001; Wallis 2003; von Stuckrad 2005; Boekhoven 2011; DuBois 2011; Pharo 2011; López-Pavillard 2015; Botta 2018). According to Kocku von Stuckrad, there is a significant division between conservative anthropologists, who defend ‘traditional’ and local definitions of shamanism and, “refute any attempt to broaden the academic application of this very term”, and anthropologists-practitioners who “sympathetically describe shamanism as an universal tradition capable of being transformed into a modern spiritual path” (von Stuckrad 2005: 123). This division has been highlighted by other scholars as a ‘fracture’ (Botta 2018) or a
‘shock of paradigms’ (López-Pavillard 2015). If the divide identified by von Stuckrad is simplistic, it has the merit of identifying two significant polarities of the varied academic approaches.

Sergio Botta suggests a way to overcome this division in the ‘archaeology of shamanism’ à la Foucault (Botta 2018: 32-4; Foucault 1969). The genealogical approach enables an understanding of the historical constitution of the field which prevents amnesia of the genesis, highlighted by Pierre Bourdieu (1992 [1980]: 50). Amnesia of the genesis supports the invisibilization of the assumptions shared in the field that the scholar himself must avoid naturalizing. This methodology was introduced in shamanic studies by Gloria Flaherty (1992) and is described by Thomas DuBois as the “rhetorical approach” (DuBois 2011: 11-2). Genealogical studies mainly focus on discourses that construct the study of shamanism, “as a product of Western theorizing” (idem). This approach has contributed in framing the recent dissemination of shamanic practices in continuity with a romantic worldview, rather than a new phenomenon of recent times (Botta 2018: 16). This methodology is fruitfully carried out by the genealogical studies by Andrei Znamenski (2004, 2007) and Kocku von Stuckrad (2002, 2010) which help to de-essentialize the concept of ‘shamanism’ through a historical perspective. Znamenski’s detailed historiography (2007), which is also a trove of important pictures, presents an extensive archaeology of the shamanic metaphor in different fields and through different ages pointing out the leitmotiv of the quest for the ‘primitive’. Von Stuckrad (2005) in contrast, focuses on the philosophical continuity of discourses that idealize nature since the Nineteenth Century. The genealogical approach does, however, run the risk of being a discourse on a discourse which often overlooks contemporary developments. The above mentioned genealogists, with the exception of Jeroen Boekhoven to whose ethnography I will return later, give scant attention to current practitioners, explaining the construction of the shamanic metaphor but not its actual use, negotiation and actualization. Boekhoven’s (2011) genealogy of the field is based on Bourdieusian theoretical framework which gives socioeconomic depth to these historical reconstructions by pointing out the power struggles enacted overtime by different agents according to their agenda and strategies. From this perspective the above mentioned division is a consequence of an inner struggle in which “an academic ‘anti-shamanic polemic’” aims to debunk contemporary ‘western shamanism’ (or neoshamanism) as inauthentic (Boekhoven 2011: 10). An example of this polemic is The Concept of Shamanism: Uses and Abuses (2001), edited by Henri-Paul Francfort and Roberte Hamayon, a French scholar specializing in Siberian shamanic societies. Boekhoven (2011) and von Stuckrad (2010) highlight the title itself presumes there is only one ‘proper’ concept
of shamanism. Inside the book Francfort and Hamayon have selected articles which compare and highlight variations from the original practice (von Stuckrad 2005: 124). The major limit of these studies is the reference above all to ‘neoshamanic’ writers, texts and videos, without undertaking fieldwork among neoshamanic practitioners themselves, and as a consequence significantly basing comparisons on decontextualized generalization.

Despite the mass of studies, there are handful of in-depth ethnographies on ‘western shamans’ or ‘neoshamanists’ (Atkinson 1992, Wallis 2003, DuBois 2011). According to DuBois, in 2011, “close ethnographic examinations of particular neo-shamanic communities” were still rare (DuBois 2011: 12). In her bibliographical review, Jane Atkinson invited anthropologists to study “the reworking of shamanic traditions from around the world in terms of American and European cultural idioms and concerns” (Atkinson 1992: 323). As mentioned, the concept of ‘western’ shamanism is potentially misleading; it would be clearer to refer to shamanisms based on the western/indigenous dichotomy, as this ethnography intends to do.

Further, as the studies are still rare, there are no detailed, extensive ethnographies with research conducted in Italy or Portugal. As Eugenia Roussou observes, “the growing significance of new forms of spirituality in Portugal has remained surprisingly unstudied” with the exception of just a few references (Roussou 2015: 97). According to Steffen Dix, the increasing tendency to participate “in multiple forms of religiosity” including ‘new age’ and ‘western esotericism’ in Greater Lisbon should be further investigated (Dix 2009: 193). Although not directly addressing shamanic practices, Clara Saraiva has studied new age and umbanda religious-therapeutic practices in the Portuguese holistic milieu pointing out how these practices responded to a series of personal dissatisfactions on the part of the practitioners in the quest for well being (Saraiva 2007, 2010, 2011). According to her ethnography, these ‘new’ forms of direct access to the sacred enable people to empower themselves and think about their ‘self’ in a more satisfactory way than hegemonic ‘biomedicine’ and Catholic Church (Saraiva 2011: 71). In her analysis on religious plurality in Lisbon, Roussou emphasized how individualized ‘alternative spirituality’ encourages ‘agency’ and ‘creativity’ in opposition to external duties in order to construct a ‘spiritual identity’ based on subjective experiences rather than “religious structural formats and norms” (Roussou 2015: 109). In a similar way, Anna Fedele (2006, 2009, 2013) approaches ‘neopagan’ spirituality, rituals and pilgrimages in France with Italian practitioners. Neopagan practitioners also refer to ancient pre-Christian and Latin-American indigenous traditions as a means to criticize

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European “patriarchy” and the Catholic Church with the aim to reconnect with their “matriarchal roots” (Fedele 2013: 67-8). These studies highlight that ‘alternative spirituality’, including shamanic practices, can become a resource for counter-hegemonic self-fashioning.

Research on contemporary ‘neoshamanic’ practitioners is often biased. The scholar and practitioner Robert Wallis observes that shamanic practices, despite global dispersion, are still a phenomenon limited to a minority of participants “within western societies” who are sidelined in the same way as the studies on them are: “just one example of the many alternative voices which are marginalised by academia” (Wallis 2003: 4-9). This marginalization, can be seen in continuity with the academic positions that at the end of 19th Century ridiculed emerging practices such as Kardecism and Spiritism (Vasconcelos 2003: 104) whose increasing popularity has facilitated the dissemination of shamanic practices (Boekhoven 2011, Cfr. Chapter Four). At the same time, research by ‘anthropologist-practitioners’ who fight against this marginalization, is often promotional, presenting thesis with a distinct lack of rigorous debate (von Stuckrad 2005). A similar issue is raised by the anthropologist and activist Beatriz Labate who is trying to encourage more rigorous literature on ayahuasca.\(^\text{10}\) Labate and Loures de Assis point out how the field of studies has often been characterized by “endogamy” with a “promotional tone” and only in recent years have some studies “adopted a more distanced and critical stance” (Labate and Loures de Assis 2018: 12). With the aim to create a field of studies on ayahuasca, the two collections of articles on ayahuasca shamanism edited by Labate and Cavnar present studies on legal issues, the ‘drug wars’, mystic tourism in the Amazonian region, controversial questions such as sexual abuse or inequalities among locals and tourists, as well as many aspects related to the ongoing processes of internationalization and commodification of the practice (Labate and Cavnar 2014, 2018).\(^\text{11}\) The major limitation of these collections is that fieldwork is often not well contextualized and many scholars generically refer to ‘westerners’ and ‘indigenous’ people.

In some research, risks were taken as the anthropologist became very involved with personal political objectives prevailing and consequent biased results, such as in Kehoe (2000), Aldred (2000) and Vazeilles (2003). Danièle Vazeilles denounces plastic shamans\(^\text{12}\)

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\(^\text{10}\) Ayahuasca is a psychototropic brew of two Amazonian plants that is currently being practiced in a global expansion. Ayahuasca, also known as \textit{yagé}, \textit{caapi}, \textit{vine} or \textit{medicina}, has been disseminated in Europe in the last ten years (Cfr. Chapter Two and Four).

\(^\text{11}\) Labate is Adjunct Faculty at the California Institute of Integral Studies, co-founder of the \textit{Interdisciplinary Group for Psychoactive Studies} (NEIP), director of the \textit{Chacruna Institute for Psychedelic Plant Medicines} and Scientific Advisor of the \textit{2014 World Ayahuasca Conference}, Ibiza, Spain, September 2014.

\(^\text{12}\) ‘Plastic shaman’, ‘white shaman’, ‘chicken shaman’ and other derogatory terms have been used by some North-American natives and activists (Cfr. Chapter Four). Cfr. the video \textit{White Shamans & Plastic Medicine Men} (1996) by T. Macy and D. Hart (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19JAMhAzXms 08/12/14)
and their new perverse form of colonialism [“nouvelle forme perverse de colonialisme”] assuming the emic idiom of native North-American activists against the insulting simplification of vampirized Indian rituals [“la simplification insultante des rituels indiens vampirisés”] (Vazeilles 2003: 271-2). Lisa Aldred similarly addresses the commodification of ‘romanticized spirituality’ of North American natives disregarding “socio-economic and political problems they face as colonized peoples” (Aldred 2000: 333). The most problematic aspect of these studies, however, is that they are not based on in-depth fieldwork. Vazeilles, for instance, analyzes books and websites, while Aldred and Kehoe quote punctual episodes in different times and locations without contextualizing them. Moreover, as Wallis points out, the ‘crime’ of misrepresentation of ‘indigenous’ people that is attributed to ‘neoshamanic’ practitioners is often also perpetuated by scholars as, “too many critics, while criticizing the way in which neo-Shamanisms universalize and decontextualize, do exactly the same to their victims (particularly Kehoe 2000)” (Wallis 2003: 67-8). These biased studies, however, emphasize a crucial issue about the global shamanic field, namely: the socioeconomic inequality among different anthropological approaches. Although de-essentialization of ‘indigenous’/‘western’ categories is necessary, it is important not to ignore the apparent and concrete inequalities between the descendants of colonized people who still live in disadvantaged conditions and the descendants of colonizers who are in more advantaged positions. As Michael Taussig points out, shamanism has been and still is deeply embedded in an intercultural relationship which has roots in colonial domination (Taussig 2003: 135; Cfr. Chapter Four).

The most in-depth ethnography on ‘urban practitioners’ is Shamanic Performances on the Urban Scene by Galina Lindquist (1997) which is a study with Swedish institutions such as foundations, festivals, reviews, associations. She adopts the ‘going native and coming back’ methodology; reporting and analyzing the point of view of practitioners that she grasps through an immersive ‘experiencing participation’ (Lindquist 1995, 1997). Although she uses a Bourdesian approach, Lindquist focuses on shamanic logic of the field without pointing out power struggles and social positions and partly adopting practitioner discourses on shamanic re-enchantement (Boekhoven 2011: 5-6; 308-9). Lindquist describes the practices more than practitioners, giving few details on their social background except for the cultivated and artistic education and their ecological concerns. This poor contextualization is partly because of the variability of participants and the shamanic socialization that does not facilitate the creation of a community, and partly by the scarce importance that practitioners attribute to their social conditions, as I also noted in my fieldwork. Her ethnography shows well how
shamanic practices contribute to the construction of a self-fashioned identity in the quest for authenticity in negotiation within the context in which practitioners are ‘embedded’ and from which they want to separate (Lindquist 1997: 117, 197, 298).

A more recent extensive ethnography, *La vida como proceso de sanación* [Life as a Healing Process] (2015) by López-Pavillard, investigates ayahuasca practices in Spain and Peru. He uses the word shamanhood [“chamanidad”] for the individual ability to enter trance, and shamanism [“chamanismo”] for the practices embedded in a shamanic community (López-Pavillard 2015: 133-8). He tries to resolve the controversial issue of definition through splitting shamans operating as individuals in Spain and the Peruvian indigenous shamans belonging to a community. This strategical split enables him to consider the two practices together while differentiating them, and as a result recognizes legitimacy of both kind of shamans. His ethnography confirms that there are no shamanic communities in Spain and that participants have not many things in common, except spending free time and economic resources participating in the ceremonies. However, like Lindquist he does not focus on practitioners, but rather on individual shamans and ayahuasca ceremonies that he describes in great detail. The insider position and confidence in the field gives him access to more informal shamanic contexts, that due to the legal issues are quite hidden although visible online.

López-Pavillard adopts a methodology based on the ‘first’ *Ontological Turn (OT)* of Jackson and Turner that he differentiates from the ‘dominant’ *OT* of Viveiros De Castro, Descola and Latour [“giro ontológico dominante”] (idem: 118). According to López-Pavillard, the dominant *OT* supports an *epistemological relativism* which does not take informants seriously enough and ends up reducing ‘animism’ to a false ontology. Meanwhile the first *OT* assumes the ontology of the other [“asume con todas sus consecuencias ‘tomarse en serio’ la ontología del otro”; idem: 120]. As the title suggests, the ethnography focuses on the process of shamanization as a life project requiring an axiological transformation from ‘dualistic/western’ to ‘animist/indigenous’ worldview. Since he undertook the shamanization

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13 López-Pavillard compared the price of a weekend ayahuasca ceremony (about 200 euros) with the Spanish minimum wage (below 700 euros per month), wondering if this could be a filter among practitioners that would characterize ayahuasca as an elitist practice (idem: 264). In my fieldwork in Italy and Portugal, I found also low-cost ceremonies (about 50 euros but even 30 euros per night) whose price allowed a larger participation. Some Portuguese practitioners, as employees, school teachers, students, complained that they could not attend the more expensive ceremonies with renown shamans (200-250 euros). The price filter certainly functions to differentiate participants, but it does not preclude the practice. In this sense, my fieldwork was more oriented to middle class and lower budget practices. For the economics of ayahuasca, Cfr. Tupper 2017.

14 López-Pavillard during the fieldwork involved as activist in the *Plantaforma para la Defensa de la Ayahuasca* in Madrid which has the aim to legitimate, regulate and investigate ayahuasca (López-Pavillard 2015: 36).
process through radical participation, to some extent his ethnography is an interesting subject of study for me. His methodological position is based on assumptions very similar to those that support the self-fashioning process as the possibility of ‘becoming the other’.

Boekhoven’s extensive genealogy devotes the last part of his analysis to the Dutch shamanic field, from local genesis and its interconnection with the global field to the present situation. I am indebted for the genealogical section that is very well contextualized, explaining the struggles and the different strategies in the field according to Bourdeusian theoretical framework, that I also use. The fieldwork section is not as thorough and well contextualized; focusing on power struggles, Boekhoven mainly analyzes the positions, symbolic capital and strategies of affirmed shamans and institutions without paying great attention to practitioners. Even though according to his methodology and research aims, extensive participation is not required, his approach to the field appears to be very distant compared to Lindquist’s ethnography. Boekhoven goes too far with distant participation and the fieldwork suffers from a lack of sharing with practitioners, not presenting their worldviews, idioms, habits, background nor their involvement in the practices. To some extent my ethnography intends to fill this gap, partly using the same theoretical framework and a similar methodology but entering into more contact with practitioners.

Although Boekhoven observes the apparent contradiction of shamanic practitioners, he does not explain it, as I intend to do. Other scholars with different approaches have noted the presence of contradictions in the so-called ‘western’ practitioners or alternatively uprooting practitioners (Vitebsky 1995, Lindquist 1997, Kehoe 2000, Hamayon 2003, Wallis 2003, Labate and Cavnar 2018). In these studies, contradiction is often linked to the ambivalent relationship of practitioners with their cultural background or attributed to a “cognitive dissonance” displacing the issue on a psychological level (Wallis 2003: 31). According to Lindquist, “the influence of the mainstream culture on this self-consciously countercultural system is much greater than people care to acknowledge”, raising apparent contradictions (Lindquist 1997: 197). Lindquist’s conclusion is to some extent my point of departure. My aim is to explain the pivotal role of contradictions in shamanic self-fashioning and above all the ‘invisibilization’ that Lindquist describes as an attitude that does not care to acknowledge it (idem). In fact, as I intend to demonstrate, if practitioners acknowledged the contradiction, shamanic practice would lose meaning, or the meaning given to it, as an antidote that enables life-changing healing.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that contradiction is discussed in Vitebsky’s article on contemporary Siberian shamanic practitioners that shows well how local and global fields are deeply interconnected around a new old practice (Vitebsky 1995: 286):

In the western New Age movement, however, shamanism has never been indigenous. These neo-shamanists are practising shamanism for the first time, in a cosmopolitan way but sometimes with the additional claim that it is somehow a revival of ancient wisdom. These movements are inchoate and barely studied, so that any generalization can be no more than tentative. (Idem: 286-7).

I agree with Piers Vitebsky that ‘neoshamanists’ are the first practitioners of cosmopolitan shamanic practices. ‘Cosmopolitan’ is used here with reference to Hannerz’ theories (1990, 2006) as the desire and the competence to experiment with the ‘other’, picking elements from different cultures or even ‘going native’ (Cfr. Chapter Two). Cosmopolitan shamanic practices are neither new nor old, but rather the two things together; it is, as will be demonstrated, denegation that can explain this paradoxical coexistence.

. . . . Towards methodological issues

Kuhn’s challenge of research paradigms, Foucault’s reflections on the relationship between knowledge and power, the issues posed by post-colonialist and feminist studies, post-modern writing culture and more recently ontological turn, have in different ways questioned the classic anthropological paradigm of ethnography as a transparent, neutral, representation. Faced with these methodological issues John Comaroff (2005) suggests an anthropologist can do no better than explain his position and the conditions of production of his own research (Cfr. also Marcus and Fisher 1999 [1986]; Clifford 1986). According to Bourdieu, anthropologists should engage in an exercise of self-reflexivity, which he calls participant objectivation, in order to prevent unconsciously projecting their relationship with the object of study and exonerate the subject from the analysis (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 1997, 2003). The scholar should do an imaginative effort to acknowledge his point of view:

Sociologists cannot be unaware that the specific characteristic of their point of view is to be a point of view on a point of view. (…) And it is solely to the extent that they can

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16 According to Gow’s hypothesis, the dissemination of ayahuasca as healing ritual practice in the Amazon has been introduced during the flourishing of the rubber industry in the 19th Century by mestizos who connected the ‘people of the forest’ with the ‘people of the city’, becoming the “masters of the paths between them”. According to Gow, the use of ayahuasca in curing rituals introduced in this time spread into the forest rather than coming from the forest as a means to “cure the disease of Western Amazonian colonial experience” (Gow 1994: 90-113).
objectify themselves that they are able, even as they remain in the place inexorably assigned to each of us in the social world, to imagine themselves in the place occupied by their objects (who are, at least to a certain degree, an alter ego) and thus to take their point of view, that is, to understand that if they were in their shoes they would doubtless be and think like them'. (Bourdieu 1999 [1993]: 626)

This imaginative-comprehensive approach is a way of interpreting the anthropological prescription to ‘take people seriously’, that is not to ‘exoticize’ them and, I would add, not to essentialize them.

To be clear from the outset, this thesis is not on shamanic practitioners but with them, or as Tim Ingold puts it: “to practice anthropology, as I understand it, means to study with people, not to make studies of them” (Ingold 2017: 23). Instead of focusing on ethnographic description of a specific subset of shamanic practices, as most research tends to do, I have oriented towards a “critical inquiry into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the one world we all inhabit” (idem: 22). I agree with Ingold that, in this sense, anthropology is a speculative discipline that can practice philosophy better than philosophy since it speculates in the world; but, to do this without being ahistorical, contextualization is necessary. According to João de Pina-Cabral (2015), anthropology is concerned about the present, but has to be cautious with it. Ethnographic present should be rejected when it is used as a rhetorical device to create a sort of permanent representation, but at the same time ethnography is realized in a contingent present that should not be dissociated from it (Pina-Cabral 2015: 219, 227).

This approach is a way to move beyond the anti-pro shamanic dichotomy that, on both sides, is based on description and definition of practitioners often leading to an essentialization of them as different from the rest. My intention is rather to move in the opposite direction: to find continuity between us and them. Finding continuity between humans, instead of separating distinct groups, is a way to de-hypostasize and de-essentialize us and them. It is not my intention nor does it seem profitable to present my research, with, as it’s base, the identification of people devoted to shamanic practice and to set them apart from everyone else. On the contrary my aim in this ethnography with shamanists is to investigate human processes, such as denegation, demonstrating how anthropological research can contribute to the reflection on the present human condition.

My position in the field of shamanic studies is primarily on the side of the genealogical approach. This position’s main limitation is to concentrate on discourse to the detriment of fieldwork, like in Boekhoven ethnography (Cfr. previous section From shamanism to shamanisms). To find an intermediate position between a focus purely on
shamanic discourse or a radical immersion in shamanic practice, this ethnography analyzes how discourse is embodied through practicing and how practice is framed by discourses that orient it. Self-fashioning in this context is both the embodiment of the practitioners project and the plan for the process of embodiment through a certain practice; the result is where practitioners projection and the practice that realizes the projection meet.

I mainly relied on Sloterdijk theoretical framework for analyzing how discourses and practices are embodied through anthropotechnic. Anthropotechnics are defined as “the methods of mental and physical practising by which humans from the most diverse cultures have attempted to optimize their cosmic and immunological status” (Sloterdijk 2009: 10, Cfr. Chapter Two). Anthropotechnics perform a sort of symbolic immunization which builds up the necessary defenses to human discomfort. Different anthropotechnics involve different practices through which different models of aspired self are embodied. Investigating another context entirely, Novaes concludes in his PhD dissertation on the processes of embodiment in a health club in Lisbon, anthropotechnics are useful tools to observe the intersections between ‘symbolic’ and ‘material’ dimensions of reality (Novaes 2018: 286). I also relied on Csordas’ cultural-phenomenological studies of embodiment (1990, 1993, 1994) to identify the projective/symbolic and practical/material aspects of the process of self-fashioning. Csordas’ approach has been crucial to my interpretation of shamanic practices as a way to self-fashion through spiritual and healing means rather than a strict form of spirituality or healing. As Csordas points out in his research with Charismatic Christians, in this context healing is a means for “the creation of a sacred self”, even though such a thing as the ‘self’ does not exist but, instead, there are ‘self’ processes (Csordas 1993: 276). Recent approaches that investigate the learning of religious practices have also been useful to focus on shamanic self-fashioning as a complex ongoing social process rather than religious transmission (Cfr. Berliner and Sarró 2007; Halloy and Naumescu 2012). Self-fashioning is a process of un-ending apprenticeship; for this reason, it is important to analyze shamanic transformation from beginner through to advanced practitioners.

Meetings and sharing with practitioners have been crucial to the observation of my own ideas and assumptions, enabling the inter-cultural reflexivity suggested by Caria (2002). Furthermore, in my research and own personal perspective, shamanic therapeutic idiom partly overlaps with the immunological metaphor of Sloterdijk. The partial coincidence between etic and emic perspectives has also contributed to the very title of this thesis, that came from an

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17 Many practitioners in fact refer to ‘spiritual means’ where the ‘spiritual’ represents a way of finding the ‘true self’ (Cfr. Chapter One).
exchange with a shamanic practitioner. She asked me to explain my research and when I concluded, she condensed the thesis with the Italian expression *un po’ di sana follia*, roughly translated as ‘a little healthy madness’. She used my own approach to create a significant dichotomy that made sense to both of us.

**. . . . Approaching the field**

The fieldwork itself, was based mainly in the area of Florence, Italy, and Lisbon, Portugal, over a period of about two years.\(^{18}\) I observed, interviewed and interacted with shamanic practitioners and networks that I followed through snowball sampling. As Lindquist notes in her ethnography, since the shamanic field is very dynamic, the engagement with participants depends on the contingent flow that is somehow arbitrary (Lindquist 1997: 13).\(^{19}\)

In Italy I had friends that started a shamanic self-fashioning about ten years ago and I was welcomed to participate. Meanwhile other Italian friends engaged in shamanic practices through the transnational network *Raíces de la Tierra* and, again, invited me to participate. In Lisbon, on the contrary, I did not know many people when I moved there to start research in 2014. During the first year, my supervisor asked me to verify the presence of shamanic practices in Lisbon as a preliminary fieldwork. Since in Italy access to fieldwork was not an issue, I strategically used the conditions in Lisbon to explore entry into the shamanic field. My experience confirmed the welcoming openness by shamanist practitioners documented by Lindquist (idem).

It was my intention from the beginning of research to also explore online contact between practitioners. DuBois, especially, has indicated the ever expanding presence of shamanic topics on the Internet as a promising and yet unexplored field of research (DuBois 2011: 12).\(^{20}\) As Conrad points, ayahuasca practice has grown considerably on the Internet encouraging do-it-yourself (DIY) practicing (Conrad 2018: 95-114). Considering shamanic practices are still a marginal phenomenon, the Internet has potential to be a valid tool for a combined investigation able to deal with the issue of marginality (Murthy 2008: 839).

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\(^{18}\) Most of fieldwork was realized between 2015 and 2017, but I had already started preliminary fieldwork at the end of 2014 and I continued contact with practitioners and to go to shamanic events until 2018.

\(^{19}\) In this regard, along the thesis I will use ‘shamanists’, ‘practitioners’, ‘participants’, ‘shamans’ and other terms with reference to the people with whom I engaged in the fieldwork without the pretension of generalizing my findings to ‘all’ shamanists. My focus is on uprooting self-fashioning and excludes other uses of shamanic practices.

\(^{20}\) To give a little but significant data, at the beginning of my PhD, in June 2015, a simple search on Google had these outcomes: 1,120,000 for “shamanism” and 30,900,000 for “shaman”. In March 2019, the results had grown considerably: 7,740,000 for “shamanism” and 54,200,000 for “shaman”.

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According to the studies of Miller and Slater in Trinidad, the Internet might also be a tool to claim the realization of a socially marginalized ‘identity’ (Miller and Slater 2000: 178). To some extent, this is pertinent to shamanic practitioners since they feel ‘marginalized’ and look for a counter-cultural self-fashioning. Nevertheless my research, which includes use and analysis of content on the internet, indicates otherwise; shamanic ‘counter-cultural’ stance is quite tuned to ‘mainstream’ tendencies as evidence in the prolific use of popular publicity techniques inviting to ‘be different’ (Cfr. Chapter One and Four).

Investigation of shamanic practices online was with the twofold aim of identifying what was happening under the shamanic umbrella and finding contacts in Portugal. The second goal was surprisingly easily attained when I found an online announcement for a shamanic workshop with the Portuguese shaman APio (Cfr. Pict. 0.2.). I contacted APio by email and we met after a few days. Even though the initial workshop I intended to attend was canceled, the meeting was extremely fruitful; APio was enthusiastic about my research and very kindly helped me by passing me contact emails and phone numbers of many shamanists in Portugal. It was only later I realized that APio was one of the first promoters of shamanic practices in Lisbon and a point of reference in the field since the 1990s. This first contact immediately produced a snowball effect with contacts among shamanist practitioners in Lisbon, and also gave me a historical perspective on the Portuguese field.

My other online research led to many overt commercial offers, confirming the ongoing commodification of shamanic practices that many scholars and practitioners have pointed out. I focused on this aspect in the beginning of research because advertisements are often clear examples of denegation in the resistance/adherence to late-capitalist lifestyles. As research progressed, it became clear commodification is a pervasive contemporary condition that rapidly expanded to domains such as identity, spirituality, ethnicity and cultural difference (Hannerz 1992; Wood 2003; Carrette and King 2005; Comaroff 2001, 2009). Boekhoven makes a good point when he says ‘consumerism’ is often framed as a depreciative process while to some extent it also proves the charm of shamanic practice and growing social appreciation for them on a larger scale (Boekhoven 2011: 302).

21 Considering the reactions of other shamans, the availability of APio was even more appreciable and rare. Some shamans or organizers refused to talk with me, inviting me instead to participate at paid events where, with other participants, I could have posed my questions. Others were more strategic encouraging me to participate in order to understand their practice suggesting that afterwards they would grant an interview, as they in fact did.

22 The technologization of shamanic practices is quite widespread online for example, through the Global Shaman Summit (https://shamanismsummit.com 04/08/15) that streams a gathering of international shaman celebrities once a year (Cfr. Pict. 0.3).
INICIAÇÃO AO XAMANISMO - PRÁTICAS ANCESTRAIS NOS TEMPOS ACTUAIS
Ciclo de Aprofundamento - 1ª Sessão
Workshop
Espiral - Restaurante Vegetariano, Terapias, Eventos, Livraria Esoterica
Data: 2014-09-07

Neste ciclo de workshops iremos dar os primeiros passos de religação a algumas das antigas tradições xamânicas, aos mundos espirituais neles descritos e às forças vivas do fogo, terra, ar, água...

Terapias:
Xamânismo

Descrição do Evento:
Neste ciclo de workshops iremos dar os primeiros passos de religação a algumas das antigas tradições xamânicas, aos mundos espirituais neles descritos e às forças vivas do fogo, terra, ar e água que a todos nutrem. E, em harmonia com essas forças, procuraremos gerar transformações na nossa vida.


Pict. 0.2. B: Espiral, Lisboa, November 2014
Journey into the Heart of Ancient Spiritual Wisdom with Shamanic Practices

Featured Speakers:
(click on photo to learn more)

- Lynn V Andrews
- Sandra Ingerman
- Alberto Villoldo, PhD
- don Oscar Miro-Quesada
- Betsy Bergstrom
- John Perkins
- Josi Luis Stevens
- Lena Stevens
- HeatherAsh Amara
- Itzhak Beery
- Imelda Almqvist
- Evelyn C. Rysdyk
- Jan Engstrom-Smith
- Hank Wesselman
- Jill Kuykendall

With this unparalleled 3-day gathering, you'll discover:

- A new kind of activism that emerges from open hearts & open perception
- How to find empowerment through shamanic journeying
- How shamanic healing is truly traditional medicine for the modern world
- The importance of building a strong alliance with the animals & land around you
- Heart-deepening experiences of visionary and practical shamanic ritual guidance applicable to personal & planetary transformation
- How to draw on the invisible world for guidance & healing
- Ways to tap into your unexpressed creative & intuitive power
- Practical tools for healing negative feelings & toxic thoughts
- The power of plant medicine to activate your higher brain
- Your role as a co-creator with the Earth, the elements & the spirit world – accelerating the conscious evolution of our planet
- Methods for shapeshifting your story & transforming our world
- How to access the subtle realms of consciousness (the upper & lower worlds) with guidance from allies there
- Sacred Earth traditions and wisdom to ground you into a more ethical way of living
- A deeper sense of presence and reverence for the natural world – including plants, animals & Gaia herself

Pict. 0.3.: https://shamanismsummit.com (04/08/15)
Preliminary online searches also led to the Festival du Chamanisme, in its ninth edition in France in May 2015 (Cfr. Pict. 0.4.). I participated in order to have a panoramic view of the global shamanic field, since the event presented more than one hundred shamans from all five continents. At the Festival, I noticed the contrast between the shared global shamanic discourse and the competing strategies to authenticate local versions; the fieldwork in Italy and Portugal has subsequently confirmed this contrast (Cfr. Chapter Four). Another important feature that emerged during this participation was the cosmopolitan attitude of practitioners from different countries who shared a deep curiosity about the cultural diversity of shamanic practices.

This cosmopolitanism à la Hannerz (1990, 2006) convinced me that a national context was less relevant in designating fieldwork boundaries. Cosmopolitan practitioners had in common the same desire to uproot from national identity often and repeatedly framing the practice as universal. This caused a great inner variability in the groups I studied and a strong presence of mixed nationalities in the groups themselves that was confirmed throughout the entire term of fieldwork. For instance, in Lisbon and Florence I had contacts with people from various regions of Italy and Portugal, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil, US, Germany, Austria, Spain, France, Turkey and mixed-nationalities as French-Angolan, Dutch-Portuguese, Italian-American or people living in foreign countries and so on. The very thing in common among these people was the search for elsewhere as a destination to change their life, a way out from nine-to-five modernity and its perceived homogeneity. Clarke has challenged anthropologists to account for portable cultural practices through their relationships of continuity and discontinuity within “a network of linkages brought to life through transnational society-cults groups.” (Clarke 2007: 727). Taking up this challenge, in order to understand a contemporary phenomenon such as cosmopolitan shamanic practice, I applied an awkward scale (Comaroff 2003), beyond national boundaries, focusing on the transnational and wired interconnections of the shamanic global field (Cfr. Chapter Four). If I had to specify the context of this research, perhaps the most reliable description would be ‘with shamanic practitioners passing by the area of Florence and Lisbon between 2015 and 2018’, which, I acknowledge, is quite vague. Nevertheless, it accounts for the fuzzy boundaries and flowing dynamism of the shamanic field that Lindquist also observed (Lindquist 1997: 145).

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23 Some shamanic practitioners used the expression ‘from nine to five’ referring to the ‘mainstream’ life regulated by the job (Cfr. Chapter Two). I borrowed nine-to-five modernity from Saldanha’s ethnography with trance-dancers/freaks at Goa (India) who identify with this term as what they do not want to be: “a traditional straight nine-to-five job person” (Saldanha: 2007: 57).
Pict. 0.4. A: www.festival-chamanisme.com/photos_and_videos.html (08/05/15)

Pict. 0.4. B: https://www.facebook.com/adrien.lambin.5/media_set?set=a.10205568305838267&type=3 (08/05/15)

Pict. 0.4. C: idem
Participation at the Festival was also very useful in familiarizing with the multifarious shamanic practices as well as clarifying the necessity of delineating the field of research and plan my approach. As I noticed in the Festival, the ceremonies and the moments just before and after were not good times to try talk with practitioners because everyone was very immersed in his personal experience. While I was developing the concept of self-fashioning at the theoretical level, I also considered the best conditions for researching it. If I wanted to focus on life changes, apprenticeship and long-term processes it was best to stay and talk with people, understand their idiom, familiarize with their way of living, returning in different moments of their life and ask them to share their life stories. During the fieldwork, this turned out to be much easier than I initially thought; among practitioners there was a certain widespread narcissistic desire to talk about themselves. Overtime, I had to learn to defend myself from multiple attempts to tell me everything about their shamanic experiences.

Fieldwork began in earnest in September 2015, after the successful preliminary fieldwork in Lisbon and Florence. At the time I did not have the intention to compare; I wanted to investigate the two contexts as a means to understand cosmopolitan practices and practitioners. From the beginning, the two contexts inter-related; an Italian friend and yoga teacher introduced me to MaLva and CaRa, two Portuguese shamanic therapists with whom she did ayahuasca in South Portugal and who she knew through a Dutch friend. During the fieldwork, MaLva and CaRa started to organize ayahuasca ceremonies and consultancies in Florence. At the same time, the transnational network Raíces de la Tierra was rapidly expanding; I got to know the Portuguese advanced practitioners SaRa and MagDa at an international event organized in Italy in September 2016. Some Italian and Portuguese practitioners also followed the same global shamans traveling the world, the viral initiations of Munay-ki and Worldwide Womb Blessing online events.

The methodology I have adopted is a combination of direct participation in events, long-term sharing with practitioners, formal and informal interviews and life stories. At the beginning I participated in many different events, including shamanic workshops, drum circles, initiations, rituals and ayahuasca ceremonies, but also public events like conferences, presentations of books, films and exhibitions. During this time, I contacted participants and requested interviews that often became a series of long interviews where many people told me their life stories. I also started to record the life stories of APio, MaLva and CaRa with

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24 In this regard, many issues and topics in the shamanist field were excluded: such as, gender, ecology, psychology, archaeology, neopaganism, music, techno-shamanism, video-games, visual art, performance, literature, mystic tourism and so on.

25 Chapter Three and Four details how I participated in the Italian group from the group’s outset and how the Portuguese group was initially experiencing a strong inner struggle that complicated my participation.
intervals of a few months during three years. These intervals were crucial as a way of noting change; understanding how they saw their lives change overtime gave increased insight into the process of self-fashioning. The intervals also introduced me to a recurrent aspect of the shamanic field: change was in some way habitual and was used by practitioners to frame their lives as a series of turning points. At the same time, as participating in events led or attended by APio, MaLva, CaRa, I interviewed some of their followers. As other scholars have noticed, shamanic participation is rather individualistic and especially in paid events there is not a coherent community (Lindquist 1997, Townsend 2004). Another characteristic of the field is that practitioners are not interested in talking about their social life outside the shamanic context and did not pay attention to the historical contingency of their lives. Many times I arrived by this information accidentally.

Although Portugal has long-term and advanced practitioners, as well as some established training programs, I did not find an identifiable shamanic community at the time of research. As I was interested in the collective dimension, in Italy I intensified the participation with Raíces de la Tierra and the DIY G group of advanced practitioners. With Raíces de la Tierra I participated at organized events and informal gatherings such as dinners, walks and chats. I then held long interviews with selected practitioners, using the same method of intervals of months. Similarly I participated with G group at regular practices of shamanic songs, which sometimes became a ceremony with psychotropics, but also at many informal occasions involving sharing and fun. By this time I had interviewed the leader ArPo and some of the advanced practitioners. In both Raíces de la Tierra and G group I was also introduced in their social network platforms (FaceBook, Whatsapp, YouTube, Google Drive, mailing list) as a way of staying informed about events, sharing songs, images, jokes and information. With both groups I had a privileged access because some members were already friends with whom I had participated at Temazcal, San Pedro walking and ayahuasca ceremonies. Compared to participation at paid events, the quality interaction was more
intimate and familiarization was easier to establish in these groups of friends.³¹ These informal interactions were very precious for many reasons; practitioners were more relaxed, conversation was not directed and passed fluidly from one topic to another. I participated in many enlightening conversations with practitioners who asked questions I had never thought of and that revealed much more of their point of view and way of life.³² In G group especially, practitioners often had different shamanic experiences. These occasions gave me a chance to understand more clearly what was of value for practitioners and what they considered ‘authentic’.

Even though I did not use a going native methodology, actively participating in ceremonies and activities was essential to enter the shamanic mood. This helped me understand what practitioners were referring to in their interviews and to share experiences that established empathy and a common idiom. Without this participation, interviews would have been limited to a discursive dimension. I do not agree with Lindquist that, as a rule, in interviews “the normative form” is obtained because the result of the interview depends on the relationship between anthropologist and interviewee (Lindquist 1997: 17). When I met the founder of the Portuguese branch of the Foundation for Shamanic studies, it was a structured interview in a strict question/answer format, because it was a condition of the interview. Apart from this, I conducted informal interviews that often became reciprocal exchanges where I also shared my doubts and reflections.

. . . . . . Outline of the thesis

Identifying and indicating how denegation works in the process of shamanic self-fashioning is the scope of this thesis. Many cosmopolitan practitioners refer to shamanic practices as an antidote to the discomfort of nine-to-five modernity. How shamanic antidote becomes a path of an un-ending healing process is documented in this ethnography through the lens of emic idiom: how the shamanic antidote is activated (Chapter One); how different therapies are applied by individuals to change/heal themselves (Chapter Two); how healing becomes a lifelong anthropotechnic in the collective dimension of the group (Chapter Three); and, how

³¹ Nevertheless, this aspect sometimes has been uncomfortable for me because I felt divided as friend and anthropologist.
³² In informal interactions I wrote few words to remember a significant issue and after I would write extensive notes. Due to this, I cannot always document the exact words of practitioners; I quote them here, using the single quotation mark in order to refer to the ‘content’ of the sentence. In some cases, I translated and wrote from Portuguese, Spanish, French, English to Italian during the conversation. When I refer to these notes, I have translated them into English using ‘single quotation marks’. With recorded conversations or a detailed written note, I quoted in the original language as translation does not always account for the tone and expression.
the shamanic anthropotechnic has spread to current practitioners and networks through viral circulation in the global shamanic field (Chapter Four). Specific theoretical framework is intentionally included in every chapter rather than treated separately so as not to isolate the theory from the context to which it was applied.

Chapter One, *the shamanic antidote*, discusses denegation by introducing Freud and Bourdieu’s theories, and applies it to Foucault’s study on technologies of the self and Sloterdijk’s theory of anthropotechnics. It then identifies the peculiar shamanic denegation set that activates, supports and protects the anthropotechnical process of self-fashioning. Denegation also supports the mechanisms of protection that conceal the entire process; how denegation is invisibilized to different degrees and how some shamanists are even aware of their own process of *auto-immunization* is documented.

Chapter Two, *shamanic therapy*, focuses on the individual path of self-fashioning. It discusses the embodiment of the aspired self performed through different therapies. The three main phases of the process of self-fashioning are identified and discussed: secession (radical separation from previous life), *training* (progressive apprenticeship through disembodiment and embodiment) and *advancing* (un-ending self-improvement). Identification of denegation in each of these phases enables understanding of how shamanic self-fashioning is based on the coexistence of contradictory aspects. The analysis of shamanic exercises illustrates how self-referential circulation between discourses and practices provides further confirmation of the auto-immunization process.

Chapter Three, *lifelong chronic healing*, the ascetic tensions that push the anthropotechnical path towards un-ending self-improvement are detailed. Ascetic training as a vaccine is explained; trials expose the practitioner to a controlled dose of risk the overcoming of which is supposed to engender immune defenses and increased ability to face life’s trials. Each new trial is an advancement on the anthropotechnical path to which corresponds an increasingly deep embodiment of layers of denegation. Nevertheless the ascetic trial, as the vaccine, is not exempt from risks that require other forms of protection in recursive way. This perpetual motion between protection and risk reinforces the need for the immunological anthropotechnical system itself. An example of the ascetic anthropotechnical path will be analyzed to show the interpersonal dynamics that support the shared denegation set and its enactment in Italian and Portuguese local groups. The participation of the group in supporting these trials is crucial as the group motivates and rewards the practitioner by bestowing prestige and leader roles to those considered the most ascetically advanced. Denegation in this case serves a twofold function, as individual and collective symbolic immunization.
Chapter Four, *viral circulation*, analyzes how shamanic practices have been extracted, abstracted and exported while nurturing a metaphor that has taken the form of the antidote to modernity. Despite the shared universal brand of ‘shamanism’, different positions in the global shamanic field articulate strategies struggling with each other in a bid to affirm practices as the most ‘authentic’ antidote. Three fieldwork cases are presented illustrating how practices circulate through transnational networks operating in Italy and Portugal: local ‘families’ from *Raíces de la Tierra*, the pyramidal organization and viral circulation of *Munay-ki* rituals and finally, the cosmopolitan DIY *G group* based in Florence.

In the Conclusion, the role of denegation in self-fashioning processes is summarized and drawn on to demonstrate how this research can contribute to contemporary anthropological debate. I close with some reflections on my own research process and on anthropological methodology in general.
CHAPTER 1. The shamanic antidote

Throughout the research I often met by chance shamanic practitioners with whom I had informal interactions outside the frame of the fieldwork. Sometimes these were very significant like the one I had with AmaQari. I was in the shop Espírito nativo in the center of Lisbon and started a conversation with the owner, a Peruvian man of about 60 years who moved to Portugal 20 years ago having lived some years previously in Italy (Cfr. Pict. 1.1.). When the research topic of my PhD came up, he enthusiastically told me about the monthly shamanic drum circles he led at that time, September 2017, in an holistic self-care center in Oeiras (a district of Lisbon) and the workshop of drum making he organized in his shop. As we were chatting, he received a phone call and talked about an accident and a problem with the spinal column he was trying to recuperate from. After the call he complained about his health worries, explaining he did not want to undergo the surgery suggested by the doctors at the hospital. He expressed a deep distrust towards the doctors, preferring instead to look for a chiropractor and asking me if, by chance, I knew someone good for this. But the most urgent problem was something else; he was feeling so anxious and fearful he was taking strong sedatives, without he couldn’t talk and work. He was worried he wouldn’t be able to lead the drum circle planned for the end of the week. Indeed he was trembling and anxious in such a way I was moved and wanted to help him. As I have had anxiety attacks and I refused to use sedatives for a similar but weaker skepticism towards the tendency to prescribe chemicals by ‘those’ doctors, I was surprised about his choice to take pills and I naively asked point-blank if he had tried shamanic practices (“and with shamanism?” [e com o xamanismo?]). He abruptly responded: “Shamanism... for what?” [O xamanismo... para quê?]. I felt deeply embarrassed since we had talked about shamanism and healing and he was manifestly more expert and convinced than me. AmaQari’s response was clear, he excluded shamanic healing for his problem, although he taught other people how to ‘heal’ with shamanic remedies. I wondered out loud if not to treat the spine but at the very least to calm down and control fear, shamanic sessions with the drum, for instance, might be helpful. He looked at me with surprise and discouragement: ‘Ah, no, this does not work for me... it is for the others’ [pois...
Pict. 1.1. A: Espírito Nativo, Lisbon, my photo

Pict. 1.1. B: https://pumacayo-espírito-nativo.negocio.site (11/06/18)
não… isso não dá… é para os outros]. AmaQari wanted an instant remedy which he only found in scientific medicine that he deeply mistrusted, and the shamanic remedy which he trusted did not work.

Once outside the shop and the empathetic feeling, I reflected on this weird conversation where I seemed more convinced than him in the effectiveness of shamanic therapy while he was convinced that nothing but synthetic medicine would be effective. What puzzled me was that AmaQari was taking a strong sedative to be able to perform shamanic sessions whose practice was aimed, among other purposes, to dismiss scientific medicine.

Often in my fieldwork I found practitioners who, like AmaQari, affirmed and negated at the same time a specific assumption without apparently realizing the contradiction that was evident. Similarly, the Brazilian shaman Ana X. firmly claimed she did not want to use ‘modern technology’ and will remain independent from the ‘white’ system so as not to be controlled by it. As an example she explained she had an i-Phone, ‘the best cell-phone in the world’, but, she only used it for a few things when it is ‘necessary’.¹ For instance, she never used texting apps and indeed if one day she were to talk with me she would call me on Skype from her tablet. Underlining her ambivalence, at the end of the interview she asked for my contact details on the most popular social networks so we could communicate more easily. Like AmaQari, Ana X. condemned ‘modern technology’ while using it to be liberated from it.

This kind of ‘contradiction’ was apparent in many practitioners. My aim here is not to point out shamanic ‘contradiction’, but rather to understand how practitioners use it to find explanations, reach conclusions, make decisions and act in their lives. The concept of denegation gave me the interpretative key to understand these almost anecdotal episodes as well as other more significant processes that enabled practitioners to frame their shamanic life path. Most shamanists refer to the practice as a medicine, healing or an antidote, but in order to understand what they mean the therapeutic idiom has to be contextualized in the forms it is theorized, practiced and negotiated.² For shamanic practitioners, the shamanic antidote is rather a dispositive to change life and a tool to auto-immunize from the discomfort of nine-to-five modernity, requiring thus a certain dose of denegation.

In this Chapter I will develop Foucault’s and Sloterdijk’s work on technologies of the self by identifying the crucial role of denegation in the process of self-fashioning. I will

¹ Quotations of Ana X. are taken from the interview realized in Lisbon on 02/11/15.
² As Csordas (1993) convincingly theorized and validated in his ethnography, healing functions as a resource for self-objectification among American Catholic Charismatics. Anthropological inquiry clarified the strategic use of healing for Charismatics. In similar way I intend to contextualize the strategic use of healing for shamanists.
illustrate how overlapping layers of denegation activate, structure, validate and protect the anthropotechnical path of shamanic self-fashioning.

1. 1. Denegation

His mind slid away into the labyrinthine world of doublethink. To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word ’doublethink’ involved the use of doublethink.

George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four

George Orwell perfectly illustrates the process of denegation which he called doublethink in the science-fiction scenario Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949).³ But while in Orwell it is programmatically imposed by an authoritarian and manipulative regime, denegation is here considered to be an unavoidable trait of human practice, including of course my own research, in which I will try to unveil the mechanisms of denegation as far as my own processes of denegation allow me to do.

I draw on the use of denegation by Pierre Bourdieu who himself drew from Freudian theories on Verneinung (Steinmetz 2006: 445). According to Sigmund Freud, Verneinung, alternatively translated as “denegation”, “negation”, “disavowal”, “denial”, is related to the repression of unconscious material as “a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed” (Freud 1976 [1925]: 235-42). Through denegation, unconscious material is at the same time ambivalently repressed and recognized, concealed and affirmed in a form that allows to protect it.⁴ Bourdieu applied Freudian concept of denegation in the sociological field extending its use from individual to collective processes, to reveal the denegated social structures that unveil the most hidden workings of domination (Paolucci 2011: 127).

³ The oppressive and manipulative society of Nineteen Eighty-Four is very similar to shamanists’ representation of current society (Cfr. next section To be another person).
⁴ Freud (1977 [1910]) hypothesizes that language itself has developed through the coexistence of opposite meanings in the same word that at a later stage would be separated into two distinct linguistic entities (for example: light/darkness). According to Freud this linguistic division masks that the concepts themselves are inseparable and interdependent, since there is no light without darkness and vice versa.
Ironically enough, according to Steinmetz, Bourdieu used Freud’s concept as well as others borrowed by Lacan, to denegate his own “strategies of embrace and repulsion with respect to psychoanalysis” (Steinmetz 2006: 451).

Bourdieu (1977, 1992 [1980], 1994) refers to denegation as a collective process of concurrent recognition and misrecognition that, for instance, operates through the concealment of the economic interest under the apparent disinterest of symbolic goods:

In an economy which is defined by the refusal to recognize the ‘objective’ truth of ‘economic’ practices, that is, the law of ‘naked self-interest’ and egoistic calculation, even ‘economic’ capital cannot act unless it succeeds in being recognized through a conversion that can render unrecognizable the true principle of its efficacy. Symbolic capital is this denied capital, recognized as legitimate, that is, misrecognized as capital (recognition, acknowledgement, in the sense of gratitude aroused by benefits can be one of the foundations of this recognition) which, along with religious capital (see Bourdieu 1971), is perhaps the only possible form of accumulation when economic capital is not recognized. (Bourdieu 1992 [1980]: 118)

“Denegation of economy” enables a conversion rendering economic efficacy of symbolic capital unrecognizable. According to Bourdieu this process is at the same time recognized and misrecognized by the agents involved (Bourdieu 1994). Further, denegated practices “can only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing”, otherwise they do not work (idem: 74). This can be used as a form of counter-test to confirm whether or not denegation is working. Further, according to Bourdieu, denegation is not simply a form of negation, nor a dissimulation (an ideological mask or a repudiation of economic interest), but instead an ambivalent process where agglutinating two opposite conditions engenders a play that otherwise would not be possible because the complete revelation of one of the conditions will make vanish the other.

Jacques Derrida (1987) also discussed denegation and the paradoxes of negative theology. In this analysis secrets are presented as a clear example of denegation. Secrets operate because they reveal and conceal at the same time: nobody should know a secret but somebody has to know it in order to be ‘secret’. Applying Bourdieu’s formula, a secret ‘can only conceal by pretending not to be revealing what it is revealing’. Substituting the potentially misleading ‘pretending’ with the less problematic “invisibilizing” helps to clarify the working of denegation and disentangle from the question of intentional/unintentional purposes that is not crucial here.

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For example, the evidence of economic interest of ‘commercial art’ decreases its social prestige and the “profits from disinterestedness” (idem: 75).
Orwell, Freud, Bourdieu and Derrida all discuss the coexistence of opposites as the necessary condition of denegation whatever the field of application. In this research I try to adapt the Bourdieusian concept of denegation to an anthropological perspective. Denegation is here defined as a collective process of concurrent affirmation and negation of an assumption or a condition, where the resulting contradiction is removed, naturalized, negated or taken for granted, in some way hidden from the perspective of the denegator and whose ‘invisibility’ enables a certain practice that otherwise would not be possible. Since the assumption is ‘invisibilized’ but present, when denegation comes to the somersault of an affirmation that simultaneously rests on an assumption and is made possible by the implicit exclusion of the same assumption, it can lead to paradoxical effects.

1.2. The role of denegation in technologies of self-fashioning

My theoretical framework is based in large part on the studies on technologies of the self by Foucault (1978 [1976], 1984, 1988a, 1988b, 2005 [2001]) that have been further developed by Sloterdijk (2009) in a general theory which presents many fruitful applications and some problematic aspects.

From History of sexuality (1976) onwards, Foucault increasingly directed his investigation from technologies of domination and power to technologies of the self, that is, how “a human being turns him- or herself into a subject” (Foucault 1988b: 3):

(... technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (idem: 18)

In these studies, Foucault mainly focused on Greek and Roman philosophers until early Christian writings, “the golden age of the culture of the self”, using his genealogical methodology with the aim to trace the history of practices through which humans constitute as subjects (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 30). Genealogical perspective is particularly fruitful since it traces continuity to current times of what is naturalized as an unquestioned trait of the present and therefore can be comfortably be mobilized for denegation.

Foucault points out the topic ‘self care’ has been controversial since classical Greece. In Plato’s Alcibiade Socrates reflects on the problematic issue of ‘who’ is the ‘self’ taking care
of the ‘self’? In self-reflexivity, the self is at the same time ‘subject’ and ‘object’ of the action. According to Foucault, the ‘self’ who starts to pay attention to “body and soul, thought, conduct, and way of being” gives shape to a ‘conscious’ subject (Foucault 1988a: 18). He describes how, before this self-awareness there is a sort of unconscious and undirected flux to life where the subjects acquire only awareness in the moment in which they activate technologies of the self to consciously transform themselves (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 93, 254).

In the context of Plato’s classical Greece, the care of the self was mainly addressed to young men, as Alcibiades, who had the role of governing other people and therefore the necessity to learn firstly how to govern themselves. The Delphic principle *gnothi sauron* (‘know yourself’) and Socrates’ notion of *epimeleia heautou* (‘care of oneself’) were in Ancient Greece reserved for a few people in power, at the moment of their formation, with a precise, political, purpose. Even though Foucault acknowledges this elitism, he does not investigate this significant aspect of classical Greek technologies of self. This condition however changed during Hellenist and Roman periods where technologies of the self became a permanent occupation, throughout one’s life, with the general purpose of getting prepared “for a certain complete achievement of life” (Foucault 1988a: 31). Political purposes were substituted by individual aims for elite audiences who had the time and resources to devote to the care of the self. The implication of exclusiveness remained; those who took care of themselves, or self-fashioned, regarded anyone living without following technologies of the self as being unaware, passive and directed by ‘external’ and unquestioned forces (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 94).

The widening of the field of application of self-care technologies led to the separation from a precise time and goal, multiplying the opportunity for personal realization. In his panoramic historical overview, Sloterdijk acknowledges the care of the self extended to an ever wider audience until the contemporary imperative “you must change your life!” which is intended universally (Sloterdijk 2009: 335-6). Sloterdijk expands on Foucault’s studies by investigating all human practice that entails a transformation of the self through different fields such as religion, politic, art, pedagogy, sport and so on. In so doing, Sloterdijk demonstrates how, in all aspects, humans have developed specific techniques and training in order to improve and overcome themselves.

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6 Foucault’s focus in later research increasingly shifted to *technology of self* because he had previously “insisted too much on the technology of domination and power”, especially in institutions (Foucault 1988a: 19). The last years of his career were dedicated to investigating the other extreme of this relationship from the side of the subject in formation.
Sloterdijk’s comprehensive theory on human practice is based on the concept of *anthropotechnics*, succinctly defined as such:

I gather material on the biography of *Homo immunologicus*, guided by the assumption that this is where to find the stuff from which the forms of anthropotechnics are made. By this I mean the methods of mental and physical practising by which humans from the most diverse cultures have attempted to optimize their cosmic and immunological status in the face of vague risks of living and acute certainties of death (idem: 10).

In order to overcome the problematic dichotomy nature/nurture, Sloterdijk refers to biological theories on immunological systems applying them to social and cultural contexts. His assumption is that similar symbolic defenses are enacted and embodied at different levels, by societies, groups and individuals. Anthropotechnics are the *bridges* between nature and culture that allow humans to embody languages, techniques, social rituals and all the necessary cultural instruments for the ‘symbolic’ survival through exercise, imitation and repetition (idem: 11). Above all, anthropotechnics act in the “middle ground of embodied practices” otherwise called “education, etiquette, custom, habit formation, training and exercise” (idem).

Sloterdijk’s most fruitful theoretical contribution is the expansion of application of technologies of the self to all practices with the emphasis on the role of vertical tensions towards an unattainable perfection that directs the purpose for practice. Vertical tensions will be described in more detail in Chapter Three but, for now, it is enough to know that progress in self-fashioning is mapped by advancement to increasingly harder goals. Drawing on the pioneering theories of Friedrich Nietzsche on asceticism (1887), Sloterdijk identifies ascetics as one of the broadest historical structures of all practising (explored in more detail in Chapter Four). Sloterdijk uses the lens of *áskesis*, classical Greek for ‘exercise’, to show every practice is an ascetic training of progressive and continuous self-improvement. Taking examples from different fields and ages he points out acrobatic attempts and vertical tensions which elevate and overcome ascetic heights and the limits of human condition. The ambitious project of translating “the religious, spiritual and ethical facts into the language and perspective of the general theory of practising” brings to the foreground the role of techniques, training and exercises that enable humans to transform, manage and even experiment in a continuous acrobatic optimization (Sloterdijk 2009: 6). In this sense in my fieldwork I shared Sloterdijk’s challenge by focusing on shamanic practices as

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7 A similar challenge was launched by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss in *Les techniques du corps* (1934 [2002]) as a starting point for research that he did not develop further.
anthropotechnics of self-fashioning that practitioners learn through a path of progressive training to improve themselves by embodying the shamanic antidote.

The theory of Sloterdijk works well for anthropotechnics that are actively learned at a certain moment of life, when a revolution, conversion or, *secession*\(^8\) begins. Sloterdijk points to the Viennese Secession as a metaphor to indicate the process of elitist separation which the secessionist assumes to be on a higher level than the rest. A great part of the book focuses on the processes of secession when the subjects decide to separate themselves from the flux of habits:

Swimming in the waters of habitus, discourses and language games is one thing; getting out and watching one's fellow humans from the edge as they swim in the habitus pool is another. As soon as this difference develops a language of its own to become a doctrine and life form, those based on the shore distance themselves from the swimmers. (idem: 191)

Getting out the *habitus pool* enables to distance from automatized habits. In this way, according to Sloterdijk, the secessionists begin a path of disembodiment of previous (repeated) habits and an embodiment of new habits through (repeating) exercises with the aim of giving shape to themselves (idem: 197). If then, man is made by exercise, repetition and habit, a crucial point remains unclear, that is, to continue the metaphor, the passage from the river to the shore, from ‘repeated repetition’ to ‘repeating repetition’, from passive to active subjects, from the anthropotechnics unconsciously embodied from birth to those who are consciously embodied after an act of secession. This ambivalence is particularly apparent when Sloterdijk, almost half way through his analysis, and after having repeated many times that humans are made by habits acquired through practicing, affirms:

The step into the practising life takes place through ethical distinction. This distinction is made by anyone who dares or is called upon to step out of the river of life and take up residence on the shore. (idem: 217)

This point is not consistent with his general theory where the step into practicing life is considered to be birth. Are there maybe different ways or degrees of practicing? A discontinuity like this, at this point in his analysis is problematic. Further the separation is then described as not the moment of stepping into practicing life but the awareness of this condition which once perceived cannot be ignored:

\(^8\) Sloterdijk creates the metaphor of *secession* referring to the Viennese movement that at the end of XIX Century separated from Academic milieu to present their own elitist way of producing an art corresponding, in their eyes, to the needs of the contemporary moment while distinguishing themselves from trivial and industrial art production.
As soon as one knows that one is possessed by automated programmes - affects, habits, notions – it is time for possession-breaking measures. Their principle, as already noted, consists in crossing to the other side of repeated events. Since the discovery of repetition itself as the starting point for its own harnessing, such a crossing has seemed practicable according to precise rules. This discovery was the premiere of anthropotechnic difference (idem: 197).

For this reason, I refer to the term ‘anthropotechnics’ when a secession takes places or, following Foucault, when the active subjects begin with intention for a specific goal applying technologies of the self with the aim of transforming themselves.

For those who step out of the river, the shore appears as a ‘better’ place and an exit from inertial flux as the beginning of a new self-improving path. At this point a certain dose of denegation is unavoidable. Those who step onto the river bank consider their previous criterion as no longer valid, since the new one is better. Nevertheless this decision is taken according to the previous criterion one has just decided to dismiss. In the act of assuming a new criterion the secessionists affirm and negate at the same time their own competence to choose the best criterion. This coexistence of affirmation and negation allows the secessionists to denegate their incompetence since if manifest, this revelation puts into question the self-directed act of secession. This first secessionist’s denegation activates the self-fashioning process.

Following the research cues mentioned by Foucault and deepened by Sloterdijk, detachment from the flux of habits and the adoption of a new way of life involves enacting an ethical distinction that divides from the rest. The first secessionist operation therefore is to trace a distinctive line that separates practitioners from non practitioners through an ethical polarization positive/negative, high/low. The ethical border gives the criterion to qualify ‘good’ and ‘bad’ habits, where the former lead to a progressive approach to the positive goal. Vertical movement from beginner to advanced practices enables the practitioners to orient, set goals for action and optimize techniques in order to elevate themselves on an un-ending path of self-improvement.

Neither Foucault nor Sloterdijk dwell heavily on the denegation in this process both focusing instead on the analysis of technologies of self-fashioning. In charting ethical distinction Sloterdijk does however discuss a crucial theme shared by shamanists, that is, the terrestrial paradise, the myth of an original happy and prosperous humanity where elevated principles and habits are perfectly realized without any effort. It is a perfection myth serving

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9 Ethical distinction according to Sloterdijk is not avoidable, including remaining inert or acting by chance, because such conduct is an expression of a preference for a criterion.
as a motor in the ‘correction’ of present ‘bad’ habits. According to Sloterdijk, Graeco-Roman *Golden Age* and Christian *Eden* “share the intention of explaining the normality of the bad” (Sloterdijk 2009: 412). These narratives hide the evidence of a human condition founded on the difficulty of “being-in-need” and the necessary strategies of acceptance of it through the representation of a remote condition without ‘need’ (idem: 413). This idyllic representation enables the quest for such a condition. If paradise can exist, then the condition of human necessity is not immanent. Therefore, if humans are in a state of necessity, this must be due to a cause, a mistake, a pity, a sickness that can be identified and removed. Anthropotechnical change offers a solution, a correction, a salvation or a remedy. Denegation plays a crucial role here through a process of inverting the relationship of temporality (before/after) and consequentiality (cause/effect) which is affirmed and negated at the same time. Denegation plays a crucial role here through a process of inverting the relationship of temporality (before/after) and consequentiality (cause/effect), which is both affirmed and negated simultaneously. This inversion enables presentation of the solution as primigenial with respect to the problem, and often to all problems, and not caused by the need to remedy it.

The process of self-fashioning is actualized through the progressive embodiment of the anthropotechnical system of auto-immunization which is composed by a specific set of layers of denegation, supporting discourses and protection mechanisms. Self-fashioning, as we have seen, is activated by the secessionist’s denegation and is based on the main layers of ethical distinction and myth of perfection. These two foundational layers enable identification of a cause for present discomfort and its solution through the specific anthropotechnical path of self-transformation. On this basis, other overlapping layers of denegation contribute to structuring the anthropotechnical path and form the specific set that supports a certain system of auto-immunization. Supporting discourses help to integrate the overlapping layers of denegation by creating a sort of internal coherence which is validated through the assumption of a certain kind of epistemology. The peculiar way of producing and validating knowledge provides protection mechanisms which invisibilize the overall immunological operation. The specific epistemology creates a self-referential circulation between the layers of denegation, supporting discourses and protection mechanisms that mutually confirm each other. I will show this self-referential circulation maintains and strengthens anthropotechnical working

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10 Foucault also mentions that the care of the self always has something to do with the idea of “correction.” Technologies of the self operate in a negative way to correct what is “wrong” (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 93-4). Nevertheless, he did not explain why the idea of correction is so crucial.

11 ‘Epistemology’ is used here to mean: conditions of production of knowledge.
during each experience, exercise and training that contributes to the embodiment of the project of the self and naturalize the necessary layers of denegations to actualize it.

The immunological system also protects the efficacy of anthropotechnical change from doubt, indecision, fear and resistance. Practitioners for instance have to resist secessionist thrust by other anthropotechnics that equally present the best path for self-realization, happiness, salvation, eternal life or whatever paradise that is depicted according to different immunological strategies. As Sloterdijk points out, a large amount of endoretorics is necessary in order to manage anthropotechnical change, especially at the start because of the interplay between the disembodiment of old habits and the embodiment of new ones (Sloterdijk 2009: 237). In fact, beginner practitioners have many doubts that advanced practitioners help with having themselves become experts through progressive practice and embodiment of the specific denegation set. Observation of the self-fashioning process through different phases has been crucial to the identification of the shamanic layers of denegation which will be presented in the following sections.

1.3 The activation of the shamanic antidote

If anthropotechnics act as a symbolic immune system, denegation is the mechanism which enables the activation of the protective antidote. Shamanic anthropotechnics offer an antidote of authenticity to many aspects of the present context that are perceived as uncomfortably inauthentic by practitioners. In this way, the representation of shamanic self-fashioning as a return to an ‘original’ or ‘natural’ condition renders strategically invisible for practitioners that this search for authenticity is rather well tuned with current neoliberal bio-politics that lead to individual self-realization as a form of compulsory freedom (Cfr. Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999]).

Denegation is traceable in all stages of the anthropotechnical process: the recognition of illness/problem, the planning of the cure/solution and, above all, the embodiment of the defenses through a concealment of the overall mechanism. This Chapter outlines the specific set of layers of denegation which makes sense of shamanic practice as a self-healing transformation; the supporting discourses that integrate the layers and confirm the practice; and, the epistemology that validates and invisibilizes the overall process. The layers are framed using the shamanic idiom that significantly, and in some cases paradoxically, reveals the enacting processes of denegation. The first layer of denegation determines the ethical
distinction between sick/western and sane/indigenous and is supported by the shamanic discourse “to be another person”. This layer enables identification of the problem in ‘western programming’ and the solution in shamanic practices as a ‘healing’. The second layer of denegation enables the shamanic myth of perfection which is supported by the discourse “thriving life design”. This layer foreshadows the final goal of practice and provides the motivation to undertake a ‘healing’ anthropotechnical path in order to ‘return’ to an idealized peaceful and harmonious future/past. The third layer of denegation validates the specific anthropotechnical path and is supported by the discourse “re-becoming indigenous”. The epistemology supported by the discourse “I feel that it is so” helps to fix, strengthen, confirm and armor the anthropotechnical process and shows how denegation acts as a securing zipper between discourse and practice. Epistemological defenses shelter from possible doubts, indecision and criticism on the base of the unquestionable authority of personal feeling. This journey into the shamanic denegation set demonstrates that the anthropotechnical path is based on a series of mutually defining opposites, such as ‘mind’/’body’, ‘cultural’/’natural’. These ongoing oppositions produce a performative discourse that leads to the naturalization of these categories, which in turn generates a perpetual motion between the two poles.

It is important to acknowledge that among practitioners there are different degrees of embodiment of the shamanic denegation set and there are those with a certain amount of self-awareness of its enactment as immunological strategy (Cfr. the final section of this chapter True hallucinations). This self-awareness introduces another layer that leads to the denegation of the denegation, as in Orwell’s doublethink.

To be another person

The first and foundational denegation of the process of self-fashioning is the ethical distinction. This layer identifies the cause for which the anthropotechnical transformation offers a solution to return to the perfect original condition. The chaman blanc Patrick Dacquay, founder and chef coutumier of the Festival du chamanisme, directly addresses this crucial issue when he presents shamanic practices as an antidote to the poison of our society:13

12 Dacquay claims he is initiated as “Déo Soof-Ta” according to Celtic traditions (“Soof-ta est un ascète Archi druide qui aurait vécu 2000 ans av J.C”; https://www.patrickdacquay.com/europe 18/05/18), Cfr. Pict. 1.2. Dacquay is the writer of many shamanic books including Le chaman blanc (2010) which describes his own personal life path through shamanic practices.
13 The Festival du Chamanisme, in 2018 its eleventh annual event, is held in France (at different locations each time) and brings together more than 100 shamans and experts from all five continents with mostly European Festival goers (who are predominantly French). When I participated, in 2015, according to the organizers

Pict. 1.2.B: idem
Pict. 1.3. A: Ceremonial space; http://chamanisme.eu/4228-2/ (08/05/15)

Pict. 1.3. B: The stage of the big Circus tent; idem

Pict. 1.3. C: The public in the big Circus tent; idem
Sous nos latitudes, les racines celtes de notre civilisation peuvent être réanimées et venir, comme un contrepoison, nous guérir des maux que la société industrielle, technicienne et commerçante génére. [In our latitudes, the Celtic roots of our civilization can be revived and come, like a counter-poison, to heal us of the diseases that the industrial, technical and commercial society generates.] (Dacquay 2012 [2003]: 23)

During the 8th Festival du Chamanisme, in a Siberian healing night/light ritual around a fire where everyone present was screaming out something they wanted to dispel, many practitioners said words like “capitalism”, “consumerism”, “pollution”, “individualism”. Indeed, all the shamanists I met attributed the main cause of current unease and problems to late-capitalist, rationalist, individualist, materialist, hyper-technological and consumerist society, often essentialized under the “western” label. 14 Dacquay’s use of the metaphor of an ‘antidote’ significantly reflects the widespread shamanic therapeutic idiom expressing the solution/correction in the form of a ‘healing’ from the ‘illness’ of ‘western’ toxic lifestyles and models.

As many shamanists affirm, ‘western’ programming has imposed a ‘sickening’ format from which they want to emancipate and heal. Many often use the metaphor from the popular science fiction film The Matrix (1999). 15 Shamanic practices represent the red pill that makes ‘waking up’ from a distorted artificial representation by showing the ‘truth’ as it is (Cfr Pict. 1.4.). According to this stance, the knowledge of truth is considered to be lost because of the cultural format but can be recovered through the shamanic red pill:

Ana X. (Brazilian shaman): O xamanismo é importante para as pessoas ocidentais porque traz consciência para as suas vidas, faz reconectar com a sua verdadeira essência. [Shamanism is important for western people because it brings awareness to their life and reconnects with their true essence] (Interview 02/11/15, Lisbon)

RiCo (Portuguese advanced practitioner): O xamanismo é para me conhecer e sair do sonho coletivo em que somos forçados, e entrar no sonho individual (...) As pessoas procuram na religião a salvação, de si mesmos, porém as religiões dizem o que tens que fazer, como tens que viver, o que tens que seguir, enquanto no xamanismo não há livros sagrados, sacerdotes, regras, é autónomo, descobres a tua natureza. Fomos formatados, habituaram-nos a viver, sobreviver, seguindo certas regras impostas, por isso precisamos do xamanismo, para reencontrarmos nossa natureza, como dizia Aristóteles retomando Platão: conhece-te a ti mesmo! Mas como fomos formatados, já não temos esse conhecimento. [Shamanism is to know me and to get out of the collective dream in which we are forced, and enter into the individual dream (…) People seek salvation from themselves in religion, but religions say what you have to do, how you have to live, what

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14 Lindquist’s research (1997) among Swedish shamanic practitioners largely confirms this stance.
15 According to Crary, the awakening from “mass somnambulance” and routinized habits is recurrent in films since Lang’s The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920); Crary 2013: 23.
This episode is amazing!

Probably one of my favorite interviews. In it we talk all about how ordinary life can feel like living in the matrix and what we can do to break out of it.

**Shaman Durek** is a 3rd generation Spirit Shaman – a spirit hacker – who works with all sorts of people from CEOs to royal families to Hollywood celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow.

**Pict. 1.4. A:** https://innertruth.org/podcast/unplugging-from-the-matrix-shaman-durek (24/10/18)

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**Jeff's Iboga Blog**

Sunday, October 5, 2014

**THE MATRIX is Real - Take the Red Pill - IBOGA**

Morpheus: I imagine that right now you're feeling a bit like Alice. Tumbling down the rabbit hole?

Neon: You could say that.

Morpheus: I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he's expecting to wake up. Ironically, this is not far from the truth. Do you believe in fate, Neon?

Neon: No.

Morpheus: Why not?

Neon: Cause I don't like the idea that I'm not in control of my life.

Morpheus: I know exactly what you mean. Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know, you can't explain. But you feel it. You feel it your entire life. That there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there. Like a splinter in your mind - driving you mad. It's this feeling that's brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Neon: The Matrix?

Morpheus: Do you want to know what it is?

Neon: (Now nods his head)

Morpheus: The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window, or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, or when you go to church or when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

**Pict. 1.4. B:** http://jeffiboga.blogspot.com/2014/10/take-red-pill-iboga.html (24/10/18)
you have to follow, while in shamanism there are no sacred books, priests, rules, you are autonomous, you discover your nature. We were formatted, habituated to living, surviving, following certain imposed rules, so we need shamanism, to rediscover our nature, as Aristotle said resuming Plato: know yourself! But as we were formatted, we no longer have this knowledge.]

(Interview 09/10/15, Lisbon)

Other practitioners are convinced that in order to ‘know themselves’ they have to undergo a shamanic training of unlearning and disembodiment of the cultural matrix in a form of Delphic aphorism. In every case, change is required to achieve self-knowledge. In fact this crucial transformation is the main distinction Foucault identifies between philosophical and spiritual quest for knowledge since the latter entails a transformation of the subject who otherwise is unable to access truth:

We will call “philosophy” the form of thought that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth. If we call this “philosophy,” then I think we could call “spirituality” the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth. We will call “spirituality” then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject’s very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth. (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 15).

The majority of shamanists would agree with this definition of spirituality because they are convinced that the same transformation through practice is the way to access truth and re-find the true self. Shamanists actualize Platonic and Gnostic ideas of a necessary truth-bringing transformation through the supporting discourse that ‘modern’ ‘western’ society has caused a dis-connection from the ‘true’ nature of the humans who therefore have become unable to access ‘inner truth’. Many practitioners in different ways expressed this idea with a particular stress on the quest for the ‘true self’:

CaRa (Portuguese shamanic therapist): Comecei a fazer cursos para o meu desenvolvimento pessoal… ir dentro para encontrar o meu sentido profundo e libertar a vivencia interior, ir para o verdadeiro sé e transformar. [I started to enroll in courses for my personal development... to go inside to find my deep meaning and free inner experience, to go for the true self and transform.] (Interview 9/06/16, Florence)

Federica (Italian shamanic teacher): Per sentirmi libera, attraverso l’auto-conoscenza entro dentro di me, vedo i condizionamenti culturali, familiari, religiosi e entro in contatto con questi blocchi. [To feel free, through self-knowledge, I enter in myself, I see cultural, familiar, religious conditionings and I enter in contact with these blocks.] (Conference on shamanism, Wolakota, Sala Maggiore, Comune di Pistoia, 18/04/16)

Elisabetta (Italian shamanic massage therapist): Le stratificazioni ci hanno fatto diventare come maschere, così quella cosa non mi tocca, però non sono io, bisogna togliere queste stratificazioni, è solo così che la nostra vera natura viene fuori e che diventiamo liberi. Il
viaggio sciamanico è un viaggio nel nostro interiore, a ritrovare il nostro vero sé. [Stratification has made us become like masks, so that thing does not touch me, but it is not me, it is necessary to remove these layers, it is the only way our true nature comes out and we become free. The shamanic journey is a journey into our inwardness to rediscover our true self.] (Conference on shamanism, Wolakota, Sala Maggiore, Comune di Pistoia, 18/04/16)

ElSi (Turkish advanced practitioner): Ayahuasca was life changing and self remembering… I was like a Matrioska, and then I try to find the real self… because I was really lost… I’ve found my self in a lot of masks and I didn’t realize how much I lie to myself about life. (…) We are supposed to be another person, which is opposite from our authentic self. (Interview 21/11/16, Florence)

As ElSi paradigmatically illustrates, it is not easy to disentangle which self is caring for which self or which is the true or false self. In this self mirror game, ElSi seems to refer to both, the ‘lost’ true self and the ‘liar’ artificial one, but then who is the self that is looking for himself? Another person, who has to take off the masks in order to find his opposite self. This is the pivotal denegation that enables secession; the subject who looks for himself is the same that lies to himself, nevertheless it is this inauthentic and unreliable self who takes the decision to change life and adopt a new more authentic and truthful life path.

