

**‘Evolved’ Traditions:
The Role of Music in Contemporary
Spiritual Practices**

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With the collaboration of:



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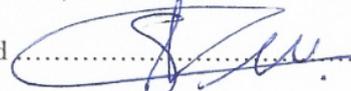
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Abstract

The role of music in the pursuit of spirituality is linked to sound's affective, socialising, and structuring affordances. However, with the progressive decline of traditional religious structures, actualised ways of relating to the otherworldly have emerged, in accordance with new technology and the needs of a 21st century public. From the incorporation of non-Western elements to the possibility of modifying sound *in situ*, the sacred continues to develop through ritual configurations.

In this thesis, I explore the role of music in the affordance of spiritual and transcendental shifts of consciousness through an analysis of three case studies, with music at their heart: Guided Breathwork, Energy Centres Systems, and the Dance of the Vajra. I emphasise the relevance of the structure that merges the sonic, the physical, and the contextual, for the affordance of a holistic experience in each case. I contrast the mechanisms underlying each practice's musical discourse to find common threads that bind them to their social environment, from their construction as a ritual of passage to their use of music as a delimitator of the sacred.

Departing from a reading of the essential concepts at the foundation of each practice as well as at their wider social level, and from a close analysis of data gathered in the field, I reframe the scoped practices under the term 'evolved' traditions. Likewise, I explore the rituals' underlying strategies in the affordance of what are perceived as spiritual shifts of consciousness, focusing on their musical structures, and define the elements involved in their successful edification. To do so, I draw attention on both the micro and macro levels of the rituals, in relation to their specific use of music – beats per minute, volume, character –, and their role in the society where they belong, respectively.

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Introduction

Five years ago, I found myself standing at the mountains of El Montnegre Natural Park, two hours away from Barcelona, with no clue of what was ahead of me. The series of events that drove me to the ‘Music and the Unconscious’ seminar taking place there, delivered by Dr Josep Maria Feicgla, set the first contact that I had with what would soon become the centre of my research, the first glimpse of a ritual that would grab my whole attention. Although this first contact was only theoretical, it was not long until I made my way up back to the campus of Can Benet Vives,¹ to see with my own eyes what had captivated me at the seminar. And I was not disappointed.

The intensity of the experience seemed to be carefully measured, yet spontaneous and undoubtedly effective. The role that music played in it was unlike anything I had experienced before, which raised several questions about the role of music in highlighting the religious, the spiritual, the sacred. From this moment, my research grew to include more rituals in order to gain an understanding of music’s role in the affordance of shifts of consciousness, deemed by ritual participants to be ‘otherworldly’. For those willing to go through the threshold of an actualised ritual proposition, tailored for its time and environment, there was a whole world that I had not yet discovered.

This thesis is concerned with the strategies used in our environment to build the appropriate musically-guided rituals that lead their participants towards what is perceived as spirituality, and further transcendence. Through an interdisciplinary approach to the field, I explore how music functions from its conception, ritual embeddedness, and reception, to its underlying strategies at a strict formal level, in building meaningful contexts that can be transformative at both the personal and social level, enabling non-ordinary shifts of consciousness.

¹ The campus of Can Benet Vives is managed by Josep Maria Feicgla as his main centre for developing Holorrhenic Breathwork, one of the schools for Guided Breathwork that concerns this research, as developed in detail in chapter 6. The fieldwork diary for that first seminar can be found in Appendix D, fieldwork diary I. Can Benet Vives, ‘Para el desarrollo armónico del ser humano y la práctica de una espiritualidad real’, *Can Benet Vives Campus*, 2017 <<http://canbenetvives.org/>> [accessed 30 December 2017].

For this task, I selected three case studies with three distinct approaches to what I hypothesise is a common underlying strategy. These case studies were Guided Breathwork, Energy Centres Systems, and the Dance of the Vajra. Each ritual's musical discourse² focuses on a common goal in the reaching of spirituality and transcendental shifts of consciousness, and contributes to the participants' wellbeing and daily life. This pursuit of a common aim raises an initial question: how can music aid the attainment of a common goal, if the rituals' starting points are so different? The answer to this question rested in the fact that the overall context to contain all practices was, actually, the same.

The traditions on which my three cases are based do not necessarily appeal to the context of 21st century Western society, but they adapt to the environment in which they exist to afford specialised meanings and goals in the building of their imageries.³ That is, although different in their foundations and theoretical bases, they share an environmental referent, which shapes the experiences that participants are afforded.⁴ The rituals thus rely on their socio-cultural context, where their participants belong, while also introducing alternative meanings that can shape their gaze on specific issues, such as the possibilities of the conscious and unconscious mind.

The same idea applies to the sonic input of the suggested cases, which must be grounded in a shared social code that can be equally read by all ritual attendees.⁵ None of the rituals considered here makes use of a specific genre or sonority, but rather focus on constructing an affectively significant experience for their participants, taken from the widely different

² The expression 'musical discourse' makes reference to the musical development of the practice, as constructed with a specific structure in mind, aimed to guide the ritual participant through the suggested experience.

³ In the following pages, I will not enter into a discussion of 'tradition'; the practices that I describe aim to create an updated practice for an actualised moment, for which tradition is only one point of reference. Nevertheless, I will allude to the changing character of the rituals, as embedded in a changing social environment, which make Steven Friedson's definition of 'tradition' pertinent: 'Tradition is the recurrence of the possible, not merely the handing down of ways to do things, and the possible always resides in a mode of anticipation and hence in the future. Ontologically, we are always protecting our future out in front of us as possible horizon of action, thus throwing a perspective on our past as presently experienced,' *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 2.

⁴ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966).

⁵ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ruth Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening: Absorption, Dissociation and Trancing* (London and New York: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011); Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

genres and environments that enable the spiritual discourse. That is, the sonic backgrounds of the rituals described here are not specialised in content, but rather in outlining characteristics and intention. The musical discourses of these rituals are not attached to a shared conception of sound, as in a specific music scene, but rather to a common affect-focused code that affords a common reading and reaction for individuals taking part in the ritual activities.

Since the central focus for the rituals is the highlighting of spirituality through the suggestion of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, they do not rely on a categorisation of the music in one genre or another, but rather on its communicative possibilities for the culturally informed listener.⁶ This introduces the questions that shaped this research: what musical attributes are ideal for leading a ritual participant towards a meaningful experience? How are these rituals constructed, and how do they conceive their music? Who decides on their music, and what do they aim for? How important is a ritual's background in the affordance of a musically-relevant non-ordinary experience? And, most fundamentally, how does music work in the facilitation of spirituality in today's rituals? These, as well as other questions, will be addressed in the pages that follow.

Methodology

This thesis has benefited from an interdisciplinary methodology, rooted in ethnographic methods and musicological analysis of the input offered by the rituals. The key studies on which this research stands are Gilbert Rouget's classic work *Music and Trance* (1985), regarding his work and survey of previous pioneering theories on trance within music studies; Judith Becker's *Deep Listeners* (2004), an ambitious thesis about music and trance which includes neuroscientific considerations; and Tia DeNora's *Music in Everyday Life* (2000), for her immersion into the most popular spheres of non-ordinary consciousness as embedded in our daily environment.⁷ I also include elements from sociology and cultural

⁶ That is, all categories, ancient or recent, alien or local, have a place in the development of the rituals that will be approached. The choice for the musical repertoire will mainly depend on the needs of the specific practice, and the connections to be made by their participants to praise the specific affects that will aid the conductance of the experience. For a closer reading of the rituals, the reader can refer to Appendices D, E and F.

⁷ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of

anthropology that have aided the comprehension of the context on which the sonic rituals are anchored, such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality*,⁸ as they are indispensable for the inherent interdisciplinarity of music studies.

The scope for the research was narrowed from my original intention to include more than one European city, to focus specifically on Barcelona and its surrounding areas.⁹ Because of the increasing popularity of the city over the past few years,¹⁰ and the wide variety of alternative therapies and practices available, Barcelona was an ideal target for optimum results. Furthermore, this choice was reinforced by my previous experience in the city and Catalan as my mother tongue, which afforded me a closer engagement with the ritual participants and a better comprehension of the environment in which they were embedded.

Regarding the selected practices, I chose three case studies that would enhance my understanding of the role that music plays in reaching what are perceived as transcendental shifts of consciousness by the ritual attendees, while not establishing a bilateral comparison or an insufficient amount of data for a thorough analysis. I started with Guided Breathwork as my first case study, since it triggered my initial research interest, gradually adding Energy Centres Systems and the Dance of the Vajra. The latter I first discovered during my first research year in Cardiff, as one of my co-workers at the

Chicago Press, 1985); Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*. Also see David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006); Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening*; Friedson, *Dancing Prophets*; Robin Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002); Christopher Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

⁸ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: Harcourt Australia, 1959); Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

⁹ Besides its multicultural and popular tourist attractions, Barcelona is home to a great number of institutions dedicated to 'alternative' therapies – i.e. Gestalt Institute (see Institut Gestalt, 'Formación en terapia corporal i gestalt - Primer curso', *Institut Gestalt: Psicoterapia, Comunicació i Relacions Humanes* <<http://institutgestalt.com/areas-de-conocimiento/actividad/formacion-en-terapia-corporal-y-gestalt-primer-curso>> [accessed 5 February 2018]) – as well as festivals and events which comprise similar practices and products, such as 'La nit de les religions' or 'Fira per la Terra', which take place every year in the city (see Appendix F, pp. 494-499).

¹⁰ Ajuntament de Barcelona, 'Tourism Statistics. Barcelona: City and Region 2016.', 2017 <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/turisme/sites/default/files/documents/171907_estadistiques_curt_2016_ultima_versio.pdf> [accessed 2 May 2018].

time was part of a group of followers of the Dzogchen Teachings,¹¹ within which the Dance of the Vajra is embedded. That first contact in Wales showed me the practice's feasibility as a case study, and I continued to work with the International Dzogchen Community in Barcelona afterwards. Finally, I found Energy Centres Systems through an online search, and saw immediately that it was suitable for my study.

I began to work with my case studies in detail from 2016, which led to the analysis of the collected materials, both from specific-practice and general comparative standpoints. I attended several ritual gatherings for each case as a participant-observer, in which I immersed myself in their sacred backgrounds and respective idiosyncrasies, entering their suggested non-ordinary shifts of consciousness. As such, my participant-observation benefited from both an outside study of the development of the rituals, and a participative understanding of the processes that they aimed to induce.

Thus, the tools and methods involved in this research can be divided into three main areas: (a) a literary-theoretical approach to both the wider and specific fields included here; (b) ethnographic methods during extensive fieldwork research for the scoped case studies; and (c) an analysis of the detailed cases, including both an analysis of ethnographic data and a musicological analysis of the music.¹²

A. Theory

For the theoretical component of my research, I began by gathering the information that would enable a closer, clearer reading of the rituals once on the field. My first contact was with Guided Breathwork,¹³ which not only piqued my interest in further research on

¹¹ The Dzogchen Teachings originated in Tibet and have a closer relation to the old tradition of the area, also known as the Nyngma tradition. See chapter 8.

¹² As influenced by the work of DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*; Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening*; and Till, *Pop Cult.*

¹³ Some of these elements were drawn from research toward my Master's thesis. See Eulàlia Febrer Coll, 'Rituals sonors per a una nova espiritualitat: La respiració guiada en la conformació d'una perspectiva transcendent' (Universitat de Barcelona, 2014). In English: 'Sonic Rituals for a New Spirituality: Guided Breathwork in the Formation of a Transcendental Perspective'.

the topic, but also allowed me to direct my reading at the beginning of my programme more effectively, to target the relevant issues to take into account later in the field.¹⁴

Judith Becker's approach to music and trance is a key influence upon this thesis. Although there have been other approaches to the connection between music and the brain, Becker's theorisation of that relationship, her consideration of both culture and biology in the creation of specific non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, and her central consideration of emotion in that connection, have been fundamental to my research. Furthermore, her suggestion that we need to understand trance from the inside (emic) as well as from the outside (etic), an idea shared by others in the field such as Richard Jankowsky,¹⁵ echoes my own experience as a participant-observer in the rituals that I describe.

It has been challenging to find literature specifically related to my case studies; furthermore, many of the publications in my bibliography have not been translated to English, or are otherwise difficult to access. I selected the most relevant work for each practice, with special attention to the cases that included a discussion of music, as discussed by the major theorists for the rituals themselves, who are also their main conceivers. The main background for each case study was drawn from Stanislav and Christina Grof, and Josep Maria Fericgla, for Guided Breathwork; Hugo Ardiles and Patricia Ríos, for Energy Centres Systems; and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, for the Dance of the Vajra. These were complemented by further literature by participants and facilitators in the rituals, who have contributed to their respective knowledge, such as Vincenzo Rossi in Energy Centres Systems, or Elías Capriles regarding the Dance of the Vajra.

The embeddedness of the selected practices within our current technological environment – evident in easy electronic access to websites, materials, interviews – allowed me to review

¹⁴ Such as Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Margarita Del Olmo, *Dilemas éticos en antropología: Las entretelas del trabajo de campo etnográfico* (Madrid: Trotta, 2010); or, Pau Moreno Feliu, *Encrucijadas antropológicas* (Madrid: Editorial Centro de Estudios Ramón Areces, 2011).

¹⁵ Richard Jankowsky, 'Music, Spirit Possession and the In-Between: Ethnomusicological Inquiry and the Challenge of Trance', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 16 (2007), pp. 185–208. See Tony Perman, 'Review Essay: Competing Paradigms in the Ethnomusicology of Trance', *Ethnomusicology*, 57 (2013), pp. 330–38.

some preliminary matters before stepping into the ritual arena itself.¹⁶ Likewise, my participation on social media complemented my live interaction with the rituals' participants and facilitators. Some of this complementary research also informed my methodological approach, particularly concerning ethical issues that could develop in the field, and more technical matters such as interview and observation guidelines.

B. Methods

Despite having made earlier observations between 2014-15, the corpus of my field research was completed between summer 2016 and summer 2017. After that point I continued to attend some of the practices sporadically, and kept in contact with many of the participants. My involvement within the field was shaped by the practices' recording and non-participation observation policies,¹⁷ which defined my role as a participant-observer in most occasions, and balanced by in-depth interviews.

I attended a total of six Guided Breathwork workshops in the Holorrhenic and Holotropic schools,¹⁸ and a complementary session on 'Music and the Unconscious' delivered by Josep Maria Fericgla. Four of these occasions were weekend-long workshops, while the others were one-day activities. I actively participated in the breathwork ritual in four of the occasions, and was allowed in as an observer in the other two. These two non-participant occasions took place at either end of my fieldwork, once at the very beginning and once at the end, and I include their respective fieldwork notes Appendix D to

¹⁶ Annette N. Markham, 'Ethnography in the Digital Internet Era: From Fields to Flows, Descriptions to Interventions', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 2016); Christine Hine, 'Ethnography and the Internet: Taking Account of Emerging Technological Landscapes', *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 10 (2017), pp. 315–29; Rene T A Lysloff, 'Musical Community on the Internet: An On-Line Ethnography', *Cultural Anthropology*, 18 (2003), pp. 233–63.

¹⁷ By outside-observance policies I refer to their veto regarding the inclusion of non-participants in their rituals, and the potential changes of the social setting that an external observer would introduce. On the other hand, the register of knowledge that is presented within the rituals does not only depend on the knowledge of their elements from the outside, but also on their physical embodiment – in this case by the researcher – for a complete understanding of the same. Nevertheless, there were two cases that allowed me to observe without participating, on my first and last fieldwork experiences in Guided Breathwork.

¹⁸ The workshops I attended in 2014 were included in my Master's dissertation for the University of Barcelona, when I undertook preliminary research on Guided Breathwork, which showed promising results for further fieldwork.

illustrate the evolution of my understanding of the events.¹⁹ These were also the only two occasions when I was allowed to take notes during the exercises.

I was only allowed in as an active participant in Holotropic Breathwork and was not allowed any kind of recording whatsoever, not was I allowed to take notes of other exercises *in situ*. Thus, I opted for capturing my own reflections in later fieldnotes, which I elaborated as a means of going back to the experiences later to analyse the gathered data. Nevertheless, one of the Grof Transpersonal Training facilitators was kind enough to let me have one of their recorded sessions,²⁰ and I was granted financial discounts on the workshops to enable my participation, for which I am grateful.

I attended nine events in total of the Energy Centres System, ESCEN: two weekend-long workshops, four four-hour sessions, and three shorter classes. I actively participated in all of them, as I was not allowed in as an observer. Due to their variable length and my progressive understanding of its mechanisms, I was slowly able to pick apart their fundamental musical structures. My journey from first contact to last is chronicled in Appendix E, offering insights into my own experience of the shifts of consciousness that are reached in the exercises.

Although I was only allowed in as a participant, some of the ESCEN facilitators also loaned me details of their sessions to analyse more closely, which I greatly appreciate.²¹ These have allowed me to establish a point of contrast between what I perceived as a participant-observer while immersed in the ritual and what was programmed by the facilitator out of the ritual arena, and offered me a point of reflexion in looking at both occasions.

The Dance of the Vajra follows a different format than the other two practices, consisting primarily of workshops and complementary activities.²² Within my fieldwork diary entries

¹⁹ See Appendix D, fieldwork diaries II (pp. 354-367) and VII (pp. 406-418).

²⁰ The term ‘facilitator’ is used within Holotropic Breathwork to designate the person in charge of the workshop, who prepares the session and controls the environment. This person needs to be qualified by Grof Transpersonal Training to organise a Holotropic session. Because of the convenience of the term, I will use it here to designate the leader in all practices, to refer to the person that *facilitates* the activity.

²¹ As in the case of Guided Breathwork, the facilitator in Energy Centres System needs to be qualified by one of the schools which conform the practice nowadays – ESCEN or Río Abierto.

²² Departing from Berger and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967), all three case studies can

in Appendix F, I have included six major events and further complementary practices: four dancing workshops,²³ a public performance of one of the dances within the Dance of the Vajra, and an outside-observation introductory session.²⁴ I also added recurrent practice of the dances during and after my fieldwork period, a workshop on Yantra Yoga, and my experience of various complementary ritual activities, such as *ganapujas*, or offering rituals. Apart from the four specific workshops, most of these events were hours-long at most, so the need to maintain continuous practice of the dances reflects a different process towards the shift of consciousness at their heart.

The Dance of the Vajra had similar policies about the observance and recording of practices. Since the music used in the Dance is linked to a specific musical melody, with further recorded additions allowed, my approach to the ritual differed slightly. For my analysis I used a specific recording, which is most often played, approved by the originator of the practice himself.²⁵ This narrower variability is reflected in my analysis of the ritual, and offers a point of contrast with the other two case studies.

Because I was not allowed any recording, photographing, or direct transcribing of the events in most instances, and because there is little, if any, footage of these rituals available online, I relied on fieldwork notes and fieldwork diaries to elaborate specifically on the role of music.²⁶ I was asked not to refer to the participants in the practices directly nor to give details on their behaviour, so I have omitted personal details unless I was given explicit consent by the participants during our interviews.²⁷

be explained to share a wider cosmos, which builds their sub-universe of meaning more widely. This is also relevant from the fact that they do not present isolated practices for the individual to approach once, but rather a more complex web of activities and exercises that are planned towards pre-established goals.

²³ Following the same line as the previous case studies here, these workshops can only be delivered by those who have obtained the instructor degree within the International Dzogchen Community.

²⁴ The entry corresponds to Appendix F, fieldwork diary XIV (pp. 465-469), as my first contact with the practice while living in Cardiff. Although I defined my fieldwork as focused in Catalonia, I believe that including the ritual within the case studies here makes a valuable contribution to my research.

²⁵ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Constantino Albini and Luca Prioretti, *The Music for the Dances of the Vajra, According to the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu* (Berkeley: Shang Shung Edizioni and Cantus Edizioni, 2015).

²⁶ See Appendices. I include key insights from these in the following chapters.

²⁷ For the in-depth interviews, I provided the participants with a document to sign their informed consent – in Catalan or English, according to preference. See Appendix C, p.335. The audio-recording of the interview was agreed, and the device remained on the table for the whole time we were speaking. Likewise, my participation in the rituals was negotiated with their facilitators, depending on the occasion. In the only case on which the signing was not accorded, in Holotropic Breathwork, we found verbal consent, following the Ethics Statement provided by the British Forum for Ethnomusicology.

Since the cost for participating in most practices was high,²⁸ I selected the optimal observation opportunities given within the time and budget available. This was not always possible, but within a dynamic of supply and demand I was able to coordinate my participation in all three cases during the same period, intermingling them if needed,²⁹ which I supplemented with 32 interviews with both ritual participants and outer religious and further ritual practicers.³⁰ The number of participants was mostly determined by the reduced public that I was able to approach, whose recurrent participation in the practices remained approximately the same. That is, distinct from other more popularly attended musical events, the number of participants was influenced by the smaller groups that usually take part in the selected cases.

I approached my field interviews with an in-depth, qualitative focus,³¹ which I supplemented with informal conversations which were not recorded, as they were not formally planned. These interviews were likewise rooted in an intersubjective discourse, in which the interviewed participants and I co-created a shared meaning for some of the non-spoken elements of the practices.³² It was from these conversations that I came to favour the term ‘evolved’ traditions.³³ More importantly, both in-depth and informal interviews enhanced my understanding of the exercises, as well as of the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that they propel, from the inside.

British Forum for Ethnomusicology, ‘The British Forum for Ethnomusicology: Ethics Statement’, 2016 <<https://bfe.org.uk/bfe-ethics-statement> > [accessed 20 March 2018]. These methods were also approved beforehand by the Ethics Committee at Cardiff University.

²⁸ It ranged from 40€ for a session to more than 300€ for weekend workshops, which included room and board. Nevertheless, I was able to negotiate terms with some of the practice organisers that would allow me to stretch my budget, as funded by Cardiff University. Further detail can be found in the fieldwork diaries attached in the Appendices.

²⁹ The fieldwork diaries have been included on Appendixes D, E, and F in order by practice rather than chronologically, so they can be consulted thematically.

³⁰ See Appendix A, p. 331.

³¹ The semi-structured interview item schedule that I used for reference, as well as a list of interviewees and the informed consent form (in English), can be found in Appendix B, p. 333. Note that the title of the thesis changed from ‘New Rituals and Music in the Western World in the 20th and 21st Centuries’ to the one now in use.

³² Gianni Ginesi, *Seguir el discurso: La entrevista en profundidad en la investigación musical* (Barcelona: SIBE: Sociedad de Etnomusicología, 2018); James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Illinois: Cengage Learning, 1980); Edmund Husserl, ‘From Subjectivity to Intersubjectivity’, in *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology* (Indiana: Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999); Paul Ricœur, ‘The Hermeneutics of Action’: (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996).

³³ See chapter 5.

My own participation was a key element in this process of understanding and breaking down the practices, beginning with my own experience of the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that each exercise separately suggested. Although I attended the rituals as a participant-observer, and was therefore not only focused on my inner development but also on what happened on the outside, I tried to find a balance in which to experience both ends of the spectrum. As such, in those cases in which I was granted an eventual ‘outsider’ position – mainly in Guided Breathwork and the Dance of the Vajra – I was able to give myself to the process more freely later on. Nonetheless, other occasions such as the workshops in Energy Centres Systems required my participation on every occasion, and I therefore varied my focus levels depending on my goals for the session. In any case, my active participation in all practices made it possible for me to both understand the non-ordinary shifts from the inside and to afford a successful dialogue with the other participants, through our shared experience.

To illustrate this participatory dialogue, in the chapters that follow I use both extracts from the interviews themselves and from my own experiences, which can be read in greater detail in the fieldwork diaries collated in Appendixes D to F.

In some instances, I relied on complementary literature around online ethnographic work and research for a better development of my fieldwork practice.³⁴ Likewise, my participation on, and relationships via, social media complemented my live interaction with the participants and facilitators of the rituals themselves.

Lastly, it is worth highlighting that my position as a Catalan-speaking researcher in a Catalan environment afforded me some intersubjective communication and understanding regarding the suggested musical elements in the rituals, which might have been different if approached from a complete etic position. My contact with the rituals within a familiar context made them easier to decipher, and benefited my understanding of the chosen music and techniques in the creation of specific spiritual goals.

³⁴ Markham, ‘Ethnography in the Digital Internet Era’; Hine, ‘Ethnography and the Internet’; Lysloff, ‘Musical Community on the Internet’.

C. Music Analysis

The third step in this research consisted of analytical insight of the sonic material itself, as collected from personal observation and the recordings loaned to me by some of the ritual organisers. I approached the suggested pieces and music playlists from their structural and stylistic characteristics – i.e. beats per minute, duration, alongside other parameters such as the pieces' volume or their *in situ* modification, repertoire, etc. – when relevant.

I analysed the sonic material using Audacity to obtain a frequential spectrum for the recordings I had, which allowed me to compare the 'sonic wave' with my own observations about the development of the activities in terms of their musically-drawn shape – or what I have termed their sonic signature curve. This method was especially relevant in the analysis for the Dance of the Vajra, whose music differs from the conception of the other two practices, as will be shown.

Nevertheless, Audacity had some limitations, such as the impediment to measure *in situ* modification or the stylistic characteristics afforded for each ritual, in each of their stages. It was therefore necessary to balance these spectrum analyses with my fieldwork notes and diaries, as some of the structural and stylistic parameters cannot be represented through this technological method. The reception of the musical discourse from a participative standpoint was also essential in understanding the efficacy and direction of the sonic suggestions.

I itemised the pieces included in the rituals into tables, which was particularly suitable for Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems. This allowed me to analyse the repertoire and duration of each sonic event in isolation from the encompassing ritual, just as with the spectrum used in the Dance of the Vajra. At a stylistic level, these tables enabled me to identify any instrumental consistencies or discrepancies, to contrast the sessions afforded by various facilitators, and to assess the relevance of their personal preferences over the frames afforded for the exercises. It is relevant to note that stylistic considerations within the rituals are closely related to the style of the person facilitating the musical materials, and are thus subjected to variability – yet cannot be dismissed as a central item for a pertinent musical analysis. Although there are some guidelines for each ritual to follow, as discussed in Part II of this thesis, there is not an immovable repertoire

to be included, but rather a shared code drawn from the learned characteristics attributed to music by the culture where the rituals are to be found.

From these sonic analyses I moved to a wider interpretation of the results, and placed all rituals side by side, as shown in chapter 9. Through the reading of all practices as embedded within a shared social nest, I was able to find common threads that are essential to the configuration of the exercises, as well as to the environment that embraces them. I have therefore broken the analysis into two parts: one for each case study separately and in detail, and one showing all three cases within their shared environment.

In sum, my methodology has benefited from a variety of approaches, which roughly correspond to the three sections of this thesis: an introduction to scholarship and theories in the field of music, spirituality, and other pertinent terms; ethnographic methodologies for each of the three case studies; and a music-analytical approach to the rituals.

This thesis is divided into three parts:

Part I consists of four theoretical chapters, in which I discuss the major elements at the basis of the rituals, which are crucial to the understanding of all their dimensions. In chapter 1 I explore some of the fundamental terms from which the scoped practices emerge, such as religion, ritual, spirituality, and consciousness. In the discussion of these terms I suggest a basis for exploring my three chosen practices.

In chapter 2 I move from the definition of concepts to their embeddedness within their own contexts, focusing on their presence and influence on the wider environment where the rituals take place. I then explore other ideas rooted in these same definitions, and discuss the place of music within the vast social panorama where they belong.

Chapters 3 and 4 are dedicated to two specific topics requiring a detailed focus. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the presence and role of affect in music, and its direct influence on the rituals considered here. In chapter 4 I discuss the role of music in the creation of identity, as well as the bonding of the participating community from the rituals' actualised, socially-built, and socially-influenced environment.

In Part II I move to a description and analysis of the three case studies. Chapter 5 is dedicated to an introduction to the three case studies, providing the theoretical frame for the term ‘evolved’ traditions drawn in part from my field research notes, and a bridge between the theoretical and practical dimension of this thesis.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to a description and analysis of Guided Breathwork, its frame, its idea of spirituality, and its two major schools of practice. Here I provide an analysis of the exercise, its ritual dimension and specific musical development, balancing this with the reception and opinion of its participants.

In chapter 7 I focus on Energy Centres Systems, discuss the schools that have contributed to the ritual’s unfolding, and provide an overview of the development of the practice. I analyse its technical aspects, focusing particularly on the musical structure at the basis of the practice, also balanced by the reception of its participants.

Chapter 8 explores the Dance of the Vajra, its background cosmos,³⁵ ritual dimension, and musical analysis. This chapter is slightly different in structure to the preceding two, foregrounding the practices’ ritual elements,³⁶ although likewise closing with the experiences of the ritual participants themselves.

Part III provides the analysis and discussion of the rituals, and conclusions. In chapter 9 I revisit some of the terms that were introduced in the opening chapters, and compare the practices to reveal similarities, divergences, and significative elements. From here I offer a reading of the matters that contribute to the creation of the feeling of spirituality in the explored rituals, in accordance with their musically-built structures, both from a particular and general level. I conclude the chapter by weighing the significance and efficacy of the rituals by their participants.

I conclude by reviewing the results of my research and providing insight on possible future directions to follow in this field. Finally, the Appendices offer additional insight into the

³⁵ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

³⁶ The Dance of the Vajra makes use of a more specific code, with meanings attached to specific actions or areas on the dance floor that must be read from its specific background cosmos, as will be seen in chapter 8. See Ricœur, ‘The Hermeneutics of Action’; Kofi V Agawu, ‘Music Analysis Versus Musical Hermeneutics’, *American Journal of Semiotics*, 13 (1996), pp. 9-24.

practices described on previous chapters, including fieldwork diaries and complementary information for a better contextualisation of the practices described here.

Glossary

Some of the terms discussed in this thesis require clarification. My approach to the existing literature and to the field has benefitted from both an emic and etic perspective, in line with my position as a participant-observer in the rituals. As such, some of the concepts are brought in from the participants' perspective and their understanding of the context that they help build. Terms such as 'spirituality' or 'transcendence' are thus discussed both in agreement with existing literature and with the interviews and discussions carried out during my fieldwork research. Thus, the use of terminology on Part I of this thesis is introduced from a perspective that values the emic discourse, in favour of a better framing of the results,³⁷ alongside an etic perspective with roots in existing theory.

The understanding of the rituals from an emic perspective is also present in Chapter 5, where I contrapose the term '**evolved**' traditions to that of New Age, as suggested by the responses of the participants in the field regarding how they see themselves. For the discussion of the three case studies that this thesis presents, I propose a middle ground between what is emically and etically perceived, to create a complete description of the rituals from inside and out. For a more detailed reading of the rituals from an emic point of view, the reader can refer to the Appendices attached at the end of these pages.

I consider that the emic perspective, from which some of the elements present in this thesis are read, favours an understanding of the values attributed to what are conceived as '**spiritual**' and '**transcendental**' dimensions for the participants. Furthermore, the ritual attendees' comprehension regarding my interest in such personal topics made me favour the attributions provided through their input. In the end, they are who keep the practices alive and 'evolving'.

³⁷ Richard Jankowsky, 'Music, Spirit Possession and the In-Between: Ethnomusicological Inquiry and the Challenge of Trance', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 16 (2007), pp. 185–208; Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Gianni Ginesi, *Seguir el discurso: La entrevista en profundidad en la investigación musical* (Barcelona: SIBE: Sociedad de Etnomusicología, 2018); and further authors in the field, have advocated for a specific need of understanding the rituals and non-ordinary shifts of consciousness from an emic perspective, for a better translation in etic terms.

Furthermore:

(i) When I use the expression **‘universe of meaning’**, I am making reference to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s theories on the social construction of reality, as defined in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) and *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (1967).¹ Berger and Luckmann argue that in each society there is a shared universe of meaning, a shared point of view of reality, which includes both philosophical ideas and everyday knowledge of the world. These universes of meaning become institutionalized and are used as a means to interpret the world, to ‘legitimate’ the systems of social organization that are present.² I apply the authors’ terms from their original context, and in light of the construction of reality in the 21st century Western world, in agreement with the progressive detachment from traditional religion streams,³ and the emergence of new ways to relate to reality – i.e. technological media. Likewise, the expression **‘sacred cosmos’**, embedded within the definition that I give for **‘religion’** in Chapter 1, comes from Berger’s theory of cosmology, which follows Émile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade’s division of the world between the sacred and the profane.⁴ A sacred cosmos therefore makes reference to the system of beliefs and practice established in relation to what is perceived as the sacred within a social context.

(ii) I use the terms **‘exercise’**, **‘activity’** and **‘practice’** mostly as synonyms of **‘ritual’**, to avoid repetition and cacophonies in the text. Nevertheless, there are nuances attached to each concept, in that: **‘exercise’** refers mostly to the physical element of the rituals; **‘activity’** makes reference to the whole construction of the rituals, from both the physical exercises that they suggest, and the musically-guiding structures that they afford; and **‘practice’** mostly refers to the coordination of the previously listed elements with the reaching of the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that are afforded in the ritual.

¹ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966); Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1967).

² Within these systems they consider ‘different conceptual machineries of universe-maintenance that are historically available to us’ such as ‘mythology, theology, philosophy and science’, Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, p. 127.

³ Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Steven Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (Toronto: Random House Canada Limited, 1973).

⁴ Émile Durkheim, , *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Australia: Harcourt Australia, 1959).

(iii) I use the term **‘sonic signature curve’**⁵ to describe the music structure that is afforded within each ritual. I have used beats per minute, volume, and stylistic choices, as key parameters to define the development of each case in terms of **‘intensity’** – described by the overlaying of instruments, the acceleration of beats per minutes, or according characteristics, in function with volume increasement and physical movement / focus. I suggest a visual representation of the process through a drawn line which curves according to these parameters, and which represents a guideline that the facilitators in each ritual follow to afford what are to be perceived as spiritual or transcendental experiences, in eyes of the ritual participants.

(iv) Lastly, it is worth highlighting this thesis’ title: *‘Evolved’ Traditions*. By using the term **‘evolved’** I do not intend to denotate improvement, but rather development. It is a term that was suggested to me by one of the participants in the Dance of the Vajra, and it was the one that came to be accepted by ritual participants in all three case studies. In light of some iterviewees’ aversion toward the **‘New Age’** label, other suggestions were: developed traditions, retrieved traditions, or re-encountered traditions. Since it was difficult to find a terminological middle ground, I decided to place the word ‘evolved’ in inverted commas, to respect the voice of the fieldwork participants while nuancing the term in favour of academic purposes.

⁵ Special thanks to my external board examiner, Ruth Herbet, for suggesting this term.

PART I
Theory and Concepts

1. Concepts in the Interpretation of Music-Guided Rituals

To observe and discuss the constitutive elements of the three rituals within this thesis, it is necessary to underline the major concepts which frame and influence them. What do we understand these rituals to be? Where can they belong, in the vast scope of our social acts and beliefs? If a ritual practice needs a sacred cosmos to define it, then we need to define 'ritual' and 'religion' in the first instance. But what differentiates these activities from those of other non-religious ensembles? What constitutes a ritual that aims for transcendence? And what does music have to do with it? Over the years, the discussion around these terms has been inconclusive and has led to a great disparity of opinions.