Most practitioners I spoke to agreed with ElSi: the shamanic aim is to dismantle passively adopted cultural conditioning in order to find the authentic self whose quest often ends to be the same aim of the practices. Moreover, when looking for oneself is looking for the truth, the individual quest for oneself is seen as the main drive of the search for cosmic truth and knowledge. In the words of Dacquay, self-knowledge is recognized as a necessary condition in order to access universal knowledge:

Le chamanisme ancestrale n’est pas une religion. C’est un état d’être qui ne peut se limiter par des structures ou des dogmes, car la connaissance universelle passe par la connaissance de soi. La pratique du chamanisme amène une redécouverte de la force de vie, l’ouverture progressive du cœur et l’éveil de la conscience. Elle favorise l’émergence de sa nature profonde, de son instinct et d’une simplicité retrouvée. [Ancestral shamanism is not a religion. It is a state of being that cannot be limited by structures or dogmas, because universal knowledge passes through self-knowledge. The practice of shamanism brings a rediscovery of life force, the gradual opening of the heart and the awakening of consciousness. It promotes the emergence of deep nature, instinct and a newfound simplicity.] (Dacquay 2014: 121)

The identification of a cause that prevents humans from reaching the truth on the one hand motivates practitioners to undertake this quest and on the other hand represents a form of distinction from those who remain un-transformed to whom the truth is not revealed. If the solution is seen as universally valid for everyone, it is nevertheless reserved for a few. This is an unavoidable denegation of concurrent affirmation (the universality of the path available for
all human beings as an inherent condition that can be recovered) and negation (the exclusiveness of the path for a few who undertake the transformation). Without the coexistence of both conditions, anthropotechnics could not offer an universal solution to all problems for all humans and at the same time a means of distinction from the un-transformed rest.

Likewise, through the healing process of transformation many shamanists are convinced they are able to not only reach the true self but also a sort of universal salvation. According to the French-Angolan shaman Geraldine Correia, for instance, shamanic practices like the psychedelic ayahuasca, are a panacea that can solve all problems by reconnecting with true essence:

La médecine la plus puissante est celle qui nous guérit totalement, celle qui nous ramène à notre essence, qui sonde le cœur pour en extraire les plus anciennes blessures et les soigner. [The most powerful medicine heals us totally, brings us back to our essence, probes the heart to extract the oldest wounds and to heal them.] (Correia 2016: 26)

Even if not all shamanists would agree with this hyper-optimistic vision of definitive healing, most advanced practitioners are fully convinced that they are on a healing path which, in the words of ArPo, can do nothing but good [“non può fare che bene”]. This affirmation negates even the possibility of side-effects and frames all effects as a necessary healing step. Indeed some of the uncomfortable consequences of ayahuasca, such as the vomit, is seen as a cleansing ‘positive’ effect precisely in virtue of the assumption that it can do nothing but good.

. . . The thriving life design

If according to Sloterdijk the myth of terrestrial paradise both hides and reveals the inherent difficulty of the human condition, this denegation enables envisioning the possibility of overcoming it. It is the figuration of an ideal past that renders a paradisiac future plausible, which is itself recovered through the anthropotechnical path of correction of the present. The possibility of coming back to an original terrestrial paradise, as shamanists imagine it,

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16 According to Foucault, technologies of the self are ambivalently universal and exclusive (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 120).
17 Quotations of ArPo are taken from the recorded interview realized in Florence on 06/02/17.
18 A certain dose of denegation of the risk of iatrogenesis is probably a common trait of every therapy (Cfr. Chapter Three). If placebo effect significantly contributes to the efficacy of the cure, it can be supposed that denegation of iatrogenesis can help to prevent nocebo effect.
represents the last goal of the practice which enables indication of the direction, enhances the motivation to undertake it and grants the means to identify the path to reach it.

The origin of shamanic practices has often been placed in an idealized past where humankind lived in peace and harmony with nature according to the anti-modernist perspective that framed the dissemination of the practices (Cfr. Chapter Four). Many contemporary practitioners continue to support this framing through their own update of the shamanic metaphor. The supporting discourse of terrestrial paradise for many shamanists indicates a hopeful future that can be pursued. In current shamanic idiom found in advertising and presentations this myth is presented as the coming of a “new golden age”, “the dawning of a Golden Era”, “harmony with all the visible and invisible living beings”, “heaven”, “thriving life design” and so on.19 The old/new golden era is a recurrent theme even in shamanic songs, a common practice among practitioners.20 Shamanic songs are an anthropotechnical means to foresee the goal of the practice by realizing what Sloterdijk calls the movebo effect which “mobilizes the existence of the anticipator towards the goal through anticipation” (Sloterdijk 2009: 246). Through these songs practitioners are mobilized by the announcement of a old/new era of harmony, love and peace21:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Todos somos medicina</th>
<th>We are all medicine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venimos hoy a cantar las maravillas que tiene el mundo</td>
<td>We come today to sing the wonders of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es la tierra en la que vivimos, es la tierra que nos sustenta</td>
<td>The land in which we live, the land that sustains us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junto con nuestros hermanos, minerales, plantas y peces,</td>
<td>Together with our brothers, minerals, plants and fishes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aves, tierras, ríos, montañas, compartimos esta armonía</td>
<td>Birds, lands, rivers, mountains, we share this harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y a vivir con el gran espíritu y a vivir con la Madre Tierra</td>
<td>Living with the great spirit and living with Mother Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A vivir en paz y armonía, compartir esta nueva era</td>
<td>Living in peace and harmony, sharing this new era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todos somos medicina, somos distintas medicinas</td>
<td>We are all medicine, we are different medicines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos sanamos unos a otros, aprendemos de esa alegría</td>
<td>We heal each other, we learn from that joy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Águila y Cóndor</th>
<th>Eagle and Condor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Águila y Cóndor volando juntos al sol (4x)</td>
<td>Eagle and Condor flying together in the sun (4x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 In the groups I followed in Italy and Portugal shamanic songs were regularly performed during the ceremonies and by practitioners on their own as a form of training (Cfr. Chapter Three).
21 These songs are from Hinario G. from the DIY G Group and Canzoniere temazcalero of Raíces de la Tierra (Cfr. Chapter Three and Four).
y el viento de tus alas NOS desperta
da nuestros corazones
preparando un nuevo dia
de amor y mucha alegría
Jaguar y venadito danzando juntos al sol (4x)
y sus pasos nos van guiando
da este nuevo dia
lleno de paz felicidad y armonía
Ayahuasca y peyotito traying la luz del sol (4x)
y estas sagradas medicinas
van sanando y van curando
nos llenan de luz para este nuevo dia

Agua no mas palabras
Agua no mas palabras, beber esta tu luz
bajar de la montaña, rezar con cada flor (2x)
Cielo a tus ojos brillar con el sol
Sube desde el este la gran expansión (2x)
Canto de los caminos que me llevan hasta el cielo
brinco, salto, todo es eterno (2x)
Sigue tu camino que al final el día llevará
detrás del rio la luz encontrarás (2x)
Humanos unidos formando la misma raza
canta, danza, en esta mi casa (2x)
Casa que florece multiples colores de alegría
irradian nuestra luz por toda la galaxia (2x)
Nace la nueva humanidad la raza del canto,
la danza y la paz (2x)]
Los abuelos, las abuelas vibran y vibran
de la emoción (2x)]
Cantando a la luna se abierti mi vida y mi corazón

Water no more words
Water no more words, drinking your light
descending the mountain, praying with each flower
Heaven to your eyes shining with the sun
The great expansion rises from the east (2x)
Song of the roads that lead me to heaven
I hop and jump, everything is eternal (2x)
Follow your path that leads to the end of the day
behind the river you will find the light (2x)
United humans forming the same race
singing, dancing, in my house (2x)
House that flourishes multiple colors of joy
they radiate our light throughout the galaxy (2x)
The new humanity is born, the race of song,
dance and peace (2x)]
Grandparents, grandmothers vibrate and vibrate
with emotion (2x)]
Singing to the moon, my life and my heart opened

These songs are quite popular in shamanic contexts and many versions performed by amateurs and professionals are shared online on websites, portals, social networks and youtube channels through the reproduction of lyrics and videos of colorful heavenly visions of plants, animals, totems and 'Indian'-like humans (Cfr. Pict. 1.5).

For practitioners, coming back to old/new golden era is an universal possibility, when one reconnects with the ‘original’ self, to become once again the united race of song, dance and peace. Old/new golden era is thus framed as a form of regression into an imaginary timeless past without effort, conflict and suffering that negates the strenuous historical struggle for human survival at the expense of other living species. As Canguilhem observed (1991 [1966]), the myth of the Golden Age is a retroactive illusion for which the imagined primordial ‘original good’ takes shape just in opposition to the ‘further evil’. In the case of shamans the aspired Golden Age takes form as a casting out of the ‘ill’ western culture.
Paradoxically, as Canguilhem observed, this dream of idyllic existence without rules significantly reveals how the concept of 'normal' is normative even in mythical discourse:

A golden age, a paradise, are the mythical representations of an existence which initially meets its demands, of a mode of life whose regularity owes nothing to the establishment of rules, of a state of guiltlessness in the absence of the interdict that ignorance of the law is no excuse. These two myths proceed from an illusion of retroactivity according to which original good is later evil kept in control. The absence of rules goes hand in hand with the absence of technical skills. Golden age man, and paradisiacal man, spontaneously enjoy the fruits of a nature which is uncultivated, unprompted, unforced, unreclaimed. Neither work nor culture, such is the desire of complete regression. This formulation in negative terms of an experience consonant with the norm without the norm having had to show itself in and by its function, this really naive dream of regularity in the absence of rule, signifies essentially that the concept of normal is itself normative, it serves as a norm even for the universe of mythical discourse which tells the story of its absence. (Canguilhem 1991 [1966]: 241)

In this case, even the shamanists perception of sickness reflects the regulatory discourse that frames practitioners as 'sick' and 'un-suitable' because they avoid adapting to life forms that are more ‘suitable’ and successful to the conditions of the current context. 22 This is confirmed in the discourse of the founder of the Festival du Chamanisme, for whom the ‘global society’ homologates people to walk in line, the same time, and penalizes those who try to step out. 23 Dacquay emphasizes the presence of different languages, traditions and colors at the Festival in contrast to a global society that requires people to speak the same language and wear the same dress as a means to successfully control them (http://www.attitudefm.com/podcast/festival-du-chamanisme-2017 8’-10’ 02/09/17). Notably, when I went to the Festival du Chamanisme at the beginning of my research in 2015, I was surprised by the commodification and homogenization of shamanic handicraft, dresses, pictures and musical instruments that in their variety were very similar in being exotic and rare, even if inspired or made by craftsmen from all over the world (Cfr. Pict. 1.6.). During the initial presentation when more than one hundred shamans from the five continents appeared together in an explosion of different colors, faces, clothes, tools and languages, it was an epiphany of the celebration of cultural difference reminiscent of United Colors of Benetton advertising (Cfr. Pict. 1.7.). Furthermore the organizers of the Festival referred to a model of mass homologation that has been overcome by current strategies of customization, increasingly emphasizing the individual ‘free’ style: “find your way”, “be different” and so on (Cfr. Pict. 1.8.). 24

22 To note that ironically, illness was one of the ‘normative’ interpretations of shamanic practices as a form of ‘Arctic hysteria’ according to the positivist approach (Cfr. Czaplicka 1914, Znamenski 2007).
23 The interview with the founder Dacquay and other organizers was broadcast on the Culture Mag program of the local radio Attitude on May 2017 (http://www.attitudefm.com/podcast/festival-du-chamanisme-2017/).
24 According to Boltanski and Chiapello, the transition from ‘mass production’ to ‘flexible production’ introduced the search for authenticity in the form of the ‘personalized’ in response to the critique of


Pict. 1.6. C: Festival du Chamanisme 23-26 April 2015; my photo.
Pict. 1.6. D: Festival du Chamanisme 23-26 April 2015; my photo.

Pict. 1.6. E: Picture of the Festival du Chamanisme 2014
www.festival-chamanisme.com/photos_and_videos.html (08/05/15)
Pict. 1.7. A:  http://chamanisme.eu/4228-2/ (08/05/15)

Pict. 1.7. B:  idem.
Pict. 1.7. C: idem.

Pict. 1.7. D: idem.

Pict. 1.8. C: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_different (17/05/18)

Pict. 1.8. D: https://www.amatech.it/tag/ikea (17/05/18)
Pict. 1.8. F: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/795448352910936592/?nic=1 (18/10/19)

If not all shamanists are envisioning a peaceful future/past paradise, the large majority are looking for a place to feel ‘at home’ that they think can be found through shamanic practising. The search for an ‘authentic’ place to belong is simultaneous with the feeling of in-authenticity experienced in their lives and, in fact, strengthens it. Although the figuration of an authentic place originates from discomfort and opens the opportunity for a way out, this same discourse emphasizes the difficulty of present time framing discomfort as a form of inauthenticity. It is a process that enhances a thirst for authenticity, which is the main theme in marketing strategies (Cfr Chapter Four). Further, what is framed as progressive alienation from ‘natural environment’ is perceived by the majority of shamanists as a form of inauthenticity and a cause of the shared discomfort of contemporary urban life. In the search for a union with nature and the cosmos, in themselves idealized and anthropocentric concepts (see the shamanic songs), there is not only highly developed egotism but also a hidden speciesism under an outer layer of love for nature. This ambivalent relationship with nature is often present in practitioner discourse, where ‘nature’ is considered to be both united and separated from humans. A nature/culture dualism according to Descola (2013) is at the base of the nostalgia for an idealized lost nature, which my informal interactions and interviews with shamanists as well as online research, their songs and publicity for events confirm. This dualism does not allow shamanists to consider themselves fully part of the nature with which they intend to ‘reconnect’; specifically, re-connection with nature is framed as a disconnection from culture, as if culture is not natural. This point is crucial to understanding shamanic anthropotechnics and is discussed further in the next section Re-becoming indigenous.

In shamanic practice the cause of all discomfort is attributed to modern western conditions of life and the bon sauvage myth of humankind not corrupted by culture is a resource in envisioning an exit from contemporary malaise. Given this frame, it is not difficult to understand how ‘indigenous’ people became a model of ‘otherness’ in direct contrast to the sickening ‘western modernity’, especially in counter-cultural contexts where shamanic practices started to be disseminated in the quest for alternatives to the nine-to-five lifestyle (Cfr. Chapter Four). The representation of indigenous people as bons sauvages, who are good, spiritual, peaceful, nearer to the natural human condition, more harmonious with capitalism as a source of inauthenticity and oppression raised in May 1968 (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999]: 99).

25 The search for an authentic place is also described in other ethnographies, Cfr. Chidester (2008) and Clarke (2007).

26 As Conrad observes, references to bon sauvages are recurrent online “for the production and promotion of commodities” related to ayahuasca (Conrad 2018: 103). He also poignantly notes that in online networks ‘Amazonian’ voices are often excluded due to the predominance of the English language (see also Fotiou 2014: 159-81).
other living beings and therefore less contaminated by the sophistication of culture, mainly
comes from the essentialization of colonial and anthropological discursive frames that will be
analyzed more in detail in Chapter Four. In shamanic contexts, however, the polarization is
inverted since the same depreciated characteristics of *primitives* are instead recognized as
positive values by practitioners precisely because they are framed as ‘non civilized’ (Cfr. Pict.
1.9.). Despite the shamanist stated intention to be authentic, to join with nature and return to
an essential human nature idealized in indigenous people, the effect of their framing is the
opposite; by reproducing this naturalized relationship with nature and indigenous people they
strengthen the ontological difference between “us” and “them”.

For many shamanists ‘indigenous’ people embody a life closer to an ‘innocent’
natural human ‘origin’ from which modern humanity has moved far away with dramatic and
dangerous consequences for all the planet. ‘Indigenous’ people, that is, not belonging to
western culture and essentialized as closer to nature, are a means for shamanists to recover the
‘lost’ connection with nature. This mutual essentialization between ‘modern’ and ‘pre-
modern’ supports the *bon sauvage* myth as a counter-part for the ‘non sauvages’ (Cfr. Chapter
Four). According to Ana X., a Brazilian shaman and founder of a training school of
shamanism in Brazil and Portugal, shamanic practices are necessary especially for
‘westerners’:

A: Somos programados, direcionados, porque dentro de nos há um sistema robotizado
que nos programa em seguir rotas: faz aquilo, não faças outra coisa, acorda cedo, não
comas isso, etc. O xamanismo ajuda a desprogramar. [We are programmed, directed,
because within us we have a robotic system that programs us to follow routes: do this, do
not do that, wake up early, do not eat this, etc. Shamanism helps to deprogram.]
L: Também com os índios? [Also with Indians?]
A: A programação índia é perfeitamente adaptada às suas necessidades, dormem e comem
quando querem, o corpo é adaptado às estações. O índio vive no ambiente e faz parte do
ambiente. [Indian program is perfectly adapted to their needs, they sleep and eat when
they want, body is adapted to seasons. The Indian lives in the environment and is part of
it.](Interview 02/11/15, Lisbon)

Hence, reprogramming is framed as desirable and necessary for ‘western’ shamanists in order
to return to the idealized ‘natural’ condition of ‘indigenous’ people who perfectly fit to the
environment. Please note the denegation that underlies this discourse: the shamanic practices
that come from ‘indigenous’ people are not necessary for them, but for us.

This difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is the pivotal ethical distinction that according
to Sloterdijk is necessary for anthropotechnical activation. The shamanic antidote is activated
assuming that humans are inherently ‘good’ and that ‘western culture’ has corrupted them.
CIVILIZAÇÃO?

PRIMITIVO?

Pict. 1.9. D: Post of a Facebook shamanic group (12/10/15)

Fig. 1.9. E: www.fundación-camino-rojo.com (25/11/15)
But, how could it happen that inherently good humans created the sickening culture they are living in? Both conditions are necessary for the activation of the antidote: practitioners have to alternatively consider humans as inherently good, the *bon sauvages*, and corrupted by themselves, the ‘westerners’.

The shamanic therapist Elisabetta at a conference about shamanism during *Wolakota 2016*, an exhibition in Pistoia, Italy, referred to Lakota people as ‘they’, having an important role for ‘us’ since they live ‘with mother nature’:

Ringrazio i fratelli [Lakota] che sono venuti da noi, loro sono abituati a vivere con madre natura nel presente, sono poco attaccati al materiale, con la loro testimonianza danno un input a tutti noi all'accrescimento della nostra spiritualità, hanno una maniera di parlare, un'apertura del cuore molto, molto, importante. Loro sono quella spinta importante per un cambiamento spirituale per noi: chiamatela kundalini, essenza, il dio che è dentro di noi...

[I thank the brothers [Lakota] who came to us, they are used to living with mother nature in the present, they are little attached to the material, with their demonstration they give input to all of us to increase our spirituality, they have a way of speaking, a very, very, important opening of the heart. They are an important push for a spiritual change for us: call it kundalini, essence, the god that is within us...](Conference on shamanism, *Wolakota*, Sala Maggiore, Comune di Pistoia, 18/04/16; Cfr. Pict. 1.10.)

The dichotomy us/them here functions because the *thrust* is mutual. If for ‘us’, ‘they’ are necessary as a resource for a spiritual change, ‘we’ too can offer ‘them’ the motivation to teach. *Woman Stands Shining*, Pat McCabe, of the Dine-Navajo Nation, identified the same framing of mutual benefit during the *Incontro di donne indigene per la Riconciliazione umana* [Meeting of Indigenous Women for Human Reconciliation]. In the three days healing ceremony, eight international *medicine women* were guided by Pat’s visions to share “the original instructions” of “indigenous people” in order to return to the *thriving life design*:

Through a series of vivid visions occurring over almost a year’s span, it was made known to me, in some detail, that what was named as an “Archetypal Wounding of Humanity” can be healed. As with all true healing, it begins at the origin, at the root, in the Spiritual or energetic realm. In this case it begins with ceremony. This ceremony is, above all, Reconciliation and a Re-Membering, an opportunity for Reunion between the Masculine and the Feminine, between Men’s Nation and Women’s Nation, and between the artificial separation between Indigenous and European descended. In other words, this proposed ceremony is a possibility for Thriving Life Design to become fully functional within our humanity once again, throughout this world and along the lines of time. (https://thrivinglife.weebly.com/letter-in-her-own-words.html 28/05/16)

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27 The event took place on 11-14 May 2016 in the countryside of Florence, Italy, organized by the cosmopolitan group *Raíces de la Tierra* (Cfr. Pict. 1.11.). The women came from US, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Namibia, Malaysia and Australia. For a contextualization of *Raíces de la Tierra* Cfr. Chapter Three and Four. For Pat McCabe biography Cfr. https://thrivinglife.weebly.com/about-pat.html (28/05/16).
Pict. 1.10.: Poster of the exhibition WoLakota 2016, Pistoia, Italy, 15/04 -02/05/16
BENVENUTI A QUESTA GRANDE CERIMONIA DI GUARIGIONE, RI-MEMBRANZA E RI-CONCILIAZIONE PER L’ABBONDANZA NATURALE DELLA VITA.
UNA CELEBRAZIONE NATA DALLA VISIONE DI UNA DONNA MEDICINA LAKOTA CHE HA SENTITO IL RICHIAMO DI GUARIGIONE DEL MONDO OCCIDENTALE...
PERCORSO E DILANIATO DA SECOLI DI GUERRE E ILLUSIONE DI POTERE CHE HANNO SEPARATO LA NAZIONE DELLE DONNE DA QUELLA DEGLI UOMINI.

DONNE MEDICINA DI TUTTO IL MONDO CHE CONDURRANNO LA CERIMONIA:

- Maria Inés Huemmir Antihual - Mapuche - Chile
- Shaun T. Lally - USA
- Ana Luisa Solís Gil - Mayan/Toleec - Mexico
- Rosalinda Visoela Namises - Namibia
- K. Parameswari Kanniah - Malaysia
- Evangeline (Sunny) Dooley - Dine - USA
- Pamela Joyce White - Aborigine - Australia
- Patricia McCabe - Dine - USA
- Ati Quigua - Arhuaca - Columbia
- Nathan Jesse Rose - USA

L’INCONTRO E’ SENZA SCOPO DI LUCRO MA PER AIUTARCI A SOSTENERE I COSTI
L’OFFERTA RICHIESTA E’: 4 giorni 80€ - 1 giorno 25€ - pranzo compreso (portare piatti e posate!)
DOVE: Azi.Ag. La Ripa - S.Quirico in Collina e B&B Riflessi nel Vigneto - Montespertoli
INFO: Simona 366 1168818 - Giulio: 347 2637953

Pict. 1.11.: Raíces de la Tierra, Incontro di donne indigene per la Riconciliazione umana, 11-14 May 2016, Montespertoli, Italy; https://roots-of-the-earth.eu/it (09/05/16)
Visibly moving an audience of about one hundred people, Pat describes undergoing difficult re-birthing in order to receive and pass on the original instructions and for this process she needs the help of ‘us’ as motivators, witnesses and receivers:

Mother Earth gives me instructions, not only for me, but for everyone. I did not ask neither looked for this spiritual ability, but this was my biological design… to come back to remember how to receive this guide… if you help me, I will pass through another labor: I will give birth to myself again. (...) It's a hard labor. I’m so profoundly changed and it is hard to say when you are in that process. I need that you sit with me, as you did when I was giving birth to my children… you will do it when I will give birth to myself again and I’ll be reborn myself in order to receive those instructions and talk about them with you. (Montespertoli, 13/05/16)

Pat repeated many times in her talk that ‘this economic system’ has caused many problems and a deep disconnection, taking away our ‘beautiful natural instinct’, and that the original instructions will help recovery in order to find the way return to the fully functional thriving life design. The ultimate goal of the practice enables envisioning a future that can be pursued through a self-transformation path based on recovering the natural instinct and following the original instructions.

... Re-becoming indigenous

Despite the many differences, whatever the shamanic path, the techniques refer to some remote and ancestral ‘indigenous’ tradition. Siberian, Maya, Inca, Lakota, Celtic practices, as well as many others framed as less culturally sophisticated, are considered shamanic techniques of re-acquisition of the natural condition hidden under western cultural programming. In the words of Dacquay the aim of shamanic practice is precisely to re-become indigenous:

Vous toucherez ainsi l’état naturel qui était celui de tous les humains à l’origine, vous redeviendrez un peuple premier et vous aurez rejoint le cercle de ceux qui se réclament de la sagesse universel. [You will touch the natural state which was that of all humans at the origin, you will become again a first people and you will have joined the circle of those who claim universal wisdom.] (Dacquay 2014: 148)

What does Dacquay mean by saying re-becoming first people? What do shamanists actually mean when they say this? Are they willing to completely renounce comfortable but ‘harmful’ modern western lifestyles? The fieldwork repeatedly confirmed no one was planning to completely renounce, with very few practitioners going to live in the Amazon
forest and the majority living in ‘modern’ cities. To give an example, even the survival course of re-wilding organized in Belgium by a couple of explorers makes it clear that, in spite of the radical title, re-becoming wild is not the intention:

We’re not suggesting that you leave the comfort of your homes to hunt, gather or forage your dinner, or that you get rid of all your possessions. We simply propose that you study the history of man and the legacy of our ancestors to regain control of our lives so that we can return to our healthy, free, strong and wilder self – our natural state. Rewilding”... what does that mean? Rewilding is a term that is being used globally to refer to the conservation and recovery of natural spaces and the reintroduction of endemic species in certain lands by human action. There are many projects in this regard around the world today – all worthy of our admiration. But we cannot forget about ourselves, as we all are increasingly influenced by “civilization” and immersed in its relentless rat race. Rewilding also emphasizes the recovery of the human race. “Rewilding” is about: Recovering lost human instincts; Forging contact with our deepest selves; Returning to the natural world; Overcoming human domestication; Restoring traditional and ancestral knowledge that is being lost at a disturbing rate; Being self-sustainable and less dependent on others; Restoring behaviors inherent to a more wild human nature. (http://www.rewildingdrum.com/eng/ 15/05/18)

Although in this course there were references to shamanic drum and Temazcal practices, this was not a shamanic course. It shows how there are currently many contexts which share the same aim of shamanists to “overcome the negative effects of domestication” and “return to our natural state” (idem). In order to understand what shamanists mean with re-becoming indigenous it is necessary to pay attention to the words being used. In the presentation of re-wilding there is an astonishing presence of words beginning with the prefix re- and indeed in the previously mentioned shamanic discourses as well it is very recurrent. Worldwide shamanists use frequent expressions such as re-turn, re-cover, re-connect, re-awake, re-find, re-unify, re-conciliate, implicitly referring to a past perfection, as for instance in these discourses of renown shamans that circulate online (the bold below is mine):

Festival du Chamanisme’s Manifesto: To participate in our measurement, the birth of a conscious humanity, we, the Shamans of the Circle of Wisdom, are proud to defend values, ethics and practices that are, as mentioned above, based on the rediscovery of our connection with the Earth, with Heaven and with the noble humanity. (http://chamanisme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/manifeste-en1.pdf 15/05/15)

Foundation for shamanic studies: Participants learn how the journey is utilized to restore spiritual power and health, and how shamanism can be applied in contemporary daily life to help heal oneself, others, and the Planet. (https://www.shamanism.org/workshops/ 13/12/18)

Global shaman summit (online event): Shamanism, rooted in centuries-long traditions, has reemerged as one of the great spiritual systems for awakening, healing, and transformation… Modern shamanism provides a pathway of sacred, practical action —
allowing you to build inner resources and access guidance to become a positive and effective agent of change.

Sandra Ingerman (North-American teacher and therapist): Discover how traditional shamanic ways of seeing and being in the world can help you reclaim your ‘humanness’ and experience the connectedness, love, and fulfilment that’s your birthright. (...) 

Reclaim your humanness and deeply connect to the Earth, cosmos, and hearts all around you — in a visceral, experiential way. Rediscover your innate capabilities for self-healing and help to heal and evolve our planet through shamanic practices.

This discourse is not only a promotional refrain but is also recurrent among the practitioners I met in the fieldwork:

ArPo (Italian advanced shamanic practitioner, DIY G Group): Lo sciamanesimo, come altre cose, tipo le costellazioni familiari, il Roy Art Theatre, ti fanno risentire il dentro, ritrovare anche la luce interiore. [Shamanism, like other things, like the family constellations, the Roy Art Theater, makes you feel inside again and find the inner light.]

Lisa: Perché risentire? [why again?]

ArPo: Perché ti eri s-connesso. [Because you were dis-connected]

(Interview 06/02/17, Florence)

ELio (Italian advanced shamanic practitioner, Raíces de la Tierra): L’abbondanza della vita è la connessione con l’universo che ti da tutto quello di cui hai bisogno, la relazione con il tutto guarisce le ferite e permette di riconnettersi, è un meccanismo che supporta e non stride. [The thriving life is the connection with the universe that gives you everything you need, the relationship with the whole heals wounds and allows you to reconnect, it is a mechanism that supports and does not clash.]

(Conference on shamanism, Wolakota, Sala Maggiore, Comune di Pistoia, 18/04/16)

Federica (Italian shamanic teacher, Hero school): Riconnettersi significa rimettersi in contatto con quella parte più selvaggia, incontaminata, naturale. [Reconnecting means to get back in touch with the wildest, most pristine, natural part.]

(Conference on shamanism, Wolakota, Sala Maggiore, Comune di Pistoia, 18/04/16)

Lia (Italian shamanic therapist and teacher, Hero school): In ognuno di noi esiste uno Sciamano da riscoprire, per permetterci di ritrovare il nostro potere personale ed il senso della nostra esistenza. Attraverso Conoscenze e Cerimonie senza tempo, possiamo ritrovare parti di noi stessi dimenticate o fuggite in momenti di dolore, traumi o incidenti. Imparerete a ristabilire un contatto con questo patrimonio antico, tramandato per generazioni nel nostro DNA, riprendendo possesso di “chi siamo veramente”. [In each of us there is a Shaman to re-awaken, to allow us to re-discover our personal power and the meaning of our existence. Through timeless Knowledge and Ceremonies, we can find parts of ourselves forgotten or escaped in moments of pain, trauma or accidents. You will learn to re-establish contact with this ancient heritage, handed down for generations in our DNA, taking back possession of “who we really are”.]

(http://liaballi.com/sciamanesismo/studi-sciamanici/ 20/05/16)

28 This word game is not easy to translate, the italian ri- marks a repetition of an action that has happened in the past.

29 I attended the inauguration and the conferences on shamanism of Lia, Federica and Elisabetta at Wolakota, Sala Maggiore, Comune di Pistoia (18/04/16) and after the events we had some conversations. Lia is the founder of the training school HERO (Holistic European Reasearch Organization) for holistic counselors in
This shared idea is particularly well expressed in the introduction of the auto-biographical book by Geraldine, a French-Angolan shaman and writer based in Portugal:

Tant de toute ma vie, le parcours du chemin de l’âme. Cette expérience m’a appris, sans paroles, ce que signifie réapprendre à être humain dans une réalité cosmique. J’ai décidé de me mettre à nu, de laisser derrière moi les habitudes quotidiennes, de me livrer et de faire confiance au pouvoir de guérison de la plante. Je suis partie sans savoir ce que j’allais découvrir et, pourtant, c’est la meilleure chose qui me soit arrivée : je ME suis trouvée. [So much of my life, the journey of the path of the soul. This experience taught me, without words, what it means to relearn how to be human in a cosmic reality. I decided to put myself naked, to leave behind daily habits, to deliver myself and to trust the healing power of the plant. I left without knowing what I was going to discover and yet it was the best thing that happened to me: I found MYself.] (Correia 2016: 31).

The pervasive presence of a re- prefix (with equivalents in Italian ri- and in French ré-) in shamanic discourse, in its indication of a movement to return to a mythical and lost condition, is a significant marker of a crucial underlying denegation. Geraldine’s goal to re-learn to be human is a denegation in terms of the attempt to recover a ‘natural’ human condition which has to be learned. The act of learning is by definition a cultural process, thus is, despite the shamanist perspective, in fact cultural. The emphasis on ‘natural’ is crucial here, otherwise the action would appear as cultural. The assumption of a ‘natural’ condition as not cultural, is indeed the drive that enables shamanists to culturally transform themselves through shamanic anthropotechnics in order to dismantle any artificial social stratification. Denegation is apparent, forgive the inevitable paradox, in the idea of ‘re-learning’ to be ‘naturally’ human that contains simultaneously the assumption of a ‘natural’ condition as eminently not cultural and the possibility of learning it, or even more paradoxically, re-learning it. Supporting the nature/culture dichotomy, shamanic practitioners on the one hand consider the learning process a cultural conditioning which they want to dismiss and on the other hand the same action, as it is presented when re-learning, is seen as the salvation from cultural programming. Since in order to return to the thriving life design it is necessary to dismantle cultural programs and recover the status of bon sauvage, shamanic training cannot be seen by shamanists themselves as a form of learning. Expressions like re-learning and re-becoming assume a different, heightened, meaning here as they underlie the idea of a return to something ‘authentic’ and uncorrupted by culture. The re- enables a temporal inversion to frame the presumed natural authenticity as preceding the inauthentic artificiality, whilst it is

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Pistoia; Elisabetta and Federica have been students of Lia and were at the time teachers at the school.
exactly the current feeling of inauthenticity that produces not only the need but the very concept of authenticity among the practitioners.  

The supporting discourse of the authentic ‘true self’ strategically enables to operate on oneself and invisibilize being operating (see the section *To be another person*). Another recurrent supporting discourse of this denegation is found in the frequent references by many shamanists to the re-learning/re-covering of the ‘guiding instinct’. In the words of the Italian advanced practitioner ELio:

> La sensazione è come di essere presi per il pellicciotto dalla mamma gatta e essere portati a giro (...) una sensazione bellissima, le cose succedono da sole (...) è un istinto che ti guida, è un''altra modalità, questa è l'abbondanza della vita, senza quell'ansia di non saper come fare. [The feeling is like being taken by the neck by a mother-cat and being carried around (...) a beautiful sensation, when things happen on their own (...) it is an instinct that guides you, it is another way, this is the thriving life, without the anxiety of not knowing how to do anything]. (Interview 13/04/16, Empoli)

ELio’s description of his own guiding instinct demonstrates well the nostalgia for a ‘natural’ condition that is attributed to other animals and that humans presumably have lost. The example of the cat is an effective metaphor that other shamanic practitioners also use as well as the global shaman Rowland Barkley who expresses ELio’s same experience more theoretically:

> When a mother cat remembers how to look after her kittens, she has the instinctive memories of the generations of cats who went before her. When people in a modern age take up practices of Shamanism, they feel home, like they have always been there, as thousands of years of spiritual and physical instinct awaken. The connectedness with all the energetic patterns of all animal types opens up, and they flow with the forces of nature the Wind, the Sea, the heartbeat of the Earth. (Online interview with Rowland Barkley: http://tranceform.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=741&catid=26&Itemid=1 01&lang=en 04/06/16)

These examples clearly highlight the denegation based on having and not having an instinct which are both necessary conditions in re-learning. The cat in fact does not need to learn to be guided by the instinct since it is an innate condition that she cannot lose. My question is: How can humans have lost an innate condition if it is, using the words by Pat McCabe, a *biological design*? In the shamanic search to recover the lost innate ‘instinct’, we can find the pivotal denegation of anthropotechnics of life guidance. Shamanic

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30 Chapter Four investigates in more detail this circularity between authenticity and inauthenticity which is crucial to activate the shamanic antidote.

31 Lindquist as well reports that the example of the cat is often used by shamanists since it is seen as “never wholly domesticated, but always somewhat wild and mysterious” (Lindquist 1997: 76).
anthropotechnics in fact respond to the anxiety of not knowing what to do through the idea of re-covering the instinct as a guidance system. However the recovery of this ability to respond in an unmediated way has apparently to pass through the highly mediated path of shamanic anthropotechnics.32 This denegation supports as well the discourse of many practitioners that they are not converting themselves to a religion with Gods, dogma and revealed truths and, therefore, are not believing in ‘something’.

There are different degrees of denegation among practitioners. Many are not thinking to undertake a process of self-fashioning, as they are, by considering instead this transformation as a recovery of their natural lost condition. When I presented my theoretical approach in informal conversations with the practitioners with whom I have been in more contact, some of them did not agree self-fashioning through shamanic practices. Especially the practitioners of DIY groups were annoyed by the idea of self-fashioning by associating it to a project or a model of the self, while they are perceiving themselves as independent ‘truth seekers’. Other practitioners instead are focused on their self-improvement path and are more conscious of shaping themselves through shamanic techniques. Some contemporary professional shamanic therapists who have developed their own methodologies have a more direct approach towards the idea of self-fashioning by stressing the advantages of technologies of self-improvement such as for instance personal branding or reprogramming. Personal branding is a method developed by the Portuguese therapist FaraH who converted the competences acquired in previous jobs in marketing and advertising in order to work with her patients on the importance to identify and pursue personal design and strategies. In reprogramming as well the Portuguese therapist MaLva presents a technology able to “consciously change the matrix” in order to “manifest our energy in an harmonious way and to free us from unfit mechanisms” (http://osoprodedeus.wixsite.com/english/consultations 18/05/18).

The main goal of the shamanic practice proposed by MaLva33 is to rid the practitioner from unsuitable, passively embodied cultural models in order to actively embody a healthier programming. Disembodiment and embodiment are necessary aspects in anthropotechnical change, since one has to disembody the old program in order to embody the new one (or to recover the original one). This process of self-transformation in the words of many practitioners is not easy at all. Transformation is also full of ambivalence because old and new

32 For that reason, developing the theories of Arnold Gehlen (2014 [1940]), besides Sloterdijk (2009) anthropotechnics are the human ‘bridge’ to fill the lack of strong instincts that are instead prominent in other animals.

33 MaLva organizes Ayahuasca ceremonies, Temazcal, Reprogramming, Trance dance and other practices (Cfr. Chapter Three and Four).
programming run parallel, occasionally causing some confusion. For example, the Portuguese
shamanic therapist CaRa undertook the re-programming ritual four times with her colleague
MaLva. She confirmed, many problematic situations were ‘unlocked’ [desbloqueado], such as
the difficulty to talk in public and chronic indecision. In the third reprogramming she asked
if she could change her astrological sign by choosing another one more suitable for her. After
some months she changed her mind and asked MaLva to reprogram her first zodiac sign as a
means to returning to her ‘original essence’. CaRa’s indecision here illustrates the
ambivalence of the will in active, conscious self-fashioning and the concurrent quest for
original essence that cannot be chosen by will. The idea to change Zodiac sign is particularly
significant because if one believes in astrology it makes no sense to change sign, since the
change undermines the theory that attributes meaning to astrological configurations. These
kind of doubts, uncertainties and changes of mind are quite common among the majority of
shamanists I met. Practitioners often mix different techniques and world-views, ending up
with ambivalent or contradictory answers that have somehow to be managed (Cfr. Chapter
Two).

. . . I feel that it is so

Shamanic discourse supports the idea that practice teaches the way to reach truth and does not
transmit fabricated truth; further, this inner truth is different for everyone. In shamanic
perspective truth, deep insight, revelation or illumination can be received through the visions
of psychotropic plants, the interpretation of dreams, information obtained through drum
trance, and whatever is able to link to the ‘true self’ such as spirits, totem animals, elders, fire,
stars, or anything else that contemporary practitioners ‘feel’ is a source of truth.

Through the epistemology I feel that it is so, shamans believe it is possible to find
inner certainty and become able to distinguish it from falsity. But how can one learn to ‘feel’
the truth? To be clear, it is not easy to ‘feel’ the truth and in my fieldwork many practitioners
and shamans expressed uncertainty. Many shamans attribute doubts and uncertainty to the
persistence of the cultural layers that the shamanic training teaches to disembay. Of
significant concern for shamans are ego projections, including fears, resistances or desires
that can interact with the ‘inner truth’. Some shamans went as far to suggest a vision is only
true after three apparitions or another kind of confirmation. In the experience of many
shamanists, ego projections are not easy to distinguish and therefore ayahuasca visions or fire

34 Quotations from CaRa are taken from the interview on 09/06/16, Florence.
communication are considered more reliable tools precisely because they are not a human source of truth. For example, some advanced practitioners like ElSi feel guided by the plant. After two years of intense monthly practice with ayahuasca she said:

E: Ayahuasca is a medicine, it gives you a guidance, so that’s why I’m doing it continuously. It is good with me. It guides me deeper…
L: In which way?
E: She grows in me, she grows inside, and I feel like her.
L: Like her?
E: Fairy… and soft, but also strong. I’m grounded and I feel more present.
(Interview 21/11/16, Florence)

The guidance of ayahuasca is thus obtained by a sort of acquired relatedness to the plant and trust in its visions. Many shamans also maintain ayahuasca is always right. Advanced practitioners in both Italy and Portugal say that in ‘ceremonies’ they listen to an inner voice that says exactly what they have to do in their lives. Similarly, some Raíces de la Tierra expert practitioners relied on the practice of Temazcal. The Portuguese shamanic therapist and conductor of Temazcal MagDa for instance, explained she regularly talks with fire in order to receive messages, solutions and ideas for her daily life. In a similar way, the Portuguese advanced practitioner SaRa learned to regularly confer with fire in order to solve her problems:

Quando tudo se começa a enredar, complicar, para mim a única forma de resolver é com a comunicação directa com o fogo, como um amigo... é uma entidade que está presente e que te pode mesmo apoiar, um confidente, alguém que te dá soluções, que resolve o problema. Estou a aprender muito isso no Temazcal. Eu peço o que preciso, aquilo para que não encontro uma solução, uma via, uma forma, e nessa semana tenho o retorno e isso é muito bonito, e uma construção também, de maneira que cada vez mais, estou super convencida de que este é um caminho de crescimento imenso, bem bonito. (...) A base fundamental que é o fogo é uma porta. Então aí confiamos. Porque não somos nós a fazer o trabalho. É o fogo, os elementos, portanto é só confiar que a porta está aberta e o mundo espiritual faz o seu trabalho, interatua conosco da maneira que quer e que sente que tem que fazer. Então é como uma desresponsabilização também. Para mim trabalhar com o fogo é uma via segura, porque não há equívocos, não há ego. [When everything begins to entangle and get complicated, for me the only way is the direct communication with the fire, as with a friend... it is present and can even support you, as a confidante who gives you solutions and solves the problem. I am learning a lot from Temazcal. I ask what I need, when I do not find a solution, a way, a form, and this week I have the feedback and this is very beautiful, and it is a construction too, hence I am increasingly convinced that this is a path of immense growth, very beautiful. (...) Fire is the main basis and is a door. So trust it. Because we are not doing the work. It is the fire, the elements, so just trust that the door is open and the spiritual world does its work, interacts with us in the way you want and you feel you have to do. So it is like a de-accountability as well. For me working with fire is a safe way, because there are no mistakes, there is no ego.]
(Interview 24/11/17, Lisbon)
According to SaRa, fire is not human and does not have an *ego* so it is possible to believe and trust in it without misunderstandings. Fire here, assumes the role of a source of knowledge and certainty for more experienced practitioners. Even these extra-human sources of certainty, however, do not fully prevent doubts as Chapter Three will show in the section about the shamanic training of SaRa and MagDa.

Shamanic self-fashioning is a long and ambivalent process of concurrent disembodiment and embodiment that gradually allows the acquisition of shamanic epistemology. Practitioner self-training is not easy also because shamanic epistemology is completely subjective and subjected to the changes of unstable feelings. One of the most popular shamanic songs, *Abrete Corazon*, for instance, describes the embodying - disembodied training by stressing the role of the heart as the automatic motor of the body and the seat of feelings and emotions, at the expense of reason which is the rational and mediated motor of the mind that has to be put aside:

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**Ábrete corazón**

- Ábrete sentimiento
- Ábrete entendimiento
- Deja a un lado la razón
- Y deja brillar el sol
- Escondido en tu interior
- Ábrete memoria antigua
- Escondida en la tierra
- En las plantas, bajo el fuego, bajo el agua
- Ábrete corazón (...)
- Es tiempo ya, ya es ahora
- Ábrete corazón
- Y recuerda
- Como el espíritu cura
- Como el amor sana
- Como el árbol florece y la vida perdura
- Que para llegar a Dios
- Hay que aprender a ser humano

**Open up heart**

- Open up feeling
- Open up understanding
- Leave aside the reason
- And let the sun shines hidden inside you
- Open old memory
- Hidden in the earth
- In plants, under fire, under water
- Open up your heart (...)
- It's time now, it's now
- Open your heart
- And remember
- How the spirit heals
- How love heals
- How the tree blooms and life lasts
- That to reach God
- You have to learn to be human

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNoFkWIhcxo 03/05/18; Cfr. Pict. 1.12.)

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When the aim of the practice is to *re*-learn to be human and *re*-cover the natural guiding instinct, the supporting discourses of many shamanists often identify with the heart as the place where that instinct can be felt. For instance in the shamanic technique NGS, *Natural Guidance System*, promoted by the North-American Jungian psychologist and medical

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35 The song is disseminated online in many versions and on Youtube it has reached more than 5 millions views (03/05/18). Geraldine told me that this song has been received by Rosa Giove, a Peruvian doctor involved in *Takiwasi* center in Peru (Cfr. Chapter Two). López-Pavillard also confirmed this information (López-Pavillard (2015: 316)).
“COMPRENSIÓN: ir por el mundo con un cerebro convertido en corazón.”

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

Mi alma está desnuda, lleva el traje transparente del Amor.

Rumi
Ábrete corazón, icaro chamánico de Rosa Giove, en la voz de Claudia Stern.

En estos tiempos, la mejor protección es un Corazón lleno de Amor.

La inocencia deja el corazón abierto para cualquier sentimiento.

Estoy a salvo en todo momento y en todo lugar.

Pict. 1.12.: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNoFkWhcxo (02/06/2017)
anthropologist Mikkal (alias Michael Smith), a member of the *Cercle of Sagesse* of the *Festival du Chamanisme* (Cfr. Cercle de Sagesse de l’union des traditions ancestrales 2014). According to Mikkal, NGS is the shamanic way to re-connect with the *original self* by following the *tao of the heart*:

Vivre en accord avec ce système de navigation (NGS) est à la racine du chemin chamanique. C’est une façon de suivre le “tao” du coeur, ou la béatitude dont parle Joseph Campbell, mais dont il ne dit pas le “comment”. Il parle tout le temps, mais nous ne l’écoutons pas toujours. Les quatre actes de pouvoir sont destinés à vous aider à trouver cette voix guidant de l’intérieur, à l’écouter, et à suivre rigoureusement sa direction et son inspiration. Un recouvrement d’âme est particulièrement solide et durable chez un individu qui en quelque sorte vit à partir du coeur: se reconnecter au cœur ou noyau de cette manière signifie se reconnecter à son “Soi originel” et dès lors il s’agit du travail de recouvrement d’âme à son niveau le plus fondamentale. [Living according to this navigation system (NGS) is at the root of the shamanic path. It is a way of following the “tao” or bliss of the heart of which Joseph Campbell speaks, but of which he does not say "how". It talks all the time, but we do not always listen to it. The four acts of power are meant to help you to find that inner guiding voice, to listen to it, and to follow its direction and inspiration rigorously. A soul-recovering is particularly strong and durable in an individual who somehow lives with the heart: to reconnect with the heart in this way means to reconnect to one's "original self" and hence it is the most basic work of soul recovery.] (Mikkal 2014: 261)

Note how in this adapted version of shamanic practice the metaphor of the heart is actualized in the form of an inner automatic pilot to navigate life. Even in more technological versions of shamanic practices there is an emphasis on the body as the place where change can happen, validated through first hand experience and personal feelings. This emphasis aligns with the opposition to ‘western’ intellectual and rational culture that is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two and Four. In this respect, the body acquires value as well as becomes a weapon to criticize ‘religions of the book’ and other spiritual practices in which it is not as involved.

This perspective of many practitioners reflects a recurrent demonization of rationality, as it would not be a ‘natural’ and common feature of humans. But the same shamanic anthropotechnical self-fashioning, however, is based on rationality. Many shamanists in fact quite consciously apply to themselves specific techniques to embody shamanic ‘truths’. Most practitioners assume the shamanic epistemology *I feel that it is so* as a result of an act of reasoning that ironically leads them to mistrust of rationality. For instance, the Sandra Ingerman’s practice analyzed in Chapter Two proposes an exercise to embody this epistemology by training in visualizing and ‘feeling’ a sort of ‘inner traffic light’ able to detect the *absolute truth*. The methodology is absolutely ‘rational’ setting a clear purpose and a way to reach it step by step, although the aim is to get rid of rationality.
The side effect of this denegation of rationality is also a widespread criticism of science that is often directed towards theoretical models of the past such as Enlightenment or Positivism. Despite this distrust, some shamanists refer to scientific studies to support their theories, as for instance the renown Canadian-Swiss anthropologist and activist Jeremy Narby. In *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge* (1998), Narby presents ayahuasca as the main source of knowledge of Peruvian Ashaninka shamans and uses scientific knowledge to support this theory.\(^{36}\) Narby discusses how visual association between ayahuasca recurrent visions of a double serpent as the *axis mundi* and the DNA molecular structure of a double helix is proof that shamans always knew DNA is the common code of genetic information for biological organisms. The use of scientific theories to legitimate a non-scientific approach is not a peculiarity of shamanists. Vasconcelos, for example, illustrates well how in Kardec’s *Spiritism* the hegemonic scientific paradigm was ambivalently challenged and at the same time used to support ‘alternative’ paradigms that, in turn, required being somehow ‘proven’ according to an implicitly accepted idea of knowledge (Vasconcelos 2003: 118).

The emphasis on the body often also reproduces without question Descartes’ mind-body dualism that is openly criticized by many anti-rationalist and anti-scientific shamanists.\(^{37}\) To give a simple and effective example, in an informal conversation of a DIY group practitioners spoke about the vomiting caused by ayahuasca and the disgust they feel at only glimpsing the glass.\(^{38}\) When LinA said that often she felt the body backing away and must make an effort to get closer to the glass, many agreed with her. Another practitioner said that he felt a shiver in his back just thinking of the glass, and another one concluded that ‘the body knows what is going on and does not want it’ [“il corpo sa cosa sta per succedere e non vuole”]. According to shamanists’ dualistic perspective, if the ‘body’ does not want to do this practice, it is the ‘ego’ that imposes it to the recalcitrant body. The denegation here is that, the ‘ego’ has imposed a practice on the body in order to silence the same ‘ego’; the active subject is at the same time the one that decides to undertake the practice and the one who has to be annihilated by it, often through a physical prostration (Cfr. Chapter Three).

\(^{36}\) Narby’s book is based on the PhD fieldwork with the Ashaninka living in Amazonian Peru and his frequent travels for the non-profit Swiss organization *Nouvelle Planète*. Ashaninka are renown in the shamanic field for traditional use of ayahuasca. Cfr. Pict. 1.13.

\(^{37}\) For the emphasis on the body and the challenge of mind/body dualism in shamanic contexts, Cfr. Botta and Ferrara eds. 2017.

\(^{38}\) Markedly, overcoming the disgust for vomiting is regarded as a successful and important step in the training (Cfr. Chapter Two).
This layer of denegation enables practitioners to frame shamanic techniques as a ‘body’ practice independent from the will, belief, opinion, conviction that comes from an ‘unreliable’ mind. A supporting discourse largely shared in shamanic contexts is that one has to try shamanic practice in order to fully understand it. This discourse strategically supports the assumption that practice is an effective healing technique which can do nothing but good.\footnote{As this analysis shows, however, shamanists make significant assumptions to support this validity; assumptions rooted in denegation.}

1. 4. \textit{True hallucinations}\footnote{\textit{True hallucinations} (1993) is a book of Terence McKenna about his journey to Colombia and the psychedelic experience with ayahuasca brew and DMT. McKenna is often quoted in online shamanic groups with references to his books, conferences, workshops, radio talks and videos.}

\textbf{Post of a Facebook shamanic group (19/09/16)}
There are different degrees of denegation among shamans and some advanced practitioners are more self-aware of the processes they are undertaking on themselves. Self-reflexivity on the practices results in increased ambivalence, for instance, a concurrent enchantment and disenchantment is frequent. Some practitioners become almost aware of the necessity of denegating in order to support the activation of the shamanic antidote. The Portuguese advanced practitioner SaRa for instance shows a high level of self-reflexivity on the process of self-construction of her “faith”:

O que este caminho me tem estado a dar, mais do que tudo, é uma enorme liberdade, de atos, de ação: se quero fazer, faço, se quero ir, vou, e este desafio de não me focar em impedimentos, nas impossibilidades e confiar. Porque no fundo isso nasce de uma fé. (...) A fé de que, apesar de tudo, tudo o que é meu, do que eu vivo, do que eu sinto, eu sei que há algo mais do que eu, algo que me segura, que não me deixa ir para baixo. É construir a fé, no fundo é encontrar a magia da vida, pôr mesmo a tônica na magia da vida, de que existe uma parte tão profundamente interatuantem em nós e tão invisível para nós. Mas esta é a parte mais importante da vida, o que é muito engraçado. Então sim, temos que confiar, mas é um processo porque também há dias em que não se confia em nada… (laughing) não há fé nenhuma, é tudo negro. [This path has been giving me, above all, an enormous freedom, of acts, of action: if I want to do, I do, if I want to go, I go, and this challenge of not focusing on obstacles and trusting. Because deeply, this originates from a faith. (...) The faith that, despite everything, everything that is mine, that I live and I feel, I know that there is something more than me, something that holds me, that does not let me down. It is to build faith, basically, to find the magic of life, to put the stress on the magic of life that is deeply interacting within us and so invisible to us. But this is the most important part of life, which is very funny. Then we have to trust, but it is a process because there are also days when you do not trust anything… (laughing) there is no faith, it is all black.] (Interview 24/11/17, Lisbon)

Self-persuasion is the explicit aim of practice and SaRa is convinced that it will work if she believes in it. Like SaRa, many practitioners emphasize that the most important thing is to convince oneself of the effectiveness of the practices. To some degree for the most self-aware shamans, the practice becomes a strategic means to construct a ‘faith’ which rescues them from modern disenchantment.

Re-enchantment, hence, is the solution. According to the Portuguese shaman APIo, “shamanism” opens the possibility to once again honor the lost mystery, without it he gets annoyed by knowing everything:

Recriámos um novo xamanismo, uma nova forma de honrar a vida que circula através de nós, honrar o mistério que estava muito presente nos primeiros povos, nós perdemos isso, classificámos, estudámos (...) as marés movem-se porque não sei quê… dissecámos estas coisas e matámos o mistério, mas o mistério continua a existir, e podemos honrar estas forças sem forçadamente lhes darmos um nome de uma entidade espiritual, não tem que ser um Orixa ou avô bisonte... o avô bisonte não faz sentido para nós… No ocidente tivemos um esforço para compreender as coisas que os antigos não tinham dessa maneira. Tínham o pensamento mágico e o pensamento conceptual estava subordinado. Nós fomos para um pensamento cada vez mais analítico, divisório para depois chegar a uma síntese.

66
Many shamanists like APio and SaRa are quite self-conscious to be carrying out work on
themselves in order to find a remedy to the discomforts of ‘modern’ disenchantment that is
hardly avoidable. This ambivalence is quite evident in the humor of many practitioners who
would comment on their own life stories by showing a spaced-out gaze of ironic self-
awareness about their strategic disenchanted enchantment (Cfr. Chapter Four). According to
Lasch (1979), irony is a form of detachment that enables setting distance and overcoming the
feeling of inauthenticity and triviality of alienated work and daily routine. This detachment
also prevents activating the will to change social conditions and find meaning in everyday
life, creating an effective defense from “the reality of the external world” through the “shell of
protective irony” (Lasch 1979: 102). In other words, irony in this case is another form of
denegation; serving to both frame self awareness and change as a cause of practice and as a
reason to not actually effect change on their surroundings. Further, self-irony becomes often a
routine that separates and protects from the routine of everyday life through an incessant flow
of comments about it.

Not all the practitioners are as self-reflexive or able to ironically laugh at themselves.
But many are convinced that the work they are doing on themselves is above all a form of
self-persuasion. The Italian advanced practitioner OmSa said:

\[
Vorrei vedere la realtà sotto forma dei miei specchi interiori affinché la possa osservare
come io la desidero, secondo i miei desideri, così come vorrei incorporarla. [I would like
to see reality in the form of my inner mirrors so that I can see it how I desire it, according
to my wishes, as I would like to embody it.] (Interview 17/04/18, Empoli)
\]

For many shamanists ‘reality’ as well as ‘truth’ is a subjective projection that can be
changed with intention. Quantic or quantum physics is often referred to as evidence for this.\(^{41}\)
A recurrent topic is that water has memory and by writing a word on a bottle one can

\(^{41}\) In Italian, many shamanists use ‘quantica’ instead of ‘quantistica’ which is used by scientists with reference
to quantum physics.
influence the effect of the water on the drinker. According to the Italian holistic therapist and shamanic teacher Lia Balli, founder of the Holistic European Research Organization in Pistoia, *quantic physics* teaches that intention can change matter:

La fisica quantica dimostra che con l'intenzione io posso cambiare la materia. Se l'intenzione è buona, creo simmetrie e geometrie, se non ho un'intenzione, invece, creo caos. Questa non è magia, è scienza! [Quantum physics shows that I can change matter with intention. If intention is good, I create symmetries and geometries, if I don't have an intention, instead, I create chaos. This is not magic, it is science!] (Conference on shamanism, Wolakota, Sala Maggiore, Comune di Pistoia, 18/04/16)

In *La fisica dell’anima* (2004) [*The Physics of the Soul*] and in many video-conferences, the Italian expert Fabio Marchesi says that Thomas the Apostle’s “seeing is believing” should be reversed to “believing is seeing”.\(^{42}\) For many shamanists, indeed, it is ‘intention’ that makes other realities and the magic of shamanic practices possible. Carlos Castaneda’s books are perhaps the biggest endorsement of this approach. In his eighth book on Don Juan training, the main teaching of the master is convincing his apprentice:

> “Every warrior on the path of knowledge thinks, at one time or another, that he (or she) is learning sorcery. However, all he’s really doing is allowing himself to be convinced of the power hidden in his being, and that he can reach it.”
> “Is that what you’re doing, Don Juan - convincing me?”
> “Exactly. I’m trying to convince you that you can reach that power.”
> (Castaneda 1987: 6)

The shamanic apprenticeship in this regard, is thus a training to convince oneself that magic can be performed by powerful humans.\(^{43}\) The successful North-American writer, healer and holder of an ayahuasca retreat center in Peru, Alan Shoemaker, goes a step further in describing shamanic apprenticeship as letting oneself be *mystified*:

> We live in an empirical world that has slowly and methodically taken away the credibility of our mind’s belief in miracles and the ability to suspend our disbelief. It isn’t that magic has gone—it’s just that we have forgotten how and where to look and listen for it. We have foolishly allowed information to replace intuition. Half-wittedly, we have also removed ritual from our lives. In our search for concise, logical communication, we have spelled near-death to whatever telepathic, extrasensory abilities we human beings once had. We have forgotten that we must continue to allow ourselves to be mystified, that we must remain receptive to knowledge not generally known. (Shoemaker 2014: 29)

Nevertheless this emphasis on the process of mystification and self-persuasion raises some doubts about the trust of Castaneda and Shoemaker themselves in the effectiveness of magic.

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\(^{43}\) Next chapter extends this discussion on power by analyzing the shamanic journey to find *Power animals.*
It is not easy, however, to suspend disenchantment and willing be persuaded as APio and Shoemaker noted.

The North-American Terence McKenna, who has been a strenuous defender of the use of psychedelics since the 1970s and he is now one of the most quoted shamanic technoprophets on YouTube, affirmed:

My encounters with shamanism and hallucinogens in the Amazon convinced me of their salvific importance. Once convinced, I was determined to filter out the various forms of linguistic, cultural, pharmacological, and personal noise that obscured the Mystery. I hoped to distill the essence of shamanism, to track the Epiphany to her lair. I wanted to see beyond the veils of her whirling dance. A cosmic peeping Tom, I dreamed of confronting naked beauty. A cynic in the dominator style. Ironically, I was at one time that cynic. I felt the folly of the quest. I knew the odds. “The Other? Naked Platonic beauty? You must be kidding!” (McKenna 1992: 13)

Like McKenna other practitioners have moments of ambivalence because often they do not succeed in being fully enchanted nor disenchanted as the next chapters will show. McKenna for example, claims to be a rationalist and had in-depth scientific knowledge of the hallucinogenic effects of DMT and Mao-inhibitors contained in ayahuasca brew. From this scientific stance he often criticized the excessive naive approach of some shamanic “non rigorous thinkers”. McKenna in fact is certain he does not ‘believe’ in anything else than his experience; the true hallucinations of ayahuasca are self-proofing because they are astonishing and inconceivable:

What happens on DMT I referred to this morning... A troop of elves smashes down your front door and rotates and balances the wheels on the after death vehicle, present you with the bill and then depart. And it's completely paradigm shattering. I mean, you know, union with the white light you could handle, an invasion of your apartment by jeweled self dribbling basketballs from hyperspace that are speaking in demotic Greek is NOT something that you anticipated and could handle. Sometimes people say “DMT is dangerous, it sounds so crazy”. Is it dangerous? The answer is, only if you fear death by astonishment. (My transcription from the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3_Vw7Mzwhg 00’ 47” - 1’ 43”)

What is certainly amazing is the cultivated creativity and ease of McKenna’s improvised linguistic performances in conferences and radio-talks, which as he observed has significantly improved through the use of DMT: “I had apparently evolved into a sort of mouthpiece for the incarnate Logos” (McKenna 1993: 10). The astonishing visions from DMT practice are proof alone, according to McKenna, that hallucinations cannot be result of conditioning such as

44 Ayahausca brew contains DMT (Dimethyltryptamine) that has a psychedelic effect and Mao-inhibitors (Monoamine oxidase inhibitor) that have anti-depressive effects and prevent from digesting the psychoactive principle when it is taken orally, instead of being smoked.

45 My transcription from the recording of McKenna Trust yourself (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GN-vMMpja30 17’ 59” 20/01/19).
reading Huxley or science fiction because they show “beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the world is made of magic”.  

Again, here shamanist discourse refers to freedom from conditioning, through ayahuasca. From McKenna’s enchanted-disenchanted perspective, DMT is a way to expand consciousness and attain a ‘superior’ knowledge that otherwise is not accessible to the ‘slaves’ of the pervasive conditioning of nine-to-five modernity. According to him, the use of DMT is a way to emancipate from the domination of ideology and culture and be free from the social slavery that obliges people to serve hierarchical institutions. From McKenna’s apparently disenchanted perspective nonetheless, there is a sort of hyper-optimism, like he considers the cultural conditioning as an illusion from which DMT could free the humans through the revelation of ‘true hallucinations’. But for the majority who are bonded to nine-to-five modern structures of ‘invisible’ domination this ‘illusion’ has real effects that cannot disappear by assuming DMT. Bourdieu and Foucault studies for instance have focused on such structures of domination showing their embodied effects which are naturalized and so made ‘invisible’ like products of an illusion. As Foucault pointed out the aim of his work has been precisely to show “the arbitrariness of institutions” that has become part of our familiar landscape in order to understand “which space of freedom we can still enjoy” (Foucault 1988: 11). Besides this theoretical perspective, the magic at stake is in the processes of denegation that contribute to make ‘invisible’ the conditioning to which McKenna refers.  

His call to individual freedom based on subjective personal experience in fact sounds like a slogan of current neoliberal politics rather than an emancipation from them (Cfr. Chapter Four). Further, the dissemination of shamanic practices, has a genealogical familiarity with denegation starting from anthropological studies that have framed, abstracted and exported them (Cfr. Chapter Four). The ambivalence between enchantment and disenchantment has been a peculiarity of the shamanic field since the first anthropologists whose positions alternated between ‘etic’ scholar skepticism and ‘emic’ native belief. As Taussig pungently observed, shamanism has to be understood in the colonial “legerdemain” that objectified it through anthropological “autoethnography of magic”:

46 My transcription from the video The power of DMT (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3_Vw7Mzwhg30’) that makes reference to McKenna’s workshop Calling the Butterflies. This perspective is shared by many practitioners who consider ayahuasca a “desalucinador” [dis-hallucinator]. Cfr http://ayahuasca.cl/web/ceremonia-ritual-ayahuasca/#1483070262780-c9741ad5-f432 (21/01/19).

47 The ‘invisibility’ of complex interconnections can produce a ‘magic’ effect. According to Hornborg, technofetishism is a “globalized form of magic” that renders invisible the networks of relations in which objects are embedded (Hornborg 2007: 35, 44). As Comaroff suggested, the ‘invisible’ and unpredictable effects of neoliberal politics can be explained by resorting to occult economies (Comaroff 2001: 7).
In any event, the colonial relationship through which such sensitive and imaginative activity as shamanism is to be conveyed inevitably becomes no less part of our object of study than the activity itself. To get to the truth about shamanism, we start to realize, means getting to the truth of an intercultural relationship objectified by means of autoethnographic intercultural texts such as the fourth version over three decades of “I Wished to Discover the Ways of the Shaman.” But this is most definitely not to say that the pervasive influence of colonialism accounts for skepticism with regards to the autoethnography of magic. On the contrary, the magic at stake here first and foremost concerns the way in which the colonial presence provides yet another figure to be caught in the legerdemain of revelation and concealment. (Taussig 2003: 135)

The concurrent revelation and concealment to which Taussig refers is a form of denegation of the unequal “intercultural” colonial relationship that framed shamanic practices and is still invisibly active in the global shamanic field. The strategical dichotomy between ‘western’ and ‘indigenous’ created by ‘civilized societies’ to distinguish themselves from ‘primitives’, is completely confirmed albeit with an inversion of polarization by the practitioners who use it to activate the shamanic antidote as a remedy for ‘us’ in order to re-become as ‘them’. This mutual essentialization comes from a relationship of domination that is concealed and revealed at the same time since otherwise the dichotomy will decay. In fact we are all ‘indigenous’ to somewhere, but when a Lakota comes to Italy or Portugal he is called ‘indigenous’ with implicit reference to the naturalized essentialization that comes from colonial frames of domination.

1. 5. Conclusion

Denegation has a crucial and unavoidable role in activating the shamanic antidote as an anthropotechnic to change practitioners’ life. The first layer of denegation supports the discourse “to be another person” enabling identification of the problem and the solution, while the second layer “the thriving life design” envisions the goal of the practices that provides the motivation to undertake the anthropotechnical path. The denegating discourse “re-becoming indigenous” identifies the way practitioners return to the thriving life design by re-learning a condition that is ‘natural’. Shamanic anthropotechnics are based on the concurrent assumption of inherent ‘natural’ human goodness and acorrupted ‘culture’ which nevertheless has been produced by the same ‘good’ humankind. This denegation sustains the strategical difference between the healthy ‘natural’ ‘indigenous’ and the sick ‘cultural’ ‘westerners’ making possible the activation of the healing antidote that otherwise will be unnecessary and ineffective. The assumption of a ‘natural’ condition is the drive that enables
shamanists to undress the artificial stratification and embody the new anthropotechnical dress by labeling it as ‘naked skin’.

The layers of denegation that supports shamanic epistemology “I feel that it is so”, and that it is essential to fix, reinforce and confirm the self-fashioning process, is a very effective anthropotechnical defense. It functions as a securing zipper between discourses and practices. Even if subjective shamanic epistemology is poorly verifiable, in the role it has, it always works. In fact if it does not work, it is justified as a misunderstanding due to ego projection or cultural conditioning or another reason that does not call into question the shamanic source of certainty. The self-referential system of reciprocal confirmation between discourse and practice also builds an immunological defense that allows advanced practitioners to consider shamanic anthropotechnics an antidote that can do nothing but good.

In this way practitioners convince themselves they do not believe in anything by rendering invisible their assumptions and the overall process. Shamanic anthropotechnics are an exemplary case study in this sense, because their denegations emphasize the crucial role of denegation and its paradoxical effects; practitioners adopt shamanic anthropotechnic in order to dismiss all anthropotechnics; to operate a shamanic self-fashioning in order to come back to the natural ‘authentic self’; to recover the guidance of the instinct in order to not need guidance; to rationally plan self-training in order to dis-activate rationality and so on.

Further, the processes of denegation lead practitioners to think of freeing themselves from socio-cultural conditioning since they are realizing their ‘inner’ personal project which is actually very finely tuned to neoliberal policies encouraging free choice, individualism, self-responsibility and so on. This perspective reflects and embodies the current diffusion of narcissistic and individualist tendencies promoting distrust in meta-narratives and hetero-imposed truths as well as adherence to practitioners’ own feelings as the most reliable epistemology. This condition makes individuals less critical with regard to the cultural translations of their feelings. That is, instead of dismissing the cultural ego to find the natural self, often and willingly, practitioners do nothing but confirm the cultural self under the layer of a presumed authentic natural ego that feels that it so. As Campbell noted this epistemology is the fundamental assumption of ‘consumer civilization’ which is based on “a widespread and largely taken-for-granted individualist epistemology, one in which the ‘self’ is the only authority in matters of truth” (Campbell 2004: 32-3). The emphasis on change your life is thus realized as being at the same time a personal free choice and a pressing social project of self-fashioning.
CHAPTER 2: Shamanic therapy

Self-fashioning is the active application of technologies of the self. This process is manifested through the embodiment of progressive layers of denegation that support the anthropotechnical path towards the aspired self. Anthropotechnical training is performed through practicing, imitating, repeating, acquiring an idiom, unlearning previous habits and learning new ones according to the models and examples presented by masters who have already actualized the transformation by embodying it themselves. The aspired self, however, is never reached because the goal itself is not achievable. As a consequence the anthropotechnical process is un-ending. To understand the transformation produced by this ongoing process is useful to observe the progression from beginner to expert practitioners that enables tracing the ascending steps of the path of self-improvement. For this reason, three main phases of the process of self-fashioning are identified: secession, training and advancing. Secession is the moment of separation from previous life, training is the process of apprenticeship through embodiment and disembodiment and lastly, advancing is engagement in the challenges of un-ending self-improvement.

This Chapter illustrates the progression of shamanic training in individual paths of self-fashioning from beginner to advanced practitioners up to recognized masters. It discusses how shamanic self-fashioning is performed through two different therapies and programs of exercises that actualize the shamanic project of the self identified in Chapter One. The shamanic antidote supports different therapies which are interchangeable with each other precisely because they are based on the same denegation set. Identification of denegation in each phase of the self-fashioning process enables understanding of how shamanic practicing itself is based on the coexistence of contradictory aspects. The concealment of this paradoxical coexistence in shamanic practice helps practitioners to form regular habits and fix them in a way of living that reinforces the denegating assumptions that support it. Results and change are validated by the practices themselves, which in turn lead to increased focus by the practitioner on self and reinforces a self-centered epistemology. This self-referential circulation is confirmation for practitioners that shamanic anthropotechnic is not cultural
conditioning but an emancipation from it, reinforcing the framing of shamanic anthropotechnic as a form of de-programing.

2. 1. The self-fashioning process: separating, training, advancing

In Sloterdijk’s theory, secession marks the moment in which the subject steps out of the flux of habit and begins a new life on the shore (Sloterdijk 2009: 191-3). This moment separates the secessionists from their previous life and the rest of non practitioners. The spatial metaphor of dislocation is often used to describe radical changes of life in religious conversion. Diane Austin-Broos discusses this in detail in her historical overview on the anthropological study of conversion, defining it as “a passage to some place” involving a transformation “to reidentify, to learn, reorder, and reorient” (Austin-Broos 2003: 2).\(^1\) Sloterdijk generously demonstrates, however, that these aspects are not exclusive to religious contexts and can be fruitfully extended to all kinds of anthropotechnical separation. Among my informants, shamanic practices are considered a spiritual means for re-birth, as Pat McCabe affirms (Cfr. Chapter One). In this case it is important to understand that ‘religious’ practices function as a dispositive in anthropotechnical re-orientation for practitioners who want to change their life. Interpreting this as a ‘religious’ conversion might be misleading.\(^2\)

The act of secession is based on the implicit assumption that it is possible to separate oneself from the rest and consequently act as “the agent that cuts itself out”:

This distinction can be compared to cutting out a figure from a larger picture - or punching a piece of a certain shape out of some rolled-out dough. The primordial difference does indeed result from a form of subtraction where the thinking and practising individual removes themselves from their first surroundings ethically, logically and ontologically; were this not the case, they could not want to distance themselves physically and affectively too. (…) On the other hand, this distinction assigns a significance to me - though not necessarily a power – that is virtually infinite, because, for the first time, my own sphere is placed as a counterweight to the sphere of the non-own (…). (Sloterdijk 2009: 224)

The significance gained through the secession leads to emphasizing the self. As in Foucault’s analysis, this self becomes the very aim of the practices assuming priority over the rest

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1 Please note the use of the prefix “re” to describe conversion. The shamanic denegation exemplified in the use of the prefix “re” in Chapter One may offer fruitful research cues in order to extend it to other case studies.
2 Furthermore many shamanic practitioners did not want to convert to a ‘religion’.
The participation of the subjects in their own subjectification increases self-awareness and self-reflexivity on the process and, according to Sloterdijk, brings “an incredible surplus of self-referentiality” (Sloterdijk 2009: 227). This emphasis on the self enables concealment of the difficulty in separating oneself from the surrounding background. In shamanic perspective, the conditioning background on the one hand profoundly determines the subject, but on the other hand can easily be cut off. Both the difficulty and ease of such separation are necessary conditions for planning anthropotechnical change. This denegation frames shamanic self-fashioning as a voluntary act of separation from the background. It also complements the foundational layer of denegation of every anthropotechnic: where the secessionists consider themselves at the same time able and unable to conduct their life. For this reason, the ‘other’ is a necessary resource because, he is in another position, where he represents a model to become ‘another’ person. In Foucault’s analysis, the other/master is a dispositive of mediation “for producing effects within the individual’s reform” (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 130). The master is able to guide people in the self-fashioning process because he has already undertaken the secession.

According to Foucault, otherness, as a way of distinguishing from sameness, is an indispensable condition for the activation of the care of the self because it allows the establishment of “a division between those who have chosen this mode of life and the rest” (idem: 113). Secession enables envisioning an otherness to be achieved outside the flux of sameness. Otherness acts as a dispositive from which reference it is possible to imagine a different condition from the present unsatisfactory one. Otherness therefore has to be strategically considered in the perspective of flux. As Rebecca Sachs Norris observed, voluntary conversion occurs “because it corresponds with the convert’s preexisting ideas or feelings” by often and unknowingly confirming the previous worldview, from which it is not easy to break away from (Sachs Norris 2003: 171).

The crucial role of the ‘other’ in changing oneself is also discussed by Sloterdijk who refers to the “auto-operative curvature of the modern subject”:

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3 In shamanic practices, paradoxically, the emphasis on the individual self passes through the universalization of the human condition with the project of dismantling the cultural self to find a more authentic emancipated self.

4 Sloterdijk (2009, 2018 [2017]) does not exactly define what he considers ‘modernity’ with the risk of naturalizing it. He emphasizes the acceleration of rapid and upsetting changes produced by human actions in a short span of time as a peculiarity of ‘modern’ times. Referring to the beginning of modernity in XVII century, he points out ‘the invention of the invention’ as the crucial change that led to the modern ‘multiplication of twilights’ (Sloterdijk 2018 [2017]: 27). Sloterdijk’s ‘modernity’ corresponds to the change of temporal perspective that occurs when people observe the effects of dramatic changes during the span of their life times and become aware that nothing is eternal.
It is easy to see why this is the only possibility in a modernized world. Individuals are not only unable to take the entire work of changing the world upon themselves – they cannot even take care of everything required for their own personal optimization by themselves. By exposing themselves to the effects of others’ ability to act, they appropriate a form of passivity that implies a roundabout or deferred way of acting themselves. The expanded passivity competence of the moderns expresses itself in the willingness to have oneself operated on in one's own interests. (Sloterdijk 2009: 374)

The statement 'I took myself in hand' is now replaced by a more complex formulation: 'I put myself in other hands so that, after completed treatment, I would once more be able to take myself in hand.' (idem: 376)

The condition of dependence on the other to change oneself is also mentioned in Foucault’s study on Greek-Roman technologies of the self; so it cannot be considered a specific contemporary phenomenon. Its relevance, however, is emphasized in the present context. With the pervasive diffusion of therapy culture since the 1970s, pre-existent social forms of support have been increasingly replaced by the appeal of ‘experts’ that support the idea that individuals need specialized help to solve any psychological discomfort (Lasch 1979, Furedi 2004, Crary 2013). This both responsibilizes and disempowers individuals to take care of themselves. According to Sloterdijk, in recent accelerated times the narrative of a permanent personal revolution compels more and more people to expand their competence, both in passivity and self-responsibility (idem: 402). In other words, the responsibility is to be actively passive. It is a denegation hard to put in practice that shamanists try to realize in a particularly acrobatic way.

The other has to be in some way new to represent a possibility of change. The quest for the new, and extraordinary, is emphasized in present times of neolatria, where the celebration of the new requires continuous and rapid production of newness (Sloterdijk 2009: 408; Cfr. Chapter 4). The social request to turn oneself into a new project is often expressed through a narrative of discontinuity. As Guyer notes, the representation of time as dates-and-events is nowadays relocated to an individual level emphasizing, “the multiplication of ruptures” (Guyer 2007: 417). This encourages a narrative of discontinuity focusing on life as a series of discrete events, radical changes, splitting differences, re-starting points, that multiply the acts of secession. Shamanic practitioners, indeed, often describe their lives as a sequence of ruptures.

The conditions of possibility in the present context contribute to the quest for the new as a dispositive to change through the dissemination of cosmopolitan aspirations that according to Ulf Hannerz (2006) passed from being an elite phenomenon to middle class

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5 In shamanic anthropotechnics, the search for the new comes together with the fascination with the ancient, although in this case the ‘primordial’ represents a resource of exotic novelty for practitioners.

strategies of distinction. The anthropologist defines cosmopolitanism as “the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience” and the desire of “going local” that leads to acquire a cultivated competence in managing different cultural contexts (Hannerz 1990: 239). The cosmopolitan strategy of distinction is characterized by picking elements from different traditions without rooting, which would require time and consistency. According to Hannerz, the cosmopolitan willingness “to be at home in the world” and uprooting from familiar backgrounds is supported by “a kind of optimism about learning, as a general possibility and as a personal capacity” (Hannerz 2006: 18).

If secession is undertaken with the ‘optimism’ of cutting one’s self out, the following process of self-fashioning is enacted with a parallel ‘optimism’ in the possibility of learning to be another person. According to Sloterdijk the secessionists look at their life as an external data that can be molded by implanting a ‘second nature’ through a process of de-automatization and re-automatization on the base of the anthropotechnical project (Sloterdijk 2009: 209, 393, 413). Self-fashioning is therefore a continuous process of training that operates through the double movement of disembodiment of previous habits and embodiment of new ones. The new, extraordinary, anthropotechnic that differentiates the secessionist from the ordinary rest is embodied through an active “repeating repetition” that installs the anthropotechnic as an automatic program, a substitution for the passive “repeated repetition” of the previous program (idem: 197). Nevertheless, the opposition of active and passive is strategic in distinguishing the latter from the former, denegating that in both cases it is a repetition. On the base of this denegation, secession can be framed as an emancipation from repetition.

In his overview on the golden age of the culture of the self, Foucault also identifies the processes of learning and unlearning as crucial actions of the lifelong care of the self. According to Greek and Roman philosophers, unlearning is necessary in order to rid oneself of bad habits, false opinions and misleading education (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 495, 536). The aim of learning is to internalize a sort of box of tools, the paraskeuē, which is “the set of necessary and sufficient moves, of necessary and sufficient practices, which will enable us to

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7 I strategically use the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ with reference to a certain stance that comes from elitarian, intellectual, artistic backgrounds that promoted cosmopolitan lifestyles as a way of distinction from ‘rooted’ lower classes (Cfr. Chapter Four). Nevertheless this is only an aspect of ‘cosmopolitan’ politics that are imposed to everyone under different and unequal conditions that lead also to a bottom-up cosmopolitanism (Hall 2008: 347). ‘Cosmopolitanism’ is a problematic concept whose meaning has been negotiated overtime, raising questions similar to those that revolve around the term ‘shamanism’ involving the same anthropology as genealogical ground of Eurocentric perspectives: Cfr. Friedman 2007, Webner ed. 2008, Kendall, Woodward and Skrbis eds. 2009, Rovisco and Nowicka eds. 2011, Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013, Ang 2014.
be stronger than anything that may happen in our life” (idem: 321). In this sense, Foucault’s interpretation of paraskeuē as defensive equipment is homologous to Sloterdijk’s concept of anthropotechnic as a symbolic immune system.8

Paraskeuē can be acquired in different ways, as the next chapter will show. However, the most effective means to embody it according to Foucault is logos:

What I would like you to note is that these really existing phrases, these materially existing logoi are then phrases, elements of discourse, of rationality: of a rationality that states the truth and prescribes what we must do at the same time. Finally, third, these discourses are persuasive. That is to say, these logoi not only say what is true or say what we must do, but when they constitute a good paraskeuē they are not confined to being kinds of orders given to the subject. They are persuasive in the sense that they bring about not only conviction, but also the actions themselves. They are inductive schemas of action which, in their inductive value and effectiveness, are such that when present in the head, thoughts, heart, and even body of someone who possesses them, that person will then act as if spontaneously. (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 323)

Logos is not only a rational resource to state the ‘truth’ but above all a dispositive to embody it and induce a way of acting as if spontaneously. The discourse of the ‘instinct’ that shamanists want to recover as an automatic natural guiding system is a good example of this acquired ‘spontaneity’. Sloterdijk also indicates the importance of endo-rhetorical methods as necessary means of self-admonition, self-training and self-remembering of anthropotechnical reformation (Sloterdijk 2009: 237). Specific anthropotechnical idiom has a very important, persuasive, role in framing and orienting the practice according to the shamanic denegation set. This is a crucial point in understanding the circularity among discourses and practices that are supported by denegation. In this respect, denegation works like Foucault’s logos binding together ‘truth’ and ‘ethos’. Where logos/denegation gives meaning to shamanic practice as an ethical self-fashioning, the practices themselves confirm the discourses whose automatization represents the embodiment of the aspired self.

The care of the self is a lifelong process that must be permanently maintained through a regular practice. As Foucault noted, Greek philosophers often used athletic or war metaphors to illustrate the endless work of self-training undertaken in the struggle to acquire self-mastery and self-control (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 184).9 In terms of continuous training, one of the most remarkable developments of Sloterdijk theory is the emphasis on the vertical

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8 Foucault also refers to the construction of an “insurance” mechanism to “withstand in the right way all the possible accidents, misfortunes, disgrace, and setbacks that may befall” (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 94).
9 According to Weber, active self-control was also the aim of Puritan ascetic practices and exercises in order to form a ‘personality’ and “to be able to lead an alert, intelligent life” (Weber 2001 [1904-5]: 72-73). This form of ‘rational asceticism’ highly influenced “the development of a capitalistic way of life” (idem: 111).
tensions of the anthropotechnical working. The construction of the subject as “someone who is active as the carrier of a sequence of exercises” (Sloterdijk 2009: 156) is realized through a self-training that entails a scale of increasing athletic steps of self-improvement. Exercise is meant in fact as the repetition of certain practices in order to improve and embody it as an automatic paraskeuē (Sloterdijk 2009: 4). When the aim of the exercise is to improve practicing, the direction and the scale of improvement are determined by the height to be reached according to the layers of denegation that support the anthropotechnical path of incremental approximation to the aspired self.

Nevertheless, anthropotechnical heights are not really accessible. According to Sloterdijk, anthropotechnics are an ascetic path of self-improvement aimed to reach improbable heights requiring practitioners to continually perform acrobatics in the attempt of overcoming their own limitations. Vertical tensions pull the practitioner towards something that is considered impossible, whatever is meant by impossible. When the border of impossibility is unavoidably mutable and recursive; envisioning a possible/impossible goal is the denegation which enables embarking on the anthropotechnical path as a way to reach an impossible height – unattainability is the motor that starts the elevation. In other words, the goal has to be considered at the same time possible and impossible otherwise it would not appear feasible or desirable. This challenge to overcome limitation begins when the impossible is thought of as possible allowing the idea of traveling the anthropotechnical path as a way to reach it.

The conquest of the impossible has to, however, be realized in some form. Advanced practitioners and exemplar masters are crucial models in envisioning the path as an elevation through reachable progressive steps towards unreachable heights. According to Sloterdijk, the masters are the possible example of realization of the impossible task (Sloterdijk 2009: 286); the imitable imitators of the inimitable show that is possible to advance on the anthropotechnical path. For this reason, according to Sloterdijk, models and guidelines are necessary anthropotechnical means to frame the exercises as realizable ways of approximation to the impossible (idem: 272-73). This denegation is enacted when uprooting extraordinary is used as a means to root and fix habits rendering them as ‘ordinary’.

In shamanic anthropotechnic this denegation is particularly emphasized because it is an apprenticeship that rationalizes and manages as ordinary daily habit the induced ‘extraordinary state of consciousness’ (Cfr. next section Les maîtres de la transe consciente).

10 The ascetic modality that exposes the practitioner to risky situations he has to overcome will be discussed in next chapter.
In the contexts I studied the purpose of practitioners is to challenge the control of consciousness (and its borders) through practices that put it into question. The experience of and success with practices that challenge this border through journeys in unknown and mysterious regions of the consciousness gives the impression and conviction of having a control over these situations and therefore over oneself and one’s life.

2. 2. On the road of secession: *não quero vidinha*

In the dynamic shamanic field there are multifarious ways and techniques to operate self-fashioning. Each practitioner undertakes a different path of ‘shamanization’ by gaining competence in the practices, familiarizing with the idiom, acquiring specific ‘postures’, training in *self-sensitivity*¹¹ and other actions that lead to fixing habits and an embodiment of the shamanic denegation set that activates the ‘healing’ antidote. This variability in techniques expresses and enhances the cosmopolitan *habitus* of practitioners who ‘speak the same language’ even though they acquire it through different practices. The shamanic layers of denegation identified in the previous chapter give an explanation as to how different remedies may be considered the same antidote. Shamanic epistemology based on personal feelings in fact supports the variability of paths whose cosmopolitanism is another demonstration that there is not a shamanic way, truth, *etc*, as with ‘churched religions’, but everyone has to find his own way. Individualism is once more a way of producing ‘authenticity’ since everyone has his own story, secession and self-fashioning path.

As the Portuguese shaman APio noted with ironic sympathy, many practitioners are ‘spiritual teenagers’ who are not rooted in any tradition and continue to experiment all their lives.¹² APio regards spiritual teenagers as funny and very open to experiment, so it is a pleasure to work with them because they get easily involved. Nevertheless, he notes, the disadvantage of this attitude is that often they are ‘superficial’ in a continual quest for ‘new’ practices that are experimented with and abandoned without the time necessary to root and embody them. What practitioners root, train and embody is above all a competence to change

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¹¹ The advanced practitioner MiguEl used the word “auto-sensibilidade” to describe his personal work of transformation in *dietas* (Cfr. next section *Um treino regular*). The shamanic therapist CaRa also referred to a process of ‘auto-sensitivity’ to explain how she learnt to ‘feel’ when a place is ‘energetically’ clean (Interview 16/02/18, Lisbon).

¹² APio recounted the joke of a friend who, in a workshop, said something like ‘please don’t teach me another way of breathing, I’m fed up with people explaining to me how I have to breathe!’ These quotes from APio are taken from the interview in Lisbon on 24/02/17.
and experiment. In paradoxical way, the shamanic denegation set leads to practices that contribute to root in the uprooting.

The great variability and the cosmopolitan appeal of ‘cultural difference’ in the shamanic field entails a paradigmatic openness to what is ‘different’ that characterizes it as highly ‘inclusive’. If according to this openness, ‘everyone’ is welcome, nevertheless those who are more ‘weird’ and ‘alternative’ are more appreciated rather than people rooted in nine-to-five life styles. In shamanic workshops or courses, it often happens that participants include those who are considered ‘tourists’ having quick look, as well as curious experimenters, occasional one-time participants, people willing to learn a specific technique, ‘holistic’ therapists in search for symbolic capital and people following the increasing global movement of attraction to these practices (Cfr. Chapter Four).

In the documentary El Espejo del Espíritu (2014) about ayahuasca ‘spiritual tourists’ in Peru, the Portuguese visual anthropologist João Meirinhos presents a concurrency of perspectives and positions that demonstrate the heterogeneity of the shamanic field: a local ayahuasquero who guides ceremonies for worldwide people and trains mainly foreign apprentices; the spiritual tourists as an electrician of Bergamo, Italy, who are looking for “something different”; local young students who are intrigued by tourists but not interested in ayahuasca ceremonies; a British medical anthropologist who trains to use ayahuasca as a healing practice, and so on. An advanced Turkish practitioner and apprentice of a local ayahuasquero by observing the turnover of tourists and practitioners notes that all people, despite their heterogeneous origin and personal history, have something in common: they want to change their life [“cuando la gente viene aquí, la mayoría de ellos, tienen algo en común: todos quieren cambiar sus vidas!”].

This common ground in fact was fully confirmed in my fieldwork as well as has been validated in other researches. The shamanists I met in Italy, Portugal and France were looking for an ‘alternative’, for the extra-ordinary. The Portuguese computer technician AlDo told me that he arrived at shamanic practice looking for something different because, there is nothing more alternative than shamanism [“o que há de mais alternativo de xamanismo?”]. The coveted extra-ordinariness in shaman anthropotechnic is a strategy that distinguishes the practitioner from nine-to-five lifestyles. Similarly, fashionable extra-ordinariness for

14 Lindquist confirmed that most Swedish practitioners wanted to change their life and framed their lives as a sequence of turning points (Lindquist 1997: 67). Cfr. also Vazeilles (2003: 272).
15 The increasing worldwide diffusion and ‘touristification’ of shamanic practices challenges this same ‘extraordinariness’ that is necessary to activate the shamanic antidote; Cfr. Chapter Four.
Portuguese shamanists is what differentiates vida/life and vidinha/little life, where vidinha is a way of referring to a repetitive life organized and determined around ‘ordinary’ habits such as a regular job, a house, a family and other middle class conditions. According to the French-Angolan shaman and writer Geraldine for instance, the worst nightmare of her childhood was a nine-to-five job in an office [“un boulot de 9 à 5, une chaise attitrée dans un bureau cloisonné” Correia 2016: 9]. The Portuguese shamanic therapist MaLva in an ayahuasca ceremony referred to the vidinha of working eight hours a day as something that the participants surely would avoid. According to Saldanha’s study on trance-dancers in Goa, India, cosmopolitan freaks/hippies are in psychedelic experience mainly looking for a way of distinguishing themselves from the “nine-to-five job person” (Saldanha 2007: 57). Many shamanists would also like to become “refugees from white nine-to-five modernity” (idem: 139).

To this effect, shamanists are in a continuous search for alternative lifestyles to what is perceived as paradigmatic of nine-to-five modernity in many fields (food, clothes, medicine, therapies, job, books, fun, ecology, education, holidays, etc.). Most practitioners arrive to shamanic practices after having experimented with other more popular practices like, reiki, yoga, meditation, massages, family constellations, anthroposophy, teosophy, metaphysics, naturopathy, chroma-therapy, art therapy, voice therapy, exotic dancing, macrobiotics, arcoiris rainbow gatherings as well as spiritual practices linked to Sufism, Buddhism, Hare Krishna, Damanhur, Osho, Amma, and so on. Before becoming shamanic practitioners, the majority had already read books (or watched videos) of guru-authors, or athletes of the quest of meaning in the apt words of Hervieu-Leger [“atletas de procura de sentido” Hervieu-Leger 2005 [1999]: 174], such as Carlos Castaneda, Micheal Harner, Sandra Ingerman, Jeremy Narby, Louise Hay, Black Elk, Alejandro and Cristobal Jodorosky, Claudio Naranjo, Deepak Chopra, Christina and Stanislav Grof, Georges Gurdjieff, Willi Maurer, Jamie Sams, Terence McKenna, Aldous Huxley, Hérnan Huarache Mamani, Alberto Villoldo, Mauro Mercier. The large majority, if not all, have read and know very well Carlos Castaneda’s books and even those who know that Don Juan is a fictional character consider his books a valid and important reference of shamanic practices (Cfr. Chapter Four). As Sloterdijk points out, books have been a portable anthropotechnic for centuries “which permitted readers from the

16 In the ceremony I participated in Ericeira, Portugal (26-27/09/15), MaLva improvised a song in which she said that God is her employer and she did not pay taxes, making many participants laugh.
17 To do this, shamanists occupy a specific commercial niche in the same way as the hippie movement in the 1960s (Binkley 2007, Boekhoven 2011, Cfr. Chapter Four).
18 In similar way, Bodei refers to the contemporary need for maîtres d’existence in order to know and change oneself (Bodei 2013: 145).
Fourteenth Century onwards to keep their pocket desert to hand wherever they went” (Sloterdijk 2009: 183). Castaneda’s pocket deserts have been the bible for many shamanic seekers, and still are, producing in many practitioners an anticipatory effect on what a shaman has to be like.¹⁹

The ‘other’ here is an example to follow in order to exit ordinary, trivial, repetitive and passive habits of the nine-to-five flux. In my fieldwork, the shamanic role models stand out for their exceptional life path and are considered bearers of an extra-ordinary way of life either because they come from distant and charming countries (as for instance Peru, Siberia, Australia, and so on) or, when European, because they present an unusual life path. If a shaman who is the bearer of a tradition rooted in exotic and foreign countries can easily be a model of otherness in the Old Continent, Italian and Portuguese shamans have to first conquer otherness in order to became recognized as shamanic models, or masters. In the last section of this chapter two in-depth life stories of Portuguese recognized shamanic masters detail how they came to be considered ‘extraordinary’ and transform their vidinha in vida.

Otherness, novelty and exceptionality are crucial in triggering the anthropotechnical turning point of secession. Dramatic events such as the classical shamanic illness,²⁰ a sudden death, a painful divorce, the loss of the job, a great disillusionment, a psychedelic experience, ‘ego-dissociation’ after drug effects or strong, upsetting life changes, are frequently mentioned by practitioners, but also extra-ordinary experiences since childhood such as visions, weird coincidences, premonitory signs and so on. The ‘extraordinary’ event often has an unbalancing effect and forces distance from the previous situation, a new stance from where it is possible to question previously unconscious embodied habits, worldviews and lifestyles. Shamans often recount radical secession and romance in their extraordinary life stories, while many practitioners, more modestly, report sudden changes and events that lead them to re-think their life. The shaman Geraldine refers to this upsetting moment in her life as a “crisis” that was an occasion to re-examine her whole life. The ‘crisis’ is the starting spark of the secession that marks the transition from passive to active subjects who decide to change their life. She said, it is usual to have a crisis at the age of 35-40 years old because before the age of 30 one goes fast forward by taking everything without questioning: ‘like a plant growing in the sun’. In the years before 30, life involves looking for a job, a place to live, a family, and so on, but when the process of ‘growth’ stops, everything is questioned. In fact on

¹⁹ Many Italian practitioners told me that after reading The Teachings of Don Juan (1968), they started looking for magic mushrooms and other psychedelics that led them to shamanic practices and to undertake a critical re-thinking of fictional models like Castaneda’s.
²⁰ As Znamenki reports, an early serious illness was a sign for identifying a shaman in Siberia (Znamenski 2007: 69, 75).
the eve of 40 years she started a journey to Peru that changed her life and also her name in *Sankan Usna* after the Shipibo shamanic initiation.\(^{21}\) She needed a “spiritual revolution” since ‘a strong pull is necessary to radically change life’.\(^{22}\) The Amazonian journey revealed the lack of satisfaction in her previous life and pushed her to leave her job as a journalist and separate from her husband and children.\(^{23}\)

In my research, I gave more attention to practitioners who take the practices ‘seriously’ as a means of self-fashioning/healing, or, borrowing an expression used by Geraldine ‘those who do the laundry’. The self-help manual *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path* (2001) by the North-American Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield was suggested to me in a pleasant conversation at a sunny bar by the Carcavelos Beach, Lisbon, with the charming stylish shaman Geraldine who was publishing at that time her third book with the established French publishers Pygmalion-Flammarion.\(^{24}\) Geraldine mentioned the book referring to many practitioners who hope to easily solve all their problems in a session of ayahuasca or hope the shaman has answers to every kind of doubt, because, she said, *westerners need gurus* [“os ocidentais precisam de gurus”]. She told me that people often ask her when the world will end or similar questions by presuming she is omniscient and are disappointed when she does not have this information. Geraldine, like many shamans or shamanic therapists, is not interested in working with practitioners who want the easy way to an *illumination* and who do not understand that *ecstasy* has to be maintained through a tiring and repetitive work of ‘inner laundry’ to be effective in daily life. Geraldine’s *laundry* is the work of self-fashioning that has patiently to be undertaken as a daily training to disembodied previous installed habits in order to embody the new ones as a *natural guidance system*.

\(^{21}\) Shipibo are a native people of the Peruvian Amazon that have the reputation of having preserved their way of life.

\(^{22}\) The quotes of Geraldine are from the interviews that took place on 19/11/15 and 23/11/15 except “spiritual revolution” which is from the back-cover of her book *Chamane* (Correia 2016).

\(^{23}\) Other practitioners, especially women, referred to the separation from their family as a radical change from their previous life. The ethnography of López-Pavillard also confirmed the recurrence of separations among shamans (López-Pavillard 2015: 233).

\(^{24}\) She told me that she was excited for the photographic shoot for the book cover and the advertising campaign to launch the book. Having worked as journalist on spiritual business she understood that marketing was necessary and accepted the decision of the editor to call the book *Chamane*, as a more beneficial strategy to sell the book (Cfr. Pict. 2.1.). The first two books were published by the Portuguese publisher Pergaminho (Correia 2008, 2012).
Géraldine Correia

CHAMANE
Les enseignements d’une vie chamanique

Du journalisme économique au chamanisme, mon parcours initiatique.

Pygmalion

Pict. 2.1. A: https://www.cultura.com/chamane-9782756417752.html (12/03/17)

Géraldine Correia

«AYAHUASCA»
O caminho da alma

2. 3. The safe way of the shaman

The shamanic journey is a widespread practice through which practitioners learn to visualize and use visions as a source of ‘information’, self-knowledge, life-guidance and healing. The diffusion of the shamanic journey as a technique to enter in contact with ‘non-ordinary’ reality, or other worlds, has been internationally promoted by the anthropologist Micheal Harner and his Foundation for Shamanic Studies or the FSS (Cfr. Chapter 4). Harner was the first to open a school in US and create a framework with which to learn the practices that have been then reproduced and actualized. The FSS has significantly contributed to the diffusion of the shamanic journey in the form of a predisposed recipe, easy to learn and safe to practice, that became a ‘standard’ basic technique of the shamanic training for westerners (Cfr. Chapter Four). Although the shamanic journey has different versions, names and traditions, the technique is very similar to Harner’s pattern. In the shamanic field this similarity is an illustration of how practices are aimed at the same goal, confirming thus the popular idea of universal ‘shamanism’. For many beginners the shamanic journey is an easy and safe way to enter in contact with shamanic practices through a non-demanding workshop, usually two hours long, that can comfortably be found in urban contexts. In many courses, the shamanic journey is the first exercise taught as a basic technique that can easily embodied through imitation and repetition until it becomes a daily practice for advanced apprentices. In the workshops I attended in Lisbon there were many beginners at their first shamanic experience. Their doubts raised during the workshops were very useful to my own understanding of the training process. The beginners were not yet familiar with the language and the logic of the field and their uncertainties required advanced practitioners or masters to explain and more clearly reveal the anthropotechnical process.

What follows is a description and analysis of the shamanic journey with drum, starting with a session performed in a particularly didactic way as an exercise for beginners. The drum is one of the main anthropotechnical means that allows the shaman to contact ‘other’ realities and re-cover the ‘true’ self. After, Harner’s influential model is analyzed with examples from my fieldwork of search for the ‘power animal’. This section concludes focusing on the path of advanced practitioners who made ‘the laundry’ by acquiring regular habits that orient their lives.

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25 The correspondent French term recette has been used by Vazeilles (2003: 256) and Hamayon (2003: 39) to emphasize the simplification of ‘new age’ rituals and adaptations. The ‘recipe’ also entails a process of self-awareness, normativity and technologization. Many resources and video tutorials are available online and there are specialized magazines that provide instructions on how to perform DIY rituals (Cfr. Pict. 2.2.).
Animais Tótemicos

Pode-se-se na história dos tempos a altura em que os ancestrais de diversos tribo e civilizações usavam a força e a energia do animal totemico que tinha em si. A nossa força é da Terra e é muito mais poderosa do que se comete. Sebado como pode descobrir o seu?

- **Pêda, Pinta, e Animal.**
  
  Cada um tem um dos sinais de natureza e serve para dizerem claramente e assim naqueles que estiverem a viver no momento, e/ou para alertar sobre mudanças necessárias que devem ser realizadas. O Pêda mais tem um totem animal e humano que as pessoas se contenham mais.

O poder xamânico

A descoberta do Animal de Pêda é uma das sete inicições mais importantes dentro do Xamánismo. Cada um deles tem um animal particular e pessoal. Muitas pessoas questionam-se quando descobrem que seu animal de poder não é aquele. Tendem a acreditar que o seu não é, mas poderia ser.

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**ENERGIA – para todo o dia!**

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**INFALÍVEIS PARA TER SORTE NA VIDA**

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**Pict. 2.2.: Elisabete Martins (Blog Celtic Wood), 2017, “Animais totemicos”, Boa estrela, 217, 28-30.**
I experienced the shamanic journey for the third time in April 2015 at the 8th Festival du Chamanisme held in Perigod, France, with the Swiss shaman Line Sturny Ishenty of the Celtic lineage of Soof-Ta (Cfr. Chapter One and Pict. 2.3.). She proposed a journey with the drum to “recover your roots, your people and your Earth” and “discover your three master” in the Celtic tent, one of the 23 ceremonial spaces of the Festival.  

When I arrived at the tent others were already sitting or lying down. Other participants followed and we sat forming a circle waiting for the arrival of Line. She arrived all dressed in white, like the other Celtic shamans. Some participants greeted her and the circle was rearranged more neatly. Line briefly presented the journey as a Celtic tradition that survived the Catholic Inquisition and through the subsequent centuries through transmission ‘from mouth to ear’ to which she was initiated. To note that in shamanic contexts oral transmission is generally considered a guarantee of authenticity and appreciated in contrast to written cultures and religions. Legitimizing her approach and status, she emphasized the importance of re-discovering our traditions, in an authentic way, without trying to appropriate the traditions of others, ‘as whites tended to do’. She insisted that one should root oneself in one’s own tradition and afterwards look for other ones, as in this way there is an exchange instead of an appropriation. She also remarked that the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is that ‘we’ have experienced before persecution over shamanic practices and that persecution was then extended throughout the entire world. If she attributed the past oppression mainly to Catholic Church, referring to present time she identified the “profit society” as the main cause of discomfort, confirming the shamanic denegation set identified in Chapter One.

26. www.festival-chamanisme.com/en/Agenda-8eFestival.pdf (05/06/15). As the pictures 2.4. well show, the organization of the Festival du chamanisme is very effective in providing a program for every participant with the map of the ritual places.

27. Even though nobody told us how to sit, it was evident that we would to stay in a circle, both because the tent space itself was circular and also because a circle is a shared shamanic form of socialization associated with the equality of the participants. In fact, Line emphasized in her discourse that in shamanism there are no hierarchies.

28. The 24 participants, of whom only six people had not journeyed before, were European but mostly French, between about 20 and 50 years old. The majority was hippie in style with bright and colorful clothes, backpacks and bare-feet (Cfr. Pict. 2.5.). This style was also evident in the meetings of Raíces de la Tierra (Cfr. Chapter Three, Pict. 3.2.)

29. At the Festival the Celtic shamans in particular focused on the similarity across shamanic practices which legitimized their position as ‘Europeans’, while at the same time emphasized the uniqueness of the practices and in so doing bringing value to their role in the recovery of lost local traditions (Cfr. Chapter Four).

30. This topic is clarified in more detail in the discussion of genealogy of the field in Chapter Four.
Pict. 2.3.A: Line Sturny; www.festival-chamanisme.com/photos_and_videos.html (08/05/15)

Pict. 2.3.B: The Celt Tenth; idem

Pict. 2.3. C: Shamanic Journey to find the Power Animal with Alain Rémy - XII Festival du Chamanisme https://www.illustr.ch/photos/rencontres-chamaniques (01/07/19)
**Programme du Festival**

**VILLAGE DE SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME (27)**

- **SONIA ET DAMIANO COSTA**
  - Brésil, mission au service du chamanisme
  - Des chants, des rituels, des danses, des expositions, des ateliers, des conférences, etc.

**TEMPE DU GRAND DRUIDE BLANC (32)**

- **SKILARK**
  - Festival jurassien des multitudes sacrées, des cultures de la terre, des peuples de la nature, des traditions des peuples autochtones
  - Activités culturelles, musique, arts visuels, ateliers, conférences

**MEDITATION COLLECTIVE**

- **Marc Vella**
  - Activités de méditation, de relaxation, de yoga, de danse

**DIJON**

- **OCEANOS DU JOUR**
  - Séance de thérapie énergétique, de méditation, de respiration

**13H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**15H30**

- **CELEBRATION CELESTES ET DE DÉJÀS**
  - Célébration des cycles de la nature, des saisons, des éléments

**16H30**

- **LE DIVIN DU NORD**
  - Célébration de la Terre, de la Lune, de la Terre, de la Nature

**17H00**

- **CELEBRAIONS CELESTES ET DE DÉJÀS**
  - Célébration de la Terre, de la Lune, de la Terre, de la Nature

**18H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**19H00**

- **TEMPE DU GRAND DRUIDE BLANC**
  - Festival des traditions des peuples autochtones

**21H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**22H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**23H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**00H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**01H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**02H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**03H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**04H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**05H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**06H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**07H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**08H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**09H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**10H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**11H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**12H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**13H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**14H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**15H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**16H00**

- **COIFFURE INDIENNE DU FESTIVAL**
  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**17H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**18H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne

**19H00**

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  - Ateliers de coiffure indienne

**20H00**

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**23H00**

- **SOIHI CELESTES DU CHAMANISME**
  - Festival de la chamanisme, des esprits, des êtes célestes

**00H00**

- **DIJON**
  - Concert de musique indienne
Pict. 2.4. C: https://www.facebook.com/adrien.lambin.5/media_set?set=a.10205668305838267&type=3 (08/05/15)

Pict. 2.4. D: www.festival-chamanisme.com/photos_and_videos.html (08/05/15)
Pict. 2.5. A: http://chamanisme.eu/4228-2/ (08/05/15)

Pict. 2.5. B: http://chamanisme.eu/4228-2/ (08/05/15)
Line presented herself as a shaman whose main task was to guide the journey because without guidance or with ‘improvised’ shamans one risks to losing oneself. She explained that in all ‘shamanisms’, as well as in the ‘chakras’, there are three worlds, we are in the middle world and we can travel in the upper and lower worlds through the shamanic journey. The journey we embarked on was destined for the lower world which she described as divided into nine levels ‘like a mille-fueille’. (layered cake). The ironic comparison made some participants laugh, themselves manifesting the detaching effect identified by Lasch (1979) as a form of de-sacralizing the situation (Cfr. Chapter One). At the same time, the gastronomic metaphor gave concreteness to Line’s words indicating the materiality of ‘shamanic’ worlds. In many shamanic sessions, I noted a recurrent appeal to material and familiar referents as a way of suggesting a connection with the ‘ordinary’ world, which, highlights the simplicity of the practice.

Line asked us to lay on our backs on the floor and gave us simple and detailed instructions in order to guide our journey. We had to listen and remember her words in the form of a visual story which we followed while she would play the drum. Drumming is usually performed in a repetitive and regular beat in order to induce the journey, as Line did. I retell here the story on the base of my field-notes:

You have to think and visualize a place in nature, whatever your wish (real or imaginary, a field, a forest, a desert, etc.), then you have to walk until you find a source of water (river, lake, sea or whatever comes to your mind). Here you will find a boat or whatever means to move on water and then you will arrive at a place with a hole. Go inside until you arrive at the first cave where everything gets darker. Here you meet a guardian (human, animal or other being) and you ask him permission to enter, but you should not accept anything from him. If he refuses to give permission, you have to stop the journey and come back by the same way you arrived. If the guardian grants you entrance, follow him into a second, even darker cave, where you will find your totem tree. You have to ask to visualize it and when the totem tree appears you can ask questions. If the tree does not appear, close your eyes and ask the help of the guardian.

After the first extensive narration of the plot, Line briefly repeated the key points of the sequence of the journey to help us to memorize it and advising us to relax and follow the repetitive and guiding rhythm of the drum. She explained that at the end of the journey she would speed up the rhythm for some minutes as a signal for the travelers to quickly return. If in that moment the totem tree hasn’t been found, we were advised to try visualizing it for the very last time. If it did not appear immediately we were told to return before the end of the

31 Line performed the drumming in the way suggested by Harner: “beating the drum in a strong, monotonous, unvarying, and rapid beat” and “striking the drum sharply four times to signal to you that it is time to return” (Harner 1980: 39-40).
drumming. Many time, Line encouraged us to give shape to the images of the journey according to our own imagination and have fun, with saying: ‘you are the director’, ‘this is your film, enjoy it’. At end of the journey, when she stopped drumming we slowly reformed the sitting circle and were invited to share our experiences, if we wanted, trying to be short as possible because we were many. Often this is the only moment when participants can share their experiences and usually people are willing to do it with a lot of detail. The majority of participants visualized the totem tree and attributed meaning to it or a message related to their lives. Only few felt asleep, lost in their inner landscapes or did not visualize it. Many asked more details about journeying and how to interpret the visions, but Line answered only in a general way without commenting on the individual stories and encouraging people to continue to train the technique. She also introduced her three year shaman course as a way to root through a solid anchorage, pointing out that the presented session was only a taste.

This is an example of how the shamanic journey is conducted through guidelines that in a more or less structured way provide the scenario and the tips to safely travel. It also outlines the mission to be accomplished according to personal purposes. With regards to other people’s journeys, Line was very effective in giving and helping participants remember the points of reference within the journey, allowing the focus to be on the staging rather than get caught up in the given plot which sometimes led to the journey becoming too complicated or too vague. This guidance style was also effective because it invited people to express and train their imagination. Instructions and comments were directed to empower individual paths of self-narration and self-improvement explicitly assuming self-realization as the main aim of the journey. The advice to express personal creativity also cleverly prevented a series of questions that I have heard in other journeys about the adequacy, correctness, significance of the visions. As such, the journeying practice helps to embody the self as the foundational authority and the director of one’s life, enhancing the secessionist willingness to change one’s life and confirming the shamanic epistemology.

32 The journey I followed was vivid with colorful images, sounds and smells from the jungle, rivers and underwater landscapes but I fell asleep waiting for the guardian in the first dark cave. When Line started to speed the drum I woke suddenly and visualized a dark cork oak, to my great surprise. The experience was dreamlike and funny.
**Les maîtres de la transe consciente**

In a virtual guided visit broadcast on the French magazine website *Télérama* in 2012, Line presented the ethnographic exhibition *Les maîtres du désordre* (Quai Brainly Museum, Paris 11/04/12-29/07/12) making reference to the *shamanic altered state of consciousness*:

Les vibrations du tambour vont permettre aussi d'entrer en état de conscience modifiée, en état chamanique, en travaillant sur les différentes hémisphères du cerveau et au long permettant de voyager en conscience, en gardant toujours une partielle de conscience, j’y tiens à préciser, on part dans une forme de transe mais qui n’est pas une transe egothique, qui est vraiment une transe consciente ou une partie de nos voyages tout en ayant une partie de nous qui est extrêmement présente à la réalité, dans la réalité, ça veut dire que il faut être bien ancrée dans ses pieds pour avoir un pied dans chaque réalité et que jamais on perd la conscience de soi ou de ce qui se passe. [Drum vibrations will also allow the entering of a state of modified consciousness, in a shamanic state, by working on different brain hemispheres and in the long term enabling the journey into consciousness, always keeping a partial consciousness, I want to clarify this, we go into a form of trance that is not egotistic but is really a conscious trance or a part of our journeys that is having a part of us which is extremely present to reality, in the reality, it means that you have to be well anchored in your feet to have a foot in every reality and that you never lose awareness of yourself or what is happening.] (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5I9sgtdqgQ 03:49-04:22 10/12/18).

As Line emphasized, the main purpose of shamanic techniques is to become able to attain a *conscious trance*. The apparent oxymoron reveals the denegation of improbable heights shamanic anthropotechnic aspires to when it leads the practitioner to challenge the frontier of ‘consciousnesses’. Very often shamanic practices are presented as a bridge to something ‘other’ (self, reality, world, consciousness), but this ‘otherness’ is thought to be reached through the rooting in ‘this’ reality, the one where the foot touches the ground. The references to ‘other realities’ in fact takes meaning only presuming ‘a reality’ that is not ‘other’ and that, in the words of Line, seems more real, as she called it “the reality”.

Line made reference to, without opening mentioning by name, the popular concepts of the main founders of the field, including Mircea Eliade’s concept of *ecstasy* as a way to define shamanic techniques, Castaneda’s apprenticeship to attain the shamanic state of *controlled folly* under the guidance of Don Juan Matos, and Harner’s method to teach controlling the ‘shamanic state of consciousness’. These concepts have been crucial to the dissemination of practices as the shamanic journey and other techniques of alteration of ‘consciousness’. This

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33 As Hamayon remarks in her comparison of Siberian native shamanic practices with Eliade’s interpretation and ‘neo-shamanic’ practices, the pivotal concepts of ecstasy and trance are not relevant in Siberian context (Hamayon 1998: 180). The comparative approach can be fruitful in indicating different purposes of shamanic practices, when it is not directed to attribute authenticity to natives and consider non-natives as abusive imitators. *Trance* took relevance for North-American and European theorists and practitioners because the concept was significant as a resource to uproot (Cfr. Chapter Four).
framing of shamanic practices developed with a romantic-antimodernist-countercultural perspective which criticized Cartesian representation of consciousness, Positivist faith in rationalism as well as the normative medical border between ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ psychical behavior (Cfr. Chapter Four). According to the denegation set identified in previous Chapter, shamanic antidote takes shape precisely in opposition to such models of essentialized ‘western’ thought. Nevertheless, the attempt to challenge hegemonic representations of consciousness is based on invisible and denegated assumptions. In fact, it is only assuming the existence of a non-altered state of consciousnesses that one can imagine to alter it. Shamanic journey is a way of altering the presumably ‘normal’ consciousness and at the same time gaining control of the alteration. The ecstatic alteration of the ‘normal’ state is interpreted as healing from a perceived excess of consciousness and control of it. Paradoxically, this denegation leads precisely to enhance and develop this control. Not by chance, the founders of the field emphasize the importance of control over shamanic techniques and the induced states that shamans are able to manage for their purposes.  

Harner was the first North-American to formalize a structured method to practice and teach the shamanic journey and many practitioners still make direct or indirect reference to his model. On the base of his anthropological competence, he assembled different shamanic traditions and techniques identified a shared core shamanism “particularly intended for westerners”:

Core Shamanism consists of the universal, near-universal, and common features of shamanism, together with journeys to other worlds, a distinguishing feature of shamanism. As originated, researched, and developed by Michael Harner, the principles of Core Shamanism are not bound to any specific cultural group or perspective. Since the West overwhelmingly lost its shamanic knowledge centuries ago due to religious oppression, the Foundation's programs in Core Shamanism are particularly intended for Westerners to reacquire access to their rightful spiritual heritage through quality workshops and training courses.  

https://www.shamanism.org/workshops/coreshamanism.html (04/04/18)

Harner’s FSS has the aim to preserve, spread and adapt shamanic traditions for ‘westerners’ through a wide program of activities from weekend workshops up to the advanced three year training. The shamanic journey is taught in the FSS basic courses as the main technique for asking information, protection, guidance or healing. Even beginners can easily undertake this exercise at home according to the popular book The way of the shaman (1980) by Harner,

34 In similar way, according to Lindquist the construction of the narrative of the shamanic journey is aimed “to make sense of its non-sense” (Lindquist 1997: 117). She also points out important similarities of shamans with dreamer groups that “make sense of the non-sense of dreams” besides the ethnography of Edgar (1995) (idem: 86).
who has been the first promoter of DIY handy resources. The manual in fact provides guidelines and suggestions to learn to safely travel and achieve the *shamanic state of consciousness*:

In engaging in shamanic practice, one moves between what I term an *Ordinary State of Consciousness* (OSC) and a *Shamanic State of Consciousness* (SSC). These states of consciousness are the keys to understanding, for example, how Carlos Castaneda can speak of an "ordinary reality" and a "nonordinary reality." The difference in these states of consciousness can perhaps be illustrated by referring to animals. Dragons, griffins, and other animals that would be considered "mythical" by us in the OSC are "real" in the SSC. The idea that there are "mythical" animals is a useful and valid construct in OSC life, but superfluous and irrelevant in SSC experiences. "Fantasy" can be said to be a term applied by a person in the OSC to what is experienced in the SSC. Conversely, a person in the SSC may perceive the experiences of the OSC to be illusory in SSC terms. (Harner 1980: xvi; Cfr. Pict. 2.6.)

SSC here is the ‘other’ in direct opposition to OSC. The dichotomy lays down the border in consciousness through which practitioners separate from ‘ordinariness’.

The majority of Harner’s readers, however, already know what he is referring to. In fact he strategically quotes his friend and renown writer Castaneda who already made reference to the ‘non-ordinary reality’ providing a fictionalized account of shamanic apprenticeship and techniques of journeying through psychotropic plants in the pseudo ethnographic best-seller *The teaching of Don Juan* (1968).35 If Castaneda’s mythical apprenticeship represented for many practitioners the ideal model of shamanic practices and shamans, Harner intended instead to found a school to teach the method and the techniques to attain SSC. He had therefore to make the extraordinary ordinary, tracing a feasible way of the shaman, an easy and safe set of techniques which can be undertaken at home. Safety is a constant concern for Harner who many times in the book points out the difference between the safe shamanic journey with the drum and the risky psychedelic experiences that can lead to *bad trips.* As Znamenski (2007) noted, when Harner founded the FSS in 1979, the popular moment of psychedelics that welcomed the books of Castaneda had already declined and many were afraid of the side-effects of such substances.

As a good DIY guide, the Harner’s global bestseller is fully didactic and oriented to practitioners who want to learn and practice by themselves. *The way of the shaman* features a series of progressive exercises and a structured method in order to familiarize with shamanic techniques and increasingly master the journey. Precise indications fully explain every action by associating it to a meaning and rationalizing the function of each step. The method aims to

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35 Although Harner quotes Castaneda’s books many times he is quite cautious about their reliability and openly refers to their fictionalized aspects.
fix a ritualized form that helps to remember the exercises and take control of the journey. Once having acquired a mastery of journeying, advanced practitioners are encouraged to personalize their own ritual.

Practitioners are invited to regularly repeat the exercises to achieve SSC and progressively learn to control it by training to behave as a shaman and entering trance “at will”, with full control of the process. According to Harner, this approach is safer than dreaming “since it is a conscious waking state” (Harner 1980: xx). As with Line, the emphasis is on the ‘conscious’ side. In fact, according to Harner, the practice requires training in certain habits like the exercise of remembering the details of the journey, in order to acquire shamanic knowledge:

When you complete the exercise, describe to your companion what you saw so that you will not forget the details of the experience. You may also write them down or dictate them into a cassette recorder. The act of remembering these experiential details is the beginning of your accumulation of SSC knowledge. (Harner 1980: 40)

The self-fashioning process through the exercise of alteration of ‘consciousness’ therefore leads to the development of self-control, self-knowledge and self-awareness of the situation and of the self.

... **Power animots**

A very popular practice that follows Harner’s method, beyond the boundaries and approval of the FSS, is the shamanic journey to find/recover the *power animal* that can guide in other spiritual missions and healing processes as well as in ordinary life. My interlocutors often considered the trance with drum, an ‘authentic’ way of communication and connection to the heartbeat. I participated in a drum circle at the holistic center *Espiral* in Lisbon, where the Portuguese advanced practitioners ViVian and ManueL presented the drum as a ‘pre-linguistic’ form of communication of ‘our ancestors’ and a form of healing through the transmission of vibrations to the body. Since mind is considered potentially tricky and the ancestors wiser than the descendants, the archaic non-linguistic communication directed to the body is framed as more reliable.

In the shamanic field, the drum is often linked to nature and especially to animals. Very often shamanic drums and other instruments are decorated with animals (Cfr. Pict. 2.8.).

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36 Workshop *Círculo de tambores, Espiral*, Lisbon, 18/11/15 Cfr. Pict. 2.7.). *Espiral* is contextualized in next section *A Pió’s story: Passar fronteras.*
Círculo de Tambores Xamânicos - O Som do Coração

O tambor é uma abordagem terapêutica antiga que usa o ritmo para promover a cura e a auto expressão.

Pesquisas recentes começam a verificar que tocar tambor acelera a cura física, estimula o sistema imunitário e produz a sensação de bem estar.

As batidas do tambor induzem um relaxamento profundo, reduzindo a pressão arterial e o stress.

Batidas do tambor ajudam a reconectar-nos ao nosso centro, aumentando as nossas sensações de autonomia e estimulando a nossa expressão criativa.

Vem Sentir os benefícios deste instrumento ancestral!

Não precisas "saber" tocar.

Outros instrumentos para além do tambor:
Maracas, Djembé, chocalhos, shakers.

Trazer roupa confortável e manta.
Pict. 2.8. A: Handmade drums, Raíces de la Tierra; https://www.tambornativo.mx/ (17/05/18)

Pict. 2.8. B: https://www.tambornativo.mx/en/pintados/ (17/05/18)
Pict. 2.8. C: Construction and sale of drums at Espiral, Lisbon; http://tamboresxamanicosdaterra.blogspot.com/ (12/09/19)

Pict. 2.8. D: Fiona’s handmade drum; http://tamboresxamanicosdaterra.blogspot.com/p/galeria.html (12/09/19)
In a workshop on shamanic drum making held in an Osho retreat center in Tuscany by the holistic therapist and *neo-shamanic* trainer Nirava Dainotto from Milan, Italy, the advanced practitioner OmSa recounted how she learnt the connection between drum and nature. In the workshop Nirava taught this connection by stressing the importance of the skin of the animal that is used to construct the drum, and that the player has to resonate and re-vitalize by bringing back to life the spirit of the animal through the drum. For these reasons the drum represents the connection to nature and power animals that has to be recovered in order to learn to act following one’s heartbeat according to shamanic epistemology.

In *The way of the shaman*, the power animal is mentioned as a kind of ‘guardian spirit’ that supports the healing work of the shaman:

The guardian spirit is often a power animal, a spiritual being that not only protects and serves the shaman, but becomes another identity or alter ego for him. (Harner 1980: 54)

The connectedness between humans and the animal world is very basic in shamanism, with the shaman utilizing his knowledge and methods to participate in the power of that world. Through his guardian spirit or power animal, the shaman connects with the power of the animal world, the mammals, birds, fish, and other beings. The shaman has to have a particular guardian in order to do his work, and his guardian helps him in certain special ways. The guardian spirit is sometimes referred to by native North Americans as the power animal, as among the Coast Salish and the Okanagan of Washington. This is a particularly apt term, for it emphasizes the power-giving aspect of the guardian spirit as well as the frequency with which it is perceived as an animal. (Idem: 74-5)

According to Harner the shaman has the special ability to connect with power animals which everyone can recover by undertaking a training. Thus promoting the democratization and large-scale diffusion of shamanic practices, Harner encourages communicating with power animals in order to ask doubts and obtain guidance in ordinary life, to heal oneself or others, and to recover the lost power whose absence is the main cause of illness, unhappiness, misfortune and troubles.

The reference to *power* is recurrent in Harner as well as in Castaneda and in fact it is one of the topics employed to argue the usefulness of shamanic practices as a means of

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37 Nirava refers to her therapy and teachings as ‘neosciamanico’ [neoshamanic] https://www.nirava.org/25/01/19).

38 OmSa referred to the workshop in two conversations in Florence on 13/06/16 and 11/07/16. She participated for the first time in 2015 as an apprentice and since 2016 as an assistant of Nirava.

39 To note that there is a significant omission because before being re-vitalized the animal has to be killed, but as in many cases the majority of shamanists seem to disregard the *dark side*.

40 In order to support his discourse on ‘totem animals’, Harner (1980: 73-88) strategically quotes ethnographies that refer to ‘animals’ in different contexts, for heterogeneous uses and with distinct purposes. He mentions the ‘guardian spirits’ of North-American Okanagan (Cline 1938), the studies of Stewart (1946) with North-American Zuni dances and masks, the ethno-psychiatric studies of Jelik with the Coast Salish (1974) and the ethno-archaeological studies with ‘Australian Aborigines’ by Gould (1969). Among these references, he quotes also Castaneda (1972) and the book on natural magic of the alchemist and scientist G. B. Porta (1562).
empowerment. Naturalizing ‘western’ hegemony, Harner writes that many ‘westerners’ have lost the power they once surely had, but fortunately they can re-empower themselves through the shamanic practice performed by ‘non-westerners’, who have this power even if they manifestly cannot boast the same good outward conditions of ‘westerners’:

To a shaman it is readily apparent that many Westerners have guardian spirits, as evidenced by their energy, good health, and other outward manifestations of their power. It is tragic, from the point of view of such a shaman, that even these power-full people are nonetheless ignorant of the source of their power and thus do not know how to utilize it fully. A related tragedy, from the same point of view, is that lethargic, ill, and dispirited Western adults have obviously lost the guardian spirits that protected them through their childhood. Worse, they do not even know that there is a method to regain them. (Harner 1980: 83)

This ambivalent stance strategically attributes to the shaman the power of re-empowering disempowered ‘westerners’.

According to Harner’s model which aims to emphasize the safety of the ‘way of the shaman’, the power animal is only beneficial – “no matter how fierce it may appear” (Harner 1980: 88):

North and South American Indian mythology is pervaded with animal characters in tales that tell not of the adventures of a coyote, a raven, or a bear, but of the adventures of Coyote, Raven, and Bear. In other words, the individual characters represent entire species or larger classes of animals. This is analogous to the unity of one's individual guardian animal spirit with the entire genus or species to which it belongs. This unity means that a person usually possesses not just the power of a bear, or of an eagle, but the power of Bear or of Eagle. The possessor of a guardian animal normally draws upon the spiritual power of its entire genus or species, although he is indeed connected into that power by an individualized manifestation of it. (Harner 1980: 74)

Considering animals in terms of species is strategic; not only does it form conceptual representation but also emphasizes the individuality of human beings and their ‘specialty’ among other natural beings, as if they are not ‘animals’.

In my fieldwork, I came across the power animal shamanic journey employed on many occasions as a technique of self-knowledge and self-improvement. In workshops, books and websites the power animal is presented with anthropomorphic features, abilities and concerns as symbols of human qualities and feelings. In terms of representation, the illustrations on Portuguese shamanic therapists J. and S. Ramos’ website are a good indication of how animals are used to talk about humans by humans. The images fictionalize the animals as shamanic messages and symbols in order to describe and prescribe anthropotechnical
dispositions, for instance the *owl* symbolizes ‘knowing oneself’ and the *eagle* ‘elevating oneself’ (Cfr. Pict. 2.9).

According to Harner, the power animal is possessed by but never possesses practitioners; another assurance of safety for western travelers. Power animals in fact are possessed, since they are discursive representations of animals produced by humans. The philosopher Felice Cimatti, borrowing Derrida’s game of words (2006), proposes animals *tout court* should be called *animots* (animal-words):

[L’animale che conosciamo, e forse l’unico che possiamo conoscere, è la somma di quanto non riconosciamo come umano; per questo l’animale non esiste, perché non esiste questo chimerico vivente che pretende di riunire in sé gli altri viventi. L’animale è letteralmente una parola, una entità linguistica. [The animal we know, and perhaps the only one we can know, is what we do not recognize as human; this is why the animal does not exist, because there is no such chimerical living being that claims to bring together the other living beings. Animal is literally a word, a linguistic entity.] (Cimatti 2013: ix).]

The anthropologist Galina Lindquist in her detailed ethnography about shamanic practitioners in Sweden largely confirmed shamanists consider animals as ‘natural symbols’ of human ‘noble’ qualities, pointing out the uniformity of the “lop-sided Power Animal zoology”:

[By and large, there is a good deal of uniformity in what animals people meet on their journeys. There are a lot of lions, tigers, panthers, leopards, pumas, and other exotic felines, as well as wolves, white and brown bears, a variety of deer, a lot of whales and especially dolphins. There are birds of prey, eagles, condors, kites. Somewhat more seldom come foxes, elephants, elks, otters, badgers, and beavers. I have never heard of people bringing back hyenas or skunks as Power Animals. (Lindquist 1997: 97)]

The shaman-anthropologist Jonathan Horwitz, American founder of the Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies who has been Harner’s disciple and teacher at FSS, commented this uniformity with Lindquist as a sign of the *Universe* that “presents us with the images of Power that we can understand, and ‘our culture’ uses animals extensively for all kinds of representation, not least in advertising” (idem: 97). According to this authoritative voice in the field, power animals – often considered an *alter ego* of the self – is translated into ‘our’ language of advertising by the ‘Universe’. As before, here shamanic epistemology, by emphasizing personal feelings as the supreme authority, renders individuals less critical in cultural representations through which their feelings are expressed, naturalizing the *cultural self* they want to release by presuming an authentic *natural ego/power animal*. 

95
Gostava tanto que conhecesses o meu eu real.

Deixas-me ser a tua medicina xamânica?

ELEVA-TE

«Sou a Águia - a minha medicina pode auxiliar-te, nas tuas «viagens», durante os teus momentos de evolução involutiva, a elevares-te, se quiseres, se sentires que chegou o momento de abrir as tuas asas, de libertares a tua mente e a tua alma, à descoberta da pluridimensionalidade da existência, e, em simultâneo, a minha medicina também te pode ajudar a entender que a espiritualidade é um caminho de liberdade e...»
XAMANISMO TRANSCULTURAL

DESCOBER-TE

«Sou o Mocho - a minha medicina pode ajudar-te, no silêncio da noite, durante os teus sonhos, a descobres-te, se quiseres, se sentirres que chegou o momento de te responsabilizares não só pela tua vida, como pela tua existência, e, em simultâneo, ajuda-te a descobrir que o caminho espiritual também pode ser muito divertido - olha-me bem nos olhos e experimenta entrar dentro da minha consciência...»
Don’t worry about mind’s suggestions

If in DIY shamanic manuals everything seems quick and easy to realize, in practice, as I experienced, many doubts surface – especially among beginners. In the shamanic circles I participated the topic of power animal often raised many questions, exacerbated by the many different conceptualizations circulating in the field with reference to power animal, totem animal, auxiliary animal, elder animal or even shadow power animal. Each conceptualization provides different explanations and dispositions. For some a power animal is a guide for all life, while for others the power animal supports in certain moments or can be interpreted as bringing a message. If even the global shamanic teacher Sandra Ingerman expresses her doubts about the role of the animals she visualizes in the audio-course Soul Retrieval (1997), it is well understandable that beginners who receive contradictory information from often a heterogeneous training have many doubts. As the Portuguese shaman teacher and therapist MaLva explained to some of her trainees, the only way to dissipate doubts is to learn to ‘feel’, confirming the shamanic epistemology to be embodied through the anthropotechnical path of self-fashioning.41

An example from my fieldwork of the kind of doubts practitioners have is a shamanic journey to find the power animal in the two-days initiation Munay-Ki which I attended at Guincho, in Portugal.42 Munay-ki is transmitted through a formalized standard framing and punctual instructions that can be partly personalized by the performer.43 The ritual was organized by the ‘soul therapist’ Patricia Peixinho who has trained in various techniques such as shamanic healing, Reiki, Quantico Radionic Table, Aura Reading, Therapeutic massage and so on. In order to enter the shamanic feeling, Patrícia proposed a guided journey to find the power animal by following the drum. She explained that shamans used to talk with animals and that the drum ‘represents the sound of mother earth’ and ‘brings consciousness’ in order to know ‘who we really are, our ego, our soul and heart’.44

41 In a lesson of the course on urban shamanism (01/03/16 Lisbon; Cfr. Pict. 2.10.), MaLva guided participants to visualize ‘the earth power animal’ explaining one can have an animal for each element, but as practitioners raised many doubts about what is the function of each animal, she said that one has to learn to ‘feel’ it.
42 Munay-Ki iniciações Inka, Hostel Guincho Surf Villa, 31/10 - 1/11/15. For Munay-Ki contextualization and viral dissemination Cfr. Chapter Four. We were six women among 30 and 50 years and three of us enrolled in the ritual through a Facebook advertising on an online shamanic group (Cfr. Pict. 2.11.).
43 When the ritual is ‘passed’, the initiated receive a manual with the instructions to perform the ritual (Cfr. Chapter Four). The description and prescription of the actions to be performed is very punctual and formalized as the instructions to realize a recipe (Cfr. Pict. 2.12.). This is one the most rationalized forms of shamanic practices that I have found and quite paradoxically the training particularly emphasized the feelings and emotions of the ritual performance.
44 According to the shamanic denegation set, the aim of this practice is to reconnect through the sound of the drum with the lost ‘natural self’ represented by the power animal.
O Xamanismo é uma filosofia de vida ancestral, que visa o reencontro do ser humano com os ensinamentos e fluxo da natureza e com seu próprio mundo interior. Atualmente, existe um movimento de resgate dos conhecimentos do Xamanismo a fim de aplicá-los no dia-a-dia, buscando elevar a consciência e alcançar novamente o equilíbrio. Este é o objetivo primordial deste curso, dar ao Xamanismo uma visão e utilização prática dentro das nossas vidas urbanas, podendo ser praticado em qualquer lugar e momento.

O Xamanismo Urbano é aconselhado a quem já tem algum tipo de conhecimento de Xamanismo.

Durante o curso iremos falar, aprender e aplicar várias técnicas xamânicas como por ex. trabalhar os 7 talentos xamânicos: visão, libertação, foco, presença, bênçãos, empoderamento e tecer sonhos, trabalhar a intuição e leitura da linguagem do Universo, trabalhar os 8 centros e os 4 cantos do corpo, entre outras.

O conceito básico da cura Xamânica é que "Ninguém cura o outro. A cura está dentro de cada um".

Formadora: [Redação] - aluna de D. Juan Uviedo
Valor mensal: 120€  |  Marcação: 96 564 93 59
O curso tem a duração 20 semanas, 5 meses.
O Munay-Ki representa uma energia de Amor, de Luz, de Partilha e de absoluta União com o todo, transmitida através de 9 Rituais Incas que carregam os códigos para um ser humano novo e experimentados como ritos de iniciação.

A expressão Munay-Ki tem a sua origem numa palavra Quechua que significa: "Eu Amo-te" ou "Sê Quem Tu Ês".

Estes rituais derivam das grandes iniciações do Vale dos Hindu, que foram trazidos para as Américas por todos aqueles que cruzaram o Estreito de Bering da Sibéria, durante o período glacial há cerca de 30.000 anos atrás. Estes viajantes foram os corajosos Laih - os Guardiães da Idade.

Em 2006 os Anciãos Que ethnicizaram as montanhas sagradas do Peru e revelaram o novo ritual, pois consideraram urgente que a humanidade tivesse acesso ao Munay Ki na sua totalidade.

Estes rituais recentemente disponíveis no Ocidente, podem agora ser transmitidos a pessoas para pessoas sendo apenas necessário a abertura do nosso Ser à sabedoria dos Guardiães da Terra e apenas deixar fluir.

PROGRAMA:

10h00 Sabado:
- Apresentação
- Dinâmica de grupo
- Abertura do Espaço Sagrado
- Meditação preparatória
- Introdução ao Munay-Ki

Iniciações
- 1° Ritual de Cura
  Partilhas
- 2° Ritual de Ligação de Poder
  Partilhas
- 3° Ritual de Harmonização
  Partilhas

13h30 - Almoço

15h - Meditação preparatória

- 4° Ritual de Violência

- 5° Ritual do Guardião do dia
  Partilhas

19h00 - Encerramento do Círculo

20h30 - Início da Celebração do Samhain* com Instrumentos de Poder, Danças, Rituais, Comida...

10h00 Domingo

- Passeio em caminhada até Parque da Peninha
- Abertura do Círculo
- Ofereça à Mãe Terra e Viagem Xamânica

Iniciações (já no Hostel)

- 6° Ritual Guardião da Sabedoria
  Partilhas
- 7° Ritual do Guardião da Terra
  Partilhas
- 8° Ritual do Guardião das Estrelas
  Partilhas

Pict. 2.11. A: https://www.facebook.com/events/717915525019963/ (22/10/15)
Pict. 2.11. B: my photo, 'ceremonial table' of Munay-Ki iniciações Inka, Guincho, 31/10/15
1 - Ritual de Cura (Hampe)
Este ritual conecta-nos a uma linhagem de seres de Luz do passado que vêm ajudar na nossa transformação pessoal. Ajuda-nos a reconhecer que estamos numa jornada espiritual e que as nossas ações têm impacto naqueles que nos rodeiam. Acorda o poder de cura nas nossas mãos de forma a nos curarmos e ajudarmos todos aqueles que cruzam o nosso caminho.
Durante o ritual está disponível uma poderosa assistência espiritual que durante os próximos dias, curará feridas pessoais do passado bem como as dos nossos antepassados.

1 - Ritual de Cura
(descrição do ritual na Pág. 12)

Como passar:

- Coloca duas cadeiras à frente uma da outra
- Fica atrás do recetor
- Abre o Wiracocha (espaco sagrado e luminoso) para ti mesmo e depois sobre o recetor
- Mantém as mãos nos ombros do recetor e sintoniza-te com ele
- Faz a tua oração, pede apoio e orientação durante esta cura ao Grande Espirito, aos ajudantes, aos teus guias, aos anjos ou quem quiseres chamar.
- Liga-te à Anima (alma) da pessoa e quando sentir estas a vir/vais sentir essa entrega, deves dizer obrigado 3 vezes.
- Em seguida, senta-te em frente do recetor enquanto ele mantém as mãos abertas no próprio colo
- Coloca as tuas mãos na zona da barriga (Llankay)
- Em seguida, coloca as tuas mãos sobre as mãos do recetor e exala com a intenção de Poder da Manifestação
- Coloca as tuas duas mãos sobre o coração (Munay) e com uma exalação. Coloca as mãos sobre as mãos do recetor com a intenção do poder do Amor
- Coloca as duas mãos na tue cabeça, na zona da 3ª visão (Yatchay) e depois com uma exalação, coloca as tuas mãos novamente nas mãos do recetor, com a intenção da Correta Visão
- Depois segura as mãos do recetor e dobra-as juntas, com as palmas para cima e sopra nelas com a intenção de cura. Ao fazeres isso, ativais poder de cura nos mãos.
- Após isso, dobra as mãos juntas e coloca-as perto do coração do recetor
- Fecha o Wiracocha
In the Munay-Ki ritual Patrícia drummed for about 15-20 minutes in the manner suggested by Harner while we were lying on a blanket on the ground. At the end of the journey we returned to sitting position and talked, but nobody found their power animal. DaNa started the sharing circle by sadly affirming that she did not visualize anything at all. Patrícia tried to comfort her saying that it could happen and that she must try again. While the other participants told their visualizations of places and people (but not animals), Patrícia helped to find a meaning for each vision. At the end of the circle DaNa asked if she could talk again. She explained she had had a vision, of a volcano with water inside, but she interpreted it as an off-topic mind’s suggestion [“sugestão da mente”]. Patrícia explained that in the shamanic journey everything is worthy [“tudo vale”], since if an image appears it has a meaning and invited her to learn not to worry about mind’s suggestions. Beginners doubts arise when practitioners have not already embodied shamanic epistemology; since shamanic knowledge it is ‘automatized’ they answer on the base of their feelings.

As in Harner’s manual, in many shamanic contexts everything can have an explanation and the ability of the shaman is to find one that actually makes sense for practitioners or, even better, to invite them to find their own by training themselves. Patrícia did this, by suggesting for instance some DIY books in order to know the meanings and symbols of the animals and become able to interpret them. She also used shamanic cards, a sort of tarot style cards with a picture of an animal and a short description, and prescription, to follow (Cfr. Pict. 2.13.). Since the beginner DaNa continued to be discouraged, Patrícia suggested to try again or to ask the help of her ‘superior ego’ in order to find the power animal, develop creativity and be able to ‘construct the film of her life’. According to Patrícia, shamanic practices can help to open ‘an inner sacred space’ in order to communicate with the ‘superior ego’.

The example of DaNa is significant because it shows how a beginner lacks above-all the way of framing the experience; she had a vision but she did not consider it a ‘shamanic journey’. The advanced practitioner Patrícia, by contrast, had already learned to recognize a shamanic vision and had the language to express it in a appropriate way according to the shamanic idiom, for instance through the concept of a superior ego. The expression ‘mind’s suggestion’ instead does not make sense for advanced practitioners as everything is worthy.

45 I borrowed this expression from the shamanic teacher Horowitz interviewed by Lindquist (Lindquist 1997: 83).
46 In the days after the ritual, the group shared some messages on Facebook and a participant suggested a link to a detailed website about Power animals: http://vozdoselementos.com.br/xamanismo/animais-de-poder/ (03/11/15).
47 Shamanic DIY books and cards are often used by practitioners as an anthropotechnical means to ask information about doubts in daily life.
Pict. 2.13. A: https://it.pinterest.com/pin/430234570629116278

Pict. 2.13. B: http://jamiesamsbooks.com/medicinecards.cfm (04/04/18)

Pict. 2.13. C: my photo, shamanic cards in Munay-Ki iniciações Inka, Guincho, 31/10/15
Moreover, to advanced practitioners, ‘mind’s suggestion’ can be a dangerous term since it introduces doubts about the source of visions.

Through shamanic journeying practitioners train the ability to make sense of the visualizations as means to interpret and orient their life. Shamanists are fashioning what Patrícia has called the superior ego, that is, the secessionist subject that progressively takes control of passively adopted habits. This self-correction, in fact, leads to the activation of a self that according to Sloterdijk is “at once supra-personal and more native” (Sloterdijk 2009: 328). This is a process where the progressive embodiment of shamanic layers of denegation enables the anthropotechnical activation of an higher, wiser self (Patrícia’s superior ego) as an approximation to recover the ‘true naked self’.

. . . . Materializar o trabalho espiritual

According to the FSS trainer AvA, a Portuguese septuagenarian anthropologist and painter who organizes monthly one day drum circles at her place in Algarve countryside, the majority of participants mainly want to have a good day and rest in the countryside; only a few take the practice ‘seriously’. Motivation determines a different perspective among advanced practitioners who want to make the laundry and ‘root’ themselves in an anthropotechnical shamanic way of life. If through the shamanic journey, practitioners learn to attain SSC and recover their power animal, afterwards they have to train and fix the habit in order to use received ‘information’ as a means of orientation in their daily lives. It is noteworthy that many practitioners refer to shamanic practices as a form to obtain ‘information’. In fact this is another area which illustrates how shamanists are embedded in a social context where emphasis on ‘information’ is pervasive, even though the source of information is authenticated according to the shamanic denegation set.

The founder of the Portuguese FSS, Maria da Conceição Marques, organizes informal drum circles on a regular basis in order to offer an opportunity to train and maintain the practice for those who have completed the FSS basic workshop The way of the shaman. Since FSS workshops are very intense and expensive, many practitioners find it useful to repeat the practice in the circles. They also attend drumming circles because the apprenticeship is mainly performed by imitation. Outside the FSS, drum circles are a shared practice as well, usually conducted by an experienced practitioner who asks for a monetary

48 Marques continues to lead drum circles and other shamanic activities, but the manager of the Portuguese FSS is currently Luís Gonçalves Louro (https://www.shamanism.eu/faculty/luis-goncalves-louro/ 10/11/18).
contribution to participate. The drum circles in which every participant plays an instrument with different levels of mastery and involvement are a form of mutual apprenticeship. For the Portuguese FaraH and SilVa, the drum circles of ViVian and ManueL are a monthly opportunity to train with the drum and to share this practice as otherwise they feel alone. For the Portuguese urban shaman ALia, trained at the FSS, group practice is useful because it helps to do it regularly, like gymnastics [“como a ginástica”].

The aim of the training for Marques is to teach people to integrate the shamanic journey as a daily practice to guide their life, as she usually does:

My life is all related to shamanism, I do not separate my life from the practice, for me the practices are daily, permanent, I continuously travel to find information, ask to the spirits, ask suggestion to what to do (...) shamanism became central in my life and I teach to people to do the same, so that it becomes something central in their lives.49

Many shamanists told me similar things affirming the idea that shamanic practices have changed their lives by becoming a central and guiding habit. For GraÇa the shamanic journey with the drum has become a regular guide that she uses when she has to take a decision. GraÇa is a middle-aged therapist and organizer of shamanic events at her holistic center in Loures, a small town near Lisbon.51 She learned shamanic journeying through J. and S. Ramos’ methodology (Cfr. Chapter Four). The Ramoses founded a school that integrates different approaches including Harner training and Guarani traditions whose symbology has been useful for GraÇa in interpreting her journeys. GraÇa described how, when she first listened to the sound of the drum, the vibrations resonated in her body as something familiar that she recognized by suddenly ‘feeling’ initiated. After training and initiations with different masters, she integrated various methods to find her way of ‘asking information’ through the drum; for her this practice is more effective than ayahuasca as the latter brings ‘more suffering than information’.

Advanced practitioners from FSS training programs participate at the workshops in order to learn to apply shamanic techniques not only on themselves but also to heal other people. From 2005 to 2008, at the age of about 50 years old, the Portuguese shaman APio participated at the first FSS advanced training and retreats organized in Portugal: Power Soul retrieval; Shamanic Extraction healing training; Shamanic Divination Training; Shamanism,

49 Quotations of ALia are taken from the interview realized in Lisbon on 04/11/15.
50 Quotations of Marques are taken from the interview realized at her place, Carmões, Portugal (05/10/15). Translations are mine.
51 Quotations of GraÇa are taken from the interviews realized at her Center in Loures (15/10/15, 09/11/15). Translations are mine.
Dying, and Beyond and Shamanic advanced healing practice. Many of them were under the direct guidance of the European director Paul Uccusic (https://www.shamanism.eu/faculty/paul-uccusic 13/11/18). According to APio and other advanced practitioners of the FSS, the training was most useful as a way to acquire a ‘structured method’ and develop self-awareness, since the apprenticeship provided a deeper understanding of the healing techniques previously learned by imitation and embodied through daily repetition.

An effective anthropotechnical exercise used in FSS advanced workshops, according to APio, is the recording and re-listening of individual’s shamanic practices with the teacher and the group of apprentices. The trainees undertake shamanic journey and at the same time report it to the group and the master. The recorded account is then re-listened and commented collectively to arrive at an interpretation of the information obtained through shamanic journey. The anthropotechnical repetition of the practice, ‘with a certain persistence’, helped APio to assume the habit of ‘creating the conditions for attention’ and develop self-awareness. As highlighted in the first section of this Chapter, technologies of self-fashioning, whatever their aim, highly contribute to acquire self-awareness and self-control, that is, the required competences to operate a change on themselves.