The main concept within the field of ritual construction is also one of the most debated: that of religion.¹ Depending on how one understands its implications, it builds on ideas from both practical and conceptual perspectives. Thus, the outlining of religion can help the definition of further concepts delimited by its influence, such as ritual, spirituality, or transcendence, which are relevant to the practices analysed in the following chapters. Another central feature of these ritual exercises is the introduction of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, or the creation of musically-led affective states. This link between music and the elevation of one's material existence towards a more ethereal sphere, defined within a shared conception of the world, and embedded in a moment in time and space, is clear in the ritual exercises that will follow.

¹ Émile Durkheim is considered one of the fathers of modern sociology and cultural anthropology. His work on the social construction of the individual's reality in *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2002), together with *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and *The Rules of Sociological Method: And Selected Texts on Sociology and Its Method* (London: MacMillan, 1982), draw on some of the basic premises from which social sciences depart. The intersubjective creation of society in the social construction of the individual thought, and the perfection of previous authors' positivist methods, are a few of his contributions to the field. A compilation and critique of Durkheim's work and other authors can be found in the work of Manuela Cantón Delgado in *La razón hechizada* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 2001), or in Fiona Bowie's *The Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), among others.

1.1. *Conceiving Religion: An Actualised Perspective*

An important debate around the concept of religion relates to Lévi-Strauss' 'floating signifier': a concept that cannot find a consensual definition due to its superabundance of meanings.² Religion's possible interpretations and readings are necessarily contained within one's own understanding of the world, so its constituent elements have different meanings, making a consensual definition difficult.

Many scholars have nonetheless tried to outline 'religion' as a point of departure for their own studies, adapting its meaning to suit a context for practices not necessarily institutionalised or built in accordance with an omnipresent force.³ In this sense, new terminology is used to define different circumstances which, in addressing the transcendental, vary in their relationships to the traditional concept of religion, based on the European ecclesiastic system. One such example is that of Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas in *Religion in Modern Times* (2000),⁴ which frames religion in the 20th and 21st centuries beyond terms such as 'invisible religion' or 'implicit religion',⁵ and which establishes a bi-partition of past and present to outline an ongoing phenomenon to include multiple shades.

In their work, Woodhead and Heelas break down the current religious panorama into three distinct categories: religions of difference, religions of humanity, and spiritualities of

² Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 63.

³ Steve Bruce, in *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), highlights the traditional understanding of religion as including not only beliefs and actions, but also institutions and the existence of supernatural entities with moral purpose. This, however, and according to the changing paradigm in academia, does not apply to the practices encompassed here.

⁴ Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

⁵ Thomas Luckmann, in *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), uses the concept 'invisible religion' to define a situation in which some of the symbolic universes afforded by the participants of society are not defined under traditional terms, such as those associated with the Church, even if they behave in a similar way. That is, the substitution of what he calls 'official' religions 'would not disappear without leaving traces in the world view and the norms of the "secular" institutions governing the everyday lives of the members of later generations' (p. 87), but it would transform in a scattered, non-official practices, better oriented to a consumer-focused environment. Edward Bailey, on the other hand, in *Implicit Religion: An Introduction* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1998), establishes a similar definition for the concept. Bailey describes *implicit religion* as 'not a simple negative, such as a lack of articulation (verbal or otherwise), or the absence of an explicitly religious frame of reference. It is positive: the presence of commitment, of any kind.... The concept is innocent of theory, as well as neutral in value.' (p. 18). His emphasis. He opts not to give a specific definition, but rather to afford an idea from integrating parts such as commitment or integrating foci.

life. Religions of difference cover strictly institutionalised practices that include an omnipotent figure to be worshiped. They value obedience, learning and respecting differences, and self-control over self-expression, among other characteristics, which are embodied in traditional systems such as Catholicism or Islamism. Religions of humanity, on the other hand, put less emphasis on transcendence to focus on the human dimension, which becomes itself an image of the divine. Unlike religions of difference, these are ‘generally willing to subject what they see as the unquestioned dogmas of previous ages to historical scrutiny,’⁶ and include freedom and tolerance as key values. They can be found, according to the authors, in systems such as Buddhism. Finally, spiritualities of life ‘are to be found in many parts of the world, most especially in countries practising eastern mystical traditions,’⁷ and to them correspond characteristics such as the importance of self-spirituality and the detachment from tradition. These mainly include New Age and some New Religious Movements, although other variables such as those presented by the rituals here included can also fit under the same label. These categories can also be combined to describe in-between situations, such as ‘experiential religions of difference’, or ‘experiential religions of humanity’, which help construct a diverse picture of practices and beliefs.⁸

The way in which these authors present a categorisation of religious reality offers evidence of the problem inherent in suggesting a single description for the term at hand. However, other scholars have alluded to the common features of diverse practices to put an embracing definition together in a more inclusive manner, starting from nineteenth-century sociology.⁹ Since my interest here does not lie in a scrupulous outlining of the discourse behind these attempts, I will focus on the constitutive characteristics of the religious phenomenon, and rely on Peter Berger’s broad definition of the term, according to which ‘religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established’.¹⁰ That

⁶ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times*, p. 71.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

⁹ Steve Bruce, ‘Defining Religion: A Practical Response’, *International Review of Sociology* (2011), pp. 107–120; David Martin, ‘On Secularization and its Prediction: A Self-examination’, in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), pp. 30-39; among others.

¹⁰ Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 34. I believe Berger’s definition offers a broad and inclusive point of departure that other scholars lack, which defines a line for ‘what people mean’ when referring to the term, and as such I chose it as reference. See Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, p. 7.

is, I will understand religion as a humanly-created sacred cosmos that serves to re-affirm one's presence in the world, thus broadening its possibilities of being for those experiencing and contributing to it. This will directly apply to the case studies that are discussed in the following chapters, and the difficulty for their participants to find a consensus to label (or un-label)¹¹ themselves.

In our contemporary society, some of religion's composing elements are described both through the connections between participants and other members of society, and between oneself and one's own sense of 'spirituality'. This being-in-the-world affords not only the maintenance of a shared world, but the maintenance of particular sub-worlds within a plural and competitive panorama, through what Woodhead and Heelas call 'spiritualities of life.'¹² Again, this does not suggest a lesser need for intersubjective agreement in the construction of systems of belief, but rather the maintenance of sub-worlds which have individual significance but are intersubjectively created.

A related topic among religion theorists is the progressive loss of the sense of traditionalism. Some drastic perspectives, such as those proposed by Steve Bruce, have speculated on the disappearance of religious practice altogether by the year 2030.¹³ This bold statement enters the debate on the 'sacralisation versus secularisation' of our 21st century Western society, uncovering a parallel decay of religious systems of belief and the emergence of self-spiritualities which cope with it. The scientific theories that coexist with such religious plans have also contributed to a changing paradigm,¹⁴ regarding both the self and spirituality. However, as Durkheim noted, both perspectives have coexisted and have not been necessarily exclusive in the past.¹⁵ Manuela Cantón Delgado points to the impossibility of a replacement of religion by a 'scientific understanding of the world and

¹¹ See chapter 5. Participants in the rituals discussed here rejected their categorisation in a 'New Age' frame, and preferred terms alluding to 'spirituality' rather than 'religion'.

¹² See Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, p. 156.

¹³ Steve Bruce, 'The Demise of Christianity in Britain', in Grace Davie et al., *Predicting Religion*, pp. 53- 63. This author's thesis has been debated by others, in the same volume and elsewhere, who stand up for a mutation rather than a drastic change.

¹⁴ By 'scientific theory' I refer to the approach to these matters in neuroscience, neurobiology or other 'hard sciences', which have been frequently viewed as confronting philosophical or religious theorisations. Ethnomusicologist Judith Becker, in 'Ethnomusicology and Empiricism in the Twenty-First Century', *Ethnomusicology*, 53 (2009), pp. 478-501, was one of the pioneers in the field to propose an explicitly interdisciplinary interpretation of the musical phenomena.

¹⁵ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

the spectacularity of the technological accomplishments' as well, since religion also responds to the functions that science fulfils.¹⁶ In other words, even if the scientific approaches to religion have brought new perspectives into account, they have added visions of the world that are still understood as world-making and world-maintaining processes, which can be combined with the search for transcendence, from a reformulated basis.¹⁷

1.2. *The Sacred as an Inherent Quality of Religion*

The quality of the sacred, as opposed to the profane, is fundamental to the understanding of what religion embraces. When Berger formulated his description for religion, he included sacrality as a key point:

Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode. By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience.... The sacred is apprehended as 'sticking out' from the normal routines of everyday life, as something extraordinary and potentially dangerous, though its dangers can be domesticated and its potency harnessed to the needs of everyday life. Although the sacred is apprehended as other than man, yet it refers to man, relating to him in a way in which other non-human phenomena (specifically, the phenomena of non-sacred nature) do not. The cosmos posited by religion thus both transcends and includes man.¹⁸

This conception of the religious as different from other daily routines had already been established by previous theorists, such as Durkheim and Mircea Eliade,¹⁹ and has continued to be nuanced by the participants in the case studies included here. However, Berger took an important step in including men in the construction of the sacred, placing

¹⁶ Manuela Cantón Delgado, 'Secularización, extinción y eterno retorno de las religiones: Reflexiones desde la antropología social', in Eduardo Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso: Presencia de la religión y la religiosidad en las sociedades avanzadas*, edited by Centro de estudios andaluces, Consejería de la Presidencia, Junta de Andalucía (Sevilla, 2007), p. 290.

¹⁷ This, in Peter Berger's theory, in *The Social Reality of Religion* is strictly related to the creation of symbol systems which represent individual thinking, in which the religious paradigm is shaped according to the ideas that work better for the society embracing them. These ideas are shaped by the appeal of psychologism and the growing individualism, which find a direct echo in the privatisation of religious practices, p. 168.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34-35.

¹⁹ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

them in reciprocal relation to it: men construct the sacred, and the sacred relates to men in return. Because of this, one can talk about the sacred as being humanly constructed, as well as the conception of the religion that includes it.

In a more actualised way, Christopher Partridge (2014) critiqued the establishment of a relation between the sacred and the religious, describing the former ‘in terms of the ways people relate to and experience certain things which are considered to be “set apart” from everyday life in some absolute sense’.²⁰ That is, in a re-shaped social context where traditional religion has been relayed to a second plane, the meaning of the sacred becomes equally re-configured. Thus, the sacred is imposed on certain objects, spaces or situations, which – for those who established them – become a separate, non-ordinary entity with transcendental meaning. This quality can also be applied to non-material phenomena, such as music, without necessarily relying on religious expression.²¹ The same idea can be seen as a continuation of Thomas Luckmann’s perspective on the matter, where the sacred constructs reality, in its placement between the human and the extraordinary;²² if reality is constructed in a determined time and space it will, therefore, shape one’s very world.

Some scholars have begun to dissolve the long-standing binary opposition of the sacred and the profane, although the concepts are still in regular use.²³ Here, I will consider the sacred as existing in a larger scale of possibilities, not needing to be articulated as such if the sacrality of an object or an entity is implicit for its social frame.

²⁰ Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 4.

²¹ Andrés Canteras Murillo, ‘La muta religiosa’, in Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso*, calls this process a ‘mutation of the sense of the sacred itself.’ He attributes the transformation of the sacred to a re-configuration of beliefs, and dismisses the idea of ‘a massive “exodus” of believers which, “orphaned” from their churches, have left to look for new courses onto which lay their “thirst of belief,” p. 155. My translation.

²² Thomas Luckmann, ‘Reflexiones sobre religión y moralidad’, in Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso*, pp. 16-17.

²³ See Jenny Taylor, ‘After Secularism: British Government and the Inner Cities’, in Davie, Heelas, and Woodhead, *Predicting Religion*; Manuel Delgado Ruíz, ‘Actualidad de lo sagrado: El espacio público como territorio de misión’, *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares*, 1 (1999), pp. 253-290.

1.3. *The Ritual: A Channel to the Sacred*

A common way of bringing religion and the sacred into the world is through ritual. The symbolic significance of the ritual as an expression of one's transcendence was noticed by Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, when approaching it as a way of justifying belief, and not the other way around – that is, when embodied in an action and understood as an expression of a feeling. Radcliffe-Brown placed more importance on the act (the ritual) than on the sacred cosmos used to justify it (the belief), as a ritual can be seen as a means of passing an idea or feeling from one generation or group of people to another.²⁴ At a social and communal level, this is fundamental for cohesion, and as such will have a central role in further chapters.

Radcliffe-Brown's formula had its precedents: in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim first differentiated beliefs (or states of opinion) and rituals (or actions) to illustrate a religious manifestation.²⁵ The importance he gave to the latter was based on the necessity of maintaining and re-affirming collective feelings and ideas – a thought that was integrated into Radcliffe-Brown's cosmos, and which has been referenced by scholars ever since.²⁶

These rituals, unlike other collective forms of expression, are defined by their approach towards a non-material sphere, which one cannot reach without the proper tools. The ritual affords a channel between both, a connection between the everyday experience and the immanent, by introducing a time outside of time which is specific to it.²⁷ Thomas Luckmann illustrated this by referring to the ritual's direct relation to the sacred cosmos that it establishes, and by highlighting its lack of meaning 'within the immediate context of everyday life.'²⁸ In other words, those rituals that articulate a sacred cosmos have a

²⁴ Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, 'Religion and Society', in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (New York and London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1965), pp. 179.

²⁵ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

²⁶ A re-formulated approach to this re-affirmation of the world can be found in Berger and Luckmann's reality-maintenance theory, *The Social Construction of Reality*. According to them, rituals are constructed as a way of making sense of the reality surrounding the individual, and to help the participants find a re-affirmation of their presence in the world. That is, in front of a situation of potential *anomia*, as described by Durkheim (*ibid.*), the ritual establishes parameters to which the participant of the ritual can hold to in case of social despair.

²⁷ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997); Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁸ Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, p. 59.

purpose set aside from other daily activities, such as eating or working. They afford a special, differentiable occasion, which does not necessarily have a materialistic value, and which is represented through a connection with a higher sphere of reality that can't be approached by other social actions.²⁹

Rituals also work as an assembly of individuals with a shared vision of the world and a common underlying spiritual imagery. This element of communality has proved to be indispensable in the work of scholars such as Victor Turner and Durkheim himself.³⁰ Thus, what Berger and Luckmann called 'world-maintenance' is reinforced by the interaction of individuals with a similar understanding of their sacred cosmos.³¹ Turner took this idea one step further:

In the social sciences generally, it is, I think, becoming widely recognized that religious beliefs and practices are something more than 'grotesque' reflections or expressions of economic, political, and social relationships; rather are they coming to be seen as decisive keys to the understanding of how people think and feel about those relationships, and about the natural and social environments in which they operate.³²

This view of the ritual ensemble as a reflection of its surrounding world will be central to the following case studies, as they appear in consonance to their environments. A ritual's value does not only lie in its inter-subjective and communal functions, but also on the meta-level that links the ritual to the entire world that surrounds it. Seen from this perspective, and in a growing individualistic environment such as the 21st century, the creation of an individualised practice can still be understood within traditional ritualistic parameters. A broad division of the ritual in sacred terms – within a religious context based on the construction of a sacred cosmos – follows the classic pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal stages first delineated by Arnold Van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage* (1960);³³

²⁹ That is, among other characteristics that constitute a ritual as such, as discussed by Rappaport in *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, or Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Fontana Press, 1993).

³⁰ Turner, *The Ritual Process*; Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

³¹ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

³² Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 6.

³³ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). The author establishes these three phases, of which *liminality* is the most fundamental, to express the structure found in those rites in which an individual undergoes a transformation of social status, e.g. from childhood to adulthood, from single to married, from living to deceased. It does not include ritual constructions

in the following pages, I will consider the structure of these ritual displays as embedded in a tripartite division of preparation, transition, and settlement.

Liminality will be particularly relevant to my discussion of the effort toward reaching transcendence. In musical terms, this engages with the *threshold* of the practice, the moment of inflection which separates the *before* and *after* in the participant's experience.³⁴ Turner referred to liminality in comparable terms, as a blend 'of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship,' that represents a moment out of time, with a recognised 'social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties.'³⁵ This will serve to represent a structured journey through which the ritual attendee finds a re-affirmation of one's own world, by detaching oneself from the same social structures surrounding oneself in the first place, and through the ritual exercise.

1.4. *Spirituality and Transcendence on the Spot*

When considering religiously-defined practices, spirituality and transcendence appear to be similar concepts. However, it is important to establish the parameters that define each term, in accordance with my fieldwork, to show how I will use them here.

Spirituality has been associated with an approach to the ineffable or the immanent,³⁶ to a conception of the world that is theorised at an ideal level, and which can be materialised through ritual expression. However, it has not necessarily been connected to a religious conception of the world in a traditional sense. Spirituality appears in parallel to ritualised action and as a means of reality-maintenance:³⁷ it refers to the sacred cosmos established by an individual to make one's reality and existence significant.

parallel to the current social status of the individuals undertaking the transition.

³⁴ See Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

³⁵ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 96.

³⁶ Magda Polo i Pujadas and Jaume Radigales, in their work *La estética de la música* (Barcelona: Editorial UOC, 2008), and Enrico Fubini, *La estética musical desde la antigüedad hasta el siglo XX* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005), extensively discuss the use of these terms among the main philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries.

³⁷ Radcliffe-Brown, 'Religion and Society'; Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

At a socio-contextual level, according to Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, spirituality has frequently been used as a ‘universal codeword’ to refer to ‘the discovery of the self and a more differentiated understanding of human psychology,’³⁸ a path towards further transcendence. The concept of spirituality itself has become connotative of a specific religious-related manner of addressing the world, mostly contained in Woodhead and Heela’s category of ‘spiritualities of life.’³⁹ This interpretation has been closest to the understanding of the participants in the rituals discussed here, to refer to the ‘otherworldly’. Furthermore, this reading of the concept implies that the spiritual is also present ‘on this side, in this world,’⁴⁰ as drawn both from an emic perspective and a more etic point of view.

Paraphrasing Marcel Cobussen, and following the preceding emic/etic discourse, in our environment spirituality becomes the boundary or threshold between our ordinary world and the realm of the ineffable, when transferring its significance from a metaphysical sphere to a critical reading of the world. This better describes the frame of the practices addressed here, as it appears to be more approachable for their participants: ‘rather than an ultra-determining reality, the spiritual becomes more accessible when conceptualized as a limit or boundary.’⁴¹ Therefore, spirituality does not only imply the relation between one and a sacred cosmos, but it is also a way of defining the world in which it is formed. In this sense, spirituality cannot be seen as an inherent quality of music, but rather as response or relation of the listener to a musical input. Spirituality is found in the interception between music and listener, and depends on the interpretation of the latter.

Transcendence, on the other hand, ventures further in the direction of embodying an action, making it subjective for each participant. In spirituality, one can find a way of expression collectively and through ritual means, but it is the individual action that builds the transcendental experience for the ritual attendees in most cases, and not necessarily in a uniform way. Transcendence takes the spiritual a step further towards what effectively *transcends* reality and ensures, not only maintains, it. Of course, this does not dismiss the

³⁸ Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 9.

³⁹ Woodhead and Heela, *Religion in Modern Times*.

⁴⁰ Cobussen, *Thresholds*, p. 67.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

possibility of transcendence outside ritual boundaries. Thus transcendence refers to a quality of the spiritual rather than to a separate category. It is found in the action rather than in the concept, and it is to be reached, rather than contemplated. The ritual context is a proper environment within which to build such an experience, especially when combined with the strong lead of music,⁴² which can act as a trigger.

Beginning with Edward Bailey's idea of the transcendental experience as *un-usual* and '*sui generis* by definition,'⁴³ it becomes an individualised matter to which each person can relate differently. This contrasts with the more interchangeable experience that spirituality presents, particularly in the case of religious and ritual ensembles in which there is a shared sacred cosmos. Transcendence here represents a more active approach to the absolute or the immanent, that the spiritual only contemplates in passive observation. This can also be drawn from an emic-informed perspective, which shows experience in moving towards the transcendent to be subjective and complementary to the spirituality from where it may emerge.

To break through this barrier between one concept and the other, external elements play a fundamental role.

I would suggest that theological thought seek out what might be called *signals of transcendence* within the empirically given human situation. And I would further suggest that there are *prototypical human gestures* that may constitute such signals. What does this mean? By signals of transcendence I mean phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our 'natural' reality but that appear to point beyond that reality. In other words, I am not using transcendence here in a technical philosophical sense but literally, as the transcending of the normal, everyday world that I earlier defined with the notion of the 'supernatural'.⁴⁴

⁴² As will be developed in the pages that follow, some non-ordinary states of consciousness such as those studied by Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), or by Rouget in *Music and Trance*, strongly rely on music for their unfolding both in a cultural and biological way. In the case of studies such as DeNora's *Music in Everyday Life*, music has been proved to facilitate the subject's entrance in these spiritually significant spaces.

⁴³ Bailey, *Implicit Religion*, p. 198.

⁴⁴ Peter Berger, *A Rumour of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969), p. 70.

The affirmation of the sacred cosmos becomes, by means of the transcendental experience, tangible for the conceiver or spiritual follower of a practice, such as those included here. Therefore, one finds a separation between both concepts in the binary opposition of terms such as intangibility and tangibility, communality and individuality, expression and experience. Music can, thus, be related to the transcendental experience through the subject interacting with it. Transcendence, like spirituality, ‘withdraws from the power of musical work, from human capacities.’⁴⁵

1.5. *Consciousness as the Key to Transcendence*

The mechanisms that make this ‘going-further’ in the spiritual experience are mostly engendered in the consciousness of the individual, in relation to one’s social context. That is, one’s consciousness and interpretation of the world play a major role in determining who, where or when someone goes through a transcendental experience. It depends on their own expectations, sociocultural preparation, and investment in the spiritual exercise, as well as on the biological elements that make it possible.⁴⁶

Therefore, defining consciousness presents two basic issues that lie in its cultural construction on the one hand, and its constantly shifting nature on the other. As David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner observe, the need for a consensual, intersubjective shift of consciousness, is what helps establish the boundaries of the ‘normal’ or ‘everyday’ consciousness within a social group.⁴⁷ However, one’s consciousness is not a steady stream and it may vary during the day if working, sleeping, or entering a ritual practice. The boundaries of what is ordinary consciousness are, in sum, vague. For this reason, here I will use the term ‘non-ordinary shifts of consciousness’⁴⁸ when describing a practice that induces a shift of consciousness not-frequently-experienced in daily life, which the individual must be able to identify as a special event.

⁴⁵ Cobussen, *Thresholds*, p. 143.

⁴⁶ See David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006); Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of a Consciousness* (London: William Heinemann, 2000); Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1987); et al.

⁴⁷ Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*, p. 10.

⁴⁸ This concept has been used by scholars such as Stanislav Grof in his description of Holotropic Breathwork and some states induced by drug intake. See Stanislav Grof, *When the Impossible Happens: Adventures in Non-Ordinary Realities* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True Inc, 2006).

The psychological explanation of ‘consciousness’ can be outlined as

the umbrella term for the mental phenomena that permit the strange confection of you as observer or knower of the things observed, of you as owner of thoughts formed in your perspective, of you as potential agent on the scene. Consciousness is part of your mental process rather than external to it.⁴⁹

The reading of one’s environment and the processing of internal and external phenomena modify the perception of one’s surroundings and inner processes, directing them for the individual according to the activity that is being performed and the resources it needs. Despite this malleability, some authors have pointed to the dubious coherence of those theories appealing to the existence of ‘levels of consciousness,’ and rather assimilated them to a continuous, variable flow.⁵⁰ Being conscious, however, implies the knowledge of oneself, of one’s thought, since ‘consciousness only arises when the object, the organism, and their relation, can be re-represented.’⁵¹ Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to expand on neurobiological implications or the physiological discussion built around the term, it is relevant to acknowledge ‘awareness’ as a normally present concept on these grounds, since it gives nuance to the control over one’s presence in a moment.⁵²

It is also relevant to highlight the work of Carl Jung on this same matter, especially as regards the application of his theory by new ritual ensembles, and specifically in the cases described in this thesis. From Jung’s point of view, the outside world can only be experienced through one’s consciousness; what one experiences is the psychic image of an object, since psychic reality is the only reality of which we are immediately aware.

⁴⁹ Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, p. 127.

⁵⁰ Tim Bayne, Jakob Hohwy and Adrian M. Owen have summarised this idea, after alluding to a classic categorisation between local and global states of consciousness, when establishing that creatures are conscious as long as they have a point of view, which cannot be staggered. Local states are those which include ‘perceptual experiences, bodily sensations, affective experiences, and occurrent thoughts,’ and are represented through objects and features which help define them. Global states, on the other hand, ‘are not typically distinguished from each other on the basis of the objects or features that are represented in experience. Instead, they are typically distinguished from each other on cognitive, behavioural, and physiological grounds’. Tim Bayne, Jakob Hohwy, and Adrian M. Owen, ‘Are There Levels of Consciousness?’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, xx (2016), pp. 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵² This has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Laurence M. Zbikowski in ‘Music, language, and kinds of consciousness’, in David Clarke and Eric Clarke (eds.), *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological, and Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 179-192.

One's psychic image of a spiritual realm, for example, is what one experiences in a religious-like context as a representation of a sacred cosmos.⁵³ Jung also differentiates between the *personal unconscious* and the *collective unconscious*, the first referring to a person's inner world that has their origin in the person's individual life, and the second integrating what he labelled as 'archetypes', ways of interiorising the outer world, which are transpersonal and intrinsically human.⁵⁴

In this context, the *self* defines the individuality of the holder of consciousness, in the frame of one's social development. Although one's individual consciousness is supported by the boundaries of one's own mind,⁵⁵ its shaping cannot be understood as fully individualised and different from other individuals living in a same sociocultural environment.⁵⁶ However, the practices comprised under Woodhead and Heelas' 'spiritualities of life' usually focus on the uniqueness of each individual mind, as do the case studies comprised here. This same process was described by Edward Bailey as one's consciousness being 'elevated from epiphenomenal to foundational status,'⁵⁷ thus establishing the ego of each individual as relevant in itself. In any case, the creation of the self is an intersubjective process which cannot take place in social isolation, since it is one's participation in language and a social environment that construct the objective world;⁵⁸ individual consciousness relies on a common understanding of the outside world, which is

⁵³ Carl Jung, *The Essential Jung*, ed. by Anthony Storr (London: Fontana Press, 1998); Joanne Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* (Bath: The Bath Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Jung, *The Essential Jung*; Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, ed. by Sir Herbert Read and others (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁵⁵ In *The Feeling of What Happens*, Damasio refers to the self as *core consciousness*, when considering it 'the very thought of you – the very feeling of you – as an individual being involved in the process of knowing of your own existence and of the existence of others,' p. 127. In other words, the centre of one's consciousness is placed in the knowledge of one's being-in-the-world. According to the author's theory, consciousness arises in the interaction between organism and object, when both are mapped in the organism's brain in the form of neuronal patterns, which become images. He follows: 'The sensorimotor maps pertaining to the object cause changes in the maps pertaining to the organism. The changes described [above] can be re-represented in yet other maps (second-order maps) which thus represent the relationship of object and organism. The neural patterns transiently formed in second-order maps can become mental images, no less so than the neural patterns in first-order maps. Because of the body-related nature of both organism maps and second-order maps, the mental images that describe the relationship are feelings,' pp. 169-170.

⁵⁶ Becker, *Deep Listeners*; Reebee Garofalo, 'Politics, Mediation, Social Context, and Public Use', in Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 127-157.

⁵⁷ Bailey, *Implicit Religion*, p. 76.

⁵⁸ Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, p. 48.

constructed using socially conceived tools. The individualism to which some practices appeal therefore cannot be understood *apart* from the traits of one's cultural environment.

1.6. *Non-Ordinary Consciousness: Meeting the Transcendent*

In a step outside daily phenomena, 'altered states' or 'expanded states' find their origin in the cultural conception of consciousness itself.⁵⁹ However, to enter these shifts of consciousness one usually needs to receive an external input, something that triggers the ultimate shift towards the transcendental experience, which is associated with the expansion of the mind. As will be shown, music is one of the most commonly found, if not fundamental external elements associated with this modification.⁶⁰ The cultural elements related to the building of such shifts, and the physical processes undertaken by the participants during these rituals or exercises, are equally relevant to their experiences.⁶¹ The pre-disposition, construction of the ritual, and behaviour to be embodied in it, are culturally and socially defined: one would probably not encounter a meditative shift provoked by the Tarantella, but rather by the trancing dance which represents it.⁶²

⁵⁹ Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*. In Jung's work, the *self* is differentiated from the *ego* in that the former comprises both our conscious and unconscious psyche, while the latter only refers to the conscious *me*. In some current ritual practices based on evolved traditional perspectives, this terminology has been frequently re-adapted and approached from a vision of the *self* which can get rid of the *ego*, that holds oneself back. The entrance into non-ordinary shifts of consciousness is a recurrent tool which, when merged with a focus on a sacred cosmos and pre-existent spiritualities, gives birth to new ways of relating to one's inner space in the material world. Jung, *The Essential Jung*. Also see Stanislav Grof and Hal Zina Bennett, *The Holotropic Mind: The Three Levels of Human Consciousness and How They Shape Our Lives* (New York: Harper One, 1993); Josep Maria Fericgla, *Seminario: Músicas e Inconsciente. Textos de Josep Ma Fericgla* (Caella, Catalonia: Societat d'Etnopsicologia Aplicada i Estudis Cognitius, 2009); Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey. Samuel, *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

⁶⁰ Ruth Herbert has referred to the utility of music in trance-inducing contexts, but has also highlighted its secondary role in the induction of such states in many cases. In 'Reconsidering Music and Trance: Cross-Cultural Differences and Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 20 (2011), she argues: 'Music (nearly always recorded) is not necessarily an integral part of the experience, and its use may be more or less targeted. It tends to be regarded as an acoustic stimulus that can achieve precise effects, as a 'technology' for relaxation, rather than a rich repository for acquired cultural associations and beliefs,' p. 210. This, on the other hand, can easily be linked to Christopher Partridge's and Tia DeNora's arguments on music as a prosthetic technology. Christopher Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus*; Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*.

⁶¹ The influence of both cultural and psychophysiological factors had already been noted by scholars such as Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*; Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners*; and Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance*, among others. The pathologising of trance in the West has defined its reading over the decades, mostly from a rational or even medical perspective, as noted by Richard Jankowsky in 'Music, Spirit Possession and the In-Between: Ethnomusicological Inquiry and the Challenge of Trance', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 16 (2007), pp. 185-208.

⁶² Ernesto De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale: Del lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* (Torino, Italia: Bollati

Conversely, the physical activity developed during the exercise aimed at triggering the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness finds a clear parallel between body movement and the shifts of mind itself.

So far, the different approaches to the expansion of consciousness have focused on the interpretation of external reactions embodied by the individual alone. Here, I argue that what informs the non-ordinary shifts in the selected case studies are (1) the cultural background of the activity, (2) the sacred cosmos according to which it is constructed and its inherent philosophical basis, and (3) the bodily expression linked to it. Music helps in uniting these factors and refining the parameters that build the ritual, while serving both the physical movement and one's intellectual discourse. It is, in short, the main binding element in constructing a practice effectively.

In traditional anthropology, the categories of 'possession' and 'trance' served as one point of departure, although these terms have now outgrown their original frames.⁶³ Gilbert Rouget, as one of the first theorists to systematise the definition of these concepts within music studies, differentiated between ecstasy and trance – the latter further divided into possessive trance and shamanistic trance. He noted the importance of understanding a non-ordinary shift of consciousness departing from the ritual itself,⁶⁴ and suggested two forms of trance, communal and emotional, that carry with them the possibilities of music-induced shifts of consciousness.

More recently Judith Becker suggested a more flexible option, more appropriate to my research, which presents a de-categorisation that places trance states under a broader

Boringhieri editore, 1985).

⁶³ Manuela Cantón, *La razón hechizada* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 2001); Brian Morris, *Introducción al estudio antropológico de la religión* (Barcelona: Ed. Paidós, 2013); Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Laura Romero, *Chamanismo y curanderismo: Nuevas perspectivas* (Puebla, México: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2011). According to this partition, trance is usually *achieved* by the shaman or leader of a ritual, and represents one's journey to the realm of the spirits or the gods, while possession is usually *induced* by the shaman or leader of the group, and supposes the descending of spiritual forces into the bodies of the participants.

⁶⁴ Rouget, *Music and Trance*. He established these categories as two ends of a scale, and did not count music in the building of ecstasy because of the state's lack of mobility, crisis, hallucinations, and usual sensory deprivation associated with it. In the terms here established, I will be taking non-explosive states of consciousness better associated with the term which make an active use of music under the same umbrella than most convulsive processes.

umbrella, and differentiates diverse possibilities as individual happenings. Becker uses the term ‘trance’ to encapsulate a variety of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness:

I define trance as a state of mind characterized by intense focus, the loss of the strong sense of self and access to types of knowledge and experience that are inaccessible in non-trance states. While Rouget prefers to distinguish between states of ‘trance’ and ‘ecstasy’, I prefer a generic category of ‘trance’ that includes meditative states, possession trance, shamanic trance, communal trance, aesthetic trance and isolated moments of transcendence. Trance states can be of different kinds: there is the trance of the performer who feels herself to be one with the music she plays; she plays the mild trance of the listener whose whole attention becomes focused on the music; possession trance, in which one’s self appears to be displaced and one’s body is taken over by a deity or a spirit; the trance of Sufi mystics who feel themselves unified with Allah; or the meditation trance of Vajrayana Buddhists, who feel themselves become the deity. Trance is not a digital on-off state. There can be many degrees of trance.⁶⁵

Ruth Herbert supported this idea of dynamic trance as a process that encompasses both high and low arousal models. She referred to Becker when borrowing the concept of ‘structural coupling,’ first used in neuroscience,⁶⁶ to link habitual exposure to a sound with the trancing state, exemplifying the importance of the cultural understanding of the process that one enters before it develops.⁶⁷ Here, following the line of these two authors, I opt for the consideration of these as ‘non-ordinary shifts of consciousness’ in a broader sense, that places diverse kinds of non-daily shifts within a common context. These include musically-induced shifts which do not fit in ritual ensembles or communal environments and practices necessarily, but which are relevant to the induction of such dispositions.

Nonetheless, in *Everyday Music Listening* (2011), Herbert also created a detailed categorisation for these trance states which complemented her wider use of the term in other circumstances, and suggested three different natures to go with it, which are also subcategorised depending on the trancer’s focus: (1) reduction in density of thought or

⁶⁵ Judith Becker, ‘Music and Trance’, *Leonardo Music Journal*, 4 (1994), pp. 41-42.

⁶⁶ Ruth Herbert, ‘Consciousness and Everyday Music Listening: Trancing, Dissociation, and Absorption’, in Clarke and Clarke (eds.), *Music and Consciousness*, pp. 179-192; Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*; Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge*.

⁶⁷ Herbert, ‘Reconsidering Music and Trance’, p. 217.

internal dialogue (attentional focus external, internal or fluctuating); (2) change in sensory awareness (attentional focus external or fluctuating); and (3) imaginative involvement (attentional focus internal or fluctuating).⁶⁸ In the cases that will be described here, these could also work as a map on which to locate them for the outside viewer, although their categorisation is not my goal here.