A particularly useful workshop for APio has been the Soul retrieval training for therapists by Ingerman. APio reported to have understood how to heal through the concept of irradiation:

Com ela [Ingerman] tenho trabalhado a irradiação, o princípio de irradiar energia de cura, o que depois a energia de cura vai fazer não sei e não quero saber, eu tenho que irradiar. O foco do workshop foi este, o ensinamento dela nesse retiro, não tanto o resgate da alma, que é o que eu faço quando toco o tambor. Eles pensam que eu estou a ir buscar a alma, a resgatar a alma, eu só estou a irradiar energia de cura que sai de mim e vai fazer o que tem de ser feito. Não vou buscar e identificar o pedacinho da alma… soltar energias de cura, criar este campo de irradiação, expansão… e tentar que o paciente esteja num estado de receitividade, que use metáforas, que use visualizações para receber essas energias de cura e depois, fazemos a viagem xamãônica para encontrar estas próprias metáforas; como uma terra seca que recebe água… e utilizas a abordagem da viagem xamãônica, ao som do tambor, para encontrar a imagem que os espíritos te enviam, a mais adequada para visualizar e propiciar esse estado energético de receitividade. [With her [Ingerman] I have worked irradiation, the principle of radiate healing energy, I do not know how healing energy works and I do not want to know it, I have to radiate. The focus of the workshop, her teaching at this retreat, was this rather than Soul Retrieval, and this is what I do when I play the drum. They [patients] think I am going to rescue the soul, but I am just radiating healing energy that comes out from me and does what has to be done. I will not seek and identify the small part of the soul… I release healing energies and create this field of irradiation and expansion… and I try to drain the patient into a state of receptivity, by using metaphors and visualizations to receive healing energies, and then, we undertake the shamanic journey to find the metaphors; it is like a dry land that receives water... and you would use the shamanic journey approach with the drum to find
the most adequate image that the spirits send you to visualize and facilitate this energetic state of receptivity. (Interview Lisbon 24/02/17)

Soul retrieval is taught and developed in many versions as a healing practice. FSS Soul retrieval techniques are aimed to recover lost pieces of soul in order to re-integrate them through a specific shamanic journey. Ingerman extended Harner’s method and encouraged the personalization of the healing processes with her apprentices. If Ingerman emphasized the importance of telling a healing story to the patient (Ingerman 1997), APio further developed this method by pointing out the role of metaphor in order to perform the healing. In his perspective shamanic Soul Retrieval is essentially a quest for the metaphors that would be ‘more appropriate’ to the patient:

A própria palavra pode ser muito rica, puxar-te da visão, a verbalização do que estás a ver dá alguma solidez à visão, estamos a materializa-lo, não através do desenho, não através da escultura, mas através da palavra, é como o pensamento ou a escrita… muito do trabalho espiritual, para trazê-lo para o dia a dia, ou pô-lo em prática, tens que materializá-lo, e temos dificuldade em entender ou perceber o que quer dizer ou como lidamos com aquilo. [Word itself can be very rich, can pull you into the vision, the verbalization of what you see gives some solidity to the vision, we are materializing it not through the drawing, nor through the sculpture, but through the word, it is like thinking or writing… you have to materialize the spiritual work to bring it into everyday life, or put it into practice, and we have difficulty understanding what it means or how to deal with it.]

(Interview Lisbon 24/02/17)

Once more, language has a crucial role here in giving solidity to the visions. According to APio, it is important to recover the power of the word restoring the magic role of spells and prayers.52

Practitioners however, often share an ambivalent stance towards language. On the one hand it is negative, as an expression of a mental and abstract disposition, and on the other hand it is positive, as a means of magic and a way of materializing spiritual work.53 In other words, the mental and linguistic devices that practitioners want to disembodify are the necessary means to realize this disembodiment. This denegation is extended when the practice, as if often the case, leads to an emphasis on mental and linguistic competences; training results in an enhancement of mental and linguistic devices rather than an emancipation from them. This effect is quite apparent since a social practice in the field is to talk extensively, both to interpret and conceptualize shamanic experiences as rooted in body,

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52 Language has a crucial role also in shamanic anthropotechnic based on psychotropics, for instance through shamanic songs (Cfr. next section Quantum leaps on the highway of the soul).

53 As Teisenhoffer (2018) points out for New Age versions of Umbanda rituals, sharing is not only an exegetical exercise but also a ritual device that characterizes the practice.
perception, ground, materiality. The denegation is further enhanced because the aim of the connection with the material body is to reach the immaterial, invisible, realities in which the ‘authentic’ self can be found.

A life-saver exercise

An exemplar realization of the above mentioned denegation is illustrated well in an exercise proposed by Sandra Ingerman, who is recognized in the field as a spiritual leader, a shamanic therapist and an excellent teacher. Ingerman has been one of the most successful disciples of Harner and a successful FSS trainer in US and Europe. After ‘many divergences’\(^5\) she founded her own method, basically a freelance version more oriented toward psychotherapy and more flexible in the organization. Ingerman has been a trail blazer of digital shamanic resources, strongly improving the technological supports used by the FSS through CD audio-courses, online training and so on (Cfr. Chapter Four). In 2012 she claimed to have trained about 10,000 people in the Western world.\(^5\) Ingerman’s online training has been very useful because it gave me the opportunity to analyzing the work of systematization that a formal teaching requires.

The first easy and quick exercise “Expanding our senses”, in the Soul retrieval audio-course (Ingerman 1997: track 2) is quite literally a process of self-fashioning in order to embody the shamanic epistemology of ‘feeling’ the truth and disemboby the cultural ‘western’ program. With a persuasive and calm voice, Ingerman invites the practitioner to close the eyes and concentrate to something he loves by repeating “I love” while observing the feelings in the body, the images, sounds, smells, “when you are hearing an absolute truth”. After, the practitioner is invited to open the eyes for some minutes and have a walk before sitting down again with eyes closed for the next excercise. In the second task the practitioner returns to the beloved thing, but this time he has to say “I hate” while observing what feelings and perceptions come “when you tell yourself a lie”. The aim of this exercise is to train practitioners to be able to distinguish ‘truth’ from ‘lie’ by perceiving inner feelings and associating them to the two different stances of lying and truth. Ingerman suggests to repeat associating the feelings to visual images, for instance a green light (truth) and a red flag (lie). She explains she perceives these images in her solar plexus when she is hearing an absolute truth or a lie. This exercise has been a “life-saver” for Ingerman in order to understand when

\(^5\) In the mentioned interview, Marques, recounted many divergences between the FSS and Ingerman.
\(^5\) Experiencing the Shamanic Journey, introduction to the homonym online course, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQYvFvmkvU, Sound True Channel, 7’04” (04/04/18).
the “logical mind is sabotaging the deeper intuitive experiences that have been so important 
for my life” (idem).

Practitioners in Ingerman’s course are invited to activate a sort of inner traffic light to 
recognize truth by embodying the epistemology I feel that it is so through imitation and daily 
exercises. The exercise helps practitioners to self-fashion themselves by unlearning to use the 
rational mind and to embody the shamanic epistemology in order to reach the absolute 
truth of individual feelings. But, as Ingerman warns, mind is difficult to mute, therefore 
practitioners have to learn to “trick” it by not directly opposing doubts and thoughts that 
otherwise will be endless and concentrating rather on feelings.56

This exercise exemplifies the denegation pointed out in Chapter One thanks to which 
rationality can be used as a means to get rid of itself. This denegation is even more apparent in 
this easy and fast ‘recipe’.

2. 4. Quantum leaps on the highway of the soul

According to the frame of ‘universal shamanism’ every path and technique is worthy and 
everyone has to find his way. For some practitioners, as we have seen, the shamanic journey is 
effective, but slow, compared to other ways, like the more and more popular ayahuasca. Many 
practitioners who have tried both techniques and preferred ayahuasca affirm that the plant 
renders the shamanic state of consciousness in a stronger and quicker way. Practitioners who 
have not tried ayahuasca or did not like it were often afraid of the strong effects and opted for 
safer ways. Some, especially people over 50, were disgusted by the side effects (including 
vomit and diarrhea), including AvA who was clear she would not rent her ceremonial place to 
people ‘vomiting all night’. She wondered how people could enjoy it and find in it a spiritual 
means. Others are repelled from ayahuasca because of the associated hippie/psychedelic 
models and tend to frame it as a ‘drug’. Maria da Conceição Marques raised doubts about the 
use of tropical plants in European contexts, since the plants are from another culture and bring 
other spirits that are ‘extraneous’ to ‘us’. For similar reasons, other practitioners consider the 
de-contextualized use of ayahuasca as inauthentic and potentially unsafe.

The Portuguese shamans I met who use ayahuasca are obviously enthusiastic of the 
beneficial effects, for instance Geraldine who wrote three books about her experience by

56 At the Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies Horwitz’s also encouraged training to “switch off the 
analytical mind” (Lindquist 1997: 74).
calling ayahuasca one of these highways of the Soul [“uma dessas auto-estradas para a Alma” Correia 2008: 119). MaLva also emphasized the speediness of the plant practice that may provoke ‘quantum leaps’ in one’s life. Ayahuasca metaphors often highlight the rapid effectiveness and the technological function of the plant whose sacred naturalness is many times associated with a techno/fantasy imaginary as well as other so called new age spiritual practices (Aupers and Houtman 2010: 15; Nixon Alan and Adam Possamai. 2014; Deane-Drummond, Bergmann and Szenszynski eds. 2015; Lazzarini 2017; Cfr. Pict. 2.14.).

In order to advance through ‘quantum leaps’ on the ‘highway to the soul’, practitioners have to learn how to use the plant and interpret the practice as a self-healing fashioning. The progressive steps from beginner to advanced practitioners are traced in the following section.

. *Como um astronauta no espaço*

The extraordinary hallucinogenic strength of ayahuasca was already noticed in the 60s by the beatnik poet William Burroughs who largely contributed to enhancing the weird charm of the brew (Cfr. Chapter Four). According to Burroughs, an expert on psychedelics, ayahuasca visions are very vivid, powerful and dreamlike “as an earth-shaking metaphysical experience”. In *The Yage Letters* (1963) he describes:

> Yage is space time travel. The blood and substance of many races, Negro, Polynesian, Mountain Mongol, Desert Nomad, Polyglot Near east, Indian—new races as yet unconceived and unborn, combinations not yet realized pass through your body. Migrations, incredible journeys through deserts and jungles and mountains... A place where the unknown past and the emergent future meet in a vibrating soundless hum. (Burroughs 1963 quoted in Znamenski, 2007:154)

As I have experienced and all practitioners confirm, ayahuasca visions are very impressive. The amazing space-time travel into the unknown, however, is not always a pleasant experience. On the contrary, it can be quite frightening. Harner’s personal account of an ayahuasca ceremony with the Conibo in Peru in 1960 describes where he asked for an antidote to help him to bear the terrifying visions of dragons attacking him (Harner 1980: 2-7). At the time of Burroughs’ and Harner’s travels, ayahuasca experiences were actually a journey in unknown regions since the effects of the plant were not popularized as they are today.

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57 Since disturbing or uncontrolled reactions are not rare, some Spanish shamans may give tranquillizers when clients have a psychic outbreak [brote psicótico] in order to ‘close’ the destructing process engendered by the plant (López-Pavillard 2015: 237).

Pict. 2.14. I: Painting of a Peruvian shaman depicting a shaman’s attack with dazzling and narcotic rays; Vitebsky 1998: 75

Even though an ayahuasca ceremony can be more easily found in urban contexts nowadays, losing the adventurous part of the journey to Amazon, the urban practice still has a certain mystery. Especially for those who consider shamanic journey too slow and safe, riskiness is a charming feature of the experience. Ayahuasca is often presented as powerful but dangerous by shamans who warn of the necessity for special protection. In the first ceremony I participated during fieldwork, MaLva enhanced the riskiness of the uncontrollable experience (unpredictable visionary effects and side effects like vomiting and diarrhea), and at the same time reassured participants of her protective role in the safety of travelers.\textsuperscript{58}

Shamans and ayahusqueros very often protect and guide the ceremony by icaros singing, that is ‘sacred songs’, through which the plant according to Geraldine teaches humans [“des chants sacrés que les plantes maîtresses elles-mêmes ont enseignés aux hommes” Correia 2016: 24]. Another way of protecting the ceremony is the opening and closing of the sacred space which is commonly pursued through Palo Santo fumigations and flower water benedictions as well as through the intention.\textsuperscript{59}

According to MaLva, intention is the basis of the shamanic work and is one of the main task of the shaman. Intention is meant as the power of the will to conduct a ceremony and is a quite recurrent topic in other shamanic practices as well. The shaman usually transfers the intention through blowing on the brew and chants while preparing the ayahuasca and, within the ceremony, by leading the session.\textsuperscript{60} Practitioners as well are asked to express a personal intention that will guide their psychedelic journey. Like Line’s guidelines for the shamanic journey, here the intention sets the mission and icaros provides a guiding track which helps to control the out-of-control ayahuasca experience.

Many assiduous participants of MaLva’ ceremonies assured me that she is very good at protecting. According to AlDo and RiCo, the closing of the ceremony is very important and when it is well performed the ‘energy’ of the ceremony changes.\textsuperscript{61} RiCo contrasted his experience with other shamans with whom he had had unpleasant side-effects.\textsuperscript{62} In fact

\textsuperscript{58} Like other shamans, MaLva requested we sign a declaration which detailed understanding the effects of the plant and the absence of illness such as heart problems, epilepsy, schizophrenia and other psychic troubles. The protection from danger may enhance the perception of the risk engendering the necessity of further protection (Cfr. Chapter Four).

\textsuperscript{59} The tropical Palo Santo tree is often used to render sacred and clean spaces, people and rituals.

\textsuperscript{60} The control that a shaman can have on a ceremony is expressed to different degrees, from an ‘influence’ through to on the effect to a ‘determination’ of it.

\textsuperscript{61} MaLva ‘closes’ the ceremony with a blessing for each participant with fumigation and flower water.

\textsuperscript{62} Other practitioners report shamans who do not work well in protecting and cause bad trips in travelers. Some shamans complain about other shamans since they left the shared place for ceremonies ‘dirty.’ The first time I heard this discourse from CaRa, I did not grasp the meaning and I asked what she intended with dirty. CaRa explained that she meant ‘dirty’ of ‘bad energies’ and laughed about my misunderstanding. In many cases my ignorance of the shamanic idiom caused hilarity and enabled me to ask for more detailed explanation.
practitioners often report hard situations with people screaming, crying, yelling that are generally attributed to the inability of the shaman to protect the space. The visual anthropologist and occasional ayahuasca practitioner Meirinhos eloquently expressed the main role of the shaman as protector through a visual metaphor:

É como explorar o espaço, como um astronauta que sai para o espaço, tu sais com um fato completo e sais com uma linha, uma linha de oxigénio e estás no espaço, o xamã é aquela linha, o xamã é aquela corda, tu estás a explorar aquele espaço com o teu fato e depois o xamã puxa-te de volta para a nave espacial, depois quando tu voltas à nave espacial, a tua melhor tendência é, tipo, abraçar quem te puxou: “tu és fantástico, tu salvaste-me a vida!”

[It is like exploring space, like an astronaut going out into space, you come out with a complete suit and a line, an oxygen line, the shaman is that line, the shaman is that rope, you are exploring that space with your suit and then the shaman pulls you back to the spaceship, when you go back to it, your strong tendency is to hug whoever pulled you: “you are fantastic, you saved my life!”]

Again safety is crucial; everyone can undertake shamanic exploration, but not alone and without equipment. Protection and a guide are necessary for the ‘astronaut’ who enters the unknown. The metaphor of navigating in the unexplored space is very recurrent among shamanists as well as in their reference to films, for instance the popular science fiction film The Matrix (1999). These associations are not casual according to Meirinhos who found the origin of his interest for shamanic practices in the cartoon imaginary:

Acho que o interesse pelo xamanismo vem dos desenhos animados, tudo o que é entretenimento para crianças é magia, fantasia, deuses, demónios, tudo é tão fantástico, isto está incluído na nossa génese desde putos, não apenas na nossa génese de paganismo europeu ou de qualquer tipo de mensagem epigenética que o nosso DNA possa passar, mas vem da nossa cultura, nos temos atração pelo desconhecido, pelo mágico, por guerras de estrelas, é tudo à volta disso. [I think the interest in shamanism comes from cartoons, all entertainment for children is magic, fantasy, gods and demons, everything is so fantastic, this is in our genesis since childhood, not only in our genesis of European paganism or in any kind of epigenetic message of our DNA, but it comes from our culture, we have attraction for the unknown, the magic, the wars of stars, it's all around this.]

Cartoons created the expectation of magic and space odyssey that practitioners found realized in ayahuasca visions whose imaginary is in turn influenced by cartoon fantasy. For the cartoon-native generation of practitioners like Meirinhos certainly the images associated with ayahuasca have a familiarity as well as the energetic wars between shamans that have evolved from the invisible sorcerer attacks from Castenda’s books to more recent pop-psychedelic imaginary of shaman wars with dazzling and narcotic rays (Cfr. Pict. 2.14. in previous section

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63 The quotes from Meirinhos are taken from the interview in Lisbon on 01/05/17.
Quantum leaps on the highway of the soul). The acid colors and surrealistic images of ayahuasca dreamscapes are also influenced by LP covers, cartoons, Video Games, and techno-music imaginary associated with Trance Dance, LSD, Ecstasy and other psychedelics (Cfr. Pict. 2.15.).

... A new world restarting

For experienced psychonauts ayahuasca visions can help to see things differently and give self-improving suggestions. The advanced Italian practitioner OmSa said the plant gives ‘a shock’ by showing you what you have to work on.⁶⁴ For the Brazilian MiguEl who participated in intensive ayahuasca retreats in Portugal the plant allows you to step out of ‘ordinary reality’ and therefore to be able to ‘do work’ on yourself.⁶⁵ For many it is like experiencing a ‘re-birth’, as the Turkish advanced practitioner ElSi told me:

Each time I do this work it’s like a new world starting, everything is possible and the first time I was feeling like a baby, after vomiting I was a baby in my mother’s womb, new baby, new born, re-birth. I felt that there is something really wrong that I have to change in my life, the first time was very important, and I went out, with MaLva, she took me out and it was daytime, not nighttime as usual, it was very special, with orange trees, the air fresh, nice wind and not so cold, I felt I’m in wonderland. I felt like aaaaah (sighing)… this place is amazing, and I started to cry and cry and I said: “I’m so fed up in cities! Nature is my place, I have to live in nature”. MaLva was saying something like “come back to your source. Believe in your intention and start to change inside”. I don’t remember all, but we talk and I was so released… because I was really lost… I’ve found my self in a lot of masks and I didn’t realize how much I lie to myself about life, it was really… depends on others! Not my life! (Interview 21/11/16 Florence)

The new world restarting opens again all the possibilities as a form of secession through a reset of previous unaware lifestyles and social masks. Many shamanists said this reset allows a return to the true self and a recovery of the lost relationship with nature. According to the shamanic denegation set, ayahuasca is recognized as a reliable source of truth since it is natural and is used by indigenous Amazonians. The revelation of the vivid and impressive dreamlike images reveal truth/true self allowing to do work on oneself through the intervention of the other/shaman.

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⁶⁴ These quotations from OmSa are taken from the interviews in Casole d’Elsa on 17-18/12/16.
⁶⁵ Quotations from MiguEl are taken from the interview in Lisbon on 26/11/15.
Pict. 2.15. F: https://www.thekindland.com/culture/when-walt-disney-marketed-to-acid-heads-1577
(12/10/19)

Pict. 2.15. I: Fanta advertising; https://www.pinterest.com/pin/616571005213484720/?nic=1 (12/10/19)

Pict. 2.15. J: Video Game Pinball; https://www.groovypost.com/howto/windows-7-3d-pinball-space-cadet-game (12/10/19)


Pict. 2.15. M: Techno video music; https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/747667975612504104/ (13/10/19)
In the interview, Meirinhos described a British dealer working and living in Iquitos, Peru, who for 20 years experienced ayahuasca with many local shamans. He said there is a sort of *pavlovian relationship* between practitioners and shaman, because as an ayahuasca psychonaut “you have such amazing experiences and that amazing spirit shows you so much about who you are, what is going on, what you should or should not do, then you may attribute that to the guy in the room who has the little rattle” (Meirinhos 2014: 1:03’). Here, please note, the recognition and reliability of ayahuasca as a source of truth is often produced through a self-referential circular process; the visions show the truth that confirms the existence of invisible/other realities whose apparition in turn substantiates the revealing effect of ayahuasca.

The link between ayahuasca and truth is not, however, shared by everyone. Taussig (1987) writing about his research in Colombia reports a conversation between the shaman Hilberto and his assistant Florencio. Hilberto warns that “yage is a great liar” by commenting on the ayahuasca ‘false’ visions of Florencio (Taussig 1987: 457). Those who attribute certainty to the truth of ayahuasca conceal the possibility that the plant can also be a vehicle for lies and falsity. This is a form of protection of what is deemed as a beneficial source; it is a protection that some practitioners enact in order to defend their anthropotechnical process. Doubts about the truth of ayahuasca visions on the other hand, do not necessarily discount certainty about their healing ability. When Hilberto expresses doubts about the truth of ayahuasca visions for example, he is sure that the plant *can* have an healing effect (idem). The reference to a *possibility*, and not a certainty, illustrates how therapeutic action is not certain and not easy to control, also for a shaman. Diffusion of tamed versions of shamanic practice has often led to unify, clean and secure it by dropping overt aspects of ambiguity, dirtiness and riskiness. Taussig reports, as Meirinhos mentioned in his interviews, local shamans in Peru seem to have far more contradictory and hard lives than the idealized models of good, wise shamans.

...*Ayahuasca medicina*

Among my contacts ayahuasca is often called *medicine* as in title of the book *Ayahuasca medicine* (2014) by Alan Shoemaker, a North-American representative for mountaineering companies who after a long shamanic training opened a travel agency in Peru for spiritual tourists, founded the ayahuasca church *Soga del alma* in 2001 and organized the first annual *Amazonian Shaman Conference* in 2004. Many people say that ayahuasca works ‘like a
surgeon’, ‘goes where you need’ and ‘is always beneficial’ as it cleans and heals, optimizes and integrates fragments, helps to overcome traumas and fears or ‘dissolve’ psychological blocks and resistance.

Many shamanists use therapeutic idiom and often refer to the ayahuasca ceremony as work with the intention to differentiate it from the more recreational uses of psychedelics.\(^{66}\) Once when I was commenting about an ayahuasca effect after a session in the DIY G group of advanced practitioners in Florence\(^{67}\) by using the words ‘I like’, BEtte immediately corrected me by pointing out that one does not have to ‘like’ it since it is ‘work’. Many practitioners also claim ‘ayahuasca is always right’, so even when one is feeling bad, the effect is lived as positive, as something that one has to clean from or to release.\(^{68}\) Vomiting in particular is often interpreted as a sign of purification and liberation of toxins or bad influences, so is usually perceived as the effect of a profound healing and disembodiment. As mentioned in Chapter One, the disgusting taste of ayahuasca provokes nausea in many practitioners at only glimpsing the glass.\(^{69}\) Disgust, nausea and vomit are therefore, an important part of the healing process. ArPo explained to me that vomit in the ceremony does not have the same effect of vomiting from a disease since, in the first case, one feels cleaned not only physically. Many practitioners I spoke to strongly agreed with this distinction. Cleansing by ayahuasca is framed as a sort of repair from the effects of living in a contaminating context with continually exposure to different kind of toxins that make us ‘sick’. ArPo also mentioned people who are ‘cleaned’ do not vomit during the ceremony. Then if someone is vomiting in the ceremony, this is interpreted as necessary purification that the plant is performing. According to shamanic purposes, vomiting during a ceremony is a way of disembodying what is considered bad, wrong, sickening.

The strong and unpredictable impact of ayahuasca on the body for many practitioners is a proof that the change is deep and radical because the effect is not only mental. Ayahuasca is thought to be a remedy also for traumas or unresolved hidden problems from childhood. The advanced German practitioner BEtte who has lived in Italy for 20 years working as a

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\(^{66}\) Most of shamanists do not use the word “drug” for ayahuasca with very few exceptions. In some healing centers in Peru ayahuasca is used as a means to treat drug addiction. Takiwasi Center directed by the French doctor Jacques Mabit promotes an international research program on the topic (https://www.takiwasi.com/21/01/19). The spiritual and therapeutic frame is also a way of de-de-legitimizing the use of substances that are illegal in many countries (Cfr. Labate and Cavnar 2014).

\(^{67}\) For a contextualization and focus on the group Cfr. Chapter Four.

\(^{68}\) According to López-Pavillard’s ethnography anything that happens within the ‘work’ of ayahuasca ceremonies is considered ‘right’ by the shamans (“para los chamanes, cualquier cosa que sucede dentro de un ‘trabajo’, es ‘lo correcto’” López-Pavillard 2015: 307). The smell and taste of ayahuasca are known as very pungent and unpleasant. It is quite common that practitioners throw down the infusion as quickly as possible and immediately after drink a glass of water or eat something sweet.

\(^{69}\) The strong and unpredictable impact of ayahuasca on the body for many practitioners is a proof that the change is deep and radical because the effect is not only mental. Ayahuasca is thought to be a remedy also for traumas or unresolved hidden problems from childhood.
video editor recounted how deep change is possible precisely because the plant moves something in the body. Since psychotherapy and Sufism did not work to solve her childhood trauma, when BEtte heard about ayahuasca vomiting effect, she thought that this could be good for her:

L’ayahuasca mi ha risolto, la prima volta ho avuto visioni su quegli episodi di violenze, visioni terribili, e ho sentito di aver risolto del tutto, di avere tolto queste memorie dalle cellule... in un fine settimana ha fatto più che in anni, è stato un lavoro rapido e efficace, ha visto una luce bianca in testa e da lì si è aperto tutto, nei testi sacri la luce bianca è caratteristica dei viaggi mistici, l’ayahuasca ti apre tutta la testa e indica la calotta cranica superiore... tante cose le ho capite dopo. [Ayahuasca solved me, the first time I had visions of episodes of violence, terrible visions, and I felt to have completely resolved and removed those memories from the cells... in one weekend it did more than in years, it was a quick and effective job, I saw a white light on my head and from there all opened, in sacred texts the white light is characteristic of mystical journeys, ayahuasca opens the whole head and indicates the upper skullcap... I understood so many things after.]

BEtte’s experience confirms ayahuasca as a quick and effective medicine that can produce a healing effect on cellular memory. Many practitioners like BEtte came to understand the effects over time and with repetition of the practice. The training requires an understanding of how the physical effect of ayahuasca is deeply intertwined with the visions that show where and how the plant is working to operate the aspired change and healing.

If through ayahuasca one can have impressive and significant insights, afterwards one has to work in order to maintain the renewing effect, otherwise one easily falls back to previous familiar habits. Moreover living in a contaminating context requires the continuous action, becoming a regular practice, of cleaning and disembodying.

. . . . *Um treino regular*

Training is necessary to assume ayahuasca as a technology of care of the self. Using almost the same words of ALia for the drum circle, MaLva explained that regular training and durable work on the self brings more effective long-term results:

É a mesma coisa que fazer exercícios: se tu treinas de vez em quando, talvez, vás sentir dor quando voltas aos exercícios e desenvolves muito menos a prática; se fizeres um treino regular, tonificas os músculos, avanças mais. Os efeitos são diferentes, sentes mais benefícios, e podes puxar os teus limites. É a mesma coisa com a ayahuasca, só que é um exercício espiritual. O ritmo cada um sente o seu, pode ser uma vez por semana, uma vez por mês ou mais. [It is like doing exercises: if you train from time to time, maybe you will feel pain when you come back to the exercises and you develop much less practice; if

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70 Quotations from BEtte are taken from the interview in Florence on 18/01/16.
you do a regular training, you tone the muscles and advance more. The effects are different, you feel more benefits, and you can pull your limits. It is the same with ayahuasca, except that it is a spiritual exercise. Each one feels his own rhythm, it can be once a week, once a month or more. [Interview 29/10/15 Lisbon]

When talking with experienced shamans who have been using ayahuasca for many years, the question of control emerges as crucial. If at the beginning, most practitioners are mainly looking for extra-ordinary experiences, after years of practice the advanced ones are more concerned on controlling the ayahuasca effect; for instance, SaL, an Italian psychologist who trained with Shipibo ayahuasqueros and promoted ‘sustainable’ ayahuasca shamanic retreats in Peru. Through the repeated and adventurous experiences, he learned above all to resist and keep control of the plant, by remaining partly aware of the ongoing visionary processes and of the situation around him, or by controlling dizziness, nausea, vomit and other unpleasant physical effects. As Saldanha observed in his fieldwork with Goa trancers, one of the achievements of advanced practitioners is “socio-chemical monitoring” and mastery of the upsetting situation that becomes a trained competence that differentiate experts from beginners (Saldanha 2007: 164).

Similarly, Portuguese AlDo emphasized the importance of self-control. AlDo grew up in the Netherlands where he trained as a computer technician but decided to return to Portugal with his Portuguese mother, a dancer, teacher of yoga and holistic therapist. His mother started to participate in MaLva’s ceremonies in the Algarve and convinced AlDo to do it to open and solve his traumas, as he suffered many diseases and operations in childhood and remained ‘closed’ or ‘semi-autistic’.71 After two years of intense practice of about two-three ayahuasca sessions per month, through painful and hard ceremonies that moved hidden traumas and blocked energies, he learned to wait and rest during the ceremony. At the beginning he wanted the strongest effect immediately, nowadays he takes the infusion and patiently waits for the long-term effects. According to AlDo, understanding of the overall experience requires a certain amount of time and one has to learn to wait. AlDo focused in particular on how he learned to use ayahuasca in order to take care of himself and acquire self-control [“aprendi a tomar conta de mim, a controlar-me, e se aprendes a controlares-te na cerimônia, podes fazê-lo em qualquer situação da vida”]. The aim of ayahuasca as a technology of the self is therefore to gain control over the effects in ceremony and in so doing, take control over one’s own life.

71 CaRa told me this pointing out the success of ayahuasca in AlDo’s case (Interview 16/02/18, Lisbon).
Advanced practitioners also said that after some time of ayahuasca practice there is a sort of intensification of the effect, so a smaller dose is enough to do the healing work. For instance in the DIY G. group, the experienced practitioners decided to experiment with ayahuasca at low doses creating a quieter effect by avoiding some of the stronger side effects. Habituation to ayahuasca to the point of being able to perceive the effect at low doses was also a training undertaken by Brazilian MiguEl and LauRel who after about two years of intense practice became Geraldine’s assistants.\footnote{Quotations from LauRel are taken from the interview in Lisbon on 29/10/15.}

MiguEl’s life story well illustrates the change in perspective the practitioner undergoes in his transition from beginner to advanced. MiguEl became interested in shamanic practices as a way to develop creativity but the first ceremony was quite disappointing because he did not have many visions and even got bored, thinking to leave in the middle of the session.\footnote{As López-Pavillard notes, with participants in ayahuasca ceremonies in Spain who felt deceived, the most common complaint is that the effect is too soft. Shamans interpreted low or absent effect both as a consequence of high expectations and attempts to control it by inexpert practitioners. Experts confirm that training is necessary in order to understand and benefit from the experience (López-Pavillard 2015: 347).} At the time he was working at his doctoral thesis in cinema about the Portuguese director Pedro Costa and was editing a documentary about the writer Maria Gabriela Llansol. It was only after about a month, when he finished editing the film, that he came to ‘understand’ that ayahuasca influenced his creative process and therefore decided to ‘deepen this path’. As AlDo pointed out: one has to learn to wait.

If the changes on MiguEl’s life were not obviously radical, he felt very different ‘inside’. By what he told me, however, the changes in his life were relevant, for instance, he lost interest in his thesis and the raw urban realism of Costa as “shamanism is a very engaging path and somehow it also disrupted my thesis”. Progressively, he also stopped going out and drinking alcohol with friends by reducing his social life to focus more on shamanism. He decided to change professional career, passing from cinema to massage therapy, guided by ayahuasca visions: ‘the plant taught me the will to enroll in a massage course and made me change my profession’ [“a planta ensinou-me a querer fazer um curso de massagens e me fiz mudar de profissão”]. He expressed the idea that the plant teaches him the will by orienting his process of self-fashioning according to shamanic epistemology. He attributed to plants, like ayahuasca, a life guiding role which ‘knows’ and ‘teaches’. In fact, after a one year course in tuina and ayurvedic massage, he started to work as masseur and enrolled in a five-year course at a school of Chinese Traditional Medicine in Lisbon. Even if MiguEl did not undertake radical secession, what he reported deeply changed his life during these two years of intense training.
In this time, MiguEl and LauRel participated once a month in ayahuasca ceremonies and preparatory tobacco purges called *vomitivo*, that LauRel defined as ‘a cleaning technology’. In *vomitivo*, practitioners drink two liters of a hot infusion of water and tobacco that induces vomiting for a couple of hours and ‘liberation from deeper things’ in order to be as clean as possible during the ayahuasca ceremony. Following Geraldine suggestions, they participated in three advanced retreats called *dietas* where practitioners work on a specific plant for two weeks by following a very restrictive diet,\(^74\) staying in silence and isolation and taking infusions of the same plant every day in order to concentrate on the effects. According to MiguEl the *dietas* are ‘processes of transformation’ and training of ‘self-sensitivity’ [“um trabalho de autosensibilidade”]. For instance, the restriction and shortage taught him to recognize the effect of each plant. The absence of salt during the retreat enabled him to perceive the previously unnoticed effect of the salt. After the *dieta*, Geraldine recommends practitioners follow a restrictive food regime for a month by avoiding at least in the first two weeks even fruit. MiguEl reported after one month of the diet, when he finally ate a banana it was a delight since the perception of sweetness was enhanced. With ayahuasca he worked on self-sensitivity so that after two years of experience, the smell of the infusion activated an effect. For LauRel the ayahuasca effect comes even before taking the infusion as in the ceremony one assumes a specific ‘body posture’ that activates the physical memory of previous experiences. If in the first ceremonies they could only lay down on the floor without moving, through a progressive training of self-sensitivity they became able to sit down and even to stand up and help people when they perform as assistants by taking a low dose. As other practitioners reported, training through repeated ceremonies results in an embodiment that prepares and disposes the practitioner to further practice.

Overtime LauRel and MiguEl became able to distinguish the impact of the plants that they experimented with in the *dietas*. Each plant is specialized in an *operation* and they learned to manage the effect during ayahuasca ceremonies through the help of the *icaros*. Shamanic songs are an anthropotechnic means to guide practitioners in their journey and remember the aim of the healing practice to embody the shamanic paraskeuē. The Portuguese holistic and shamanic therapist MagDa for instance explained that the songs guided her first ceremony in very poignant way since she felt she realized all the words of the songs.\(^75\) LauRel and MiguEl also referred to the songs as means to remember and activate the healing powers of the plants; when you know the effect of each plant just hearing the name in the songs has

\(^{74}\) The diet is usually based on the absence or drastic reduction of salt, sugar, meat and alcohol. Sexual abstinence is suggested as well.

\(^{75}\) Quotations from MagDa are taken from the interview in Lisbon on 07/12/17.
an healing effect. Their master Geraldine in fact pays particular attention on *icaros* learned from the Shibipo and ‘received’ during ceremonies. Before conducting a ceremony, Geraldine has a personal interview with each participant who is invited to express an *intention* during the ayahuasca session. In a certain moment of the ceremony Geraldine usually performs individualized *icaros* for each practitioner and in so doing focuses the ayahuasca journey on the expressed *intention* of each individual.

The songs realize what Sloterdijk calls *movebo effect* anticipating the goal of the practice (Sloterdijk 2009: 246). The advanced practitioner LiBu of the DIY *G group*, that meets every two weeks to train a collection of shamanic songs in order to improve the performance during ayahuasca ceremony, let me think about the *movebo effect*. I in an interview he made reference to the song *Estou aprendendo a me curar* [‘I’m learning to heal my self’] in order to explain me that when they sing they are effectively learning to heal themselves:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Estou aprendendo</em></th>
<th><em>I am learning</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Estou aprendendo a mi curar (2x)</em></td>
<td>I’m learning to heal myself (2x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Eu peço conforto das águas do mar</em></td>
<td>I ask for comfort to sea waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Eu peço conforto da Mãe lemanjá (2x)</em></td>
<td>I ask for comfort to Mother lemanjá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Estou aprendendo a deixar ilusão (2x)</em></td>
<td>I’m learning to let illusion (2x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Eu peço a clareza nas águas do mar</em></td>
<td>I ask for clarity to the sea waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Eu peço a clareza da Mãe lemanjá (2x)</em></td>
<td>I ask for clarity to Mother lemanjá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Estou aprendendo a mi firmar (2x)</em></td>
<td>I’m learning to be firm (2x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Eu peço a firmeza das águas do mar</em></td>
<td>I ask for firmness to the sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Eu peço a forca da mãe lemanjá (2x)</em></td>
<td>I ask for strength to the mother lemanjá (2x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case as well the anthropotechnical process is quite self-referential since practitioners learn the songs to learn how to heal through the songs. The work of care of the self performed by shamanic songs not only guide, remember and anticipate the practice but is also prescriptive of the same necessity of the therapy. What Foucault pointed out for the Stoics can be extended to contemporary shamanists who similarly act in a *rational* way embodying the shamanic *paraskeuē* through *logos*.  

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76 She emphasized the importance of singing in the original language, devaluing other shamans who use *icaros* of other people and even translate it in Spanish or Portuguese, which in fact is quite usual.

77 To note as the text of the songs is often very simple and repetitive enabling to easy remember and perform it in a short time. As I experienced in the meetings of *G group*, it is easy to learn many shamanic songs in a session, more over the songs are repeated, usually three times, then at the third performance all the group is able to sing them.

78 As Foucault pointed out oral discourses are particularly effective and persuasive technologies of the self since listening is not actively directed as the other senses and is in some way passive (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 334-37). The ethnography of Hirschkind (2006) illustrates how audio-cassettes are used as mnemonic instruments of ethical self-fashioning among Islamic practitioners in Egypt.
Hence, the self-fashioning process is a life-long learning and paraskeuē is never fully embodied. Many practitioners say, the healing path is never ending and self-improvement can always be ameliorated. Masters too, are on an anthropotechnical path of vertical tensions that pull towards a continuous self-improvement. The Portuguese shamanic therapist and teacher CaRa, for instance, considers herself a shamanic guide but not a shaman, because she feels that she has still a lot to learn. In her own words to be a shaman, one has many trials to overcome and it is not easy at all. She gave a simple but significant example of why she is not yet a shaman:

Para ser xamã, tens que superar muitas provas, muitos testes, e é tão fácil cair... por exemplo, uma coisa estúpida, vais no transito e ficas nervosa... isto quer dizer que ainda não és, porque se és não te importa, nem sequer te dás conta. [To be a shaman, you have to overcome many tests and it is so easy to fall... for example, a stupid thing, if you are in transit and you become nervous... this means that you are not yet, because if you are, you do not care or do not even notice it.] (Interview 29/10/16 Florence)

This answer reveals both the discomforts of urban context that annoy CaRa, traffic for instance, and the shamanic remedy as a way of silencing it. CaRa strives to arrive at the condition of not noticing external disturbance through the embodiment of the shamanic paraskeuē, a sort of protective enclosure into the self. Denegation here works as an immunological defense by hiding what is uncomfortable for the subject and what may put at risk the anthropotechnical process of self-fashioning.

### 2.5. A noite escura da alma of APio and MaLva

In shamanic idiom the expression *A noite escura da alma* [the dark night of the soul], makes reference to a moment of great crisis followed by a dark and hard period close to death that often ends with a deep transformation. Many Portuguese shamans told me their stories using this expression to mark a radical change in their life. What follows are the life stories of two Portuguese practitioners who came to be considered shamans through a radical secession leading to a close to death experience and to re-birth with consciousness. These two shamans followed different paths, APio traveled the way of the shaman from the 90s and MaLva on the highway of the soul from the 00s.

79 The expression is used by Christina and Stanislaw Grof (1992) who quote the mystic poem of the 16th Century *La noche oscura del alma* by San Juan de la Cruz; Cfr. Bache 1991.

80 As Chapter Four will clarify, MaLva defines herself as an ‘advanced practitioner of shamanism’, but her clients and trainees calls her ‘shaman’.
APio’s story: *Passar fronteras*

In the extended interviews with APio\(^1\) it was not easy at all to find information about his job, family and social life; he often answered my questions with the words ‘ordinary’ or ‘nothing special’ and few other details. He told me he was born in 1955 by home ‘psycho-prophylactic’ birth, that is without suffering, in a Lisbon apartment. He grew up as the only child and nephew in a family he qualified many times as ‘urban’. APio lived a quiet childhood, studied at a humanistic secondary school and enrolled in literature at university, but left without taking exams. Through indirect references, I learned that his grand-parents came from a peasant background in a small town in the North of Portugal to look for a job in Lisbon. His grandparents and parents worked their whole lives as administrative employees for an ‘anonymous’ big company in Lisbon. During the interview, APio wondered what this information had to do with ‘shamanism’ and preferred to talk instead about his extra-ordinary experiences which, in his opinion, was more significant to my research.\(^2\)

With ironic self-reflexivity he calls himself an *urban shaman* by defining shamanism as ‘a strategy of surviving’ that he tries to adapt to contemporary urban settings. Shamanism for him has been a ‘door of transformation’, a means to ‘change color and way of seeing’ and ‘pass borders’.\(^3\) The first doors of transformation in his life were music, sex and psychedelics, a classical passage of many youngsters at the age of 18-20 in the middle of the 70s, as he himself noted. When I asked what it was like to be in Portugal during revolution of 25th April 1974, he answered he has never been interested in politics but he loved going to political meetings in order to listen to the ‘collective sound by removing the words’. Even if not interested at all in revolutionary discourses, he felt welcomed in the meetings; people found him funny and accepted him as ‘another crazy one’. The psychedelic music of Pink Floyd’s concept LP *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973), dancing at house parties with friends, marijuana smoking and falling in love for the first time were striking experiences that allowed him to ‘break up with the body’, or (my words), to unlearn by disembodying. These experiences brought him to ‘feel as if his feet did not touch the ground’ and to leave himself in ‘the eternity of peace’, beyond space and time, out of the present.

After this transformation he went through a very strong crisis, ‘a call from the chaos’, *a noite escura da alma* that brought him almost to death by provoking his first secession.

\(^1\) The interviews were at the *Espiral* in various sessions from 14/10/16 to 24/02/17.
\(^2\) This stance is shared by the majority of shamanists I interviewed.
\(^3\) The reference here is to Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* (1954); Cfr. Chapter Four.
‘Falling from heaven to hell’, he was invaded by a will to destroy everything, a feeling of coldness, indifference to life and detachment from everything and everyone. During this period he became a vegetarian and ate the macrobiotic diet that he perceived as very beneficial even when he started to lose weight and his appetite. As he told me, during this period he experimented with letting go and turning inertia into a ‘crystallized habit’. He let himself go to the point of weighing only 35kg. For a man about 1.80 meters tall, this must have meant he was skeletal, as I could see in a photo he quite proudly showed me. He was getting worse every day and did not want to be cured in a hospital; the family was very worried but did not know what to do. On the advice of a friend, APio finally accepted to be treated by the Japanese macrobiotic therapist Kazuo Kon. As there was the ‘real risk’ that APio would die, Kazuo took time to decide whether or not to accept the case. In an individualized healing session of about twelve hours, Kazuo basically ‘took care’ of APio by talking, reassuring, massaging and feeding him. Kazuo took the above mentioned photo to remember this extreme day as a limit to not be exceeded.84

In the words of APio this was a ‘re-birthing with consciousness’ that brought an overflowing cheerfulness and joy for life; he danced all the time and fully recovered appetite until he became ‘fat’ and weighed up to 80kg in few months. The secessionist second birth made him feel the master of his life where he willingly and joyfully chose what to do. In this period he started to practice yoga, in order to balance the body exposed to the extreme changes of weight, and participated to theater and dance courses to express his disruptive creativity. He started to read books on ‘oriental’ philosophy and spirituality, ‘it was natural at that time’, in preference to his family’s Catholic religion that had always been insignificant to him. He read the books of Castaneda, ‘an author that marked a generation’, and of Mauro Mercier which introduced him to shamanism. Just as Nietzsche had had a transforming effect when he was at secondary school, these books similarly opened other doors of transformation. Through these anthropotechnical practices APio began the endless work of giving shape to a second self as an active subject carrier of a sequence of exercises with consciousness.

The anthropotechnical turn also brought him in more contact with nature by avoiding abstract discourses. For instance, he stopped participating at esoteric meetings in Sintra with old friends and preferred to go alone for night walks in the woods. He no longer had patience for theories, because ‘discourses lead to confusion and contradiction’, while he found truth in nature by living it rather than reading about it. In nature he ‘received’ strong dreamlike

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84 The case was even presented to Michio Kushi, the Japanese promoter of macrobiotics in the US and Europe, as a successful example of healing. From there, the case story traveled the world through macrobiotic networks, as APio proudly told me.
visions that he had to learn to interpret by himself but also learning to inhibit the visions since there were too many ‘messages’. These experiences were occasional because he also married and had a son. APio did not give importance to events like the job, the marriage, the birth of the son, as if these were insignificant details of his life.

To survive, the vidinha, he started to work as an administrative employee in a big company where he learned for the first time a method that helped him to be structured. In the meantime, for ‘personal development’, the vida, he was training in formally as a yoga teacher and energetic massage therapist by developing a personal method. By himself he learned to interpret the ashes of the brazier, in order to feel his patients’ disease and to heal it by using animal visualizations. For example, he sometimes felt he was ‘transforming’ into a cat or a snake that swallowed the patient's illness and made him feel stronger as if he were nourished by the illness.

While his life consisted of routine habits between job, family, yoga classes and messages treatments, he looked for other ways to stand out. He used to walk, dressed all in white, in disreputable neighborhoods in Lisbon. He would walk among ‘junkies, gamblers and prostitutes’ in order to absorb the ‘negative’ energies of these urban ‘degraded’ places. As for the healing method, he mainly focused on his individual inner experience since in these situations he felt nurtured and healed, while he felt neither compassion nor fear for ‘those people’. His gaze on their gaze of his weirdness among weird people, not nine-to fivers, was a source of distinction and satisfaction that gratified him: ‘I would be an apparition for those people’.

If the first strong secession marked him, the disruptive reaction faded over the years with the acquisition of new routines. A second abrupt secession separated him from his previous lifestyle by producing another anthropotechnical turn that pushed him to leave his job and family at the eve of his 40th birthday. His life was suddenly shocked by a real romance, APio’s ‘askesis’. He met an old friend who had founded a spiritual movement based on the medium ability of his wife GabrieLa. She was at that time suffering from an advanced cancer and APio’s friend asked him for help. APio attempted to heal the medium-woman and immediately fell in love with her. ‘Breaking social models’ he left his wife and son from one day to the next, and went to live with the couple.

85 According to Stuart Hall’s analysis on the ‘flower power’ movement, personalized artistic acts became a stylish way of disaffiliation from middle class values and ways of life. Like APio, many shamans inherited the hippies’ concern for style and artistic happening by acting “like some cast of hired actors perpetually on stage” (Hall 2007 [1968]: 167).
In the new place he experimented with all kind of healing methods in order to release suffering and possibly save Gabriela. He also observed many healers and therapists trying to do the same. He started to play drum to shamanically heal his lover while ‘sailing between suffering and pleasure’ and ‘dancing with death’. The romance ended with the tragic death of the woman, but this suffering allowed him to ‘enter a new life’. He traveled to Santiago de Compostela in Spain with a group of healers, mediums and templars who were friends and devotees of Gabriela in order to perform a post-mortem ritual. On that occasion a healer said to APio, one day he will have people around him, but at the time he did not pay attention to this ‘call’.

After those dramatic experiences, a ‘de-structuring of the habitual ego’ opened him to visions of an *Earth Goddess* and bonded him further to nature and night walks in Sintra woods. He felt an absence of himself, a sort of ‘emotional Alzheimer’ that detached him from the rest and from his “ancient ego”. This dissociation is in some way necessary, according to Foucault, in order to found and give shape to the self through technologies of the self which aim is nothing more than the same self. APio told me this second tragic secession triggered the breakup of deep defenses and habits rooted in himself, as ‘suffering and illness overturn conventions and transfigured’, by opening him to increasingly live ‘as a pilgrim’. Quoting Castaneda’s famous sentence ‘delete the personal story’ [‘apagar a historia pessoal’], he reflected on how all these experiences detached him from his social background which he saw as trivial and unimportant compared to the events of ‘fate’ that changed his life so deeply. In this respect, personal stories appear as irrelevant for many practitioners who give relevance to the much more significant ‘signs’ of the eternal universe. In order to take part in this more authentic and amazing life, one has to ‘delete the personal story’ and enter into universal destiny.

The social acceptance within the restricted group of healers that recognized him as *special* and therefore ‘destined’ to guide people was crucial in order to complete the secession, leave his job and change his life. For some years after this, APio continued spiritual-therapeutic training by participating in Irish shaman Brian Hughes’ workshops. Hughes was the first recognized shaman he met in person. APio called Brian the ‘rage shaman’ since he provoked strong emotional reactions in practitioners by evoking their worst traumas, abuses, fears and sufferings in group settings. Brian also had an extra-ordinary tragic life-story, as murderer and ex-convict, and was considered a master of extra-ordinariness by other people. His recognition of APio as *special* had a greater impact than the recognition

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from fellow practitioners but, it was not enough for APio to begin his path to be a healer and master.

The decisive push came from another social recognition in *Quinta da paciencia*, a charming villa in Sintra where a painter and poet gathered around her a group of esoteric artists and therapists. APio got involved in organizing events at *Quinta da paciencia* and was pushed by the lady to offer night walks for small groups in the woods of Sintra. For APio she had a crucial role as ‘she dignified’ him by recognizing his ability to guide a group. He explained that this unexpected change of group orientated perspective with his walks, was possible because the situation created ‘a field that allowed this to happens’. The *field* supported by the social recognition of the group gave rise to what was inconceivable before, in APio’s words the field produced a ‘magic’ effect.

These experiences and in particular the ‘dignification’, pushed APio to get increasingly involved in the field, founding his own meeting place with a group of friends with heterogeneous training in astrology, Buddhism, meditation and other new age practices. In the rented and very luxurious villa *Quinta dos Lobos* the experience of *Quinta da Paciência* was further enhanced: ‘if at the *Quinta da Paciência* we went at 200 km per hour, at the *Quinta dos Lobos* we were at 400km per hour’. At *Quinta dos Lobos* APio had the opportunity of proposing and organizing events as well as continuing his training by participating in workshops and retreats including those of Marques who would become after few years responsible for the Portuguese FSS. APio then succeeded leaving his job and went to live in the huge, elegant, *Quinta dos Lobos*. In so doing he detached even more from nine-to-five lifestyles. *Quinta dos Lobos* was an experiment in social aggregation in the quest for a ‘tribe’ or ‘a spiritual extended family’ according APio definition. The experiment failed after one year mainly for lack of cohesive direction. For some years he met a group of healers, therapists and artists with the project to create a self-help tribe devoted to the healing of the Earth, but for similar reasons as *Quinta dos Lobos* they failed because there were ‘too many leaders’. Again he noted that in the tribe, the conditions for magic happened very easily by allowing detachment from social conventions and experimenting unusual social aggregations in order to create a sort of *heterotopia* (Foucault 1984 [1967]).

These failures were a great disillusionment to APio who had to look for another place and another job. He organized healing sessions as well as workshops, retreats and drum circles mainly in the region of Lisbon. Meanwhile he started FSS training jumping straight in

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86 To note, *Quinta da Paciência* resembles the Dodge Luhan community of artists and intellectuals.
87 APio continues to organize *caminhadas nocturnas na Serra de Sintra* (Cfr. Pict. 2.16.).
CINHADA NOCTURNA NA SERRA DE SINTRA
AO ENCONTRÃ DA LUA CHEIA
Orientada por António Paiva

À luz da Lua, mergulhando no mágico ambiente de ilu e neblina, que à Serra deu o títul de Serra da Lua. Lanternas apagadas, a palavra suspensa e o silêncio preenchido pelos sons da natureza envolvendo-nos... Mais do que caminhando de um sitio para o outro, pretendemos estar receptivos para sentir a energia dos diversos elementos que nos envolvem. Abrir os nossos sentidos para o aqui e o agora, disponíveis para a magia da noite e para a descoberta e partilha de afectos e emoções.

Sexta, 4 Ago, 21h30 - 5€ - Inscrições - 936 170 898 – antompaiva@gmail.com

Pict. 2.16.: https://www.espiral.pt/blog-1/categories/actividade (12/09/17)
Pict. 2.17. B: My photo, Espiral bookshop
advanced course level because of the recognized experience/symbolic capital. The training gave him a ‘structure’ and a ‘method’ that he customized according to FSS guidelines by integrating his previous experiences. After some years, he worked as a manager of Espiral, one of the first vegetarian restaurants in Lisbon founded in 1978 with a natural products shop and books that extended its purpose to an ‘informative center of alternatives’ by hosting workshops and offering therapies (Cfr. Pict. 2.17.). While leading Espiral APio involved many people from his past to organize events, but he lost the will to guide shamanic circles. When I met him for the first time in 2015 APio told me he was tired of proposing the same things and did not want to play the drum, preferring instead to experiment. He would like to invent rituals in a supermarket or in the streets in order to ‘clean’ urban places, but at the same time he felt that it would be not understood as shamanic. In order to maintain a certain authenticity and not have to pretend to play the drum, he decided to stop with shamanic circles even if people continued to ask him to lead them:

He felt in some way trapped in a role created by the expectations of practitioners but, he was not able to drop that recognized role as otherwise people became ‘confused’. He eventually ended up playing the drum again, in order to be recognized as a shaman, ‘otherwise they repudiate me’, but as a shaman he felt unsatisfied. APio noted the paradox himself: it is impossible to structure the ‘non-structured’ for people who want to structure themselves in the non-structure. APio’s shamanic challenge was and remains finding a non-structuring structure. This perpetual secessionist way of life is recognized as exemplary by

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88 As in the reported case of Geraldine, there is an effect of expectation according to a model that can provoke the mistrust and dissatisfaction of practitioners if the shaman does not correspond to it.
practitioners but at the same time it disorientates them, requiring APio to acrobatically balance structuring and non-structuring.

Many Portuguese practitioners I met in my fieldwork pointed out APio’s crucial role in the diffusion of shamanic practices in Lisbon; he is recognized as ‘a point of reference’, a healer and a master\(^9\). RiCo, an airport employee about 50 years old I met at MaLva’s ayahuasca ceremony in Ericeira (26/09/15), made his first shamanic experience with APio in 2005 in a center for spiritual therapies in Belem, a wealthy neighborhood of Lisbon. When he participated in the drum workshop for *Personal power retrieval*, he looked at APio as a weird kind of hippie ‘out of this world’. RiCo did not understand at all what he was doing while he was looking for ‘the natural form to express oneself’. He remembered that he was not able to even explain to other friends what the workshop was about because it was alien to him too at that time. After ten years in which RiCo has become progressively involved in shamanic practices through the more charming ‘highway’ of psychedelics, he saw APio in another perspective: a cool guy who succeeded to do what he wanted to do with the courage to break social conventions by choosing to live his life as a “free man”. As a practitioner RiCo came to consider APio a ‘master’ and even called him ‘the father of shamanism’ in Lisbon. Nevertheless APio is not ‘his master’ and shamanic journey with drum is not his way. After many experiences with international shamans in Portugal, in 2011 RiCo found his point of reference in MaLva who appeared to him as an *Indian*.

.. MaLva story: *Era outra pessoa*

The life story\(^9\) of MaLva illustrates the extraordinary life path that has differentiated her from her former life. Self-fashioning was realized through a series of progressive secessions and continuous processes of unlearning previous habits and the learning of new ones. Like APio and many other shamans, MaLva was reticent to talk about her family, study, job and other trivial information about ‘ordinary’ life by emphasizing instead her extraordinariness. She told me she was born 1974 in a poor family in a little town in the North of Portugal. The only book

\(^9\) RiCo’s quotes are taken from the interview in Lisbon on 09/11/15.
\(^9\) I was introduced to MaLva and CaRa by an Italian friend and yoga teacher who participated in their ceremonies in Portugal. I met CaRa and MaLva in January and May 2015 in Lisbon. I had a long interview with MaLva at her home (Lisbon 29/10/15) and many conversations in Lisbon and Florence. MaLva joked with me saying that she accepted the interview because maybe one day she could read it in a book and became famous. Further meetings have been only with CaRa who told me that she could answer for MaLva who was too occupied to come. Interviews with CaRa have been in Lisbon and Florence since January 2015 to February 2018. I participated in an ayahuasca ceremony (26-27/09/15 Ericeira), a lesson of the course on urban shamanism (01/03/16 Lisbon) and a cosmological map consultation (Florence 29/10/16 Cfr. Chapter Four).
at home was the Bible that she read many times, even though she was never interested in Catholic religion that was imposed on her as well as her sister and brother. At four years old, she had strong meningitis and was interned in the hospital at risk of dying for 20 days. She only remembered waking up one morning with hands and feet tied to the bed of the hospital and feeling suddenly ‘different’ as if she was re-born: ‘I was another person’ [“era outra pessoa”]. In MaLva’s self-narrative this was the first secession.

As a child she felt ‘different’ from other people and learned by herself to interpret dreams, signals and visions that have ‘guided’ her since adolescence. For instance she felt guided to resist the recurrent suicidal thoughts and this resistance pushed her to find a way to avoid poor vidinha in becoming a maid like her parents. She tried to go to university, but did not pass the entrance exam for the faculty of psychology. One day she read in the newspapers an announcement for a course and felt that it was a sign to enter the army – she always felt she is a ‘warrior’. With the determination provided by the sign, MaLva prepared and passed the army selection exam and began professional training at an aeronautical college in a little town near Lisbon. The military course also enabled her to move far away from the home terrinha [little land], opening new, powerful horizons of opportunity since ‘everything is little there, while nothing is little in me’.

In the army she felt empowered because she was an excellent student and was hired as a teacher at the end of the one year course. During that time she returned to her family only a few times, but on one of these occasions she took the courage to kick out of the house her father and brother who increasingly abused her mother. After, her mother had a psychological breakdown and was permanently interned in hospital. MaLva did not tell me directly this tragic story. She avoided talking about her family whom she only described as fully alien to her. I got to know the story through her assistant and colleague CaRa in another interview without MaLva present. CaRa pointed out MaLva’ courage gained in the army meant she could face the family violence she had endured since childhood.91

The second tragic secession that definitely detached her from her family as well as new economic possibilities of a well paid job pushed her to look for other opportunities of training and social aggregation outside the aeronautical base. She loved her job as a teacher because it gave her satisfaction, discipline, rootedness and ‘structure’, like APio, but she felt limited by the narrow horizons of the military context. In the nine years she was in the army she started a parallel self-improvement training as an active subject in the care of the self. She

91 During the interview with MaLva, CaRa often added details, above all about concrete aspects of MaLva life or peculiarity of the Portuguese context that I did not know. CaRa told me her story which at a certain point became intertwined with MaLva’s life as they started to work and live together.
firstly enrolled a five year astrology course that opened her to the spiritual therapeutic field where she felt more at ease. She started to pass more and more time at Monte Mariposa, a Retreat Centre for Self-Realization in the Algarve, South Portugal, where she participated in many week-end courses, including numerology, chroma-therapy, tarot, soul reading, soul regression and the three levels of Reiki by becoming a trainer. In 2002, she decided to leave the army moving to live and work as secretary and organizer to Monte Mariposa. She worked and participated in the events of the center that represented for her an ‘opening point’, like APIo’s doors, that put her in contact with shamanic practices, including, a retreat of ‘energetic cleaning’, the ascetic Temazcal steam bath and Vision quest fasting as well as her first psychotropic ceremony with the S. Pedro sacred plant.

She felt immediately familiar and called by shamanic practices, but she felt disillusioned with spiritualoid people since in the 00s spirituality became increasingly fashionable, and consequently for MaLva, fake and superficial. Therefore, in 2006 MaLva decided to start a journey in Mexico and Guatemala with a Mexican curandera she knew at Monte Mariposa. Even if she loved the journey, experimented with peyote and learned to guide Temazcal, at the end of four months she entered her noite oscura da alma, ‘a zero point: without money, without values, without faith, without nothing’. MaLva framed a noite oscura da alma as a submersion in darkness and negative thoughts from the morning to the night with the only desire of dying. For MaLva this was another death experience that led her to another re-birthing.

MaLva returned to her little home town in North Portugal to start a new life and restructure herself by following what would come: ‘I did not look for anything as everything appeared on my path’. For instance, one day a friend talked her about a new holistic space and the day after, she began to teach Reiki there. MaLva felt, again, at ease in the role of teacher that allowed her to ‘learn to make real what you say’ through the relationship with her apprentices. The recognized role was crucial to finishing the dark night of the soul, by providing confirmation and motivation to MaLva in the same way as having a recognized role benefited APIo.

In 2008 she had other ‘big turning point’ that made her understand why she had returned to Portugal by allowing her to positively re-frame previous unhappy events as necessary steps leading to a ‘blessing’. Through a Brazilian student of hers, MaLva felt ‘called’ to get to know Don Juan Uviedo, an Argentine shaman-therapist-artist who claimed to

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92 Many shamanists interpret the ease and spontaneity of an event as a confirmation of their truths and ethos (Cfr. Chapter Three).
have been a model for Castaneda’s Don Juan. Malva dreamed about him and then decided to go to Brazil where she started a shamanic training with Uviedo. During the training she learned some shamanic techniques including the *cosmological map*, the *stone game* and *re-programming*, ‘the only technique that allows to change the matrix and re-program the program in a conscious way’ [“a unica tecnica que de forma consciente permite de mudar a matriz e reprogramar o programa”]. But above all the apprenticeship with Uviedo gave her the self-confidence to be able to heal others and calm previous doubts and uncertainties:

A partir de 2008 tudo mudou... como estava a sentir o mundo, os receios desapareceram, senti muito a mudança também através da reação dos outros à minha volta. Mudei de personalidade, tornei-me menos agressiva, menos fechada, mais amorosa. Perdi medos. Por exemplo na cura às vezes tinha medo de não saber ver, por exemplo na leitura da alma, e depois de 2008 senti que os medos tinham desaparecido, aumentou a minha confiança, a capacidade de ver as coisas também aumentou muito. [From 2008 everything changed... how I was feeling the world, fears disappeared, I felt a lot of change also through the reaction of others around me. I changed personality, I became less aggressive, less closed, more loving. I lost fears. For example during the healing sessions, sometimes I was afraid of not knowing how to see, for instance in Soul Reading, but after 2008 I felt those fears disappear, my confidence was enhanced and the ability to see things also increased a lot].

Like APio’s experience, confirmation from an exceptional master was a necessary step in assuming a guiding role for practitioners. The apprentices in turn reinforced her conviction and self-confidence by confirming her change and made it real.

Another significant event that marked her life was the journey to Peru where she had a ‘baptism’ with ayahuasca where she felt ‘called’ by listening to the word. She described this experience as her Jesus’s 40 days in the desert. Malva also stayed two weeks in a community of indigenous Amazonian Shipibo at Pucallpa where she made ten ayahuasca ceremonies, as it is common in intensive retreats, by following the specific restrictive anthropotechnical diet.93 She was impressed by the visionary power of the plant that was ‘1000 times stronger’ than other psychotropics; it gave her visions in which she felt taken to the center of the earth through the roots of ayahuasca. According to Malva, the visions of ayahuasca are shortcuts that allow to quick attainment of ‘consciousness, wiseness, healing, change and liberation’.94 She returned to Peru three times, participating in ayahuasca retreats with other friends including her future colleague CaRa. In 2011 when in Peru, Malva had a vision that ‘called’ her to guide ayahuasca ceremonies in Portugal with CaRa. In 2012 they started to bring

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93 The diet was rice with green bananas for two weeks and was considered very hard by CaRa.
94 To note again the metaphor of speediness used by Malva and APio as well as by other shamanists.
ayahuasca to Portugal, organizing about two ceremonies per month and by traveling once a year to Peru (Cfr. Chapter Four).

Unlike MaLva, CaRa does not have an extraordinary lifestory and had to acquire in other ways symbolic capital and exited the flux of ordinariness in a different way. She born in 1974 to a well educated family in Lisbon where the father worked as a civil engineer and her mother did not work. Her grandparents owned a shop in a little town in Estrela region and her parents moved to Lisbon to study. CaRa studied tourist management at university and worked in a travel agency in Capoverde and in Lisbon where she met MaLva. Except for psychedelic experiences that were not so extra-ordinary at that time but neither mainstream, she felt ‘different’ from the rest for her restlessness and uprootedness. CaRa always felt ‘not belonging to this society’ since she did not understand ‘the robotic and mechanized’ way of living, the repetition of routines (‘study, work, marry’), the ugliness of war, hunger, injustices and so on. She was ‘revolted with the world’ and between 20 and 30 years old started a quest for other meanings and perspectives. After having trained in many therapies,\(^{95}\) CaRa started a shamanic path with MaLva in 2009. After, she regularly followed MaLva’s courses and retreats until she became MaLva’s partner. During a shamanic retreat, MaLva felt that CaRa had healing powers and encouraged her to develop her ability by involving her as assistant. Nevertheless, unlike MaLva, CaRa did and continues to do many courses, workshops and training in order to learn specific techniques to heal other people. In 2015, she took the courses in Munay-ki and Womb blessing by the global master Miranda Gray that she repeated twice as she felt insecure; even if she worked a lot with Womb blessing and Womb healing by giving 57 sessions in seven months. In 2016, she enrolled other five courses and a structured training for curanderas of the Academia da Curandeira in Porto.\(^{96}\)

APio and MaLva are examples of how one can succeed to acquire symbolic capital and be recognized in the field through the anthropotechnical processes of secession, unlearning and application of technologies of self-fashioning in order to embody shamanic truth and ethos. In other life stories I found similar processes with radical changes that allow shamans to differentiate from the rest as extra-ordinary. Social recognition by other people, however, was crucial for both APio and MaLva in order to become masters, teachers and healers. As all advanced practitioners say, once one begins this path, the work of quest and

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\(^{95}\) She trained in Reiki, numerology, aura reading, ayurvedic massage, energetic cosmology, stone games, symbology, metaphysics of the health and the Louise Hay healing method (http://osoprodeus.wixsite.com/20/01/19).

\(^{96}\) She participated once per month at the seven weekend modules of the training course The seven female paths (http://xamanizando.com/despertando-mulheres-de-medicina/ 04/04/18).
fashion of the self becomes a never-ending process that leads to continuous secessions, trainings and social confirmations.

2. 6. Conclusion

Practitioners set off on the shamanic anthropotechnical path to change their life and pass from *vidinha* to *vida*. The therapeutic program to find the true self allows them to shape themselves through shamanic techniques without perceiving it as self-fashioning. The care of the self as the construction of an active and self-conscious subject is a never ending training through which practitioners advance on their anthropotechnic path of embodiment. Progression on the path necessitates integration of the shamanic layers of denegation which support the practices as a self-healing therapy through a self-referential circulation between discourse and practice. The learning process is realized through a progressive training of exercises to embody the shamanic language, postures and practices that enable acquirement of shamanic paraskeuē.

The analysis of different positions indicates the purpose of practice changes overtime. Beginners, above all, train to interpret the practices as a healing and to embody the shamanic epistemology as a way of changing and re-orienting their life. Advanced practitioners who have already gained this competence may focus on further goals as the progressive training of self-sensitivity to advance on the self-fashioning process. Beginners are more interested in the mysterious and shocking effect of the practices in order to experience the ‘extraordinary’ as a means to change life and step out from the ordinary flux. While advanced practitioners are more focused on acquiring control of these disturbing practice situations and take regular habits in order to orient their daily life in a stable way. For the expert practitioners, the practices are a way of training self-control and self-awareness skills by acquiring in this way a mastery over themselves, over upsetting practice situations and possibly over other challenging life events.

The supposed ‘non western’ shamanic way features many aspects that are in continuity with the ‘western’ models that shamanists want to dismantle and that are as a consequence denegated, for example the constant challenging of human limitation in order to acquire more power, self-awareness and control over oneself and the world around. The side-effect of denegation here is the practitioner naturalizes the paradox. For instance, the emphasis on language as an effective anthropotechnic to visualize, interpret, memorize and build the shamanic paraskeuē according to shamanic goals as the emancipation from abstract and
theoretic knowledge through body practices. Another side effect is that sometimes, shamanic self-fashioning seems to realize exactly the contrary of the declared aim of the practice. Despite the purposes of disembodying rationality and embodying shamanic epistemology based on personal feelings, in fact, shamanists act in a rational way by consciously applying specific techniques to themselves and consequently acting as if spontaneously.

Active training to self-fashion and embody shamanic paraskeuē is thus interpreted as a process that recovers the natural, authentic, self. Nevertheless, their most inner landscapes seem rather to confirm the presence of cartoons, advertising, science-fiction and techno imaginary. Hannerz used a gentle euphemism referring to a kind of optimism for the cosmopolitan will to uproot (Hannerz 2006: 18). I would say that there is an excess of optimism in thinking it is possible to cut ourselves out from our backgrounds, as if never having been a part of it. I do not intend to argue that this aim is impossible, but denegating that it is difficult is the first step for not realizing the uprooting project, and instead naturalizing cultural conditioning as the ‘true’ self.
CHAPTER 3. Lifelong chronic healing

Self-fashioning is an un-ending process that has to be regularly maintained, confirmed and revitalized demanding continuous training in order to advance on the self-improving path. Advancement on the path entails progressive embodiment of the specific denegation set which notably increases with each step. When the shamanists’ aim is to heal themselves, the anthropotechnical path cannot be anything other than a lifelong chronic healing.

The anthropotechnical path of ascending goals towards an impossible perfection leads to a continuous, self-challenging training. The ascetic modality of training analyzed in this chapter is particularly effective since it enhances the practitioners’ challenge to persistently overcome their limitations. Auto-immunization is actualized through ascetic trials that expose practitioners to a controlled dose of risk. Like a vaccine, the overcoming of the trial should engender immune defenses and increased ability to face life’s trials. Nevertheless, the ascetic trial is not exempt from risks that require the adoption of protection mechanisms. As protection itself can be dangerous, other forms of protection are enacted in recursive way (Cfr. next section Transfiguration in Sun Dance). Denegation here, serves to conceal the risk of iatrogenesis and the recursive need of protection.

Since denegation is a collective process, an example of a shamanic group will be analyzed to show the interpersonal dynamics that support the shared layers of denegation and its enactment. This chapter focuses on the ascetic anthropotechnical path of the transnational organization Raíces de la Tierra as well as its Italian and Portuguese local groups. Raíces de la Tierra provides a collective narrative that binds practitioners to the ‘family’, as they call the organization, by framing each step of the path, creating a shared language, setting the ideal goals and formalizing the ways to practice. The group organizes big international gatherings (the Kiva), teaches regular practice to locals (the weekly Temazcal), and promotes an incremental path of ascetic trials for advanced practitioners (Vision Quest and Sun Dance). Apprenticeship is supported by experienced practitioners, masters and the leaders of the group whose examples confirm and reinforce the motivation to advance on the path. Advancement is progressively realized through the achievement of intermediate goals that elevate towards further steps on the un-ending scale of self-improvement. This process is accompanied by an
increasing embodiment of the necessary layers of denegation that increasingly take deeper root with each step. The group has a pivotal role in motivating, maintaining, actualizing and reinforcing the anthropotechnical path since the advancement is rewarded by social recognition and elevation in the community hierarchy. Denegation in this case has a double role, at individual and collective level, acting both as an auto-immunization and a protection for the whole group.

3.1. The un-ending ascetic training

Sloterdijk (2009) and Foucault (2005 [2001]) refer to askēsis as ‘exercise’, an action according to the Greek etymology aimed to improve a certain practice. This broad perspective includes the more specific use of ascetics with reference to practices of privation and resistance.¹ In the shamanic self-fashioning process, the aim of askēsis is to embody the necessary paraskeuē according to the anthropotechnical project. Foucault, in fact, defines the ancient Greek-Roman askēsis as “exercise of the self on self”:

> It seems to me that for the Greeks, and for the Romans also, the essential function, the first, immediate objective of the askēsis, on account of its final objective being the constitution of a full and independent relationship of oneself to oneself, is the constitution of a paraskeuē (a preparation, an equipment). (…) And the askēsis may then be defined as the set, the regular, calculated succession of procedures that are able to form, definitively fix, periodically reactivate and, if necessary, reinforce this paraskeuē for an individual. (Foucault 2005 [2001]: 326-7)

The training, as described in Chapter 2, can be realized through a program of exercises and a gradual process of unlearning and learning based on the imitation of the masters and the repetition of the practice until it becomes ‘automatic’. What is progressively embodied, ultimately, is the denegation set that enables the anthropotechnical process of self-fashioning.

Ascetic practice, intended in the narrow sense, is a specific form of training that pushes practitioners to overcome a difficult situation through trials of resistance and privation, such as fasting. In the learning process, a trial is like an exam that challenges the trainee and forces him to build his own paraskeuē and then apply it in action. Unlike a program of exercises, however, the ascetic trial is not based on repetition but on exposition to a difficult situation, the overcoming of which attests to the success of the preparatory training. The

¹ In order to avoid confusion I will use here askesis/asketic with reference to the wider meaning of improving exercise, and asceticism/ascetic for the practice of resistance and privation that will be explained more in detail in this section.
challenging situation is an occasion to learn how to manage difficulty and to test previous training. The trial, like an exam is *una tantum* and if it is not overcome the training has to be repeated in order to achieve the intended goal.

The theory of anthropotechnics as *ascetology* and the development of the idea of vertical tensions to unreachable heights, as Sloterdijk recognizes, results in large part from the visionary and genial intuitions of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (Sloterdijk 2009: 6). According to Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal of privation and renunciation has been often misunderstood as a form of departure from life, whereas it is the hindered vital instinct that is strengthened in ascetic practices:

Allow me to present the real state of affairs in contrast to this: the ascetic ideal springs from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life, which uses every means to maintain itself and struggles for its existence; it indicates a partial physiological inhibition and exhaustion against which the deepest instincts of life, which have remained intact, continually struggle with new methods and inventions. The ascetic ideal is one such method: the situation is therefore the precise opposite of what the worshippers of this ideal imagine, – in it and through it, life struggles with death and against death, the ascetic ideal is a trick for the preservation of life. The fact that, as history tells us, this ideal could rule man and become powerful to the extent that it did, especially everywhere where the civilization and taming of man took place, reveals a major fact, the sickliness of the type of man who has lived up till now, at least of the tamed man, the physiological struggle of man with death (to be more exact: with disgust at life, with exhaustion and with the wish for the ‘end’). (...) What causes this sickliness? For man is more ill, uncertain, changeable and unstable than any other animal, without a doubt, – he is the sick animal: what is the reason for this? Certainly he has dared more, innovated more, braved more, and has challenged fate more than all the rest of the animals taken together: he, the great experimenter with himself, the unsatisfied and insatiable, struggling for supreme control against animals, nature and gods, – man, the still-unconquered eternal-futurist who finds no more rest from the pressure of his own strength, so that his future mercilessly digs into the flesh of every present like a spur (...) but even this nausea, this weariness, this fatigue, this disgust with himself – everything manifests itself so powerfully in him that it immediately becomes a new fetter. His ‘no’ that he says to life brings a wealth of more tender ‘yeses’ [eine Fülle zarterer Ja’s (sic)] to light as though by magic; and even when he wounds himself, this master of destruction, self-destruction, – afterwards it is the wound itself that forces him to live... (Nietzsche 2006 [1887]: 88-89).

Here, the apparent negation in privation that becomes an affirmation of life is a form of denegation: the self-inflicted wound is a mechanism to force oneself to live. As this chapter will show, this denegation is confirmed by the most extreme shamanic practices such as the ascetic *Sun Dance* that literally is self-mutilation as a form of celebration of life.

As the philosopher Roberto Esposito convincingly suggests (2002), the ascetic modality clearly described by Nietzsche, is homologous to a vaccine that inoculates a small dose of poison/illness into the body in order to create anti-bodies to counteract and fight the
same illness. In the case of ascetic practices, however, what is introduced is not an illness, but a potential danger, and what is challenged is above all the fear. Fasting for four days does not prevent hunger pains, but is rather a prevention from the fear or worry of not eating. Overcoming a fasting trial, as will be shown, is a means for practitioners to be able to manage this fear. Borrowing the immunological metaphor of Sloterdijk, ascetic anthropotechnics expose practitioners to controlled doses of risk to be managed during the trial in order to overcome the risk and engender the spiritual immune defenses. Even though ascetic symbolic auto-immunization is homologous to vaccine, as APio described himself in his life story, it is however, more complex because it involves the crucial process of denegation.

The idea of ‘controlling the risk’ is in itself contradictory since the risk is precisely a uncontrollable situation that by becoming controllable loses riskiness. In ascetic trial practitioners expose themselves to a small dose of risk, but the situation itself is controlled. Denegation enables management of the two opposite conditions of control and risk. When the ascetic trial is overcome, the immunological defense that is embodied is the idea the specific risk can be managed and to have thus acquired the necessary paraskeuē to manage other possible risks. The focus in these trials is, above all, on control and self-control.

To be clear, ascetic trial, as the vaccine, is not exempt from risk. Denegation allows the risk of the operation to be hidden as well as the anthropotechnical process of protection. As Esposito indicates, according to Greek etymology farmakon is ambivalently the poison and the medicine (Esposito 2002: 152). A potential life-saver vaccine, can be lethal; the denegating process of iatrogenesis hides the riskiness of the medicine, whose negative effects are not caused by accident but are a consequence of the medical intervention that is sometimes worse than the disease it is supposed to cure (idem: 168). Since protection generates other risks, as the healing action can have sickening effects, it is then necessary to protect from the cure itself, and so on. The need for chronic therapy, therefore, warns about the presence of a chronic illness, which is ultimately, life itself. This process is recursive and generates a perpetual motion between danger, protection and risk that feeds each other producing a circularity of mutual necessity. This perpetual motion, in turn, reinforces the need for the immunological anthropotechnical system in recursive way.

2 A shaman interviewed by López-Pavillard referred to ayahuasca as a vaccine [“vacuna”] for negative energies that are transformed into anti-bodies after the ceremony (López-Pavillard 2015: 337). As Chapter Two highlighted, ayahuasca practice presents ascetic aspects that require progressive training. According to a practitioner interviewed by López-Pavillard, ayahuasca training is like ‘overcoming the screens of a video-game’ (idem: 347).

3 A significant risk that advanced shamanic practitioners incur, is a certain addiction to the practice (Cfr. section Transfiguration in Sun Dance).
In the ascetic training modality, overcoming a trial motivates participation in more and harder trials. As pointed out in previous chapter, the challenge to overcome limitations foreshadows an impossible goal with a possible acrobatic path to reach it. If the unreachable anthropotechnical heights are considered at the same time possible and impossible, the intermediate steps approximate to the end goal in a progressive escalation of difficulty. The ascetic path elevates step by step unveiling at each reached level of expertise a higher horizon of new possible goals of self-improvement that before were considered impossible. Each new step, exercise and trial is an advancement on the anthropotechnical path to which corresponds an increasingly deep embodiment of incremental layers of denegation. The overcoming of the trial brings satisfaction and an enhancement of self-confidence that reinforces a conviction that control of oneself has been achieved in the risky situation. Through self-referential circulation, the resulting empowerment confirms the efficacy of the ascetic practice which in turn supports the overall anthropotechnical path. This reinforces and maintains the denegation of the risk of iatrogenesis.

If the main goal of anthropotechnics according to Sloterdijk is to negate the inherent difficulty of the human condition, ascetic practices denegate this difficulty through trials that enable to assume to have a control of that difficulty. As the shamanic practices analyzed in this chapter will show, in fact, the climax of ascetic training is reached in the hardest trial, the Sun Dance where there is a transfiguration of suffering into joy. This ultimate achievement is realized by the bravest practitioners with the admiration of all the group that supports them. In this respect, the group has a crucial role in recognizing the extra-ordinariness of advanced practitioners who undertake the hardest trials. In Sloterdijk’s metaphor, the acrobatic verticality of the ones who approximate to the top, engenders a sort of vertigo in the ones that consider themselves unable to reach the same heights:

By advancing their exercises on the tightrope of humanization, the extremists introduce the duty for everyone to pass a test in intermediate acrobatics to remain in the practice community of the humanized. The simple people obtain their certificate if they admit that merely watching makes them dizzy. (Sloterdijk 2009: 192)

The vertigo of ‘simple’ practitioners has a crucial role in order affirming the height reached by the ‘extremist’ practitioners, and vice-versa, the latter need a public as audience to their acrobatic extraordinary ability. In the hardest trials especially, the support of the group is pivotal in understanding the transfiguration operated by ascetic practice.

Denegation is above all, a collective process. In the collective dimension, the group of denegators assumes a central role since it significantly contributes to the support, recognition
and reward in overcoming trials through the construction of a narrative that frames and legitimizes ascetic practices. This very process, activates and maintains the necessary specific layers of denegation.

On a practical level, the group is also essential in preparing and persisting in the trials, since the temptation to stop is always present. Commitment in front of the group functions to secure continuation on the path. Furthermore those who advance receive social recognition and are often rewarded through a parallel advancement in the hierarchies of the community. The group itself is likewise, strengthened by the advancement of practitioners. As Esposito (2002) indicates, ascetic practice is a way of immunization of the community as well. In this sense denegation functions as a double immunity, since the collective denegation set supports the individual auto-immunization, and the involvement of each practitioner confirms the collective denegation set, as an immune defense of the group from its own disintegration. On the shamanic spectrum, in fact, each community supports specific layers of denegation and strategies of legitimization that work as a collective immunological defense (Cfr. Chapter Four).

3. 2. Raíces de la Tierra

Raíces de la Tierra is an international organization that has rapidly developed in the last 30 years from Texas to Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Portugal where the local groups are currently based. According to the main Raíces website, the founder was chicano poet and activist Raymundo Tigre Pérez, born in 1940 in Laredo, Texas, from a migrant Purépecha family (www.Raícesdelatierra.org 12/12/17; Cfr. also Pérez 1970; Martín-Rodríguez 1995; Cfr. Pict. 3.1.). Tigre Pérez frequented the Diné-Navajo Big Mountain Reservation and the Lakota Rosebud Reservation where he participated in Temazcal, Vision Quest and Sun Dance with the Lakota Sioux medicine man Henry Crow Dog. After chicano political and artistic activism for North American natives, in the late 1970s Tigre Pérez devoted his life to a spiritual path mainly following Lakota traditions. A vision he had in a Sun Dance ceremony inspired him to organize an ‘inter-tribal’ gathering of native American people with the aim to preserve and share their spiritual traditions. The

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5 Champion (1989) highlighted a similar shift from political activism to spiritual involvement in the French movement Eveil à la Conscience Planetaire [Awakening to Planet Consciousness].
gathering was first called *Kanto del pueblo*, or alternatively *Kanto de la Tierra*, and afterwards was titled *Kiva* with reference to a traditional native North American ceremony. In 1989, Tigre Pérez started to organize *Kanto de la Tierra* in collaboration with the ecological and spiritual community of *Teopantli Kalpulli* in San Isidro, Jalisco, Mexico. The community was linked to the transnational spiritual movement of *Grande Fraternidad Universal* and was deeply committed to developing an ecological education.

In the *Kalpulli* Tigre Pérez was especially sustained by the family of the Mexican Heriberto Villaseñor, who ran a company of organic supplements, and his Colombian wife Nubia Rodriguez, who worked as a *dula* [traditional midwife] as well as raising their eight children. Heriberto arranged his frequent business trips to coincide with the ceremonies in Mexico and the US, and helped Tigre Pérez to involve some Wirrarika *Marakame* [medicine men] from Mexico in *Kiva* gatherings in the US. During these years, Tigre Pérez developed a hard and long path of training, later adopted by *Raíces*. Advanced practitioners are asked to practice *Temazcal* regularly, to undertake a cycle of four *Vision Quest* (four days of fasting, silence and isolation on a mountain) and of four *Sun Dance* (a ceremony of four days of *Temazcal*, fasting, dancing, and optionally blood sacrifice.) and volunteer 20 years of service to support *Raíces* practices and *Kiva* gatherings.

According to practitioners accounts, after his death in 1995, three disciples were named by a Lakota Council to continue the path of Tigre Pérez and one of them was Heriberto. *Raíces de la Tierra* was born through the intense work of Heriberto and Nubia who involved more and more American native people and organized increasingly crowded *Kiva* gatherings (Cfr. Pict. 3.1.). They started to broaden the ‘family’ of *Raíces* to other American countries developing strong friendships with people who stayed for long periods at Heriberto and Nubia’s home. *Temazcal* for instance was brought to Chile in 2005 by a devoted group of practitioners who undertook *Vision Quest* and *Sun Dance* and lived some months in the *Teopantli Kalpulli*. In 2008, the Chilean group organized the first *Vision Quest* under the direction of Heriberto and at the conclusion of the cycle of four trials, in 2013, they received the fire, that is, the authorization to organize and lead a ceremony according to the Tigre Pérez path.

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6 *Kiva* is an ‘inter-tribal’ gathering actually held in Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Netherlands once per year (Cfr. Pict. 3.2.).

7 Other organizations such as *Llamado del corazon de la tierra* in Spain from 2012 and *Hearth of the Earth* in the UK from 2017 currently claim they teach the path of Tigre Pérez in similar but different ways than *Raíces*, for instance promoting *Temazcal* and *Kiva* but not *Vision Quest* and *Sun Dance*. Cfr. http://theheartoftheearth.org, http://www.facebook.com/llamadodelcorazondelatierra (18/01/19). The Chilean leader of the Italian group of *Raíces*, OscaR, told me that they do not have contact with these groups and that probably they come from the other disciples of Tigre Pérez.
Pict. 3.1. A: Raymundo “Tigre” Pérez, https://raicesdelatierra.org/la-historia (03/05/16)

Pict. 3.1. B: Heriberto and Nubia talking at the Kiva 2014, Chile; https://roots-of-the-earth.eu/it/chi-siamo/la-cerimonia-della-kiva (03/05/16)
“LA MEDICINA DIRECTA EXISTE Y ESTÁ DISPONIBLE PARA TODOS. PREPÁRA TU ESPÍRITU Y CORAZÓN. EL TAMBOR ESTÁ A PUNTO DE VIBRAR LOS SONIDOS ANCESTRALES.”

HERIBERTO VILLASEÑOR.
DIRECTOR RAÍCES DE LA TIERRA

#NosVemosenRaíces
ROOTS OF THE EARTH
"THE WORLD UNITED IN ONE PRAYER"
HOLLAND
AUGUST 2017 16TH - 20TH
www.roots-of-the-earth-kiva-netherlands.nl

RAÍCES DE LA TIERRA
DEL 13 AL 16 NOVIEMBRE 2014
CALLEJONES, VI REGIÓN, CHILE

ENCUENTRO CEREMONIAL DE SABEDORAS Y SABEDORES INDÍGENAS
RAÍCES DE LA TIERRA COLOMBIA
KIVA: El juego que reúne todos los fuegos.
4 AL 7 DIC 2014
ECO ALDEA YAKASIA
KM 8 VÍA SIVANJA
WURZELN DER ERDE
RAÍCES DE LA TIERRA
14-17 August 2014
www.raicesdelatierra.at

Pict. 3.2. A: https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1554963134568901.1073741840.307028586029035&type=3 (11/10/19)
Pict. 3.2. B: The ceremonial space in Austria; https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1554963134568901.1073741840.307028586029035&type=3 (12/10/19)

Pict. 3.2. C: Kiva, Chile, 2014; https://roots-of-the-earth.eu/it/chi-siamo/la-cerimonia-della-kiva (06/10/17)
In similar ways, *Raíces* created local groups in Colombia, Peru and Europe as it will be described in more detail in next chapter on viral circulation of shamanic practices. Nevertheless, it is useful to mention here that group’s strategies did not lead to the official use of the word ‘shaman’, while it is commonly used by the majority of *Raíces* practitioners. According to OttO, a Mexican advanced practitioner whom some call Heriberto’s *right arm*, *Raíces de la Tierra* does not use the word ‘shaman’ because it is ‘abused’, preferring instead to use *abuelo* [grandfather, ‘old sage’] to refer to medicine men and spiritual leaders of native ‘indigenous’ traditions (Cfr. Chapter Four).

. The anthropotechnical path of *Raíces*

The first time I interviewed OttO in December 2016 in Florence, Italy, I was not aware of his high ranking role in *Raíces*. Italian practitioners referred to him as the *Corredor de Temazcal* who had ‘received the fire’ and told me that his dream was to become an airplane pilot in order bring ‘shamans’ to *Raíces* gatherings all over the world.8 During the long interview some practitioners from the Italian and Austrian groups were present and listened with attention every word of OttO.9 In one of the few breaks, MiNa surprized me affirming “this is the Bible!” [“è la Bibbia!”]. We all laughed like many other times during the relaxed interview. In that moment I mainly focused on self-irony and humor in MiNa’s comment as a sign of self-awareness and distancing. But during the fieldwork, I realized that it was not only a joke, since OttO’s interview was literally a sort of Bible for the Italian ‘family’ which at that time did not already know the history of *Raíces*.10 In the interview OttO told us the visionary genesis of *Raíces*, the sacralization of Tigre Pérez, the verification of Heriberto as faithful disciple and successor, the justification of the ideal path of the masters as well as the embodied realization of that path in OttO’s personal history. OttO represents an exemplary realization of the ideal path that Italian practitioners can directly imitate as a concrete model.

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8 OttO told me he was studying to become a pilot and reasoned that renting a plane in some cases may be cheaper than paying for the tickets for all the ‘abuelos’*. In the idiom of *Raíces* the *corredor* [runner, driver] is the authorized conductor of *Temazcal*.

9 OttO’s quotes here are taken from the long interview that was held at my house (28/12/16) in the presence of the advanced practitioners MiNa (Italian) and OscaR (Chilean), who were the main promoters of *Raíces* in Italy; ViOlA, an Austrian practitioner who at the time was already involved in *Vision Quest* and *Sun Dance* and the year after received the fire of *Temazcal*; and ViDo, a Guatemalan artist living in Vienna who helped to build *Temazcal* structure in Italy.

10 The group asked for the recording and the transcription of the interview in order to disseminate it. Some advanced practitioners asked me to translate it and extract some parts, but I did not feel comfortable about this or many other situations where shamanists invited me to actively participate in the field.
The interview is full of anthropotechnical indications in the form of short significant sentences which are easy to remember. For instance *who does not change loses the opportunity to improve himself* [“lo que no cambia, pierde la oportunidad de mejorar”], *a half truth is a complete lie* [“una verdad a mitad es una completa mentira”], *if you pray only when you have problems, you have a problem!* [“si tu solo rezas cuando estás en problemas… mi amigo, estás en problemas!”] and so on. OttO’s charming retelling is a form of teaching through anecdotal stories and examples from experience that transmit *Raíces* anthropotechnic in an informal way that practitioners, in particular, appreciate.¹¹

OttO told us how Tigre Pérez received the consecration of the highest degree of *holy man* by Lakota leaders, who have a reputation for striving strenuously in order to preserve native traditions [“Al Tigre lo reconocieron el grado mas alto que puede haber para nativos americanos, holy man”].¹² This title recognized his ability to talk with the *invisible spiritual world* and stay in the *terrestrial world* [“es una persona que ya puede hablar con el mundo de los espíritus, el mundo invisible, y estar en el mundo terrenal”]. Tigre Pérez’s visions were presented as premonitions of future events, as the *Kiva*, that he received during a *Sun Dance* ceremony:

Esta visión de que la tierra estaba llorando porque sus hijos, los pueblos nativos, estaban perdiendo su espiritualidad, sus cantos, estaban perdiendo su manera de vivir. El vio que la tierra estaba triste por esto, entonces, en su visión (el tuvo esta visión en una *Danza del Sol*), pues, se lo llevaron a otro mundo y ahí empezó a tener esta visión. Creo que en esta realidad, no creo, estoy seguro, cuando llegamos a ciertos límites humanos y los sobrepasamos, tenemos ciertas visiones, revelaciones y todo. Entonces en una de estas visiones, en una *Danza del Sol*, a él le llegó esta visión de la tierra que estaba llorando y el vio un gran altar dentro de la tierra que era la *Kiva* y pues allí había un fuego central y pues el vio una mujer morena que estaba llorando, pues el vio una gente que tenía una pinta indígena que estaban a cantar, de repente la tierra paraba llorar y comenzaba a cantar también con ellos, entonces fue por esto que le llamó Kanto del Pueblo. [This vision of the earth that was crying because her children, the native peoples, were losing their spirituality, their songs, their way of life. He saw that the earth was sad for this, so, in this vision he had in a Sun Dance they took him to another world where he began to have the vision. I believe that in this reality, I do not believe, I am sure, when we reach certain human limits and overcome them, we have certain visions, revelations and everything. Then in one of these visions, in a Sun Dance, he got this vision of the earth that was crying and he saw a big altar inside the earth that was the Kiva and there was a central fire and a dark woman who was crying, then he saw people who had an indigenous look who were singing, suddenly the earth stopped crying and began to sing with them, so that is why he called him Kanto del Pueblo.]

¹¹ The advanced Italian practitioner LiVia who often hosted OttO at her house explained a sign of wisdom from OttO’s teachings can come in the most unexpected moments, while cooking, driving or having a beer, following the inspiration of the moment.

¹² The symbolic capital attributed to Lakota was largely confirmed in the field (Cfr. Chapter Four).
This kind of ‘premonitory vision’ inspires people to realize what they have seen is a recurrent means in shamanic contexts to frame events, rituals, positions. It also provides a confirmation of the extra-ordinariness of the visionary who succeeded making it real.\(^\text{13}\)

The ecumenical purpose of *Kiva* gatherings guided the main mission of *Raíces de la Tierra* to preserve and spread traditional ‘indigenous’ practices in their original forms by directly involving the native *abuelos*:

*Poder dar de conocer a la gente algo tradicional, algo como es, algo sin nosotros ponerle ni quitarle, sabemos que los abuelos dijeron que es así y por esto traemos el abuelo porque te lo diga, osea ni siquiera te lo estoy diciendo yo, aquí esta el abuelo, pregúntale, y entonces por esto se traen los abuelos, a parte que ellos rezan en la Kiva por nosotros, por la tierra, porque todos estemos bien, también la gente tiene la oportunidad de acercarse a ellos, preguntarle, porque de la misma manera, en este mismo momento, esta pasando la contra-parte de esto, porque el indígena ya no quiere ser indígena tampoco, y ya los jóvenes indígenas prefieren un i-phone wifi que irse hacer una ceremonia a la montaña. [To be able to make people know something traditional, something as it is, without putting or taking anything away, we know that grandparents said that it is like that and for this reason we bring them to told it to you, I am not telling you that, here is the grandfather, ask him, and then this is why we bring grandparents, because they pray in the Kiva for us, for the earth, for everyone's well, and people have the opportunity to approach them, ask them, because, just right now, the counter-part of this is happening, because indigenous people does not want to be indigenous either, and indigenous young people prefer a Wi-Fi i-phone rather than going to Vision Quest.]*

The leaders of *Raíces* are presented as humble and simple people, as fathers and friends aiming to build a colorful and peaceful family. When OttO presented them, he emphasized their extra-ordinariness as well as their humanity with funny anecdotes that illustrated the anthropotechnical path of *Raíces*. A recurrent trope that comically brought the leaders close to practitioners was the participation at a practice without knowing at all what it was. For instance, Heriberto traveled to Texas to undertake the *Sun Dance* under the suggestion of Tigre Pérez who did not prevent him in anyway. The utter lack of preparation enhanced Heriberto’s heroism in our imagination as we all knew the harshness of the ritual that requires a hard and long training. In a similar way, OttO’s father entered a *Temazcal* guided by Heriberto joking about the misunderstanding [“que? un té con mezcal?”]. He did not have any idea of what it was and in fact he was not even properly dressed (with shorts). The ignorance about the trials was interpreted as a sign of lack of prejudices about the practice that in both cases provoked a big shock and was the starting point of a secession.\(^\text{14}\)

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13 For instance, the founder of the *Festival du Chamanisme* said he was inspired by a dream during a Native American Gathering in Canada (http://festival-chamanisme.com/en/origin-of-the-festival/ 21/01/19).

14 OttO’s father continued to strongly support *Raíces* and offered his land for the construction of a permanent *Kiva*. In spite of his Catholic education right until up to the point where he would enter a monastery, he started an individual quest through the popular metaphysics of St. Germain and Indian spirituality that he
The friendship and collaboration between Tigre Pérez and Heriberto are also presented by OttO through continuous anecdotes and funny stories. For instance, their initial mismatch with diet, since in Kalpulli the mestizos were vegetarians, while the native Tigre Pérez as an ‘indigenous person’ was allowed to unofficially eat meat:

Eran comunidades de gente mestiza, que empezaron a trabajar con conocimientos indígenas, conocimientos también como de la yoga, de la India, de varios lugares, era un motivo espiritual pero universal, por esto el nombre Gran Fraternidad Universal... Esta Kiva, esta ceremonia a esta comunidad Teopantli Calpulli fue donde Heriberto conoció al Tigre, en la comunidad, en la ceremonia, y de verdad es que se enamoró de la ceremonia: “como puede existir algo de tan bonito, de tan natural?” Y de ahí comenzó a tener mucho mas contacto con el Tigre... porque en esta fraternidad, en estas Calpullis, eran 100% alternativos, 100% conservadores, entonces no comían nada de carne, nada de productos plásticos, todo era muy conservador, y pues Tigre era un indígena y estaba acostumbrado a comer carne... entonces el Tigre 1 día, 2 días, 3 días, 4 días: no carne? Ya estaba... “me dan de comer o no?” Y una vez Heriberto pidiendo al Tigre: “estas bien?” Y Tigre: “si, pero yo quiero carne!” Heriberto: “quieres carne?”, “Si!”: “Pues ve-te a mi casa y yo voy cocinar carne para ti”. Así se lo llevó a su casa, bajó al pueblo a comprar carne y regresó. Pues todo era como un reto, en la común, en la familia estaban acostumbrados a no comer carne, así: “Como que vas a cocinar carne aquí se está prohibido?,” Heriberto a su esposa le dijo: “pues sí, para nosotros sí, pero para el no, el lo necesita, es un indígena y está acostumbrado, hay que darle su respeto”. Y entonces fue así como empezó una amistad entre Tigre y Heriberto. [Communities of mestizo people began to work with indigenous knowledge, also of yoga, of India, of various places, it was spiritual but universal, for that reason the name Great Universal Brotherhood... Heriberto met Tigre at the Kiva in the community Teopantli Calpulli and he really fell in love with the ceremony: "how can there be something so beautiful, so natural?" From there he began to have a lot more contact with Tigre... because in this fraternity of the Calpullis, they were 100% alternative, 100% conservative, so they did not eat any meat, no plastic products, everything was very conservative, but Tigre as indigenous was accustomed to eat meat... then the Tiger 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days: no meat? I was already... "Do you feed me or not?" Heriberto asked him: "Are you okay?" And Tigre: "Yes, but I want meat!" Heriberto: "Do you want meat?", "Yes!". "Well, go to my house and I will cook meat for you." So he took him to his house, went down to the village to buy meat and returned. Following the rules of the community, Heriberto’s family was not used to eat meat, so: "how can you cook meat if here it is forbidden?" Heriberto told his wife: "Yes, for us, but he needs it, he is indigenous and he is used to it, we have to respect him". In this way the friendship between Tigre and Heriberto began.]

This mismatch is recurrent in the field because many practitioners are deeply concerned with ‘conscious food’, especially vegetarian or vegan diets, and sometimes a different diet screeches with their idealized models of supposedly not carnivores bon sauvages. Remarkably, in this account OttO frames Kalpulli as 100% alternative and, for this reason, more conservative. On the one hand, mestizos were open to experiencing cultural diversity, but on the other hand they were looking for fixed models to apply strictly. This kind of
ambivalence is shared by many shamanists that want to uproot and root at the same time. The frame of Raíces, in this sense, supports presenting a way of uprooting and rooting.

Raíces discourses often resort to the essentialization and naturalization of ‘non mestizo’ traditions and people, for instance OttO presented the camino rojo [red path] as the natural path of Native American people:

OttO often spoke of the importance and meaning of the blood sacrifice since it is not easy to understand for European practitioners (see this Chapter, Sun Dance analysis). The naturalization of the term ‘race’ here, and homogenization of all Native American cultures as devoted to blood offering, legitimizes blood sacrifice as an honor practice which has often been misrepresented in books [“El sacrificio no es algo malo como dicen los libros, no al contrario sacrificaban animales con sus ceremonias, sacrificaban incluso humanos y todo, pero era un honor”].

Another important point that OttO explained in detail is the entrega del fuego which is the method in Raíces to transfer authority and create hierarchies. Authority in this context refers to guiding and transmitting ceremonies: Temazcal, Vision Quest, Sun Dance and Kiva. The entrega del fuego is not only a form of social recognition but also a responsibility to transmit the practice in the way it has been preserved by Raíces. For this reason, the fuego is given or delivered to someone who is able to sustain this responsibility and properly follow the tradition:

Entregar el fuego es como un respeto por tu trabajo que has hecho, pero a la misma vez es darte una gran responsabilidad que no te la vas a quitar así de fácil. Entonces es un respeto, porque se le da un fuego a alguien que sabe lo que está haciendo y ha trabajado mucho por ese camino, y le das un fuego a alguien que sabes que no se va a quemar con este fuego, porque el fuego quema. [Delivering fire is respect for the work you have done, but at the same time it is a great responsibility that you are not going to let it go easily. It
is a respect, because fire is given to someone who knows what he is doing and has worked a lot along that path, and you give a fire to someone you know is not going to burn with this fire, because fire burns.]

The metaphor of fire points out responsibility is not exempt from risk. The leaders of a ceremony have to, above all, manage the risk of burning themselves and the participants, literally in the case of the Temazcal and figuratively in the other practices. To reinforce the difficulty in managing the risk, OttO told some anecdotes of people who received the fire but did not handle it well due to excess of ego. The concern with limiting the ego is a vital topic for Raíces since it is essential in keeping the group united and enforces avoiding personal interference in transmissions, that inevitably change the traditional ways of the abuelos. This is in fact an immunological defense used by the group in order to manage individual challenges to authority and the identity of the community.

Throughout the interview, OttO pointed out another important aspect of Raíces. The emphasis on servicio, volunteer work of practitioners, is a way of ensuring the cost of practices is low, and reinforcing local groups. OttO also indicated servicio is a reason to live: the one who does not live to serve, does not serve to live [“el que no vive para servir, no sirve para vivir”]. Obligatory voluntary work is also often emphasized in order to criticize individual ambitions and the ongoing commodification of spiritual practices. Absence of economic interest is an aspect particularly appreciated by Europeans practitioners who often complain about the ongoing commodification of shamanic practices.

This attitude among Raíces practitioners corresponds to the Bourdesian position of the “prophet” who struggles for power in the religious field and legitimates his ambition “by a more absolute refusal of temporal interest – that is, political from the very first – of which asceticism and all other physical ordeals are another manifestation” (Bourdieu 1991 [1971]: 25). Prophets’ position, who differentiate themselves both from affirmed institutions and freelance ritual operators for their ‘disinterest’, is supported by the devotion of the adepts to undertake strong ascetic trials, as in the case of Raíces. In fact the ascetic path of Tigre Pérez is very hard and long. Raíces discourses constantly validate the worth of the path by reinforcing the motivation of practitioners to overcome increasingly difficult trials (Cfr this Chapter). But as OttO noted, many European practitioners seemed reluctant and some opted for an easier path. In order to motivate them, OttO supported the difficulty of the path emphasizing its ancientness as a demonstration that it works [“as veces es mas fácil seguir un camino por mas difícil que parezca que pero sabemos que funciona”]. According to Raíces’

16 The emphasis on servicio clearly emerges in a post on the FaceBook public page of the Italian Group about the ‘golden rules’ of Raíces; Cfr. Pict. 3.3.
LE REGOLE D’ORO DI RADICI DELLA TERRA

1 - La Preghiera è la più importante
2 - Tutto è Servizio
3 - Lavoro personale con il proprio ego
4 - Camminare il Cammino (sentire la chiamata per le altre cerimonie)
5 - Realizzazione personale
6 - Non aspettarti nulla e arriverà


Pict. 3.3. B: OttO explaining the Kiva to ELio, Pitigliano, 25/01/16, my photo
framing, the spiritual path is undertaken through three practices; Temazcal is a way of ‘cleaning’ and guiding practitioners in daily life, while Vision Quest and Sun Dance are trials which enable to advance, just as the masters have done before.

3. 3. Re-birthing in Temazcal

Temazcal, Inipi, Sweatlodge, Capanna sudatoria, Schwitzhütte, Hutte à sudation are steam-bath practices that reference pre-colonial Native American practices and have been variously recontextualized.\(^1\)\(^7\) Temazcal is a very diffused practice that is often framed as shamanic in the European context. There are many versions of Temazcal circulating through different settings and forms of ritualization.

Temazcal is a resistance trial where practitioners support hot temperatures that increase in a small and dark space, usually a temporary construction made with wood in the form of a low dome (Cfr. Pict. 3.4.).\(^1\)\(^8\) The goal is to create a small dark space to enhance the steam experience. In the middle of the dome there is a hole in the ground where incandescent stones are placed. Heat is generated by the steam produced when water is poured onto the stones. The action is repeated four times in four moments of steam production. A few hours before the beginning of Temazcal, the dome is completely covered with various layers of heavy blankets to maintain the hot temperature and darken the interior space (Cfr. Pict. 3.4.). The preparation of Temazcal starts at least three hours before the ceremony when the fire is turned on and the stones are put into the fire. It requires the work of at least four to five volunteers or more, depending on the size of the structure.

In Raíces as well as in another settings, Temazcal is divided into four moments that are called doors [“porte”, “portas”, “puertas”]. At the beginning of every door, the person in charge of keeping the fire going brings inside a set of incandescent stones which the conductor of the ceremony puts in the central hole pouring water onto them. At the end of the door, the door of the structure is opened and some refreshing air and light come inside bringing relief to practitioners, especially those who are seated near the entrance (usually the beginners, since it is easier to exit from this position). But the relief is very brief and when the

\(^{17}\) Temazcal has been disseminated as ‘shamanic’ practice and re-signified by spiritualizing traditional therapeutic uses that in Mexico according to De La Torre and Gutierrez Zuñiga (2016) were mainly addressed to women who gave birth; Cfr. also. Aparicio Mena 2006; Argyriadis Kali et al. Eds. 2008; De La Torre 2014.

\(^{18}\) This form is the most diffused according to my fieldwork experience and online information, but it is not the only one, as Temazcal structures can be built in stones as well.

Pict. 3.4. B: The collective construction of the Temazcal guided by OttO, Montespertoli; 26/03/16, my photo
Pict. 3.4. C: Preparing the Temazcal, Montespertoli; 26/03/16, my photo

Pict. 3.4. D: The circle before entering the Temazcal; Kiva 2017, Holland; https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1554963134568901.1073741840.307028586029035&type=3 (12/10/17)
Pict. 3.4. E: Entering the Temazcal, Vision Quest, Pitigliano 2017; https://www.facebook.com/pg/radicidellaterra/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2154865024636302 &ref=page_internal (12/10/17)

Pict. 3.4. F: The opening of the door of the Temazcal, Pinhal Novo, 26/11/17; my photo
The door is closed again, steam restarts to fill all the space with a further increase of temperature. The opening of the door is also the moment when if someone is not feeling good they can ask for the permission to go out. Usually, at the beginning the leader or corredor explains that Temazcal can provoke fears and/or discomfort and advises novice participants not to panic and hold on until the hut door is opened.\(^\text{19}\) Shamanic songs guide the experience by framing the four doors according to different meanings and purposes attributed to each door.

At the end of Temazcal participants go out and experience a very relieving feeling, breathing fresh air. Some even have a fresh shower to clean off the sweat, which enhances the enjoyable contrast between cold and hot temperatures. Many practitioners describe the end of Temazcal as very pleasurable, beneficial and a revitalizing moment: the refreshing air on the ‘cooked’ skin; the reactivation of the all body through the high contrast of temperatures; the freedom of movement after the constriction of the small dark space and the simple joy of breathing in full lungs after the suffocating effect of the steam. The pleasure, the release and finally the satisfaction of overcoming the trial is an individual and a collective gratification as the experience is shared with others just as exhausted and totally overwhelmed as everyone else after a Temazcal.

In the Raíces de la Tierra practice, before entering the Temazcal, the corredor performs a brief invocation to the four directions by remembering the associated meanings of the four doors and two practitioners called eagles [“aguias”] purify the practitioners with Palo Santo fumigation. The corredor is the first to enter the structure showing the way to practitioners who repeat the same gestures: he kneels on the threshold, puts his head on the ground and says ‘Permission to enter. For all my relationships. Aho!’ [“Permissão para entrar. Para todas as minhas relações. Aho!”].\(^\text{20}\) Raíces rituals are appreciated in the group for its ‘simplicity’. The advanced Italian practitioner LiVia, for instance, positively compared it to more complicated settings which require a lot of effort to remember the actions and words, which distracts her from the purposes of the practice.

According to the Portuguese advanced practitioner SaRa,\(^\text{21}\) every door is framed in correspondence with a compass direction, an animal and an intention to which four songs are

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\(^{19}\) In some ritualizations before entering Temazcal practitioners rub with nettle twigs to enhance the therapeutic effect of reactivation of the blood circulation. Some leaders also burn herbs, such as lavender, rosemary, or even chili, that perfume the steam with their aromas in order to purify and heal participants.

\(^{20}\) The Lakota word “aho” is used as a way of greeting each other or framing a collective action, a ceremony, a chant, a speech. This is a performing act very popular in the field, usually someone launches an “aho” and the others answer chorally “aho”.

\(^{21}\) Quotes from SaRa are taken from the interview in Lisbon, 24/11/17. I knew SaRa at the Italian Vision Quest in Pitigliano in June 2016 and after we met in Portugal. She received the ‘entrega del fuego’ as corredor de Temazcal in 2018 (Cfr. Chapter Four).
devoted. The first door represents the East and the eagle with the intention to enter into contact with the spiritual world. The second door is the South and the she-wolf with the intention to work on family relations. The third door represents the West, the buffalo and the relations with friends and partners, while the fourth door is devoted to the North, the white bear, and the work is focused on knowing themselves. The first round ends when practitioners come out through the East door where everything starts again, supporting a re-birthing narrative according to the words of SaRa: ‘when the North door ends, you come out from the East door where you are born’ [“quando sais da porta do Norte voltas a porta do nascente que é por onde nasces”].

The repetition in rounds of four is recurrent in Raíces as well as in other settings often with reference to the four elements. The partition contributes also to give a collective rhythm, to frame the practice by orienting practitioners and providing them a temporal point of reference which is useful in resistance trials. The shared symbology of the four elements guides the construction of meanings around Temazcal as a practice of re-connection with nature and re-birthing. As mentioned in Chapter Two for power animals, in this case as well the reference to natural elements and animals is anthropocentrically oriented to the work on the self. Shared symbols also offer inspiring starting points for individual self-care and self-healing purposes. Many advanced practitioners, like SaRa, appreciate the flexible framing that guides them but at the same time enables them to develop their own interpretations.

Learning to overcome the trial

Temazcal is often framed as a ceremony of re-birthing confirming the renovating effect attributed to shamanic practices. As some practitioners say in Temazcal one experiences death and life, since before ‘re-birth’ one has to ‘die’. All the practitioners I interviewed remember the first Temazcal as a very hard and anxiogenic experience that provoked claustrophobia, suffocation, fears, a feeling of imminent death and so on. Especially the first time, it is not easy to resist until the end and it is quite common that novices ask to leave during the Temazcal. Many practitioners said they thought, ‘I’m going die!’, ‘they are all mad here!’, ‘I want to go out!’, or ‘I will never do it again!’. To tolerate and overcome the ascetic trial, defense and resistance strategies need to be learnt. This training is achieved by imitating

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22 The songs are usually intoned by the corredor but can be proposed by practitioners as well. Raíces’ Portuguese group started to organize in 2018 monthly workshops in order to train together with the songs. In the Italian and Portuguese group some practitioners were advanced in singing and playing before the Temazcal. This is a recurrent practice in the shamanic field that in fact improves the collective musical performance (Cfr. Chapter Four).
advanced practitioners and repeated experience through which beginners become experts. The difficulties of beginners reinforce the acquisition of skills by advanced practitioners and the perception of Temazcal as an ascetic trial that requires training.

The first Temazcal with Raíces de la Tierra was, for OttO, very shocking. He participated with his father when he was thirteen without knowing anything about the practice just like Tigre Pérez and Heriberto:

Era un niño y no estaba acostumbrado, venía de un mundo de ciudad también, no sabía ni que onda. Entonces me salí, juré nada mas volver! Me acuerdo de Heriberto. “Ese Temazcal y estos indios locos, me van a meter muchos problemas, no me vuelvo a meter!” Pero no… igual creo que tenia una grande búsqueda a esa edad porque tenia bastante problemas o cosas que yo no comprendía, empecé a buscar, pues llegué al Temazcal, y empecé a ir y a ir. [I was a child and was not used to it, I came from a city, I did not know what to expect. I went out and swore never to do it again! I remember Heriberto. “Temazcal and these crazy Indians are going to bring me a lot of problems, I will not go back!” But no... at that time I was looking because I had problems or things that I did not understand, I arrived at Temazcal, and I started to go and go on.]

Through the repetition of regular weekly practice, he became increasingly expert and decided to continue the path of Tigre Pérez until completion. His efforts have been rewarded; nowadays OttO guides Temazcal almost every weekend and is one of the masters of Raíces de la Tierra. If in the first Temazcal he thought he would die, he is now afraid of dying without practicing it. For OttO Temazcal has become a healthy and vital practice without which he can’t survive:

Porque si algún día me lo quitan me muero, porque es una manera de mantenerte sano. Vivimos en un mundo que todo te absorbe, fácilmente te absorben tu energía, tu felicidad, tu tranquilidad, te lo absorben rápido, si no sabes cuidarte, mantenerte... en tu Búsqueda de Visión, en tu Danza del Sol, a lo mejor puedes aprender a estar fuerte, pero en el Temazcal puedes estarte renovando, todas las veces que entres el Temazcal... pues es así si me quitan el Temazcal yo me muero! [If one day they take it from me, I will die, because it is a way to keep you healthy. We live in a world that easily absorbs everything, your energy, happiness, tranquility, and quickly, if you do not know how to take care of yourself... in your Vision Quest, in your Sun Dance, maybe you can learn to be strong, but in Temazcal you can renew, every Temazcal... hence, if they take away Temazcal I die!]

According to OttO, Temazcal is a necessary chronic healing that is a defense from the otherwise dangerous absorption of this world, that is, it is an anthropotechnical immunological measure of protection.

This is an extreme example, the one of an extraordinary master, but all practitioners refer to similarly strong experiences through which they have to pass in order to learn to
overcome Temazcal trial and appreciate its benefits. Everyone has an adventurous story to tell about the search for strategies to sustain the hot temperature, the physical discomforts and the feeling of unease. The development of strategies is an important part of the training in overcoming Temazcal by which practitioners become experts and can pass the learned tips to beginners. Some strategies include moving to the outer areas of the structure (away from the source of the steam), lying down on the ground, singing or counting the pine needles in order to distract from anxious thoughts, holding the hand of other participants, finding a ‘minimal’ (short) breathing rhythm, breathing near the ground where the air is less hot, or even digging the ground to find some fresh air.

The harsh situation forces practitioners to move from familiar habits and ‘come out of their comfort zone’ to experiment other strategies to deal with difficulties. Resistance training is also a form of acquiring self-control that engenders a feeling of satisfaction. Consequently, the more the experience is perceived as potentially risky, the more the gratification for overcoming the trial increases. An important role of the leader is to protect from the risks of the experience, as it has to be potentially risky and hard. These risks in fact are part of the adventurous charm that differentiates Temazcal from a more ordinary and safe sauna or steam-bath experience. As it is easy to imagine, a very common risk is that Temazcal is too hot, long and strong. Some practitioners report having been burned [‘bruciati’, ‘quemados’] during a Temazcal, sometimes because of the inexperience of the leader and sometimes because of a desired difficulty and quest for the absolute limit.

The Temazcal of Raíces can be more or less difficult depending on the corredor, but practitioners are not reproached if they give up, as it can happen in other settings. The strategy of Raíces is to welcome everyone, even children, since Temazcal is the easiest trial on the path and is presented as a practice that is good and safe for everyone. OttO often talked about his initial difficulties and the corredores are always very inclusive, encouraging participants who don’t want to go through it again, to try. In other settings, by contrast, practitioners are strongly advised to keep going until the end or condemned if they leave, for instance in the Camino Rojo/Fuego sagrado organization. The Temazcal of Camino Rojo is known among practitioners as very strong and can be accompanied by the ingestion of the

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23 Other practitioners report that the leader and the group can be very insistent and express strong disapproval when someone gives up. In my first Temazcal, in 2009, when I left at the second door the leader and the group insisted I stay and were very welcoming when I decided to enter again during the third door. Raíces corredores encourage staying but without strong pressure and above all when somebody leaves there is no disapproval. Parents and children usually sit near the door and don’t communicate when they exit, while in other settings it is not allowed to exit without permission.

24 The group changed name overtime from Camino Rojo to the actual Fuego sagrado Itzachilatlan and practitioners refer to it with both names.
hallucinogenic cactus peyote to enhance the shamanic experience. In a Temazcal with Camino Rojo ten years ago, the advanced practitioner ArPo²⁵ had a very impressive and frightening experience:

As this quotation expressively highlights, the leaders of Temazcal of Camino Rojo are far more severe, throwing out of the structure participants in difficulty. The search for strategies in this case was not welcomed and was seen as a trick to avoid the difficulty. In Raíces, on the contrary, the discomfort of practitioners is not reproached but it is supported by the ‘familiar’ encouragement of the group and of the corredor. According to the strategies of the group, humility and cooperation are important values in order to strengthen the ‘family’ (Cfr. Chapter Four).

. . Temazcal as chronic healing practice

In my fieldwork experience practitioners described Temazcal as a form of healing and self-care that is necessary for contemporary urban people as a way to return to the thriving life design. In shamanic idiom Temazcal is a ‘death’ and a ‘re-birthing’, a ‘womb’, a place of

²⁵ ArPo organizes monthly Temazcal in the DIY G group in the neighborhood of Florence, Italy (Cfr. Chapter Four). Quotations of ArPo are taken from the interview realized in Florence on 06/02/17. ArPo traveled by car from Italy to Spain to participate in his first Temazcal. Many Italian practitioners told me that ten years ago they had to travel, mainly to Spain or Latin America, in order to experience Temazcal, ayahuasca, peyote, etc., as it was not as easy to find in Italy as it is today.
‘renovation’ and ‘cleaning’, a ‘return to mother earth’. In the words of SaRa, the experience is lived as a purifying renewal from toxic daily life and an awakening to simpler ‘natural’ life [“é uma via muito importante para a gente eliminar muitas coisas e se purificar, para poder estar disponíveis, acordados, despertos para perceber como é que nos conectamos com os elementos e a vida mais simples”]. Sweating is framed as a form of purification and literally disembodying the toxins of contaminating urban life, similar to vomiting in ayahuasca practice. This is the renewal purpose of many shamanists who want to free themselves from ‘western’ imposed sick patterns in order to recover a ‘natural’, ‘authentic’, human matrix.

A common idea is that Temazcal allows the recovery of a previous authentic lifestyle through contact with the elements (fire, water, earth, air) in order to waken from the illusion and alienation of contemporary urban lifestyles. Detoxification is also necessary to clean from pollution. The advanced Portuguese practitioner of Raíces de la Tierra IaN wrote in the group chat of a mobile social network that he was in Paris for work and he needed 50 Temazcal to clean from the air pollution [“Estou em Paris em trabalho. PRECISO DE 50 temazcalis só para limpar a poluição”]. SaRa replied to him that he needed an uninterrupted Temazcal [“Precisas de um ininterrupto!”] and many followed with smiling face and applauding hands emoticons.26

For many practitioners, the necessary purification from polluted ways of life can bring an experience of lifting the load carried, often unaware, as well as a release of accumulated tensions or even a resolution of hidden traumas. Every Temazcal is an opportunity to repeat the cleaning effect and another confirmation for urban practitioners that they are on a healing path which can do nothing but good in the words of ArPo (Cfr. Chapter One). According to OttO, the advantage of Temazcal is it is simple and safe, with a slow reliability [“el Temazcal es un camino sencillo y lento, y es una medicina segura, solo vas a encontrar ti mismo!”], that makes it more appreciable than fast medicines: ‘plants are like highways, faster but less safe’ [“las plantas son como autopistas, mas rápidas pero también menos seguras”].

This perception of Temazcal as a form of healing is learnt by practitioners overtime. An important aspect that most of practitioners point out is that in the Temazcal they carry out spiritual ‘work’ that passes through the body, since it is not an intellectual or abstract experience, as SaRa affirms:

Ir ao Temazcal e fazer este trabalho é muito importante porque nos dá estes elementos através da experiência, e não é uma coisa de uma palestra ou de uma teoria, é algo que as pessoas vivem no corpo, e fica marcado nas células, numa memória celular física. [Going

26 SaRa and IaN have authorized me to use this conversation from the group chat (29/09/17).
to Temazcal and doing this work is very important because it gives us these elements through the experience, and is not a lecture or a theory, it is something that people live in the body and marks the cells in physical cellular memory.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the attention on the body is a crucial aspect of the framing of shamanic practices that often involves a prostration of the body as a means of healing from the corruption of the ‘mind’ and the ‘ego’. LiVia in the month that followed her first Temazcal learned that the healing experience happened first of all in the ‘temple of the body’:

Ho capito qual era la medicina nel corso del mese che ha seguito il primo Temazcal. Ne sentivo la necessità. Mi ha insegnato l’umiltà. Il fuoco richiede umiltà, chi ci ha a che fare, lo sa. Anche io come fornaia. Ho capito che c’è uno scambio di dare e ricevere, quindi si può anche chiedere. Parlare è chiedere, pregare è chiedere, è come andare in chiesa, solo che si fa con tutto il corpo. È un sacrificio, si lascia il proprio sudore. [I understood the medicine during the month after the first Temazcal. I felt the need. He taught me humility. Fire requires humility, those who deal with it, know it. Me too as a baker. I understood that there is an exchange of giving and receiving, so you can also ask. To speak is to ask, to pray is to ask, it is like going to church, except that one does with the whole body. It’s a sacrifice, you leave your sweat.] 27

According to LiVia, who was born in an Italian Catholic peasant family, performing Temazcal is like going to the church. In her account she uses Catholic references as a familiar and simple way to describe Temazcal like a prayer performed with the whole body. 28

The performative aspects of the practice make individuals feel active agents of Temazcal and are an important feature which is highly valued by practitioners because they are opposite to passive/intellectual spiritual and healing experiences. Moreover the preparation and participation in Temazcal involves the enactment of artistic competences, in playing, singing, decorating, handcrafting, that many practitioners have and put in place (Cfr. Chapter Four). The performance and artistic aspects have a strong importance for many practitioners who appreciate the opportunity to experiment with different roles in a guided setting that helps to express creativity as well as draw out strong emotions. Indeed it is quite common during the Temazcal to listen people crying, screaming, laughing, expressing joy, sadness or fear. In Raíces, at the end of each door, participants can express their feelings and thoughts with the support of the group.

Playing the drum and singing all together are seen as a form of active participation and the group itself as a mean of healing, as it says in the song Todos somos medicinas (Cfr.

27 Quotations from LiVia are taken from the interview in Empoli, 09/12/16.
28 The relationship with the Catholic Church is ambivalent within the group. For SaRa, who grew up in an atheist background, the regular practice of Temazcal at 11h every Sunday opens a problematic parallelism with the Catholic celebration since it appears as an obligation [“com este rigor, com esta cadencia semanal, quase que é obrigatório de ir a missa”]. On the other hand, many Raíces practitioners use a vocabulary that recalls the Catholic rhetoric of humility, expiation and sacrifice.
Chapter One). In fact the shared practice of singing helps to reinforce unity and well being in
the group through cheerful songs that celebrate the joy of the meeting. At each door a set of
songs is dedicated to the specific element and focus on the ‘work’ practitioners have to do to
‘heal’ themselves. Many shamanic songs have a church feel both in melodies and in texts,
although the invocations are devoted to natural elements, plants, animals, Taita Inti,
pachamama, Mother Earth. The elements are means of healing and ways of coming back to
the origin through the Temazcal, as in this song29:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vuelvo a mi hogar</th>
<th>I return to my home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agua vital... purificame</td>
<td>Vital water... purify me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuego del amor... quema mi temor</td>
<td>Fire of love... burn my fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viento del alma... llévame a tu altar</td>
<td>Wind of the soul... take me to your altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madre tierra... vuelvo a tu hogar</td>
<td>Mother earth... I return to your home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En el temazcal...</td>
<td>In the temazcal...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The framing through the four elements guides practitioners by differentiating the doors and is
also a vehicle for the imagination to elaborate meanings and symbols in interpreting the
healing. As mentioned in Chapter One, the fire, as the stones, assumes the role of a source of
knowledge and certainty. Since it is not human and has no ego, it is possible to trust in it
without misunderstandings.

Although personal interpretations are not discouraged, in Raíces de la Tierra Temazcal
is a spiritual healing according to a tradition. As mentioned in the presentation of Raíces, the
ancient origin is a guarantee of the safety and goodness of the path as being worthy of
following. Temazcal is framed as a Native American practice that the founder Tigre Pérez
helped to recover and disseminate in a mestizo version of Lakota and Mexican traditions. The
authenticity of Temazcal is constructed in different ways such as, through the authority of the
founder, the presence of native spiritual leaders who teach the old ways to do it and the
repetition of a series of traditional routines that are learned by practitioners.

The authenticity of Raíces is also recognized by external practitioners who participate
occasionally. In a DIY G group meeting, the advanced practitioner PiNo who is involved in
other shamanic groups as well, presented the Temazcal of Raíces as a very ‘traditional’
practice. As an example of their authenticity he told how they use to start the fire in a very
ancient way, by rubbing the sticks, without any modern means such as matches or lighters.
PiNo especially emphasized this practice as a demonstration of the transmission of traditions
in Raíces because if they keep on with the ancient technique for starting the fire, it is

29 The song is taken from Raíces’ songs book Canzoniere Temazcalero (Cfr. Pict. 3.5.).
CANZONIERE TEMAZCALERO

Pict. 3.5. A: Cover of Raices’ Song Book (WhatsApp group)

Pict. 3.5. B: The lighting of the fire, Montespertoli, 23/03/16, my photo
supposed that they do the same with the rest as well. The lighting of the fire impressed the audience as in fact it had happened to many new comers who participated at Raíces Temazcal.\(^{30}\)

Another way of gaining authenticity is the telling of stories as a way of learning and remembering native mythologies and uses. The telling of stories is often explained as ‘their’ way of passing the knowledge and a form of authenticity. SaRa told me a charming story that a Lakota woman told at the Sun Dance in Ixtlan del Rio, Mexico:

Uma coisa que achei muito bonita nesta Dança que não sei se sabes, é que as pedras que entram dentro do Temazcal são seres vivos, pertencem ao mundo mineral que é o reino mais antigo da Terra, desde os primórdios, e por isso guarda em si toda a sabedoria das várias camadas da Terra. Quando se vai buscar uma pedra, normalmente vulcânica, da profundez da terra, esta já percorreu o espaço infinito do universo (porque estamos em constante movimento), portanto já recebeu muita informação, conhece muita coisa. É como se estivéssemos a consultar uma grande sábia, uma bruxa muito velha. Ao retirarmos estas pedras e ao pô-las no fogo, é como irmos acordar uma velha depois de um ciclo de hibernação muito longo e fazê-la despertar através do fogo. Por isso os Lakota dizem que temos de cuidar das pedras como se fossem seres muito velhos e ao mesmo tempo bebês que tenham acabado de nascer porque elas estão a acordar. [A very beautiful thing in this Dance which maybe you do not know, is that the stones of Temazcal are living beings and belong to the mineral world that is the oldest kingdom of the Earth, from the beginning, and therefore it keeps all the knowledge of the various layers of the Earth. When you look for a stone, usually volcanic, from the inner depths of the Earth, this stone has already crossed the infinite space of the universe (because we are in constant movement) and received a lot of information. It is as if we were consulting a great sage, a very old witch. Removing the stones and putting them in the fire, it is like waking up an old woman after a hibernating cycle through the fire. For this reason Lakota say we have to take care of the stones as if they were very old and at the same time babies that have just been born because they wake up.]

This story confirms not only the framing of Temzacal as a re-birthing but also many discourses that circulate among shamans, for instance the idea that stones have a memory and bring information.\(^{31}\) In the Lakota story, the stones are represented anthropomorphically, as ‘witches’, ‘wise people’ and ‘babies’ [“bruxas, sabias, bebês”] who are bearers of wisdom and create the magic of the story. In this case, however, the story was not only a nice way of framing the practice but it brought also indications on how to perform it. SaRa in fact recognizes the anthropotechnical function of the tale, while noting that the behavior suggested is not followed in current mestizo practice:

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\(^{30}\) This way of lighting the fire is performed by the most advanced practitioners in Raíces but it is not easy. Sometimes, when they do not succeed in a reasonable time, the corredor ends up using modern means. This happened in the Meeting of Indigenous Women for Human Reconciliation (Cfr. Chapter One and Pict. 3.5.).

\(^{31}\) As mentioned in Chapter One, unspecified theories of ‘quantic physics’ are often quoted as a source to support the idea that material elements have a memory that can help to heal. These discourses circulate online through ‘alternative’ sources of information that challenge academic scientific knowledge but ambivalently lean on ‘quantic physics’.

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É uma história super bonita. Com todo o cuidado entrar e comunicar com as pedras. Nos Temascais lakota, quando estão a entrar as pedras, não se fala, nós os mestiços raiceiros, falamos e cantamos. Mas os Lakotas tem este princípio que é “quando entram as pedras, há que as escutar” e nunca entras num Temazcal sem ter algo para pedir ou perguntar. De certa maneira, é como ir a uma consulta de uma grande sábia, de uma avó que sabe tudo. E se vais lá só para olhar para elas, não vale a pena tê-las acordado. Acho isso muito bonito, porque já não é tanto a tradição de Raíces, mas é esta tradição que se mistura. A Dança traz a tradição dos mestizos, já com os cantos em espanhol e tudo, e a tradição dos índios Oglaka Lakota, que é uma linhagem do Norte da América. [It is a beautiful story. You have to be careful entering and communicating with stones. In Lakota Temazcal, when the stones are coming in, we do not speak, in Raíces we, mestizo, talk and sing. But Lakota has this principle that is "when the stones come in, you have to listen" and never enter in a Temazcal without having something to ask. Somehow it is like going to a consultation of a great sage, of a grandmother who knows everything. It is not worth to wake them up just to look at them. I think this is very beautiful, because it is not a tradition of Raíces, but it is a mixed one. Sun Dance brings the tradition of the mestizos, already with the songs in Spanish and all, and the tradition of the Oglaka Lakota Indians, which is a lineage from North America.]

In these words it is evident the ambivalence of the will to root in a tradition and the consciousness that the same tradition has been changed by the mestizo practice. So even if the message of the nice story is clear and shared by practitioners (to be silent when the stones enter), it is not followed (talking and singing).

### 3.3. Climbing on Vision Quest

On the Italian website of Raíces, Vision Quest – also known as Búsqueda de visión, Visão da montanha, Ricerca della visione and Hanblecheyapi in Lakota – is presented in this way:

In this ceremony you will have the chance to go up on a mountain and be alone for 4 days without food and water. In exchange you will be able to learn to feed yourself with the flight of the birds, with the singing of the wind, the light of a new dawn and the colors of the sunset... You will stay inside a circle, an altar of your prayers made of tobacco ties. Each tobacco tie is a prayer to the Great Spirit, through which you will introduce yourself to the spiritual world. (...) When you are up on the mountain forget about who you are in the city, forget about who you are in the world and be yourself. (...) You will have a life-changing experience within a beautiful and ancient ceremony. Prepare yourself in the sweat lodge, pray, sing, sweat out your fears... Say your name out loud, introduce yourself to the spirits... Burn out your ego in the holy fire... Be sincere... Great Spirit listens to all of us... and we can never lie to him... Search for someone you trust to be your supporter. Your supporter will drink water for you, will eat for you, and will pray and sweat in the sweat lodge every morning and every evening to giving you the strength to continue your quest... (http://roots-of-the-earth.eu/about/the-vision.quest 11/12/17; Cfr. Pict. 3.6.)

The preparation of buscadores starts about a year before. Practitioners have to declare their intention in advance and undertake a training that prepares and commits them to realize
RICERCA DI VISIONE

31 AGOSTO - 4 SETTEMBRE 2016
PITIGLIANO (TOSCANA)

Condotta da: Heriberto Villaseñor “Tecolozintli”
e Don Mateo Zepeda

Preghiamo la Grande Madre della Creazione
perché possiamo comprendere come vivere
in Pace, Armonia e Unità
una Madre Terra, una Nazione
unite nella stessa preghiera
per tutte le nostre relazioni
Hablecheuyapi Mitakuye Oyasin.

più info: www.radicidellaterra.it/ricerca-visione
the trial. Training to fasting is not recommended and the most important preparation for the trial is achieved through regular Temazcal practice all through the year. Temazcal is a necessary purification practice that helps to overcome the harder trial, as SaRa explains after three Vision Quests:

As pessoas devem, teoricamente, preparar-se um ano antes de fazer a sua primeira Búsqueda com o Temazcal que permite esta limpeza, esta purificação, esta libertação de muitos medos, de muitas coisas, para irem mais ligeirinhos para cima. Se vais assim de uma só vez, é forte, mas tem que ser vivido. [People should prepare themselves a year before the first Búsqueda with Temazcal which enables this cleansing, this purification, this liberation from many fears, from many things, in order to go lighter. If you go without preparation, it is strong, but it has to be lived.]

In addition to the purifying practice, buscadores have to prepare themselves to undertake a special Temazcal. At the dawn on the first day of Vision Quest, buscadores enter Temazcal after the canonical four doors and participate in a fifth exceptional door reserved for them. For this reason, during the preparatory year buscadores are invited to participate at the Temazcal fifth door especially for training them. According to OscaR, a Chilean advanced practitioner who leads Temazcal in Italy, this is the beginning of the challenge that commits buscadores to the trial as the fifth door is stronger than the previous four because of the effect of steam accumulation.32

During the preparation year for the fifth door, buscadores begin to differentiate themselves from other practitioners. This is the first separation that marks their commitment to the group. The separation is explained by the Italian advanced practitioner ELio as a key factor of ‘rite of passage’ like the Vision Quest. He supported this framing by quoting the anthropological theories of Turner and Van Gennep to interpret his experience:

La Búsqueda poteva essere un’esperienza per andare di là a vedere che c’è, sai come nelle fiabe “non andare nel bosco” e il bambino ci va (…) nei riti di passaggio, entri nelle zone liminali… te hai uno status iniziale, e nella Búsqueda, o altro rito, lo metti in discussione… per prima cosa attraverso la separazione, te prendi e vai sulla montagna, ti separi dalla comunità, poi ti trovi in uno spazio liminale. [Búsqueda may be an experience to see what is there, how in the fairy tales it warns ‘don’t go into the woods’ and the child goes there (…) in the rite of passage, you enter liminal areas… you have a initial status, and in Búsqueda or another ritual, you put it into question… firstly through separation, you take yourself and go to the mountain, you separate yourself from the community, then you find yourself in a liminal space.]33

32 When I assisted a Vision Quest at Pitigliano, Italy, in September 2016, a buscador did not manage the fifth door and came out. The fifth door is harder because buscadores enter Temazcal without the training of previous four doors.
33 Quotations from ELio are taken from the interviews in Empoli, 13/04/16 and 27/09/16.
Anthropological reflexivity is shared by other practitioners who consider the Vision Quest as an ‘ancient’ ritual by North American natives, like the Lakota, who passed their way to Raíces de la Tierra. Some practitioners wanted to share with me anthropological reflections on their own experiences by questioning the authenticity of Raíces practices compared to the ‘original’ practices. SaRa for instance explained that ‘originally’ Vision Quest was a rite of passage to adulthood that forcefully changed meaning and function in our contemporary practice performed by adult practitioners:

Esta é uma tradição que vem dos índios Lakota, antiga, de todos os índios do Norte da América que punham as crianças com 10-12 anos a cumprir este jejum para encontrarem a sua visão do que seria o seu papel na comunidade. Hoje em dia, já para nós… a gente vai com 40 e tal anos fazer isso, quero dizer… [she laughs] [This is a tradition that comes from the ancient Lakota Indians, from all North American Indians, who put 10-12 year old children to fulfill this fast to get a vision of their role in the community. Nowadays, for us… we go at 40 years and more, I mean… [she laughs]

The their/our dichotomy frames many rituals performed and repeated according their supposedly traditional ‘original’ way with the awareness of current transformations of our unavoidable contextualization. This ambivalence leads many shamanists to develop an ironic self-reflection that in the majority of the interviews was expressed through laughing about themselves, as in this case.

If the Vision Quest is no longer a rite of passage to adulthood, what is it for? Why are practitioners like SaRa or ELio undertaking the Vision Quest? According to OttO, the aim of Vision Quest is to ‘find yourself’ in order to reach a mental state capable of receiving messages from the spiritual world. But when he explained the stages of the four days of Vision Quest the key factor of the trial seemed to be the acquisition of control over the mind:

El primer día, pues está bien, está tu cuerpo, eres fuerte, tu cuerpo es fuerte y tu ego es fuerte; el segundo día ya se empieza a cansar tu cuerpo y sigue tu mente, tu mente te puede mantener fuerte, si la sabes dominar. La mente es súper fuerte, es como en conexión directa con el espíritu. Pero el tercer día, ya cuando se cansa tu mente puede hacerte juegos, es como un sistema de defensa, hace bromas (por ejemplo: “Mira ahí hay agua puedes ir a beber y nadie se da cuenta”, o “Ya no consigues respirar, tienes que salirte del Temazcal”). Tienes que aprender a dominarla, si ya no logras dominarla… lo ideal sería estar en esto, dominando la mente, desde el primer día, para poder recibir mas, pero es difícil y somos humanos, vulnerables. Cuando de verdad logras dominar tu mente, el único que queda es tu espíritu y tu espíritu es ya... no le puedes hablar, esa ya es conexión. (…) Cuando ya no hay cuerpo, ya no hay mente, solo espíritu, si te ofrendas bien, as veces el mundo invisible dice: “mm, esta bien mira, ahora si le hablo, me va a escuchar!”, porque ahora estas en otra onda. [The first day, it's okay, there is your body, you are strong, your body and your ego is strong; the second day your body begins to tire and your mind too, mind can keep you strong, if you know how to master it. Mind is super strong, it is in direct connection with the spirit. But the third day, when your mind
gets tired, it can play games with you, it's like a defense system, it makes jokes. For example: "Look, there is water and nobody notices if you drink it", or, "You are not able to breathe anymore, you have to get out of Temazcal!" You have to learn to master it, if you can no longer master it... the ideal state would be dominating the mind from the first day, in order to receive more, but it is difficult and we are human, vulnerable. When you really manage to dominate your mind, the only one left is your spirit and your spirit is there already... you cannot talk to him, it is already connection. (...) When there is no longer a body, there is no longer a mind, but only spirit, if you offer yourself, sometimes the invisible world says: "Mm, you look good, now if I speak to you, you will listen to me!", because you are in another wave.

The aim of Vision Quest training therefore is to dominate the immune defence system of the mind that obstructs attainment of a spiritual connection with the invisible world and the possibility to have a vision. To note, 'mind' in this discourse is ambivalently seen as a means to keep oneself strong and a potential source of tricks and illusions that has to be dominated. According to OttO, the difficulties of fasting from food and water, staying forced in a small place, being in silence and sleeping alone on the mountain are not the hardest obstacles to overcome; the more strenuous limits to be exceeded are above all mental. The impossible acrobatics buscadores have to undertake is the control of the mind over the mind to transcend the mind in order to recover the true self. Nevertheless the true self is very hard to find, since it is not the one who undertakes the Búsqueda, neither the one who struggles or offers himself and not even the one who succeeds to dominate himself, but the true self is beyond body and mind and arrives when there is only the ‘spirit’. According to this denegating perspective, one connects with oneself when one disconnects from one’s mind and body, that is, one finds oneself in the absence of oneself. Visions are in some way a confirmation of the achievement of this absence that enables to contact the invisible world.

Similarly to what happens in Temazcal resistance trial, the training of buscadores to ‘control the mind’ progressively improves with each day of the Vision Quest as OttO explained and ELio confirmed describing his first experience:

La Búsqueda ti spoglia, sei in contatto con te stesso, attingi a delle cose. Per esempio, inizialmente sono arrivati i diavolacci, le prime visioni sono resistenze. Il secondo giorno volevo scendere giù, c’era una voce che diceva “Stai facendo una cosa che non hai mai fatto, se lo fai muori”. Se resti, riesci a chetare questa voce e andare al di là dei limiti, dà senso di libertà, forza, potere, senti che puoi riacquistare un potere che ti toglie la mente che ti dice “Non puoi farlo”. È una rivoluzione all’interno delle tue credenze, oltre a vivere l’aspetto istintivo. [Búsqueda undresses you, you are in contact with yourself, you can draw on things. For example, initially the devils arrive, the first visions are resistances. On the second day I wanted to go down, there was a voice that said "You are doing something you have never done, if you do it you die". If you stay, you can hush this voice and go beyond the limits, it gives a sense of freedom, strength, power, you feel that
you can regain a power that your mind takes away telling you "You can't do it". It is a revolution of your beliefs and an experience of the instinctive aspect.]

The training to take control over the alarming voices warning of the dangers in the trial is the way through which ELio is able to overcome the limits of his mind. In his words the attainment of this goal of the ascetic trial enables the acquisition of power and freedom through the contact with and the domination of the instinctive aspect. The conquest of primordial instincts, to eat for instance, enables contact with the vital forces that struggle against the privation and learning to resist means gaining control over these instincts.

In the same way as in Temazcal, the Vision Quest trial is not exempt from risk; moreover, the risk is pivotal to activate the ascetic training. Fasting and not drinking water for four days, for instance, can be dangerous and practitioners are aware of this aspect.\textsuperscript{34}\textsuperscript{34} Buscadores prepare their prayers and cloth bags filled with tobacco, which they put on a tree in the area where they will remain in isolation as a means of protection (Cfr. Pict. 3.7.).\textsuperscript{35} The preservation of the ascetic practice of Vision Quest according to Lakota traditions also creates a protection from the risks of the trial, since practitioners take part with the guarantee of its ‘ancient’, ‘indigenous’, origin.\textsuperscript{36} The trial gives the opportunity to train in resistance within a controlled setting that creates the conditions to challenge the practitioner’s limits and realize a progressive self-improvement.

Each Búsqueda is given the opportunity through the trial to advance a step more on the anthropotechnical path and develop new resources in facing the extraordinary situation. For ELio, the first Búsqueda brought to him to ‘conquer’ the inner animal by drawing on a store of resources that he usually did not access:

Heriberto dice che nella prima Búsqueda che fai c’è la lotta con l’animale, ovvero la tua mente inferiore, la bestia, che ti dice “non ce la fai”. Una volta conquistato questo spazio, la bestia ce l’hai dalla parte tua, non ti rompe, come forza primordiale istintiva, vai ad attingere a un bagaglio di forze cui normalmente non attingi... per questo ho iniziato a correre dopo la Búsqueda quando sono arrivati FalCo e LiVia, era una libertà: lo puoi fare! (…) Nella Búsqueda si vive il quotidiano in un’altra modalità, per esempio il silenzio e poi un altro tempo. È una percezione differente. Sentire la differenza tra vivere

\begin{enumerate}
\item Some practitioners told me that they feared fasting, being attacked by animals or sleeping alone on the mountain and had decided not to participate since they considered it too risky. This of course, reinforced the satisfaction of those who overcame the difficulties of the trial. In the shamanic field some practitioners maintain that it is possible to feed on ‘light’ or ‘prana’, without eating, but this is not the case of buscadores; not needing to eat would render the ascetic trial meaningless for them.
\item During the preparation of the prayers, practitioners think of their personal motivation for the trial. Buscadores prepare their prayers according to a model (Cfr. Pict. 3.7.).
\item The vigilance of Raíces leaders was mainly spiritual and nobody controlled buscadores. In the Vision Quest in Pitigliano, Italy, a buscador had some trouble finding the way to come back to the camp after three days of fasting. In other settings the organizers checked up on buscadores every night, but this guarantee takes away part of the risk as well.
\end{enumerate}
Ricerca di visione Italia
5,6,7,8 Settembre 2019

COME REALIZZARE
PERIMETRO DI PREGHIERE

Prima di tutto trova un bastone, la misura ideale è di una altezza che arrivi al tuo cuore.

Annota l'inizio del filo rosso al tuo bastone. In seguito inizia a collocare i sacchetti di tabacco seguendo le indicazioni sul disegno che spiega come fare l'intreccio che lo annodera' al filo.

Metti i sacchetti ad una distanza di 2/3 dita l'uno dall'altro. cerca di non metterli troppo distanti tra di loro così che il tuo cerchio (perimetro) non venga troppo grande. Sara' importante, perché non si impiglierà i sacchetti e il filo tra di loro, arrotolare al bastone il filo con i sacchetti man mano che si vanno facendo. Il filo non si deve mai rompersi.

Physically running after the negative trial of fasting and privation was a demonstration of the vital forces that the risk and the difficulty activated; confirmation of overcoming of personal limits happened in the very final moment when his ‘supporters’ arrived to free him. The run expressed the freedom that ELio maintains he found during the Vision Quest and in fact it was literally a liberation from the constrictions imposed by the ritual. The aim to overcome his limits and acquire new resources pushed ELio to develop strategies by relying on different areas to before the discovery [“territori diversi rispetto a prima della scoperta”].

Since a shared shamanic aim is to dismantle imposed cultural patterns, the experience of living in another modality is in itself an achievement that can lead to another perception of silence and time. Being exposed to an unusual and forced situation, according to ELio, imposes structural changes by breaking habits and mental representations in order to be able not to eat and stand still for days. The needs he usually satisfies with food and information have to be satisfied feeding on ‘other foods’ as the subtle bodies, the four elements, the trees [“entrando in contatto con i corpi sottili, i 4 elementi, gli alberi”].

In every Vision Quest buscadores climb a step forward on the self-improving scale of their training. The advancement prefigures the next levels of purposes that will require to increasingly develop self-control and strategies to resist. If the first Vision Quest is a challenge towards something unknown that can provoke unexpected fears, the following trials are undertaken with greater awareness. At each Vision Quest the buscadores motivation to overcome is enhanced and supported by previous successful achievements and social expectations. The supporting group increasingly motivates buscadores at each new trial; as SaRa points out, an experienced buscador cannot give up:
A primeira Búsqueda, e acho que é assim para muita gente, vais com medo do desconhecido: o que é que me espera? Para uns pode ser controlar o medo da fome, da sede, outros medos, para mim foi o medo das carraças ou de insetos… mas depois, na segunda Búsqueda já é a seria, com consciência e responsabilidade do que estás a fazer, e não podes voltar atrás com o mesmo tipo de questões… é uma questão de viver o momento, aquele momento vai determinar o que tu vais viver, e se calhar podes ir com uma expectativa, e normalmente vais com uma expectativa, que nunca é… por exemplo, imagina, vais com medo de ter sede, mas depois não é a falta de água, mas tu tens um frio desgraçado e vai ser este o teu foco de atenção. [The first Búsqueda, and I think it is like this for many people, you go with fear of the unknown: what awaits me? For some people it can be to control the fear of hunger, thirst, or other fears, for me it was the fear of insects... The second Búsqueda is already serious, with conscience and responsibility of what you are doing, you cannot return to the same kind of questions... it's a matter of living the moment that will determine what you are going to live, and maybe you can go with an expectation, and usually you go with an expectation, which is not... for example, imagine, you are afraid of being thirsty, but then the problem is not the lack of water, but you have a terrible cold and this is the focus of your attention.]

Each Vision Quest can present unforeseen difficulties. The specific conditions of the ‘moment’ – such as cold, rain, sun, the ground type – can become the focus of attention and the main concern. The Portuguese advanced practitioners SaRa and MagDa related their experiences regarding this unpredictability. Both of them had decided to undertake the third Vision Quest in 2017 with the American families of Raíces who they met at the Sun Dance in Mexico the year before. When SaRa went in Peru and MagDa in Chile both of them experienced extreme thirst, because it was very hot and sunny. They had to find ways of extracting humidity from the air, creating shade, limiting movement and urination, taking advantage of the morning dew and so on. In their first Vision Quest in Belgium in 2015, by contrast, it was rainy and cold all the time and they have to manage a very uncomfortable situation. The second day of fasting MagDa was exhausted and completely wet. She decided to go down to the camp to get her tent to protect herself. Going downhill was hard because it was steep and slippery and many times she fell to the ground. She did not know the area well, and had to find and remember the way to go down and come back up. She succeeded, by walking very slowly, fixing visual points for reference and following straight lines in order to remember the path. Nothing impossible, but surely something adventurous, thrilling and very distant from her habitual life in the little town of Oeiras without a free moment between job, supermarket and family life.

SaRa had more fortune as she had brought with her a plastic tent, but in Belgium she suffered ‘a threat of urinary infection’:

Na primeira Búsqueda tive uma grande ameaça de infeção urinária, eu sempre sofri, comecei a ficar em pânico com aquilo, “ah meu deus não sei quê”, mas durante a noite
passou miraculosamente... estive toda a noite em pé, chovia muito, estava super desconfortável, e realmente sentia este desconforto físico e pensei “não, eu não posso estar aqui, ninguém vai me apoiar, tenho que ir ao hospital ainda vai ser um longo caminho”. Mas era de noite e pensei: “não tenho luz, vou amanhã de manhã”, mas no dia seguinte já não tinha nada. No ano passado tive muitas dores de postura. Eu durmo muito na visão da montanha, durmo mesmo. Só que perdi a posição, não tinha posição, começaram a doer-me muito as pernas, uma dor horrível. Este ano aconteceu o mesmo. Há sempre um dia, do segundo para o terceiro, é o pior dia, porque estás no meio, ouuuf, ainda falta mais uma metade... no terceiro dia já é a contagem decrescente. [At the first Búsqueda I had a great threat of urinary infection, I always suffered from this, I started to panic, “oh my God”, but during the night it passed miraculously... I was standing all night, it was raining a lot, I was very uncomfortable, I felt this physical discomfort and I thought “no, I cannot stay here, nobody will help me, I have to go to the hospital, it’s a long way”. But it was night and I thought: “I have no light, I go tomorrow morning”, but the next day I had nothing. Last year I had many pains in the posture. I sleep a lot during Búsqueda, I really sleep. But I lost my position, I had no position, my legs began to hurt a lot, a terrible pain. This year it happened again. There is always a day, from the second to the third, which is the worst day, because it is in the middle, ouuuf... the third day is already the countdown.