To differentiate these shifts of consciousness from those comprised under ‘daily consciousness’, it is worth mentioning the work of Aldridge and Fachner, as well as that of neurobiologists Patricia Tassi and Alain Muzet.⁶⁹ According to the latter, a distinction can be drawn between *physiological* states, and *evoked* states of consciousness. In their statement, what differentiates one from the other is the spontaneous nature of the evoked state. That is, although our consciousness shifts during our everyday life, there are some states that can only be entered artificially by ‘either specific self-training (e.g. transcendental meditation), externally induced (e.g. hypnosis) or drug ingestion (e.g. hallucinogens, anaesthetics).’⁷⁰ Although they find both categories comparable to a certain extent, the way in which they are induced is the key to their distinct nature. This will be fundamental to comprehend the cases in which a non-ordinary consciousness is approached, although they ought not to be subject to close categorisations, as is the case of the rituals discussed here.

It is undeniable that a great part of the development and reading of these non-ordinary shifts must be done through neurophysiological lenses, but it is as necessary to consider the sociocultural construction of such transcendental experiences.⁷¹ Body movement merges with cultural expectation to provide a meaningful experience for the participants of the non-ordinary-consciousness-including practices, and frequently mirrors what is happening both inside and outside of the participant’s mind. As will be seen, this same mechanism is also mimicked by music.

⁶⁸ Ruth Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening*.

⁶⁹ Jörg Fachner, ‘Music and Altered States of Consciousness: An Overview’, in Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*, pp. 15-37; Patricia Tassi and Alain Muzet, ‘Defining the States of Consciousness’, *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 25 (2001), pp. 175-191.

⁷⁰ Tassi and Muzet, *ibid.*, p. 185.

⁷¹ Judith Becker, along with Ian Cross, was one of the first to recognise the need for interdisciplinary work to cover this matter. The present research, however, will focus on the social and cultural development of such states in combination with a musical factor, and will not include laboratory tests on any of the participants. See Becker, ‘Ethnomusicology and Empiricism in the Twenty-First Century’.

Dancing is a great example of the collaboration between these elements, as the work of scholars focused on raving has highlighted. Scott Hutson, for instance, points to how ‘extended rhythmic dancing and bodily movement brings on physical exhaustion, vertigo, hyperventilation, and other physiological conditions that may alter the consciousness.’⁷² The same discourse applies to the frequent use of drumming in traditionally-termed ‘trance rituals,’ described both as provoking alterations of the inner ear, and in relation to the cultural signs for the entrance into the shift of consciousness itself.⁷³

Finally, a factor of influence related to the external inputs aimed for the entrance into non-ordinary shifts is the use of psychedelic substances.⁷⁴ Even if they present a shortcut to enter these conditions, in many religious and ritual contexts they are substituted by alternative techniques which provide a similar reaction, as many authors have noticed,⁷⁵ such as ‘fasting, special breathing and certain ways of yoga and meditation,’⁷⁶ as in the cases included here. As I will highlight from both my observation and experience in the field, music is a major trigger in either case.

1.7. *Music Brings it All Together*

Music can modify our being-in-the-world.⁷⁷ This reflects what Rupert Till has described as the dualism between *chronos* (time) and *Kairos* (the moment), or the physical time that goes by and the subjective interpretation of that duration.⁷⁸ Music therefore retains its ability to stop physical time and propel the individual towards an ecstatic, atemporal

⁷² Scott Hutson, ‘The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73 (2000), p. 40.

⁷³ Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Becker, *Deep Listeners*.

⁷⁴ The cases which will be approached here rely on music and ‘alternative’ body activities. They do not count with the introduction of external substances under any circumstances. Any kind of potential drug introduction in the field was marked as a hard limit for both ethical and analytical reasons. Any practice that could have included potential drug taking was discarded beforehand.

⁷⁵ Hutson, ‘The Rave’; Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London: HMSO, 1989); Ioan Myrddin Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Possession* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); among others.

⁷⁶ Barker, *New Religious Movements*, p. 59.

⁷⁷ Rouget, *Music and Trance*, p. 122; Polo i Pujadas and Radigales, *La estética de la música*; Fubini, *La estética musical desde la antigüedad hasta el siglo XX*.

⁷⁸ Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 9

moment: the suggestion of a spiritual feeling. Because of this, Johannes Eurich attaches some of the qualities traditionally associated to religion, to music:

The temporary dropping out from the everyday into a fictitious world thus becomes a refuge beyond reality, which for a time offers 'redemption' from the constraints of the modern world by means of a changed state of mind. Making everyday life somehow transcendent shows ways of experience which traditionally have been placed in the field of religion. So it can be described as a pseudo-religious experience which is mediated by music.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, the focus of attention and understanding of the musical language become indispensable for such an interpretation. The expectations and focus put on music and the understanding of the affect or the message that it transmits are essential to a consequent reaction, and to the building of a specific feeling for the listener. Tia DeNora offers a great example of this when approaching several women and trying to comprehend their daily uses of music (2000), inferring that music is frequently used to reinforce certain feelings or to help awaken sensations on a daily basis.⁸⁰ Judith Becker, along the same lines, formalised the concept of 'deep listener' to refer to those people who are especially receptive to musical inputs – a reception so intense that it can lead to non-ordinary shifts of consciousness. As she explains, this deep listening can lead to moving, religious experiences, although it does not have to be necessarily associated with 'trancing'.⁸¹

Although music can help induce non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, the paradigm tells us that there is not a definitive and singular musical 'trigger' for this.⁸² Given the wide range and variety of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that exist, music can be as variable as the shifts themselves, or the activities developed in parallel to their sonic material. The cultural and social construction of the entrance into a non-ordinary shift of consciousness may be associated with a specific rhythm or musical input, or it may just depend on the predisposition of the participants themselves to make the final step.⁸³ The

⁷⁹ Johannes Eurich, 'Sociological Aspects and Ritual Similarities in the Relationship between Pop Music and Religion', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 34 (2003), p. 50.

⁸⁰ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*.

⁸¹ Becker, *Deep Listeners*, p. 2. Also see Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2005).

⁸² Cobussen, *Thresholds*, p. 127; Rouget, *Music and Trance*, p. 94; Becker, *Deep Listeners*.

⁸³ See Rouget, *Music and Trance*, p. 94. As he shows, drumming has been commonly found in association

same happens with the instruments involved in the performance of such activities, which will vary from context to context, and which will have cultural presumptions or connotations built around their own sound. That there is not a single way of addressing music for the entrance into these shifts of consciousness is, indeed, proof of the necessity for an intersubjective agreement on what consciousness *is*, as well as on its alteration, in relation to the cultural ensemble where the question is raised.

One can refer to these musically-guided transcendental journeys as ‘peak experiences.’⁸⁴ John Whaley, John Sloboda, and Alf Gabrielsson describe them as ‘self-validating, self-justifying moments with their own intrinsic value’, which are ‘never negative, unpleasant or evil, and cause a characteristic disorientation of time and space as well as a loss of fear, anxiety, doubts and inhibitions.’⁸⁵ There is another possibility, however, related to what Maslow labelled as ‘plateau experiences,’ which would be closer to Rouget’s *ecstasi*,⁸⁶ or to the contemplative shifts of consciousness described within Buddhist literature. Paul Freinkel summarises the concept by presenting it as a shift that ‘occur[s] when peak experiences become permanent realizations in a person’s makeup and transform the person.’⁸⁷ Although both can apply to non-music-related experiences, it is relevant to highlight the sonic input that makes their development possible in many contexts: music, although not indispensable for entrance into a non-ordinary shift of consciousness, helps to maintain it and aids in the socialisation of the whole ensemble.⁸⁸

with the cases that he labels as ‘trance,’ but it cannot be traced as a constant. If one includes meditative states or other non-explosive approaches to non-ordinary states of consciousness to this equation, drumming falls even further to the music which helps inducing such states. On the other hand, Judith Becker and Ruth Herbert have both highlighted the importance of taking into consideration the ‘habit of listening’ to a specific sound to give it the quality of a trigger for such states. See Becker, *Deep Listeners*; Herbert, ‘Reconsidering Music and Trance’.

⁸⁴ Abraham H. Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994); *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

⁸⁵ John Whaley, John Sloboda and Alf Gabrielsson, ‘Peak Experiences in Music’, in Susan Hallam, Ian Cross, and Michael Taut, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 453. In the peak experience theory, these authors conceive a tripartite form consisting of ‘cognitive responses and loss of self; climaxing with continued loss of self and motor responses; and subsiding with emotional responses, [and] self-transformations,’ which coincides with the structure given by Arnold Van Gennep in his theory on the rites of passage. Authors such as Paul D. Freinkel have also pointed to the existence of a *plateau* which follows the peak experience in case of a permanent realisation of what he calls ‘the person’s makeup,’ which would equate to what Buddhist have labelled the state of Enlightenment. See Pauls D. Freinkel, ‘Singing and Participatory Spirituality’, *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 34 (2015), pp. 151–65.

⁸⁶ Rouget, *Music and Trance*.

⁸⁷ Paul D. Freinkel, ‘Singing and Participatory Spirituality’, *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 34 (2015), p. 154.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 325-326.

This clashes with Rouget's affirmation that 'although such music does play a part in triggering and maintaining the trance state, it does not owe its effect to the properties of its musical structure, or if it does, it does so only to a very small degree.'⁸⁹ Here I will consider the musical structure to be fundamental to the maintenance of each non-ordinary shift of consciousness, and as such will dismiss Rouget's affirmation: in each case, music will parallel not only the physical process that it accompanies, but also the intended shift of mind itself in the context from which it departed. The affective approach made by music towards the participants will also be fundamental to understanding the construction of guided experiences, as those developed in many newly formulated or 'evolved' rituals.

Music introduces a vital element for framing spirituality, and especially during the construction of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness in ritual ensembles adhering to a background sacred cosmos. The social and cultural constructions around music are placed at the basis of the rituals that this research introduces, together with the building of the sense of the otherworldly. Because of this, the relevance of the concepts outlined in this chapter will be highlighted in the pages that follow as the foundation on which the rituals and their music are later edified.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

2. Applied Concepts and the Emergence of Music-Guided Ritual

The place and time in history where ritual practices appear have a basic influence on their construction. The circumstances that led to their conformation and the elements which influence their sacred cosmos cannot be detached from their direct social environment. How music is used in these ensembles, how it is perceived and delivered, also depends on the resources and the cultural knowledge of its listeners, performers and producers. Because of this, it is important first to outline the environment in which these music-led practices are born, in order to fully understand how they have come to be, and what their function is within their societal framework.

2.1. *The Construction of Reality and the Role of Religion*

‘Interaction’ and ‘intersubjectivity’ summarise the ways in which society and social collectives are conceived and built, and how they are addressed by those who constructed them in the first place. The world is built intersubjectively by the participants of society, and the interaction between the world and these individuals makes them both evolve.¹ In the end, as Berger and Luckmann pointed out, worlds are both socially constructed and socially maintained.² In this building of the social environment, religion has a central place in legitimating the world, in giving meaning to what one already understands to exist.³ Since the age of enlightenment in the 18th century, the reformulation of reality has come to rely on science more than it has on religion.⁴ As Cantón Delgado underlines, the

¹ Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 14-15.

² Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966), pp. 53-54. Their emphasis.

³ Ibid. The authors refer to legitimation as a process ‘best described as a “second order” objectivation of meaning. Legitimation produces new meanings that serve to integrate the meanings already attached to disparate institutional processes. The function of legitimation is to make objectively available and subjectively plausible the “first-order” objectivations that have been institutionalized,’ p. 102.

⁴ See Eduardo Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso: Presencia de la religión y la religiosidad en las sociedades avanzadas*, ed. by Centro de estudios andaluces, Consejería de la Presidencia, Junta de Andalucía (Sevilla, 2007); Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003).

opposition of science *versus* religion, has been reinforced by the discourse which contemporary anthropologists and sociologists have disseminated, ‘ignoring the thesis sustained by Durkheim at the dawn of the 21st century, which postulated the continuity and not the breakup between religious and scientific thought.’⁵ In the reading of new or ‘evolved’ ritual constructions, these two spheres are seen as a continuum, borrowing elements from one another freely, in a similar way to New Age rituals:⁶ relying on a scientific explanation of their own universe, which validates their discourse in the minds of their participants.

This introduces the idea of universes and sub-universes of meaning, parallel discourses that coexist in a larger universe. Berger and Luckmann consider sub-universes of meaning to be the result of role-specialisation and the building of specific knowledge, which can exist as a popular discourse or as private affair.⁷ If one extrapolates the idea of such subdivisions to the religious sphere, there are multiple sub-universe of meaning – and therefore ways of understanding the world – embodied by each coexisting religious current within one overarching universe.

For example, in our Western context most people will agree that we perceive the world in three dimensions, or that a person’s ability to touch an object is defined by the boundaries of one’s own body.⁸ Yet some sub-universes may emerge that propose alternatives: the possibility of perceiving further spheres with our ‘inner senses,’ or observing past events through spiritual means. These, even if they do not find social agreement, are representative of the view of the world for some individuals, or groups of individuals.⁹ The rituals which rely on a sacred cosmos construct sub-universes of

⁵ Manuela Cantón Delgado, ‘Secularización, extinción y eterno retorno de las religiones: reflexiones desde la antropología social’, in Eduardo Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso*, p. 289. My translation.

⁶ See Stanislav Grof and Hal Zina Bennett, *The Holotropic Mind: The Three Levels of Human Consciousness and How They Shape Our Lives* (New York: Harper One, 1993); Josep Maria, *Seminario: Músicas e inconsciente. Textos de Josep Ma Fericgla*, Fundació J (Calella, Catalonia: Societat d’Etnopsicologia Aplicada i Estudis Cognitius, 2009); among others.

⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, pp. 102.

⁸ Theories such as the Extended Mind Thesis put this affirmation in question, since the boundaries of the body can be traced within the objects that one manipulates oneself and uses to interact with the world. That is, those objects that appear as ‘prolongations’ of our bodies would become, according to this theory, another active part in our exploration of the world. See Joel Krueger, ‘The Extended Mind and Religious Cognition’, in *Religion: Mental Religion*, ed. By Niki Clements, MacMillan (2016); Lynne Rudder, ‘The Extended Mind and Religious Thought: Persons and the Extended-Mind Thesis’, *Zygon* (2009), pp. 659-675.

⁹ Thomas Luckmann, in *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: The

meaning to which the participants can relate, and help them re-affirm their presence in the world, relating to their individual circumstances.¹⁰ This will be the case of the rituals discussed in the chapters that follow, which rely on thoroughly edified sub-universes, inserted into a wider Western context, where they can establish a dialectical relation between the experiences that they afford and their participants.

The new forms of religiosity that such rituals present, although dependent on the construction of reality from one's inner and outer perception of the world, are strictly linked to the moment in time in which they appear and the status of the context in which they develop. The late 20th century, and mostly the 21st, introduced a world 'dominated by risk, insecurity, and the acceleration of time and space,'¹¹ where the values of individualism grew and the instability of a system of beliefs to grasp, in a spiritual sense, became latent.¹² Because of this, every individual becomes the builder of one's own beliefs, in what Andrés Canteras Murillo considered a 'new personalised, relativist, syncretic, pragmatic, and emotive style.'¹³ In an environment in which a predominant religious current starts to fade, and where multiple alternative views of the world emerge, the individual can put the desired elements together to form a personalised perspective of the environment, in what can be labelled as 'a mutation of the sacred.'¹⁴ Reality, although consensual in broader terms, becomes scattered in individual interpretations of specific beliefs.

Because of this, the debate between secularisation and sacralisation has gone deep into the conversation of scholars: on the one hand, the progressive leaving-behind of

Macmillan Company, 1967), refers to the construction of these universes and sub-universes as symbolic universes of meaning. As the author suggests, in the objectivation of the world, we create systems of meaning that constitute our reality, and which may or may not include materialistic and spiritual objects in the same sense. In other words, what we do when creating symbolic universes of meaning is make an idea tangible and operable by the individual. This view can be integrated in the joint work of Luckmann and Berger as an expansion of the processes by which the universes and sub-universes themselves are created, and become meaningful for the individual relating to them.

¹⁰ See Krueger, 'The Extended Mind and Religious Cognition', 59–74.

¹¹ Gerhard Steingress, 'Todo lo que existe no se desvanece en el aire: Sobre la religiosidad como forma ideológica de la ambivalencia', in Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso*, p. 150. My translation.

¹² See Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1992); Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998); Zygmund Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); among others.

¹³ Andrés Canteras Murillo, 'La muta religiosa', in Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso* (2007), p. 160. My translation.

¹⁴ Murillo, 'La muta religiosa', p. 155.

traditional structures can be read as a progressive secularisation of society; on the other, the entrance of alternative systems of belief and ritual expression suggest a tendency towards sacralisation, even if detached from traditional structures.¹⁵

Many sociologists, especially during the last decades of the 20th century, insistently advocated for the secularisation theory, considering the idea of sacralisation to be a misunderstood process that can in no way compare to systematic spirituality. What Bruce called ‘the fragmentation of societies and of social life, the disappearance of the community and the growth of the massive bureaucracies (national and international), and increasing rationalization’ is, in his opinion and in that of others, not consequent in the creation of a religious necessity.¹⁶ The privatization of religion, rather than the decline of traditional institutions, has been posited as the reason why New Age and New Religious tendencies have emerged.¹⁷

Paul Heelas outlined the need for a de-traditionalised religion which appeals to de-traditionalised people: ‘a “religion” which is (apparently) more constructed than given; with practices which emphasize the authority of participants; which says that the “sacred texts should confirm what is in you” or which refers to “God/Goddess/Source, as you experience Him/Her/It”; which provides guidance and personal experience rather than beliefs; which does not demand that one should belong to a particular organization.’¹⁸ But other theorists such as José Casanova have not considered this perspective to be a valid replacement for traditional structures, which give a stable sacred cosmos to its community of believers. Casanova rather attributes the emergence of ‘spiritual compensators’ to a market-oriented strategy, which he considers to be ahistorical and a-

¹⁵ Woodhead and Heelas, in *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), establish various theoretical categories to relate to when navigating the various interventions with leading roles in academia. For the part of secularisation, there is the *disappearance thesis*, which states the progressive disappearance of religion; the *differentiation thesis*, according to which religion starts to leave the social sphere to go into a private one; and the *de-intensification theory*, for which religion remains only under an insubstantial form, are to be highlighted. In terms of sacralisation, three approaches which state an inverse approach can also be drawn: ‘growth (by way of conversion), dedifferentiation (or deprivatization) and intensification’, pp. 305-429.

¹⁶ Steven Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 38-39; José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Although Casanova does not present such a strict vision as Bruce, he puts secularisation on the table to dismiss its mytification, in the praise of sacralisation made by the appearance of new forms of spirituality in Postmodernity.

¹⁷ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*.

¹⁸ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 172.

sociological.¹⁹ The debate therefore centres around the need for alternative suppliers of spiritual cosmoi. Liliana Arroyo Moliner responded to the same discussion in her doctoral thesis by binding sacralisation to individual choice, and secularisation to society as a whole, exemplifying how the religious has been increasingly addressed towards the individual.²⁰ Nevertheless, New Religious circles and other pseudo-religious expressions continue to address a great public, so the debate is extended.

Thus, the main point of disagreement in scholarship is the necessity for a consensus in defining *secularisation*, since it has been traditionally used to designate a detachment from Church, but not from any other coexistent systems. One can find emergent Religious Movements and New Age inspired practices that present a spiritual alternative for a growing public. Although these frequently rely on the market game to approach their participants,²¹ one should be able to identify basic lucrative institutions from other forms of religious expression, inspired in pre-existent and ‘evolved’ traditions which establish a well-meditated sacred cosmos. The practices that are discussed in the following chapters are better adapted to this latter category, and as such will be approached and reviewed in Part II of this thesis; a determination about their sacralisation or secularisation, however, will be left up to the reader.

2.2. *The Interpretation of Music in a Socially Build Environment*

Music is capable of engaging people in a way that scholars such as Tia DeNora, and Christopher Partridge after her, have termed a prosthetic technology:²² an extension of the body ‘to manipulate, to enable and to constrain people;’ a technology that, in a

¹⁹ José Casanova, ‘Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: towards a Global Perspective’, in Davie, Heelas, and Woodhead, *Predicting Religion*, p. 25.

²⁰ Liliana Arroyo Moliner, ‘Espiritualidad, razón y discordias: El budismo ahora y aquí’ (Universitat de Barcelona, 2013).

²¹ Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000)

²² In relation to Michel Foucault, ‘Technologies of the Self’ (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988). DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Christopher Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 51. More recently, in ‘Emotion, Meaning and Popular Music’, Christopher Partridge, and Marcus Moberg, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), Partridge has referred to music’s role in the construction of the sacred space ‘through its peculiar ability to construct affective space as a site of meaning-making, music encourages psychosomatic states that much spiritual practice seeks to cultivate,’ p. 31.

religious environment, stands up to ‘manipulate mood and thereby contribute to the construction of sacred affective space.’²³ In other words, although our understanding of music depends on our primary socialisation and previous interaction with sound, the effect it has in return exceeds that. In this sense, music can be differentiated from language, which acts similarly based on signification and arbitrariness. Music ‘can float even more freely,’²⁴ in the sense that it gives space to individuality and personal signification where language mostly closes its gates.

The ways in which we perceive music are, therefore, both linked to our cultural knowledge and to our psychological and physical responses to organised sound. There are also various elements to take into account when analysing the impact music has on the listener,²⁵ which also have to be considered and highlighted in relation to the entrance to non-ordinary shifts of consciousness. Leonard B. Meyer, in his pioneering work on *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (1956), highlighted the following:

The preparatory sets which arise as a result of our beliefs as to the nature of musical experience are not specific to any particular style or form. The disposition to respond is general, i.e., mental attitudes and bodily tensions which arise are relevant to musical experience per se. Together with these general beliefs about aesthetic experience of more specific dispositions or ideo-motor sets based upon past experience in listening and knowledge acquired either systematically or by chance. Once the listener knows, either precisely or in terms of general style characteristics, what kind of music he is going to hear, this information conditions his perceptions, modifies his opinion of what is heard, and qualifies his later responses.

Thus, meaning is not an inherent property of cultural materials:²⁶ it is rather constructed to be recognisable social content to which the individual can relate, and on which one has

²³ Ibid, pp. 51 and 196. This can be linked back to the Extended Mind Thesis, according to which music works as an extension of the body with which to explore the world. See Krueger, ‘The Extended Mind and Religious Cognition’; Lynne Rudder Baker, ‘The Extended Mind and Religious Thought’, *Zygon* 44 (2009), pp. 659-75.

²⁴ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 21.

²⁵ Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (London: Chicago University Press, 1956).

²⁶ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*; DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*; et al.

power of change and of association to the environment where it is developed. As DeNora puts it, ‘music is in dynamic relation with social life.’²⁷

It is not surprising that, in this context, music is in direct relation with the sacred also outside of the traditional institutional frame, in the sense that it is frequently given a special space inside one’s experience of the outside world, as a non-daily phenomenon. ‘Religion and God are not dead, but very much alive and well and dancing to the beat of popular music,’²⁸ as Sylvan states. Music’s religious significance has just ‘migrated to another sector of the culture,’²⁹ so in the creation of smaller sub-universes, the individual has the final say on the definitions of their own religious and spiritual boundaries.

From an ecomusicological perspective, the biological factors that lie behind these constructions are said to be embedded in the memory of the listener of the specific culture within which one has grown and learned behavioural patterns. In *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (2005), Eric Clarke uses an ecological metaphor to refer to the way our brain constructs specific neurological patterns depending on where our socialisation takes place. He states that having developed in a specific way makes us interact with the world in a specific manner, as delineated by the elements which originally shaped our neuronal networks. Therefore, ‘having been exposed to environmental shaping (such as tonal chord sequences), the network has “grown” in a certain manner with the consequence that it behaves in a specific and differentiated fashion,’ whenever a similar input comes in.³⁰ The exposure to a particular environment during our primary socialisation determines the connections we make between elements

²⁷ DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, p. 20.

²⁸ Robin Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), p. 3.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Eric Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 30.

of the outside world,³¹ and the ideas that we take as pre-existent: our neuronal network becomes ‘attuned to the environment,’³² and consequently to music.

Considering specific practices that play with this knowledge of the world, there are various levels in constructing the ritual exercises themselves. The first step is defined by the environment and context in which the ritual will be developed: the macro-context represented by the culture and society where it is going to take place, and the micro-context defined by the specific location and moment where the activity is to be developed. All possible sub-contexts, such as local culture or personal history, are also relevant; in fact, these in-between levels are the important variables to observe in specific individuals’ responses, as I will show in the following chapters. The use of musical tools to induce the kinds of non-ordinary shifts at issue here are, therefore, mostly developed collectively: when constructing the musical processes for the practices, when choosing the best-working sonic material, the parameters to attend will be those defined by the common denominators presented by the participants and their sociocultural background.

Beyond the macro-context – participants’ country, common history or cultural background – there are several elements to consider, from conventions associated to sounds or tunes to the social strata of the participants. Thomas Luckmann accurately predicted an evolution of the religious paradigm towards a model better shaped for an actualised individual, who had slowly detached from traditional institutions in favour of a

³¹ That is, when we construct our first neuronal associations and primary knowledge of the world around us, as opposed to secondary socialisation, which departs from primary socialisation and later becomes specialised in further sub-universes of meaning. Following the theoretical frame established by Berger and Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality*, secondary socialisation can be described as ‘the internalization of institutional or institution-based “sub-worlds”’. Its extent and character are therefore determined by the complexity of the division of labour and the concomitant social distribution of knowledge.... The formal processes of secondary socialization are determined by its fundamental problem: it always presupposes a preceding process of primary socialization; that is, that it must deal with an already formed self and an already internalized world. It cannot construct subjective reality *ex nihilo*,’ pp. 158-160.

³² Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, p. 31. This same perspective has been incorporated in the work of Judith Becker and other scholars, who have relied on an interdisciplinary reading of musical phenomena to have a better approach to ‘what actually happens’ in the individual’s mind. Becker has also referred to the association of music to previous inputs with the term *habitus of listening*, adapted from Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus*, and has underpinned the Structural Coupling Theory as a way to understand how music understanding is built in the brain. See Judith Becker, ‘Music and Trance’ *Leonardo Music Journal*, 4 (1994), pp. 41–51; Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of a Consciousness* (London: William Heinemann, 2000); and Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1987).

scientific approach towards the nature of the self.³³ Applying this discourse to music, one finds a social structure defined by the consumer industry, which attends the specific needs of the individuals, and offers them unique sensory experiences shaped for their individual fulfilment.

On the micro-contextual level, the ‘set’ and ‘setting’ of the practices have a fundamental impact on the experience of the participants individually,³⁴ since they help afford the adequate environment for the activities. That is, the expectations and preparation of the participants, along with the adequate atmosphere for the ritual, are elementary for the optimal development of the intended experiences. But these elements are not only restricted to the rituals’ immediate environment: they have further implications, which are not always considered by the organisers of the practices themselves, defined by the cultural and social knowledge of the participants as much as by the individual’s ability to become immersed in the experience. In other words, the micro-cosmos where the ritual is placed depends on the macro-cosmos that gives birth to it in the first place, which is defined by the changing sociocultural context in which the participant lives, and which has the power of ideological change. The set and setting must therefore be understood as indirectly dependent upon the major context that made them possible in the first place, but also as a remarkable individual process of preparation for the ritual experience. In the following case studies, this is reflected in their existence within a shared context, and their particular interpretations.

The ritual exercises’ musical procedures exemplify how music is not only bounded to aesthetic pleasure, but rather entangled in further sociological issues. As Ian Cross underlines, ‘in almost all musical cultures, music may exist as entertainment or be produced and experienced for its powers to move our passions. However, music is usually more than sound produced for the purposes of entertainment or the elicitation of affect.’³⁵ This is, indeed, what these three musical rituals deal with on a fundamental level.

³³ Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*.

³⁴ The terms *set* (expectations, attitude) and *setting* (environment, ambience) have been introduced by some of the the creators of current ritual practices to define the two basic features on which the practice is constructed. See Patrick Lundborg, in *Psychodelia: An Ancient Culture, A Modern Way of Life* (Stockholm: Lysergia, 2012), and Stanislav Grof within the stream of Transpersonal Psychology, in books such as *Holotropic Breathwork: A New Approach to Self-Exploration and Therapy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010).

³⁵ Ian Cross, ‘Cognitive Science and the Cultural Nature of Music’, *Topics in Cognitive Science*, 4 (2012), pp.

2.3. *Is New Age an Expression of Its Time?*

Through modern and postmodern thinking emerged new approaches to religion and ritual expression.³⁶ The relevance of the self, the scientific approach to reality, and the introduction of non-Western philosophies through globalisation, have helped integrate the hundreds of movements under the labels of ‘New Age’ or ‘New Religious Movements’.³⁷

The term ‘New Age’ has been used to describe a variety of practices which respond to ‘the monistic assumption that the Self itself is sacred,’ and which put an emphasis on ‘the spirituality of the natural order as a whole.’³⁸ The growth of New Age practices during the countercultural movements of the 20th century, and its popularisation as a construct in the 1980s, can be seen as a reaction against what Paul Heelas has called ‘traditions with their dogmas, doctrines and moralities,’ that no longer applied to a flexible, changing world.³⁹ For this purpose, they drew from Buddhist and shamanic traditions in which the self, the present moment, and the connection with nature were reinforced. However, their readings of non-Western traditions – even when introduced by non-Western masters – were done according to the needs of their Western participants, and were re-represented in favour of their new contexts.⁴⁰

668-677.

³⁶ See Zygmund Bauman, ‘Postmodern Religion?’, in Paul Heelas, *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. by Paul Heelas, David Martin, and Paul Morris (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998); and Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*; Beck, *Risk Society*; Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (London: Stanford University Press, 1990); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: La ética en un mundo de extraños* (Madrid: Katz, 2007); Liliana Arroyo Moliner, ‘Espiritualidad, razón y discordias’.

³⁷ Although the popularity of the New Age emerged around mid-20th century, its origins can be traced back to the 19th century. Ryan Hibbett, in ‘The New Age Taboo’, *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (2010), states how ‘*The New Age* officially began in 1894 as “A Weekly Record of Culture, Social Service, and Literary Life,” but did not emerge as a successful publication until changing hands in 1907’, p. 286.

³⁸ Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27. For Kieran Flanagan, in *Postmodernity, Sociology and Religion* (London: McMillan Press LTD, 1996), the elephant in the room is to be found in the coexistence of ‘two contradictory movements in religion that are difficult to reconcile: first, the quest for a New Age spirituality; and, second, the imperative to rehabilitate tradition in mainstream religions that has given rise to the term fundamentalism’ (p. 6). The search for spiritual differences, he exposes, presents a post-secularising tendency that revolts against what he calls ‘the marriage of secularisation of modernity’ (p. 6), therefore suggesting the coexistence of both sacralising and secularising tendencies at once.

⁴⁰ This context, or the public to which New Age better applies, has been better framed by Bruce in *Religion in the Modern World* as belonging to a specific middle-class section of the population ‘whose more pressing material needs have been satisfied,’ and ‘specifically to the university-educated middle classes working in the expressive professions: social workers, counsellors, actors, writers, and artists,’ p. 216. This, as observed during the fieldwork undergone for this research, still remains accurate twenty years later.

The thought and environment that originated the New Age as a movement has changed over the years,⁴¹ to something that describes a change from a naturalist perspective, towards a 21st century scientific-technological focused view.⁴² Some of the ideas that were strongly related to New Age practices in the last century have reformulated in an evolving landscape, as I show in chapter 5. New Religious Movements, on the other hand, rely on stronger hierarchies and expressions of institutionalised spirituality. They are also ‘used to cover a disparate collection of organisations, most of which have emerged in their present form since the 1950s,’⁴³ and because of this their boundaries have become blurry. Even if their participants ‘may not identify with one of the many constructed religions of global society’⁴⁴ as in the case of New Age practices, they differ from the latter in that they do not centre their discourse around the ‘authority of the self.’⁴⁵

To differentiate these, it is essential to describe the break that New Age practices establish when considering the importance of personal experience *versus* other institutionalised practices that dictate a path for their participants to follow.⁴⁶ For New Agers, the concept of the sacred lies *within* the individual, in the self, and therefore becomes immovable. Meanwhile, in New Religious Movements, or other strictly-structured groups, the sacred objects lie *outside* the participant’s body. This does not mean that certain elements or symbols to which New Agers relate lack a sacred quality, but that the sacred must be re-defined in favour of the participant’s individuality.

⁴¹ Ellie Hedges and James A. Beckford, ‘Holism, Healing and the New Age’, in Sutcliffe and Bowman, *Beyond New Age*, p. 170.

⁴² Steven Sutcliffe, ‘Between Apocalypse and Self-realisation: “Nature” as an Index of New Age Religiosity’, in Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey. Samuel, *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 33.

⁴³ Barker, *New Religious Movements*, p. 9. According to Pearson, these groups ‘prefer the term “revived religion”, since practitioners draw on ancient traditions and manipulate them for the twenty-first century’. In Joanne Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* (Bath: The Bath Press, 2002), p. 7.

⁴⁴ Pearson, *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ This would include, for instance, Wiccan ensembles or strongly organised societies such as Scientology, which clearly picture an approach to a strongly scientificised 21st century. The rituals which will be discussed here, fall far from these closed structures, and because of it New Age ideas become more relevant to their framing. See Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries*; Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel, *Nature Religion Today*; Barker, *New Religious Movements*; Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010).

⁴⁶ Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries*, p. 190.

On the other hand, the importance of the self is the main goal that New Age participants pursue in their rituals: a significant psycho-spiritual transformation.⁴⁷ New Age rituals seek to provoke changes in the way in which the individual imagines his or her own self and environment. They aim to provoke a ‘shift from our contaminated mode of being – what we are by virtue of socialization – to that realm which constitutes our authentic nature.’⁴⁸ For this purpose, the spirituality to which they appeal is seen as inherent to the individual in the first place.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, in their conception of higher spiritual spheres accessible through the appropriate methods and guidance, the idea of the supernatural is not explicitly considered in most cases.⁵⁰ Rather, most New Age theoretical frames rely on a scientific approach to the mind and its expansion, to the possibilities of the human psyche and the findings of innovative science and technology with which they can corroborate their practices, as Rupert Till highlights:

In the main, Western cosmology is now largely governed by the religion-like dogmatism of science, which claims a monopoly on truth. Like a traditional religion, science often presents itself as absolutely authoritative. However, the more fundamental questions about the nature of the universe asked by science, the greater the amount revealed about the similarities between science and other religions or belief systems.⁵¹

Till argues that religion and science cannot be seen as opposed, but rather as belonging to a same plane from which they can borrow elements and complement each other, especially while interacting on the ritual arena. Because of this, some psychoanalytical theories of the unconscious became especially relevant in the dawn of the New Age. Such is the case with Jung, who worked on the psychoanalysis of religion more specifically,⁵² and who marked a departure for some included in this research.