This account testifies to the crucial importance of time in the Vision Quest and, above all, how time is spent with the ever present temptation to give up. Urgent needs always come and buscadores have to learn how to postpone need until the urgency has passed. Another challenge for SaRa was her desire to bring many items in her backpack. It is a common problem for the majority of European buscadores. Her ideal is to go up the mountain with only a blanket, like Mexican buscadores, but for the moment she is satisfied that year after year the backpack has been lighter and she has learned to leave many unnecessary things.

This training has been fruitful in dismantling many ‘preconceptions’ that ‘imprisoned’ SaRa during her first Búsqueda:

A primeira vez que subi a montanha, havia uma coisa que me preocupava, chegar ao fim do quarto dia e reencontrar toda a gente cá em baixo sem ter tomado banho, a cheirar super mal... tive a manhã inteira à espera que me viessem buscar a desembaraçar o cabelo porque achava que estava um autêntico bicho, e assim que me sentia. É engraçado que agora, até isso se aliviou, uma coisa tão simples, os banhos ou a higiene, aquela higiene a que estamos acostumados. Eu agora saio da Visão da Montanha com a mesmíssima roupa com que estive lá em cima por quatro dias, convivo, vou comer, fazemos uma viagem até ao restaurante mais próximo, vamos no hotel, durmo essa noite e só no dia seguinte de manhã vou tomar banho. Não me sinto nem suja mal cheirosa, isso mudou também. É uma prisão, uma super limitação, que é real, porque realmente na primeira visão eu devia vir super mal cheirosa e não queria olhar para ninguém, não queria abraçar ninguém, nem que me tocassem e nestas últimas já nos aliéviam destas toxinas, não só físicas mas também dos preconceitos. É engraçado, eu estava muito na

37 In 2016 in Pitigliano, Italy, the about forty buscadores had backpack except a practitioner who went up with only a blanket.
38 During a collective dinner at the camp, the youngest son of Heriberto told a group of Raíceros that he participated in a Búsqueda bringing only a blanket as many practitioners do in Mexico.
coisa da higiene, tal e tal, mas isso prende os movimentos. [The first time I climb on the mountain I was worried to arrive at the end of the fourth day and meet people without having showered and smelling very bad... I passed all the morning trying to adjust my hair because I thought I was a real animal and I felt that way. It is funny that now even this has been relieved, such a simple thing, the baths or the hygiene to which we are accustomed. Now, I leave Vision Quest with the same clothes I have on for four days, I eat, we go to the nearest restaurant, we go to the hotel, I sleep that night, and only the next morning do I take a shower. I do not feel dirty or smelly, this has changed too. This is a prison, a huge limitation, that is real, because the first time I was smelly and did not want to look at anyone, I did not want to hug anyone and in the last ones we have already relieved of these toxins, not only physical but also prejudices. It's funny, I was taken into this hygiene thing, but this limits the movements.]

SaRa’s change happened over time and with repeated experience. At the first Vision Quest she had not even realized the embodied limitations she had learned to recognize and eventually disembodied at the time of the third Vision Quest. This is an example of what kind of toxins shamanists are willing to clean from and what are the pressures they want to lighten in order not to feel ‘limited’. As the majority of shamanists say, they aim to disembodied rather than embody since disembodiment is seen as the first step of the un-ending quest of the unlimited ‘true self’.

According to many advanced practitioners, the solitary experience in a Vision Quest raises many doubts. In her third Vision Quest, SaRa felt great anxiety on the mountain, with this she felt she was wasting her time [“porque sentia que estava a perder o tempo”]. Other buscadores say the same. This is another pressure of current times from which many practitioners desire to be free. This kind of discomfort emerges especially in situations where there is nothing to do. MagDa also felt the same discomfort, she thought about the many things she had to do in her ordinary life and asked herself why she did not stay at home with her children. She found strategies to reduce the anxiety and the inner struggle, such as, through the self-application of Reiki techniques, but it was not easy at all.

MagDa decided to undertake Vision Quest after experiencing Temazcal in Portugal because she ‘felt’ that Raíces practices could be a good path of healing and spiritual evolution. She started to dream of being on a mountain and as the repeated dreams did not stop, she had the certainty of having to go there. When she arrived in Belgium in 2015, she told all the group: my spirit decided to do the vision quest without asking me [“o meu espírito decidiu fazer a visão da montanha sem me perguntar”].\(^\text{39}\) Even if she apparently had no doubt about the decision, because the dreams were clear, nevertheless she felt obliged to go on the mountain instead of relaxing at home [“Porque assim estava quase contrariada, estou a me

\(^{39}\) MagDa told me with a certain pride that many practitioners remembered this sentence even after many years. This way of taking decisions, in fact, has some prestige and social recognition in the group since it is interpreted as not dependent on personal will.
Here, MagDa expresses clearly the challenge to gain control of one’s mind, passing through worries, fears, confusion, indecision and trying to find a balance among inner tensions and struggles that did not find a rest. Finally, she calm down, by postponing the decision to give up that persisted until the very last moment. The training helped her to manage continuous doubt and advance on the path; she went on to participate as a ‘supporter’ in Italy in 2016 and Spain in 2017.

As mentioned on Raíces website, each buscador has at least one person that supports him in the camp where the rest of the group stays and works to daily activities, like preparing woods and stones for Temazcal, getting water, organizing workshops for children, cooking, cleaning and so on (http://roots-of-the-earth.eu/about/the-vision-quest 11/12/17; Cfr. Pict.

40 Quotations from MagDa are taken from the interview in Lisbon, 07/12/17.


Supporters accompany the *buscadores* to the mountain the first day and go to take them back on the last day. During the four days of *Vision Quest* supporters have to eat, drink and pray for *buscadores*. All the group does two half *Temazcal* – two doors – at dawn and at sunset of each day. When I participated, many supporters said they felt a connection with *buscadores* on the mountain, for instance, perceiving nausea, dizziness and wanting to cry. According to OttO, supporters carry out spiritual work reconnecting with *buscadores* and putting their *ego* apart for a while.

When MagDa was in Chile, she asked Heriberto to be her supporter, but she felt a strong ‘connection’ with the Portuguese family of *Raíces* as well. The Portuguese practitioners said they perceived a great thirst through the four days when in fact she was very thirsty. When MagDa supported a friend in a Spanish *Vision Quest* she experimented with this connection by living the experience in the camp:

O trabalho de apoio é muito bonito. Em Barcelona foi mais intenso, porque eram muitos e então farto-me de comer, tinha imensa fome, passei o tempo a beber e a comer, e andava sempre com uma garrafa de água no braço. A minha amiga estava sempre a querer que eu bebesse água, e eu só pensava em água. É bonito porque a gente sente muito o que sentem as pessoas lá em cima, é um trabalho bonito. Então nos Temascais a gente tinha que chamar os nomes daquelas pessoas. [The support work is very beautiful. In Barcelona it was more intense, because there were a lot of people and then I eat a lot, I was very hungry, I spent all the time drinking and eating, I always walked with a bottle of water on my arm. My friend [on the mountain] wanted me to drink water and I only thought about water. It is beautiful because we really feel what people feel, it is a beautiful work. In Temazcal we had to call the names of those people.]

SaRa as well decided to support NaDia, a young Russian friend and practitioner of *Raíces* in Portugal. But the first day NaDia came back because she was very scared and did not want to pass the night alone on the mountain. SaRa told me that she felt disappointed because she suddenly remained without a role and she did not succeed to hide her annoyance, as she should. In Italy, a practitioner at her first *Vision Quest* came back to the camp during the first day, because she was bored on the mountain; her supporter was openly disappointed and other people commented on the decision with a certain disapproval framing it as a failure.

In general the expected procedure for *buscadores* that give up is separation from the rest of the group. A *buscador* comes back to the camp and goes directly to the *Temazcal* structure where someone is always taking care of the fire (which cannot go out for the duration of the *Vision Quest*). The *buscador* ‘purifies’ in the *Temazcal* before returning to the camp where his participation is limited and he cannot help in the daily tasks. According to *Raíces* teachings on humility, OttO always encouraged supporting practitioners who give up
or ask for help by using an anthropotechnical sentence: *It is not a human task to test the spirituality, the spiritual strength, of another human being* ["No es tarea de un humano poner a prueba la espiritualidad, la fuerza espiritual, de alguien, de otro humano"]. This attitude allows *Raíces* to be open to more people and definitely differentiate them from *Camino Rojo* competitors who propose a harder version of *Vision Quest* for warriors.41 The appreciated ‘humanity’ of *Raíces* is exemplified by OttO who, at fifteen, gave up on his first *Vision Quest* because he was not prepared. Heriberto encouraged him to try again and warned him not to undervalue the difficulties of the trial through an anthropotechnical sentence that OttO still remembers: “It’s not because you hear the trip is nice, that you will get on the train without a ticket” [“No porque lo escuches bonito el viaje, te vas a subir al tren sin boleto”]. Following this teaching and a year of preparation, OttO undertook another *Vision Quest* and succeeded by separating the *ego* and the desire to say *I did it*; through this experience he became very determined to accomplish the *Raíces* path before the age of 28.

The last day of *Vision Quest*, after the dawn *Temazcal*, supporters set off to retrieve the *buscadores* while the others prepare for the collective celebration. *Raíces* leaders warn of limiting body contact with *buscadores* and not even look at them before they enter in the *Temazcal*. OttO described the mythical arrival of *buscadores* and his words were repeated by many practitioners in the Italian *Búsqueda*:

Regresan de la montaña de la *Búsqueda* de Visión y les ves que regresan con ojos puros que bajaron y tuvieron algo bonito arriba: vale la pena! Me recuerdo mucho cuando ves alguien bajar con esos ojos profundos, ojos puros, con esta mirada fuerte que ni siquieras te atreves a mirarlos en los ojos, porque los miras es los ojos y te dan ganas de llorar de ver esa pureza. [They return from the mountain of *Vision Quest* with pure eyes and came down as if they had something beautiful: it is worth it! I remember when you see someone coming down with those deep eyes, pure eyes, with this strong look, you do not dare to look them in the eyes, because you look at their eyes and want to cry for this purity.]

The purity and the determination of the eyes is the proof that *buscadores* have changed their status. However, only the supporters and those who have received the *fire*, can see the *buscadores* arrive because they enter directly in the *Temazcal* in a moment when the rest of practitioners cannot access the space. *Buscadores* are welcomed by all the group only after the *Temazcal* for the collective celebration.

The end of *Vision Quest* actually marks a passage since in this moment usually Heriberto passes the *fire* to advanced practitioners and some of the *buscadores* effectively

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41 According to ArPo the leaders of *Camino Rojo* didn’t talk to people who had not undertaken *Vision Quest* organized by them which was based on a scale of increasing difficulty from 4 to 12 days of fasting with the intake of ayahuasca, Cfr http://www.fuegosagrado.eu/visionquest (24/08/18).
change their status in the group. It happened in the Italian Vision Quest, where Heriberto passed the fire of Temazcal to OscaR, who had concluded the cycle of four Vision Quests. The story of OscaR in the group is representative of the ways people bind themselves to Raíces through a personal and a collective commitment. OscaR participated at the first Kiva organized by Raíces in Chile in 2009 where he met Heriberto, Nubia and OttO. Since OscaR felt that shamanic practices re-connected him with the body, he decided to undertake the first Vision Quest in 2010 as a personal challenge. The hard trial brought great changes in his life, for instance, he decided to stop drinking alcohol. OscaR’s decision also convinced his alcoholic mother to stop drinking as well. This change had an even greater impact confirming to him the effectiveness of the path and motivating him to accomplish the four Vision Quest cycle for the well-being of his family. When OscaR moved to live in Italy with MiNa, he had concluded his second Vision Quest and asked OttO how he could continue. OttO suggested he created a local group in order to advance on the Raíces path and offered to travel and guide Temazcal in Italy. OscaR told me that he felt he had a mission for himself, his family and Raíces. When he succeeded to form an Italian group, OttO helped him to organize a Vision Quest in Italy. Finally Heriberto gave him the fire to conduct Temazcal. Overcoming of the compelling ascetic trials is a way to acquire the symbolic capital and social recognition that enables assuming a position of power in the group. Even if OttO claims that in Raíces there are no chiefs, as it is not an institution, the familia raizeira has a hierarchy that is recognized by the group; clearly demonstrated in OscaR’s rise to a leader role in the local group.

The transfiguration of successful buscadores is the validation that they have achieved control over themselves and above all, over their fears. Ideally, according to OttO, control is gained of the fear of the fears, leading to an acceptance of the transience of human life:

En las tradiciones del Norte América hay una palabra bastante bonita que de hecho son dos palabras, “Oka ei”, que significa “hoy es un buen día para morir”. La verdad es sí, es un buen día para morir: todo lo que hagas, hágalo con honor, con amor, como si fuera un buen día para morir, pues nos vamos. Es como tener la convicción... si tu vas a una Búsqueda de Visión y vas con esta convicción que vas a entregarlo todo: “si aquí me voy a morir, me voy a morir por algo bueno”, entonces así tu ves de frente la vida, el mundo invisible y todo. [In North America traditions there is a pretty nice word that in fact are two words, "Oka ei", which means “today is a good day to die”. The truth is yes, it is a good day to die: everything you do, do it with honor, with love, as if it were a good day to die, then we leave. It is like having the conviction... if you go to a Vision Quest with the conviction to deliver everything: “If I am going to die here, it is for something good”, so you see life in front of you, the invisible world and all.]

Acceptance of the possibility of dying honorably during a Vision Quest trial is a form of immunization to the fear of the death, as memento mori stoical technology of the self.
provided in different ways (Foucault 1988). According to Sloterdijk, the control over the fear of death is present in all anthropolotechnics, and it is a crucial goal of ascetic techniques aimed to surmount the insurmountable:

Whoever challenges death, then, in order to integrate it into the domain of ability, will – if successful – have proved that it is within the realm of the humanly possible to surmount the insurmountable - or become one with the terrible. That is why all exercises directed against the controlling of the soul by intense affects, unexamined habits and the illusions of the tribe and the forum lead ultimately and inevitably to measures against the subjugation of all subjugations, the possession of all possessions: the subordination of humans to the power of death. This can occur in two different ways: firstly through an asceticism, which leads to an artificially acquired attitude of being able to die. (Sloterdijk 2009: 200-1)

Ascetic practices are a way of exorcising the fear through a set of situations of ‘controlled risk’ conceived for the purpose of auto-immunization as an alternative to vaccination through accidental life events which may engender similar immunological effects but can lead as well to unpredictable consequences.

3.4. Transfiguration in Sun Dance

Sun Dance is a very famous ceremony from Lakota tradition that has been studied by American anthropologists since the end of the 19th Century. It became a symbol of the revival of Native North-American traditions in the 70s. Raíces Sun Dance is a metissage of Lakota traditions that were ‘passed’ to Tigre Pérez and globally disseminated by Heriberto and Nubia (Cfr. Pict. 3.9.). SaRa presented the Sun Dance performed in Mexico in 2017 as a mestizo practice or mix of traditions oglaka-mexica [“é uma mistura, porque também tem a energia da Nubia e do Heriberto que também trazem a sua tradição e não a vão a por de lado para seguir aquilo, é uma mestiçagem, eles chamam oglaka-mexica”]. Raíces’ Sun Dance is a very strong ascetic trial where dancers have to fast and dance for four days and, those who want to can ‘offer’ their blood. The focus of the following analysis is based on the accounts of practitioners who participated as dancers and supporters in the Sun Dance organized by Raíces de la Tierra in collaboration with Lakota spiritual leaders in Ixtlan del Rio, Mexico, in

42 First anthropological studies Cfr.: Lowie (1914), Spiers (1921), Shimkin (1947); 70s revivals Cfr. Znamenski 2007.
43 In 2014 a cycle of Sun Dance started in Ixtlan del Rio, Mexico, under the supervision of Lakota leaders. In 2017 the fire of Sun Dance was officially passed to Heriberto who received the authorization to transmit it.
Familia Raíces de la Tierra
Lakota Oglala
México Sundance 2017
Centro Ceremonial Raíces de la Tierra, Ixtlán del Río
CUARTO AÑO

Purificación 16 al 18 Julio
Día del Árbol 19 Julio
Danza 20 al 23 de Julio

Loretta Afraid of Bear
Altar Danza del Sol de Black Hills
Tom Kanatakeniata Cook
Líder Danza del Sol
Milo YellowHair
Portavoz Reserva de Pine Ridge, SD
Heriberto Villaseñor Goméz
Líder Raíces de la Tierra.
Nubia Rodríguez García
Líder Raíces de la Tierra.

Informaciones, participación y apoyo
registroraicesdelatierra@gmail.com
Familia Raíces de la Tierra
Lakota Oglala
México Sundance 2016
Centro Ceremonial Raíces de la Tierra, Ixtlán del Río

Purificación 10 al 12 Julio
Día del Arbol 13 de Julio
Danza 14 al 17 de Julio

Loretta Afraid of Bear
Altar Danza del Sol de Black Hills

Tom Kanatakeniatte Cook
Líder Danza del Sol

Heriberto Villaseñor
Líder Raíces de la Tierra

Milo YellowHair
Portavoz Reserva de Pine Ridge, SD

2016 and 2017. The ceremony was held without explanation, so not every practitioner understood what was happening and knowledge of the practice came through repeated participation.

According to ELio and LiVia, who participated as supporters for the Austrian Dancer MeT at his first Sun Dance in July 2016, the preparation started some days before with the teepee ceremony and cutting of a tree. The day before the beginning of the Sun Dance, the leaders of the ceremony choose a great tree to cut. Each dancer hit the tree with an ax and many people around helped with ropes and levers because the tree must be handled carefully so it does not touch the ground. Felling the tree lasted many hours until it came down into the arms of the group. Dancers caught a splinter of the tree and altogether with helpers transferred the tree to the sacred place of the ceremony. The tree was put by the group in the central hole of the sacred circular arena above a terracotta brazier filled with the heart of the bison (a mix of herbs). After, dancers tied ropes and their bags of prayers to prepare the tree for the ceremony. In 2016, there were around 70 men and 40 women dancers who were separated by gender. Male dancers were guided by Milo and Tom, helped by Heriberto and OttO, while female dancers where supported by Loreta and Nubia. Dancers made four dances per day of about two hours each, and rested in the breaks. They performed four chants, one for every direction, by following the rhythm of drums (unplugged and amplified as well), while supporters assisted outside the sacred space. Men and women were separated and stationed in rows opposite each other along a circle radius according to dispositions that ELio did not grasp. The ceremony was performed by advanced and beginner practitioners who learned from the experts by imitating and trying to understand the logic:

Dopo la prima danza, c’è il momento della chanupa, la pipa sacra. Ogni danzatore ha del tabacco e una pipa e fa dei giri nello spazio sacro. Di tante cose si capiva che c’era una logica, ma da fuori non si capiva tanto quale. Io ho imparato imitando gli altri. I danzatori vanno da un lato del cerchio in cui possono avere contatti con gli esterni che si avvicinano e passano alle persone che vanno lì o del tabacco, che poi ognuno va a bruciare al fuoco, o la pipa. A me hanno passato la pipa. Devi accenderla e passarla agli altri, ognuno dei quali te la ripassa e tu continui a offrirla, finché la pipa non è finita e allora la riporti al danzatore. (…) Questa è la cerimonia più arcaica e tradizionale che ho visto in vita mia. Tradizionale, nulla che potesse rifarsi al mondo nuovo, da come si muovevano, come stavano, con un ordine preciso. [After the first dance, there is the moment of the chanupa, the sacred pipe. Each dancer has tobacco and a pipe and he spins in the sacred space. It was clear that there was a logic in many things, but from outside it was not clear which one. I learned by imitating others. Dancers go to one side of the circle where they can have contact with the those outside who approach and pass them or

44 In 2016 the teepee ceremony with peyote where dancers usually sing and pray by invoking totem animals was canceled due to delays in the organization.
45 In 2016 the leaders were Milo (Lakota), Tom (Mohawk), Loreta (Lakota) and Don Alfonso (Wirrarika).
the tobacco, which then is burnt on the fire, or the pipe. They passed the pipe to me. You have to turn it on and pass it to the others, who pass it back to you and you continue to offer it, until the pipe is finished and then you return it to the dancer. (...) This is the most archaic and traditional ceremony I have seen in my life. Traditional, nothing that could refer to the new world, how they moved, how they were, with a specific order.]

ELlo here, is sure that all the actions in the dance have meaning, and that the experts have to know and transmit it to others through the repetition of the experience or possibly informal explanations by the Elders. Many times in the account he repeated that Sun Dance is manifestly a very ancient tradition that has conserved the original ritual aspects which he perceived by observing the movement of the dancers. He interpreted the precise but mysterious order as a sign of ‘ancestralness’ that was not corrupted by the modern world enabling people to take part in a very ancient practice as it was. This accords with what OttO taught and the aim of Raíces to preserve native spiritual traditions. The informal learning through imitation, repetition and embodiment of gestures contributed to the charm of the ceremony. ELlo was fascinated by not knowing what would happen, and the element of surprise enhanced the already strong emotional participation. As ELlo told me, the first and last dances were “choreographic” and, it was only during the second and third dances that blood sacrifices could be undertaken by the dancers who had declared it in advance:

All’inizio della seconda danza, che poi si chiama prima danza di offerta, chi vuole può decidere di fare un’offerta di sangue. (...) Quelli che offrono vengono segnati con 2 dita rosse sul viso (2 linee sulla guancia dal gesto che fa). I danzatori hanno polsiere e cavigliere di erbe e in testa una corona di salvia e piume di aquila. Hanno anche un osso di aquila con cui fischiano. Il danzatore incarna l’aquila. Le polsiere e le cavigliere servono come protezione e come punto di contatto perché i danzatori non possono essere toccati, solo si può toccare le polsiere. Il supporto degli altri è molto importante perché in questa cerimonia stanno sempre vicino ai danzatori, non come nella Búsqueda che sei da solo. Al centro del cerchio stendono una pelle di bisonte con il teschio poggiato sopra. Quelli che offrono si avvicinano all’albero, ciascuno col proprio legnetto lavorato con punte stondate. Quelli che infilano i legnetti (principalmente Heriberto e OttO) si mettono i guanti e aprono un bisturi usa e getta, fanno due taglietti e poi infilano il bastoncino dentro. (...) I danzatori vengono messi vicino all’albero e restano un po’ in contatto con il tronco, poi ognuno ha l’aiutante che porta la corda e il danzatore nel suo spazio… prima si contano quante persone vogliono fare l’offerta e poi si mettono le corde nel cerchio, poi vengono attaccate le persone. (...) Poi Tom fa fare 4 movimenti, come se fosse una respirazione. Si devono avvicinare all’albero e poi si allontanano, la quarta volta camminando all’indietro, fanno un movimento deciso in modo che la carne si stacchi… il bastoncino salta… zampilli di sangue… intorno ai danzatori che offrono ci sono gli appoggi che aiutano, in quei momenti fa forza, fai vento col ventaglio… Dopo che si è staccata la carne, l’assistente riporta il danzatore al centro, viene staccata la pelle rimasta attaccata e viene messa nella mano del danzatore, poi viene messa una polvere cicatrizzante, e poi i pezzi di pelle e carne vengono offerti sotterrando sotto l’albero. [At the beginning of the second dance, which is called the first offering dance, those who want can decide to make a blood offering. (...) Those who offer are marked with 2 red fingers on the face (2 lines on the cheek). Dancers have wrist bands and anklets of herbs
and a wreath of sage and eagle feathers on their heads. They also have an eagle bone that they whistle with. The dancer embodies the eagle. Wrist bands and anklets serve as protection and points of contact because dancers cannot be touched, only the wrists can be touched. The support of helpers is very important because in this ceremony they are always close to the dancers, unlike in the Búsqueda where one is alone. In the center of the circle they spread the skin and the skull of the bison. Those who offer come close to the tree with a piece of wood with a rounded tip. Those who insert the sticks (mainly Heriberto and OttO) put on gloves and open a disposable scalpel, make two small cuts and then insert the stick inside the body. (...) Dancers are placed next to the tree and remain in contact with the trunk for a while, then the helper carries the rope and the dancer to his space... first, one counts how many people want to offer and then the strings are put in the circle and people are attached. (...) Then Tom makes 4 movements, like he is breathing. They must approach the tree and then move away, the fourth time walking backwards, with a determined movement so that the flesh comes off... the stick jumps... jets of blood... around the dancers there are the helpers, in those moments they give support and wave with a fan. (...) After the flesh comes off, the helper takes the dancer back to the center, the skin is detached and placed in the dancer ‘s hand, then a healing powder is put on the wound and the pieces of flesh are offered and buried under the tree.

As a supporter, ELio stayed at the side of MeT and danced for him until reaching a sort of trance. But the moment of offering flesh was very hard for him too and provoked the sort of vertigo mentioned by Sloterdijk. The first impression of ELio was a sort of disgust, a feeling of nausea, that other practitioners refer to as well. The account of ELio was quite controlled in describing the details of the experience. LiVia in contrast describes emotionally swooning from the initial shock and incredulity at the joyful collective sharing of triumph of the dancers:

La nostra prima reazione dopo il primo che si è staccato la pelle è stata: ma questi sono scemi! Non abbiamo detto proprio così, ma insomma ci sembrava una cosa così lontana dalla vita, poi abbiamo iniziato a capire: quando sei lì, sei un trionfo, sono tutti intorno a te che ti incitano, è una forza. ([Our first reaction after the first one that came off the skin was: but these are fools! We didn't say so, but it seemed something so far from life, then we started to understand: when you are there, you are a triumph, they are all around you, to incite you, it is a force.]

For both of ELio and LiVia, the reaction of the dancers and the group was essential in understanding Sun Dance offering as a personal and social triumph rather than a self-imposed suffering. The transfiguration of the dancers who did not appear to suffer while they were clearly suffering, was very impressive and gave to ELio the key as to how to frame the flesh offering as different to ‘sacrifice’:

Vedi le loro reazioni, c’è chi lo fa in modo forte, come una sfida, chi col sorriso, con gratitudine, li vedi l’offerta, non lo vedi come sacrificio, non li vedi sofferenti. Anche se soffrono, ma in quel momento la maggior parte dei danzatori ha facce serene o fiere. ([You see their reactions, there are those who do it strongly, like a challenge, who with a smile,
with gratitude, you see the offer, you don't see it as a sacrifice, you don't see them suffering. Even if they suffer, but at that moment most dancers have serene or proud faces.

The reaction of the dancers made LiVia change her mind about the suffering in the offering act that eventually seemed to her less strong than she first had thought. Through the overall experience, she understood that *Sun Dance* is not a ritual of pain but rather a *ceremony to celebrate life* as a birth:

> La *Sun Dance* è un rituale di vita, non è un rituale di dolore, sembrava un parto, come energia, sangue e vita... poi guarda loro non sentono il dolore, sono così drogati! Ti fai male molto di più in altre cose della vita. No, l'energia era di vita, nel momento in cui si stacca la pelle è come se fosse un parto, dolore e vita, offri qualcosa di te. Loro dicono che è un rituale di inizio anno, i Lakota dicevano che è una cerimonia per celebrare la vita, infatti ti attacchi all'albero della vita. [*Sun Dance* is a ritual of life, it is not a ritual of pain, like a birth, like energy, blood and life... they do not feel pain, they are so doped! You hurt yourself much more in other things in life. No, the energy was of life, at the moment when the skin comes off it is like a birth, pain and life, you offer something of yourself. Lakota say it is a ritual for the beginning of the year, a ceremony to celebrate life, in fact you are attached the tree of life.]

As LiVia noted, dancers were as if ‘doped’, and not because they had consumed drugs, but because the entire situation provoked a state of great exaltation in everybody. Through the participation at the *Sun Dance* LiVia understood that this ascetic trial is a celebration of life rather than a negation of it. As Nietzsche (2006 [1887]) highlighted, ascetic trials are an affirmation of life where the wound reactivates the vital forces. In this case the wound, literally, became a reason for life by binding even more practitioners to the *Raíces* path and ascetic anthropotechnics through their blood and flesh. The *Sun Dance* experience cannot be forgotten and the scars are the impressive embodied mark that distinguish the dancers from other practitioners.

As the *Sun Dance* is the hardest ascetic trial, the risks are even greater. According to OttO and other dancers, the greatest risk of *Sun Dance* is becoming addicted to it. The triumph after the trial pushes practitioners to want to go beyond new limits ‘in a compulsive way’, according to SaRa. After her second *Sun Dance*, she decided to have a break realizing that the continuous challenge to overcome oneself can become vicious:

S: E realmente agora posso dizer que é quase um vício. Neste ano, a *porta* da morte é também a *porta* do vício, a parte obscura, senti muito o vício de quase podermos levar ao extremo a entrega de jejum que pode quase pôr-te à morte, senti um toque, muito evidente. [I can actually say that it is almost a vice. This year the *door* of death is also the *door* of vice, the dark side, I felt very much the vice of being able to carry to the extreme the delivery of fasting that can almost bring death, I felt a touch, very evident.]
L: Porque um vício? [L: Why a vice?]
S: Um vício porque parece que não conseguimos deixar de continuar... eu sinto que se calhar se me dissessem “Olha tens que ficar mais dois dias”, eu ficava lá 2 dias e iria encontrar qualquer coisa em mim para resistir e aguentar, mas chega a um ponto em que o corpo, a máquina, vai falhar. Mas o que eu sinto disso é que é quase uma coisa compulsiva, chega um momento em que te perdes a noção que tens que estabelecer um limite de preservação. Foi este que eu vivi este ano. Porque é fácil mergulhar. [Vice because it seems that we cannot stop continuing... maybe if someone had said to me "you have to stay two more days", I would have stayed there for 2 days and wouldn’t have found anything in me to resist, but there is a point where the body, the machine, will fail you. I feel that it is almost a compulsive thing when you lose the notion that we need to set a limit on preservation. This is what I experienced this year. Because it is easy to dive.]

Advanced practitioners can become addicted to challenge the human limits until risking the survival of the ‘machine’/’body’. This discourse once again confirms that the practice to get rid of the mind turns out to be, rather, a practice of the will through the prostration of the body. Preservation of life brings in itself the risk of putting in danger this same preservation. For this reason Tigre Pérez set a limit to four Sun Dances in order to prevent zealous practitioners from ‘the risks of spirituality’ to which OttO referred:

[Referring to Sun Dance] Porque te digo de cuatro y no mas? Cuatro para cerrar el circulo a las cuatro direcciones, las primeras cuatro son para hacer tu camino. También hay algo que es peligroso... lo que platicábamos antes, la espiritualidad es peligrosa, es un arma de doble filo, porque el beneficio propio es peligroso, hay que estar bastante atento. Por ejemplo, en la Danza del Sol, si haces una ofrenda de carne, de sangre, de todo, te quedan unas cicatrices y hay gente que vive de eso, llega, se quita la camisa y tiene como 50.000 cicatrices en el pecho, en los brazos, en las espaldas y ya se creen como dioses, se creen que ni los pedos se les huelen...estos están enfermos, esto es el peligro. [Why do I say four and no more? Four to close the circle to the four directions, the first four are to make your path. There is also something that is dangerous... we were talking before that spirituality is dangerous, as a double-edged sword, because one’s own benefit is dangerous, one must be very careful. For example, in Sun Dance, if you offer your flesh, blood, everything, you have some scars and there are people who live for that, to take off the shirt and have about 50.000 scars on the chest, in the arms, in the backs and they believe they are like gods, they even believe that their farts do not smell... they are sick, this is danger.]

As OttO explains, the remedy of spirituality is beneficial and dangerous at the same time, so one needs to be cautious not to get sick of the same cure. Chronic healing is not only un-ending but can also make the practitioner fall ill. This risk is not accidental but inherent to the cure and a possible, calculated, consequence of the healing action; the remedy requires a remedy.

Limits, however, have exceptions. Both LiVia and ELio told me that at the Sun Dance many dancers had more than the canonical eight scars, including Heriberto. According to OscaR, it is possible to ask permission to undertake more than four Sun dances in specific
cases, for instance, when a relative is at risk of death or something very extraordinary happens. Setting limitations is also a means to protect the Raíces family from inner division and competitiveness. As ELio noted, at the beginning of the Sun Dance in 2016 Heriberto pointed out the ‘pure intent’ of the ceremony for which the sacrifice is not even necessary in order to balance the competition of many young Mexicans determined to offer. In Raíces framing the ‘pure’ and main purpose of Sun Dance is to live the experience as a spiritual means to possibly receive visions, as Tigre Pérez and Heriberto. Having a vision, however, is an extraordinary experience that rarely happens. The possibility for everyone to have a vision, whilst only a few actually having it, motivates practitioners to progress towards the heights of those extraordinary models.

Understanding the offering is another key to the motivation of practitioners. In Raíces, the offering is meant as an exchange and a request to the spiritual world. With OttO, for instance, the offering has become even a pleasure that he did easily in order to bring benefits to his family:

[referring to Sun Dance] Yo le veo como un gusto, porque para mi ofrendarle cuatro días de ayuno al Creador porque mi familia este bien todo el año, porque mi familia tenga vida, tengan abundancia, mi gente, mi circulo de Raíces tenga vida, tenga abundancia con sus familias y todos, yo con todo gusto, cariño y amor, decisión, honor, humildad, se lo ofrezco al Creador con gusto, fácilmente, porque nos da tanto todos los días y porque no ofrecerle un poquito de ti? Se vuelve muy egoísta, no mas pedir, pedir y pedir, y que das? Hay una frase bonita: “si tu solo rezas cuando estas en problemas… mi amigo, estas en problemas!” [For me it is a pleasure, my offering of four days of fasting to the Creator for the well-being of my family all year round, for my family to have life and abundance, for my people and Raíces to have life and abundance with their families, I offer it to the Creator with pleasure, affection and love, decision, honor, humility, easily, because he gives us so much every day and why not offer a little bit of you? It becomes very selfish, just ask, ask and ask, and what do you give? There is a beautiful phrase: "If you only pray when you are in trouble… my friend, you are in trouble!"]

This do ut des logic is confirmed by many advanced practitioners. MagDa felt many positive effects of Sun Dance in her life, health, family and work. She participated in the Sun Dance for the first time in 2016, and for the second time in 2017, when she decided to offer. The female offering is considered a recent tradition and is more soft and less visible: a thin thread is introduced to the arm of the dancer and is ripped out the last day leaving a small scar. The exclusiveness of Sun Dance to male dancers is framed by SaRa as a balancing of the fact that women already have giving birth and menstruation as a form of blood offering:

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46 OttO said Raíces removes the fire from leaders who pursue personal realizations and do not follow the rules.
A oferta nas mulheres não é obrigatória, e nos homens também não. Mas as mulheres têm uma função na Dança que é mais de amparar, suportar, porque a Dança é um desafio para os homens. É para que os homens possam viver aquilo que as mulheres passam pelo portal do parto, da entrega do seu sangue. Todas as mulheres entregam os seus codigos à terra, comunicam com ela através do seu sangue, e os homens não têm esse portal aberto, então, ali é a oportunidade que eles têm de estar em contacto muito direto com o mundo espiritual. As mulheres o que fazem é amparar deste lugar de sabedoria, porque é esse o seu papel, a sua estrutura, e por isso as mulheres não têm que oferendar, porque todos os meses oferendam. Em todo caso há esta possibilidade aberta para oferendar um bocadinho da pele do braço para um pedido muito concreto, algo de muito específico, uma coisa muito forte, quase de vida ou de morte. [Blood offer is not compulsory for women, nor for men. In Sun Dance women have the role to support, because the Dance is a challenge for men. Men can experience what women pass in the portal of the birth. All women offer their codes to the earth, communicate with her through their blood, and men do not have this portal, then, this is the opportunity for them to be in direct contact with the spiritual world. Women support this place of wisdom because it is their role, their structure and for this reason women do not have to offer, because they offer every month. However, there is the possibility to offer a little piece of arm skin for a very concrete request, something very specific, something very strong, almost life or death.]

SaRa particularly emphasized the female role in Sun Dance, for instance noting that Nubia brought the sacred pipe and started the ceremony. Like other Portuguese female practitioners, SaRa is involved in organizing spiritual therapies on the ‘feminine’ and supporting the work of Nubia with women. Even if the female offer is presented as an exception for a special, tragic, moment, in the Portuguese group four women decided to undertake it as a form of personal healing. According to MagDa’s account, the first Sun Dance healed a part of her body that had received surgery seven years previous. She perceived the healing through a localized warm sensation that provided to her a thorough cleaning [“uma grande limpeza”]. In her second Sun Dance, devoted to the family, according to the same framing of the four doors of Temazcal, MagDa decided to offer for her sons:

A primeira Dança é o início, para me curar, para estar bem, a segunda é a porta da família, eu ofereci para os meus filhos, só na segunda Dança, para eu conseguir de alguma forma que eles consigam melhorar, que eles consigam ter outro tipo de… sigam o caminho deles para serem felizes e não entrem no mesmo esquema que toda a gente entra, tipo há que casar, ter filhos, trabalhar, na na na… e isto tem que ser para toda a gente, porque ninguém está feliz, eu acho. Há outras coisas que são importantes e o mais importante é que eles sejam felizes. (…) O que eu sinto da oferta é… bom, se consigo transformar em palavras, o que me está a aparecer em termos de imagens, porque é só isso que eu posso dizer, é sangrar para os meus filhos, que não é nada que eu não tenha já feito. [The first Dance is the beginning, to heal, to be well, the second is the door of the family, I offered for my children, only in the second Dance, so that they can improve and

47 During her travels to European Raíces events, Nubia was asked by Italian and Portuguese practitioners to organize seminars and activities especially for women, such as female Temazcal or rituals for menstruation (Cfr. Pict. 3.10.). In a conversation I had with Sofie della Vanth, a German therapist focused on female spirituality who attended a workshop with Nubia, she criticized Raíces ‘conservative’ female models in contrast to her ‘feminist’ approach to shamanic practices (Faltignano, 18/06/17), Cfr. also http://www.retedelledonne.org/mappatura/%20/cultura-e-filosofia-femminista/9000-sofie-della-vanth (28/05/18).
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La niña interior: La inocencia, la espontaneidad, el juego y la alegría.
La doncella: comienzo de la menstruación, la sensualidad y sexualidad como sagrado.
La madre: conexión con la creación, la entrega, el amor incondicional, la contención y la mujer que nutre.
La abuela: mujer sabia portadora del conocimiento.

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Nubia Esperanza Rodriguez

ASOCIACIÓN FAMILIA RAÍCES DE LA TIERRA
ESPAÑA - PORTUGAL
Pict. 3.10. C: ‘Moon Temazcal’ for women with Nubia, Montespertoli, 07/02/17; https://www.facebook.com/pg/radicidellaterra/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2154865024636302&ref=page_internal (13/09/18)

have other kind of... follow their path, be happy and do not enter the scheme as everyone else, like marry, have children, work... this should be for everyone because no one is happy, I guess. Other things are important but the most important is that they are happy. (...) What I feel about the offer... if I can turn into words what is coming to me through images, because that's all I can say, is to bleed for my children, nothing which I had not already done.

Since she undertakes the ascetic path to get out of the scheme which makes people unhappy, she desires the same out-of-scheme path for her children, because she wants them to be happy; the most important thing for her. When I asked MagDa how her teenage sons (13 and 17 years old) reacted to her offering blood, she answered that firstly they have thought that she was crazy by expressing their worries [“és maluca? Vais ficar quatro dias sem comer nem beber?”]. When she explained that she made the offering for them, they were very touched [“super emocionados”]. The benefits of the offering regarding the happiness of her sons will only be known in the future, but MagDa is sure that the positive effects on her job are already evident because her business improves significantly after each Sun Dance:

Na verdade o que acontece realmente é que cada vez que vou à Dança do Sol, começo a ganhar mais do que ganhava, começo a ter mais trabalho do que tinha e a minha relação com os meus filhos melhora. Eu podia demonstrar, faço as contas todos os meses, isto é da gestão, e se não fosse também faria, tenho as coisas muito organizadas, um ficheiro com o registo com todas as informações de todos pacientes, quantas vezes vão, em que dia é que vão, é uma coisa que fiz sempre no banco e portanto agora faço para mim, abro uma aplicação, construo e faço aquilo… e é engraçado que depois da Dança do Sol o meu trabalho aumenta, quase o dobro, eu vi e disse “Wow! Como è que é possível?” [What really happens is that after every Sun Dance, I start to earn more than before, I work more and the relationship with my children improves. I can demonstrate it, I do a financial balance every month, I have everything well organized, a file with all the information of the patients, how many times they come, which day, I used to do it for the bank and now I do it for myself with a program... and it's funny, after Sun Dance my work increases, almost the double, I noticed this and said: “Wow! How is it possible?”]

MagDa worked in a bank for almost 20 years and after her divorce decided to change job by training herself to work as freelance therapist (Reiki, osteopathy, massages). She maintained her banking administrative habits and documented the improvement in her new business. In seven years she earnt more with her new career than in the bank, as she proudly told me. After each Sun Dance she was more determined and able to change the things that did not work. A very important change was reducing pressure to work that she felt and that caused anxiety and a status of continuous effort, while now, by doing less, she is incredibly obtaining more:

Porque às vezes a gente sente ansiedade, “para conseguir isto, tenho que trabalhar muito”, que é uma coisa que eu também tenho, ou também tinha, e ainda tenho, tinha e tenho, que
é: eu tenho que me esforçar muito, tenho que trabalhar muito, estudar muito, é tudo muito, para conseguir o que quer que seja, e não é verdade [she laughs], também não é, tipo, não faço nada e consigo tudo [she laughs]. Eu tenho um nível de exigência tão grande que às tantas isso limita também e foi isso que comecei a aprender. Às tantas penso: tenho que conseguir isto, isto, e isto, porque só assim consigo chegar ali e isso não é verdade, é uma verdade que a gente põe na cabeça ou nos põem quando somos miúdos, sim, “Para tirar uma nota boa, tens que estudar”, para não sei quê tens que não sei que mais... e para esta coisa que tens que fazer, tens que te esforçar. Esta coisa que para trabalhar tens que suar, não é assim, não tem que ser assim, e esta ideia faz com que nos impeça de fazer menos e ter mais. Porque às vezes é só o abrir, o estar disponível para o que vem e aceitá-lo, que é muito mais importante. [Because sometimes we feel anxiety, "to achieve this, I have to work a lot", which is something I have, or have had, and still have, that is: I have to work hard, I have to study a lot to get anything, but this is not true [she laughs], I don't want to say that I don't do anything and I get everything [she laughs]. I have such a high level of requirements that it becomes also a limit and that's what I started to learn. I think: I have to achieve this and that to get there, but this is not true, this is a truth that people have in mind or that is put on their head in childhood, "to have a good grade, you must study"... and you have to work hard and sweat, but it's not like that, it should be that way, and this idea prevents us from doing less and having more. Because sometimes it is just opening, being available for what comes and accepting it, it is much more important.]

Doing less for MagDa is the reduction of the duration of a therapy sessions from 90 mins to one hour. This enabled her to work better because she is focused on the very important aspects of healing and patients take her work more seriously. The consequence is more successful therapeutic results. Overcoming the trial enhanced self-confidence and provoked a positive domino effect; not only did MagDa’s income almost double, but the outcome for her patients improved. She now has more patients and more time for consultations.

The material benefits after Sun Dance are framed as a success that confirms the positive effect of the ascetic trial and motivates practitioners to advance on the anthropotechnical path. ELio, however, expresses a certain ambivalence about the do ut des explanation:

Ora ho capito il perché. Lo puoi capire solo mentre sei lì, è un'offerta che hai, come dare te stesso, offri una parte di te stesso... è un'esperienza spirituale fortissima, danzare, senza mangiare né bere, tutto è un'offerta... se esiste reciprocità tra i mondi, hai dato e riceverai, anche se non è per quello che si fa. (...) Tante cose succedono quando sei lì, tanto che non puoi far altro, metti da parte te stesso, puoi ricevere visioni, come Tigre Pérez, la visione della Kiva l’ha avuta in una Sun Dance. Sei lì per dare: quanto sono disposto a dare di me stesso? Per cosa? Per la mia vita, per il senso dell’esistenza, per la famiglia. [Now I understand why. You can understand it only while you are there, it is an offer, like giving yourself, you offer a part of yourself... it is a very strong spiritual experience, dancing without eating or drinking, everything is an offer... if there is reciprocity between the worlds, you have given and you will receive, even if it is not done for that reason. (...) So many things happen when you are there, you can't do anything else, you put yourself aside and you can receive visions, like Tigre Pérez, he got the vision of Kiva in a Sun Dance. You are there to offer: how much am I willing to give of myself? For what? For my life, for the sense of existence, for the family.]
The participation at the Sun Dance for ELio is a validation, and a naturalization, of OttO’s Bible. ELio uses almost the same words as OttO, albeit, as an apprentice, in more uncertain phrasing. He affirms the reciprocity of offering/receiving as crucial to understand the participation at the trial [“hai dato e riceverai”], but at the same time as not the main purpose of Sun Dance [“anche se non è per quello che si fa”]. In some way the do ut des explanation does not seem to fully satisfy ELio and pushes him to look for other reasons.

During fieldwork I met only a few people who had undertaken Sun Dance, especially outside Raíces, because it is a hard trial that not everybody is able to undertake. Furthermore it is a commitment that has to be repeated four times and often requires traveling to America. The only practitioner I interviewed who participated at a Sun Dance outside Raíces is ArPo of the informal DIY G group. The experience was ‘atrocious’ for him and totally unexpected, as initially he did not have the intention to undertake the sacrifice, but during the second Sun Dance he was transported by the inexorable flux of events:

A: Io l'ho fatto la seconda volta, son partito con un’idea totalmente... di non farlo, ma perché non penso di averne bisogno... epoi... eravamo solo io e G. quell’anno... mentre lui andava a comprare le cose, le compravo anch’io, poi siamo andati il giorno prima a farci i nostri legnetti, i nostri ossicini, in una carrozzeria ci hanno dato gli strumenti, e poi mi sono trovato li con la pipa e tutto, ed è stato atroce. (...) Al round che sta a te, ti dipingono due cerchi rossi, poi quando sta a te, ti prendono con le piume e la salvia, ti fanno sdraiare su una pelle di orso, non capisci un cazzo, arriva uno che ti piglia e prende con un bisturi, tac, tac, ti taglia e ti infila i bastoncini velocissimo. [I did it the second time, I left with an idea totally... not to do it, because I don't think I need it... and then... I was with G. that year... while he was going to buy things, I bought too, then we went the day before to make our sticks, our little bones, in a garage they gave us the tools, and then I found myself there with a pipe and everything, and it was atrocious. (...) On your turn, you are painted with two red circles, then when it’s up to you, they take you with feathers and sage, make you lie on a bear’s skin, you don't understand shit, someone comes along with a scalp, tac, tac, he cuts you and inserts your sticks very fast.]
L: E hai sentito male? [And did you feel pain?]
A: sS io ero li ahh [grimaces] poi ti rimettono in piedi, ti portano davanti al posto dove devi stare, ti mettono questa corda che è dura e pizzica [face of disgust], te la stringono e fa già male, e te che cazzo... e ti hanno detto vai veloce indietro, vai a tutta, e te vai veloce indietro e bunk, rimbalzi, perché la pelle è durissima... [he laughs]... un male [he sucks]... ti incitano accanto... e tu devi cominciare a caricarti di un... per me un’energia totalmente inesplorata, i denti devi digrignare, picchia e mena, rimbalza, un dolore atroce, dopo un paio di volte che ero li, mi hanno chiamato, mi hanno coinciso un po’ la pelle, e allora mi son tirato indietro e pam è saltato uno, poi di corsa indietro e risaltato anche l’altro e dopo sei... è fatta, è fatta, gocciola il sangue, ma poi non senti più male, sei totalmente (... ) è stata una cosa... enorme, enorme, per me, e non aspiro a rifarlo, però ne ho capito il senso e va bene, è una libera scelta che le persone fanno, un dono, come dire, al grande spirito di questo atto, è un attimo capito che soffri, cioè, tutto sto ambaradan, l’alberone, la gente, sei in un posto dove non puoi dire “no scusate, ho sbagliato” [he laughs]. [Yes, I was there ahh [grimaces] then they put you back on your feet, they take you to the place where you have to stay, they put you this rope that is hard and pinches...]

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[face of disgust], they hold you and it already hurts, and you what the fuck... and they told you to go back fast, and you go back fast and bonk, bounce, because the skin is very hard... [he laughs] a great pain [he sucks]... they encourage you... and you have to start moving you with a... for me a totally unexplored energy, your teeth must grind, you bounce, an atrocious pain, after a couple of times that I was there, they called me and cut the skin, and then I pulled back and, pam, one stick jumped, then I ran back and the other stood out too and after you are... it's done, it's done, blood drips, but then you don't feel pain anymore, you're totally (...) it was... huge, huge, for me, and I don't aspire to do it again, but I understood its meaning and it's okay, it's a free choice, a gift to the great spirit of this act, you suffer for a moment, that is, everything, the tree, the people, you are in a place where you cannot say "no sorry, I was wrong" [he laughs.]

L: E qual é il senso? Il senso che hai capito… [And what is the meaning? The meaning you understood…]

A: Inesprimibile, capisci che è una cosa forte, per la nostra cultura ovviamente siamo nella follia. [Inexpressible, you understand that it is a strong thing, for our culture this is obviously madness.]

Outside the heroic and mythic framing of Raíces, this account indicates more clearly the raw quality of the trial, but also confirms the crucial role of the group, and the importance of the ritual framing; both are necessary conditions for the compelling effect that prevents last minute re-thinking. ArPo’s account reveals how the events follow one after the other without the possibility of escape and how the dancers are stunned, almost doped, as LiVia also observes. If the suffering in itself is not unbearable, all the preparation, the collective encouragement and the required self-imposition of the sacrifice enhances the heroism of the act in front of the group. The exaltation of the ceremony is in fact contagious even in those who merely observe. ELio told me that LiVia was tempted to offer blood right up until the last moment because if a practitioner understands the reason why ‘they’ do it, or if you are transported by the flux of events like ArPo, you are screwed [“LiVia era tentata fino all’ultimo, perché alla fine ti ci fottono, cioè sei li e capisci perché lo fanno”].48

To note that practitioners who participated in Sun Dance at a certain point of the interview tried to explain me why people do it, without my asking, as if an explanation was necessary (unlike Temazcal for example). Even when the practitioners say they understood the meaning of the ceremony, from their accounts emerges a need to find an explanation that is difficult to express in words. As LiVia and ArPo said, as well as the sons of MagDa, for ‘our’ culture this is madness. Practitioners can not ignore the perspective derived from ‘our culture’, but at the same time, in order to go through the trial, and interpret it as sanity, they have to forget it in some way. The magic of denegation is that something is and is not at the same time.

48 The last day of Sun Dance supporters as well can decide to offer if they want.
3.5. Conclusion

The shamanic self-fashioning process is an un-ending path of chronic healing that in Raíces de la Tierra is realized through a long and arduous program of increasing difficult ascetic trials. The ascetic modality realizes in particularly effective manner vertical tensions that reinforce the motivation to overcome further trials. Every next step of elevation foreshadows a new horizon of goals towards an unreachable perfection. Ascetic training enables the progressive embodiment of the shamanic paraskeuē and the necessary layers of denegation that support the anthropotechnical path of auto-immunization. Exposure to controlled doses of risk in the trials create the immune defenses to face up to life difficulties. Ascetic anthropotechnic mode in this context, is based on the implicit assumption that symbolic immunization works better than the immunization that might result from direct confrontation with these events. Ultimately this perspective hides and affirms at the same time that life itself is dangerous and difficult. The hardest trial, the Sun Dance, in fact, comes to the acrobatic denegation of suffering transforming to joy through what practitioners call a transfiguration. This denegation is crucial to envisioning a better life, that is, a correction to the life already lived, that leads to a more real, authentic, sane life. Nevertheless, this procedure itself is not exempt from risk; protection from potentially risky protection is necessary. Hence, enhancing a perpetual immunological anthropotechnical process.

Where Chapter Two analyzes the process of learning and progressive embodiment of layers of denegation for individuals, this Chapter documents the crucial role of the group and the institutionalized program of trials which are maintained by the group in reinforcing the anthropotechnical path of chronic healing. In this case auto-immunization is both personal and collective. Individual progression on the anthropotechnical path gives the impression of having improved self-control and this achievement is rewarded by the group and it is a way of reinforcing the group itself. Denegation here, also protects from the risks of iatrogenesis from cure, that is, of the specific therapeutic path. Raíces supports the path of Tigre Peres as the most worthy, but many other anthropotechnical paths are possible. Next Chapter will focus on the interconnection of individual and group strategies in the global shamanic field that is ambivalently driven by both collaboration and competition.
The first European travelers who met Tungus ‘shamans’ in Siberia depicted human beings with animal attributes (Znamenski 2007: 5-6; Flaherty 1992: 23; Cfr. Pict. 4.1.); the shamans appeared so weird and mysterious that their humanity was doubted.

How has the perspective changed to the point of now considering those ‘primitive’, almost inhuman, shamans a resource to ‘re-learn’ to be human? The imaginative drive of the shaman is considered a way of returning to an assumed natural ‘humanity’ because many current socio-cultural conditions are perceived by cosmopolitan practitioners as inhuman effects of a sickening acculturation. Shamans now represent a means to ‘de-civilize’ oneself because, they were previously essentialized as ‘primitive’ by those who considered themselves ‘civilized’, including historians, artists, theologians and many anthropologists among others. This inverted polarization played a crucial role in inspiring the healing antidote metaphor, that has
gradually become an anthropotechnical self-fashioning therapy. This Chapter traces how the shamanic metaphor of the antidote to modern inauthenticity has begun to take on the role of an uprooting therapy from urban middle-class lifestyles.

This appealing shamanic metaphor took shape above all among Romantic elitist artists supporting an anti-modernist worldview in 19th Century and assumed an anthropotechnical role in the counter-cultural backgrounds of the 1970s. From these small groups, the shamanic antidote has been increasingly disseminated to larger audiences all over the world. This viral circulation, as will be shown, both facilitates and endangers the anthropotechnical path of uprooting from the mainstream.

The shamanic metaphor enabled to create an attractive universal brand which framed different therapies as expressions of the same antidote to modern inauthenticity; today, a polychromy of versions abound. Despite the unifying brand of ‘shamanism’, different people and the therapies they conduct or participate, articulate their own strategies as the most ‘authentic’ in struggle with one another. I present here, a background of current strategies and practitioners from my fieldwork, to understand for who and in which contexts shamanic anthropotechnics are attractive and function as an antidote to the ‘inauthentic’ nine-to-five modernity.

My findings largely confirm the counter-cultural roots of the shamanic field, even though the large scale dissemination of practices involves an increasingly differentiated audience. However even in unspecific counter-cultural versions of shamanic practices the emphasis remains on their ‘extra-ordinariness’ which is specifically intended for ‘ordinary’ people. The global dissemination of the practices as a fashionable phenomenon is perceived by many advanced practitioners on one hand as a successful achievement, and on the other hand as a threatening vulgarization that puts into question their ‘exoticism’. The viral circulation of shamanic practices in ambivalent way both engenders the need for the shamanic antidote and facilitates its accessibility. It strengthens the credibility of the healing efficacy of the therapies, but at the same time raises the risk of disactivating it. Large scale access of the practices results in a reduction in the therapy’s distinguishing characteristics as an anthropotechnic that uproots from the mainstream. This ambivalence requires shamanists to continuously elaborate new strategies to protect the anthropotechnical ‘authenticity’. Nevertheless, the fast modality of the current conditions of possibility enhance the sense of

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1 According, to Brabec de Mori the ongoing touristification of ayahuasca practice “facilitates the introduction of capitalism to native societies” disseminating rather than opposing the viral ‘capitalist’ illness in the last Amazonian reserves of ‘non-westerners’ (Brabec de Mori 2014: 226).
‘inauthenticity’. Shamanic practices in fact circulate in unequal ways through cosmopolitan networks and processes of viral dissemination and touristification.

The opposition between authenticity and inauthenticity is a product of and an antidote to late-capitalist structures that shamanists claim to go against in open denegation of the evidence to the contrary. The quest for authenticity is a pervasive trait of current marketing strategies of late-capitalist society that itself induces a sense of inauthenticity and the remedies to overcome it. To avoid this inauthenticity, practitioners produce and swallow the shamanic antidote of authenticity which paradoxically reinforces the perception of inauthenticity and the need for chronic healing.

4.1 Surfing the shamanic metaphor

The words ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ have been strategically conceptualized over time in different ways according to the historical contexts, the agenda and the positions that contributed to producing them. Drawing on the detailed genealogies by Flaherty (1992), Hutton (2001), Von Stuckrad (2002, 2005, 2010), Znamenski (2007), Boekhoven (2011) and Botta (2018), this section documents the historical processes of extraction, abstraction and exportation of shamanic practices that have led to current uses. Due the immensity of the topic, I strategically focus on the aspects of this complex and controversial process that are significant in understanding the use of the shamanic metaphor as anthropotechnical antidote. Particular attention is paid to the ways shamanic practices have been framed and disseminated outside the specific local contexts by the first European travelers and scholars. My focus is above all on the “western imagination”, as Znamenski (2007) puts it, whose essentialization is parallel and dependent on what is categorized as ‘non western’. As highlighted in Chapter One, the western/non-western dichotomy that arose from this imagination is crucial to understanding how the shamanic antidote is activated.

The shamanic metaphor can be traced to a process of generalization, misrepresentation and exploitation mainly in colonialist contexts where ‘orientalizing’ descriptions of the ‘other’ have been often used as a means of domination (Said 1995 [1978]; Steinmetz 2004, 2008). The word “schaman” appeared among intellectual Europeans from the late Sixteenth Century in the accounts of German-speaking explorers and scientists who were hired by the Russian Tsar Peter the Great to explore and map Siberian territory with the aim of “searching for
mineral resources, measuring temperatures, collecting and recording exotic specimens and antiquities (...) including such “bizarre” superstitions as shamanism” (Znamenski 2007: 6). These first accounts of “ecstatic séances performed by native Siberian spiritual ‘doctors’ mainly depicted shamans from the Christian perspective as “priests of the devil” (idem).

This characterization proved useful for Russian colonial domination that through the ‘invention’ of Siberia and Siberians generalized and grouped at the same time, local people and traditions (Botta 2018: 44-45). Russian colonizers essentialized ‘Siberians’ as ‘primitives’ to be educated and baptized, with the project for them to acquire a ‘civilized’ status, like Europeans. This led to emphasize Tungus traditions, to the European eye, as being regarded as the most weird and exotic of the region:

As I mentioned in the preface, the word shaman originated from the language of the Tungus (Evenki), one of the Siberian indigenous groups. Russian settlers in Siberia chose this expression and eventually began to apply it to all native spiritual healers. One may wonder why the newcomers came to prioritize this Evenki expression over other indigenous words that described spiritual practitioners. I guess this happened because, unlike other natives, the Evenki reindeer nomads resided literally all over Siberia. Russian and Western explorers encountered pockets of their communities from central Siberia to the coast of the Pacific Ocean. In addition, the Evenki pleased the eyes of explorers with their beautiful clothing and tattoos. Eventually, to European travelers, the picturesque Tungus came to symbolize the archetypical Siberian natives. This could be a reason that the newcomers naturally chose the Evenki shaman over other tribal definitions as the generic term for all Siberian spiritual practitioners. (Znamenski 2007: 3-4; Cfr. Pict. 4.2.)

Tungus shamans appeared exotic to Russians as well. Peter the Great repeatedly asked for a ‘Siberian magician’ to be brought to Moscow to perform ‘ecstatic drumming’ for court entertainment (Znamenski 2007: 9). It is noteworthy that the same Russian essentialization of Siberian people was used in Nineteenth Century by the local separatist scholars Potanin (1882) and Iadrinzev (1886) to affirm a different cultural identity from Russian nationality, and then to claim independence for Siberia (quoted in Znamenski 2007: 39-52).

Christian interpretation, however, attributed to Siberian shamans the ability of evoking ‘evil’ forces. This was recognition of the shaman’s position in the religious field, albeit an antagonistic ‘demonic’ one. While the studies by Diderot and other Enlightened scientists sponsored by Catherine The Great about a century later, depicted the shaman as a ‘juggler’, an ‘impostor’ and a ‘deceiver’(Boekhoven 2011: 34-5). Siberian shamanic practices at any rate, continued to fuel images of weirdness and mystery. Catherine herself, resorted to Tungus practices as a subject for a play, The Siberian Shaman (1786), that ridiculed the shamans as part of a strategy to gain the reputation of an ‘enlightened’ monarch in Europe.
FIGURE 1.1. The Tungus (Evenki), whose settlements were scattered all over east-central Siberia and whose picturesque attire impressed explorers, gave shamanism its name. Johann Gottlieb Georgi, *Das eröffnete Russland, oder Sammlung von Kleidertrachten aller im Russischen Reiche wohnenden Völker* (St. Petersburg, n.p., 1774), plate “Tungus Hunter.”

*Picture 4.2.: Znamenski 2007: 4.*
Significantly, these cliches produced by Christian and Enlightened intellectuals - the main ‘culprits’ of what is essentialized as ‘western thought’ by many contemporary practitioners - have been gradually inverted. The same aspects that were criticized by Christian and Enlightened intellectuals became instead appreciated in the Romantic artistic milieu in the 18th and 19th Centuries. The works of Herder and Goethe are prime examples of this inversion that raised the shaman to religious virtuoso, “a reminder of those ancient ecstacies and artists who were able to transgress ordinary reality by means of music and poetry” (von Stuckrad 2002: 773; Cfr. Pict. 4.3.).

In Herder’s work the genealogical root of the shaman-artist took shape in the emphasis on authenticity, according to the Romantic anti-modernist perspective. ‘Primitive’ shamans were considered ‘authentic’ precisely because they were ‘not civilized’ and belonged to a folk-life that was perceived at risk of disappearance in the capitalistic race of ‘modern’ progress. This stress on local traditions, folk-life, nature, weirdness, irrationality, was heightened by the nostalgia of anti-modernist artists, like Herder, who strategically positioned themselves as “shamans of a higher civilization, claiming a distinct form of capital in the process” (Boekhoven 2011: 37; Cfr. also Flaherty 1988). Herder had a pivotal importance in promoting the discourse on authenticity of ‘genuine’ local traditions that has become one of the roots of shamanic cosmopolitanism and of anthropological studies on folklore. ‘Folk’ traditions in fact were presented as corresponding to the idealized Romantic image of ‘nature’ opposed to sophisticated and artificial ‘culture’. In Romantic Naturphilosophie, the idea of ‘primitive’ people of the past and present took place as “the best human condition” following a natural way of living (Boekhoven 2011: 37). This inversion of polarity led to the articulation of a new discourse on shamans as examples of an assumed premodern and more authentic humanity.

The emphasis on nature and indigenous people as ‘more’ natural than urban society was strongly linked to the theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2002 [1755, 1760, 1762]) who similarly searched for authenticity and emancipation from culture which, he identified, was the cause of all problems and, above all, the corruption of bon sauvages. According to Stocking, Rousseau anticipated the importance Malinowski would attribute to anthropological fieldwork in the 20th Century:

Long before Malinowski wrote the validating mythic charter of modern anthropological fieldwork (1922; cfr. Stocking 1983), Rousseau had evoked an image of the fieldworker as the philosophical student, shaking off ‘the yoke of national prejudices’, undertaking
FIGURE 1.5. Romantic image of Tungus shamans. A nineteenth-century German lithograph from a Russian album. Fedor K. Pauli, Description ethnographique des peoples de la Russie (St. Petersburg: F. Bellizard, 1862), 72–73, plate.

great voyages to acquire direct observational knowledge of 'the likenesses and the

Unsurprisingly Lévi-Strauss recognized the genealogical role of Rousseau as the "founder of
the sciences of man" (Lévi-Strauss 1976 [1962]: 33) who placed the first stone of the
discipline identifying “the central problem of anthropology, viz, the passage from nature to
culture” (Lévi-Strauss 1991 [1962]: 99). Rousseau’s investiture as the philosophical founder
of anthropology by one of the recognized fathers of anthropology enabled Lévi-Strauss to
legitimate both the anthropologist as “the only thinker qualified to understand the cultural
blinders that humans wear” and his own personal Rousseau-like narrative style (Luhrmann
1990: 396). Indeed, the majority of shamanists fully subscribe to the bon sauvage myth as
well as to an anthropological questioning about cultural blinders that they themselves want to
eradicate by wearing the invisible shamanic glasses (Cfr. Chapter One).

The shamanic metaphor gradually extended outside and inside academia with effects
of mutual interconnections. In the academic field, the construction of ‘shamanism’ as an
object of study became increasingly detached from just the Siberian context (Tomášková
2013: 2). Castren’s (1853, 1857) studies on Finnish folklore and Karl Emil Jung (1877) with
reference to Australian healing practices were both significant (Boekhoven 2011: 42; 53).
Those as other ethnographic studies have contributed in extending the domain from the
practices of Tungus ecstatic drummers to different practices from all over the world. Although
the risks of using generalized and vague terms such as “shamanism” was pointed out by many
anthropologists at different times (Van Gennep 1903; Shirokogoroff 1924; Evans-Pritchard
1971 [1956], Geertz 1973 [1966]), this alert did not prevent the extension of the use of the
concept becoming a category of inquiry in researching ‘indigenous’ societies from the New
World.

In her genealogy of Americanist anthropology, Regna Darnell pointed out that the
study of the “American Indian” has been a foundational theme of a rising national
anthropology that tended to “homogeneize the New World aborigines” in order to delineate
their distinctive identity in the global cultural panorama of ‘native’ people (Darnell 2001: 9).
Moreover, the American Indian was a resource that outside of academia, was used to construct
a national identity distinguished from European roots. In both cases, the construction of the
American Indian identity was based on the concealment of the recently finished Indian wars.
Focusing rather on the past of the disappearing traditions of Native Americans,
anthropologists did not investigate the tragic situation of the contemporary recent history, and
in so doing, strategically concealed that “urgent practical problems of coexistence with and administration of the Indians created the broad scope of the discipline” (Darnell 2001: 8). Meanwhile outside of academia, colonial perceptions of the primitive Indian enemy changed from devaluing to celebratory representations, from the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890 to the first tourist tours to Hopi’s *Snake Dance* of 1905, as if the tragedy of the massacre only some years before had never happened (Jenkins 2004: 65-9).

Shamanic practices indeed have been an object of study through which the field of anthropology has built its foundations. American anthropology in particular became strongly linked to native Amerindians. In the process of an increasing generalization of shamanic practices, Franz Boas deserves a special mention because he has marked some of the peculiarities of the shamanic field. Shamanism\(^2\) was a promising object of study for Boas because it supported his diffusionist theory in opposition to evolutionist theories. The *Jesup North Pacific Expedition* (1897-1902), with the mission to collect material for the *American Museum of Natural History*, represented for Boas an opportunity to find cultural continuity between the Asian and the American continents. Despite the expedition finding more differences than similarities, in the subsequent Museum exhibition and newspaper articles discussing the findings, the concept of shamanism was extended and amplified, far beyond Boas intentions, towards a genealogical theory of religion (Botta 2015).

Boas’ relationship with his main informant, George Hunt aka *Quesalid* is significant here. Hunt was a mestizo of English-Tlingit origin who married a Kwakiutl/Kwakwa’wakw, living for some periods with the Kwakiutl.\(^3\) Hunt received the shamanic ‘call’ at 16 years old after a serious illness and was initiated under the name of Quesalid. After a few years, he stopped practicing as a shaman and started to work as a Boas’ informant and collector of Kwakiutl artifacts. *I Desired to Learn the Ways of the Shaman*, published by Boas in *The Religions of the Kwakiutl* (1930), described the apprenticeship of a Kwakiutl shaman from the native point of view, without mentioning his role of informant under the name of George Hunt (Botta 2015: 47). This hidden backdrop sheds a different light on Quesalid’s apprenticeship and his skeptical intention to understand whether shamans use tricks. Taussig (2003) in his analysis wittily emphasizes the problematic relationship between anthropologist and

\(^2\) The word “shaman” was introduced in US by Leland 1992 [1884] and other scholars who traveled in Europe. Boas started to use the term in 1888 and gradually it substituted the popular “medicine man” (Botta 2015). However the transition from “medicine man”, mainly used as synonymous of “deceptive Catholic priest”, to “shaman”, as “a particular stage of human development”, marked a more neutral stance towards Amerindians (Jenkins 2004: 56).

informant was not questioned at all by Boas. Taussig’s point is that Boas was skeptical of native reports about their traditions because he thought they adapted descriptions to appear more ‘rational’ to the foreign scholar’s eyes, but he did not apply this skepticism to his main informant. It is another example of how, as Taussig indicates, the concept of ‘shamanism’ has been shaped through an intercultural meeting deeply inscribed in the colonial relationship and its denegation (Taussig 2003: 135; Cfr. Chapter One).

Quesalid’s account was the first documented adaptation of shamanic practices in what Taussig calls an “auto-ethnography of magic” which, at that time, was mainly addressed to an audience of anthropologists and cultivated readers (idem). I Desired to Learn the Ways of the Shaman was further disseminated through Lévi-Strauss’ The Effectiveness of Symbols (1963 [1949]). The popular French anthropologist quoted and interpreted Quesalid’s account to validate his theory, without questioning the problematic anthropologist-informant relationship identified by Taussig (2003) and Botta (2018). The text became an ethnographic classic and a posteriori it may be also considered the precursor of the prosperous genre of shaman-anthropology later developed by Castaneda and his followers. The auto-biographical account supports Lindholm’s theory about the recurrent ambivalent involvement of anthropologists in other’s practices alternating between the disenchanted standpoint of the inquiring scholar and the presumed enchanted worldview of the ‘native’ in order to grasp it (Lindholm 2002). Anthropological studies, in ambivalent way, contributed to nurturing the shamanic metaphor with doses of enchantment and disenchantment. As highlighted in Chapter One, denegation enables the coexistence of a disenchanted enchantment that can be even conscious for some contemporary practitioners. This denegation functions in Quesalid’s intriguing story in presenting the skeptical gaze being seduced through an apprenticeship of tricks of the shaman and discovering the enchanting effectiveness of magic.

The Effectiveness of Symbols is noteworthy also because it has contributed to the academic ‘rehabilitation’ of shamanic practice to a wider audience by equating it with psychoanalysis. The definitive validation of ‘shamanism’ as a worthy object of study was achieved by the eminent historian of religions Mircea Eliade, who was the first scholar to formulate an explicit universal theory in the essay Le Chamanisme et les Techniques

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4 According to Taussig, Boas published the more skeptical of the four versions of the account that made no reference to the involvement of Quesalid in ecstatic performances (Taussig 2003: 135). Znamenski also refers to a previous version of the account in which Hunt/Quesalid was not skeptical at the beginning, pointing out that the conversion of the apprentice from skepticism to trust in shamanic healing was constructed by Boas and others scholars, including Lévi-Strauss and Ellenberger (Znamenski 2007: 60-62).

Archaïques de L’extase (1951). Referring to previous generalizing researches, without ever having seen a shaman himself, Eliade disentangled different specific traditions from their cultural, social, historical and geographical contexts as expressions of the same phenomenon (Znamenski 2007: 173). Following a non-historical approach, Eliade defined ‘shamanism’ as an archaic and universal religion and identified the ‘essence’ of all shamanisms as a technique to reach and control ecstasy. Although Eliade’s approach has been largely criticized and his concept of ecstasy has been questioned, especially with regard to Tungus practice,⁶ Le Chamanisme had a very significant international influence on the history and on-going framing of shamanic theories and practices. His definition and categorization of shamanism was voiced time and time again by practitioners in my fieldwork (Cfr. Chapter Two and Three).

Eliade’s definition of “shaman” was popularized and entered public idiom as a traditional and universal ritual operator – throughout all times and cultures (Botta 2018: 123). This concept of universal ‘shamanism’ not only facilitated the application of the term to frame practices from all over the world but even supported their extraction and adaptation outside local contexts. Eliade’s essentialization of ‘shamanism’ as an inherent condition of humanity is a crucial key in legitimizing North-American and European ritual operators when they call themselves “shamans”. The dissemination of shamanic practices outside their local settings brought academic scholars to distinguish between ‘neoshamanism’ and ‘traditional shamanism’ to preserve traceable contexts in which ‘shamanism’ is used as analytical category (Botta 2018).⁷ This distinction however is controversial and not easy to apply in a global context where ‘indigenous’/’western’ or ‘traditional’/’neo’ is a pivotal dichotomy in both shamanic studies and practices (Cfr. Introduction).

Without the intention to support the controversial distinction between ‘non native’ and ‘native’ shamans, it is important to note that the shamanic antidote is activated in contexts in which the practices have an uprooting effect. Cosmopolitan practitioners are looking for a resource to change life and emancipate themselves from their social backgrounds. As the example of Raíces de la Tierra has shown, practitioners ambivalently search for uprooting/rooting practices that can be performed both by ‘native’ and ‘non native’ operators (Cfr. Chapter Three).

⁷ The distinction between ‘indigenous’/’western’ or ‘traditional’/’neo’ is a pivotal dichotomy in both shamanic studies and practices (Cfr. Introduction).
⁸ Without the intention to support the controversial distinction between ‘non native’ and ‘native’ shamans, it is important to note that the shamanic antidote is activated in contexts in which the practices have an uprooting effect. Cosmopolitan practitioners are looking for a resource to change life and emancipate themselves from their social backgrounds. As the example of Raíces de la Tierra has shown, practitioners ambivalently search for uprooting/rooting practices that can be performed both by ‘native’ and ‘non native’ operators (Cfr. Chapter Three).
Ultimately, Eliade’s definition gave shape to the concept of universal shamanism, attainable by anyone but, the consequent global dissemination of transcultural shamanic practices then posed the question: What is ‘shamanism’ and in which contexts it can be applied? Academic studies influenced the dissemination of shamanic practices as much as the extended practices brought out the need for new definitions in a play that is on-going in the generation of new discourses that generate new practices and so on.