⁴⁷ Roderick Main, ‘Religion Science and the New Age’, in Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries* (2002), p. 185.

⁴⁸ Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Hedges and Beckford, ‘Holism, Healing and the New Age’, in Sutcliffe and Bowman, *Beyond New Age* (2000), p. 191.

⁵⁰ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature’, in Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel, *Nature Religion Today*, pp. 24-25.

⁵¹ Till, *Pop Cult*, p. 187.

⁵² Carl Gustav Jung, *The collected works of C.G. Jung. Vol.11. Psychology and Religion: West and East* (Cornwall: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 509–26.

In his article 'Jung's Psychologising of Religion' (2000), Steven Sutcliffe states that those who think of Jung as the saviour of religion are actually misconceiving him, since his evaluation of religion is neither positive nor negative. It is true, however, that he signalled the dreams and the arts to be entrance points for the unconscious, which he 'prepared to propose as alternatives to religion.'⁵³ Jung also accentuated the relevance of the inner self, and introduced new secular myths such as flying saucers,⁵⁴ which have been embraced by New Age practitioners and new ritual conceivers ever since.⁵⁵

All these ideas point to the borrowed idea of 'healing,' used in many New Age practices, as understood in traditional contexts:

Healing the earth (that is, restoring it to its natural purity); healing the diseases of the capitalistic workplace (that is, restoring love and creativity to the world of business); healing the person (that is, moving beyond the ego to experience the wholeness that is our birthright); and healing disease (bodily disorders) and/or illness (described by McGuire as 'the way the ill person experiences his or her disorder, in a given social and cultural context'),⁵⁶

Although this topic can be rapidly associated with shamanic traditions, Wouter Hanegraaff links it to eighteenth-century theories with a naturalist nineteenth-century interpretation, together with the idea of spiritual advancement through consecutive lives, which appeals to traditions such as Buddhism or Hinduism.⁵⁷ That is, even if some of these New Age practices are influenced by the re-interpretation of foreign religious cosmoi, they also have clear features of the culture which first nurtured them. To achieve this level of influence on the body through spiritual means, New Age usually relies on what Heelas called 'unusual and/or powerful experiences',⁵⁸ in which the participants can make sense of their daily lives, and relate them to their immediate environment. This

⁵³ Steven Sutcliffe, 'Jung's Psychologising of Religion', in Sutcliffe and Bowman, *Beyond New Age*, p. 65.

⁵⁴ Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious; The Essential Jung*, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969)

⁵⁵ Sutcliffe, 'Jung's Psychologising of Religion', in Sutcliffe and Bowman, *Beyond New Age* (2000), pp. 74.75.

⁵⁶ Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 81.

⁵⁷ Hanegraaff, 'Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature', p. 25. In a similar vein, in *Dancing Prophets* and on a similar line, Steven Friedson points out how 'it is impossible to separate the phenomenal reality of music, trance, and healing in Africa into neatly defined categories of Western epistemological thought such as aesthetics, religion and medicine,' p. xii, thus giving a re-interpretation of parallel parameters as appropriate for their environment.

⁵⁸ Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 191.

experience, he continues, has to be interpreted as meaningful, and the individual has to attribute it to a spiritual realm of significance through which one can validate it.

This strategy has continued to be used in the construction of New Age rituals to the present day, although from an actualised perspective. While in the late 20th century New Age was embraced by a smaller section of the population, its popularity grew to become connected to more than just the counterculture: it transformed into an alternative way to treat moral and health issues, and it started to embrace mainstream capitalistic subjects, such as work and consumer attitudes.⁵⁹ Ryan Hibbett considers this evolution and proposes that one should see contemporary New Age from a ‘centuries-long dialectic – as a persevering attempt to recode existing bodies of knowledge, such as religion and science, in a language that better suits a given population’s needs — rather than as a movement simply originating in the 1970s and in the wake of 1960s counterculture.’⁶⁰ Hibbett also puts a focus on the categorisation of the music included under the label of New Age, while describing the association with the term as pejorative in the mainstream musical scene. He described how ‘it is popular to dislike new age, in good part because of the blurred line it draws between “genuine artistic production” and “mainstream commercialism”.’⁶¹ However, its wide range of influences, from rock and roll to ‘chill out’ or ‘mood music’, makes it difficult to establish a closed category and is beyond the discourse of these pages.⁶²

⁵⁹ See Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries*; Heelas, *The New Age Movement*.

⁶⁰ Hibbett, ‘The New Age Taboo’, p. 287.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 283-308.

⁶² In the following pages, I will not be focusing on labelling the music used in the rituals that I will describe as much as on its uses and main features, which are combined with non-ordinary states of consciousness to afford meaningful experiences. On the other hand, although the subject of music included under the New Age label can be useful to describe a specific approach to a mind-opened perception of the world in musical terms, other popular and commercial genres find their way into many ritual practices to build the experience for its participants, so recurring exclusively to the music described under the New Age category does not do justice to the wide range of sonic inputs used for the sake of the rituals themselves – which, furthermore, will not fit this accurately under the ‘New Age’ tag. Likewise, this range of influences might suggest that ‘new religions’ are a symptom of the postmodern condition. For more information see Flanagan and Jupp, ‘Postmodernity, Sociology and Religion’, pp. 70-73.

2.4. *Music and Ritual Practice in the New Age*

One distinctive approach toward music in New Age rituals is its healing and guiding attributes. Aldridge and Fachner, as well as Rouget, have shown how participative performances are common ways of interacting with a sonic input,⁶³ such as in dancing rituals. In this context, this is commonly born from the interaction between a ‘mother culture’ and other adjacent ones, taken from alien contexts.

Music’s malleability and potential for customization by its listeners makes it an appropriate tool to use in the self-centred environment described by New Age practices. The role of the healer is revoked from the conductor of the ritual and put back into the individual’s hands:⁶⁴ the participants are the only ones who can determine their own healing path and its effectivity. Any outside helpers, along with the music, are tools to ease the process of reaching spiritual transcendence.

The involvement of outside healers in these processes is not always so clear, however, and some creators or facilitators of New Age practices take an active part in the rituals until the participants can go through the suggested process by themselves. As Heelas points out, the authority of the attendees who take an active role in these rituals ‘derives from the assumption that those to be healed are unable – initially – to do any work. They are too locked into that mode of being which is generating their diseases, namely their egos.’⁶⁵ The figure of the guide or master becomes relevant in constructing the participants’ experience, as does the musical structure that this person conceives for the same purpose. Nevertheless, music still works as a reinforcement for the journey that the participant is going through, mirroring the process itself, while objectifying and making it tangible for the individual.⁶⁶

⁶³ David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006).

⁶⁴ Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, pp. 81-82.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁶⁶ As it happens in classic healing rituals, and as reported by Claude Lévi-Strauss ‘The Effectiveness of Symbols’, in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1963), pp. 186-205, the healer – or here, the music, which has a main role in the healing – extracts an object towards which the sick person can focus, objectifying the problem and making it tangible for the individual. In his work, Lévi-Strauss describes how a sorcerer shows a bloody worm, made from different materials, to the person he is healing as a symbolic representation of the illness that he has removed from the body, allowing the patient to objectify it and efficiently place it as the source of one’s harm. Here music serves as a symbolic explanation of the healing process, which parallels the physical and psychological process of the

The healing process, which can have different foci, is usually structured around a spiritual level.⁶⁷ Because of this, non-ordinary shifts of consciousness play a fundamental role: they put the individual closer to the transcendental shift; they allow the participants to access a more powerful realm to heal themselves; and music acts as a potent trigger to induce and maintain such shifts of consciousness, referring to the ineffable dimension of reality.⁶⁸ Scott Hutson, for instance, introduced the rave phenomenon to exist around these boundaries, when considering it ‘comparable both to shamanic, ecstatic healing documented in ethnographies of small-scale non-western societies, and to spiritual experiences in modern western subcultures,’⁶⁹ as it includes a musical focus and a ritual-leading figure.

Talking about the figure of the shaman and shamanism itself becomes, here, unavoidable. Although it must be read as a form of behaviour rather than as a self-awarded label,⁷⁰ the idea of Rousseau’s ‘good savage’⁷¹ has been influential in the imagined construct of this figure, as Ronald Hutton describes:

Shamanism is viewed by many as humanity’s earliest and primordial religion.... ‘Shamanism’ is a term used to describe a particular form of behaviour associated with altered states of consciousness (ASC) and trance.... Since the 1960s and 1970s there has been a great deal of interest in shamanism in the west due to the drug counterculture. In its western form, shamanism has been interpreted broadly to mean any magico-religious practice involving trance or altered states of consciousness.... Shamanism is seen to be a

participant. It is, therefore, symbolically efficient as an object on which to place a non-tangible experience.

⁶⁷ Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, pp. 81-82.

⁶⁸ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*; and others.

⁶⁹ Scott Hutson, ‘The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73 (2000), pp. 35–49.

⁷⁰ Laura Romero, *Chamanismo y curanderismo: Nuevas perspectivas* (Puebla, México: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2011); refers to this issue when conceiving the problem of conceptualisation behind the shaman, by which ‘the codes of interpretation do not confirm the break between categories such as nature-culture, but rather the constitution of cultural codes underlying all thinking logic.’, p. 44. My translation. In relation to Claude Lévi-Strauss, ‘Magic and Religion’, in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1963), pp. 167–242.

⁷¹ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discurso sobre el origen y los fundamentos de la desigualdad entre los hombres* (Barcelona: Península, 1970).

more authentic and original source of spirituality, uncorrupted by religious institution, dogma and power relationships.⁷²

Mircea Eliade suggested a classical paradigm that has been addressed by other scholars, which establishes the healing powers of the shaman as brought from other planes of existence.⁷³ The figure of the shaman can ascend or descend other planes, usually through the entrance into non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, and there receive the appropriate resources to heal, by the hand of powerful spirits and similar sources. The role of music in the interactions with this figure was best described by Gilbert Rouget, when referring to the producers and inducers of such shifts, as possessive or shamanic.⁷⁴

In his work, Rouget determined that ‘the possessed person is never the musician of one’s own trance; the shaman always is.’⁷⁵ The possessed person is usually the receiver of the musical input, while the shaman is the producer, who may not use the musical production to enter the shift himself every time. In today’s rituals, as in the three case studies considered here, in most instances it is neither the facilitator nor the participant who produces the music. Rather, there are external musicians who take this role, or technological equipment in their substitution. According to Rouget, any external musicians introduced in the ritual arena will not enter the non-ordinary shift either.⁷⁶ It is the guide or organiser who is in control of the musical input, the one to decide the musical development of the activity – its beginning, end, and who has access to its alteration. Because of this, and together with the idea of healing, the organiser can be seen as embodying the shamanistic role as a neo-shamanic figure, which induces the non-ordinary shifts for the participants, while controlling the musical input and staying in the position of ‘the experienced healer.’

Finally, this healing role is not to be confused with music-therapeutical practices. The rituals to which this research refers are constructed around and towards a sacred cosmos, which are related to a spiritual realm, in the frame of a scientific validation discourse. The

⁷² Ronald Hutton, ‘The Discovery of the Modern Goddess’, in Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel, *Nature Religion Today* (1998), pp. 103-104.

⁷³ Mircea Eliade. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004); Romero, *Chamanismo y curanderismo*; Rouget, *Music and Trance*; and others.

⁷⁴ See Rouget, *Music and Trance*.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷⁶ *Idem of ibid.*, p. 113.

case studies outlined here focus on the self, and on the individual as one's own healer, while in music therapy the therapist is in charge of the session and of great part of the individual's development from a medical perspective. The aims and uses of music in each case are different: in the music-structured rituals explored here, sound works as a guide for the participant, and as a mirror of their own psychophysiological processes, while in music therapy it is used to help develop or improve specific behaviours, psychological, and physical problems.⁷⁷ Therefore, although both disciplines are focused on improving their participants' conditions, their foundations change their ultimate composition.

Furthermore, in the road towards this inner transformation, one's affective development, articulation of affect through music, and understanding of that relationship, is fundamental, and therefore worthy of a closer approach.

⁷⁷ See Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*; Susan Hallam, Ian Cross, and Michael Taut, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

3. The Role of Affect in Music-Guided Rituals

In rituals that approach higher dimensions of reality via non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, the link between affect, religious focus, and music becomes central.¹ Therefore, the spiritual and transcendental experiences that these rituals enable their participants to reach depends on the capacity of the ritual to successfully induce the participants' affective response. These participants then must understand the cultural construction of the ritual's musical system, and be able to approach the common spiritual focus that is set for them.

In this chapter, I explore the role that affect has in defining a path for its listeners, and highlight its relevance in the ritual contexts that will be outlined in the chapters that follow.

3.1. *Understanding Affect Through Culture and the Body*

The affective affordances of music and the multiple ways to approach affect and express it through it are not new ideas.² Although affect and emotionality begin in our biology, the affective formation process cannot be detached from the cultural configuration that shapes it.³ In the end, one must remember that sound is a direct consequence of motion,

¹Judith Becker, 'Exploring the Habitus of Listening: Anthropological Perspectives', in Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 127-157.

²Ibid.; Ruth Herbert, in *Everyday Music Listening: Absorption, Dissociation and Trancing* (London and New York: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), also highlights that 'for thousands of years music has so often been present in situations of automatic task completion that it is clear that it affects the experience in various ways,' p. 73. See Magda Polo i Pujadas and Jaume Radigales, *La estética de la música* (Barcelona: Editorial UOC, 2008); Enrico Fubini, *La estética musical desde la antigüedad hasta el siglo XX* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005); Peter J. Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *Historia de la música occidental* (Madrid: Alianza Música, 2006).

³Judith Becker, 'Music and Trance', *Leonardo Music Journal*, 4 (1994), pp. 41-51, following the theoretical frame established by Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1987), relies on the theory of neuronal grouping to explain how the emotional background related to music listening is built, and later related to the cultural environment that shapes it. According to this theory, 'it is not individual neurons that determine thought and behavior, but rather neuronal groupings and groups of groupings

and that the production of music requires the implication of the body, in the first instance.⁴

Antonio Damasio refers to this double construction from body and culture in his work, when he notes that ‘emotions are complicated collections of chemical and neural responses, forming a pattern,’ but also that ‘learning and culture alter the expression of emotions and give emotions new meanings.’⁵ Although the basis for affective responses is built in the brain as a common trait among all humans, one’s interpretation of the outside world and culture are essential factors in its composition.⁶ These processes become clearer if one approaches a specific topic, such as music: although our brain is pre-programmed to have certain affective reactions depending on chemical and neuronal processes, as well as bodily reactions, one can only make a connection between a specific affective reaction and a musical input if one has learned to identify it as such.⁷

In the *Handbook of Music and Emotion* (2010), Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda suggest a definition for ‘emotion’ and other concepts (mood, feeling), and offer a complementary concept in the term ‘musical emotions’.⁸ Nevertheless, these terms are comprised under the bigger umbrella term ‘affect’, to denote an affective reaction that is highlighted through a shorter period of time. Affect, therefore, ‘is used as an umbrella term that covers all evaluative – or ‘valenced’ (positive/negative) – states (e.g. emotion, mood, preference). The term denotes such phenomena in general. If that is not intended a more precise term

called “maps”,’ which are located in specific areas on the brain and linked to past behavior. These maps are built from repeated behaviour or learning, and can stimulate other maps connected to them awakening memories or emotions,’ pp. 44-45.

⁴ Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening*, p. 63.

⁵ Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of a Consciousness* (London: William Heinemann, 2000), p. 51. He continues by stating that ‘All the devices can be engaged automatically, without conscious deliberation,’ and that ‘All emotions use the body as their theatre (...), but emotions also affect the mode of operation of numerous brain circuits: the variety of the emotional responses is responsible for profound changes in both the body landscape and the brain landscape,’ pp. 51-52. Therefore, the bodily reactions that are bounded to some chemical balances in the brain also contribute to the whole feeling of emotion.

⁶ See Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, ‘At the Interface Between the Inner and the Outer World: Psychological Perspectives’ in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 73-97.

⁷ Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁸ In their ‘Introduction: Aims, Organization, and Terminology’ in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion* (2010), pp. 3-12, Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda define these terms as follows: ‘Emotion: This term is used to refer to a quite brief but intense affective reaction, that usually involves a number of sub-components (...) that are more or less “synchronized”.’ / Musical emotions: This term is used for ‘emotions that were somehow induced by music,’ without any further implications about the precise nature of these emotions, p. 10.

(e.g. mood, emotion, preference) is used instead.⁹ Here, I will use the terminology as suggested by Juslin and Sloboda, and invoked by the other contributors to the volume.

Other authors in the *Handbook of Music and Emotion* introduce key concepts from complementary perspectives as well.¹⁰ Will Schrimshaw, for example, suggests ‘intensity’ as a characteristic of affect that can be traced in musical phenomena, since ‘intensive quantity refers to the magnitudes constituting the affect’s own “internal” composition: degrees of phase, bandwidths and magnitudes of frequencies.’¹¹ Becker focuses on arousal to explain the entrance in an affective shift of consciousness, as it induces increased heart rates, pulse, breathing and other bodily reactions, although she differentiates between physiological arousal and ‘the more cognitive concept of “feeling”.’¹² But it was Leonard B. Meyer who originally opened the subject to further discussion, by suggesting that emotions in music are provoked by unresolved stimuli: when the individual receives a sonic stimulus but is not able to respond to it, it becomes an emotion, as in opposition to a total resolution of tensions.¹³ Although his thesis has several faults, beginning with the interpretation of the musical reaction from an ethnocentric point of view based only on music analysis, Meyer’s work was pioneering and inspired further musicological research.¹⁴ In more recent years, DeNora and others have highlighted the relevance of interdisciplinary knowledge in the reading of musical phenomena, acknowledging the gap between semiotic and reflective interpretations of music, and the need for both observational and participative perspectives.¹⁵

The dialogue on neurological functioning and musical response has led to more refined classifications, and to further interpretations related to the origin of emotion or affect.¹⁶

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Susan Hallam, Ian Cross, and Michael Taut, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*.

¹¹ Will Schrimshaw, ‘Non-cochlear sound: On affect and exteriority’, in Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle, *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), p. 35.

¹² Becker, ‘Exploring the Habitus of Listening: Anthropological Perspectives’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 127-157.

¹³ Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (London: Chicago University Press, 1956).

¹⁴ See David Huron and Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, ‘Music Expectancy and Thrills’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 584-586.

¹⁵ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*.

¹⁶ Mark Reybrouk and Tuomas Eerola, ‘Music and Its Inductive Power: A Psychobiological and Evolutionary Approach to Musical Emotions’, 8 (2017), pp. 1–14. The authors emphasise the relevance

For instance, a common categorisation of emotion has been described in terms of primary or basic emotion (happiness, anger, sadness, fear, and disgust) and secondary or complex emotion (envy, solace, humility, and others), the latter being more difficult to approach through musical means because of its specificity.¹⁷

Both musically-induced emotions and aesthetic emotions have also been attributed additional categories, depending on how they are communicated to the individual.¹⁸ Peter Kivy and Donald A. Hodges differentiate between cognitivist and emotive positions,¹⁹ or between perceived expressions of emotion and felt emotion; between what is *recognised* as an emotion outside the body, and a *lived* emotion. Although both forms of understanding are mainly culturally disposed, the use of the term ‘affect’ unites these more isolated experiences, which are defined through a shorter span of time, and compress them under a wider affective reaction, with variable affordances, as induced by the specific ritual scenarios discussed here.

To corroborate some of these theoretical assumptions, other scholars have tested different devices to weigh the bodily reactions of the individuals, from skin conductance to heart rate, which can be used to complement score or structural analytical procedures, such as analysis of intervals, mode, rhythm or tempo, in a fashion closer to Meyer’s.²⁰ However, self-report methods seem to be more popular,²¹ although they are frequently linked to

of the amygdala in the transmission of emotional stimuli, and on music referring to this specific area in the production of affective response, both long and short term.

¹⁷ Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Isabelle Peretz, ‘Towards a Neurobiology of Musical Emotions’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 99-126; Marcel Zentner and Tuomas Eerola, ‘Self-Report Measures and Models’, *ibid.*, pp. 187-221; and others in the same volume. These emotions, at the same time, can be placed in a double-axis scheme depending on their *positive* or *negative affectivity*, in the circumplex model, as described by Sloboda and Juslin in ‘At the Interface Between the Inner and the Outer World’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 73-97.

¹⁸ Becker, *Deep Listeners*, p. 52.

¹⁹ Peter Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Donald A. Hodges, ‘Psychophysiological Measures’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 279-311.

²⁰ Alf Gabrielsson and Erik Lindström, ‘The Role of Structure in the Musical Expression of Emotions’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 367-400. The authors establish a long sub-division of structural and musical factors and provide a summary of results from reviewed studies. However, they conclude that the context where the individual is placed is the ultimate key factor in defining one’s consequent reactions; and they invite further research beyond classical music, to which much of this research is restricted.

²¹ Marcel Zentner and Tomas Eerola, ‘Self-Report Measures and Models’, pp. 187-221, and Emery Schubert, ‘Continuous Self-Report Methods’, pp. 223-253, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*.

strong subjectivity.²² Nevertheless, these tools make a notable step towards the understanding of the mechanisms behind affection and emotion triggering, from which musicology can benefit.

Some of these techniques have already been introduced into music research,²³ since they offer a great addition to the reports outlined in the field. However, it is observation which most clearly describes the cultural elements involved in the reactions that the listeners embody, when talking about intense affective development in ritual environments. The context in which these develop is as important as the preparation made to ensure an according affective reaction, since much of the unfolding of the participant's behaviour is linked to the effect of the direct environment. Therefore, the case studies that follow will focus on field participant-observation, while keeping in mind the possibilities of further technology-based techniques for the measurement of the musically afforded behaviours.

3.2. *Entraining to Music, Elucidating Affect*

Following this line of research, scholars such as Martin Clayton have established a correlation between between body, culture, and sound, in terms of musical entrainment,²⁴ in that 'musical manifestations of entrainment rely upon highly specific forms of training and enculturation.'²⁵ That is, a person's ability to respond to rhythmic regularities is at once cultural and biological – as the ability of humans to respond to rhythmic regularities is also built from a cultural perspective.

Clayton describes various levels at which entrainment can be manifested: (1) intra-individual, where 'the ability to discriminate and identify particular metrical patterns in

²² Daniel Vätstfjäll, 'Indirect Perceptual, Cognitive, and Behavioural Measures', *ibid*, pp. 256-277.

²³ Judith Becker, 'Ethnomusicology and Empiricism in the Twenty-First Century', *Ethnomusicology*, 53 (2009), pp. 478–501.

²⁴ Clayton describes 'entrainment' as 'the process by which independent rhythmical systems interact with each other. "Independent rhythmical systems" can be of many types: what they have in common is some form of oscillatory activity (...); they must be independent in the sense of 'self-sustaining' (...) Entrainment can be symmetrical (...) or asymmetrical (...). In the case of music it can be either: symmetrical in an ensemble made up of peers, asymmetrical when people play or dance along with pre-recorded music they cannot influence.' In Martin Clayton, 'What Is Entrainment? Definition and Applications in Musical Research', *Empirical Musicology Review*, 7 (2012), p. 59.

²⁵ Martin Clayton, 'Introduction', in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, p. 12.

music²⁶ shows at the individual level; (2) inter-individual, where various individuals show movement coordination on the different body parts; and (3) inter-group, where shared tempo, ritual relationship, and attention paid to surrounding groups, are taken into account.²⁷ As noted above, these rely on enculturation and learned behaviour at each particular level, and are related to the ability to perform certain movements under specific rhythmic patterns, which may be shared within a group or multi-group environment, as in the case of dancing. The intra-individual level of entrainment, which concerns this thesis more specifically, has been highlighted to work towards a cohesive and affective dimension, afforded by music at both the physical and cultural levels.²⁸

Furthermore, Wiebke Trost, Carolina Labbé, and Didier Grandjean suggest several categories to discuss the development of such affective responses – perceptual, autonomic physiological, motor and social.²⁹ Here affective responses can allude to different dimensions that conform each individual as a separate entity.³⁰ In a similar vein is the discussion around synchronicity in music—the relation of the body and rhythm, for the improvement of performance and sociability within sports environments. Synchronicity is defined as coordinated bodily movements occurring simultaneously with a perceived rhythmical pattern, or as Costas Karageorghis and Leighton Jones put it, ‘a form of auditory-motor synchronization in which the actor (e.g., the athlete or dancer) and the auditory stimuli are “oscillators” which generate their own rhythms.’³¹ By contrast, asynchronicity refers to the presence of a rhythmical pattern that is not being followed in the performance of bodily movements.

²⁶ Martin Clayton, ‘Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction’, in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, p. 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-21.

²⁸ Wiebke J Trost, Carolina Labbé, and Didier Grandjean, ‘Rhythmic Entrainment as a Musical Affect Induction Mechanism’, 96 (2017), pp. 96–110; Carolina Labbé and Didier Grandjean, ‘Musical Emotions Predicted by Feelings of Entrainment’, *Music Perception*, 32 (2014), pp. 170–85; Patrik Vuilleumier and Wiebke Trost, ‘Music and Emotions: From Enchantment to Entrainment’, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1337 (2015), pp. 212–22.

²⁹ Trost, Labbé and Grandjean, ‘Rhythmic Entrainment as a Musical Affect Induction Mechanism’. Perceptual entrainment makes reference to the auditory process of recognising the beat within a rhythm; autonomic physiological entrainment is ‘the tendency for biological rhythm’; motor entrainment refers to the capacity to adapt bodily to a rhythm; and social entrainment ‘can emerge when listening to or making music together in a group,’ pp. 98-103.

³⁰ See Chapter 1, p. 56. Rouget, Music and Trance; Becker, Deep Listeners. This is echoed in my discussion in Chapter 1 of the affordance of non-ordinary states of consciousness by the disturbance of the inner ear.

³¹ Costas I Karageorghis, D L Priest, L S Williams et al., ‘Ergogenic and Psychological Effects of Synchronous Music during Circuit-Type Exercise’, *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 11 (2010), p. 552.

Karageorghis and Leighton Jones have studied the implications of diverse rhythms and musical genres on physical development to assess the improvement of physical performance and metabolic cost, contraposing synchronous and asynchronous movements to bodily exercises.³² In light of their results, the possibilities of measuring elements such as the coordination of ritual participants to the musical input that they are afforded opens further levels of meaning when applied to the case studies included here.³³

For the elucidation of affect, studies in synchronicity show that there is not a strict connection between body movement and the presence of synchronized music in the affordance of specific affective states.³⁴ However, Oliver Grewe and colleagues conclude that:

An orienting reflex would not be an emotion, but it could be a starting point for an affective evaluation process and a precondition for an emotion. Initiated by an orienting reflex, a listener experienced in a certain style of music may thereby react in an affective and even emotional way to music of the well-known style. But this rather “emphatic” reaction seems to be based on individual experiences and associations. We can be moved and motivated by music, but our “free will” and former experiences remain active components in our reactions.³⁵

With this, we return to the shared experience introduced by body and culture in the construction of affective responses, and the role of entrainment at both levels to afford the entrance into what may be perceived by ritual participants as non-ordinary states. Likewise, this assessment moves the argument close to what Rouget argued as the inexistence of specific music to elucidate specific states, and establishes a point of reference to read the case studies discussed in the following chapters.

³² Ibid., Costas I Karageorghis, and Leighton Jones, ‘On the Stability and Relevance of the Exercise Heart Rate and Music-Tempo Preference Relationship’, *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 15 (2014), pp. 299–310.

³³ Mind that my participation in the field was limited by the impediment of bringing any kind of materials into the ritual arena, which make me only able to rely on observation and memory, and thus unable to formulate specific conclusions in this regard.

³⁴ Oliver Grewe, Frederik Nagel, Reinhard Kopiez, and Eckart Altenmu, ‘Emotions Over Time: Synchronicity and Development of Subjective, Physiological, and Facial Affective Reactions to Music’, *Emotion*, 7 (2007), pp. 774–88; *ibid.*

³⁵ Grewe, Nagel, Kopiez and Altenmu, ‘Emotions Over Time’, p. 788.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Clayton's argument in favour of measuring entrainment purely from an observational standpoint could be misleading, since 'the danger in doing away with the mathematics altogether is that we are left with a metaphorical explanation for all social coordination that is shorn of the detailed scientific model of coupling and self-organisation.'³⁶ Because of this, he argues for 'a conceptually simple but mathematically precise, generalisable and non-domain specific model of dynamic interaction,' which falls outside the scope of this thesis. The pages that follow will leave the door open to future quantitative research, and describe the events that unfolded within the described rituals on the basis of qualitative participant-observation.

3.3. *Music, Meaning, and the Construction of Affect*

Music's affective function was highlighted by Alan Merriam as fundamental in the social experience that it affords for the individual. In the same line, authors such as Juslin and Sloboda have described how 'under certain circumstances, music-induced emotions may have profound, even life-changing behavioural consequences.'³⁷ Understanding how we experience music and read it through cultural and physical means therefore becomes essential in the analysis of ritual manifestations.

Since music is non-representational, non-artefactual and allogenic,³⁸ it is strictly linked to the society that conceived it. Music is embedded in the social forms that give birth to and mediate it; the constructions elaborated from this perspective can change through time, however, to acquire other meanings and interpretations. Most scholars agree that music can only represent thought, or mimic it in accordance to the listener's associations, but not reproduce affect as such.³⁹ DeNora considers this contextualisation process to be a way of objectifying affect and putting it into an observable, if virtual, form, shaped as imagined by its conceiver:

³⁶ Clayton, 'Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction', p. 11.

³⁷ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964): Juslin and Sloboda, 'At the Interface Between the Inner and the Outer World', pp. 86.

³⁸ Georgina Born, 'Music and the Materialization of Identities', *Journal of Material Culture* (2011), p. 387.

³⁹ Ian Cross, 'Music as a Biocultural Phenomenon', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 2003, pp. 106–111; Malcom Budd, *Music and the Emotions* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

Music gives respondents a medium in which to work through moods. It provides a way of transferring their means of expression from the ‘real’, physical realm . . . to the imagined, the virtual. Music thus provides a virtual reality within which respondents are able to express themselves in a (symbolically) violent manner, for example by choosing ‘aggressive’ or ‘anti-establishment’ music, or by playing music at full volume.⁴⁰

The Contour Theory, by contrast, considers ‘that [musical] pieces present emotion characteristics, rather than giving expression to occurring emotions, and they do so in virtue of resemblances between their own dynamic structures and behaviours or movements that, in humans, present emotion characteristics.’⁴¹ Aside from the cultural implications and the construction of meaning given by the individual, music resembles the inner expression of emotions, their dynamics, and thus it establishes a connection non-dependant on cultural meaning, but rather on attributes of appearance.

For my purposes here I see biology as setting the foundation for the creation of affect in music, but it is the shaping of such fundamentals that gives music its affective meaning, not vice versa.⁴² As Ian Cross suggests, this shaping relies on the cultural environment of the musical expression, not as a universal code:

Depending on the particular forms and situations in which music may be manifested for particular cultures, we would expect a greater or lesser likelihood that neurophysiological correlates of sonic pattern and of patterned movement are more or less likely to co-occur. Certainly, the notion of exploring music by examining the neurophysiological correlates of the acoustic signal that partially constitutes it must be recognized as severely culture specific and as likely to afford only partial access to an understanding of the neurophysiology of music.⁴³

Simon Frith also reinforces this idea by emphasising the fundamental cultural element that goes hand in hand with one’s biological trigger. He also criticises the idea that the

⁴⁰ DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, p. 65.

⁴¹ Stephen Davies, ‘Emotions Expressed and Aroused by Music: Philosophical Perspectives’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 15-43.

⁴² Becker, ‘Music and Trance’, *Leonardo Music Journal*.

⁴³ Cross, ‘Music as a Biocultural Phenomenon’, p. 109.

physical response we obtain when exposed to sound *is* itself the meaning we attribute to it. Because of the cultural specificity of music, we cannot directly attach a response to an input without the proper code to read it.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, what the listener gets depends in great measure on their own expectations, goals and preparation.⁴⁵ These parameters can alter or modify the experience for each individual, and change the elements on which one focuses. In the ritual contexts outlined here, these personal issues are usually diminished as much as possible, so the facilitators of the music can have control over the experiences of the participants, especially when involving non-ordinary shifts of consciousness. As a result, they assume that the meaning given to certain musical inputs is transversal among the participants of a single sociocultural context, and choose what to play accordingly. This is also reflected in the stylistic characteristics that can be observed alongside the musically-defined ritual structure, as they are subject to variability depending on both the personal preference of the facilitators and the nuances that the wider social context affords.⁴⁶

As Meyer highlighted, meaning is not a property of things and it does not lie in the stimulus alone: rather, the same stimulus may mean different things for different people, in different contexts.⁴⁷ With regard to music, the expression of some emotions may be understood intersubjectively in the same social context – for instance, a minor third might be associated with sadness, a major third with joy. As in the construction of the world around us, these associations between music and expression are socially acquired, depending on our basic social understanding of the world.

Another important, and mostly indirect, element which influences our perception of music in our daily environments, is what Anahid Kassabian labels ‘ubiquitous listening.’⁴⁸ With this term, she refers to the music in the background of daily situations and activities, which one hears but does not listen to. This way of listening, Kassabian argues, ‘still

⁴⁴ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁴⁵ Juslin and Sloboda, ‘At the Interface Between the Inner and the Outer World’.

⁴⁶ See chapters 6, 7 and 8 for stylistic and formal development of the selected rituals.

⁴⁷ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, p. 34.

⁴⁸ Anahid Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity* (London and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013).

produces *affective* responses, bodily events that ultimately lead in part to what we call emotion.⁴⁹ The information that we collect from ubiquitous listening, although unconscious, affects our later interpretations of the outside world and its soundscapes. This relates to the role of sound in ritual contexts, where a participant is led towards a transcendent objective conducted by affect. These parameters help to build the musical expression that accompanies the ritual frames:⁵⁰ in ritual contexts, music is used to support an experience, to guide the listeners towards a specific shift of consciousness. Music is, in this sense, a central part of the spiritual experience, as it may be perceived by ritual participants, as and a powerful trigger for transcendental experiences.

3.4. *The Affective Music Experience*

As I have shown, affect involves the participation of both external and internal processes. These two parameters – culture and the body – will help build a complete experience for the listener.

The affective value of a piece of music is conditioned by the culture which gave it its significance; therefore, when one listens to a timbre, a cadence, or a specific song, it may bring back previous experiences and sensations of that element.⁵¹ Judith Becker refers to this way of understanding the musical input as a ‘habitus of listening,’ from Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus,’⁵² a tendency built from one’s own cultural experience. Becker proposes that it is ‘not a necessity nor a rule, but an inclination, a disposition to listen with a particular kind of focus, to expect to experience particular kinds of emotion, to move with certain stylized gestures, and to interpret the meaning of the sounds and one’s emotional responses to the musical event in somewhat (never totally) predictable ways.’⁵³ The cultural predisposition to behave and interact with affect or emotion in a

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. XI; Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening*.