4.2. Swallowing the uprooting anthropotechnic

While the concept of ‘shamanism’ was gradually losing consistency and specificity, the shamanic metaphor begun to nurture an intriguing imagery where fear and curiosity, suspect and admiration, enchantment and disenchantment were equally involved. Boekhoven indicates, the works of artists, philosophers, anthropologists and theologians largely contributed to create the metaphor of ‘shamanism’ for ‘primitive’ religions “representing both the ills of supposed primitive irrationality and a potent antidote to the supposed ills of excessive rationality” (Boekhoven 2011: 64). The idea of civilization as an ‘illness’ was already present in the artistic theories and in the ethnographic accounts on Siberian shamans by the abstract painter Vassily Kandinsky who ambivalently looked for a new art in the charming traditions of old Russia (Weiss 1995). Notably, the interest in shamanic practices has been both modernist and anti-modernist, performing as a resource for moving away from the transformation of modern times and as a trampoline for a change, that is, a denegation. The desire for re-enchantment arose from disillusionment and the idea that ‘before’ enchantment was possible, as in the processes pointed out by Latour (1991) regarding ‘modernity’. Anti-modernist aspirations found in the US and European counterculture of the 70s fertile ground with practitioners seeing shamanic practices as a means to changing their present circumstances. In these conditions, for an increasing number, shamanic practices assumed an anthropotechnical role of guidance and self-transformation. This section traces the main processes that led to the anthropotechnical use of shamanic practices from elitist contexts to contemporary global mainstream dissemination.

Shamanic practices spread through many roots including anthropology, art, religion, psychology, ecology, ‘indigenism’ and psychedelics (Cfr. Znamenski 2007, Boekhoven 2011). The focus here is rather on how the intersections of different domains with frequent transitions in and out the academic borders have been crucial in the processes of constitution
of the shamanic field. At the end of 19th Century, the role of the *Theosophical Society* founded in New York in 1875\(^{10}\) was highly influential among US and European intellectuals, lawyers, doctors, artists, teachers in disseminating popularized texts from counter-hegemonic sources of knowledge extracted from ancient, exotic, non-Europeans or Pre-Christian traditions. This included, Buddhism, Yoga, Indian philosophy, Sufism, Gnosticism and shamanic practices (Tingay 2000: 37-50; Boekhoven 2011: 57-63). Tingay observes, theosophical circles were alternative not only to dominant scientific and catholic paradigms but also to freemasonry and other esoteric groups. The Theosophical Society was both different for its female leadership and the capillary cosmopolitan organization through local circles.\(^{11}\) Other elitist transnational networks like *Eranos* in Switzerland and the *Bollingen* Foundation in the US also strongly contributed to the popularization of shamanic practices, including through subsiding the work of Eliade.\(^{12}\)

Experimentation with shamanic practices started in these elitist circles, where artists and intellectuals became to play with exotic and other’s practices. According to the genealogy of Boekhoven, the first ceremony with ‘sacred plants’ was performed in 1912 by the anthropologist Harrington who brought the psychedelic peyote to the wealthy house of the cosmopolitan patron Mabel Dodge Luhan\(^{13}\) for a private ceremony with friends in New York (Boekhoven 2011: 80-8).\(^{14}\) Dodge Luhan and her Native North-American husband energized a community of artists, called the *Mud-Palace*, inviting to Taos in New Mexico intellectuals including, Carl G. Jung, David H. Lawrence, Mary Austin and the anthropologist and poet Jaime De Angulo. The *Mud Palace* meetings are an example of the elitist cosmopolitan milieu where shamanic practices became attractive. Artists in search of creative means, like Mary

\(^{10}\) The *Theosophical society* was founded by the Russian aristocrat, intellectual and medium Helena Blavatsky and the American military Officer, lawyer and journalist Henry Olcott; Cfr. Tingay 2000, Boekhoven 2011.

\(^{11}\) Tingay (2000) points publications of translations into English as the common language promoted the worldwide dissemination of the Theosophical network as well as the dissemination of English as a language of intercultural exchange.

\(^{12}\) The *Eranos* network was made up of cosmopolitan artists, theosophists, esotericists, writers, political radicals, pacifists, vegetarians, feminists and religious scholars who established communes on the *Mountain of Truth*, Switzerland, in the 1930s. Van der Leeuw, Radin, Jung and Gurdjieff as well as Eliade participated at *Eranos* conferences. As Boekhoven points out, these scholars balanced precariously with feet in two fields, for instance, Radin was considered too ‘skeptic’ and ‘rational’ in the *Eranos* circle and too romantic by some of his academic colleagues (Boekhoven 2011: 139-46).

\(^{13}\) The wealthy and cultivated Mabel Dodge Luhan traveled in Europe and lived in Florence for some years. Her ‘international reputation as a cultural catalyst” increased when she moved to New York and became a point of reference for the Greenwich Village avant-garde (Rudnick 1996: 7). In 1917, she went to live in Taos where she met and married the native American Tony Luhan who contributed to constructing the Mud-Palace (Cfr. Pict. 4.4.).

\(^{14}\) Anthropologists had a crucial role in linking shamanic practices and psychotropic plants, for example, the contribution of ethnobotany about peyote and psilocibes in Mexico (Lumholtz 1902, Schultes 1938, Wasson 1957, Cfr. Pict. 4.5.). Lumholtz describes the experience as stimulating and used the word “shaman” (Znamenski 2007: 54).
FIGURE 2.3. Mable Dodge Luhan and Tony Luhan in Taos, New Mexico, 1924. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Pict. 4.4. A: Znamenski 2007: 56

Georgia O'Keeffe, Taos Pueblo, 1929. Oil on canvas, 24 × 40 inches.

Pict. 4.4. B: Rudnick 1996: 132
Laura Gilpin, Residence, Mabel Lujan, Taos, c. 1935. (c) 1981, Laura Gilpin Collection, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

Pict. 4.4. C: Rudnick 1996: 176

Figure 2.4. Bert G. Phillips, a member of the Taos artistic community, with his Indian model. Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Neg. 40392.

Pict. 4.4. D: Znamenski 2007: 57


**Figure 4.1.** *Psilocybe mexicana* mushrooms were widely used by the Mexican Indians in their shamanic sessions. Watercolor by Roger Heim. Courtesy R. Gordon Wasson Collection, Harvard University Herbaria.

**Figure 4.2.** R. Gordon Wasson receives his ration of *psilocybe* mushrooms from Maria Sabina during her nighttime spiritual séance. Photograph by Alan B. Richardson. Courtesy R. Gordon Wasson Collection, Harvard University Herbaria.

*Pictures 4.5. B: Znamenski 2007: 123; 125*
Austin, who dressed in American Indian clothes and wrote books inspired by Native Americans and ‘medicine women’. In her books Austin identified art, nature and ‘Indianness’ as means to re-gain lost authenticity (Boekhoven 2001: 82-3). Likewise, De Angulo whose studies on Indian languages and music or his pioneering ‘going native’ methodology, were not received with enthusiasm in academia and found a warmer reception in artistic circles who appreciated his ‘weird’ behavior. De Angulo also idealized Native American Indians as the hope of salvation for the uprooted ‘white American’:

The white American must preserve the Indian, not as a matter of justice or even of brotherly charity, but in order to save his own neck. The European can always tie back to his own mother soil and find therein the spiritual pabulum necessary to life. But the American, overburdened with material culture, is threatened with self-destruction unless he can find some way to tie himself to his own mother soil. The Indian holds that key. (De Angulo quoted by Rudnick 1996: 97)

In the 1910s-1930s these exotic meetings were exclusive of an elitist milieu, but overtime they became more accessible and attractive to the middle class, in the same trajectory outlined by Simmel (2016 [1911]) for fashion, and by Hannerz (2006) for cosmopolitan tastes. In this way, elitist experimentation of shamanic practices became increasingly within the reach of the middle class looking for strategies of distinction; what was in the 1930s affordable to only a few individuals such as Mabel Dodge Luhan, became accessible to “thousands of middle-class Westerners” (Znamenski 2007: 289). The Bollingen Foundation supported this dissemination through the publication *The Hero with a Thousand of Faces* (1949) by the mythologist Joseph Campbell, who depicted shamans from all over the world as heroes of self-psychotherapy (Boekhoven 2011: 153). Shamanic practices were presented as a resource to change life and the ‘extra-ordinary’ shaman as a spiritual-psychological guide for ‘less significant individuals’:

Jung, Eliade, Campbell and other members of the Bollingen network saw themselves as intellectual and spiritual aristocrats, whose erudite scholarly knowledge about shamanism surpassed other academic forms of knowledge about shamanism, as their scope was wider. (…) Their elitism, essentialism, primitivism and religionism stand out as the main features of their interpretation of the world, which, they supposed, was endangered by disenchantment and, in Eliade’s terminology, the ‘terror of history’. Their shamanologies can be characterised by the same features, as their image of the shaman represented the thinker, the archaic mystic and the privileged guide of less significant individuals, who depended on the shaman’s capacities to introduce them to essential and universal truths. Without the shaman, people became lost in trivial historical configurations. (idem: 2011: 160)

Bollingen elitist intellectuals with the aim of educating the masses, contributed to the framing of shamanic practices as a means of life guidance. The practices introduced by cosmopolitan artists with a de-structuring purpose began here to be used to structure an anthropotechnical path of self-fashioning. The denegating effect was the rendering ‘ordinary’ of the ‘extraordinary’ (Cfr. Chapter Two and Three).

Psychedelics were one of the most successful roots of the large-scale dissemination of shamanic anthropotechnic to larger audiences. The Romantic metaphor combining nature, creativity and spirituality in the quest for authenticity, was associated in the 1950’s with the beat generation and the use of psychedelics, including by the writer William Burroughs who in 1953 participated at an ayahuasca session in Colombia with the ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes. The description of ayahuasca visions as a “metaphysical experience” in The Yage Letters (1963) by William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, according to Znamenski, “became a cultural and spiritual blueprint for would-be spiritual pilgrims who followed in their footsteps” (Znamenki 2007: 155).

The Doors of Perception (1954) by Aldous Huxley also combined the psychedelic and aesthetic with the sacred by supporting the idea that mescaline opened a suitable door for spiritual and psychological growth. The publication of the article Seeking the Magic Mushroom (1957) by the banker and ethnomicologist Gordon Wasson on the magazine Life about his spiritual experiences with the Mazatec shaman Maria Sabina and psilocybe hallucinations stirred the interest of many people who started to travel to Mexico in search of ‘sacred plants’. The native use of ‘sacred plants’ inter-crossed with the diffusion of synthetic psychedelics in American society; scholars traversed strict academic borders and found a more interested readership outside of academia. Timothy Leary, who in 1962 followed Wasson’s example and went to Mexico to try peyote, was expelled from Harvard University for experimenting LSD with his students. Outside of academia he became instead a spiritual leader “advocating psychedelic experience as a new world-religion” (Boekhoven 2011: 191).

The attribution of an anthropotechnical role to shamanic practices by an increasing number of practitioners was possible in the 1960s-1970s because economic and social conditions changed rapidly. After the economic boom of the 1960s, Boekhoven observes, the

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16 Burroughs was the first ayahuasca tourist who animated artists, researchers and “other pioneers” to study and practice “indigenous applications of psychoactives”, starting a flow of psychedelic tourism that determined a significant change in ayahuasca practice among the Shipibo (Brabec de Mori 2014: 208).

17 According to Znamenski, Wasson brought to Mexico the chemist Albert Hoffman, who firstly synthesized LSD in 1957, and they offered a lysergic pill to Maria Sabina who claimed that there was no difference between LSD and psilocybe (Znamenski 2007: 127).
significant improvement of standard of life led to a “proliferation of distinctive and alternative lifestyles”. Psychedelics, art and music became increasingly a means for individual transformation and emancipation from mainstream middle class lifestyles. The psychedelic references in the songs of The Beatles, Jefferson Airplane, The Doors and other musicians largely contributed to the global popularization of tastes and lifestyles in the middle class. The Doors chose their name referencing Huxley, and made open reference to shamans calling themselves “the electric shaman’s band” while Jim Morrison was called “the shaman superstar” in an article from the New York Magazine in 1968 (Goldstein 1968: 42; Cfr. also Boekhoven 2001: 193-4).

Shamanic anthropotechnic gained appeal in counter-cultural backgrounds, particularly with hippies and new agers (Boekhoven 2011: 164). Shamanic practices well suited to the style of the hippie revolution that was centered on the shift from ‘world transformation’ to ‘self transformation’ through an appeal to authenticity and the will to be free from cultural repressive models (Binkley 2007). The criticism of capitalist consumerist middle class lifestyles led to experimentation with ‘other’ lifestyles. Binkley points out, hippie concerns and aspirations were focused on the application of the loosening revolution in every aspect of daily life, assuming a normative and educational stance towards individual change aimed at embodying a self-directed lifestyle. Unlike avant-garde experimentation mainly aimed at deconstructing and transgressing borders, the hippie project was addressed to control these de-structuring and challenging experiences, as a way of life. The call to ‘immediacy’ was ‘mediated’ by expert guides who helped to “re-learn by conscious effort” how to think and act without following mainstream cultural conditioning (Binkley 2007: 60). The hippie paradox of ‘mediated immediacy’ is denegated in similar way by shamanists who also support the idea of recovering the self as a “reassuringly stable personal core” that can be elected as the unique reliable authority (idem: 34).

Psychedelics in this perspective lost the disruptive potential and began to be used in a ‘therapeutic’ way as a means of self-improvement and emancipation from American middle class models and values. According to Stuart Hall (2007 [1968]) and Binkley (2007), hippies were mainly ‘white’ people fascinated with ‘other’ and marginal cultures as a means to transcend their socioeconomic position without questioning their “own hegemonic role as a white, largely male, largely heterosexual middle class value system” (Binkley 2007: 24). As Saldanha observes, psychedelics as “the commitment certain whites have to transforming

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themselves through drugs, music, travel, and spiritualities borrowed from other populations” is mainly used to explore the possibilities of this hegemonic role rather than upsetting it, confirming global inequalities rather than questioning them (Saldanha 2007: 12). The project of a self-choosing self pursued by hippies is a legacy not only for contemporary shamanists, but has also been ‘naturalized’, and disarmed, by contemporary consumer lifestyles based on free choice and self-responsibility:

This study has argued that seminal features of the countercultural agenda have contributed to the shaping of techniques for coping with such measures of freedom and personal autonomy that are today taken for granted. The loose self developed cornerstone supports and skills for the lifestyles identities demanded of a society of flux and change, in which techniques of a reflexive project of the self would become indispensable. While outward invocations to self-abandonment have been revised or neutralized, the essential structure of a self-responsible self, of a self-producing, self-choosing, and self-consuming self have entrenched themselves in our way of life. (...) It is from the counterculture’s adventures with self-loosening that was fashioned the flexibility and self-responsibility so deeply rooted in our contemporary self-understandings, and in the significance we attribute to the minute choices we make in daily life. Under the life conditions of the new millennium, it is possible to assert, paraphrasing a claim once made about liberalism more generally: “we’re all loose now” (Binkley 2007: 249).

The hippie focus on conscious and ethical choices in every detail of everyday life remarkably anticipated current customized marketing strategies. Hippies began producing, selling and consuming of a set of objects, services and information for their own use in order to share their lifestyle and in so doing they popularized specialized commercial niches. Likewise, many contemporary shamanic practitioners produce, sell and buy organic food, hippie style and exotic dresses; advocate ‘loosening’ therapies, manual and DIY books; make music and artistic handicrafts, and so on.

According to Life magazine, counter-cultural tastes and proposals were already a promising profitable business in 1968. For example, the legendary Esalen Institute in US successfully combined spiritual, therapeutic, artistic and recreational practices:

Years before, in 1968, Life magazine had already observed that Esalen ‘sometimes is like a religious retreat, sometimes a Southern revival meeting, sometimes a Dionysian revel’. Visitors danced, shouted, cried (‘crying is a sort of status symbol’) and worked on other ‘techniques to unlock the human potential’. In short, they threw their ‘inhibitions’ to ‘the Gentle Winds’. Life also detected that the Human Potential Movement was ‘not only a mystique but a business, and a thriving one at that’. Transpersonal psychologists and other esoteric authorities offered lectures and seminars on Zen, yoga, drugs, Sufism, mysticism, parapsychology and a variety of forms of meditation and therapy through which visitors could allegedly free themselves from social, emotional and psychological constraints. (Boekhoven 2011: 163-4)
Esalen was a point of reference also for the so called new age culture of the sons of Aquarius. According to Heelas, Esalen paved the way for other centers for “self-actualization” that quickly expanded in the 1970s, multiplying access to schools, courses and workshops through new age networks of “seminar spirituality” (Heelas 1996: 52; 77). To note that “new age” is a vague term, like ‘shamanism’, that has changed meaning over the years and resisted a clear identification with a theory or a movement.\(^{19}\) However in the common ground of ‘new age’ backgrounds to which many scholars refer, “there is a discursive emphasis upon the self and that self-authority is paramount” (Wood 2007: 27). As it was for hippies, similarly other scholars concluded that the ‘new age’ had a mainstream diffusion from the first elitist practitioners to widespread society and media advertising (Campbell 2002 [1972], 2004; Heelas 2008). Many scholars point out the correspondence of several ‘new age’ themes with the emergent neoliberal consumerist lifestyles such as the stress on hedonism, narcissism, individualism and the emphasis on the self as the unique source of authority, as well as the self-responsibility of giving shape to oneself (Heelas 1996, 2008; Sutcliffe 2003; Campbell 2004; Wood 2007). I would add, this pressure on self-responsibility and individual self-fashioning is emphasized as a form of freedom, or even, a compulsory freedom that denegates its auto-obligation.

As Heelas (1996) observes, healing the earth as well as self-healing has great importance in new age contexts, and these two issue are often associated in remixed ‘native’ practices. In hippie and new age contexts, Native Americans in particular have received special attention in the wake of emerging environmentalist movements. Romantic association between a natural way of life and ‘indigenous’ people was strengthened and became one of the stalwarts against a polluted and corrupted capitalist way of life and in the quest for more natural and spiritual lifestyles. The popular speeches attributed to the Native American Chief Seattle and Smohalla, who invoked Mother Earth as a goddess, have often been quoted until today as examples of Native American philosophy and an ethical way of living.\(^{20}\) Mother Earth devotion was often combined with an emphasis on female spiritual abilities and promoted, especially in new age networks, a way of empowerment through gender-oriented practices performed for and by women (Jenkins 2004).

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\(^{19}\) Sutcliffe (2003) indicates the term ‘new age’ has been used in etic and emic perspectives with different purposes and as well as for shamanisms the field of the studies significantly interplayed with the practices (Cfr. also Champion 1989; Wood 2010; De La Torre 2011, 2014). The term is often used by contemporary shamanists in a negative sense with reference to a superficial and consumerist spirituality.

\(^{20}\) These speeches are controversial since they have been transcribed, and probably adapted, by ‘white’ writers (Jenkins 2004: 87-91). Chief Seattle’s speech for instance has a long history of manipulation and the version that circulates nowadays is an evangelical popularization that especially strengthens the link between spirituality and environmental concerns.
According to the Canadian-Native American Aigle Blue, a member of the Cercle de Sagesse at the Festival du Chamanisme, the meeting between Native Indians and Flower Children was announced by a prophecy received by the wise Elders of the First Nations 500 years before the coming of the “white man”. The prophecy announced the destruction of Native American people and their resurgence in the New Age of the Aquarius when “the eagle will walk on the moon”:

A profecia diz ainda que cinco gerações após o desaparecimento quase total dos Índios, os filhos e as filhas do homem branco poriam faixas, e vestir-se-iam como Índios, caminhariam descalços sobre a terra sagrada e falariam às abelhas e às flores. Seria o sinal que a voz dos antepassados poderia ser entendida de novo. Seriam então os filhos e as filhas do homem branco que responderiam ao apelo. Esta nova geração formaria o que seria chamada a Nação do Arco-íris. Os seus guerreiros construiriam uma ponte que conduziria-nos-ia à Era das Flores, também chamada pelos ocidentais a Nova Era, ou era do Aquário. A profecia diz que os povos autóctones seriam então chamados a ensinar por toda parte do planeta. [The prophecy also says that five generations after the almost total disappearance of Indians, the sons and daughters of the white man put on bands, and dress like Indians, walk barefoot on the sacred land and speak to bees and flowers. It would be the signal that the voice of the ancestors could be understood again. It would then be the sons and daughters of the white man who would respond to the call. This new generation would form what would be called the Rainbow Nation. His warriors would build a bridge that would lead us to the Age of Flowers, also called by Westerners New Age, or Aquarius Age. The prophecy says that indigenous peoples would then be called to teach throughout the planet.] (Aigle Bleu 2003: 5-6; Cfr. Pict. 4.6.)

Hippies have been the movement that have most supported this connection through exchanges with Native Americans and the creation of usually impermanent communes (Jenkins 2004; Znamenski 2007). The renown Bear Tribe network of communes consisting of about 200 people at its peak was founded in 1970 by the mestizo Sun Bear of German-French-Norwegian-Ojibwa origin. After few years it declined mainly because of drug abuse.\(^{21}\) Afterwards Sun Bear transformed the Bear Tribe into a school that offered training for shamans and the renown Medicine Wheel ceremony as well as courses and manuals on earth-based spirituality. ‘Native traditions’ were used to teach people how to live more in harmony with the environment. The clients of Sun Bear were mainly white people, and his free adaptation of ‘native traditions’ aroused the criticism of many Native American activists (Jenkins 2004; Znamenski 2007).

In these conditions, it is not surprising that Castaneda’s The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge (1968) was globally successful and went mainstream, becoming an

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\(^{21}\) Sun Bear was born in 1929 as Vincent Le Duke in an Indian Reservation in Minnesota and before becoming a spiritual leader had a career in Hollywood films and became an expert of ‘Indianness’ teaching at universities (Znamenki 2007: 282-85), Cfr. Pict. 4.7.
Pict. 4.6.A: Camp Aigle Bleu, VIII Festival du Chamanisme; http://chamanisme.eu/4228-2/ (08/05/15)


Pict. 4.7. A: Znamenski 2007: 283

Pict. 4.7. B: https://www.amazon.ca/Bear-Tribes-Self-Reliance-Book/dp/0943404002
authority in the shamanic field.\textsuperscript{22} In the first three books of Castaneda’s saga, including his doctoral thesis published as \textit{Journey to Ixtlan} (1972), he presented the main character \textit{Don Juan} as his main Yaqui informant and teacher.\textsuperscript{23} In his presumed ethnography he combined the appealing ingredients of anthropology, ‘Indianness’, psychedelics and counter-culture, art, psychotherapy, oriental spirituality and philosophy in a cosmopolitan mix. After De Mille’s (1976, 1980) debunking, however, Castaneda’s books could not be considered ethnography. Castaneda used many sources, without mentioning the authors, both among those who wrote on shamanic practices such as Eliade, Wasson, Meyerhoff, Furst, Opler, La Barre and other influential scholars such as Van Eeden, Huxley, Bauman (De Mille 1980). Surprisingly Castaneda also drew many sentences from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, using an excellence of western logical thought to support the ‘non western’ perspective of Don Juan (De Mille 1980: 421). Castaneda’s bestsellers were particularly charming since he presented himself as the ingenuous apprentice who wanted to dismiss ‘western’ thought and education to understand the mysterious shamanic teachings of Don Juan. The characterization of the anthropologist enabled the reader to easily identify with his anthropotechnical self-fashioning and uprooting path. In doing so, Castaneda gave birth to an anthropological line of insider anthropologists who became shamans, or \textit{shaman-anthropologists}, as well as to the literary genre of \textit{the tales of power} that is still prosperous.\textsuperscript{24}

To be clear, however, \textit{shaman-anthropology} was also the result of anthropological reflections upon the \textit{emic/etic} debate (Svanberg 2003 quoted in von Stuckrad 2005: 126). According to Fabian, Castaneda parodied “the little disputed privilege of the possessive past which the conventions of anthropological discourse grant to all practitioners” and that anthropologists tend to have towards their own fieldwork (Fabian 2005 [1983]: 94). Castaneda was encouraged at the UCLA because professors, like his supervisor Harold Garfinkel, were interested in validating the so called ‘ethno-metodological’ approach and supported the necessity of the insider’s position of the anthropologist in immersing in the native point of view (Znamenski 2007: 209; Cfr. also Tedlock 1991).

After the publication of the doctoral thesis \textit{Journey to Ixtlan} (1972), the international success and the first criticisms, Castaneda left academia and founded \textit{Cleargreen Inc.}, a for-

\textsuperscript{22} In the first eight books Castaneda did not use the word “shaman” and referred to Don Juan with exotic terms as “brujo”, “nagual” or “sorcerer", but he used it in some interviews as an anthropological “technical word”. Only from 1990 onward the more and more popular word “shaman” appeared in his bestsellers (Boekhoven 2011: 206), Cfr. Pict. 4.8.

\textsuperscript{23} It has been demonstrated that Castaneda didn’t do any fieldwork; Cfr. Richard De Mille (1976, 1980).

profit company that is still actively teaching ‘Toltec’ techniques of self-actualization and self-emancipation. The position of anthropologist who left academia gained him symbolic capital in counter-cultural backgrounds, inspiring many people to look for shamans among South American natives. It is worth repeating, his books are still considered a source of anthropotechnic inspiration for contemporary shamanists, even if many of them are aware that they are fictional.

If Castaneda was “one of the informal apostles of the ‘New Age' community” (Znamenski 2007: 165), Harner had more success in the institutionalization of shamanic practices. Harner, who had a recognized career as an ethnographer, also decided to leave academia and profit from his symbolic capital as an anthropologist to fully devote himself to shamanic practice. In 1979, Harner founded the first shamanic institution that in 1980 became the Foundation for Shamanic Studies (FSS). The aim of FSS is the preservation and dissemination among westerners of his own elaboration of core shamanism, the common nucleus of all shamanic practices, into easy and safe recipes (Cfr. Chapter Two). FSS was the first institution that presented an adaptation of shamanic practices for westerners and became an important point of reference for practitioners and aspiring shamans. Furthermore, FSS provided practitioners DIY resources in order to continue the training on their own in the form of drum records, guided shamanic journeys and the previously mentioned manual by Harner, The Way of the Shaman (1980). Overtime FSS opened branches across Europe, Latin America and Asia and also promoted a program of indigenous assistance for ‘indigenous’ people willing to ‘recover’ their lost traditions:

Helping to preserve shamanism where it is being threatened, and assisting its revival when invited, are critical dimensions of the Foundation's mission. The FSS has a network of specialists in shamanism throughout the world to help save indigenous shamanic knowledge in imminent danger of being lost. The FSS also responds to requests from native peoples to help revive and maintain their own shamanic traditions. (http://www.shamanism.org/fssinfo/indigenousAssistance.html 20/02/17)

FSS provides a certificate of Living Treasures of Shamanism and “an annual lifetime stipend to exceptionally distinguished ‘indigenous’ shamans in less-developed countries where their age-old knowledge of shamanism and shamanic healing is in danger of extinction” (idem 13/08/17). Mutual convenience and legitimacy are here particularly evident: for indigenous shamans to be recognized and financed and for the FSS to confirm its authority in the domain of shamanisms and asking funds for this “mission” (Atkinson 1992: 322). The dominant

position of FSS as a non-profit institution with research ambitions however has been eroded overtime by increasing competition in the form of other training programs and increasing availability of shamanic practices.26

The dissemination of shamanic practices among ‘westerners’ who became not only practitioners but also healers and teachers, even for ‘indigenous’ people, provoked some criticism in ‘native’ contexts from where these practices presumably came (Wallis 1999: 44-6; Znamenski 2007: 287-95). Indeed, these adaptations and the related conflicts challenged the very concept of ‘shamanism’ putting at risk the ‘authenticity’ of the antidote for shamanic practitioners. In 1993, some Lakota activists declared ‘war’ on “plastic shamans” and still run a website denouncing ‘new age’ frauds “imitating” their traditions (http://www.newage fraud.org 20/06/18).27 At the same time this controversial situation brought ‘indigenous’ people recognized as ‘native shamans’ to strategically borrow elements from the successful Castanedian model. For example, some developed prosperous mystic tourism trips (Hamayon 1998, Boekhoven 2011, Botta 2012). In Siberia after the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a resurgence of local shamans that regained their legitimacy some of whom started to collaborate with the FSS in order to learn core shamanism (Znamenski 2007: 358-61). In South Korea as well, prohibited shamanic practices were revitalized and nowadays are recognized as a national cultural heritage and performed in Festivals and TV shows (Kendall 2009). From the 1990s onwards in Europe, spiritual seekers have been looking for pre-Christian ‘native’ shamanic practices in Celtic, Etruscan, Finnish, Swedish and Hungarian history and traditions (Znamenski 2007). Following Eliade’s definition, in fact, religious traditions before Christianity can be framed as ‘shamanic’, as primitive forms of religion. The naturalization of Eliade’s transcultural shamanism by most practitioners offers a universal shared frame that holds together all the variants under the same umbrella term, as different versions of a unique phenomenon. Nowadays, there is a tacit agreement between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ shamans who accept this frame as they participate in the global field with effects of mutual interconnection and competition (Cfr. Pict. 4.9.). Although the universal shamanic antidote unifies different therapies under the same brand, the field itself is characterized by a

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26 According to Puttick until 2004 most “western” shamanic therapists were trained in Harner’s shamanism (Puttick 2004). In my fieldwork, I found only a few who had trained at FSS. Indeed, the ones who did had, where in Portugal around 2000-2005 and did not have many other options as is the case nowadays. Notably, FSS provides a certificate of advanced practitioner, but not a professional title of healer or teacher.

27 In 1993 the Lakota Summit V, a gathering of representatives of Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Nations unanimously approved the Declaration of War against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality against non-Indians wannabe, new age shamans and plastic medicine men who “desecrated, mocked and abused” Lakota ceremonies and spiritual practices (http://www.aics.org/war.html 08/12/17). Lakota people have the reputation to be those who mostly struggled during the Indian wars and in the Reservations in order to preserve their traditions.
Pict. 4.9.A: Patrick Dacquay (France) and Ulises Osorno Bozano ‘Tlakaoselotl’ (Mexico), VIII Festival du Chamanisme; http://chamanisme.eu/4228-2/ (08/05/15).

Pict. 4.9.B: Minthé ‘Hatch Oh Neh’ (Belgium) and the Kogis’s Delegation (Colombia); idem.
strenuous struggle to be recognized as the most authentic. This competition enhances the polychromy of variations and strategies that will be illustrated in the next section.

4.3. United colors of shamans

The counter-cultural appeal of shamanic practices as antidote to nine-to-five modernity has spread to a larger audience since the 1970s, also thanks to Castaneda bestsellers which aimed at readers of the middle class. Although counter-cultural legacy is still pervasive in the contemporary shamanic field, in some contexts it is not appreciated since it is associated with ‘drug culture’ and a certain ‘un-seriousness’. Even in these backgrounds, however, shamanic anthropotechnic maintains if not a revolutionary then at least an uprooting appeal which is crucial to envisioning a self-fashioning shift from present discomforts (Cfr. Munay-Ki section).

The large-scale dissemination on the one hand represents successful social achievement and confirms anthropotechnic as valued, but on the other hand leads to a devaluation of the practices as trendy and touristic. Ayahuasca has recently appeared in Hollywood films such as Blueberry (2004), Wanderlust (2012), While We’re Young (2014) and other productions such as, El Abrazo de la Serpiente that won an Art Cinema award at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival and the documentary The Space In Between (2016) by the performance artist Marina Abramovic. If film stars like Jennifer Aniston drank ayahuasca in a movie it’s possible to definitely say, as many practitioners do, that shamanic practices are becoming trendy. Further, participating in a ‘ceremony’ nowadays, is far more easy than it was in the 1960s or 1980s; travel is more affordable and many people want to have a direct psychedelic experience instead of reading about it in books or watching it in films. Consequently the extraordinary of ayahuasca is becoming more ordinary, and even fashionable. This increase in popularity risks the loss of its elitist charm. The current viral circulation renders the practices more easily accessible, as is for ayahuasca, but this same availability challenges the aspired authenticity and requires shamans to continuously find new protection strategies.

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28 Ayahuasca was also popularized by the Brazilian artist Neto who realized the installations The Body that Carries Me (2014), Aru Kuxipa – Sacred secret (2015) and Yubẽ bushka (2016) by involving Huni Kuin people to guide ayahuasca ceremonies in his exhibition at Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao, Spain, also later realized in Vienna, Austria and other cities (Cfr. Goldstein and Labate 2018: 76-94); Cfr. Pict. 4.10.

29 The actress Gwyneth Paltrow, like other Hollywood celebrities, has her own personal shaman, the popular shaman Durek (https://shamandurek.com/press-media/). To note how he adapted shamanic practices to the fashionable style of Hollywood (Cfr. Pict. 4.11.).

After the counsel of elders are contacted on your behalf. Once information is shared with you. Then a shamanic path is laid out individually. This may include spirits of the higher realm entering your body or physical body detox of your system by touching pushing and tapping. The methods may include different treatments from a varied of cultures.

It may take more then one session or it could be just one depending on the persons issues and preference of knowledge needed to create total change both internal and external for empowerment healing and living pure love and being free.

Shaman Durek works all over the world and does skype sessions and can be booked to do so. Please go to contact page for more info.

Pict. 4.11. A: https://shamandurek.com/ (05/09/19)

Despite the shared shamanic frame, different positions in the global shamanic field articulate their own strategies to establish themselves as the most authentic. Indeed, one of the main values at stake in authenticity is the issue of who is a ‘true’ shaman and what is ‘shamanism’. The strategy of FSS for instance, is to emphasize the ease and safety of Harner’s methodology. FSS offers domesticated and controlled shamanic techniques that can be learned by everyone during week-end workshops and performed in urban spaces. However, this democratization promoted by Harner has taken away the ‘extraordinary’ from shamanic practices that may now be enacted by everyone, everywhere. FSS strategy to gaining legitimacy is based on the symbolic capital of Harner, as an established anthropologist, and on his authoritative ‘adaptation’ for ‘westerners’. Marques, the founder of the Portuguese FSS, confirmed that ‘core shamanism’ is a condensation of Harner’s studies and experiences into ‘safe’ techniques that can be applied by everyone in daily life. According to Marques, Harner as an anthropologist could understand ‘their’ tradition and translate them for ‘us’, since a cultural adaptation is necessary. Marques verified many practitioners of her drum circles asked for explanations from her after they had experiences with ‘traditional’ shamans from all over the world because they had problems to understand the shaman and the experience. According to her, ayahuasca is a practice that is extracted from its traditional ‘context’ with risk. Marques also criticized ‘western’ people auto-titling themselves ‘shamans’, because she defended the idea that the “shaman” is only the ‘traditional’ type, referring to anthropological theories. This indicates the necessity of cultural mediation and the role of the anthropologist as the best interpreter in order to guarantee authenticity and avoid illegitimate and potentially dangerous imitation.

As Townsend noted, the clients of FSS are “well educated, in middle-age, and some are in power positions” (Townsend 2004: 7). In my fieldwork I found some Portuguese therapists over 50 years old who trained with FSS, because when they started 20 years ago there were very few other opportunities. These few practitioners, after the FSS training began their own adaptation of methodology both for healing and teaching. In this, the current position of FSS is ambivalent because it encourages practitioners to personalize shamanic techniques and to find their own path, but at the same time defends Harner’s methodology as the orthodox. Marques noted with disappointment that many apprentices developed their own methodology largely drawing on Harner’s, of whom the acclaimed Sandra Ingerman is one. After having been trainer for the FSS, since 2003 Ingerman promoted her own version of

30 Quotations of Marques are taken from the interview realized at her place, Carmões, Portugal (05/10/15).
31 According to ALia and APio, they have been asked not to participate at FSS events by Marques because they personalized Harnerian methodology too much.
practices and supported the institutionalization of professional careers through upgrading learning courses and certificates. As a psychotherapist, Ingerman emphasized the therapeutic role of shamanic practice to “live more authentically, harmoniously, and joyously” by creating a professional license for shamanic ‘teachers’ and ‘practitioners’ with the aim of helping people through “the spiritual diagnosis and the proper healing method” (http://www.shamanic teachers.com 26/07/18). In the presentation of the online streaming course Cultivating Shamanic Perception, shamanic healing is presented as an antidote to “modern Western living”:

The shamanic path offers a heart-opening, self-healing, and self-empowering antidote to today’s frenetic lifestyle and to reclaiming your humanness. (…) In the busyness of modern life, overwhelmed of current politics, and distractions of the digital age, we’ve misplaced our innate knowing of how to live as the ancient shamans did — how to live with a shamanic perception. Even if you’re a seasoned shamanic practitioner, you may be lacking the strong roots developed by those trained in shamanism from an early age. When we come to shamanism later in life, we can miss important steps that can deepen our practice — and help us evolve.

(https://theshiftnetwork.com/ThroughSacredEyes/recording?t=thanks 26/07/18)

This emphasizes Ingerman’s specific role of teaching the shamanic path to those who are not ‘trained in shamanism from an early age’. As mentioned in Chapter Two, she developed many self-learning resources such as CDs and online training, interviews and seminars; self-help books; a monthly newsletter and global healing call; the Transmutation App (2014) for mobile phones and tablets; and participated in the annual Global Shaman Summit since 2015. Taking advantage of dissemination of DIY shamanic practices, these resources are intended to integrate the practice of beginner or even ‘seasoned’ practitioners who may have missed ‘some steps’.

Strategically FSS and Ingerman do not use the word ‘shaman’ for their teachers and healers preferring to call them “advanced practitioners”. Some of their trainees, like the Portuguese APio and ALia, call themselves ‘urban shamans’ and are available to less cultivated and wealthy practitioners who cannot afford the costs of FSS and Ingerman’s training.32 APio and ALia cannot boast of the symbolic capital of indigenous origin or training, and strategically stress their role in translating and adapting practice for ‘urban’ middle class people. In one of APio’s shamanic workshops,33 some loyal practitioners mentioned their

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32 Some practitioners specifically said that they are not able to afford these courses. Between 2015 and 2018 in Portugal, a basic two day FSS workshop cost 145 euros (http://estudo.xamanico.org/FSS/ participar.php 12/09/18), while a one day training with APio cost 45 euros, and a workshop with Celia around 20 euros.

33 The one day workshop Xamanismo: caminhos do passado e do presente [Shamanism: paths of the past and the present] was held at the Espiral, Lisbon, on 04/10/15; Cfr. Pict. 4.12. I participated also to a shamanic journey to recover the power animal organized at a holistic/umbanda center in Seixal, Portugal, on 16/04/15, and in many conferences, exhibitions, dinners and presentations organized by APio at Espiral. For the
preference for him because he ‘rendered shamanism simple’ and taught it in informal way, that is, in a non-bureaucratic or intellectual way. The practitioners in APIo and ALia’s circles were middle class workers, students and therapists without a high level of formal instruction but with a lot of training in the ‘holistic’ area.\textsuperscript{34}

Another route FSS shamanic trainees take is exemplified by S. and J. Ramos who opened the Centro de Terapias Naturais e Desenvolvimento Humano (ANKH), a therapy center in Lisbon that mixes different approaches and teaches ‘transcultural’ shamanism as well as ‘traditional’ Guarani shamanism. I had a significant conversation with J. and S. Ramos about the word ‘shaman’.\textsuperscript{35} They affirmed that only indigenous people ‘living in a jungle’ and recognized by a community can call themselves ‘shamans’. They explained that in fact ‘our’ healers are doctors and psychologists, as both of themselves are, and that it is “absurd” that people living in a city self-title themselves ‘shamans’. Their online CVs include a detailed list of training in scientific and ‘para-scientific’ areas including with FSS and Ingerman, but strategically do not mention the institution, only the teachers of courses they took (Cfr. Pict. 4.14.).

At ANKH, J. and S. Ramos largely repeat the methodology, terminology and basic concepts of Harner and Ingerman, nevertheless they claim to have structured ‘transcultural shamanism’ on their own and even defend it with copyright (www.portais.org/Copyright/Alguns_Pensamentos.htm 14/03/16). From 2015 to 2018, J. and S. Ramos gradually changed strategy emphasizing their academic experience as a source of authority. In three years ANKH upgraded to the title Instituto de Ciências Integradas [Institute of Integrated Science] with the involvement of other therapists and the mission to develop “scientific vanguard projects” for “researchers” with an “integrative and innovative scientific approach” (https://ici.org.pt/investigacao/ 12/09/18). They also opened an account on academia.org publishing their academic work as students of psychology and the document Estatísticas e Indicadores de Qualidade [Statistics and Quality Indicators] that evaluates their modular training course for therapists on transcultural shamanism (https://ispa.academia.edu/sej 27/07/18). In the latter, a socio-demographic sketch describes apprentices of ANKH as between 30 and 65 years old, 86% of which are women, 81.8% not belonging to a specific religion. They particularly emphasize that the amount of participants in their courses with higher education (55% graduates, 18% with a Master's degree and 9% with a Doctorate) ‘belies social representations

\footnotesize{interviews with APIo Cfr. Chapter Two.} 
\footnotesize{34 I participated at two shamanic journey with ALia at Espiral, Lisbon, on 28/02/15 and 16/10/15, and I interviewed her in Lisbon on 04/11/15 (Cfr. Pict. 4.13.).} 
\footnotesize{35 I met the Ramoses at the ANKH, Lisbon, on 22/09/15. I had only a brief conversation with them, because they would have granted me an interview only if I had enrolled in a course.}
XAMANISMO
Caminhos do Passado e do Presente

4 Out - 09:30/18:00

1º módulo: Apresentação ao Círculo
Início da Busca da Visão
Valor: 45€

Inscrições e Informação:

Pict. 4.12.: https://allevents.in/lisbon/workshop-xamanismo-caminhos-do-passado-e-do-presente-1%C2%BA-m%C3%B3dulo/20001855496285 (06/10/15)
**Círculos Xamânicos**

28 FEVEREIRO, 14H30, ESPIRAL, LISBOA

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"A JORNADA XAMÂNICA* OS AUXILIARES EPSPIRITUAIS!

**Círculos Xamânicos**

PRÁTICAS COM GUIAS, MESTRES, ANIMAIS PODER.

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**Xamanismo:**

O xamanismo é uma prática de tratamento ancestral, com cerca de 40.000 anos de existência, a mais antiga via espiritual conhecida e tem sempre estado em estreita união com a Natureza.

Integrando o passado, presente e futuro, podemos recuperar informação preciosa, que vai para além dos portais do tempo e do espaço.

Ao encontramos o nosso poder interno, verdadeiramente podemos escolher quais os melhores caminhos na vida.

O desafio é desenvolver práticas com os aliados espirituais e aguardar as suas bênçãos.

Praticante Xamanismo Essencial (Core Shamanism) de Michael Harner

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*Pictures 4.13. Mailing list (21/02/15, 11/10/15)*
Licenciatura em Psicologia no ISCTE-IUL

Aprendizagem, Motivação e Emoção (com Patricia Arriaga).
Atitudes e Mudança de Atitudes (com Diniz Lopes).
Avaliação Psicológica (com Joana Alexandre).
Competências Académicas I (com Isabel Correia).
Competências Académicas II (com Patrícia Arriaga & Joana Alexandre).
Comportamento Organizacional (com Susana Tavares).
Epistemologia e Pensamento Crítico (com Carla Moura).
Estatística e Análise de Dados I (com Margarida Cardoso).
Estatística e Análise de Dados II (com Maria do Carmo Botelho).
Estatística e Análise de Dados III (com Raúl Laureano).
Gestão da Imagem Pessoal (com Marta Bicho).
Gestão de Conflitos (com Ana Carmaz).
História da Psicologia (com Paula Castro).
Métodos de Investigação Qualitativos (com Ana Santos).
Métodos de Investigação Quantitativos (com Isabel Correia).
Métodos e Áreas de Aplicação da Psicologia (com Marília Prada).
Métodos e Técnicas de Estudo (com Carlos Burcio).
Neuropsicologia (com Rita Jerónimo).
Percepção de Pessoas e Relações Interpessoais (com Rita Jerónimo).
Percepção, Atenção e Memória (com Rita Jerónimo & Marília Prada).
Psicofisiologia e Genética (com Augusta Gaspar).
Psicologia da Educação (com Cecília Aguiar).
Psicologia da Personalidade (com Eduardo Simões).
Psicologia da Saúde e Clínica (com Carla Moreira & Sónia Bernardes).
Psicologia das Organizações e do Trabalho (com José Neves).
Psico. do Desenv. da Criança e do Adolescente (com Lígia Monteiro).
Psicologia do Desenvolvimento do Adulto (com Lígia Monteiro).
Psicologia Social (com Luiza Lima & Carla Moura).
Psicometria (com Diniz Lopes).
Psicopatologia (com Joana Alexandre).
Raciocínio e Linguagem (com Rita Jerónimo).
Teorias e Estruturas Organizacionais (com Nelson Ramalho).

Pós-Graduação em Psicologia na Chapel Hill da Universidade da Carolina do Norte, E.U.A.

Licenciatura em Linguística (pré-Bolonha) na UNL-FCSH

Análise do Discurso (com Fernanda Mendes).
Antropologia do Parentesco (com Rui Rodrigues).
Biologia e Cultura (com Carlos Henriques de Jesus).
Fonética Geral (com António Emíliano).
Fonologia I (com António Emíliano).
Fonologia II (com António Emíliano).
Gramática Textual do Português I (com Helena Trigo).
Gramática Textual do Português II (com Helena Trigo).
História da Língua Portuguesa I (com Teresa Bricard).
Informática (com Teresa Lino).
Inglês I (com Allyson Roberts).
Inglês II (com Allyson Roberts).
Inglês III (com David Rowlands).
Inglês IV (com David Rowlands).
Interfaces em Linguística (com João Costa).
Estudos Linguísticos I (com Teresa Bricard).
Estudos Linguísticos II (com Teresa Bricard).
Estudos Literários I (com Gustavo Rubim).
Estudos Literários II (com Gustavo Rubim).
Italiano (com Rosanna Carretta).
Lexicologia e Lexicografia I (com Raquel Alves Silva).
Lexicologia e Lexicografia II (com Raquel Alves Silva).
Linguística Clínica - Especialização I (com Ana Monção).
Linguística Clínica - Especialização II (com Ana Monção).
Linguística Computacional (com Rute Costa).
Linguística do Texto (com Mária Antónia Coutinho).
Linguística e Informática I (com Teresa Lino).
Linguística e Informática II (com Teresa Lino).
Linguística Histórica (com Teresa Bricard).
Linguística Inglesa I (com Isabel Tomás).
Lógica da Linguagem (com Paulo Melo).
Metodologia do Trabalho Científico I (com Rui Zink).
Metodologia do Trabalho Científico II (com Rui Zink).
Abundance Prosperity Reiki (com Wanda Eagleton).
Deep Red Reiki (com Wanda Eagleton).
Gendai Reiki-Ho (com Hiroshi Doi).
Gold Reiki (com Wanda Eagleton).
Karmic Reiki (com Wanda Eagleton).
Karuna (com Rosy Naor).
Karuna Ki (com Vincent Amador).
Kundalini Reiki (com Wanda Eagleton).
Reiki Essencial (com Angelina Agraye).
Reiki Usui Shiki Ryoho (com Chetan Assem).
Reiki Usui Shiki Ryoho (com Marlene Bortoleto).
Reiki Usui Shiki Ryoho (com Rosy Naor).
Reiki Usui Shiki Ryoho (com Vincent Amador).
Reiki Usui Tibetano (com Marlene Bortoleto).
Sacred Flames Reiki (com Allison Dahlhaus).
Seichim 7 Facet (com Maria de Lourdes).
Seichim 7 Facet (com Tom Rigler).
Sekhem Seichim Reiki (com Tom Rigler).
Skhm (com Patrick Scott Zeigler).
Skhm (com Tom Rigler).
Templar Degree (com Allison Dahlhaus).
Usui Reiki Ryoho (com Frank Arjava Petter).
Usui Reiki Ryoho (com Hiroshi Doi).
Violet Flame Reiki (com Allison Dahlhaus).

**Constelações Familiares e Organizacionais**

Constelações Familiares (com Albrecht Mahr).
Constelações Familiares (com Bert Hellinger).
Constelações Familiares (com Bertold Ulsamer).
Constelações Familiares (com Dagmar Ingersen).
Constelações Familiares (com Esther Frankel).
Constelações Familiares (com Eva Modelung).
Constelações Familiares (com Frank Arjava Petter).

**Meditação (Mindfulness)**

Light Body (com Duane Packer & DaBen).
Light Body (com Sanaya Roman & Orin).
Meditação Dinâmica (em Osho International Meditation Resort).
Raja Yoga (em Brahma Kumaris).
Sintonias Multidimensionais (com Michael Hammer & Lelama Sjamar).
Sufi (em Osho International Meditation Resort).
Tonglen (com Khepo Pema Sherab).
Vipassana (em Osho International Meditation Resort).
Zen (em Osho International Meditation Resort).
Zen (com Hyakuten Inamoto).

**Xamanismo (Cultural e Transcultural)**

Activation of The Medicine Wheel (com Wanda Eagleton).
Ethereal Crystals (com Wanda Eagleton).
Fairy Light Ray Key (com Wanda Eagleton).
Xamanismo Cultural (com Cláudia Giovani).
Xamanismo Cultural (com Elisabeth Cosmos).
Xamanismo Cultural (com Tony Samara).
Xamanismo Transcultural (com Alicia Fuentes Gaites).
Xamanismo Transcultural (com Betsy Bergstrum).
Xamanismo Transcultural (com Paul Uccusc & Roswitha Uccusc).
Xamanismo Transcultural (com Sandra Ingerman).
Xamanismo Transcultural (com Simon Buxton & Naomi Lewis).

**Outras Paracências**

Abundantia (com Wanda Eagleton).
Celtic Wisdom Energy System (com Wanda Eagleton).
Chakra Therapy (com Allison Dahlhaus).
Channelling (com Duane Packer & DaBen).
Channelling (com Lita de Alberdi).
Channelling (com Sanaya Roman & Orin).
Clear View Energy (com Wanda Eagleton).
Cura da Alma (com Claudelle Brosseau & Chetan Assem).

of people interested in complementary therapies as less educated’ [“vem contrariar algumas representações sociais que apontam para um maior interesse nas terapias complementares por parte de pessoas com menos escolaridade”, idem]. Here, with an acrobatic denegation, S. and J. Ramos use scientific quantitative methodology, statistics and surveys to legitimate authority to encourage innovative “out of the box” scientific projects to challenge scientific methodology (https://ici.org.pt /investigacao/ 12/09/18).

There are many other different strategies used to achieve authoritative positions in the shamanic field, both using and not using the word ‘shaman’. Freelance shamans enact individual strategies aimed to valorize their specific experiences and symbolic capital by often devaluing their training as an unessential step. APio found a way to produce authenticity by stressing his weird and unique personal experiences, while he did not give any importance to the FSS training (Cfr. Chapter Two). Similarly MaLva presented the training with Juan de Uviedo as a moment of recognition of her extraordinary life path since childhood (Cfr. Chapter Two). Unlike APio, MaLva who traveled looking for shamans in South America, does not use the word ‘shaman’ for herself. In a significant conversation I had with MaLva’s collaborator CaRa, in fact, she affirmed that they both prefer to title themselves ‘advanced practitioners of shamanism’, because only the community can recognize someone a shaman. Indeed I call them ‘shamans’ precisely because their practitioners consider and call them ‘shamans’. Both MaLva and CaRa joked about this entitlement that they choose not to use, and even warned me not to rely on people calling themselves ‘shamans’. At that time, at the beginning of my fieldwork, I was confused about this advice; it reminded me of Don Juan’s puzzling jokes to his apprentice Castaneda. According to their definition in fact they are ‘shamans’ and therefore, as shamans, they do not call themselves such. Denegation helped me to solve this apparent puzzle and understand how it was possible that in negating to be shamans they were actually affirming themselves as shamans, aware meanwhile that affirming being a shaman would be proof of not being shaman.

The Brazilian Ana X., who is a healer and the director of a school of shamanism in Brazil and Portugal, similarly repeated this denegation by affirming not to rely on people who call themselves ‘shamans’, and presenting herself as a ‘shaman’. Her reasoning: She could

36 It is noteworthy that when MaLva and CaRa traveled in South America looking for shamans, they preferred two Galician ayahuasqueros, who had moved to live near Iquitos, to ‘traditional’ Ashaninka and Shipibo shamans. The former appeared more ‘authentic’ and less commercial, while the latter asked too directly for monetary payment. To note that MaLva and CaRa in Portugal also directly ask for monetary payment. For the interviews with MaLva and CaRa Cfr. Chapter Two.

37 Quotations of Ana X. are taken from the interview realized in Lisbon on 02/11/15. I participated in a ‘moon ritual’ at a private house at Torres Vedras, Portugal, on 27/10/15. In this occasion I interviewed her assistant SoFia.
call herself ‘shaman’ since she had indigenous ancestors and was ‘initiated’ when she was 27 years old by an indigenous shaman in Brazil after a serious illness. According to Ana X. there are two kinds of shamans: spiritual ones, who recognize each other at first sight as has often happened to her, and ‘shamans of the book’, who learn ‘shamanism’ from the experiences of others. Even though she clearly considered legitimate only the former, she told me that even the latter has a role for practitioners who have not yet ‘evolved’, leading to the conclusion that she mainly works with ‘evolved’ practitioners. She argued that since I came to her I had to be ‘evolved’, in this way enacting a strategy that empowered both of us.  

Despite individual strategies, Ana X., MaLva, CaRa, Geraldine, and Patrícia Peixinho all mentioned with a certain pride that among their clients there are many successful professionals, as doctors, bankers, managers, business men, creative professionals and so on. Notably, prestigious clients were a sign of distinction and confirmation of their own success even with the ‘cold’ and ‘rational’ professionals that years ago would never have participated, as Patrícia remarked. In the events I participated in, it was not easy to identify a profile for clients because participation varied significantly from event to event, and there was not a stable group of practitioners. I sketched a profile of clients gleaning this through direct information they provided me, or through the indirect conversations with them and what I could observe.

MaLva and CaRa confirmed that in their ceremonies, from 2012 to 2016, around 3000 had participated. Participants were from a wide range of backgrounds. Locations alternated between cosmopolitan ceremonies and retreats with Portuguese and foreigners, above all from Europe, in charming holistic centers in Algarve, and ceremonies for Portuguese people near Lisbon in cheaper urban locations. The majority of their practitioners are women and the ‘womb blessing’ and other gender oriented shamanic practices are increasingly popular, as CaRa told me. MaLva’s personal history of empowerment is an example of emancipation that female practitioners particularly appreciate (Cfr. Chapter 2). Some of their cosmopolitan clients, including Turkish ElSi and Italian ViS often referred to MaLva as a “warrior” pointing out her strength. In my fieldwork I met Portuguese holistic therapists and practitioners, middleclass employees from twenty to fifty years old, artists, students and therapists from Italy, Netherlands and Turkey. Except the for the few who did not strictly need to work, the majority were working nine-to-five jobs or therapists organizing their work with flexible

38 On other occasions the symbolic capital of being an anthropologist put me in a privileged position, where I felt the expectations of shamans, as well as confirming the significant role of anthropologists in the genealogy of the field.

39 Quotations of Patrícia are taken from the conversation we had in Guincho, Portugal, on 31/10/15.
hours. Flexibility in this sense is seen as an opportunity and a means to be free from nine-to-five work, a way of living which is well suited to recent ‘flexible’ capitalism structures (Sennett 1999; Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999]). MaLva and CaRa effectively often work from five in the afternoon to nine in the evening, when nine to five workers have time to participate in ceremonies and therapies.

When I asked to MaLva and CaRa what kind of people participate in their ceremonies, they answered that ‘there is everything’ [“há de tudo”], stressing that the majority are not ‘hippie style’. CaRa gave an example of a creative professional who was guided in her work by ayahuasca visions, or middle-aged managers who wanted to learn specific techniques useful for their daily life. Managerial interest in shamanic practices was confirmed by a Chinese-Canadian director of a prosperous vegan restaurant in Lisbon who enthusiastically participated in MaLva’s ceremonies and requested an ayahuasca session reserved for her employees as a sort of team building activity.

MaLva does not mask her interest in money and supports this kind of shamanic practice that, for some practitioners, is considered ‘commercial’. During a cosmological map ‘reading’ with the ‘hippie style’ Italian practitioner OmSa, MaLva stressed many times the importance of money to ‘realize our dreams’ pointing out that widespread contempt for money by artists should definitely be abandoned to avoid creating a ‘block’ to creativity. OmSa, who participated in the DIY G group and had artistic aspirations, loved the map tool and found in it a lot of ‘confirmation’, but did not appreciate at all MaLva’s approach because it was ‘too commercial’. She observed, for instance how MaLva identified the cosmological causes of her problems and immediately after proposed a solution: a far more expansive reprogramming ritual. After the session OmSa was critical about the commercial trend of

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40 Online information circulates about North American CEOs going to the Amazon region to try ayahuasca for creative-professional purposes; Cfr. www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/may/18/american-ceos-travel-to-amazon-to-try-ayahuasca-for-creative-purposes (17/05/16); www.businessinsider.com/entrepreneurs-awakening-ayahuasca-2016-11?IR =T (02/02/18). According to some practitioners, these are ‘urban legends’. Even if the information of these websites is not reliable, there are some books and shamanic manuals for manager; Cfr. Borgatti 2011.

41 The above mentioned manager in an off chance conversation told me that she planned to open a holistic center for ‘alternative’ healing in Lisbon. She asked my opinion about MaLva and other shamans questioning who appeared to me more ‘authentic’ and ‘reliable’. My elusive answers challenging the idea of authenticity did not seem satisfactory for her. Some months after, CaRa told me that they had not accepted her proposal as they wanted to remain ‘free’.

42 I participated as translator and friend of OmSa at the cosmological map reading organized in a private house in Florence on 29/10/16, Cfr. Pict. 4.15.

43 It’s possible I incidentally contributed to this idea because when I was translating I paused in the crucial moment where the conversation shifted from constellations and personal desires to trivial money. This passage took me by surprise. MaLva asked me to translate with a gesture of the hands inviting me to hurry up. While I was still translating in Italian, with impatience, she finished the translation in English and OmSa dryly answered ‘Ok, ok I have understood’, looking at me.

44 A diagnostic cosmological map costs 70 euros; reprogramming costs around 500 euros.
Pict. 4.15. Cosmological map of OmSa, Courtesy OmSa, 29/10/16
shamanic practices and MaLva’s profitable business. For the advanced DIY practitioner OmSa, this approach appeared too ‘aggressive’ also because it disempowered her own shamanic skills putting her in the position of a ‘passive’ client.

Like MaLva, Geraldine confirmed that in her ceremonies hippies or practitioners mainly interested in the ‘psychedelic trip’ did not come back because her ceremonies are designed for people willing to do ‘serious’ therapeutic work on themselves. Other shamanic healers mentioned this point to distinguish their clients, devaluing the hippie interest as recreational and hedonistic only. Geraldine also claimed to have many wealthy foreigner patients, including Americans, Russians, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Brazilians people (with about 200 hundred clients per year and a total of 1500 clients from 2008 to 2016). Cosmopolitanism is a source of symbolic capital in the field, and in this case also represents success. Geraldine was clearly proud to have patients from all over the world who come to participate specifically in her ceremonies in Lisbon. I met a few practitioners of Geraldine, mainly students and therapists, and many others who were not her students who wanted to go to her ceremonies but could not afford to go.45

While freelance shamans have clients with different social backgrounds, DIY G group and Raíces de la Tierra meetings are attended by stable communities based on shared interests and lifestyle. Participants in these groups are more aligned to hippie, art, counter-culture and the genealogical roots of the field.46 In the small DIY G group around 30 floating participants and a nucleus of ten advanced practitioners and organizers meet regularly in a beautiful villa in the wealthy hillside neighborhood of Florence.47 Participants range from 30 to 60 years old but are predominantly between 40 and 50, with the majority being women. Compared to other groups, DIY G group participants are quite educated, especially in the artistic field. The majority are from the middle class with a prevalent artistic or therapeutic training at university level (music, art, design, video, literature, physiotherapy, psychology); some have a doctorate. Other members had however abandoned university and have spiritual/therapeutic training in yoga, pilates, ayurvedic massages, naturopathy, permaculture, familiar constellations, Rudolf Steiner’s training, Roy Art Theater voice therapy, Osho teachings and so on. Many of them

45 The cost of an ayahuasca ceremony in 2016 was around 240 euros for two nights, almost double MaLva’s (around 70 euros per night). Geraldine discouraged practitioners from participating only one night. She strongly recommended the day before the ceremony to do a ‘vomitivo’ preparation which costs additional 50 euros. Dietas and one-week retreats are more expensive. I did not participate in her ceremonies, because it was not my focus, and I preferred to interview her, the Brazilian assistants MiguEl and LauRel (Cfr. Chapter Two) and some of her clients like the Italian student of osteopathy GaB and the musician and teacher DoN.

46 Some practitioners I met participated in the events of both the DIY G group and Raíces de la Tierra.

47 The owner of the house is the son of a Professor of History of Religion and is working as artist and illustrator, while his partner is teaching Design at a private University.
have traveled and lived abroad or came from abroad (including Germany, France, Spain, US and the UK). Most practitioners combine temporary jobs not correspondent with their studies with artistic or therapeutic activities. This flexibility is seen by many as an opportunity to be open to change and remain free, that is, free from nine-to-five work. In fact some of the meetings are organized during working hours on weekdays. The DIY G group strategy for gaining authenticity is mainly based on the ‘uniqueness’ of the combination of their individual paths and differences in approach.

The Raíces de la Tierra Italian ‘family’ also composes of variable community of individuals, that online reaches 184 members with 956 likes (31/07/18), with a nuclear group of about twenty people which is increasing. The age varies from 20 to 60 years old and a dozen children, but the majority are between 30 and 40 years old with a predominance of women. The participation of families with children is welcomed, and is quite unusual in the shamanic field where the events are mainly intended for individuals. Most of the members do temporary jobs related to their lifestyle in the areas of organic food production and selling, agriculture, agri-tourism, Steiner education, art teaching, light design, editing for holistic newspapers, various kinds of handicraft and therapies like naturopathy, fitotherapy, massages, yoga, meditation. Some work occasionally in bars, restaurants, gardening, domestic cleaning and caring, and many are looking for more attractive and stable jobs. Most of the nuclear group are trained in art (graphic design, visual arts, sculpture, performance, scenography), but only a few have finished university and work in this area. Similar to the DIY G group, most of practitioners are trained in reiki, meditation, yoga, capoeira, pilates, connective and shiatsu massages, naturopathy, aromatherapy, Jodorosky’s psychomagic therapy, transpersonal art and theater therapy, metaphysics studies, holistic counseling and so on. Some of the members are also shamanic therapists and teachers, like BiaNca who lived with Australian Aborigines and teaches reiki with shamanic journey and totem animal workshops; ANco who teaches online meditation and ‘dream reality’ courses and the ‘healer’ JanUa who developed a gender oriented practice for women based on Harner methodology as well as on shamanic traditions of her region, Sardinia. Although individual freelancers increase their symbolic capital by participating as volunteers at Raíces events, that they list in their CVs, sometimes personal goals conflict with the group non-for-profit strategies. The group is quite cosmopolitan with people from Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, United Kindom as well as from other Italian regions. A large part of Raíces practitioners live in the Tuscan countryside and share a hippie lifestyle which is apparent in colorful clothes, organic and vegetarian food, co-housing and exotic handicraft production. Many practitioners are not interested in politics but read many
books and are used to sharing online counter-information which is often poorly reasoned.\textsuperscript{48} Cosmopolitan and psychedelic experiences are quite common, as they also are for DIY \textit{G group}, even if \textit{Raíces} does not support the use of \textit{sacred plants}.

Despite the variations, the common ground of advanced shamanic practitioners is to have cosmopolitan ‘non-ordinary’ experiences which field logic rewards. This colorful variability creates however, a sort of cosmopolitan homogeneity by reinforcing the sub-cultural identity of shamanic communities in contrast to a monochromatic uniformed ‘rest’ (Cfr. the \textit{Festival du Chamanisme}’s discourses in Chapter One). A peculiarity of shamanists, whatever strategy and path, is to share different therapies and spiritual practices according to a cosmopolitan way of temporary adhesion (Cfr. Chapter Two).\textsuperscript{49} This mode mainly follows the free and individual form of personal religions (Hervier-Léger 2005 [1999]; Carrette and King 2005; Craig 2014; Roussou 2015) which is opposed to ‘institutionalized’ religions considered less ‘authentic’ by shamanic practitioners (Cfr. Chapter One). These forms of individual and ‘free’ spirituality are more suited to the trend of current neoliberal policies (Carrette and King 2005; Craig 2014). As APio observed, ‘shamanism’ offers in this sense a support to manage the increasing cosmopolitan mix of cultural differences, enabling a personal and inter-personal integration that, according to him is necessary, because of the challenges of ‘globalization’. Other practitioners also say that ‘shamanism’ can provide a universal frame to integrate different experiences and worldviews. This allows to experience the polychrome variety of shamanic practices while remaining on the same path. Many shamanists in fact, use a self narration of discontinuity in relation to other practices and of continuity referring to shamanic practices, even if they include very different experiences such as \textit{Temazcal}, ayahuasca, drum circles, cosmological maps and so on. Since the shamanic path for many advanced practitioners is a way of continuous change, this discourse strategically frames different practices as the same, enabling change in practice without changing it, that is, once again an exercise in denegation.

\textsuperscript{48} For instance, information about Tesla cars, chemtrails and other conspiracy theories. When I was in a bar with some practitioners of the Italian family, they commented the TV news that was playing, agreeing that the media broadcast only bad news, spreading fear and sadness. Some mentioned that happily there is also an online program that only announces good news, spreading instead hope and trust. I often heard similar discourses by other shamanists. This can be seen as a way to create a sort of heterotopy that protects from bad news.

\textsuperscript{49} For example ArPo and OmSa, after about ten years of involvement, stopped participating in shamanic events during the summer 2018, while I was writing my thesis.
The transnational network of Raíces de la Tierra

Raíces de la Tierra strategically does not use the word ‘shaman’ preferring the more neutral appellation ‘abuelo’.\(^{50}\) The Mexican organizer OttO explained me that, due to the ongoing commodification of spiritual practices, the word ‘shaman’ is ‘prostituted’.\(^{51}\) In his interview, he did use the word “shaman” a few times, joking that it was a ‘bad’ word to use for the ‘touristic guide’ [“el guía turístico’] of shamanic practices. Despite the intention to differentiate from Hollywood shamans [“los chamanes de Hollywood’], OttO admits that sometimes the word ‘shaman’ may be an easy way to refer to this kind of practice. The word ‘shaman’ itself is not present in the American websites of Raíces, but it appears on their European website referring to some Hungarian and German abuelos participating at the Kiva (Cfr. Chapter Three and Pict. 4.16.). To note that Tigre Pérez was presented as a “chamán” in an interview broadcast on the Spanish TV talk show La Tabla Redonda in 1992. He accepted to be called ‘shaman’ possibly because at the time the term still had a strategic benefit and was not yet ‘abused’ by the present global mass diffusion of shamanic practice. In common with Rydving (2011) and other ‘conservative’ anthropologists, the intention of Raíces is to come back to vernacular words for a shaman-like figure like pajé, marakame, taita and so on, regarding these terms as ‘authentic’. But as OttO himself, noted a word to refer to all these ‘indigenous’ healers and spiritual leaders is useful in order to ‘communicate’:

Abuelo porque es una palabra, como se dice, muy universal, para no decir si vino el Marakame, vino el Taita, el Machi... no, vinieron los abuelos. Es una palabra sencilla, que le podemos explicar a la gente que es un abuelo. (…) Los que llamamos “abuelos”, son los que saben, porqué es así casi en todos los significados. Por ejemplo, Marakame significa “el que sabe o el que ve en los sueños”, Taità en Colombia creo que es “el que sabe, el que reza”, Machi ya he escuchado que es algo parecido. Al final la esencia del nombre es la misma. El chamán también es el que hablaba con los espíritus y curaba. La esencia de la palabra a lo mejor es la misma, pero nosotros la tomamos en una palabra fácil de entender para la gente que es abuelo, por que al final también nuestros abuelos son los que saben, tu abuela era la que te hacía el té de las plantas que sabe para que te iban a curar (…) los abuelos saben, son los que por naturaleza tienen conocimiento, entonces es por esto que usamos la palabra abuelo, un abuelo indígena. [Grandfather is a word, as they say, very universal, not to say the Marakame came, the Taita came, the Machi... no, grandparents came. It's a simple word, we can explain to people who are grandparents. (…) "Grandparents" are those who know, it is so in almost all meanings. For example, Marakame means "the one who knows or the one who sees in dreams", Taità in Colombia I think is "the one who knows, the one who prays", Machi is something similar. In the end the essence of the name is the same. The shaman is also the one who spoke with spirits and healed. The essence of the word is probably the same, but we take it in a

\(^{50}\) Refusal to use the word ‘shaman’ posed some difficulty including whether to insert or not Raíces in my study. The answer came during fieldwork, since practitioners of Raíces consider Temazcal, Vision Quest and Sun Dance shamanic practices and Heriberto and Nubia as spiritual guides of a shamanic path.

\(^{51}\) OttO’s quotes are taken from the interview in Florence, 28/12/16.
Peter "Altair" Trummer  
(Austria)  
Peter has been walking his spiritual path for more than 20 years along the ancient Celtic knowledge. With his down-to-earth composure and playful profundity the modern Druid and philosopher easily touches one's heart. Throughout his life Peter has undergone a profound transformation, which led the nature-loving traveller to his spiritual work as Celtic shaman (Druid). He works with Runes and astrology, as well as accompanies rituals (such as weddings, blessings, namings) and personal processes.

Zoltan Solyomfi Nagy  
(Hungary)  
Zoltan is a Hungarian shaman (hungarian expression= taltos). Initiation as shaman was lead by Hungarian masters. He experienced several years of teachings in Lakota medicine in Northern America but also in Hungary. He is not only leader of ceremonies and sweatlodges, but also musician, poet, drum and rattle maker. Knows a lot about Hungarian folkculture. (dance and music) Zoltan is accompanied by Majercsik János Oğuz.  
www.tengri.hu
word that is easy for people to understand, because in the end our grandparents are also the ones who know, your grandmother was the one who made you tea of healing plants (...) grandparents know, they are the ones that by nature have knowledge, so this is why we use the word grandfather, an indigenous grandfather.

Ultimately, Raíces uses the word abuelo because it is a simple word that ‘everyone can understand’ as a person bonded to ancient knowledge. This strategical move, as well as the low cost of the practices, allows ‘communication’ with a broader audience enabling Raíces to involve many young people, as OttO proudly points out. The Raíces ‘family’ only asks for a refund for expenses for their ceremonies and training, demonstrating that they do not have an economic interest and, in the process, acquiring symbolic capital. Many practitioners appreciate this aspect not only because the practices are cheap, but above all because they see Raíces as a more authentic and not for profit agency. Italian and Portuguese practitioners alike regarded this aspect as positive, and rare, and criticized the sale of shamanic practices, at high prices, by business oriented ‘shamans’. To maintain low prices for participation, Raíces practitioners are invited to become volunteers actively organizing, financing and supporting the ceremonies. This strategy also empowers the local groups by directly involving them in the organization of the events and, reinforces cohesion among the transnational family.

According to OttO, the mission of Raíces is to enable contact with traditions of the abuelos in order to teach to the ‘mestizo world’ a natural way of living. This way is aware that everything eaten comes from the earth and not the supermarket [“una manera de vivir, una manera de acercarse a una vida natural que es la tierra, estar agradecido con la tierra, estar consciente que todo lo que comes, lo que tomas viene de la tierra, no del LIDL”]. Raíces international meetings are indeed fruitful opportunities for mestizos as well as for indigenous abuelos. In Raíces gatherings mestizos have the possibility to learn a way of life that cannot be bought at the supermarket, and ‘indigenous’ abuelos can meet practitioners who are much more motivated to learn their traditions than their own ‘nephews’ who appear more interested in the latest i-phone model. In the beginning this collaboration was not easy because of ‘indigenous’ fear of ‘mestizo’ appropriation. OttO told a charming anecdote to explain how

52 Since many Italian and Portuguese raizers received a Catholic education, the economic exchange for spiritual services is perceived as a ‘sale’ according to the consumerist politics of late capitalist societies which is seen in opposition to the Catholic Church that does not ask for a direct economic exchange for ceremonies.
53 For instance, Temazcal can cost 50 euros or more, instead of 15/20 euros, which is negotiable, with Raíces.
54 The i-phone example is a coveted status symbol of the hi-tech mestizo lifestyle. At a conference in May 2016 during an exposition of Lakota handicraft in Pistoia, Italy, Leonard Crow Dog Junior, a spiritual leader from Rosebud Reservation, expressed a similar concern about young Lakota by using the same example.
‘respectful’ mestizos convinced Colombian abuelos to participate at the first national Kiva gathering in 2012:

Entonces hay una historia de una Kiva, en Colombia, el primer año que se preparó la Kiva allá. En Colombia hay muchas tribu indígenas, muchos abuelos indígenas, hay Kogis, hay Mamo, y, a parte que hay muchas etnias, de verdad, digo que hay muchos abuelos que todavía saben en Colombia... lo que te decía antes de la prostitución de las medicinas y de la espiritualidad, es que de repente ya llegaba cualquier a estas personas, por ejemplo a Colombia, y les hacía una Búsqueda de Visión, una Danza del Sol, así, así, así, y ni siquiera eran gentes indígenas, no, era gente que nada mas de alguna manera estaba haciendo la ceremonia y eso… y ni siquiera fue a la gente ahí de Colombia: “Oye, esta gente nos esta pidiendo esta ceremonia, la podemos hacer aquí? Nos dan su permiso?” No, no, llegaron así, a conquistar. Entonces, cuando empezamos con la Kiva allá en Colombia, Heriberto y su esposa, que es de Colombia, fueran dos o tres veces antes a platicar allá, con abuelos de allá. “Porqué quieres hacer esto aquí?” y Heriberto: “no, mira, esta es una ceremonia de unión, de hermanarnos todos”. “No es que ustedes del Norte no mas llegan aquí para poner sus Temazcales y todo, ni permiso nos piden”. “No la verdad es el contrario, queremos hermanarnos con ustedes”. Y fue si, no, si, no… bueno el chiste es: se llegó el día de la ceremonia, la Kiva ya estaba hecha, se prendió el fuego para la ceremonia, para la Kiva, pues estaban no mas los abuelos invitados, los Wirrarikas, los pocos abuelos de Colombia que ya trabajábamos y nada, ellos no querían venir a la Kiva, ya estaban en el lugar de la ceremonia, pero ellos no quisieron venir. Estaba raro, interesante, y ahora? Ya pasó toda la ceremonia de la Kiva y después para la ceremonia de la Kiva de la tarde, todos los abuelos estaban en su maloca, en su consejo, y Heriberto fue a invitarles otra vez “Oye, por favor, vengan aquí a la Kiva, a compartir su rezo y todo” y empezaron “No, no vamos a ir, ya estamos hartos que ustedes del Norte vengan aquí a conquistar-nos y todo, bla, bla” y Heriberto le dije: “No, mira saben que, nosotros les respetamos y eso, y la verdad es que esta es una unión y al contrario lo que queremos hacer es dar a conocer sus conocimientos para que no se pierda porque también se está perdiendo todo el indigenismo en el mundo, y al contrario hay gente en las ciudades que están en una búsqueda buena, están en una búsqueda espiritual, también es bueno compartirlo para que los ayuden ustedes también a sus comunidades y que ese conocimiento no se pierda, porque ese conocimiento se está perdiendo y hay gente que a lo mejor no nacieron indígena, nacieron en la ciudad, pero tienen un buen poder espiritual, tienen una búsqueda espiritual, son personas que están aprendiendo el camino espiritual y todo”. Y de repente en esta platica se levanta un viejito ya como de 90 y tantos años: “Este señor, lo que dice, si es cierto. Mis nietos ya no quieren aprender, ellos ya no quieren saber, yo ya pronto me voy a morir, y que voy a hacer con tanto conocimiento que tengo aquí se ya nadie lo quiere saber? Ese señor dice la verdad.” Entonces empezaron a platicar entre abuelos colombianos, “Esta cierto, vamos ir a la Kiva”, y fueron. Después de la Kiva y todo, empezaron a ver que no es una conquista, es una unión, osea los indígenas del Norte, del Sur y todos, al final se dan cuenta que son lo mismo, todos le rezan al fuego, a los elementos, a la tierra, todos les ofrecen a la tierra y al cielo. [There is a story of the first Kiva in Colombia where there are many indigenous tribes, many indigenous grandparents, there are Kogis, Mamo and many ethnic groups, really, there are many grandparents that still know in Colombia... what I told you before about the prostitution of medicine and spirituality, suddenly some people came to Colombia, for example, and did a Vision Quest, a Sun Dance, and they were not even indigenous people and dis not ask to the people of Colombia: “Hey, some people ask us for this ceremony, can we do it here? Do you give us the permission?” No, they arrived to conquer. So, when we started with the Kiva in Colombia, Heriberto and his Colombian wife went two or three times before to talk with grandparents there. “Why do you want to do this here?” And Heriberto: “No, look, this is a union ceremony to unify us all”. “You
from the North arrive here to put your Temazcales and everything, you do not ask us for permission”. "No, the truth is the opposite, we want to come together with you”. And it was yes, no, yes, no... well the joke is: the day of the ceremony, the fire was lit for the Kiva, there were the invited grandparents, the Wirrarikas and few grandparents of Colombia who were already working [with Raíces] and nothing, they did not want to come to the Kiva, they were in the place of the ceremony, but they did not want to participate. It was weird, interesting, and now? The morning ceremony of the Kiva passed and then for the afternoon Kiva all the grandparents were in their maloca, in their council, and Heriberto went to invite them again "Hey, please, come here to the Kiva, to share your prayer” and they started “No, we are not going, we are fed up with Northerners coming here to conquer us" and Heriberto said: "No, we respect you and this is a union, we want to disseminate your knowledge so that it does not get lost because all indigenism in the world is also being lost, and on the contrary there are people in the cities that are in a good search, a spiritual search, it is also good to share it so that you also help their communities and knowledge is not lost, because that knowledge is being lost and there are people who were not born indigenous, who were born in cities, but they have a good spiritual power, a spiritual search, they are people who are learning the spiritual path.” Suddenly, in this talk, an old man 90 years old rises: "This gentleman, what he says, it is true. My grandchildren do not want to learn anymore, they do not want to know anymore, I am going to die soon, and what am I going to do with so much knowledge that I have and nobody wants to know anymore? That gentleman tells the truth.” Then Colombian grandparents began to talk, “this is true, let's go to the Kiva” and they went. After the Kiva, they noticed that it is not a conquest, but it is a union, I mean the Indians of the North, of the South and all, in the end, realize that they are the same, they all pray to fire, to the elements, to the earth, everyone offers to the earth and to heaven.]

The agreement worked and the annual Kiva gathering in Colombia is now involving up to 35 indigenous communities according to the Raíces website (https://Raícesdelatierra colombia.org 13/12/17). This story accounts for the way Raíces presents itself as an institution that does not have imperialist or commercial purposes. Its aim is to twin [“hermanar”] respectful mestizos on a good path of spiritual quest with indigenous people who risk losing traditional practices. If locals are decreasingly interested in ‘their’ traditions, indigenous spiritual leaders can gain ground globally by engaging with people who value ‘their’ practices. This arrangement appears beneficial on both sides, as the popularity of the cosmopolitan annual Festival du Chamanisme and the continuation of the FSS Indigenous Assistance Program testify.

After quickly spreading in South America, Raíces arrived in Europe through Austrian practitioners who had traveled in Mexico and Chile and through the Mexican spiritual leader Don Mateo who moved to Austria (http://www.feuerkreis.at/wurzeln_geschichte_e.html 17/12/17). Transnational links of family and friendship enabled the realization of Vision Quest in 2009 and of Kiva in 2012 finding volunteers, resources and a space for the ceremony to welcome about 600 people in Austria. The first Kivas were hard and Austrian practitioners ended up in debt from organizing the event. Raíces groups spread very quickly in Europe through the strategical movements of some members of the group and the progressive
engagement of local practitioners. For instance, OttO went to study as a flight pilot in Belgium and tried to create a local group, at the same time he supported the beginning of the Dutch and Italian groups. According to OttO, the Belgian group did not work because local people were ‘closed’ and not very interested in this kind of practice. Since many participants in Temazcal were foreigners living in Belgium temporarily, it was not possible to form a stable group. In contrast, in the Netherlands participants were more ‘open’ and ‘aware’, spiritually and ecologically. The Dutch group however, remained small because Temazcal is a very available practice there. In a similar way, the Mexican CanDia, who lived for some years with Heriberto’s family moved to Spain, started a group in Maiorca and Portugal with her Spanish husband and shaman BalBi. Likewise, the Macedon MaX who lived between Austria and Spain with his Brazilian partner and practitioner, accomplished the Raíces ascetic path in record time, after which he started to lead the Austrian and Spanish groups, alternating leading with OttO in Italian Temazcal as well.  

The Italian group was started by a couple, the Italian MiNa and the Chilean OscaR, who for some years lived in Chile where they participated at Kiva, Temazcal and Vision Quest. When I first met the Italian family of Raíces through two friends who were shamanic practitioners, the group had just started to organize Temazcal in the countryside near Florence. In March 2015, with the help of OttO they built the structure in a place offered by a member of the group and owner of a nearby bed and breakfast. The first Temazcal I participated in was in July 2015; there were about 20 people who were focused on organizing summer travel to the Kiva in Austria and describing the gathering to some newcomers. In September 2015, monthly Temazcal began, again with more enthusiasm and determination from larger group of practitioners who worked to support the local family. During the first year, the group strengthened and started to organize fund raising events to plan and finance other activities, for instance the meeting of indigenous medicine women Incontro di Donne Indigene per la Riconciliazione Umana, held in Montespertoli, Tuscany, in May 2016 (Cfr. Chapter One). At these fund raising events hosted for free in a small cultural centre in the countryside, members of Raíces applied their artistic, therapeutic, handicraft and culinary skills with concerts, art

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55 European organizers OttO and MaX are volunteers and receive only reimbursement for expenses, although they work hard devoting great part of their resources and free time to Raíces. OscaR used the expression ‘tempo record’ referring to MaX’s path because he undertook the ascetic trials one after the other. Usually practitioners wait a year before engaging in the next trial, also because they need to train (Cfr. Chapter Three).

56 They organized car sharing and free camping. Those who were more experienced talked about the previous year, especially pointing out the presence of abuelos and the rare opportunity to meet them.
shows, films, workshops, selling of handicraft and a gourmet organic buffet. These events were opportunities to enact and empower the different skills of members of the group, reinforcing the ability to collaborate that would be useful in organizing more challenging events like the Vision Quest in September 2016.

Unlike the Italian family, the Portuguese group was more heterogeneous from the beginning and practitioners did not share much outside Raíces practice. This difference evolved from the different formation of each group. In Italy the group was formed through friends with similar interests, cultural backgrounds and social positions. In Portugal the group formed around the Spanish shaman BalBi and were initially his clients, without necessarily similar interests or backgrounds. In general the Portuguese group was less ‘hippie style’ and the practitioners I met were quite different from each other. Some members were educated, living in Lisbon and working in a bank; while others were holistic therapists living in small cities; or artists living in the countryside; unemployed looking for a job as well as permanent and short-term staying foreigners. Compared to the Italian family Portuguese practitioners were less followed by the Raíces main leaders receiving mostly guidance from BalBi and CanDia. It’s another example of how freelance shamans attract a variety of practitioners and for this reason in this setting stable groups are rare.

In November 2017, when I participated at the Temazcal in Pinhal Novo, the Portuguese family was struggling internally and the local leader, MagDa, was being contested. Despite the explicit struggles, many practitioners were united on the common aim to recover balance and harmony in the group to be able to receive prestigious assignments from Raíces, for instance responsibility for the next European Kiva. According to Portuguese raizeros, Heriberto was considering the possibility of organizing the next European Kiva in

57 The group organized activities including Capoeira, drum circles, collective songs and dances, shadow puppetry, workshops on the alchemy of plants and essential oils, conferences on dreaming and meditation, workshops for children to construct dream-catchers, Ojos de Dios and magic wands (Cfr Pict. 4.17.). The majority of the handicraft for sale was by indigenous communities linked to Raíces, for instance, the well known Huichol bead jewelry, as well as by artisans who travel and sell their work around the world.

58 I could not follow the Portuguese group from the beginning because when I first met some of Portuguese Raizeiros in the first Italian Vision Quest in 2016, they had already engaged in Vision Quest and Sun Dance.

59 A core member told me that he didn’t have many interests in common with most of the group members, for example he could not discuss day to day life or politics, since most practitioners were not engaged at all in knowing what was going on, or even go to the cinema because they never would agree on the choice of the film.

60 I learnt online that MagDa resigned some months after. At the Vision Quest 2018 in Spain, Heriberto named the four corredores of Temazcal including SaRa, IaN, and PauLo, the owner of the land purchased for the Kiva, who had all undertaken Vision Quest and Sun Dance. The choice of leaders here, confirms the Raíces mode of reproduction (Cfr. Chapter Three). The choice to name four people was a strategic decision to lighten the logistical burden, since one of the difficult tasks of local leaders was to guarantee regular weekly practice.
20 febbraio dalle ore 15

Circolo Brusciana
Via Senese Romana 132, Empoli (FI)

15 > 17 Laboratorio “Intrecci magici dall’universo”
creazione “Ojos de Dios” e “Acchiappasogni” adatto a
ogni età si consiglia portare lane colorate, piume,
corticce, perline e... fantasia!
15 > 20 Lettura dei Tarocchi personale (Yoni)
16 > 17 “Merenda dell’allegria” (per bambini dentro e fuori)
17 > 18 Laboratorio di manipolazione della creta
per grandi e piccini
16 > 17 Workshop sulle pratiche energetiche sociali della
tradizione spirituale andina (Giulio Biancalani)
17 > 18 Workshop di Capoeira adulti e bambini (Alan Jorquera)
18 > 19 Workshop “Il potere della voce” (Niccolò Angeli)
19 > 20 Circolo di Canti di Medicina (Essen)
20:00 “Cenone della salute”: 20 € (bambini 10 €)
(antipasto, primo, secondo e contorno)
21:00 Skitarrate anticrisi... canta che ti passa!
(Martino Coppola)
22:00 D.J. TOTEM i gusti della musica frendfucionmixed

Laboratori e spettacoli: offerta libera consapevole
Cena: 20 € (bambini 10 €) grazie per prenotare
ai numeri: 0571 931859 / 329 1681420

Pict. 4.17. A: http://circolobrusciana.com/events/elenco/?tribe_paged=1&tribe_event_display=past&tribe-bar-search=pachamama (13/02/16)
Pict. 4.17. B: The market and Huichol jewelry, Festa Pachamama, Brusciana, 20/02/16, my photos
Pict. 4.17. C: The theater with shadows puppetry, Festa Pachamama, Brusciana, 20/02/16, my photo

Pict. 4.17. D: Singing shamanic songs, Festa Pachamama, 10/06/17, https://www.facebook.com/pg/radicidellaterra/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2154865024636302&ref=page_internal
Portugal in 2020.\textsuperscript{61} The group was very excited by this idea and an advanced member had already bought land in Alentejo to host the ceremony following a vision he had had during a Vision Quest. Kiva location is another strategy of providing recognition and gratification to local groups as a reward if they succeed in organizing events and enlarging membership. The group encourages participation and affiliation at different levels, from the individual to the local group out to global activity, and this is not without inner rivalry with divergence of purposes, interests, strategies and, as a consequence, immunological defences.\textsuperscript{62}

As local families of Raíces de la Tierra quickly expand, global leaders plan more challenging tasks, for instance the realization of a Kiva in India in 2019, during the religious celebration of Kumbha Mela. The event is promoted by the United Nations of the Spirit (UNS), a cosmopolitan organization based in Krishna ecovillage of Varsana, Colombia, US (http://unitednationsofthespirit.org/upcoming-events/world-union-holy-rivers-february-2019/22/12/17). The idea of UNS was instigated during a Kiva in Colombia in 2015 with the participation of the leaders and the elders of Raíces de la Tierra. The dream of Tigre Pérez became even greater through the planned union of Kiva and Kumbha Mela celebrations, the latter being a Hindu pilgrimage of millions of devotees described as the “world’s largest religious gathering” (http://www.allahabadkumbhyatra.com 22/12/17). The unification of the two events was announced as “something that happens for the first time” (idem) and offered as part of a month long pilgrimage to sacred Indian sites guided by the abuelos collaborating with Raíces.

The UNS presents itself as an agency devoted to the defence of Mother Earth rights and the promotion of ‘native’ spiritual traditions to give rise to a new ancient culture:

\begin{quote}
We, the ancient peoples, offer a cultural agreement: between ancient wisdom of natural humanisation and the artificial technological world. We intend to create a synthesis between what was brought in 1492 and what we have had here since the beginning, to generate a new old order, to allow the path of existence. We understand that the modern world has taken away our life and existence, for we propose a path that preserves existence. (...) We are the announced prophecy of the peoples and nations around the world, the birth of a new humanity, a new ancient culture, where every nation is
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} This decision has since been confirmed and at the time of writing, the Portuguese group have started to realize the gathering. Since the land was bought, guaranteeing a certain stability, the global Raíces family decided to establish a stable European Kiva in Portugal moving all the resources from other European countries to this site.

\textsuperscript{62} MagDa, received the ‘fire’ to conduct Temazcal but after one year resigned from her position of leadership in the group in order to conduct her own Temazcal. In the meeting I attended for the Kiva in Portugal, practitioners were also worried about possible interference of the European family on the organization of the event. At the Italian Vision Quest in 2016, some Austrian practitioners were not happy because the future Kiva had been relocated from their country and told me that they were thinking of continuing the Kiva whether it be with Raíces support or on their own. It’s an example of how local groups are prepared to protect themselves from the global family.
responsible for its natural norms and its original law. We must all return to the mentality of this great creative spirit and starting from there, to multiply this story of origin. From this point we must announce that there is a path for the human seed, and that we are the seed of the Original creator. (...) Today we are restored in the CosmoGeoCracy, so that the human seed germinates and thrives, and we become Naturagentes, guardians and custodians of life. (...) This continent is basically a mixture, so we return to our heritage and the memory of our native mother and the land to create a synthesis. We DO NOT deny the western world, moreover we propose an agreement: an agreement for all to become Naturagentes. We declare ourselves the United Nations of the Spirit of the Naturagent.
http://unitednationsofthespirit.org/founding-declaration/ (12/12/17)

Many Raíces discourses resonate in this declaration. To note that these ecological concerns are also found in the ‘environmental’ Encyclical Laudato Si’ (2015), published just a few months before the UNS declaration, confirming that “ecologism is in the process of becoming the central discourse of the present day” (Sloterdijk 2009: 177). According to Sloterdijk, nowadays the ecological siren is one of the best means to set a collective mission for universalist anthropotechnical agencies; and, from my fieldwork it was clear, this is what Raíces de la Tierra aims to become.

. . DIY G group

Unlike the universalist ambition of Raíces de la Tierra, the strategies of the informal Italian G group stress their uniqueness as a form of distinction and protection from the risks of inauthenticity of the ongoing global dissemination of shamanic practices. The life story of the informal leader of G group significantly illustrates an ambivalence toward cosmopolitan networks through which he had access to shamanic practice. I have been a friend of ArPo since 1991 when he was finishing High School evening classes in art and was learning to play the theorbo, a rare lute mainly used in baroque music. He was living at that time in a bohemian district of Florence with his family (his mother, two sisters and grandmother), in a colorful artistic house full of plants, cats and books. Many friends from all over the world passed by. When he was a teenager he had dropped out of High School and tried many jobs, living for a while with his father, a US soldier based at the Camp Darby, an American military complex one hour away from Florence. ArPo continued to train in music, living in London for a few years and obtaining a Master’s in theorbo. For a while he played in a baroque ensemble of international musicians. At the same time, he continued to develop his interest in art, psychedelics, esotericism, psychology as well as informatics that finally

63 Many aspects of Raíces correspond with the Catholic Church, for instance, the rhetoric of sacrifice and humility and regular Sunday practice felt, by some, as an obligation (Cfr. Chapter Three).
became the most reliable source of income, if not his favorite source. Job precariousness and the possibility of working online however enabled him to participate in training with Holotropic breathing, Family Constellations and Roy Art Theater, living for some months of the year in France. Since 2007, ArPo has increasingly been involved in shamantic experiences through which he learned to perform practices by himself as well as with other group members. After experiencing Temazcal in Spain with Fuego Sagrado, in 2008, ArPo trained for 40 days in Ecuador on the Jornadas de Medicina [days of medicine], an informal learning experience with the local shaman CuBo he had met in Madrid. He appreciated CuBo but not Fuego Sagrado because they follow a very rigid ‘platform’ not permitting variation from their fixed ‘traditions’. For this reason he preferred to directly learn with CuBo through a less structured training based on first-hand personal experience. During the Ecuadorian trip, ArPo and other apprentices were guided by CuBo and other local curanderos to experiment with different practices including peyote, San Pedro, ayahuasca and Temazcal. He helped to construct a structure of Temazcal when they visited Shuar people who did not know the practice at all and were ‘very perturbed’ according to ArPo’s account [“erano veramenti straniti”]. On returning to Florence, he decided to construct a Temazcal in the countryside near Arezzo, Tuscany, with the help of some friends who had experienced the practice with Fuego Sagrado. In the first Temazcal under his guidance, he told me the group ‘aped’ the known forms and formulas [“il primo l’ho condotto io e abbiamo un po’ scimmiottato”] and over the years gradually changed by integrating heterogeneous elements to form their own way. When in 2010 the group started to regularly organize Temazcal for friends, ArPo strongly recommended the practice to everyone, including me. In the beginning he was worried to follow the rules and the meanings he had learned. He seemed confident there was a precise model to fulfill, but

64 According to López-Pavillard, the spread of ayahuasca ceremonies in Spain was facilitated by the Chilean psychotherapist Claudio Naranjo beginning in 1988 (Lopez-Pavillard 2015: 223; 245). In fact many practitioners participated in ayahuasca ceremonies in Spain, while in Italy and Portugal at that time there was less opportunity.

65 The cosmopolitan organization Fuego Sagrado involves local shamans and contributes in disseminating and hybridizing different practices under the universal frame of ‘shamanism’. For example, CuBo guides Temazcal, which is not traditional in Ecuador, according to Fuego Sagrado ‘platform’.

66 The group only asked participants reimbursement for expenses, which is quite unusual in the shamanic field. In first email sent by the group in 2010, the practice was presented as both Temazcalli (‘a Nahuatl word that in the language of the Aztec means Steam House’ [“una parola in lingua Nahua, la lingua degli Aztechi, che significa Casa del Vapore”]) and Inipi (‘in North America, in Lakota language, it is known as Inipi that means Rebirth again’ [“Nel Nord-America, in lingua Lakota, è conosciuto come Inipi che significa Rinascere ancora”]). They used however the Italian translation Capanna Sudatoria pointing out the difficulty to trace back an unique historical origin of this ancient and spread practice (“La pratica di utilizzare il vapore per purificarsi e curarsi è talmente antica ed ubiquitaria che è difficile rintracciarne un uso originale”).
uncertain how to reproduce it. After ten years of practice he is now very relaxed, making what he calls a ‘fusion’ without worrying about being faithful to a ‘traditional’ model. After 2010, he continued to experiment with other shamanic practices, including the Kambo, that is currently in a stage of global dissemination, and started a cycle of four Sun Dance (Cfr. Chapter Three). ArPo does not want to transform his practice into a business or a job, as others do with less experience and skill. He feels shamanic practices should remain free and he would not feel comfortable in a professional role as, as he says, he is in conducting informal ceremonies with friends.

After many years of looking for a place where to build a permanent Temazcal in the Florence area, in 2014 ArPo finally found a friend who offered his private garden. With the help of some friends, he built it and started to organize Temazcal about once per month. The group formed from this, with friends who started to meet regularly every two weeks with the aim to train in shamanic songs performed during ayahuasca and Temazcal ceremonies. The group also hosts international shamans, psychotherapists, Umbandaime and Daime ritual operators who conduct ceremonies with ayahuasca, peyote, San Pedro or other sacred plants. Although there is no formal leadership, ArPo is the main promoter and leader of the ceremonies. The majority of group members are advanced shamanic practitioners who have followed different trainings in artistic and therapeutic areas, which they share with other practices. This exchange of information, creates a small network based on similar interests. Group members value, in particular, the informality of the meetings, the continuous experimentation without following an established pattern, the peer exchange and mutual apprenticeship.

In 2010 ArPo had the most expertise, but in the years since other members have trained, gained symbolic capital and challenged ArPo’s informal leadership. Bette, a German video-maker who practiced Sufism and tried ayahuasca under ArPo’s suggestion increasingly participated in ceremonies and read extensively about the topic. Following ArPo’s example, she went to Ecuador with CuBo and started a course for curandera. As she gained experience and skill, she questioned the way of conducting ceremonies, the selection of the songs and

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67 Kambo is a South-American frog whose secretion provokes an intense immunological reaction with strong physical effects. Kambo practice is often called a ‘vaccine’; Cfr. Gorman 2015.
68 I regularly attended group meetings from December 2015 to July 2016 and less regularly until August 2018. When I started fieldwork with the group I already knew four members. I was present when practitioners decided to create a group on a social network that required a name (04/01/16). They choose the street name of the group meeting place, that had already been used for a shared online directory of the scores and the lyrics of songs, Cfr. Pict. 4.18.
69 Sometimes during these meetings some members brought marijuana, psyclocibes, ruta siriana or other psychedelics to be more inspired.
Pict. 4.18. A: Cover of the private Facebook G group

Pict. 4.18. B: Image sent by ArPo to the Mailing list with the information about Temazcal
Pict. 4.18. C: ArPo preparing G group Temazcal, courtesy ArPO

Pict. 4.18. D: OmSa in a G group meeting of shamanic songs, courtesy OmSa
4.18. D: Image sent to the Mailing list with the information about a shamanic ceremony; the dome of the cathedral of Florence has been replaced by a peyote.
above all the hippie spirit of *G group* with the creative use of sacred plants that, in her opinion, was not ‘serious’ enough. Similarly, PiNo was also deeply involved with *Raíces de la Tierra*, *Fuego Sagrado* and other international shamans. He had trained with *Fuego Sagrado*, accomplished the cycle of four *Vision Quests* and had started the *Sun Dance* in the US. He organized some events at *G group*’s location with shamans from *Fuego Sagrado* and helped to construct a big tepee and a dry bath in the garden. When he was titled temazcalero, he conducted his first *Temazcal* at the *G group* location according to the *Fuego Sagrado* frame. For some members it was much too structured with too many rules to follow. Further, PiNo wore a special outfit with some symbols representing the ascetic trials he had overcome. According to OmSa, a *G group* member, this discipline and the symbols were ‘like in the army’, and were both charming and perturbing. She felt uneasy in PiNo’s ceremonies unlike in ArPo ceremonies, where no one corrects her or imposes rules. Ceremonies with many rules and a script to follow in her opinion, broke practitioner’s sense of freedom and ease. When PiNo asked to perform regularly *Temazcal* at the *G group* location, ArPo felt the rivalry and perceived the risk of losing his informal leadership. Other members did not welcome the *Fuego Sagrado* ceremony formats and the owner of *G group* location did not want an increase in events: PiNo eventually found another location.

These inner struggles show the considerable length taken to keep *G group* balanced and ArPo’s efforts to maintain his leadership without explicitly affirming it. This tacit concealment enables members to feel free from authority and rules. The extent of its effectiveness was clear when ArPo was absent for some months in 2015. During this period, LiBu attempted to guide the group in regular meetings to practice the shamanic songs. LiBu’s inexperience was clear in his explicit attempts to conduct the event and manage participation. His leadership style uncovered and hardened some of the implicit rules of the group, such as, repeating songs for three times or opening and closing the ceremony with a *rapé* practice. Under ArPo the same rules were enacted in a softer way. *G group* members value the ArPo’s apparent non-leadership also because it empowers them as self-guiding advanced practitioners. As a consequence, any attempt to create an explicit leadership until now has failed. Other practitioners including FoNi following more structured methodologies, do not consider ArPo ceremonies as ‘serious’ or say they are ‘inauthentic’, since improvisation is perceived as not professional and potentially risky. On the contrary, for ArPo and many in the

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70 For example, he and other leaders of *Fuego Sagrado* entered the *Temazcal* first according to their hierarchy.
71 LiBu himself talked about his inexperience and the ‘softer’ way of leading of ArPo. *Rapé* is a mixture of powdered plants which usually contains a strong tobacco and is blown into the nostrils through a special double pipe that links the mouth to the nostril (Cfr. Pict. 4.5. A).
G group, combining different approaches and improvisation without following a ‘tradition’ is the key to activating the aspired antidote of authenticity. According to the shamanic denegation set, this is confirmation for G group members that they do not follow a model and that their practice is the fruit of ‘original’ non-repeatable variations. Nevertheless these improvisations in G group draw on an established global repertoire of songs whose individually chosen tracks are ‘freely’ recombined by members of the group. For instance, the Himnario G is a collection of shamanic songs that every practitioner in the group contributed to, in the process mixing Umbanda, Umbandaime and Daime songs, Icaros from Peru, Lakota songs, Rainbow meetings songs, Capoeira songs, but also pop music including The Beatles and Rastafari songs. The effect is a very cosmopolitan set, embracing Orixas, the cult of the elements and pachamama Mother Earth, invocations to sacred plants, but also hymns to Ganesha, references to Dharma and Karma and even Christian Saints. The apparent spontaneous variability in this combination engenders a sense of authenticity.

This form of gaining authenticity, however, is attenuated by observing the group practice within the global shamanic field. Participating at events with other groups and visiting online resources, I noticed that most of G group’s shamanic songs are shared by many other practitioners, including in Raíces de la Tierra and and being available online. The G group strategy of authentication through customization of globalized shamanic practices as a defense against homogenization and commodification is typical of contemporary marketing focusing on ‘personalized’, ‘authentic’, and ‘unrepeatable’ experiences. The customized playlist is a popular contemporary practice that largely replaces the authoritative album, challenging the etymological meaning of authenticity:

Indeed, our current age of digital reproduction seems to invalidate the root of authenticity, the Ancient Greek notion of authentikos, connoting both the idea of an original, authoritative text as well as authority over something or someone. In our era of digital reproduction, the authoritative album has been replaced by the personally curated playlist; a digitized pdf replaces the book in a library. (Cobb 2014: 1)

According to Cobb, the desire for authenticity and advertising trends are interdependent because a digitalized and globalized culture facilitates worldwide reproduction that leads precisely to “a greater desire for authentic cultural products” (Cobb 2014: 3).

This has not gone unnoticed by G group members who joke about themselves. In a conversation after a song session, LinA who is an academic teacher of design, commented on

72 G group also varies musical instruments improvising new versions of the same songs under ArPo’s and other musicians’ guidance.
an article in *Vogue* magazine she had shared on online with *G group* about increasing dissemination of shamanic practice as an antidote to alienation in modern times (www.vogue.it/moda/news/2018/08/15/dove-danzano-gli-sciamani-vogue-italia-agosto-2018 21/08/18). The article stressed in particular the spread of practices among celebrities such as Sting, Luis Vuitton, Susan Sarandon and Ernesto Neto. Other members agreed with LinA that shamanic practices have become mainstream, pointing to the dissemination of ayahuasca among hairdressers and gay communities in London as a sign that ‘shamanism’ is increasingly trendy. In the conversation, awareness of the global dispersion of shamanic practices was perceived as positive for a shamanic revival but at the same time a perturbing vulgarization by the mainstream. LiBu concluded the conversation with a funny joke adjusting a famous jingle of an Italian snack commercial from the 1970s: “È arrivato il curandero!” [“The healer arrived!”]. The replacement of the ‘snack-man’ [merendero] with the ‘*curandero*’ was so effective that everybody laughed. Ironic self-awareness is a trait of many shamanists and *G group* practitioners along with ArPo are very familiar with joking about themselves with a brilliant finesse.

... *Munay-Ki* viral circulation

The *Munay-Ki* initiation is globally promoted by the North American-Cuban shaman-anthropologist Alberto Villoldo and his *The Four Winds* Foundation based in California. On the Foundation’s website Villoldo presents *Munay-Ki* as a practice of the “Q’ero Inka nation” from Peru that he adapted and brought “to the West”, pointing out his role of qualified mediator as *medical anthropologist* (http://munay-ki.org/source 10/07/18, Cfr. Pict. 4.21.). According to Villoldo, *Munay-Ki* rituals are “steps in the evolution of humanity” and are intended to anyone who is interested in self-improvement techniques. Even if the practice is not framed as counter-cultural, Villoldo strategically refers to practitioners as “ordinary men and women who live extraordinary lives”, confirming the peculiar distinction logic of the field (http://munay-ki.org/founder/ 10/07/18).

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74 ArPo’s photos inspired the musician comic author F. M. Sardelli to create the character of Arnananda, joking about “the guru of the guru” in *Il vernacoliere*, a local satirical magazine (Cfr. Pict. 4.19.). ELio from *Raíces de la Tierra* also inspired a comic realized by a group of his High School students (Il covo del conomero 2017; Cfr. Pict. 4.20.). Both ArPo and ELio joked about their fictional representations, but it is noteworthy they are considered sources of inspiration for satirical characters.
La cucina dell’anima
Ha tavola col Guru dei Guri
ARNANANDA

«L’ovo se fanno le nargila
che si spiega nell’Univerze
solo la pole senti
chi lo mangia»

702 ricette a base di
Ova per vivere in
symbiosi col grande
spinto della vita e
tenera a boda il
colesterolo

Ha scolta il gyro dei gvari
Arnananda
che ti dici:
L’innioransa se distruggie
ch cammina col piedi di loto nella
luicie, no chi mangiava solo i
panini delle gotismo.
Capito, testadegazzo?

Omme.
Lode al Guru dei Guri
Arnananda
Ne la pacie se scacia l’innioransa.
Chi di giorno cammina col piedi di loto fra
grandi o-dorosi ni pulsa la sera.
Le vibrasioni è come i suoni della tronba: non
la sente se uno dormiva, ma chi ha scolta...

Sri Guru Arnananda
Se hai problemi, chiedi al Gvrv.

Per contatti e appuntamenti col Gvrv lasciare una Rolls-Royce
 parcheggliata sotto casa e poi attendere la vibrasione che parte.

Pict. 4.19.: F. M. Sardelli, Arnananda, Il vernacoliere
IL COVO DEL COCOMERO

LE ALLUCINANTI AVVENTURE
DEL PROF. BIANCALANI
Initiation in Munay-Ki can be made online or through workshops, usually over two
days as it is nine to thirteen rituals.\textsuperscript{75} After the initiation, apprentices are authorized to teach.
Helena P. did just that in Portugal where, according to Villoldo’s website, there are 68 registered Munay-Ki graduates (http://munay-ki.org/graduates-list/ 04/08/1018). I participated in the Munay-Ki ritual organized by the holistic therapist Patricia Peixinho who strongly recommended continuing to pass on the ritual. At the end of the initiation, every participant receives a \textit{pi-stone} and a manual with instructions to correctly disseminate the ritual (Cfr. Pict. 4.22.). From this small group of five women, about a year after the initiation, two of the apprentices had begun to ‘pass’ it (Cfr. Pict. 4.23.). At that time both weren’t very satisfied with their jobs as public employees and were involved in many activities related to the shamanic field, such as Yoga, Ayurveda, macrobiotic diet, meditation and so on.\textsuperscript{76}

Global circulation of Q’ero practices is not an exclusive of Villoldo, but has a long history that for many regards illustrates the genealogy of the field. The Q’ero were ‘discovered’ in 1955 on an anthropological expedition guided by Oscar Nuñez del Prado. He constructed the “eponymous figure of authenticity” of the Q’ero according to the counter-hegemonic political agenda of indigenist movements (Le Borgne 2005: 115). The expedition contributed to the restitution of land occupied by fazenderos to Q’ero people. After leaving academia, Oscar globally disseminated Q’ero practices and organized journeys in Q’ero territories near Cuzco. His son Juan and his grandson Ivan followed in his footsteps by studying anthropology, becoming global experts and guides of the \textit{last Inka descendants} [“ultimi discendenti Inca”; https://www.ilgiornaledelloyoga.it/intervista-massimo-romagnolo 13/07/18].

I met Q’ero Don Lorenzo Ccapa at a Despacho ritual in the countryside near Florence organized by a supportive Tuscan shamanic therapist, and by Romagnolo, a shamanic counselor, who followed Don Lorenzo Ccapa’s entire Italian tour.\textsuperscript{77} While Don Lorenzo spoke very little, Romagnolo explained his tour had the spiritual/ecological aim to awake the ‘energetic consciousness of the places’ he visited [“l’obiettivo è risvegliare le coscienze

\textsuperscript{75} Villoldo’s website details only nine rituals. There were twelve rituals in the initiation I had with Patricia who explained that the last three were ‘discovered’ and disseminated more recently (Cfr. Chapter Two). CaRa told me that in 2016 she received the thirteenth ritual called \textit{the womb ritual} which is promoted by the Chilean Marcela Lobos, student and partner of Villoldo (http://theriteofthewomb.com/the-rites 04/08/18).

\textsuperscript{76} VaNia was about 30 years old and worked as music teacher at school while doing a course of shamanism. DaNa was about 50 years old and was an informatics technician. She gave yoga courses after work. Patricia strongly urged VaNia to follow the shamanic path since she recognized in her a \textit{divine mission}.

\textsuperscript{77} On this occasion (19/03/16), I had a conversation with Romagnolo. Don Lorenzo continued his tour to other Europeans countries with the support of local organizers through formal and informal networking. Other shamans organize European tours like the renown Mexican-Maya \textit{abuela} Margarida whose tour in 2018 was sold out several months before her arrival in Europe.
The Munay-Ki is your invitation to dream an entire new world into being.
(Alberto Villoldo, Founder)

Founder

The Earthkeepers are ordinary men and women who live extraordinary lives. They acquire uncommon grace and power through prayer, study of the wisdom teachings, and discipline; believing that people come to the Munay-Ki when they are ready.

Many of you have received such a calling from Spirit, and long to make a difference in the world, and in your life. When you enter the path of the Earthkeepers with sincere intention and an open heart, you'll soon notice that you are in the company of like-minded people who strive to live with ethics and vision. And you'll find yourself supported by luminous beings who lived on this planet many thousands of years ago, and who are now part of the great matrix of life. These will add their power and vision to yours.

According to lore, the wisdom of the Earthkeepers goes back more than 100,000 years. The teachings have gone through many transformations, as mountain peoples migrated to lush grasslands or crossed the Siberian ice into the thick forests of the American continent. Today, we experience another evolution as we bring this ancient body of knowledge into the 21st century.
Source

“We have been the keepers of rites that usher in who we are becoming as a people, as a planet. These processes are not only for the Indians, but for the entire world.”

– Don Manuel Quispe to Alberto

Viloldo, Ph.D.

The Origin of the Rites of the Munay-Ki

The rites of the Munay-Ki were brought to the West by Dr. Alberto Viloldo, distilled from his work as a medical anthropologist with the high shamans of the Amazon and Andes.

Pict. 4.21. C: http://munay-ki.org/source (12/07/18)

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Pict. 4.22. A: https://www.ebay.es/itm/183608149419 (31/10/19)

Pict. 4.22. B: https://www.shamansmarket.com/products/pi-stone-tiger-eye (31/10/19)

Pict. 4.22. C: Munay-ki Certificate, 01/11/15, my photo
Munay-Ki
As Iniciações para elevares a tua consciência

MUNAY-KI
Os 9 Rituais do Despertar Xamânico Andino

25 e 26 de Novembro
S. João da Madeira
energetiche dei luoghi”) and clean ‘collective unconscious’ through the creation of ‘energetic networks’ [“un lavoro di ripulitura dell'inconscio collettivo, creando connessioni e reti energetiche tra paesi”]; ecological and spiritual purposes interconnecting to support a planetary mission. When I talked with Romagnolo about Villoldo’s version of Munay-Ki, he was strategically ambivalent. He pointed out the originality of Don Lorenzo rituals compared to the marketing of the invented tradition of the nine rituals by Villoldo [“la tradizione di Villoldo è inventata, i 9 rituali, è marketing, e funziona”]. But he also emphasized Villoldo’s importance in helping the Q’ero to be known globally and supporting the community with regular donations. In the early 1990s donations to Q’ero communities were minimal; The Four Winds Foundation in contrast was very profitable (Znamenski 2007: 156-7). According to Romagnolo, the situation has not changed significantly even today, with the Q’ero having a long history of harsh living conditions in the Peruvian Andes. Romagnolo, it should be noted, is not neutral and ambivalently defends both sides, since in this way he legitimates his position as Italian promoter of Q’ero, a role which grants symbolic capital as shamanic therapist and teacher.

In the last years, The Four Winds opened two retreat centers in Chile and Germany where it continues to disseminate Villoldo’s program to “become an agent of transformation and bring health and well being to the world” (https://thefourwinds.com/online-energy-medicine-training/ 04/08/18). In a six months online course or 28 days residential course, for $10,800, Villoldo’s Light Body School training offers the possibility to “acquire and cultivate your skills as a modern shaman”. According to the website, the program was created 25 years ago and has trained more than 10,000 students “from all walks of life – scientists, construction workers, nurses, doctors, psychologists, massage therapists”. It is presented as an ethical program, “if you want to earn your income from an ethical endeavor” (https://thefourwinds.com/energy-medicine-practitioner-health-coaching 4/08/18). Nevertheless, new age frauds and plastic shamans alert website created by “an activist group of Native people” has identified Villoldo’s school as not an “ethical endeavor”. In fact, from 2007 onwards, many threads of the open online Forum qualified Villoldo as an “exploiter”, including in this post by the administrator Educatedindian:

"There’s a number of reasons why Villoldo is clearly a fraud, one of the worser ones in my opinion because of the amount of damage he's done. He's an exploiter in academia, along the lines of Castaneda, Harner, Martin Prechtl, and Mehl Madrona, which means that he knows better and just doesn't care, and also that he tries to use his academic credentials to promote the acceptance of this kind of exploitation. (…) Like Castaneda, most of what Villoldo passes off as Native is actually from Asian traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, or
Taoism. Both men count on their victims being ignorant of not only NDN beliefs, but Asian ones too. (http://www.newagefraud.org/smf/index.php?topic=1393.0 04/08/18)

New Age Fraud represents unspecified ‘native people’ and is especially critical of ‘selling of spirituality’. The New Age Fraud’s mission is to defend ‘free’, ‘traditional’, ‘oral’, native ‘true’ practices against ‘inauthentic’ practices, including “any allegedly traditional teachings in books or on websites” and “charg[ing] money for any ceremony or teaching” (idem). The website challenges the use of the word ‘shaman’, since “native people DO NOT use the label ‘Shaman’”, a term applied by ‘whites’ to give an “untrue picture of native cultures” (idem). According to this strategy, the academic privilege that enabled Castaneda, Harner, Villoldo and many others to assume authority over what are called ‘their’ practices is denounced. As with Raíces de la Tierra, however, it is not easy to delineate a border between presumably inauthentic ‘whites’ and authentic ‘natives’. The shamanic immunization metaphor inspired by ‘non-western’ natives confirms and reflects the gaze that labels them as ‘other’, and at the same time creates a global brand that unifies natives and non natives.

Munay-Ki example illustrates how different positions are currently interconnected in what can be termed as a viral circulation: the North American-Cuban shaman-anthropologist Villoldo and his profitable foundation; the pyramidal organization that takes place among Portuguese practitioners; Italian freelance shamanic therapists legitimizing themselves as mediators, and finally Q’ero shamans who travel the world after their practice has already spread internationally. In my fieldwork, I also experienced the seasonality of viral circulation. At a certain point many shamanic practitioners discussed Q’ero in Portugal as well in Italy and online. At another point, the Amazonian Shipibo, and more recently the Brazilian Huni Kuin are hot topics in the global shamanic field. These trends effect constant renewal of shamanic practices by introducing new techniques and ‘native’ practitioners to Portugal and Italy as well as the online community. Freshness and authenticity plays a large part in the enthusiastic reception of new practices. Re-branding is also strategically used to garner the same effect. Huni Kuin, also known as Kaxinawá, indicate how a change of name is used to ‘re-appropriate’ identity; this case the previous name Kaxinawá was attributed from outside, while Huni Kuin is self-titled, like it happened with Wirrarika/Huicholes in Mexico. Rebranding and renewal of authenticity through the introduction of new practices has the counter-effect of producing inauthenticity and a continuous need for more authenticity. Some practitioners I spoke to, and many online, perceive this viral circulation as a form of touristification of the practices causing ‘indigenous’ shamans on European tours to lose authenticity, and as a consequence puts the shamanic antidote at risk. The immunological
function at play here, requires a never-ending production, negotiation and renewal of strategy to keep the anthropotechnical antidote active and minimize the risks of its own viral dissemination.

4. 4. Conclusion

The shamanic metaphor is actually a very fascinating brand that has been constructed overtime through the contribution of priests, explorers, geographers, artists, philosophers, anthropologists, historians of religions, psychologists, cosmopolitan patrons, local activists, pop-stars and celebrities. These intersections have nurtured the metaphor of the shamanic antidote as a means of uprooting from the discomforts of a sick ‘modernity’. It is a concept of modernity that took shape symbiotically with the romantic essentialization of a presumed pre-modernity where shamanic practices have been placed.

Denegation is working at many levels in the global shamanic field. Anthropological studies in this context contributed to creating the dichotomy ‘western’/’indigenous’ and denegating this dichotomy’s colonial roots. Research on shamanic practices was framed and disseminated mainly by anthropologists who based their authority and prestige on intercultural encounters. Universal Eliadian shamanism contributed to the essentialization of this dichotomy while it created the possibility of overcoming it through an abstract category that equated the shamans of all times and places. In the current conditions of possibility this equation becomes a means, among others, to sharpen historical global inequalities derived from the concealed colonial past. For instance, as Saldanha (2007) observes, the difference between the ‘white man’ who gains an identity in becoming Indian and the Indian who instead loses his ‘authenticity’ when adapting to ‘white’ lifestyles. It is notable how this discontinuity in the shamanic field is naturalized on both sides, for ‘white’/’western’/’modern’ as well as for ‘other’/’indigenous’/’premodern’, or more precisely what I term, the successors of ‘colonizers’ and successors of the ‘colonized’. European successors of ‘colonizers’, who have the opportunity to occupy themselves with the care of the self, reproduce their hegemonic position in relation to shamans and shamanists coming from colonized countries, who have the opportunity to occupy themselves in teaching how to re-become indigenous.

78 For instance in the case of CuBo who is considered a ‘native’ shaman even if he conducts Temazcal which is not ‘native’ of Ecuador while ArPo is not considered ‘native’, although both of them learned the practice as a ‘non-native’ tradition (Cfr. DIY G group section).
But above all, denegation supports the therapeutic role of the uprooting shamanic anthropotechnic that enables practitioners to imagine the process of liberation from neoliberal structures that have brought them to desire this emancipation. As Lindquist observes, the counter-cultural shamanic field “is deeply embedded into the dominant culture, being not so much a rejection of it, but, rather, one of its culturally consistent, if idiosyncratic, expressions” (Lindquist 1997: 215). This peculiar ambivalence in shamanic practice is particularly emphasized by Boekhoven who points out how many current shamanic strategies concord with contemporary neoliberal politics:

Something within society, that is, neoliberal capitalist structures. Permanent education, self-accountability and individual responsibility are part of the basic logic of both shamanism and neoliberalism. While shamanic self-fulfilment and self-improvement are presented as antidotes to the competitive atmosphere of neoliberalism, they are part of the ‘self-improvement industry’ that, as I have argued before, contributes to the structures that it claims to resist. (Boekhoven 2011: 270)

Denegation is the key to understanding how shamanists follow and fight neoliberal structures of permanent education, self-accountability and individual responsibility to which I may add cosmopolitanism, flexibility, free choice and self-branding. What is interesting is not so much the apparent contradiction, but how practitioners succeed in orienting their lives through this contradiction, without perceiving it. In this perspective shamanic epistemology based on personal feelings and first hand experiences is a product of and an antidote to neoliberal structures at the same time. More specifically, the shamanic denegation set enables practitioners to adapt to present conditions by framing these conditions as more pleasant. According to Craig, contemporary neoliberalism not only generates anxiety and discomfort, especially for the ‘downsized’ middle class, but also encourages an ever-growing economy of self-help technologies to adapt to this uneasiness:

Spirituality or self help discourses are the new protestant work ethic and encourage individual workers to use reflexive spiritual practices to accommodate themselves to any features that chafes their lives (...) individuals that are suffering have only themselves to blame and must transform themselves rather than expect their social world to change. (Craig 2014: 9)

Resistance to uncomfortable late-capitalist structures through the search for ‘alternative’ lifestyles becomes an economic resource that can be fruitfully capitalized through the denegation based on interest to disinterest (Bourdieu 1977). This denegation is found in the assertion of the organizers of the Festival du Chamanisme that they and their community of practitioners are ‘penalized’ because they ‘resist’ neoliberal approaches to business and
competition (Cfr. Chapter Two). The disinterested ‘resistance’ to neoliberal pressure here is the supporting discourse of a denegation that enables them to turn shamanic practices into a market place festival without presenting it as a form of business, branding or marketing. In terms of Bourdieu’s symbolic goods whose economic value is enhanced by the denegation of the interest, the Festival’s ‘resistance’ to neoliberal logic enables shamanists not only to hide their interest and investment in profit structures, but also to have the symbolic economic advantage of apparent disinterest.

According to Boltanski and Chiapello, the search for authenticity is both emphasized and frustrated by capitalism that successfully neutralizes the critique of capitalism as a source of non-authenticity through the commodification of the same criticism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999]: 451). The shamanic metaphor, as we have seen, has become a strongly endorsed collectively owned brand and consequently, it is subject to the very marketing strategies that enhance the discomfort of inauthenticity and the need for authenticity. According to the internationally acclaimed management advisers Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (1999, 2000, 2007), ‘authenticity’ is the main target of contemporary advertising in selling customized experiences that engage each customer in an inherently personal, ‘authentic’, way (Cfr. also Beverland 2009).

The relationship between authentic/inauthentic is homologous with the crucial shamanic dichotomy healed/sick. Canguilhem’s reasoning on medical categories of “normal” and “pathological” identifies a significant movement in order to understand this homology:

The abnormal, as ab-normal, comes after the definition of the normal, it is its logical negation. However, it is the historical anteriority of the future abnormal which gives rise to a normative intention. The normal is the effect obtained by the execution of the normative project, it is the norm exhibited in the fact. In the relationship of the fact there is then a relationship of exclusion between the normal and the abnormal. But this negation is subordinated to the operation of negation, to the correction summoned up by the abnormality. Consequently it is not paradoxical to say that the abnormal, while logically second, is existentially first. (Canguilhem 1991 [1966]: 243)

When abnormal / sick is the starting point for a normative healing action, it is then what is determined normal that sets the model of health to be reached, determining at the same time, what is considered abnormal/sick. Similarly, authenticity is defined by what is inauthentic. Even though the sick/inauthentic takes precedent, historically and logically, it takes shape in accordance with what is normatively established a posteriori as authentic / sane. The normal /

79 The disinterest stance is evident in the strategical discourses that presented the crowdfunding to cover part of the costs of the Festival du Chamanisme (about 40,000 euros) framed as a benevolent event for the benefit of the planet.
healed / authentic determines the abnormal / sick / inauthentic as something to be treated and corrected in order to re-gain the supposed original authenticity. Nevertheless, authenticity as a *posteriori* construction enhances the sense of unauthenticity, engendering a perpetual motion that activates the shamanic anthropotechnic (Cfr. Conclusion).
Conclusion

During the analysis of shamanic anthropotechnics, a theory was formed on the role of denegation in self-fashioning processes. In the first part of this conclusion, I will summarize and systematize this theory and the interpretation of the shamanic practices that derives from it. In the second part, I will show how this interpretation can help solve some of the problems that emerge from other studies on similar topics in literature. Finally, I apply aspects of the theory to my own research process and to anthropological methodology in general.
The perpetual motion of denegation

Resuming the initial definition, the process of denegation is enacted through three main steps: 1. concomitant negation and affirmation of an assumption; 2. protection of the engendered contradiction through rendering it invisible; 3. concealment of the protection. The overall process activates a practice that would not be possible without the coexistence of opposite conditions. The coexistence of thesis and antithesis, the protection of the contradiction and the concealment of the protection engenders a perpetual motion among opposites that necessitate each other chronically. This compulsive movement activates, sustains, maintains and confirms the practice of self-fashioning. Denegation here can thus be seen as a process of auto-immunization that operates through the progressive embodiment of mechanisms of protection that are automatized as a permanent paraskeuē. Protection often enhances the need for further protection, that in turn strengthens the necessity of the anthropotechnical immune system in recursive way.

The first step of secession where the practitioner considers himself at the same time able and unable to conduct his life, enables the assumption of being in the process of removing himself from the cultural background and beginning an anthropotechnical path of self-fashioning. The movement to change corresponds with negating the previous life. This step entails exiting from the ‘ordinary’ flux and becoming another person with the disposition of being actively passive. Nonetheless, this uprooting project is not as easy as practitioners hope because the change of life paradigm unavoidably reflects the previous paradigm. In shamanic anthropotechnic, practitioners want to uproot from the ‘western’ program that has conditioned a way of life which itself has produced the urgency to change. Not by chance the analysis of shamanic techniques, references, purposes and imagery revealed continuity with mass-media films, cartoons, music, commercials. It is a concordance rooted in contemporary marketing based on a strategy of customization which gives value to a product through authenticity. This continuity is generally not apparent for practitioners because it is protected by the invisibilizing effect of denegation. The overall process of denegation here conceals the current viral demand for self-fashioning as an individual free choice undertaken in an emancipation from social conditioning. This urgency of self-fashioning is not a peculiarity of shamanists but a pervasive condition that Sloterdijk (2009) calls the revolution of the second person: you must change your life! Social pressure to freely and actively give shape to oneself is in itself a denegation under the conditions of freedom and obligation, resulting in inescapable paradox because self-fashioning results from individual will and a social demand
at the same time. Further, current neoliberal biopolitics encourage individual freedom and
self-responsibility according to the project of dismissing politics in favor of direct regulation
of the market and a social program of an individualized society.\(^1\) Shamanic socialization
reflects this denegation in its encouragement of communities formed by self-focused
individuals who are unlikely to become stable aggregates (Cfr. Chapter Four, Lindquist 1997;
Townsend 2004; Boekhoven 2013; Lopez-Pavilard 2015).

After secession, the second necessary step of ethical distinction determines a correct
and an incorrect way of life according to a vertical scale of self-realization towards an
unreachable perfection. As Sloterdijk argues, the myth of a primordial terrestrial Paradise
aims primarily to deny the inherent condition of human necessity. The pre-existence of a
condition of ease foreshadows a way out from present difficulty by identifying and removing
its causes. In shamanic anthropotechnics, the thriving life design of natural harmony and
peace takes shape as opposition to the present discomfort of practitioners caused by ‘western’
sickness and healed by ‘non western’ shamanic practices. The anthropotechnical shamanic
path of re-learning to be human is in itself a denegation that presupposes a natural
uncontaminated condition, the true self or the ‘indigenous’ state, that can be recovered
through cultural re-learning of it. Re-learning here is seen as both natural and cultural,
although it is based precisely on an assumed division between nature and culture.

From these two layers of denegation results the un-ending anthropotechnical work of
self-improvement. The challenge to overcome one’s own limitations starts the moment in
which the impossible is thought as possible and anthropotechnics are the bridge between these
two. To be clear, the goal has to be considered at the same time possible and impossible
otherwise it would not appear neither feasible nor desirable. Along the possible/impossible
ascetic path practitioners train to improve their acrobatics and embody the necessary doses of
denegation that progressively increase with each further step. Shamanic anthropotechnical
acrobatics are realized by making ordinary the extraordinary, rooting in the uprooting, losing
oneself to find oneself, rationally planning dis-activation of rationality, experiencing
controlled ‘out of control’ and so on. I summarize these acrobatics with the expression taming
untamedness.

The last step in denegation is the concealment of the overall operation. Shamanic
epistemology realizes this task by acting as a zipper between discourse and practice, creating

\(^1\) According to Crary, the production of loneliness is a “fundamental underpinning of capitalism” where the
individual solitude appears as ‘natural’ in virtue of its collective seriality: “Seriality is the dispersal of
collectivity into an aggregate of discrete individuals who relate to each other only on the basis of hollow or
narcissistic identities” (Crary 2013: 87-8).
a self-referential circularity that makes the process appear natural, automatic, spontaneous and self-evident. The epistemology based on personal feelings attributes to the self the most reliable source of authority and certainty, thus protecting the practitioner from doubt and indecision. When confronted with a disturbance, it is framed as a mind projection, a trick of rationality or social conditioning which has to disembodied. The more the shamanic paraskeuē is embodied, the more the practitioner is able to navigate according to his own feelings. Since the ‘true’ self and personal feelings are not questionable, the embodiment of this epistemology arms against any kind of doubt. This individualist epistemology perceived as personal emancipation from social constraints, is, as has been documented here, well-tuned to the pressures of modern consumer society that encourages self focus. From this perspective, shamanic epistemology based on personal feelings and first hand experiences is at the same time a product of and an antidote to neoliberal structures that encourage individualism.²

The self-referential system of mutual confirmation between discourse and practice contributes to embody the immunological defense that allows advanced practitioners to consider shamanic anthropotechnics an antidote that can do nothing but good. It is a defense that protects from the risks inherent in anthropotechnical action through a denegation of iatrogenesis. As Chapter Three has shown, practitioners state that shamanic practice is only beneficial but at the same time admit it may have dangerous side-effects that have to be managed. As we saw, the beneficial Sun Dance can be addictive to the point of putting one’s life at risk and for this reason is limited to four trials. Here, the healing action itself requires protection from side-effects which are potentially worse that the illness being cured. This concatenation of protective action and counter-action can become recursive because each protection potentially requires a further protection. The need for protection in turn enhances the anthropotechnical symbolic immune system and validates its necessity. The perpetual motion of illness/healing/counter-healing and so on engenders in fact a necessity of chronic healing, that is, life as an un-ending correction to life.

Another crucial perpetual motion is the one among authenticity and inauthenticity that characterizes the global shamanic field. Viral circulation of shamanic practices is an indicator of its success on a large scale, especially after having being demonized, devalued and even banned, but shamanic practice itself is now threatened by increasing popularity and

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² **Experiential contradictions** in everyday life are highlighted as an inherent trait of neoliberal capitalism by Comaroff (2001). According to Boltanski and Chiapello (2007 [1999]), the contradictions of the new spirit of capitalism lead to the paradox that the actions undertaken to counter capitalism increase its strength; Cfr also Le Goff 2014.
‘touristification’ that puts into question its uprooting and distinctive effect. The quest for authenticity is a pervasive trait of current marketing strategies of consumer late-capitalist society that induces a sense of inauthenticity along with the remedies to overcome it. This in turn enhances the sense of inauthenticity which requires shamanists to continuously develop new strategies in order to protect anthropotechnical ‘authenticity’. The quest for authenticity produces inauthenticity which in turn requires additional doses of authenticity and so on, engendering perpetual motion as for *chronic healing*.

Recurrent dynamic dichotomies therefore play a crucial role in shaman anthropotechnics serving to activate, support, maintain and manifest a never-ending process of self-fashioning:

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Denegation serves to spin the opposites in perpetual movement because the appearance of the thesis recalls and requires the presence of the antithesis and vice-versa. The adept concealment of this motion serves its continuance and renders it at the same time chronic. The linguistic frequent use of *re-* within the shamanic field indicates this spin of dichotomies because it creates a bridge between a past condition that is no longer present but can be *re-gained* in the future. This spin is activated by the will to change the present due to nostalgic ideas of a better past which, in turn, prefigures how the future ought to be.

3 According to Novaes circularity might offer a way of observing reality without ‘ontological hierarchies’ [“Mas quando perspectivamos uma dinâmica cíclica, podemos conceber uma realidade sem hierarquias ontológicas” Novaes 2018: 286]. Although this conclusion seems too optimistic, I agree that circularity is helpful in reminding us that the extremes of an opposition are inherently interconnected, and essentially dependent.
Towards a way of commensurability

The analysis of shamanic self-fashioning through the lenses of denegation enables to observe from another perspective the division among conservative anthropologists and practitioner anthropologists, as von Stuckrad (2005) puts it (Cfr. Introduction). From López-Pavillard’s practitioner-anthropologist position, a similar dichotomy is apparent in the struggle between the symbolic-ritual paradigm and the experiential paradigm (López-Pavillard 2015: 77). According to this framing, the symbolic-ritual paradigm focuses on local studies and shamanic communities, in particular in Siberia. This approach generally does not consider trance an analytical category and frames the interaction with spirits as symbolic, attributing the concept of shamanism to ‘western’ fancy for the ‘exotic’. The experiential paradigm, on the contrary, focuses on individual shamans and trance is considered a universal human ability to interact with spirits, as in Eliade (1951) theorization. Although these groupings are simplifications, it can be helpful to distinguish between ‘contextualist-outsider’ and ‘universalist-insider’ approaches, where the former refers to local shamanisms and often uses a detached methodology ‘from outside’, while the latter frames shamanism as an analytical category or universal condition from an ‘inside’ perspective.

Both of these research approaches equally and rigidly negate the validity of the other, causing the deep fractures within the shamanic field of studies discussed by Botta (2018). For insiders like López-Pavillard (2015) or Wallis (2003), outsiders discourse is not significant because they have not become ‘natives’ and as such, cannot fully understand the shamanic worldview. In this regard, universalist/insiders often assume shamanic epistemology that supports the practice as self-evident. From the perspective of contextualist/outsiders, this assumption renders insider research as not significant because it reproduces without questioning the practitioners’ stance (von Stuckrad 2005: 124-5).

Quoting Kuhn’s theories, for López-Pavillard the two paradigms are not ‘commensurable’ and are condemned to misunderstand themselves (López-Pavillard 2015: 82-3). The lens of denegation opens up the possibility of a dialogue and a way of commensurability. Assuming the hypothesis that nobody is immune to denegation, the contrast with other points of view is the only way to counteract its invisibilizing effect. Or, to put it more cautiously, every point of view has blind spots that a completely different perspective is able to show. The contrast with a different research paradigm represents a valuable tool for self-awareness. From this perspective, both insider and outsider approaches are significant and fruitful as both reveal the limitations of the other. Insiders like López-
Pavillard and Wallis do run the risk of simply reproducing practitioners’ point of view, but should be merited in this case for identifying the normative position of outsiders. Denouncing shamanic practices be used outside local contexts or focusing on comparative analysis often aimed at emphasizing the ‘originality’ of local ‘native’ practices, as outsiders often do, is reductive and ignores contemporary interconnections between ‘natives’ and ‘non-natives’ in which the boundary between local and global is increasingly porous. To their credit, outsider scholars like Hamayon, have largely contributed to de-essentializing the Eliade’s model and banishing the illusion of homogeneity of analytical categories such as ‘trance’ and ‘shaman’ (Hamayon 1998, 2003). The emphasis of these comparative studies on ongoing processes of commodification, ‘westernization’ and homogenization has also been useful to highlight global inequalities in the field (Hamayon 1998, 2003; Aldred 2000; Kehoe 2000).

Labate and Cavnar offer a promising approach to focus on those global inequalities. Despite being an activist for ayahuasca studies and practices, Labate criticizes the approach of insiders as often too “promotional” (Labate and Loures de Assis 2018: 12; Cfr. Introduction). She calls for more critical research to find useful tools in re-thinking the interpretations of shamanic practices. In the anthology edited by Labate and Cavnar (2014, 2018), local and global versions of practices are analyzed in terms of inequalities and involvement in the field. In the Amazonian region, for example, inequalities between locals and non locals are clearly apparent, especially in ayahuasca tourism (Brabec de Mori 2014: 225-6). This analysis however, often and uncritically uses categories like ‘western/indigenous’ with the risk of naturalizing them.\footnote{The dichotomy ‘western/indigenous’ is recurrent in these collections. To give an example, Gearin and Labate’s article ironically criticizes western ‘homogenization’ of Amazonian diets in ayahuasca ceremonies, and then refers to the ‘western mind’ without other clarifications, that is, homogenizing ‘westerners’ to the same mind (Gearin and Labate 2018: 188). As Wallis points out very well, many scholars make the very ‘fault’ they denounce in practitioners (Wallis 2003: 67-8).}

Other studies in the same book, introduce other ways of approaching inequality. Caicedo Fernández, for instance, emphasizes how power differences in the ritual/therapeutic ayahuasca field in Colombia are related to ethnicity, class, gender, age, expertise and operate on various levels supporting asymmetrical relations (Caicedo Fernández 2018: 212).\footnote{Caicedo Fernández traces how the expansion of the Colombian yagecero field over the last twenty years is linked to the “elitization of yage consumption” and the current “urban spiritual therapeutic market led by indigenous and non-indigenous specialists” (Caicedo Fernández 2018: 200). In Colombia and Peru, ayahuasca is also called yage.} The anthropological challenge is to find other ways of mapping inequality without resorting to problematic ‘western/indigenous’ dichotomies. One solution is to focus on the specific conditions of inequality within each context and develop tools to concretely
map which kind of inequalities are present, in which ways, and at what levels they actually work.


López-Pavillard’s approach is radical participation, and the ‘lifetime meta-process of spiritualization’ he describes is similar to the shamanic self-fashioning of chronic healing I have identified [“un metaproceso de espiritualización cuya duración se prolongaría a lo largo de toda la vida” López-Pavillard 2015: 13]. This process, according to him, originates in the individual will to change, and operates through a rupture with the known (the secession) that leads to an ontological transformation towards an animistic cosmovision (idem: 93, 273, 437, 447). This change requires progressive training that is realized through repeated participation in ceremonies. Even if the training is not detailed, when describing the intentions of practitioners López-Pavillard points out the progressive awareness from beginners’ curiosity to more oriented purposes such as ‘killing the ego’ and ‘freeing from chains’ of the more experienced up to the personal healing of mental and psychological processes in the most advanced (idem: 271-5). This progression shows well the increasing acquisition of the therapeutic idiom on a path of personal self-improvement [“superación personal”] and the embodiment of shamanic epistemology that leads advanced practitioners to consider ayahuasca a source of truth and a surgery (idem: 275, 348, 455). López-Pavillard assumes the worldview of the shamans and also adopts the therapeutic idiom without questioning it, validating in the process many practitioners’ assumptions.

López-Pavillard’s ethnography provides an extensive description in great detail of ayahuasca ceremonies and shaman paraphernalia, and focuses on the effects of shamanization rather than its enactment. This is a consequence of his approach which aims to describe the shaman’s ontology and in so doing risks of essentializing it. The exercise of immersing in the emic worldvision in order to assume the ontology of the shamans is, it should be said, a form of self-fashioning with the same optimistic confidence of being able to become another person, and at the same time assuming that the other is radically different. While López-Pavillard was able to operate the self-transformation and assume the ‘animistic’ paradigm of the shamans, for participants in his fieldwork, in contrast, it was not easy to abandon their
‘western’ dualistic paradigm. López-Pavillard essentializes Spanish ‘western’ practitioners, as if he was not part of them, and in so doing avoids the problem of his own relation to participants and fieldwork. It is the same tendency von Stuckrad identifies in Wallis’s research (von Stuckrad 2005: 125).

Lindquist, by going native and coming back, immerses herself in the worldview of practitioners and emerges to analyze it, pointing out many aspects that I also identified during my research. Like López-Pavillard she is somehow optimistic about her ability to do this round-trip in the shamanic world and still return without consequences or, at least, not questioning the effects anthropological self-fashioning has on her own research. Lindquist’s ethnography however is less biased, which is appreciable and rare in the shamanic field of studies. She discusses in depth how shamanic practices are used as a means to construct a counter-cultural fashioned identity which is deeply embedded in larger society (Lindquist: 1997: 196-7). “The process of internalization of the new cultural schemas” is akin to an anthropotechnic that she describes as a training to internalize the self as the main source of authentication on the basis of personal feelings (the shamanic epistemology) (idem: 52, 106, 292). The process of internalization depends on the familiarization with meanings acquired in “deliberately orchestrated contexts” and the sharing of repeated emotional experiences (the self-referential circulation among discourses and practices) (idem: 56). Internalization is completed “when cultural representations become part of the individual perspective” and become a value to orient one’s life, or I would say, when the shamanic denegation set is embodied in the anthropotechnical paraskeue (idem: 106). Lindquist also confirms that this process is aimed at acquiring authenticity whose loss is attributed to inauthentic ‘western society’ from which the indigenous, idealized, ‘noble savage’ is exempt (idem: 49). Her ethnography emphasizes the aim of gaining control over trance and the recurrent presence of contradictions between the intentions of practitioners to break away from western lifestyles and their way of living that often reproduces the criticized patterns and imaginary. Nevertheless, like Boekhoven, she does not explain nor indicates the crucial role of these contradictions that analysis through denegation has helped to uncover and understand. Like

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6 The only place where López-Pavillard mentions his difficulty of incorporating different paradigms is a description in the introduction about an ayahuasca ceremony in 1995 where he had a sort of ‘cognitive shock’ because of the abrupt immersion in a cosmovisión alien from his own culture (“por la brusca inmersión en una cosmovisión ajena a la de mi propia cultura”; López-Pavillard 2015: 6).

7 The process of internalization is described as the “‘black box’ of life, between the input (of meaning and experiences) and the output (of rules and values)” which is very similar to Sloterdijk’s anthropotechnic (Lindquist 1997: 55).

8 Lindquist points out how shamanic imagery is influenced by mass-media production, including Disney animations and popular commercials (Lindquist 1997: 117).
López-Pavillard, Lindquist often assumes the worldview of practitioners and tends to reproduce it. According to Boekhoven, Lindquist frames the practices as an anti-modern antidote, just as practitioners do, whilst he convincingly points out the ambivalent and subtle modern/anti-modern stance of practitioners (Boekhoven 2011: 5-6; 308-9). My research endeavors to explain the challenging issue of how modern and anti-modern co-exist enabled by denegation.

Through their different approaches, Lindquist and López-Pavillard, both confirm many aspects of the anthropotechnical process of self-fashioning. It is a strong indication that studying anthropotechnics can lead to commensurability, or a common ground where different anthropological approaches can be compared and the fractures of the shamanic field of studies can be overcome. As Novaes observes, anthropotechnics are a fertile, multidisciplinary and transversal ground which enables to de-essentialize practices and peoples and to avoid ‘a gross materialism or omnipotent idealism’ [“um materialismo grosseiro ou um idealismo onipotente” (Novaes 2018: 286-7). The analysis of ‘trance’ is a good example of how anthropotechnics can fertilize common transversal ground. Whatever practitioners call trance (which I intentionally do not define), it can be considered either a ‘western’ cultural construction ‘unduly’ inspired by Siberian practices, as Hamayon would say, or a universal state shared by different practices through which one accesses other worlds, as López-Pavillard puts it. Whether trance is a social construction or an essence, the interpretation through the theory of anthropotechnics enables identification of the crucial aim of this practice which is not so much in achieving the state itself as in its control (Cfr. Chapter Two). Tracing denegation in conscious trance reveals how this practice becomes a perpetual engine that unceasingly involves the practitioner in the impossible task of taming untamedness.

. . . Le fantôme de la liberté

During this anthropotechnical path as anthropologist, I trained myself in perspective exercises in order to alternatively focus on my argument, the literature and the anthropological issues. This was also my greatest difficulty as, like Lindquist, I tended to confuse my view with the shamanic view which to some extent coincided. In the use of therapeutic idiom I had to learn to alternate emic and etic perspectives because the shamanic antidote metaphor partially overlapped with Sloterdijk’s immunological theory. Alternating points of view has been

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10 This title refers to a movie of Luis Buñuel (1974) which is an ironic masterpiece on the paradoxes of 1970s French bourgeoisie in quest for impossible freedom.
crucial in understanding practitioner’s perspective without reproducing it. It has also been crucial to questioning my own worldview and my naturalized assumptions. Studying with shamanists enabled me to identify denegation as a human process that was not peculiar to practitioners; I could find it also in myself. In this sense, denegation at the beginning of research enabled me to conceal my intention to not take position was itself a position that I considered somehow neutral. Elaboration of the theoretical framework forced me to explicitly take a position and abandon this illusion of neutrality.\textsuperscript{11}

Anthropology may be the academic discipline that offers the most training and tools to compare different points of view and, significantly, identify denegation processes. The alternation of view is a good exercise to identify denegation and blind spots, even though it is hard to notice one’s own blind spots, so meeting the other becomes a necessary and useful tool of self-reflexivity. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to imagine the other as an alter ego in order not to essentialize him as radically other. Engagement with shamanists gave me the possibility to enact the imaginative-comprehensive approach suggested by Bourdieu (1999 [1993]) and imagine myself in the place of shamanists, as I could have been, without forgetting that I am not. In this approach, I used denegation to undertake the impossible task of being and not being in the shoes of practitioners. This double-belonging is inherent to the idea of participant observation which is, as Bourdieu right says, a contradiction in terms (Bourdieu 1992 [1980]: 34). Radical participation, however, is no less problematic. The position of anthropologists willing to fully embody the other worldview is still extremely optimistic and hides how the scholar, in the moment of writing, forcibly takes another position (Fabian 2005 [1983]). This approach is epitomized in Viveiros de Castro’s perspetivism and the Ontological Turn with the risk of essentializing even further any radical difference of the other.\textsuperscript{12} As David Graeber observes, ontology is used here as an “extreme a form of Idealism” in which ideas generate realities (Graeber 2015: 23). Further, the ontological approach leads to considering anthropology as “a theory of peoples’ ontological autodetermination” (Viveiros de Castro 2011: 128),\textsuperscript{13} with the risk of reducing the discipline to the practice of collecting endogenous narratives:

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{11} This difficulty was enhanced by my engagement with practitioners/friends that sometimes became uncomfortable.
\item\textsuperscript{12} As Zeitlyn (2014) noted, many OT studies are based on a theoretical déjà vu that recalls the essentialization of the ‘primitive mind’ by Levy Bruhl (1922). It is noteworthy that this position is very similar to shamanists’ stance who are very often fascinated by classical anthropological theories (Cfr. Chapter Three).
\item\textsuperscript{13} For my fieldwork this approach is redundant as practitioners produce self-ethnographies abundantly by themselves.
\end{itemize}
Mafeje (1998: 67; cf. Sharp, 1998), for one, holds that ethnography, to be true to itself, needs to be liberated entirely from anthropology, thus to become – without even the most reflexive of ethnographers – a source ‘of social texts authored [solely] by the people themselves’. The logical end point of reducing our practice to the elicitation of narratives of local experience is not a unique anthropology at all. Nor is it a politics of positive engagement. Quite the opposite. In a postcolonial age in which ‘natives’ everywhere speak for themselves, it is, simply, redundancy. The alternative, patently, is to argue for a theoretically and politically principled social science. (Comaroff 2003: 156)

Although I sympathize with Viveiros De Castro’s activism and the necessity of a post-colonial questioning of anthropological paradigms (Viveiros De Castro 2011: 128; see also Bayart 2010), these goals are more likely achievable building a solid etic explanation as Comaroff (2005) suggests and adopting an inter-subjective approach which Caria (2002) propounds.

Having supervisors in different disciplines has helped me to work with different academic perspectives. With my anthropologist supervisor I had an intense dialogue on the context and the contextualization of practitioners. The difference in our view has been useful in questioning my naturalized assumptions on indigenous/western shamanisms and natives/non-natives practitioners. This confrontation forced me to explain and clarify my relation to practitioners and pay attention to the conditions under which this ethnography was researched. With my philosopher supervisor, in contrast, the discussion was more abstract and focused on philosophical issues that helped me to elaborate the theoretical framework. My communication with Sergio Botta, a historian of religion, has been crucial in understanding the genesis of the field from a historical perspective and avoiding the risk of naturalizing the shamanic metaphor. All these different points of view helped me to pay attention to be careful of ethnographic particularisms, while I attempted to reduce universalistic explanations and historical reconstructions, with the goal of producing a well rounded contextualized explanation.

Following my hypothesis that denegation is unavoidable in every context, I looked for processes of denegation in the theoretical frameworks I used. In Sloterdijk and Foucault, freedom/subjection is the dichotomy that activates the practice of self-fashioning in ambivalent way. Foucault refers to this ambivalence saying, “constitution as subjects in both senses of the word” is a form of submission through which the subject takes shape as ‘subjected’ (Foucault 1978 [1976]: 60). Technologies of the self are a means for self-domination the subjects voluntarily imposes on themselvs. Imposed/voluntary self-domination is a dichotomy that is also present in Sloterdijk theory. Anthropotechnics can be framed both as a form of subjugation and emancipation. The awareness that humans are made by exercise
and repetition enables to actively decide which repetition to passively repeat. In this sense, there is a denegation that conceals the coexistence of active/passive dispositions in the anthropotechnical process of active submission and passive emancipation.

Emancipation is the main aim of Foucault’s research on biopolitics and power relations. He studied the form of domination with the aim to show how individuals are more free than they think (Foucault 1988a: 18). In this sense Foucault implicitly assumes freedom as an absent and desirable condition that becomes a resource in imagining how to overcome current political oppression, social limitation and cultural conditioning, as if it was possible to escape from it. As with shamanist denegation, Foucault’s denegation opens a possibility of emancipation by projecting something that is not present but is thought to be reachable.

Denegation, ultimately, is a means to defend an impossible coherence from human contradiction. Denegation in shamanic practice provides a way to navigate complex contradictions that are an inherent part of human condition. Where human condition is messy, painful, irrational and unpredictable, denegation can be, and is, employed not just as a way to ignore that difficult condition but to actively survive it.

14 As Novaes observes, anthropotechnics enable practitioners to ‘know the material and symbolic characteristics of the structural conditions in which we live’ with the effect of increasing agency [“conhecer as caraterísticas simbólicas e materiais das condições estruturais em que estamos inseridos permite uma maior agencialidade” Novaes 2018: 285].

15 Chapter One identifies this denegation in the ambivalent use of repetition in Sloterdijk’s theory.
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