⁵⁰ Joel Krueger, ‘The Extended Mind and Religious Cognition’, in Niki Clements, *Interdisciplinary Handbooks on Religion - Mental Religion: The Brain, Cognition, and Culture* (MacMillan, 2016).

⁵¹ Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*; Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*. This idea can be seen as a continuation of the ecological thesis presented by Clarke in *Ways of Listening* (2005).

⁵² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁵³ Becker, *Deep Listeners*, p. 71; Becker, ‘Exploring the Habitus of Listening: Anthropological Perspectives’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 127-157.

specific manner, instigated by a musical input, is also fundamental to the building of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, as it will determine behaviour in ritual processes that include music.

To be able to respond to such sonic inputs, the listener must be able to decode both the music itself and the proper cultural performance that it affords.⁵⁴ In this sense, some sounds that are technologically reproduced expand the possibilities of what music communicates to the listener:

Music played on electric instruments and/or recorded in a studio can be subjected to a staggering panoply of effects such as echo, reverb, tremolo, delay, flanging, panning, fading, compression, equalization, multi-tracking, overdubbing, and pitch and tempo control, and then played on a variety of sound systems including hand-held devices and computers, home stereos and public address systems, and/or terrestrial and satellite radio each of which can be heard in isolation through headphones or socially through loudspeakers. Each of these devices has a different social function, which mediates the experience of listening differently. Can we possibly imagine that such an array of alternatives would not affect our emotional state in different ways?⁵⁵

In new – or ‘evolved’ – ritual ensembles, as I will show in the following chapters, such technological tools have assumed a central role in the musical material inserted in the rituals, as they are symbolic of the context which formulates them. As a live musical input, they affect the bodily expression of the individual, and condition the response to the musical listening as related to similar, previously experienced, circumstances. Authors such as Rouget, or Merriam and Blacking before him, showed how music ‘speaks simultaneously to the head and the legs,’⁵⁶ and introduced the centrality of body expression in the constitution of affect, thus taking a step from the cultural to the physical

⁵⁴ Stephen Davies, ‘Emotions Expressed and Aroused by Music: Philosophical Perspectives’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 15-43.

⁵⁵ Reebee Garofalo, ‘Politics, Mediation, Social Context, and Public Use’, in Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, pp. 725-754.

⁵⁶ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 326; John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1973), Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*. Merriam specifically refers to music’s function of physical response, among nine other functions which can also be considered along these lines, such as the function of symbolic representation or the function of emotional expression, pp. 219-226.

dimension. Joel Krueger further relies on a whole-body explanation, presenting music as a ‘persistent environmental source of emotion-specific bio-regulatory feedback.’⁵⁷ Therefore, when we listen to music we structure and regulate our own affective experience.

By stimulating and directly modulating ‘particular neural and physiological responses, music functions as a real-time emotion regulator.’⁵⁸ Given the ways in which we construct our relations with music, and the cultural elements which make us relate to a musical input, a guide in a ritual practice can trace an approximate journey for the listener to follow. Ideally this will be relevant to the participant, once the process has been described and the sacred cosmos clearly established, as I will show in the following chapters. An example of how music is used in this sense is presented in Tia DeNora’s *Music in Everyday Life* (2010), in which she describes the development of an aerobics class: there are distinct music suggestions accompanying each phase of the exercise, with distinct features that echo the participants’ physical process and lead them through the exercise.⁵⁹ In this context, DeNora shows that music is used not only as a ‘backdrop to aerobic proceedings,’⁶⁰ but also as an expressly designed musical scaffolding device to organise the activity’s bodily structure. This offers insight into the ways in which musical structures work in ritual environments, and how they work through both the mind and body of the participants to successfully afford what they will be able to perceive as a transcendental journey. The shared experience of entering into a non-ordinary shift of consciousness, facilitated by the affective power afforded by music, affords a powerful means of individual and collective identification, which is fundamental to the three practices explored here. As such, the individuality and collectivity afforded by music will require closer attentio

⁵⁷ Krueger, ‘The Extended Mind and Religious Cognition’.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*. She defines the process depending on volume and beats per minute as follows: ‘For example, cassettes entitled ‘Motivation’, which are designed for use in the warm-up, maintain a beats-per-minute rate of 130-8, while ‘Body Blitz’ or ‘Energy Workout’, with a bpm of 140-6, are employed during the core. Cool-down numbers tend to hover at around 130 bpm and are classified under the heading ‘Relaxation’,’ pp. 91-92. This three moments describe a tripartite form, which can be traced to the three phases of the ritual construction introduced by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner. See Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997).

⁶⁰ DeNora, *ibid.*, p. 92.

4. Ritual Bonds: Music in the Construction of Community and Identity

As I have shown, a ritual is a sum of its elements: it affords a moment in time that is suspended in a *before* and *after*, while also requiring formalisation, reiteration, and durability.¹ For a ritual to succeed and be sustained in time, it requires a binding factor: the affordance of a feeling of union through ritual means is fundamental to any individual's recurrent participation. Music acts as a cohesive element in multiple circumstances, establishing a common sacred cosmos on which participants can focus together.² But music must describe the journey that the participants are to follow, and appeal to their cultural knowledge, which will ground them within a common universe of meaning.

The feeling of community offers the participant a sense of pertinence, of identity, that is usually linked to religion, and which music reinforces through the experience of a common response.³ In this sense, the interpellated rituals adapt their environment to the end that they pursue: the successful guidance of the participant towards a meaningful journey. Their use of music and technological tools can be seen in a similar way to collective practices such as concerts or raves, in which music acts as a cohesive element.⁴ In these environments, the suggested sonic material helps bring the participants together not only under a shared experience, but also under a shared focus.

¹ Roy A Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Fontana Press, 1993); Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, 'Religion and Society', in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (New York and London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1965), pp. 175–202.

² Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964); Christopher Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ian Cross, 'Music as a Biocultural Phenomenon', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 2003, 106–11; David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006); Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); et al.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Scott R. Hutson, 'The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures', *Anthropological Quarterly* (2000), pp. 35-49; Martin Clayton, 'Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction', in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, pp. 1–25.

4.1. *Music, Community, and Affect*

Aldridge and Fachner described the feeling of unity that a community embraces as ‘different to the sensation of natural events through the senses of smell, sight, touch, taste and hearing,’¹ and attributed it to a shared perspective of the world, which is socially built and, therefore, socially relatable. However, the idea that the religious ensemble functions as a way of affording bonds between its participants is not new, and it highlights the ritual expression as an observable structure for the community to feel identified with.

Max Weber focused on the idea of the religious community, referring to congregations in the traditional religious sense within the frame of Protestantism, highlighting the importance of the ritual act together with the figure of the prophet – which in this case could be embodied by the creator of a ritual practice, or the DJ in a context of a night club or rave.² Victor Turner expanded on the idea of *communitas*, entering into specific forms of congregation and social bonding. He stated that the sense of community emerges where social structure lacks, an idea that can be linked to the emergence of new ritual expressions that reinforce an unstable sense of pertinence, such as the ones to be discussed here.³ He considered *communitas* to develop mainly on ritual liminal stages, ‘almost everywhere held to be sacred or “holy”, possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalised relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.’⁴ The sharing of a ritual journey unites those experiencing it in the moment of transition, which unfolds in a strong, common spiritual experience.⁵

¹ Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*, p. 57.

² Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1922); Hutson, ‘The Rave’.

³ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997), p. 126. He follows: ‘Undoubtedly, in large-scale complex societies, with a high degree of specialization and division of labour, and with many single-interest, associational ties and a general weakening of close corporate bonds, the situation is likely to be very different. In an effort to experience *communitas*, individuals will seek membership of would-be universal ideological movements, whose motto might well be Tom Paine’s “the world is my village”,’ p. 202. See Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (Toronto: Random House Canada Limited, 1973); Zygmund Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

⁴ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 128.

⁵ Steven Bruce, in *Religions in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) offered different perspective on this matter, that ‘the secondary benefits of religion are individualized and they have largely displaced the primary purpose [of religion]. Previously, one intended to worship God and accidentally maintained the cohesion of society. Now one pursues personal satisfaction and accidentally worships God,’ p. 132.

Turner further differentiated between existential or spontaneous *communitas*, which he associated with a ‘happening’ kind of action; normative *communitas*, which establish a common code to mobilise and organise resources in a long-term social system; and ideological *communitas*, which he described as ‘utopian models of societies based on existential *communitas*.’⁶ In the case of the practices to be addressed here, the third model best applies to their characteristics, since they do not present an extended, cross-social agreement for the organisation of society, but rather a more or less utopian view of the world. In any case, Turner’s distinctions must be seen as a non-closed categorisation for possible gatherings, which can evolve and incorporate new sub-elements as time goes by.⁷ Although Aldridge considered communal experiences beneficial for human social life and wellbeing, other authors have considered them unnecessary for the daily unfolding of life, akin to modern market strategies.⁸ From Aldridge’s perspective, community provides the significance of the world that lacks in New Age groups’ surrounding social structures, or what Turner called ideological *communitas*. Thus, in a changing social environment where traditional religion no longer affords an identifiable structure of support for the individuals, other formations come into place to re-identify them. Whether a market perspective enters the equation is a matter for future discussion.

With the addition of music the significance of the communal gatherings strengthens, leading to relevant affective and self-identifying experiences.⁹ As Merriam suggests, within a social ensemble music acts as a solidarity mechanism that reminds people of their unity, while also affording the coordination their actions as, for example, in a ritual

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ As those defined by the sub-universes of meaning in Berger and Luckmann’s theoretical frame in *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966).

⁸ Jose Casanova, ‘Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: Towards a Global Perspective’, in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003). Casanova implies that the ‘secularisation of demand’ introduced by Steve Bruce imposes constraints on what he calls ‘supply-siders’, which work upon religious entrepreneurs in Europe, which introduce supernatural alternatives or compensators ‘for which there is apparently little religious need,’ p. 24. Some of the qualities attributed to religious manifestation by Aldridge point to sociological classic theory as regards the integration of the individual within a caring milieu: Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2002); the offering for an understanding of personal events, and others that go beyond the material world, Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1978); or the provision of symbolic universes of meaning to give significance to the world, Berger, *The Social Construction of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York, Penguin Books, 1967).

⁹ Becker, *Deep Listeners*; Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Georgina Born, ‘Music and the Materialization of Identities’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 16 (2011), 376–88; Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus*; DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*; Cross, ‘Music as a Biocultural Phenomenon’; and others.

environment.¹⁰ Although Merriam distinguishes the affordance of a community from music's other functions, such as affective unfoldment, some contemporary scholars have proposed a reading that merges both facets.¹¹ When DeNora and Partridge refer to music as a prosthetic technology,¹² they introduce the idea of affect to better understand the role music plays in the construction of social bonds in religious contexts. 'Group performances of sacred songs or hymns,' Partridge states, 'consolidate human communities into religious worlds of their own.'¹³ That is, in a religious context, music affords not only an intense individual experience, but also a collective reinforcement of a feeling of pertinence based on shared affect.

The idea of shared time is relevant in this context, since music's unfolding is what makes the creation of an affective link between listener and source, and between listeners, possible.¹⁴ DeNora explains:

Like the form of the novel, then, music can convey the mercurial dimension of emotional experience, the process of feeling. But unlike literature (though like theatre), music is a medium that unfolds across socially *shared* time. All actors involved in a particular music-producing and music-listening situation are involved for the same amount of time and are exposed to (or produce) the same 'parts' of music at the same time.¹⁵

The concept of the parallel experience is fundamental in today's ritual ensembles, since it is the aim of their music providers to afford a significant event for all attendees – an experience that can speak to one's individuality, and that is equally efficient for all listeners.

Krueger introduces a similar idea in referring to the synchronisation of moods through music.¹⁶ He describes rhythm, melody and pulse as the main organisers of the temporal

¹⁰ Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*, pp. 226-227. We can trace the idea of solidarity back to Émile Durkheim's concept of mechanic and organic solidarity, in his description of the organisation of society and the reciprocal relations between individuals.

¹¹ Ian Cross, 'Cognitive Science and the Cultural Nature of Music', *Topics in Cognitive Science* (2012), pp. 668–677.

¹² DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*.

¹³ Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus*, p. 195.

¹⁴ Tia DeNora, *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 83.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83. Her emphasis.

¹⁶ Joel Krueger, 'The Extended Mind and Religious Cognition', in *Religion: Mental Religion*, ed. by Niki

structure in religious events, since they condition the behaviour and coordination between participants, making it possible for them to act ‘as one.’¹⁷ This is particularly true in those situations involving bodily performances and interaction, which include an explicit need for other participants to carry out an action. On the other hand, in Georgina Born’s theory, the affordance of a feeling of community takes place in the transformation or interaction with pre-existing social formations, along with the mediating role of music.¹⁸ The musical input established in the practices in which a group of people comes together, reflects the common features of such participants and helps them see themselves reflected in one another, making possible the creation of a bond. Along the same line, Frith also notes that music ‘provides us with an intensely subjective sense of being sociable’, which is better consolidated throughout ritual means.¹⁹

In relating my fieldwork to the theoretical frames developed by these and other scholars, I aim to show the role of both musical and religious focus in affording exceptionally valuable experiences. In the ritual practices that I explore here, music helps reinforce the affordance of what Turner called ideological *communitas*, in the structuring of time and affect, connecting the individual to like-minded participants in a common vision of the world.

4.2. *Identity Formation and the Role of Music*

In a community, its participants create their identity based on shared values and visions of the world. Identity is afforded through social interactions, the environment where one

Kasumi Clements, McMillan I, 2016, pp. 237–54. Also see Harry B T Lim, Costas I Karageorghis, Lee M Romer, and Daniel T Bishop, ‘Psychophysiological Effects of Synchronous versus Asynchronous Music during Cycling’, *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* (2014), pp. 407–13; Carolina Labbé and Didier Grandjean, ‘Musical Emotions Predicted by Feelings of Entrainment’, *Music Perception*, 32 (2014), pp. 170–85.

¹⁷ Ibid.; Born, ‘Music and the Materialization of Identities’; Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Born, ‘Music and the Materialization of Identities’, p. 382. Born centres her argument in the discussion of genre and social identification, and highlights sub-culture issues that can only be partially described through the variety of New Age practices and its participants. Her thesis on the communal identification through musical terms cannot be applied to the case of new rituals as much as the uses of the same according to specific circumstances, which better reflect the nature of the New Age participants coming together.

¹⁹ Frith, *Performing Rites*, pp. 243-245.

is born and raised.²⁰ Sub-universes of meaning and practice help shape one's identity: shared history, religious affiliation, the love for a sport, or taste in music, are different ways of identifying with a group of individuals. However, and because of this, the individual cannot be understood in separation from society, as a self-identifying subject.

Cobussen approaches this idea from the biological creation of identity, stating 'that the image we gradually build of who we are physically and mentally, of where we fit socially, is based on autobiographical memory over the years of experience and is constantly subject to remodelling.'²¹ But despite the social elements that build it, identity can be outlined by its personal character and exclusivity:

Everything is what it is, the outside is out and the inside in. After all, that is how identity could be defined: the condition or fact that a thing is itself and not something else. Having an identity means being identical-to-onself by excluding from oneself everything other (than oneself). Identity is that which is different from difference.²²

Identity is therefore a subjective expression of one's interpretation of the outside world, constructed from a personal point of view, defined by society and one's own history. In Luckmann's terms, this would 'define personal identity as a universal form of individual religiosity,'²³ in an understanding of the world as an intersubjective agreement that can be read in religious terms. New Age and spiritual practices underline the significance of the individual mind, and work in its favour in this same sense. How we identify with a musical proposal will depend, in the end, on our interpretation of the world and intersubjective agreement about its construction.

In this context, music acts as a cohesive element that adapts and evolves with the social environment that produces it. This shows, for instance, in the creation of virtual communities or through individual music-listening technologies, in which one can build

²⁰ Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008); Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*; Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*. Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, pointed out that 'once crystallized, [identity] is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations.', p. 194.

²¹ Cobussen, *Thresholds*, pp. 223-224.

²² Cobussen, *Thresholds*, p. 32.

²³ Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 70.

an identity without necessarily interacting face-to-face with others, even if approaching the same ideas or musical materials.²⁴ However, it is the relation to music itself, and the individual's biography that relates to it, which makes one feel identified with a specific sonority, as Stone-Davies suggests when highlighting the relation between autobiographical self-making and musical self-making.²⁵ Similarly, Cross refers to the individuality of the listeners and to music's floating significance,²⁶ borrowing Lévi-Strauss term, since it brings together interpretations which do not require a linguistic agreement but a social one. The individual, in this sense, can give a specific significance to a communal proposal in relation to one's own biographical history.

Each interacting individual can thus interpret musical meanings more or less entirely idiosyncratically without necessarily coming into conflict with the interpretations of others, a situation that seems to stand in direct opposition to that manifested in language where most speech acts require a degree of consensual referentiality between participants in order to be interactively efficacious... Hence, music provides a minimally conflictual framework for ostensibly communicative interaction; its seemingly direct expression of meaning, together with the affiliative qualities that derive from its temporal regularity, affords participants the sense that their experiences are in alignment even while the meanings that each is attributing to a joint musical activity may diverge widely.²⁷

In a few words, music affords and maintains self-identity.²⁸ One finds in music an element of reference to define oneself, while the environment where it develops is related towards the same experience. As Cross highlights, 'music is bound to its contexts of occurrence in ways that enable it to derive meaning from, and interactively confer meaning on, the experiential contexts in which it occurs.'²⁹ Therefore, in the ritual context it is not only the identification with the other members of the community which construct one's identity, but also the ritual itself and its integrating elements, of which music is a fundamental part. In the case studies that follow, the introduction into the rituals of

²⁴ Ian Cross, "'Does Not Compute'?: Music as Real-Time Communicative Interaction', *AI and Society* (2013), pp. 415-430; DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*.

²⁵ Férida Stone-Davies, 'Music and World-Making: Hadyn's String Quartet in E-Flat Major', in Férida Stone-Davies, *Music and Transcendence* (London and New York: Ashgate, 2015).

²⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950).

²⁷ Cross, "'Does Not Compute'?: Music as Real-Time Communicative Interaction', p. 416.

²⁸ Heidi Partti and Sidsel Karlsen, 'Reconceptualising Musical Learning: New Media, Identity and Community in Music Education', *Music Education Research*, 12 (2010), 369–82.

²⁹ Cross, 'Music as a Biocultural Phenomenon', p. 108.

familiar repertoires affords a relation among the ritual participants, entraining them, while reflecting the participants' own affective responses and developments.

In the creation of a bond through music, and those who relate to the same sonic experience, a common organisation of time and thought occurs, and the event that is being collectively observed and participated in brings the listeners to act and react in consonance. And, more importantly, it does so 'without sacrificing their bounded personal identities,'³⁰ so each participant will have a self-identifying experience – to modify or maintain the own biography – while collectively relating to those surrounding them in the sharing of time, affect, and spiritual focus.

4.3. *Identity and Music Technology*

In the context of the 20th and 21st centuries, the ways in which music has begun to be introduced into ritual practices parallels the daily uses of the technologies employed in everyday music listening situations. The increasing uses of music through technological means are moved to the ritual arena and incorporated into the musical discourse presented there.³¹ This use mirrors the major context – the major universe of meaning – in which the participants exist outside of the ritual, making possible a process of identification that uses and understands music similarly in the ritual and in the 'outside world'.

Since music is introduced in favour of the affordance of identity and community feelings, some authors have pointed to a tendency towards increased individualisation, also represented by individualised systems of audio, and a modern discourse that appeals to the value of each person as a separate, unique entity.³² Portable music gives us access to different repertoires on demand, which stimulates and modulates 'emotion-specific neural

³⁰ Becker, *Deep Listeners*, p. 123.

³¹ Some authors such as David Aldridge, 'Religion: The Everyday Forms of Spiritual Life', in *Spirituality, Healing and Medicine: Return to Silence* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2000), and Berger, Berger and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, already followed and previewed the increasing introduction of technologically mediated music in daily and specialised environments.

³² Aldridge, 'Religion', p. 77; Berger, Berger and Kellner, *The Homeless Mind*, p. 80; Partti and Karlsen, 'Reconceptualising Musical Learning'.

and physiological responses' in which 'music functions as a real-time emotion regulator, coaxing emotions out of us and shaping their dynamics as they unfold in real time.'³³ In other words, music helps us modulate the environment as well as ourselves, in a mutual exchange.

Cross refers to this as an objectivation of music, which, when conceived as an object, can be manipulated, decomposed into smaller pieces or re-configured, contrary to what is usual in other cultural contexts.³⁴ He alludes to the use of music for its aesthetic pleasure and its affordance of bonding experiences; and to the reconfiguration of meaning in a technology-led space, which gives way to constantly moving exchange of possibilities. These tools can be adapted to music for ritual needs: with them, sound can be cut or extended *in situ*, manipulated with complementary effects, or mixed, contrasting with a traditional model in which live music is provided, and where there is less margin for restructuring sound on the go, and in relation to the reactions of the listeners.³⁵

The advantages which technological manipulation offers have also been revisited in music-therapeutic environments, where the effects on and consequences for the listener are strictly linked to the improvement of the participant's health. These uses have helped music therapists afford the appropriate backgrounds for their sessions, and to adapt each proposal to specific patients with specific issues.³⁶ Karen Burland and Wendy Magee refer to the construction of and connection to the listener's identity through musical means, which make sound more approachable for the patient. They show how music, as reproduced technologically, can appeal to a wide range of repertoires that cannot be introduced live, as well as to people of different ages and with different musical tastes and

³³ Joel Krueger, 'Musicing, Materiality, and the Emotional Niche', *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education*, 14 (2015), pp. 43–62. Eric Clarke and Ruth Herbert have also made contributions in this same direction, when considering technology-mediated musical inputs to be the constructors of the outside world as well of ourselves. Eric Clarke, 'Music perception and musical consciousness', in David Clarke, and Eric Clarke (eds.), *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological, and Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 193-213; Ruth Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening: Absorption, Dissociation and Trancing* (London and New York: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011).

³⁴ Cross, "Does Not Compute?".

³⁵ Reebee Garofalo, 'Politics, Mediation, Social Context, and Public Use', in Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 127-157.

³⁶ Aldridge and Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness*; Karen Burland and Wendy Magee, 'Developing Identities Using Music Technology in Therapeutic Settings', *Psychology of Music* (2012), pp. 177–189.

memories. Recorded music provides ‘access to therapy in ways not offered by methods involving traditional instruments’³⁷ by appealing to a wider repertoire and control over the sound. The same occurs in ritual contexts, although in such cases the focus relies on a group of people rather than on individual participants, who need to find their own path to heal their inner selves, *versus* the outside healing that music therapy provides. These groups must be addressed via their common cultural ground, compensating through group interaction anything less relatable at a personal level.

Burland and Magee follow by emphasising how technology is perceived as modern and relevant for the individuals in our daily environment, and how it is usual for them to seek technologically reproduced music to repair themselves.³⁸ This is directly related to the modern construction of the world and the departure from familiar elements to build one’s own reality, both in material and perceived spiritual realms: introducing technologically mediated music in ritual ensembles does nothing but make the whole proposal more approachable for those entering it from a similar universe of meaning, while extending the possibilities of the musical discourse itself. Furthermore, a new dialogue between sound and the body is afforded by manipulating music technologically, the rave being its most paradigmatic example.³⁹

Most raves’ general character and lack of focus on a common sacred background makes the use of the body freer than in other environments, in which pre-determined moves are established in relation to the sacredness of the ritual. Nevertheless, Graham St. John places the rave in a similar group of behaviour to some religiously constructed practices, in what he calls the ‘postmodern inertia’ of the late 20th century, interpreting it from a perspective of both individual liberation and mechanised alienation.⁴⁰ In his work, he considers the rave within Turner’s spontaneous *communitas* terms, even if they are born

³⁷ Burland and Magee, *ibid.*, p. 187.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188. DeNora, in *Music in Everyday Life*, makes the same argument when following the uses made out of technological media by the participants of her study.

³⁹ Hutton, ‘The Rave’; Johannes Eurich, ‘Sociological Aspects and Ritual Similarities in the Relationship between Pop Music and Religion’, *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 34 (2003), pp. 57–70; Graham St John, ‘Electronic Dance Music Culture and Religion: An Overview’, *Culture and Religion* (2006), pp. 1–25; et al.

⁴⁰ St John, ‘Electronic Dance Music Culture and Religion’. The author labels clubbing and the rave as *complementary* to what Heelas and Woodhead called spiritualities of life in their joint work. Thus, they consider the gap between spiritualities as described by a sacred cosmos, and as a postmodern attitude towards life.

from a mainstream common sub-universe of meaning. In their relation to a sacred cosmos raves afford an extended dialogue between the sacralised and secularised. This confrontation and ritual diversity exposes the changing face of religion and ritual practice in our everyday environments, which describes not only the affordances of music in new practices, but also their reception among their attendees.⁴¹

The new spiritual lifestyles, in St. John's terms,⁴² adapt music from both technological and scientific points of view, connecting with the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that specifically aim for the affordance of a feeling of transcendence. Today's spiritually-focused rituals use music to trace the path for their participants, maintaining their own idea of religion and whatever lies beyond materiality, as well as the affective development that music enables at the cultural and biological levels. If successful, the musical curve that these rituals describe will lead the individual towards the expected experience. Therefore various elements must be taken into account in the following case studies, from the conception of the world and the parameters that define it, through the construction of an affective background and a context of community identification, to the use of specific parameters in the transmission of the distinct and closely constructed processes. Nevertheless, depending on the nature of each ritual, these parameters will change in order to adapt to the tradition that preceded them, and the new tradition being forged.

⁴¹ See Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London: HMSO, 1989); Paul Heelas, *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, edited by Paul Heelas, David Martin, and Paul Morris (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998); Trude Fonneland, 'Spiritual Entrepreneurship in a Northern Landscape: Spirituality, Tourism and Politics', *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* (2012), pp. 11–27.

⁴² St John, 'Electronic Dance Music Culture and Religion: An Overview'; Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times*.

PART II
Case Studies

5. ‘Evolved’ Traditions and Music Expression: Three Case Studies

From the revised concept of religion to the role of affect in music, each of the terms defined so far plays a key role in the analysis of the practical cases at the core of this research: Guided Breathwork, Energy Centres Systems, and the Dance of the Vajra. These three practices share parallels in their development, musical structure, strong physical activity, and their context within a unique cosmos; yet are distinct in their relationships with pre-existing practices. In this chapter I explore the place of the scoped rituals within their everyday environment, from their participants perspective, and contrast them with the New Age label that they are often associated with. I offer a frame to encompass all three cases, built from specific traditions and literature, and highlight the most relevant elements that allow to define them as ‘evolved’ traditions.

5.1. *From the Chakras to the Dance Floor: Three Case Studies*

My choice of case studies derives from my experience in Guided Breathwork, which I first explored during my Master’s degree at the University of Barcelona.¹ It was clear during my initial research that there was much left to observe about the practice’s uses of music and its embeddedness in a re-formulated sacred cosmos. This led me to ask whether the musical strategy followed by Guided Breathwork could be applied to other cases, particularly those developed under similar parameters.

Despite certain similarities, all cases follow different approaches in their conception of the bodily exercises that they propose, their conceptual roots in existing traditions, and their ideas about non-ordinary shifts of consciousness. This unites them in musical and structural terms, but separates them in the specific sub-universes of meaning that they afford.

¹ Eulalia Febrer Coll, ‘Rituals sonors per a una nova espiritualitat: La respiració guiada en la conformació d’una perspectiva transcendent’ (Universitat de Barcelona, 2014). In translation: ‘Sonic Rituals for a New Spirituality: Guided Breathwork in the Conformation of Transcendental Perspectives’.

The three case studies can be summarised as follows:

1. **Guided Breathwork:** Consists of a hyperventilating exercise aimed for the entrance into a state of hypoxia and later apnoea, in which the participant is to realise the root of any existing personal issues, through the access to one’s unconscious.
2. **Energy Centres Systems:** Developed through movement, attached to specific parts of the body. In addressing focus areas on the participants’ physique, it aims to de-block existing personal issues and to facilitate an entrance into higher realms of consciousness.
3. **Dance of the Vajra:** Defined as meditation in movement, consists of a slow dance performed in a group. It aims for the realisation of one’s true state of the mind, as defined by Dzogchen teachings, rooted in Tibetan Buddhism.

Common characteristics are present, regarding the pursue of spiritual or transcendental realms. In all cases, there is a common aim: reaching higher or profound shifts of mind that are bound to the spiritual and the unconscious, with the help of music. The musical outline that structures them, and guides the participants towards the desired processes, show similar characteristics that will be worth highlighting. Their sonic designs differ in each case and adapt to the rituals’ unique needs, always as a complement to the physical process and a reflection of their background cosmology. All three cases use sound equipment and technology during their rituals, embedding them within the familiar Western musical context.² That is, they choose to reproduce their music rather than including live performers, and opt for a more flexible and controllable input for which they have direct power of choice, in terms of repertoire, volume and overall privacy.

Because the music is pre-recorded the repertoire and instruments for each practice are broad. In the case of Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems, this is especially relevant, in the sense that the musical processes that they afford can vary from session to

² Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ian Cross, ‘Music as a Biocultural Phenomenon’, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (2003), p. 106–11; Georgina Born, ‘Music and the Materialization of Identities’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 16 (2011), pp. 376–388; and others.

session, as they are based on character guidelines and not on a specific repertoire. For the Dance of the Vajra, on the other hand, there is a specific melodic line that must be followed, which can however be altered within the piece’s recording with the introduction of any instruments and sounds that the composer considers pertinent.

Regardless of their specific needs, rooted in different points of departure from diverse traditions, each ritual introduces music as the central element on which the exercises will be later built. Therefore, sound acts as a cohesive element that gives continuity to the three cases, while also highlighting their divergences. Music is used to fulfil an action, to afford a path towards different shifts of mind that must be approached both physically and sonically from different fronts, and as such depends on the very nature of the practices themselves:

1. Guided Breathwork searches for a more explosive entrance into a non-ordinary shift of mind, and as such the sonic signature curve³ that accompanies it reinforces the building up of an equally intense physical process.
2. Energy Centres Systems do not focus on such an explosion, but more on a building up towards a peak, to lead to spiritual realisation, accompanied by accumulating movement. Because of this, its accompanying music gradually rises and falls.
3. The Dance of the Vajra shows a calm, circular and reiterative focus, which is mirrored by the dance’s movement, which is to lead to a more steady, meditative shift of consciousness. As such, the accompanying music presents a more uniform stream.

Drawing on Rouget’s terms, this places these rituals on different points in the spectrum from a more traditional trance, to a meditative, calmer, non-ordinary shift – which better corresponds to Rouget’s description of ecstasy.⁴

³ ‘Sonic signature curve’ is used here as a metaphor to describe the musical attributes that afford the musical development within each ritual. It depicts the musical process described by the playlists that accompany each practice, as well as their strategic use of music to built up the intensity to afford the desired shift of consciousness, to be perceived for the ritual participants.

⁴ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). As highlighted on chapter 1, here I understand trance as a common denominator

When the same practices are contrasted with their originating traditions, we can see a different, equally pertinent, spectrum:

1. The Dance of the Vajra appears closest to the tradition from which it departs, due to the direct link of the practice to the cosmos established by its sole master in the West, who was raised within the environment of the root context itself. That is, the Dance is embedded within a series of ancient teachings from traditional Tibetan Buddhism, and conceived as a modern expression of the same.⁵
2. Guided Breathwork offers a middle point between a pre-existing tradition and more modern elements. It is informed by the strong influence of shamanic traditions researched and experienced by the practice’s creators, and the European and North American use of psychedelic substances in their corresponding therapeutic environments.⁶ Both schools of thought put a special focus on the ‘alteration’ of the mind in a premeditated and balanced environment, derived from the rituality of the Amazonian and Hindu practices.
3. The Energy Centres System goes through a similar strategy as Guided Breathwork, in that it drinks from two complementary streams, one being psychoanalytical Western theory and the other Yogic Eastern practice. Nevertheless, today’s expressions of the System have gone through a filter that, over the years, has refined its elements with an over-layering of the work of successive theorists. This has progressively distanced it from its original context, and moved it towards a co-created construction, that sporadically introduces the New Age within its terms.⁷

Despite their location on a wide ‘traditional to re-formulated’ scale, each practice’s conceptualisation is never arbitrary and is rooted within specific literature and instruction by their conceivers. This is one of the most relevant characteristics attributed to the rituals

for non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, from the description offered by Judith Becker in ‘Music and Trance’, *Leonardo Music Journal*, 4 (1994), pp. 41–51.

⁵ See chapter 8.

⁶ See chapter 6.

⁷ The presence of the term New Age is not understood as derogative in this case, and it has been used for the conceivers of the System themselves within their written work. See chapter 7.

by their practicants, who consider it to be what differentiates themselves from other practices which include what they perceive to be ‘a “pick-and-mix”, in which components from possibly diverse sources are put together by the individual to comprise a personally satisfying conglomeration which may be unique to them but also changeable at will’.⁸

Furthermore, this differentiation offers a conceptual issue that needs addressing to establish a middle ground that can successfully comprise all cases from both an inner and outer agreed perspective: where does the New Age end, and where do these practices begin?

5.2. *Traditions that ‘Evolved’: A Conceptual Crossroad*

My three case studies can be interpreted as presenting self-tailored sacred backgrounds, based on non-Western cosmoi, which might suggest they be labelled as ‘New Age’. I would argue that, from an emic perspective, their informed foundations and the contrast that they offer to other ‘shallow’, ‘less researched’ practices,⁹ necessitate a concept that suits them better.

Based on the discourse around New Age outlined in previous chapters, and with the addition of my fieldwork participants’ impressions of the topic, it is possible to distinguish between the cases comprised here and those practices collected under the umbrella label ‘New Age’. This is not to suggest, however, that the New Age movement did not prepare the field for a better adaptation and acceptance of alternative practices, from Christianity to what Rupert Till calls the ‘religion-like dogmatism of science’.¹⁰ The progressive integration of new ideas within the major universe of meaning in Western society has been a benefit of the affordance and maintenance of examples such as those discussed here.

⁸ Malcom Hamilton, ‘Analysis of the Festival for Mind-Body-Spirit, London’, in Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 193. Nevertheless, this idea could be considered debatable when taking in account the diverse elements that inform Guided Breathwork and the Dance of the Vajra, i.e. the influences brought from Yogic Eastern practice.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-195.

¹⁰ Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 187.

Thus, to establish a conceptual separation for my case studies, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of some complementary ideas regarding the term ‘New Age’. With reference to my cases, I will use the term ‘*evolved traditions*,¹¹ which I define as ‘practices rooted in pre-existing traditions that have been actualised or widened considering their original sacred cosmos.’ Further, I will consider the uses of music within both New Age and ‘evolved’ tradition contexts, and their points of agreement and diversion, in consideration of the opinions of those who embody the rituals here analysed.

If we concede, following Ryan Hibbett,¹² that New Age is actually rooted not only in external influence but also on naturalistic currents developed in the 19th century, then we may perceive slight differences in the origins of each category.¹³ That is, although both New Age and ‘evolved’ traditions rely on pre-existing cosmoi, the former are often seen as maintaining only a vague connection to the same, a validating strategy linked to ‘ancient wisdom’, rather than on specific characteristics or codes established by those older cosmoi, which ‘evolved’ traditions participants aim to leave behind:

We earlier noted that New Agers are averse to traditions, with their dogmas, doctrines and moralities. Yet New Age continually draw on traditions – shamanic or Buddhist. The solution to this seeming paradox lies with the fact that New Agers are perennialists.... The perennialized viewpoint involves going beyond traditions as normally conceived, going beyond differences to find – by ways of experience – the inner, esoteric core. This means that New Agers can ‘draw’ on traditions whilst bypassing their explicit authoritative doctrines, dogmas and moral codes.¹⁴

¹¹ This concept was negotiated with fieldwork participants and has not been not introduced to denote improvement, but rather consequence or development. Other possibilities such as ‘adaptation’ or ‘reformulation’ were not considered accurate by the participants or their description of the practices they were involved in. The term ‘evolved’ has therefore been placed in quotation marks, with the aim to encounter a point of agreement between field participants and academic description.

¹² Ryan Hibbett, ‘The New Age Taboo’, *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 22 (2010), pp. 283–308. The author states: ‘The term new age itself, however, appears to have emerged during the early nineteenth century, when declarations and prophesies of an age of heightened cultural and spiritual awareness appear,’ p. 284. See chapter 2.

¹³ Authenticity is rarely discussed as such within New Age, and nor within the cases that I will discuss here. New Age practices aim to bring scattered teachings under one roof, for the healing of the participant. If it is effective, it is valid, and as such its inherent authentic basis is often overlooked. Nevertheless, this is a topic that warrants further research. See Hibbett, ‘The New Age Taboo’; Scott R. Hutson, ‘The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73 (2000), pp. 35–49; Steven Sutcliffe, and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 26-27.

As Heelas notes, perennialism is one of the main attributes of New Age, in its intersection between existing traditions and the desire to go beyond them at an experiential level. Participants in ‘evolved’ traditions would argue that their reliance on pre-existing traditions is more specific, not from the standpoint that all religions are ‘the same core of absolute truth,’¹⁵ and that their added experiential dimensions come from the Western environment in which they were developed. In other words, participants in ‘evolved’ traditions move away from a consideration of religious pluralism, and rather stick to pre-existing traditions, delimiting their body of knowledge. Nevertheless, the blurred line between both ends could be extended into further philosophical discussion, as lines of work such as Transpersonal Psychology are frequently included within a perennialist frame. The aim of these pages is, however, to interpret the information afforded by the ritual participants themselves in favour of understanding their own take on the practices that they embody.

According to the ritual participants that I interviewed, New Age proposals are distant to their understanding of tradition, while ‘evolved’ traditions rely strongly on the context that gave birth to them, integrating specific teachings and techniques in their developments. This offers a greater stability to the practices that base themselves on a specific stream, and may offer them greater longevity.

You have to think that the Dance of the Vajra has always been there, there are lots of dances, even there are places that have them, but no one sees them because they are secret. But then again, it is what it is: a tradition. Therefore, it is an innovation within tradition, it is a novelty within tradition, but it is not New Age. What New Age means is a potpourri. When I think ‘New Age’, I think about Maria or Paquito, who lived in India for ten years, have come back, they are out of a job, and they make up something and sell it, but it is not necessarily anything worth it. It is not connected to anything, it does not have a transmission.... [The Dance of the Vajra] is a tradition, since there is a link that comes from its origins. (Interviewee #15, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

¹⁵ See Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946) Bennett Gilbert, ‘On Breaking Up Time, or, Perennialism as Philosophy of History’, *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, 12 (2018), pp. 5–26; Craig Martin, “‘Yes, ... but ...’: The Neo-Perennialists”, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 29 (2017), pp. 313–26.

As this participant highlighted, the not-compromising tendency of New Age is also emphasised by the eclectic nature of many practices placed under its label, which construct personalised exercises to suit specific sectors of the population on a non-continuous basis, while not making a distinct consideration of the root elements that they integrate. This tendency has been likewise noticed by scholars in the field, such as Joanne Pearson, Richard Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel:

Any formal assessment of the so-called ‘New Age movement’ must confront the extraordinarily eclectic, variable, flexible and diverse phenomena which have, over the last thirty years, been gradually drawn together under this heading. The undisputed diversity of New Age practices can be understood in terms of a vast array of characteristics, none of which applies universally except for, perhaps, the one unifying principle proposed by Paul Heelas: the ‘authority of the individual’.¹⁶

The reliance on the individual as self-healer is also present in ‘evolved’ traditions, especially in Guided Breathwork and the Energy Centres Systems. However, the healing that they propose rarely relies on the supernatural,¹⁷ but rather on a pseudo-scientific vision of the inner processes that one goes through while within the prescribed activities. This may also be observed in New Age rituals, as a strategy to locate them within a precise context complete with validating scientific tendencies. However, this approach falls short in the light of any thorough study of their scientific basis, particularly from the perspective of an ‘evolved’ tradition’s practicante.

In the end, the clearest characteristics of ‘evolved’ traditions centre on the desire of their facilitators to differentiate themselves from a label that has become mainstream, and the desire to provide a meaningful and sustainable environment for the individual. In 1996, Heelas wrote:

¹⁶ Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel, *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 45-46.

¹⁷ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumour of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1969); Steven Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); José Casanova, ‘Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: Towards a Global Perspective’, in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003).

Use of the term ‘New Age’ should not be taken to imply that all those discussed under the rubric are themselves happy with the expression. Many dislike the term, feeling that it has come to be associated with (supposedly) corrupted versions, such as those addressing materialistic prosperity. Others scorn the terms simply because they do not like being labelled. Such attitudes, though, do not mean that we are not entitled to employ the term to characterise what those concerned have in common, essentially questing within to effect change.¹⁸

This tendency has endured for more than two decades, even as it has been reformulated in recent years, keeping the sacred and the profane in a binary opposition, which is progressively blurring. Furthermore, the relation of these terms argues in favour of the mutation of the sacred,¹⁹ showing an evolving environment that adapts to its traditional predispositions from a re-formulation of reality. In it, the sacred is chosen and defined by the individual, and no longer given as immovable by a wider social context, which allows popular music a role that had been previously denied.

The contrasting concepts between the ‘evolved’ traditions and New Age categories may be outlined as follows, based on the inputs of participants and facilitators on the field:

<i>‘Evolved’ Traditions</i>	<i>New Age</i>
Acceptable label	Offensive label
Based on specific traditions and literature	Cul-de-sac for potpourri practices
Also considers ‘darkness’	Only considers ‘light’
Informed adaptation to the West	Arbitrary adaptation to the West
Specialists have developed it	Anyone can develop it
Requires practice	One session shows results
Healing specific issues consciously	Healing everything
Risk prevention	No risk prevention
No ‘exotic’ pretensions	Presented as an ‘exotic’ package
Collective side reinforced	Individuality reinforced

Table 1. Participant/facilitator perspectives on contrasts between ‘evolved’ traditions and New Age.

¹⁸ Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 17.

¹⁹ Andrés Canteras Murillo, ‘La muta religiosa’, in Eduardo Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso: Presencia de la religión y la religiosidad en las sociedades avanzadas*, ed. by Centro de estudios andaluces, Consejería de la Presidencia, Junta de Andalucía (Sevilla, 2007), p. 155.

Thus, from a practicante’s perspective, New Age practices show a less rigorous approach to the tradition on which they are based, or to the issues that they approach; rather, they only acknowledge the positive side that they have to offer, their ‘luminous’ side, while rejecting the negativity or darkness that is deemed necessary in ‘evolved’ traditions for a balanced development of the individual. That is, the pessimistic side of reality is also taken into consideration by participants in ‘evolved’ traditions’ and felt not to be relevant within New Age contexts.

I think that I am pre-New Age, but really maybe we are those who brought the New Age to develop. What happens is that New Age are the same elements, but not in depth, only on the surface.... Superficial, there is a positive message, it has positive connotations, it stays with the shallow and doesn’t go any deeper to what is really below, because there is light and darkness, not everything is ‘pretty flowers’. (Interviewees #23 and #24, participants in Energy Centres Systems).

Following this discourse, one must address the specialisation of the practices and their conceivers, regarding ‘evolved’ traditions. In opposition to those exercises comprised under the ‘New Age’ label, participants and facilitators believe that these rituals show an informed background, a precise healing focus, and a clear prevention of risks for the participants to enter their suggested non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, as will be shown through the following chapters.²⁰ This is seen, for instance, through the most convulsive non-ordinary shift included in the exercises of Holorrhenic Breathwork. As the practice’s creator Fericgla states:

People with reality distortions must not undertake a ‘music and unconsciousness’ session. Madness is frequent around meditation centres, raves, etc. It can produce musicogenic epilepsy (not very frequent but existent)... Another frequent danger is that of a psychotic crisis. Sometimes it is unknown by the own patient previous to its manifestation. Appears through uncontrolled euphoria in moments previous to the seizure. It can happen after a session.²¹

²⁰ For further detail, see the attached fieldwork diaries in Appendixes D to F.

²¹ Extract from fieldwork diary I, Appendix D, regarding Fericgla, *Seminario: Músicas e inconsciente*, p. 346.

With this, Fericgla aims to differentiate his practice from other ‘less rigorous’ ritual forms, in his inclusion of psychology-trained team members, for the assessment and supervision of their propositions. This also draws on the separation established between New Age and ‘evolved’ traditions in considering a hierarchy within the line of knowledge on the ritual arena, which can be argued to be less stratified from an emic perspective.

Lastly, the exotic note given to both New Age and ‘evolved’ traditions must be addressed. Although it is recognised primarily from outside observation in each case, the divergence is to be found in the formulation of the concept itself by each ritual. Exoticism is sometimes overlooked in New Age, while being reinforced from a marketing perspective. Within ‘evolved’ traditions, any alien elements are seen by the participants as carefully weighted and balanced with Western elements, and as such avoiding appropriation or a shallow use.²² The same tendency is shown through the sonic input that both currents include, since ‘evolved’ traditions base their music on a repertoire tailored for their environment, making use of the technological advantages at hand, where New Age is often seen by ‘evolved’ tradition participants as pushing the limit of cultural appropriation. Following from this, music can be said to act as a binding element for the composing elements in ‘evolved’ traditions, and a resource to consider in the building of the experience.

These issues, among further specificities regarding each case, will be addressed in the chapters that follow, in a reinforcement of the participants’ argument on their nature as a step removed from New Age, and one closer towards ‘evolved’ traditions.

5.3. *The Role of Music in ‘Evolved’ Traditions*

In each of the rituals considered here, music has a direct relation to the goals that are set and the background cosmos which comprises them. Each case study will therefore show a somehow different musical proposal, adapted to the specific needs of the practice.

²² For this matter, one must go back to the ideas of Orientalism and Occidentalism, as they are socially built concepts strongly attached to political and cultural endeavours, rather than on genuine Eastern tradition, as suggested by Edward W Said in *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2003).

As noted above, the strategy to gain entrance to a more physically-active shift, such as that described in Guided Breathwork, cannot be the same as the one used for a more relaxed exercise, as in the Dance of the Vajra,²³ since each has a distinct set of pre-established relations that dictate their socially and sonically-built environments.²⁴ In the end, the role of music in the construction of the ritual practices is not singular, but plural.

In its function as a guideline of the ensemble, music frames (1) the physical activity that is proposed, (2) the affectivity that is highlighted, and (3) the shifts of consciousness that are introduced and propelled by (1) and (2). These shifts are fundamental to the construction of what is to be perceived as a feeling of spirituality, and therefore must ideally adapt to the physical and affective characteristics that will help in the induction of such shifts, in accordance with their theoretical frame.

Furthermore, these characteristics relate directly to the collective element at the heart of all three cases, both from a physical perspective and an affective approach, in building toward the desired shifts of consciousness. Physically, music helps the groups’ entrainment in coordinating their movements or actions, and promotes cooperative contact among the participants,²⁵ which is fundamental to the success of the rituals. Affect-wise, music guides the reactions of the participants through its intersubjective meanings.²⁶ The context in which the practices take place is therefore essential, as the code for interpreting the sonic input may differ from one geographical location to another.

The sharing of the experience in a group makes the experience tangible and objectifiable from the observing participants’ standpoint. As theorists such as Rouget and Becker have

²³ See chapter 1.

²⁴ Clarke, *Ways of Listening*; Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1987); Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of a Consciousness* (London: William Heinemann, 2000); Becker, ‘Music and Trance’; Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); and others.

²⁵ Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Becker, *Deep Listeners*; Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Martin Clayton, and Laura Leante, ‘Embodiment in Music Performance’, in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, pp. 1–24. See chapter 4.

²⁶ See chapter 3. Patrick N. Juslin, and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening: Absorption, Dissociation and Trancing* (London and New York: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011); Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Clarke, *Ways of Listening*.

noted, trance states can be considered as a social expression and, as such, they are learned behaviours which appear or are triggered within the social environments in which they are validated.²⁷ Thus, the shifts of consciousness that are suggested in each case are to be experienced individually, even if collectively framed and reinforced.

The contrast of these music-coordinated elements to other practices under the New Age label is difficult to grasp, since the multiplicity of techniques that are included may vary depending on factors such as the traditions on which they are based, or the inclusion of recorded or live music. However, it is worth underlining that the use of music within the ‘evolved’ traditions considered here is, in broad terms, designed to follow specific characteristics rather than specific repertoires. That is, the processes are based on a variable repertoire, based on a pre-established pattern in each case, rather than an immovable set of pieces or a de-contextualised repertoire relocated to that ritual. This makes the tracing of specific stylistic considerations difficult, further from the general guidelines given in each case and selected for elucidating the non-ordinary shifts that are pursued. Thus, each case will show certain preferences in repertoire, in favour of affording the goals that they establish for their participants – i.e. Guided Breathwork will move away from jazz and minimalist genres to avoid moving the listeners away from the pre-drawn path, introduced by the facilitators.

Since the rituals’ engagement with preceding traditions is most often referential rather than a continuation *per se*, their Western formulations require a reassessment of some of their elements, including music. The pieces that are selected for the rituals rely on a Western-based system of meaning; not to exclude non-Western sonorities or instruments, as in the case of the Dance of the Vajra, but rather to re-frame them in the new universe of meaning in which they are placed. In the chapters that follow, I will describe the music for each practice in the context of their new function and in relation to their original sacred cosmos.

²⁷ Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Becker, *Deep Listeners*; David Aldridge, and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006). Due to the physical alteration that some of these practices present, the entrance into a non-ordinary state from an individual standpoint cannot be dismissed. However, the commonality of the rituals is essential, both through literature and the fieldwork undergone for the present research.

6. Case Study I: Guided Breathwork

The first time that I encountered what I have called an ‘evolved’ tradition was by chance, at the mountains of El Montenegro, in Catalonia. Using Guided Breathwork as my first case study here makes sense therefore, both chronologically and as a reflection of the process of thought that has followed my fieldwork.

I will use the term ‘Guided Breathwork’ to designate both the practices of Holorrhenic Breathwork and Holotropic Breathwork, which are the most representative schools that work towards the facilitation of a non-ordinary shifts of consciousness using an altered breathing technique and an evocative musical process. Although one can find similar systems in smaller schools from a basic online keyword search for ‘shamanic breathing,’ these two examples represent the best-formed, most clearly structured and researched rituals within the breathworking panorama to be based on a sonic input.¹

In terms of the phases of their overall rituals, the musical processes that they incorporate, or the shifts of consciousness that they introduce, both schools operate very similarly. However, they also display some major differences, beginning with the specific background cosmoi from which they depart, and the hierarchy that they create within their respective communities. Because of this, it will be worth considering their theoretical frames and uses of music separately, to better understand their respective foundations and aims.

¹ Rebirthing is another well-known breathwork technique that has had international resonance and that also works through hyperventilation, and towards similar goals. However, it does not use music during its development, nor any other sonic materials. See Leonard Orr, ‘What Is Rebirthing Breathwork?’, *Rebirthing Breathwork International*, 2017.
<<https://rebirthingbreathwork.com/2013/03/13/what-is-rebirthing-breathwork/>> [accessed 30 December 2017].

6.1. *An Introduction to Guided Breathwork*

Guided Breathwork emerged in the last decades of the 20th century as a technique for self-exploration and auto-therapy [treatment applied to oneself for healing purposes], which aimed to improve the quality of life of those willing to explore deeper dimensions of the self in a non-traditional environment. As noted, it is built on two main elements: altered breathing, faster and deeper than usual; and an evocative musical process, which makes the participant relate to specific situations or emotions. Through these, the participants are to reach a non-ordinary shift of consciousness that will allow them to heal from the inside, departing from the unconscious and one's intrinsic inner healing potential.² That is, the altered breathing will conduct the breather to a state of hypoxia and resulting apnoea,³ that will 'unblock' access to the unconscious and the origins of any problems needing to be addressed, with the guidance and support of music.

Although the Holorrhenic and Holotropic schools draw from pre-existing breathwork practices,⁴ their creators incorporated new elements from psychiatry, psychology, and anthropology, to build a more complete method that could be developed in a supervised environment and in accordance with pre-set parameters.⁵ This offered both Stanislav and Christina Grof, from the Holotropic school, and Josep Maria Fericgla, from the Holorrhenic school, an actualised approach to introduce in the Western world, in a ritual form that benefited from the emerging spiritual tendencies of the countercultural movements that preceded them.

² In Holotropic Breathwork, facilitators usually make reference to the 'inner healer', a wise existing healing force in every individual that leads the improving process during holotropic experiences.

³ Apnoea is usually defined as the cessation of breathing. Nevertheless, in this context it refers to reduced lung movement – not its total ceasing – as a consequence of the over-breathing that precedes in the exercise.

⁴ Stanislav Grof, from the Holotropic school, and Josep Maria Fericgla, from the Holorrhenic school, refer to *pranayama* and other similar breathwork techniques that have been used to reach non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, and on which they found inspiration to constitute their practices. Stanislav and Christina Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork: A New Approach to Self-Exploration and Therapy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010); Josep Maria Fericgla, 'Respiración Holorénica: Técnica, efectos y fenomenología', *Fundació Josep M. Fericgla*, 2015 <http://josepmfericgla.org/web_Fundacio_JMFericgla_2/pdf/josep_maria_fericgla_respiracion_holorenica.pdf> [accessed 17 April 2017]. Note that most of Josep Maria Fericgla's work is only available in Spanish, and as such cannot be referenced in English.

⁵ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*; Josep Maria Fericgla, *Epopteia: Avanzar sin olvidar. Respuesta a las cuestiones más frecuentes tras vivir una experiencia transformadora* (Barcelona: La Liebre de Marzo, 2003).

Grof and Fericgla have both emphasised their perspectives on religion and science, thus establishing a basis for their practices to develop. Briefly, they have advocated a reconciliation of the two, as already suggested by Durkheim or Eliade,⁶ and discarded the Cartesian partition of mind and body in favour of a holistic perspective of the self:

The time of feeding a fight of biologism against psychologism, and psychologism against culturalism, has passed; it is time to create a systemic space in which to try to comprehend the existential interrelation that exists.⁷

The divide between religion and spirituality also enters their discussion, particularly with regard to the pejorative connotations of religion, as attached to its institutionalisation and detachment from the genuine spiritual experience.⁸ Since the shifts of consciousness in which the breathers find themselves can be read from a spiritual or metaphysical point of view, it is relevant for both authors to establish the grounds on *how* they conceive the practices that they conduct. However, their consideration of breathwork as infused with religious connotations cannot be entirely discarded, but read as a re-formulated concept. For the participants this same differentiation is often pinpointed as the belief in *something else*, as opposed to the imposition of what that *something else* must be from a hierarchical standpoint.

The authors have also alluded to what they believe are the problems in Western academia, as regards the recognition of the shifts of consciousness that they propose as valid and non-pathological, rather than linked to psychological dysfunctions.⁹ This has

⁶ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: Harcourt Australia, 1959). See chapter 2.

⁷ Josep Maria Fericgla, 'Las experiencias activadoras de estructuras en el desarrollo individual y de las sociedades', *Revista Cultura y Droga*, 8 (2003), p. 25. My translation.

⁸ Grof states that: 'To prevent the confusion and misunderstandings that in the past have plagued the discussions about spiritual life and have created a false conflict between religion and science, it is critical to make a clear distinction between spirituality and religion. Spirituality is based on direct experiences of ordinarily hidden dimensions of reality.... Spirituality involves a special relationship between the individual and the cosmos and is in its essence a personal and private affair.... By comparison, the basis of organized religion is institutionalized group activity that takes place in a designated location.... and involves a system of appointed mediators.... It creates a hierarchical system focusing on the pursuit of power, control, politics, money, and other possessions. Under these circumstances, religious hierarchy tends to actively discourage and suppress direct spiritual experiences of its members, because they foster independence and cannot be effectively controlled.' Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p. 355.

⁹ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*; Stanislav Grof, 'Human Nature and the Nature of Reality: Conceptual Challenges from Consciousness', 30 (1998), pp. 343–57; Josep Maria Fericgla, *Epopteia*.

not passed unnoticed by anthropologists or ethnomusicologists either, who have defined the aversion of the West towards the unknown or the alien spiritual from their respective fields, especially when discussing trance.¹⁰ Grof further considered this a ‘humiliating comprehension for the members of the Western academic community,’¹¹ who had come to realise that their vision and understanding of the human psyche was no more advanced than other approaches in preindustrial environments. Grof and Fericgla define the experiences of the participants from an informed reading of the Western psychiatric tradition, as well as complementary fields such as cultural and social anthropology, to give a personalised version of the sacred cosmos that embraces the practices as a whole, and criticise the traditional approaches that exclude a consideration of the unexplained. However, this does not omit Transpersonal or psychiatric treatment from the more immediate breathwork, which the authors consider to be complementary – sometimes necessary – in reaching the true root of the participants’ issues.¹²

Both Fericgla and Grof establish a clear differentiation between a pathological state and a spiritual emergency, or what Fericgla calls an ‘exace.’¹³ For the same reason, they establish a theoretical frame for consciousness and its expansion or modification, since one’s understanding of the same is the only way of measuring its reach. Therefore, each author has defined a background cosmos in which to place this non-ordinary consciousness, as a set of parameters to help read it.

Starting with the idea of the non-division of religion and science, Grof has repeatedly considered the nature of consciousness as existing in unknown grounds, and not necessarily in the brain. He suggests, however, that this does not mean that the brain is not responsible for our bodily functions and reactions, and agrees with Berger and

¹⁰ Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Iker Puente Vigiola, ‘Complejidad y Psicología Transpersonal: Caos, autoorganización y experiencias cumbre en psicoterapia’ (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2014); Richard Jankowsky, ‘Music, Spirit Possession and the In-Between: Ethnomusicological Inquiry and the Challenge of Trance’, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 16 (2007), pp. 185–208; et al.

¹¹ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p. 218.

¹² In the form that is handed to the participants prior to the Holotropic Breathwork experience there is a passage that exemplifies this: ‘The breathwork sessions are directed as personal-growing experiences and should not be considered a substitute for psychotherapy.... If you have any doubts as to whether you should participate in the session, it is essential that you consult your doctor or therapist, as well as the organisers of the workshop.’ I include this in fieldwork diary VI.

¹³ In Fericgla, *Epopteia*. ‘Exace’ stands for ‘Experiencia Activadora de Estructuras’. In English: ‘Structure-Activating Experience’.

Luckman's idea of the construction of reality based on our social and cultural knowledge.¹⁴ Fericgla does not make a restricted consideration on the nature of consciousness in his work, but rather regards the dimensions and elements to be taken into account.¹⁵ Nevertheless, both Grof and Fericgla define this same concept as fluctuant, and non-ordinary shifts of consciousness as belonging to a variable.¹⁶

Because of the intrinsic character of the breathwork, both schools emphasise the relevance of the extraordinary experiences that they provide. In their creation of their respective practices, the authors' experimentation with psychedelic substances was a key point of reference, which they used later to reproduce similar shifts of consciousness in substance-free environments. They attached specific background cosmoi to support the adaptation of their findings to the Western environment in which breathwork was finally presented.¹⁷ Their construction of the practices also drew on a knowledge of global rituals executed under substances of the same calibre, that are used to induce similar shifts with similarly transcendental goals:

To quote a few resources caught on the fly, one can mention the consumption of powerful psychotropics within ritualised frames (diverse North and South American indigenous groups, consumers of peyote, ayahuasca, brugmansias or San Pedro, or the African followers of the Buiti cult, consumers of iboga).¹⁸

And other substance-free techniques which procure similar shifts of consciousness:

¹⁴ Stanislav Grof, and Hal Zina Bennett, *The Holotropic Mind: The Three Levels of Human Consciousness and How They Shape Our Lives* (New York: Harper One, 1993).

¹⁵ Josep Maria Fericgla, 'States of Consciousness and States of Consciousness and Shamanisms', *Fundació Josep M. Fericgla*, 2001, <http://josepmfericgla.org/web_Fundacio_JMFericgla_2/pdf/josep_maria_fericgla_states_of_consciousness_and_shamanisms.pdf> [accessed 28 December 2017].

¹⁶ Ibid.; Grof and Bennett, *The Holotropic Mind*.

¹⁷ Grof first encountered and started using LSD-25 in a psychiatric environment when receiving one of Albert Hoffmann's samples, after he synthesised the substance for the first time. Stanislav Grof, 'Stanislav Grof - Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research', *Youtube*, 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYQY-AwtC2Y&t=932s>> [accessed 28 December 2017]. Fericgla became a shaman during his anthropological research in Colombia, and therefore explored ayahuasca intensively. Josep Maria Fericgla, *Los jíbaros, cazadores de sueños: Diario de un antropólogo entre los shuar, experimentos con la ayahuasca e iniciación chamánica* (Barcelona: La Liebre de Marzo, 2015).

¹⁸ Fericgla, 'Las experiencias activadoras de estructuras en el desarrollo individual y de las sociedades', pp. 33-34. My translation.

Such dissociated states of consciousness are also reached by means of long sensory deprivation (Zen Buddhism, anchorites from Medieval Christianity, or Hindu ascetics), through music-mechanical techniques (like the cathartic music and dance of the Moroccan Gnawa, or the ecstatic one of the whirling Sufi dancers), or by means of a specific breath control (like in Pranayama Yogic techniques, Kapalabhati, or holorrhenic and holotropic breathwork).¹⁹

This can be seen as a summary of the elements taken into account in the construction of Guided Breathwork itself, which, also in the sense outlined by Fericgla above, integrates elements from mechanical music techniques, amongst others. It also suggests the background which the authors took into account for the construction of their practices, with roots in the academic world and its systematic research methods.

A common idea that both authors share and that they consider to be the main aim of these practices, is to be found in the will to experience death and rebirth. Through it, the insider may gain a higher understanding of the self and the cosmos, knowledge that is to be used on a daily basis. It also helps to embed more clearly the 'rite of passage' element in the ritual equation, establishing a differentiation between the personal status of the participant before and after participation.²⁰ The specific aim and title of the workshops delivered by Fericgla at El Montnegre, under the name *Despertar a la vida través de la muerte* (Awakening to Life through Death),²¹ emphasise this very element.

Finally, it is worth noting the influence of Carl Jung on the work of both theorists: each adopted Jung's ideas of the archetypes and the collective unconscious,²² which relate directly to the possibilities and encounters of consciousness expansion. They consider these to be transversal and structuring for all participants, a representation of codified images related to their outer world, and a point of connection for the overall human imagery that unfolds under parallel intellectual processes. Grof and Fericgla turn to the idea of a universal subconscious mental structure to construct their sessions, based on

¹⁹ Ibid. My translation.

²⁰ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*; Fericgla, 'Respiración Holorénica: Técnica, efectos y fenomenología'; *Epopteia*.

²¹ Josep Maria Fericgla, *Taller para despertar a la vida a través de la muerte*, Limited Ed. (Caella, Catalonia: Fundació Josep Ma Fericgla, 2015).

²² Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, ed. by Sir Herbert Read and others (New York: Princeton University Press, 1959); Jung, *The Essential Jung*.

Jung's theory, which they use to address the experiences of the breathworkers under a pseudo-psychoanalytical lens.

They also allow Jung's theory of the *numinous* to take a primary role in their workshops, invoking it as a key reference in the nature of every participant's experience.²³ This shift of consciousness, however,²⁴ needs to be understood through a more detailed outline of the particular cases that help to build it.

6.2. *Holotropic Breathwork, by Stanislav and Christina Grof*

Holotropic Breathwork was created and developed by Stanislav (1931-) and Christina (1941-2014) Grof in 1975 at Esalen, California.²⁵ It rapidly expanded worldwide via the training programs that they created, and gained popularity gained as a self-healing practice. Stanislav Grof coined the term 'holotropic' from the Greek roots *holos*, 'whole,' and *trepein*, 'to move toward,' thus constructing the meaning 'aiming for totality.'²⁶

Holotropic Breathwork was developed as a departure from Grof's psychiatric work. Having received a sample of LSD-25 from its discoverer Albert Hofmann, Grof realised the potential of the substance and started incorporating it into his practice.²⁷ Following governmental restrictions on the medical use of LSD, Grof created an alternative that

²³ Josep Maria Fericgla, *Seminario: Músicas e Inconsciente. Textos de Josep M^a Fericgla*, Fundació Josep M^a Fericgla (Calella, Catalonia: Societat d'Etnopsicologia Aplicada i Estudis Cognitius, 2009); Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*.

²⁴ Some philosophers, such as Schopenhauer, referred to this state as the *ineffable*. Magda Polo i Pujadas and Jaume Radigales, *La estética de la música* (Barcelona: Editorial UOC, 2008); Enrico Fubini, *La estética musical desde la antigüedad hasta el siglo XX* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005).

²⁵ Stanislav Grof, *When the Impossible Happens: Adventures in Non-Ordinary Realities* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True Inc, 2006), p. 13; Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007). The Esalen Institute is a school for experimentation with consciousness and alternative healing techniques, located in Big Sur, California. It was founded in 1962 by Michael Murphy and Dick Price, and is described in the Institute's official website as having proved 'the possibilities of reconciling intellectual and experiential; mind and body; science and mysticism; immanence and transcendence; East and West; meditation and action; youthful idealism and time-tested wisdom.' See Esalen Institute, 'On Ancient Ground, Opening New Horizons: Pioneering Deep Change in Self & Society' <<https://www.esalen.org/>> [accessed 2 January 2018].

²⁶ Stanislav Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery: Dimensions of Consciousness and New Perspectives in Psychotherapy and Inner Exploration* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 239.

²⁷ Grof, *The Holotropic Mind*, pp. 31-33; Stanislav Grof and Walter Mead, 'The Healing Potential of Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness (Walter Mead Interviewing Stan Grof)', *Interviews with Stanislav Grof*, pp. 1-9 <http://www.stanislawgrof.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Healing-Potential-of-NOS_Grof.pdf> [accessed 25 May 2018].

would bring a similar experience to his patients, rooted in practices from Eastern cultures, such as *pranayama* [a breathing technique].²⁸ To this, he applied the theoretical and medical background that had been attached to his LSD-guided sessions, and set a well-established explanatory background for interpreting what his participants went through.

Grof defines holotropic shifts of consciousness as ‘characterized by a specific transformation of consciousness associated with dramatic perceptual changes in all sensory areas, intense and often unusual emotions, and profound alterations in the thought of process,’ which are ‘usually accompanied by a variety of intense psychosomatic manifestations and unconventional forms of behaviour.’²⁹ These shifts of consciousness, he argues, can be found among many cultures, both spontaneously or as a result of triggering events, such as near-death experiences.³⁰ His conception of the process that develops in Holotropic Breathwork includes a series of terms that are not explicitly shared by other schools, considering the possibility of experiencing mystical and embryonic states that may transcend time and space.

The content of holotropic states is often spiritual or mystical. We can experience sequences of psychological death and rebirth and a broad spectrum of transpersonal phenomena, such as feelings of union and identification with other people, nature, the universe, and God. We might uncover what seem to be memories from other incarnations, encounter powerful archetypal figures, communicate with discarnate beings, and visit numerous mythological landscapes. Our consciousness might separate from our body and yet retain its capacity to perceive both the immediate environment

²⁸ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p. 31. *Pranayama* is a breathing technique included in many forms of yoga as a means to integrate and gain awareness of one’s ‘prana’ (life force). There are many breathing formulas included under this label, such as alternate-nostril breathing or breath holding, as well as proposals that have been incorporated into well-being centres for the Western public. See Richard Kearney, ‘Pranayama: Breathing from the Heart’, *Religion and the Arts*, 12 (2008), pp. 266–76; Sheila Patel, ‘Breathing for Life: The Mind-Body Healing Benefits of Pranayama’, *The Chopra Center* (2017). <<https://chopra.com/articles/breathing-for-life-the-mind-body-healing-benefits-of-pranayama>> [accessed 24 January 2018]; Ratna Sharma, Nidhi Gupta, and R. L. Bijlani, ‘Effect of Yoga Based Lifestyle Intervention on Subjective Well-Being’, *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*, 52 (2008), pp. 123–31; Yoga Journal, ‘Pranayama Exercises & Poses’, *Yoga Journal*, 2007 <<https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/types/pranayama>> [accessed 24 January 2018].

²⁹ Grof, ‘Human Nature and the Nature of Reality’, p. 344.

³⁰ Grof quotes ‘aboriginal rites of passage, and systematic spiritual practice, such as various forms of yoga, Buddhist or Taoist meditation, Sufi dhikrs, Kabbalistic exercises, or the Christian Jesus Prayer (hesychasm),’ among some of the cultural expressions that present holotropic states, besides those introduced by psychedelic substances, which he also approaches in his work. In *When the Impossible Happens*, p. 14.

and remote locations.³¹

Here Grof contrasts the participant experiences that he gathered from his patients with misunderstood mental disease,³² and details the resulting possibilities, beginning with the systems of condensed experience, or COEX systems. These consist of constellations of affective and physical memories that are linked to past experiences, which have shaped every individual's character, and that organise one's psyche thematically. For instance, a COEX constellation may include all our embarrassing memories, and unconsciously predominate or influence our behaviour in life. These are often related to our four Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPM),³³ the four experiential guidelines relating to each one of the four phases of our biological birth, which are later reproduced in life. They can be summarised as follows:

- *BPM 1: Amniotic universe.* One's intra-uterine experience, before birth.
- *BPM 2: Cosmic oppression* or *No exit.* Experiences related to the beginning of labour and contractions, when the cervix has not begun to dilate or fully open, and the foetus is trapped.
- *BPM 3: Fight for death and rebirth.* In relation to the experience of moving and struggling through the birth canal.
- *BPM 4: Leaving the womb.* In relation to the experience of having left the womb, and entering the outside world as a separate being, away from the mother.

Each of these levels includes diverse possibilities of experience that can relate to good or bad realities, and that can be reinforced by further experiences from the moment of birth onwards, depending on their nature, thus coalescing as a COEX constellation. For example, if one person grew as a foetus in a hostile womb, and then happened to encounter a hostile home environment during a prolonged period of time, this would form a COEX constellation that could be potentially re-lived and resolved through the

³¹ Extract from Grof, 'Stanislav Grof - Psychology of the Future'.

³² Ibid.

³³ In *The Holotropic Mind*, Grof goes into detail in the description of these perinatal realms, and points to the possibilities that are included in their development and their relation to the breather's daily lives.

primary experience of one's gestation. These would then come to represent the group of experiences that formed the constellation in the first place.

Other possibilities that can take place during breathwork include transpersonal experiences, limited and unlimited by time and space, and those of a psychoid nature, such as past-life experiences or encounters with mythical beings.³⁴ To take these as real experiences, Grof states, one must first accept the notion of the transpersonal, the implication of one's consciousness to exist also outside the body, and not only in relation to tangible matter.³⁵

Once this background has been established, every workshop includes a supporting sacred cosmos that differentiates one's ordinary experiences from those belonging to a non-ordinary realm, which can be attributed a sacred quality. Therefore, the participant's journey finds itself described by pre-set parameters that will serve as a code for reading the exercise, and that will work towards a final aim based on self-healing and self-discovery. Through the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, Grof says, the listed transpersonal levels work as an 'inner radar' that tracks the affective baggage of the breather and makes any related material appear so it can be sorted out.³⁶

In this equation, music works towards the same goal, as a trigger for these affective responses to surface and find expression. Although Grof considers music not to be of fundamental significance – a workshop can develop without a sonic input, like in Rebirthing – he recognises the relevance that it has in creating a meaningful experience for the participants, and therefore the importance of selecting the adequate material to outline the process. Music must afford a 'conducting wave' that helps the breather move beyond any existing psychological barriers, while s/he must embrace the musical process by letting go of any apprehensions, expressing anything that the music arouses,

³⁴ Ibid. Regarding the experiences beyond space, the author considers the identification with other people, the experiencing of the biosphere's consciousness, or even at a planetary level, to be present in the breather's practice. In relation to the experiences beyond time, he lists the contact with spirits or animals, encounters with spirit guides and supernatural beings, and journeys to mystical realities. Finally, as regards the psychoid experiences, he places special emphasis on synchronicity.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 128.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 290.

whether it is loud screaming or laughing, baby talk, animal noises, shamanic chanting, or talking in tongues. It is also important not to control any physical impulses, such as bizarre grimacing, sensual movements of the pelvis, violent shaking, or intense contortions of the entire body.... We also encourage participants to suspend any intellectual activity, such as trying to guess the composer of the music or the culture from which the music comes.³⁷

The parameters that Grof cites as a guideline are mostly focused on the need for finding appropriate music that can serve the whole room, rather than specific individuals. Likewise, he advises against the use of repertoires that include vocals in a language that can be understood by the participants, or well-known pieces that may suggest specific topics or affective reactions. It is also important that there are no lapses between pieces, nor any dissonant or anxiety-inducing songs or sounds.³⁸ The work of the facilitator is therefore of fundamental importance, since the chosen repertoire and succession of pieces can determine the unfolding of a better or worse experience for the breather.

Grof divides the musical process into a tripartite form, with three musical repertoires that interlace and follow each other: the first with activating music that slowly grows in intensity and that includes rhythmic and percussive pieces; the second, which introduces powerful orchestral music and dramatic pieces, culminating in a peak; and the third, which slows down progressively and ‘elevates the spirit.’³⁹ As I will show, these phases parallel the physical process undertaken with the breathwork in the ascending intensity, maintenance, and final decrease.

Grof emphasises the importance of the musical equipment to be used in the practice, to ensure a smooth transition and maintenance of volume among all pieces, with recommendations for backup sonic equipment, in the event of a primary malfunction.⁴⁰ The technological resources used have been updated according to the possibilities of the installations, so over the years CDs and mixing tables have been slowly replaced by pre-recorded playlists that work similarly but are easier to carry and edit.

Beyond Holotropic Breathwork’s theoretical frame, there are several points to consider

³⁷ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p. 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

in terms of the structure of the workshops:

- First and foremost, Holotropic Breathwork includes a free introduction to the breathing technique, which can be adapted by the participants depending on their preference and ‘inner wisdom,’ while still following the basic directions of deeper and faster breaths than usual, without spaces between inhalation and exhalation. That is, participants do not need to follow a strict breathing rhythm, but rather can choose what works for them in each moment. Because of this, there is often an asynchronic relation to music, which shows entrainment at a wider affective-response level.
- As noted earlier, new facilitators are regularly trained through Grof Transpersonal Training’s program (GTT),⁴¹ which creates a more flexible hierarchy within the community, and a more diverse offering for those willing to try new musical approaches based on the same theoretical background.
- Finally, at the end of the breathworking exercise each participant draws a mandala representing their own experience, so it is truthful to each participant and serves to share meaning across the group. The facilitators also give some recommendations to all participants, both verbally and on a handout, of measures to take after the workshop and recommendations to follow.

⁴¹ According to Grof Transpersonal Training’s website, there are currently more than 50 certified facilitators in Spain, of which 10 are currently certified. Worldwide, there are more than 200 active facilitators, and thousands who have undergone the training. See Grof Transpersonal Training, ‘CPD Current Certified Facilitators’, *Holotropic Breathwork* <<http://www.holotropic.com/holotropic-breathwork/facilitator-listing/>> [accessed 2 January 2018].



Figure 1. My drawing of a mandala, corresponding to my third Holotropic Breathwork experience.⁴²

These parameters can be contrasted with the background established for Holorrhenic Breathwork, which is built towards a similar aim and through a parallel technique, but from a somehow different background cosmos, which is not as rooted in mystical spirituality but rather on earthly transcendence. The musical process that is described by Fericgla, in contrast to that of Grof, specifies in greater detail each phase according to its relation to the inner development of the participant.

6.3. *Holorrhenic Breathwork, by Josep Maria Fericgla*

Josep Maria Fericgla (1955-) is the main originator of Holorrhenic Breathwork. He developed it out of his academic work among shamanic practitioners,⁴³ as well as from Stanislav Grof's Holotropic Breathwork and the same *pranayama* breathing technique that served Grof as reference.⁴⁴ For the construction of the concept, he used the Greek roots *holos*, 'whole', and *eurisko*, 'moving towards, flowing', for a meaning of 'moving towards totality'.⁴⁵

In his work, he describes two events that helped him build the perspective of the world that he tries to communicate to the participants in his workshops. First, when staying

⁴² See fieldwork diary VI, in Appendix D, pp. 398.

⁴³ Josep Maria Fericgla, *Los jíbaros, cazadores de sueños*.

⁴⁴ Fericgla, 'Respiración holorénica'.

⁴⁵ Fericgla, *Epopteia*, p. 43.

among the Shuar, he was advised to ‘die to be reborn healthy,’ and realised that experiencing death while being alive is essential to ‘regenerate and keep on being truly alive.’⁴⁶ Second, in 1997 he suffered an accident in which he had a near-death experience, followed by a long hospitalisation. Through this, he realised that ‘the existence of “something” does not depend on the body.’⁴⁷ These two incidents encouraged him to shift from the academic world towards his present position as director of his own foundations and centres, where he works on and for personal and spiritual development.⁴⁸

In his campus at El Montegre Nature Park, he offers a bi-annual seminar focused on music and the unconscious, where he addresses the ideal construction of a Holorrhenic Breathwork session, which must work as an *exace*, or structure-activating experience,⁴⁹ along other topics.⁵⁰ According to his outline of the practice, it is constructed of four steps: (I) introduction, (II) madness, (III) death, and (IV) rebirth. If one is to read this as parallel to Grof’s structure, the third point here would correspond to the peak present in the Holotropic process.

Fericgla does not stop his consideration of the musically-led process at this stage, but goes into further detail. In this description, his theoretical background cosmos is filtered through psychology and psychiatry, among other fields.⁵¹ The phases that the author contemplates develop as follows, as musically divided:⁵²

- *Overture*. Includes the first activities of the workshop and information of the

⁴⁶ Josep Maria Fericgla, “‘Sentí que había Muerto y vi con claridad’”, *Fundació Josep M. Fericgla*, 2015 <http://josepmfericgla.org/web_Fundacio_JMFericgla_2/pdf/josep_maria_fericgla_senti_que_habi_a_muerto_y_vi_con_claridad.pdf> [accessed 22 December 2017], pp. 4-5. In his fieldwork diary, included in Fericgla, *Los jíbaros, cazadores de sueños*, he describes some of his experiences with ayahuasca, making his point of view easier for the reader to grasp.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ See Can Benet Vives, ‘Para el desarrollo armónico del ser humano y la práctica de una espiritualidad real’, *Can Benet Vives Campus*, 2017 <<http://canbenetvives.org/>> [accessed 30 December 2017]; Josep Maria Fericgla, ‘Fundació Josep Maria Fericgla’ <<http://josepmfericgla.org/>> [accessed 12 June 2017].

⁴⁹ Fericgla, *Epopteia*.

⁵⁰ In both this seminar and his regular *Despertar a través de la muerte* workshops, the participants are handed a notebook with back-up texts, recommendations, and space to write, which are usually limited edition, and therefore hard to find elsewhere. See Josep Maria, *Seminario: Músicas e Inconsciente*; Fericgla, *Taller para despertar a la vida a través de la muerte*.

⁵¹ Jung’s archetypes and the collective unconscious are recurrent in his talks and in his work, together with other psychoanalyst references. Jung, *The Essential Jung*, ed. by Anthony Storr (London: Fontana Press, 1998).

⁵² Fericgla, *Seminario: Música e Inconsciente*. My translation, on fieldwork notes. See fieldwork diary I, Appendix D for further detail, pp. 337-353.

process. Music is used as a resource for preparing the participants for the breathwork exercise. It must include low frequencies and masculine voices that transmit confidence, while showing established limits.

- *Symbology*. The holorrhenic journey must start with energetic music, that brings the participant beyond one's limits. It must propel the breather forward.
- *Biographic journey I*. The biographies of the participants are arbitrarily reviewed and put in relation to a common sociocultural background. The music that follows must allude to the antagonism against the father; it must be choleric and cruel. As such it usually includes drumming.
- *Primal sexuality*. The music must include a strong erotic load. It must be lascivious and include breathing sounds. It represents going through the moment of maximum unconscious carnal sexuality and the entrance into puberty. This is followed by the beginning of consciousness and the first personal crisis of the 'self'.
- *Carefree music*. Light music that counters the roughness of this primal consciousness, such as Brazilian samba or explosive pieces, to represent adolescence's voluptuousness and carefreeness. This will be defined by nostalgic music that favours the breaking of bonds with one's fatherly figures.
- *Return*. This recap is not a lineal journey, but rather folds back onto itself to return to the last puberty stages with dark and agitated music, both tearful and enjoyable. At this point one will have reached catharsis and the 'ecstatic process', as the author puts it, will begin.
- *Biographic journey II*. Reference to the same biographic journey outlined previously, but from a complementary perspective, which includes lullabies and carols, to refer to childhood, and a closer approach to one's affective life experience.
- *Adolescence*. This goes through religious and pastoral repertoire, which introduces the transpersonal and cosmic dimensions of the self. It can include some low notes to refer to the fatherly figure, but feminine voices must predominate towards the

end of the process.

- *Exit.* A good exit is essential, and it must include cheerful music that alludes to one's reencounter with reality.

Fericgla summarises this process by pointing to the relation of rhythm to action, and affect to melody and social life.⁵³ Music, he posits, helps potentiate the listener's memories and emotions, so the process described above can be structured depending on the sonic input. He also remarks on the repertoire, suggesting that the overlaying and introduction of 'complex instruments'⁵⁴ is key to attaining catharsis, together with the alternation of binary and ternary rhythms; the need for modulating the journey towards less intense rhythms and higher frequencies after the breather's implosion, as a getaway for the listener; the association of metal to authority, or flutes to contention and transcendence; and the use of carols for breaking the participant's defensive barriers, facilitating a state of regression.⁵⁵

Besides the detailed fragmentation and description, Fericgla establishes a clear differentiation between 'living music' and 'dead music',⁵⁶ which defines which pieces must be used for a successful breathwork session.⁵⁷ In short, living music is defined as that which can successfully aid in expanding the listener's consciousness, since it is in direct relation to our cosmic consciousness, and encourages us to 'the language of the soul.'⁵⁸ In contrast, dead music can please us aesthetically, but it will not impact actively on the listener nor help in one's personal development.

⁵³ Fericgla, *Seminario: Música e Inconsciente*. See fieldwork diary I, Appendix D, pp. 337-353.

⁵⁴ With 'complex instruments' Fericgla tends to mean 'polyphonic and Western' instruments which rely on harmony more than they do on rhythm. Note that Fericgla's training in music is encompassed within his study of ethnomusicology, on a complementary basis to anthropology and psychology.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ By 'living music' Fericgla refers to music that shows complexity and has a thought process behind it, such as most Classical music, as well as folkloric and popular repertoire that is constructed thoroughly and with a human touch to it. In contrast, 'dead music' represents music that is mechanical and impersonal, as well as less 'refined' pieces, i.e. most techno and electronic music, or genres such as reggaeton. These definitions must be read as a part of Fericgla's consideration of music and not as a transversal standard for all facilitators in Guided Breathwork.

⁵⁷ Josep Maria Fericgla, 'Músicas extáticas, músicas vivas y músicas muertas' (Casa del Tíbet, Barcelona, 2014) <<http://josepmfericgla.org/2014/video-musicas-extaticas-musicas-vivas-y-musicas-muertas>> [accessed 2 January 2018].

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* This idea, although it may seem arbitrary, is a key aspect in consideration of the author's cosmos, which is used to construct the practice. An example of living music, given to us on 2014's *Music and the Unconscious* seminar, was Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony n. 5 in D minor.

Although he refers to the breathworking process from a somehow different perspective than Grof, Fericgla also includes affect and the search for spirituality in the ritual's equation. He discusses the issue extensively in *Epopiteia: Avanzar sin olvidar* (Epopiteia: Moving Forward Without Forgetting), published specifically as a key for integrating his breathwork workshops. In this work, he organises the chapters under questions that may be asked by the participants after a session, such as 'is there an underlying order to what happened to me?' or 'do these experiences need to be understood from an individual or a collective dimension?'

The ultimate objective of these activating experiences is to amplify the field of awakened consciousness, and the cognitive territory as a primal step in the psychic and spiritual development of every human being.... In *exaces* the healing process is understood to be equivalent to the process of completing something, of becoming someone whole. This fact possesses a religious and sacred quality for every human being, since it is the search for unity, for the One that all religious credos talk about and look for.⁵⁹

As shown here, there is not a direct reliance on the idea of the supernatural as in Grof's work, but rather on a vaguer spirituality that can appeal to believers and sceptics alike, as in Lévi-Strauss' 'floating signifier'.⁶⁰ However, this spiritual dimension is developed further in other activities and associations developed by Fericgla as well, such as the *Escola de Vida i Simultaneïtat* (School of Life and Simultaneity), which he directs and organises for those interested in deeper introspective work.⁶¹

In contrast to Holotropic Breathwork, the Holorrhenic practice is framed in a permanent space in Catalonia, and the presence of the creator of the exercise enables the construction of the sacred in a more specific manner. That is, as the space for Holorrhenic Breathwork is always located under the same roof and within the same environment,⁶² surrounded by nature and wildlife, it is easier for it to be recognised as a place out of the

⁵⁹ Fericgla, *Epopiteia*, pp. 70-72. My translation.

⁶⁰ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 63.

⁶¹ On their website, the School facilitators describe it as 'an association of Sufi inspiration, and close to the Fourth Way, Jung's psychology, and the shamanism of the high Amazonia.' See *Escuela de Vida y Simultaneidad*, 'Escuela de Vida Simultaneidad: Una vía de espiritualidad práctica', *Escuela de Vida y Simultaneidad* <<http://escoladevida.org/>> [accessed 4 January 2018].

⁶² That is, in the case of Catalonia. Those who have been awarded the possibility for developing these workshops elsewhere in Spain may not count with specific facilities for the workshops' unfolding.

ordinary. The true delimitation of the practice under these terms happens with the musical input, however, which blurs the line between the profane and the sacred for the delimitation of the space.⁶³

There are other specificities to be taken into account in the case of Fericgla's practice, corresponding to the workshop's preparatory and integrating activities.

- The biggest difference is found in its breathing technique: the participants are instructed and reminded to follow the music both *before* and *during* the process, focusing on the exhalation of the air to the beat. Therefore, there is no room for the participant to adapt to any preferences, but one needs to follow whatever is playing in the background – up to 200 beats per minute in the case of some pieces. Fericgla also uses a big drum to emphasise the first and middle sections of the process and to reinforce the beat of the music itself, which is never done in the Holotropic case, since that practice excludes outside interventions – of sonic or physical nature, besides the obvious musical input – if not explicitly requested by the participant.⁶⁴ Thus, the level of entrainment to the beat is, in this case, more specific than in Holotropic Breathwork.
- There is also an added dimension to the Breathwork part of the workshop, introduced by Fericgla as gesture taken from the School of Life and Simultaneity, which consists of the introduction of the same piano piece at the close of every session, and a brief reverence at the end. Fericgla's hermetic position in relation to the facilitation of any information in this sense, or as regards the musical repertoire overall, implies that the meaning and references taken into account for his workshops are not clear to the external observer and can only be hypothesised. This also contrasts with the openness of the Holotropic schools.
- The preliminary and integrating exercises include not only the compulsory trust

⁶³ This fact became especially relevant and clear during the last Holorrhenic Breathwork workshop in which I was present, when the sound equipment stopped for only a few seconds due to a malfunction, creating a lapse 'back in time'. This, however, was not noticed by some of the breathers while in the process, thus echoing Grof's postulate on the dispensable use of music. Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*.

⁶⁴ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*.

and disinhibition exercises, but also the completion of the Hartman test and a personal interview with the facilitator.⁶⁵ This, as in the case of Holotropic Breathwork, helps in assessing the participants' health for the later participation in the proposed exercises. Because the Holorrhenic Breathwork workshops usually last for at least three days, there is also room for complementary activities, such as those described in the fieldwork diaries attached in Appendix D.

- The final integration of the experience is not done by means of drawing, as with the Holotropic mandalas, but rather by sharing with the group. That is, once the breathwork experience has taken place, the breathers are free to share what they have lived with the rest. They can also ask for feedback by the facilitator, who will proceed to explain his point of view, based on each individual's breathwork and their results on the Hartman test. Fericgla also organises a meeting one week after the workshop that acts as a closing gathering for the group, and which the participants can attend to share the experiences from the first days of integration.

Having established the points of departure of both rituals, the reading of the musical process can begin from an informed background, drawing on its reception by the community participating in it, which allows specificities to be outlined more easily in relation to specific musical developments. Nevertheless, there are some common ritual issues that are relevant for such a description and need reviewing first.

6.4. *The Ritual and Musical Dimensions in Guided Breathwork*

Guided Breathwork can be divided into three main sections that correspond to Van Gennep's pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal ritual stages,⁶⁶ normally referred to as

⁶⁵ See fieldwork diary IV, in Appendix D, pp. 377-386. Fericgla defines this test as 'a therapeutic compass that identifies which are the most important aspects that the consultant or the patient need to solve, detecting, for instance, where the most relevant blockages exist.... It is a diagnostic and orientation tool that helps recognising the strengths and weaknesses of each individual.... It is the perfect tool to cartography the soul of people.' [My translation]. Josep Maria Fericgla, 'Prueba de valores o Test Robert S. Hartman', *Fundació Josep M. Fericgla* <http://www.josepmfericgla.org/web_Fundacio_JMFericgla_2/pdf/prueba_valores_Hartman.pdf> [accessed 27 May 2018].

⁶⁶ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997). As observed within

preparation, experience, and integration by the creators of the exercises. In both cases, they include similar procedures for each phase, creating a parallel development which is differentiated in the detail. These three stages can be briefly outlined as follows:

1. *Introduction or pre-liminal phase.* Begins as soon as one decides to participate in the workshop, since it puts one's mind at work, in expectation. The day of the workshop includes some preparation: the compulsory signing of a medical form, the development of a personal interview, and a brief theoretical presentation of the practice, including aims, mechanism, theoretical background, and potential effects. Before the breathwork takes place, there are some warming-up exercises that are included according to time availability.
2. *Experience or liminal stage.* Corresponds to the breathwork exercise itself, and is similarly developed by both schools, in the introduction and guidance of the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness through musical means, plus the eventual help of bodily manipulations.
3. *Integration or post-liminal phase.* Includes activities designed for giving closure, such as sharing one's experience with the other participants. It is also expected to last well after the workshop has ended, as a process of understanding one's experience and the re-adjustment to daily life. Materials and advice are given to the participants so they can continue unfolding their process with some backup resources.⁶⁷

Within the whole practice, and especially during the liminal phase, music is the primary guide for the participants to follow. As such, it goes beyond its aesthetic dimension to act as a point of reference, based on an intersubjective agreement of its broader meanings, and its structuring function during the breathworking stage. In other words, music has

Fericgla's workshops and taking into account his PhD in cultural anthropology, it seems clear that the author himself rooted Holorrhenic Breathwork on the understanding of such authors. Regarding Grof, there are no clear literature references that point to his familiarity with such thesis.

⁶⁷ Fericgla underlined the rituality of the exercises in his consideration of Holorrhenic Breathwork as a 21st century rite of passage. He prefers the term *exace*, to refer to the experiential process that includes the non-ordinary state of consciousness that is sought, to the traditionally labelled 'compulsive and neurotic behaviours', *Taller para despertar a la vida a través de la muerte*, p. 19.

multiple roles to fulfil within the ritual, from simply filling silence to enabling the socialisation of the whole ensemble.⁶⁸ It is especially relevant as regards the affective development of each individual: it is the main focus for everyone to address during the inner self-exploration and healing, it is a point of reference for self-identification, and a bond for the community sharing a same cultural code. All these parameters are necessarily related to the processual meaning of the music, interpreted according to the journey that is proposed for a successful outcome.⁶⁹

To facilitate this process, the chosen repertoire is widely varied and may need *in situ* modification. Because of this, music is introduced through technological means, using good-quality sound equipment and powerful speakers, which provide the person leading the exercise with wider options and control.⁷⁰ Furthermore, this offers additional possibilities that would be unavailable in the use of a live proposition, such as the inclusion of a wider repertoire, the possibility of manipulating the volume, length or content of the sonic material, and the offering of privacy for the participants.⁷¹ This musically guided process can last from two-and-a-half to five hours.

Other elements add to the conception of the practice as a ritual, such as the role-definition of its participants. These can be summarised as: (1) facilitators, (2) breathers, and (3) sitters. The facilitators are those in charge of the workshop and the preparation of the breathwork session. They choose the music to be played, and are the only ones to have access to the mixing table or sound equipment. They also perform a personalised interview with each participant before each workshop, to make sure that their psychic and physical conditions meet the requested standards of health, and will perform body manipulations on the participants if agreed and needed during the experience. There is at least one main facilitator, and one to help out in each session, who will take on

⁶⁸ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 326.

⁶⁹ See Patrick N Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (London: Chicago University Press, 1956); Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); et al. in chapter 3.

⁷⁰ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p. 36.

⁷¹ I discussed this in depth in Eulalia Febrer Coll, 'La opción digital: Música en las nuevas configuraciones religiosas y rituales', in *Procedimientos tecnológicos y creación sonora*, ed. by Xosé Aviñoa and Marta Vidán (Barcelona: Icaria, 2015).

secondary but essential tasks such as the disposition of materials, or the addressing of any issues that may need attention.⁷²

In the case of Holotropic Breathwork, the facilitator can be anyone who has been certified as such by Grof Transpersonal Training (GTT);⁷³ in Holorrhenic Breathwork, Fericgla himself remains in charge of every session in Catalonia, while there is a smaller group of trained facilitators elsewhere in Spain. This may be seen as a reflection of the worldwide popularity of Grof's method, in contrast to the locally focused practice of the Catalan anthropologist. In each case, however, the person in charge of the session must have been trained in the process to develop it.

The breathers and the sitters are usually the participants of each workshop.⁷⁴ Before the breathwork phase, the attendees are asked to group into pairs for the duration of the event. They are then divided in two groups, corresponding to the two categories: the breathers, who are the ones to go through the breathwork experience; and the sitters, those who will take care of the breathers during the exercise. The roles are interchangeable, so everyone will experience both perspectives in every workshop. Therefore, each occasion must comprise *two* breathwork sessions, spaced in time depending on schedule, with each session including respective preliminary and concluding exercises, meaning that the same overall structure is reproduced twice.

During the breathwork experience, the breathers lay on mattresses with their eyes covered, within the secure environment afforded by the facilitators. They are instructed to wear comfortable clothes and to let go of any preconceptions or expectations they had for the session. With this in mind, they are then conducted through a brief relaxation exercise that gives way to the breathwork itself.

The sitters must keep their focus on taking care of their partners, so they do not hurt themselves if they convulse or move around, or in case they have any requests.⁷⁵ The only

⁷² Stanislav Grof, *When the Impossible*. Grof defines the facilitator's task as the 'support for the experiential process with full trust in its healing nature, without trying to direct it or change it,' p. 353.

⁷³ Grof Transpersonal Training, 'CPD Current Certified Facilitators'.

⁷⁴ There can also be external helpers that work as sitters, as well as helper-facilitators, as in the case exposed on fieldwork diary III, in Appendix D, pp. 368-376.

⁷⁵ Among the tools for taking care of the breathers there is always water for drinking or moisturising the

moment in which the sitters not need to be specifically focused on their partners is in the event that they need physical intervention from the facilitators.⁷⁶ These interventions or manipulations take place when the facilitators see one of the participants being ‘stuck’ in the process, or if the participants explicitly ask for help. If the facilitators are the ones to approach the breather, there is always a request for consent before the intervention, which can be refused or stopped at any time, and that can go from applying pressure on a bodily-specific point to working on a movement or an articulation.

Finally, the environment in which the workshops take place needs to be taken into account to frame the sacred element of the ritual, to give the participants privacy and the sense of a separation from the ordinary.⁷⁷ Many of the Holotropic Breathwork workshops take place in locations chosen by the facilitators according to their economic and geographical possibilities; Holorrhenic Breathwork has a designated space at Can Benet Vives, in El Montnegre Nature Park, immediately differentiated from the everyday.⁷⁸ These locations are not closed or built specifically as a temple, but rather taken from the secular space and re-formulated temporarily within similar parameters. The same can be said for the music, as most of the repertoire used during the ritual is not distinct from what one could hear at a concert, at home, or at the mall; it is re-defined by its use, however, and given meaning through its attachment to the non-ordinary experience. In other words, the music ends up in a space between the secular and the sacred, that through its reshaping helps differentiate the ritual experience from ordinary situations. Thus one can say that the music affects the delimitation for the sacrality of the ritual by cordoning the environment in which it takes place, as further explored in chapter 9.

Having defined these elements, there is one key aspect that needs to be taken into account: the specific music discourse set for the practices that build their value as self-healing and inner-development practices. As shown, each school sets a different proposition for this, leading to differently detailed musical processes, with specific meanings attached to the

breather’s lips, a plastic bag in case they need to throw up, some paper, and extra blankets and pillows.

⁷⁶ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p.48.

⁷⁷ See chapter 2, on the definition of the set and setting on ritual practices and their relevance to afford the appropriate personal and situational environment for the participants.

⁷⁸ Their website offers a summary of their activities and installations, as well as a calendar for upcoming activities. Can Benet Vives, ‘Para el desarrollo armónico del ser humano y la práctica de una espiritualidad real’.

phases that are established and results that are sought. However, a common analysis for their suggested processes can be outlined from their parallel traits.

6.5. *A Musical Analysis of Guided Breathwork*

From what has been discussed so far, and through the reading of the musical construction attached to both Holotropic and Holorrhenic sessions, one may establish three basic phases on which the ritual is built, which can be sub-divided in a tripartite structure within its liminal stage:

- I. *Preparation.* Both schools believe that the participant starts preparing for the activity from the moment that they decide to participate, as it represents the decision to carry out an action. There are also some custom procedures that are addressed once the participants arrive at the designed location, such as an individual assessment, the filling of consent forms, and an initial talk exposing the aims of the workshop, its mechanics, and its potential effects.

Once the workshop itself begins, there are some preparatory activities whose length depends on the time available to develop them. That is, the preliminary exercises will change in depth and length depending on the duration of the workshop. These are built on various elements, such as warming up the body through movement, becoming familiarised with the other participants, affording a feeling of togetherness and community, and letting oneself go in a safe environment (ie., dancing, letting oneself fall on a partner's arms and vice versa, sitting in front of a partner and looking one another in the eye, or group-coordination activities and games).⁷⁹

Many of these do not include a musical input unless necessary, as in the case of dancing. In some of the exercises, there is also a strategic use of sound by means of its placement and characteristics. For instance, if an exercise requires the

⁷⁹ In *Epotheia*, Fericgla points to the importance of introducing collaborative exercises during the preparatory phase, so the participants 'go through the cathartic experience embraced by the human vessel that is formed by the other participants, allowing themselves to recognise the pure emotions that are uncovered for the others, in oneself', p. 103. My translation.

participants to talk to one another, music is placed in the background, corresponding to the mood that the facilitator wants to introduce, which makes the participants talk at a loud enough volume, while preventing overhearing conversations and offering privacy to each couple.⁸⁰

- II. *Experience.* The main experience is unfolded through the breathworking exercise, which represents the liminal stage of the ritual, the threshold where the person who *was* and the person who *will be* sits.⁸¹ It is also the main musical-specific part, in which sound will act on multiple levels to help and guide the breather through the long process. The duration of this section will depend on the specific group, and on how fast or slow the participants work through the non-ordinary shift. Usually, the person leading the workshop will have a prepared playlist that will be altered *in situ* if necessary, so the basis will be initially set at approximately three hours. It is introduced by a relaxation exercise, designed to prepare the breather for the exercise that is about to begin, and may include relaxing, non-metric, low-volume music, such as a *rāga's ālap*.

This main phase can also be divided into three larger groups, as described both by the physical process that is experienced and the musical structure that is followed:

- i. The first third of the breathworking practice is characterised by its growing intensity and encouraging character, which helps the participant enter the breathing process and the non-ordinary shift of consciousness. The music shows an increase and sustain of high beats per minute [up to 200bpm], simple harmonies and scales [i.e. pentatonic or modal, harmony only built occasionally]. The volume is increased rapidly and maintained in a high dB range. It is based on a rhythmic element, and as such includes percussive ensembles and sometimes electronic music with a marked beat. It also includes responsory chants in unison, with percussion or little

⁸⁰ The detailed description of this preparatory stage and the exercises that took place on each occasion are addressed in the fieldwork diaries included as Appendix D. See pp. 354-351.

⁸¹ Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008); Van Gennep, *The rites of passage*; Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

accompaniment, or simple chants and body-produced sounds such as breathing or stepping on the floor. It may include some 'ethnic' instruments such as digeridoos and trumpets. The register of the voices is mainly masculine and usually low for instruments.

- ii. Towards the second hour, the rhythmic element gives way to an affective focus, and the beats per minute decrease consequently [down to 110-70], while the volume is kept high. At this point, the breather has entered a breathing dynamic that allows him or her to expand one's focus beyond the physical exercise, together with the growing hypoxia produced by the hyperventilation. The harmonic range is expanded and expressive melodies are introduced through orchestral pieces, chanted melodies accompanied by stringed instruments, or popular and folk songs. The repertoire moves towards a middle register and feminine voices start to predominate.

This phase culminates with the *breakthrough*, the moment of maximum affective expression from which intensity will start decreasing. As the peak of the experience, it will usually encompass grandiloquent orchestration, which includes percussion and a wide harmonic range. It is usual for the facilitators of the practices to introduce movie soundtracks to afford this inflexion, that brings a feeling of achievement for the participants, of having reached 'the top of the mountain.'

- iii. Finally, a third conclusive part wraps up the breathing and helps the participants in returning to their daily shifts of consciousness. The participant goes through an apnoea or very lightly breathing stage as consequence of the hyperventilation that has preceded, and moves progressively towards normal breathing. The beats per minute and volume start decreasing from this point onwards [down to 60-0], and the dB move to a higher, more crystalline range. The chosen pieces for the section embrace a religious or spiritual

quality, as suggested by reverberated and melismatic voices and choirs, melismatic simple melodies accompanied by fauxbourdons, and sounds of nature such as birds, whales, or waterfalls. This last phase can last as long as needed, but it is extended at least for one hour.

- III. *Integration.* After the breathing experience, there is some time left for the participants to reflect, along with some complimentary activities designed to help initiate the participants' integration. Although these will depend on each school, they usually include a sharing part in which a first verbalisation of what each person has gone through is put forth.

These exercises do not completely conclude the experience, which will continue for a few days or weeks until the participants have processed the elements that formed their experience. To this end, the facilitators provide the participants with written and verbal recommendations for the days to follow, which include giving oneself some space, and not taking hurried decisions. Music is usually not present during this phase.

This tripartite form is the main guide for the facilitators to follow, in terms of structure and repertoire, although each session may include variations in the length of any of the parts, and according to the reactions of the participants, especially for the liminal part of the same. For instance, if there are some participants having trouble reacting to the music, the facilitator can choose to play some pieces rather than others; or if at the end of the third hour there are breathers still in the process, the facilitator can extend the last part to accommodate them.

Because the music takes a major role in the central phase, this will be my primary focus in the following pages. Although the preparatory and integratory stages are fundamental for the consideration of the whole ritual composition, these two work in service of the breathwork exercise, which is the one musically outlined and guided, and the one to enable the transition from one social state to another.

Besides the repertoire partition and the focus that is established, in physical terms the breathwork can be divided into two major blocks: one comprising points *i* and *ii*, in which the participant hyperventilates; and one for block *iii*, which includes the apnoea and progressive re-integration of daily consciousness. Furthermore, the *breakthrough* reached in phase *ii* may be seen as the true liminal moment of the process, where everything converges in an out-of-time and space moment. Christina and Stanislav Grof compare this building up and ultimate decrease in intensity to an orgasm that builds to a climax and then goes back to relaxation.⁸²

To analyse the development and efficacy of this process, there are several relevant parameters at stake, which can be grouped under two major blocks: structural characteristics and stylistic characteristics. The structural characteristics comprise both the beats per minute and the volume set for the music, which are mostly interdependent during the liminal phase. As outlined above, during the first hour, comprised under point *i*, the beats per minute (bpm) hold their higher speed, and the volume is kept high. In the case of Holorrhenic Breathwork, the usual introduction of a live drum elevates the dB considerably, marking the difference with later sections with greater emphasis. Section *ii* shows a decrease in bpm that is compensated by an overlaying of instruments, a broad harmonic development, and the maintenance of a high volume. This only begins to decrease from the beginning of the third hour, as underlined in point *iii*, which introduces a progressive decrease for both parameters.

For the stylistic characteristics, tonality, instrumentation and character must be taken into account. During the first part of the initial development, the repertoire includes simple scales and harmonies [i.e. pentatonic scales and little harmonic elaboration], with the focus on the rhythmic element through percussion, and a character focused on moving forward, on encouraging the breather, of becoming reingrained with our primal roots. It is not until point *ii* that tonalities begin expanding and integrating richer harmonic colours [i.e. building of triads into tetrads], as well as long melodies [i.e. more than four bars long, with longer rhythmic values]. At this stage, the rhythmic element is left behind to focus on affect, on expanding the participants' relation with the message transmitted through sound. The character given to most pieces is romantic and melancholic, although

⁸² Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p. 35.

this does not exclude cheerful and optimistic songs, thus finding a general balance between major and minor tonalities. It includes strings and operatic voices, as well as brass instruments and some light percussion to emphasise some of the phrasing. Finally, and after the breakthrough, which includes the major harmonic and instrumental expansion for the activity, the repertoire turns towards minor tonalities, or goes back to simple scales. It introduces reverberation as an almost transversal element in all the pieces, and references the idea of religiosity or spirituality with the inclusion of *a cappella* chants, Gregorian ensembles, and string or wind instruments.

Because the volume is kept on high during stages *i* and *ii*, and with the focus first on instrumentation, and then on harmonic expansion [i.e. tetrachords and complex chordal development], the overall intensity of the musically described curve shows an escalating progression that culminates in the explosive *breakthrough*. This same building-up is then deconstructed in a progressive lessening of intensity, slowly loosening the tension that had built up. This whole process, in any case, must be outlined within an intersubjectively agreed code to afford the desired effect, and to successfully induce the shift of mind that is sought.

This building, maintenance, and release of musical and physical tension may be represented as follows, with the use of the suggested parameters, into the ritual's sonic signature curve:

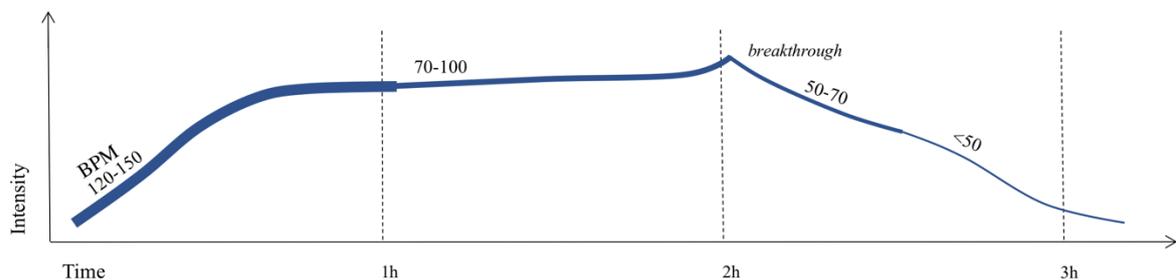


Figure 2. Development of a Guided Breathwork session.⁸³

⁸³ To my surprise, a very similar curve was drawn by Patrick Lundborg in his work *Psychedelia: An Ancient Culture, A Modern Way of Life* (2012), when referring to the psychophysiological process that is endured during experiences such as Holotropic Breathwork (p. 166), or in relation to traditional ayahuasca journeys (p. 469).

The same musical line can be somehow observed from running a pre-built session through some basic software analysis. However, this cannot expose the fluctuations introduced by the facilitator *in situ* in terms of volume, nor does it show any possible modifications that may take place during the actual exercise on the repertoire or other stylistic parameters. An example:

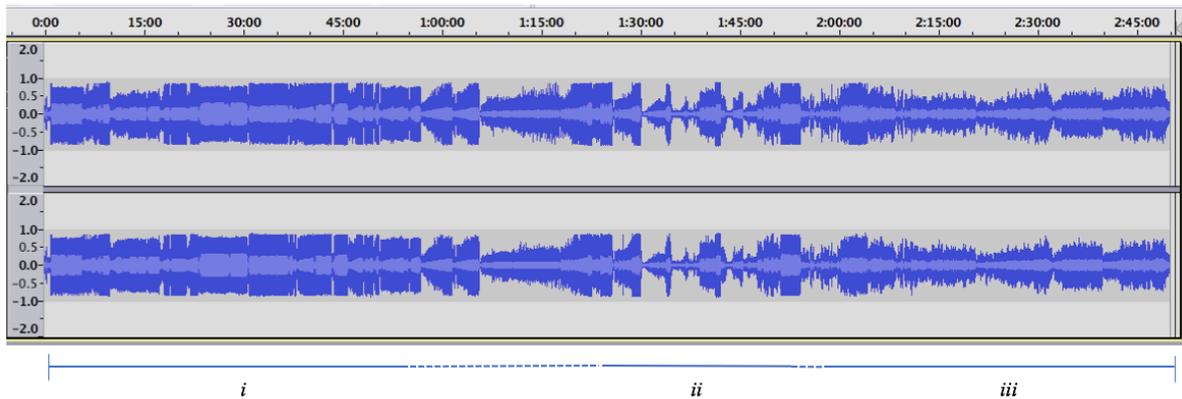
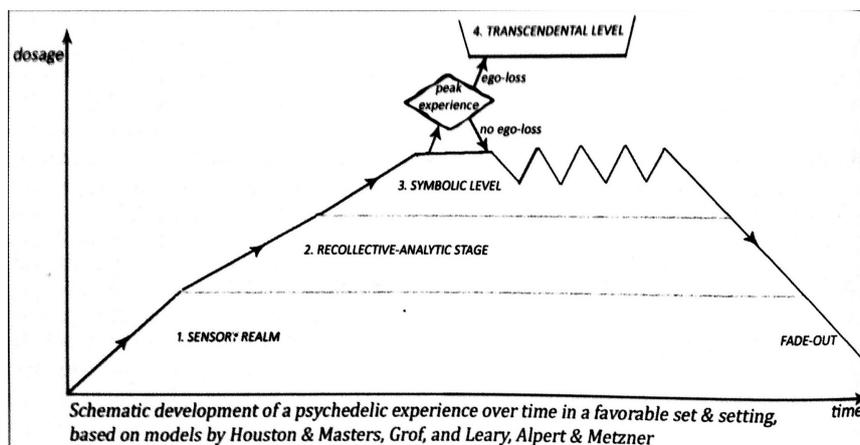


Figure 3. Audacity waveform. Holotropic Breathwork session by Marc Aixalà (GTT).⁸⁴

In the playlist used for Figure 3, the overall process is set to last a minimum of 2 hours and 50 minutes, and shows the application of the outlined phases on a real case. The discontinuous dots shown between sections correspond to the transitional periods that do not strictly fit under one section or the other, but as a modulation set for the participant



Patrick Lundborg, *Psychedelia: An Ancient Culture, A Modern Way of Life* (Stockholm: Lysergia, 2012), p.166.

⁸⁴ The example has been run through Audacity to show the basic spectrum of the complete session in dB. It was provided by Grof Transpersonal Trained facilitator Marc Aixalà, from the Catalan group Holotròpics, to whom I am most grateful for his helpful attitude and open mind.

to adapt and take in the change of repertoire. This flexibility is present in most sessions, and shows the relevance of understanding the pre-set phases as a point of departure, rather than a closed model. In my fieldwork diary of 12th November 2016, I wrote:

I was expecting to come across what is usually the middle section around an hour into the process, but it was not getting there. An hour and 20 minutes later, the shift did finally occur.... This middle part, which includes the 'breakthrough,' lasted for about 30 minutes and shifted towards the expected repertoire. (Fieldwork diary VI, Appendix D, p. 401)

This variability can be addressed by the facilitator on the go, elongating or shortening each part depending on the reception that the participants are having in the specific occasion, which is made easier by having a point of initial reference. However, based on personal experience, the construction of such a curve is not always as clear, nor even as relatable, and it is the contrast with the outer experience of the process – by the sitter or the observer – that ultimately corroborates the efficacy of its mechanics and the actual entrance into a non-ordinary shift of consciousness.

On the other hand, the high bpm reached during the initial phases of the exercise introduces an adaptation in the breathing of some of the participants, when following the music's beat, in the form of an unconscious subdivision or aggrupation of the present tempo. The differences that they present in their personal experiences, as seen during the in-depth interviews, also come into agreement with the activities that have preceded, that have prepared or 'softened' them for their entrance to the shift of consciousness that is suggested. Finally, the set and setting, as described in chapter 2, are the first and ultimate delimitators for highlighting the confidence and disposition of each attendee.

In the case of Holotropic Breathwork, two of the interviewees, who are also facilitators, lent me some of their sessions to analyse, which represent a precise example for the activity.⁸⁵ In these tables, one can trail the diverse stages defined by referring to the characteristics of the introduced pieces – groups of instruments, resources such as delay

⁸⁵ In Holorrhenic Breathwork, I did however not have the names of artists, nor was I able to measure the length of the pieces that were introduced by Ferićglá. The reader can refer to the attached fieldwork diaries, since I was let in as an observer and thus was able to number the characteristics and changes of the pieces that appeared during the process as they developed. See Appendix D, pp. 362-366 and 409-417.

or reverberation, and so forth. Nevertheless, the line between these sections is blurry in their use of transitional pieces, and needs to be seen in favour of the capacity of the facilitator to afford a smooth process that does not disrupt the inner process of the participants. Corresponding to Figure 3:

	Title	Author	Characteristics	Bpm	Duration	Time	Section
1	Feels Like Rain	Michael Danna	Electronic, marked beat and bass line	110	3:22	3:22	i
2	A New Error	Modeselektor	Electronic, distorted, marked beat and bass line, repetitive	110	2:28	5:50	
3	Lauhazka	Oreka Tx	Overtone singing, electronic percussion, marimba, unison chanting, mixed voices, strings	125	4:01	9:51	
4	The Sky Was Pink	James Holden	Electronic, saturated, simple melodic line, marked beat	130	7:41	17:32	
5	Graucholorfen	Hedningarna	Masculine chanting, rhythmic base, strong beat, low frequencies, digeridoo, strings, folk melodies	120	5:43	23:15	
6	Sunrise	Etnoscope	Electronic, strong beat, low frequencies, feminine voice, simple melody	140	7:27	30:42	
7	???	???	Electronic, unison chanting, marked beat, drumming polyrhythm	145	7:05	37:47	
8	Omas Ludvia	Hedningarna	Swedish bagpipe, simple melody lute, guitar, percussion	140	3:54	40:41	
9	Porc #1	Moderat	Electronic rock, marked beat, drumming, breathing sounds	135	2:47	43:28	

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10	Porc #2	Moderat	Electronic rock, marked beat and bass line, long synthesiser notes, soft masculine voice, reverberated	130	2:29	45:57	
11	Tro Breizh	Carlos Núñez	Wood-wind instruments, bagpipe, medium frequencies, percussion, 'Celtic', masculine voices	160 (sub 80)	4:33	50:30	
12	Mandara	Vas	Feminine voice, soft, melismatic, reverberated, <i>tabla</i> drumming, lute, tambourine	180 (sub 90)	6:20	56:50	
13	Om Nama Shivaya	Poumi	Responsorial chanting, drumming, tambourine, fauxbourdon	85 (incr 130)	8:49	1:05:39	t r a n s i t i o n
14	Tantra	David Parsons	Electronic, overtone singing fauxbourdon, percussion, superposed simple melodies	85	12:23	1:18:02	
15	Ghizemli	Omar Faruk Tekbilek	Ney, lute, fauxbourdon, strings, reverberated, soft percussion	150 (sub 50)	7:51	1:25:53	
16	Agnus Dei	Rufus Wainwright	Masculine voice, <i>vibrato</i> , long melody, fauxbourdon, strings, harmonic aperture, reverberation	40	4:24	1:30:17	ii
17	Journey to the Line (Thin Red Line)	Hans Zimmer & Johnn Mori	Movie soundtrack, orchestral, long and wide harmonic lines, long melodic line, wood-wind <i>staccato</i> , light drumming and brass instruments + shift to strings, <i>largo</i> , paused, high frequencies	60	8:35	1:38:52	

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18	The Inner Child	Mike Oldfield	Feminine voice, long melodic line, no lyrics, piano, reverberated, strings, percussion, guitar, bass line	50	4:10	1:43:02	
19	The Kiss (The Last of the Mohicans)	Trevor Jones	Fiddle, light drumming, orchestral, strings, harmonic aperture, long melodic line, brass instruments	75	5:21	1:48:23	
20	Love Marygolds	Mychael Danna	Piano, orchestral, strings, reverberated, harmonically wide, acoustic guitar, rebab, flute	60	2:40	1:51:03	t r a n s i t i o n
21	Straight Song	Primeaux & Mike	Masculine voices at unison, folk, feminine delicate voice, long notes, orchestral, sustained strings, reverberated	50	3:06	1:54:09	
22	Mother Is Sent Away	Various Artists	Feminine voice, campfire sounds, paused, orchestral pulses, soft	50	2:25	1:56:34	
23	Dreams	Goran Bregovic	Feminine voice, chorus, <i>a cappella</i> , wide harmonic range, reverberated	55	2:12	1:58:46	
24	Ná	Kimi Diabaté	Acoustic guitars, complex, masculine spoken voice, choir, bass line	70	4:37	2:03:23	iii
25	Wisdom	R. Carlos Nakai & Nawang Khechog	Light steady drum, flute, strings, masculine voice, reverberated, long melodic lines	110 (sub 55)	5:19	2:08:42	
26	Throat-Singing and igil. Untitled	Shu-de	Small choir, <i>a cappella</i> , carol	100 (sub 50)	2:12	2:10:54	
27	Fullness of Wind	Brian Eno	Orchestral, violin long melody, strings, brass instruments, strong bass line, sustained notes	50	9:49	2:20:43	

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28	Baba Hanuman	Shantala	Acoustic guitar, rebab, tambura, long melody, simple, masculine and feminine voices, choir, repetitive, reverberated	110 (sub 55)	11:42	2:32:25	
29	Chidanada	Deva Premal & Miten	Feminine voice, synthesised fauxbourdon, choir, reverberated	45	7:26	2:39:51	
30	I Could Not Love You More	Ramses III	Synthesiser, saturated, guitar, fauxbourdon, sustained notes and simple harmony, strings	50	10:13	2:50:04	

Table 2. Holotropic Breathwork session by Marc Aixalà (GTT).⁸⁶

Another example, that may serve as a point for contrast and comparison for the reader, can be found in the following session put together by Holly Hartman, Grof's personal secretary in the United Kingdom:

	Title	Author	Characteristics	Bpm	Duration	Time	Section
1	The Tuatha De Danaan	Global Journey	Fiddle, simple melody, drums, bass line, flute, marked beat, 'Celtic' melody	140	5:04	5:04	i
2	Two in the Bush	Outback	Guitar, percussion, low pitched repetitive vocal sounds	130	5:15	10:19	
3	Dark Moon, High Tide	Afro Celt Sound System	Drumming, strong beat, guitar, fiddle, flute, fauxbourdon, 'Celtic' melody	130	4:12	14:31	
4	Delirium	Euphoria	Guitar, slide, percussion, drum, synthesiser, repetitive, chants	110	5:01	19:32	

⁸⁶ 'Sub' stands for 'subdivision' of the rhythm followed by the breathworking participants.

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5	The Funkadelic Drummer	Boris Blenn	Electronic/techno, synthesiser, electronic sounds, repetitive, low frequencies	145	4:39	24:11	
6	Graucholorfen	Hedningama	Masculine chanting, rhythmic base, strong beat, low frequencies, digeridoo, strings, folk melody	120	6:15	30:26	
7	Lesson From A Nomad	Zack Hemsey	Rap, masculine voice, piano, repetitive, marked beat, synthesiser	160 (sub 80)	5:04	35:30	
8	Hiyahiyahey	Chorus of Tribes	Synthesiser, electronic, masculine voice, saturated, marked beat	120	4:16	39:46	
9	Anni Rose	Tulku	Drumming, maracas, guitar, bass line, synthesizer	170 (sub 85)	4:57	44:43	
10	Thai Mannai Vanakkam	A.R. Rahman	Masculine voice, melismatic, responsorial chants, <i>tabla</i> drums, sitar, synthesiser, reverberated	130	6:09	50:52	
11	Ohm, Transfix Mix	Adham Shaikh	Feminine voice, melismatic, <i>tabla</i> drums, bells, marked beat, synthesiser, flute	110	6:49	57:41	t r a n s f i x i o n
12	Samhain	Phil Thornton	Wood-wind instruments, drumming, strings, harmonic opening	120	6:05	1:03:46	
13	Sweet Lullaby	Deep Forest	Chanting, feminine voice, electronic rhythm, synthesiser	95	3:49	1:07:35	
14	The White Feather	Ah*Nee*Mah	Drumming, flute, tambourine, synthesiser, reverberated, harmonic opening	75	6:25	1:14:00	

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15	Brideshead Revisited: Always Summer	Terry Davies & BBC Philharmonic Orchestra	Piano, orchestra, strings, soft, reverberated, romantic	80	2:29	1:16:29	ii
16	Love Mountain	Alborada Del Inka	Flute, guitar, natural sounds, synthesiser, reverberated, drums, bass line	70	5:33	1:22:02	
17	Cantus Inaequalis	Adiemus	Feminine chanting, <i>a cappella</i> , reverberated, percussion, <i>pizzicato</i> strings	110	3:18	1:25:20	
18	A Small Measure of Peace (The Last Samurai)	Hans Zimmer	Orchestral, strings, brass instruments, long notes, harmonic opening, dynamic intensity, wide frequency range	65	8:00	1:33:20	
19	Death is the Road to Awe	Clint Mansell	Orchestral, piano, strings, wide frequency range, dynamic intensity	95 (sub 50)	8:26	1:41:46	
20	Across the Mountains	Vangelis	Orchestral, strings, brass instruments, percussion, male choir, dynamic intensity, reverberated	75	4:12	1:45:58	
21	The Breaking of the Fellowship (The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring)	Fran Walsh & Howard Shore	Orchestral, strings, flute, brass instruments, wide frequency range, dynamic intensity, harmonic opening and soft melodies	50	7:21	1:53:19	
22	Reunited (Parade's End)	Philippe Allard, Geert Callaert, et al.	Orchestral, strings, piano, harp, <i>legato</i> , reverberated	80 (sub 40)	3:02	1:56:21	
23	Ellis Island	Thomas Newman	Strings, oboe, harp, long melodic lines, reverberated	80 (sub 40)	2:06	1:58:27	
24	Dreaming of Bag End (The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey)	Howard Shore	Orchestral, strings, harp, flute, reverberated, dynamic intensity	100 (sub 50)	1:57	2:00:24	

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25	Govinda Radhe	Angelika	Acoustic guitar, harp, feminine voice, soft, reverberated	70	10:53	2:11:17	t r a n s i t i o n
26	Earthsong	James Asher	Synthesiser, flute, bass line reverberated, slow drumming, acoustic guitar	65	6:15	2:17:32	
27	Deora Ar Mo Chroí	Enya	Feminine voice, reverberated, synthesiser, chorus	70	2:47	2:20:19	
28	Trois morceaux après des hymnes byzantins	Anja Lechner and Vassilis Tsabropoulos	Piano, cello, reverberated, long melodic lines	100 (sub 50)	4:09	2:24:28	iii
29	Lotus Dance	Phil Thornton	Strings, soft percussion, <i>tabla</i> drum, trumpet, flute, bass line, synthesiser, reverberated	90 (sub 45)	9:55	2:34:23	
30	Joyful Path	Deuter	Light percussion, bells, gongs, high frequencies	50	2:53	2:37:16	
31	Sea of Vapours	Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan	Sitar, synthesiser, reverberated, male chanting, slow bass line	50	3:58	2:41:14	
32	Song of the Banshee	Aine Minogue	Flute, synthesiser, reverberated, feminine voice, high pitched, long melody lines	55	8:01	2:49:15	
33	Flow	Ahura	Flute melody, reverberated	50	3:34	2:52:49	
34	The Tsok Offering	Jean-Philippe Rykiel & Lama Gyurme	Synthesiser, male voice, melismatic, microchromatic, reverberated	45	7:26	3:00:15	
35	Yelli 1	Baka Beyond / Baka Forest People	Natural sounds, feminine voice, vocal games, soft percussion, raw, free metric	-	1:23	3:01:38	

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36	Relaxing Rainforest Ambience at Dawn for Deep Meditation	Natural White Noise	Natural sounds, waterfall, animals, rain, metric-less	-	3:44	3:05:22	
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Table 3. Holotropic Breathwork session by Holly Hartman (GTT).

These playlists give a better idea of what forms the soundscape for a breathwork session, and of the stylistic considerations that build the liminal phase of the ritual, showing:

(1) a progressive building of drumming instruments and mechanically-produced sounds [i.e. synthesisers], as well as low-pitched voices, which aim for the progressive building-up of the shift of consciousness that is pursued, and which help the breathers enter the suggested exercise;

(2) a shift towards harmonic instruments [i.e. piano] and complex melodic lines, accompanied by frequent use of reverberation and delay effects, focused on the affective development of the participants [peaking with the *breakthrough* with *The Kiss* on the first case, and *Dreaming of Bag End* on the second]; and

(3) a progression towards sounds of nature [i.e. animal sounds] and simple accompaniments to vocal inputs [i.e. fauxbourdons or only reverberating spaces], which appeal to serenity and a feeling of accomplishment, to be read in spiritual terms by the participants in the ritual.

Nevertheless, the facilitators that put these playlists together have the last say in which specific repertoire will make it to the mix, depending on personal preference and experience. Usually, the pieces selected by the facilitators will be crossfaded for a smoother final product that does not interfere in the breathers' journey. However, the participants themselves are the ones to have the last say on the efficacy of the ritual's stages and tools.

6.6. *Guided Breathwork Inside Out: A Reading of its Reception*

After outlining the musically tripartite form in Guided Breathwork from an analytical and external point of view, the question remains whether this process is acknowledged by the participants in the same terms. Here I will address some of the issues that relate directly to the musical development of the practice, as well as its framing, based on the concepts reviewed above. This will be done from two standpoints: (a) the in-depth interviews performed in the field, and (b) my own experience as a breather, sitter, and observer.

First, the two possible approaches that are presented define different results, which conform to different experiences: Holotropic Breathwork allows a greater flexibility in rhythm while breathing than does Holorrhenic Breathwork, which is much stricter. The live drum introduced by Fericgla makes a big difference in this sense as well, since it does not allow the participants to fall into the sleepy state that comes with the apnoea, as is often the case within the frame of its counterpart. An active shift of consciousness is therefore maintained for longer in Holorrhenic Breathwork:

There are moments in which the music gives you a rush. For me the drum helped, like it was more powerful. (Interviewee #6, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

When you breathe for the first time it is hard to recognise the experience as it is, because you don't lose your consciousness, you don't go anywhere. There's people that lose their minds on the outside. If you observe it, it looks like they are out of place and do not control themselves, but it is not true: they have just learned to let go more. (Interviewee #2, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

I thought that one of the symptoms that I would notice would be that I would get dizzy and, somehow, I would get lost.... That the experience would come from these grounds, by the losing of consciousness, by the dizziness... but it wasn't like that, I did not get dizzy at all. (Interviewee #1, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

Here, all interviewees refer to a shift of consciousness that happens outside of the parameters that they imagined before participating, and which end up shaping their experience and ritual outcome. They argue against a loss of control or consciousness, and offer a reading of their experience that allows an understanding of Fericgla's theoretical

cosmos from an emic perspective. Compare this with Holotropic Breathwork, in which getting lost in a blank space is more frequent:

I tried to follow it, to have a minimum consciousness to try and follow the sequence that was introduced, but it was impossible. There was this music at the beginning, tribal, and towards the end I remember that there was some Bach here and there, or something like that, you know? But I can't remember it well because I was too far gone. (Interviewee #10, participant in Holotropic Breathwork)

This weird state came and went away three or four times. Every time I went back to 'consciousness,' I realised I had stopped breathing hollotropically and re-started it, but it wouldn't last long since I was 'away' again. (Extract from fieldwork diary III, in Appendix D, p. 374)

Therefore, the perception of the musical input depends on the practice, and the shifts of consciousness that the participant encountered, as well as on the school. In the fragments above, since there is not an insistence brought in by the facilitator or the need to follow the beat of the music, falling outside of the delineated process in terms of awareness appears to be more frequent.

However, there are cases in which the non-ordinary shifts alters the perception from the outside, also in Holorrhenic Breathwork:

I don't know if there is a moment in which you don't hear [the music], really. I guess you do, because if I didn't notice two moments of accidental silence, it must be that in some moments you are so absorbed by what you hear in your head, that you do not listen too much. (Interviewee #8, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

The only problem, actually, is that while one breathes it is almost impossible to be aware of the detail of the musical development. (Extract from fieldwork diary V, in Appendix D, p. 396)

These cases support the idea that the non-ordinary shift of consciousness needs to be interpreted from the inside in the first place, as stated by Becker in relation to trance, 'in

a way that is congruent with the understandings of the social group.⁸⁷ However, because of the intersubjective cultural agreement that is necessary in the construction of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, which in the West have tended to be pejorative and feminised,⁸⁸ a participant in these ritual scenarios may find it difficult to label them in terms that are usually used to refer to alien cultures.

Likewise, not all encountered shifts of consciousness will be the same for every participant, or on every occasion, but they will fall under a more general umbrella that encompasses them and that depends on factors such as predisposition, physical alterations, or affective responses. However, what seems to be transversal, which may help the embracing of all experiences under these same terms, is the suspension or temporal compression of time created within the ritual and with the help of music, that has been approached by most scholars exploring similar terms.⁸⁹

It is hard for me to separate bits of it, because the experience for me was the entire thing. I can't be sure if it would be better if it was longer or shorter, because you lose track of time. (Interviewee #9, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

The three-hour-long process felt like fifteen minutes.... I kept on going for a while, I rolled on one side, and I lost a bit the perception of the *here* and *now*. I found myself in an empty space, while lots of thoughts were running through my mind but not a single one stayed, nor had more relevance than the previous. (Extract from fieldwork diary III, in Appendix D, p. 373)

These fragments exemplify the malleability of time experienced from within the afforded process, re-introducing the need for understanding the non-ordinary shift from an emic perspective along an etic standpoint.

Nevertheless, music's influence was seen by all interviewees as fundamental to the development and maintenance of the pursued shift of consciousness. Within these

⁸⁷ Becker, *Deep Listeners*, p. 27.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Rupert Till, for instance, places emphasis on the suspension of time, as described in chapter 1, as well as on the influence of music in the creation of an atemporal moment for the listener. Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 9; Rouget, 1985; Becker, 2004; David Aldridge and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006); et al.

remarks, one can find different responses attached to the three established musical phases of the exercise, although they may not have been rationalised as such by the insiders who are unfamiliar with the theoretical background. It is especially relevant to signal the relevance they give to the first section, with its high bpm and encouraging character:

What would be difficult without music would be the following of the breathing rhythm, that's for sure, as I see it. (Interviewee #1, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

On the first part of the breathwork you couldn't do it without the music. It pushes you, it pulls you when you are not getting there, when you are running to get there, to the rhythm of music. (Interviewee #8, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

The presence of fast-paced rhythms and described stylistic characteristics thus appear effective in affording the entrance in to the desired process. Similarly, the thoughts of the participants are often bound to the affective intentionality behind the rituals' musical choices, and refer to the phases described above:

I started crying during the first [session, as a sitter]. I dropped a tear when I saw this girl, because it was very emotional, you were able to *see* the music. All of this, without music, how do you do it? How do you reach these states? It is so important, to have this music. (Interviewee #9, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

There are, for example, chants that may remind you of shamans or to North American natives, and to me, precisely, the theme on the Nazi military caused me.... I got emotional with the native Americans, I dropped some tears, and with the Hitler part... I had a feeling of rejection, right?, with the Hitler bit... I believe that the major part of those who were there threw themselves into the experience, so what you do is... you open yourself and see to what point this music can penetrate into you and provoke these reactions. (Interviewee #9, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)⁹⁰

⁹⁰ The introduction of Hitler in this context is disarming, but is often introduced in Fericgla's breathworking structure as reference to the first biographical journey that the breather encounters. This is meant to trigger rejection and afford a link with the figure of the authoritative father, as outlined in the description of the author's process. It is also one of the key inputs that are remembered by many of the breathers after the exercise. See fieldwork diaries in Appendix D for the detailed description of the studied sessions.

This last quote illustrates the efficacy of the process as envisioned by Fericgla in the environment of Holorrhenic Breathwork. From the reading of the fieldwork notes, the interviews, and their comparison with the process as exposed by the author on the *Music and the Unconscious* seminar,⁹¹ there is a match with the expected reaction – corresponding to what I have labelled above as ‘Biographic Journey I’, in the description of phases followed by this school.

On a similar note, a participant in Holotropic Breathwork highlighted these and other elements that add to the building up of the whole event, which are put in the centre of the discourse by the creators of the practices:

Since I always liked this subject, it is clear that this happens because it has some working tools that are very similar to shamanic medicine.... The music, the breathwork, would be the means through which one alters one’s consciousness, since there is a change of oxygen, etcetera, and after this, there’s the group process and this kind of *inside*, first, but then the fact that you share it with the collectivity. (Interviewee #10, participant in Holotropic Breathwork)

Here, we can observe the relation established between the breathwork ritual and the shamanic tradition that informs it, along the understanding of pseudo-scientific formulas such as the presence of oxygen in blood. Thus, it offers an example of the position embodied by the average participant in the practice, and the connotations given to both the scientific and non-scientific background that supports it.

The introduction of specific affect-focused material, as noted, is fundamental for the following of the process that has been pre-set by the authors of the practices, and for the affordance of these feelings. Because of this, the choice of sonic material does not correspond only to the facilitator’s taste, but also to the capacity of the participants for understanding the used code. It is because of this that some parameters would appear in contrast with the freedom of interpretation that is available to the participants.⁹² Holly Hartman, who is Grof’s secretary in England and a facilitator herself, pointed this out during one of our chats, in relation to a session that she runs overseas:

⁹¹ Fericgla, *Seminario: Músicas e Inconsciente*. See fieldwork diary I, in Appendix D, pp. 337-353.

⁹² Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, pp. 34-36.

[The playlists] had a more Celtic flavour, because around most of the world the Indian music has that kind of rich spiritual quality to it, so I took out everything that I thought was Indian or Eastern in origin, and just created a couple of sets where I thought I was only including Western music, and the first thing was that there was one piece in there that happened to be the national anthem for Tamil Nadu, which is the next place to where we were doing the work. And I didn't hear it as Indian but it was, so I went through the music, a couple of nuns and priests got up like this, and then they were like 'wow, how did you know to put that piece in?' It had been completely contrary to my intention. (Interviewee #3, facilitator in Holotropic Breathwork)

Therefore, any musical influence that may affect the group too directly is discarded by the facilitators. For instance, if a workshop is to be developed in Spain, collectively relatable songs such as the traditional wedding march, the Spanish hymn, or a piece taken from outside of the cultural codes which the participants will not be able to read, would be dismissed. On the other hand, the sharing of a similar code, and the parallel reaction towards the sonic inputs, works to recognise the similarities among those gathered to perform a similar activity, thus acting in favour of group-consciousness.

The same group element has been underlined by the participants themselves as well, since it is built and extended after each workshop, only to be dissolved by time and the fading away of the experience during the following weeks.

That there are a lot of people there is like saying 'well, we are all here with a same goal'; it gives you confidence. We all have an objective; we know what we want and come here because we have it clear in our minds.... This feeling of brotherhood, of being all together. (Interviewee #6, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

Through this assortment, we can observe that the bonding is not only afforded by the sharing of the intense experience, but by the sharing of a universe of meaning in which there is an intersubjective code to follow, and a common affective response.⁹³ As the ritual participant highlights, there is a common objective approached through a shared ordinary context, that makes the exercise valuable.

⁹³ Peter Berger and and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966).

Moving forward, and regarding the shamanic imagery that is highlighted by the participants, it is worth approaching the body manipulations performed in the event that some blockages appear. This approach shows the facilitator to be grounded in a similar space as the traditional shaman – between the access to non-ordinary planes and its inherent healing capabilities:

Manipulating works for this, as well. It's like you overcome that pain in a shorter, but much more intense level.... It is like a first level, you go through it and let go, and then you can keep on with the breathing. There, the possibility of connecting with something else appears, whether it is images, revelations... (Interviewee #2, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

I got in [the process] fast, but then I found myself somehow blocked. I wanted him to come and manipulate me. And it is true that, when he manipulated me, these memories suddenly came to me, of when I was little. I saw an image of my mother that was very powerful, and then it happened, like, my reconciliation with her. (Interviewee #6, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

On the one hand, this shows the effectiveness of the manipulation of the body to keep the participants moving forward within their inner processes. On the other, however, the proposition in the introduction of de-blocking strategies is differently presented by the two schools: while in Holorrhenic Breathwork it serves the breaking of a barrier departing from the facilitator's work, in Holotropic Breathwork it is usually introduced as a cooperative strategy between breather and facilitator.⁹⁴

In my experience and in the specific case of Holotropic Breathwork, it served as a means to help cope with some of the symptoms that may occur during the process, such as the tetanisation [muscle contraction] of the extremities.

I explained that I was still feeling some cramps on my hands because of the reiterated tetany, and she asked me if I wanted to work on it.... She proposed making some pressure

⁹⁴ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*. He defines this as a strategy in which the facilitator asks the breather 'to focus his or her attention in the area where there is a problem and do whatever is necessary to intensify the existing sensations,' to apply the appropriate physical intervention without affecting the unconscious process of the participant, p. 39.

against my hands so I could push against hers, balancing our strength. (Extract from fieldwork diary IV, in Appendix D, p. 381)

And back to the tetany, now on my face.... My jaw was so tight I was starting to get a headache, so he helped me release it by moving it up and down. (Extract from fieldwork diary VI, in Appendix D, p. 403).

These extracts show how the level of intervention and pressure on the body is different in two cases. Holotropic Breathwork offers a more cooperative, less invasive strategy which does not afford a painful reaction to the work applied on the body. The goals behind each practice are consequently different, as the response that they seek is also diverse.

Finally, although there are divided opinions on the inclusion or exclusion of music in these rituals among the participants, there is usually an encountered middle ground in which music is deemed a trigger and stimulator for a more powerful, visceral experience – even if not indispensable at all costs. Within the Holotropic school it is often underlined that a session can keep on developing after a malfunction of the sound equipment, or even in its absence.⁹⁵

However, the difference that music makes has come to establish it as one of the pillars of the practice, and as such has become essential for the induction of the desired shifts of consciousness. This becomes especially pertinent when compared to the other techniques:

For me [Holotropic Breathwork] is way more powerful. Once you have started in Holotropic, you don't go back to Rebirthing. I mean, one Holotropic session is like five or six sessions of Rebirthing. Sure, I have maybe been in 10, 12, 15 sessions of Rebirthing, and there is also a preparatory and closing phase there, you know? But it didn't include music.... The breathwork [technique] is the same, but what happens is that Holotropic is way more powerful. (Interviewee #10, participant in Holotropic Breathwork)

In sum, the role of music in Guided Breathwork is necessary for a full and complete experience. It must be understood to work at several levels that move from the purely physical, as in helping move on with the breathing, to the creation of bonds in the

⁹⁵ Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork*, p. 34.

community that participates in the exercise, through the sharing of an experience within an intersubjectively understood code. The specific backgrounds that are put together for the practices, that represent the transcendental dimensions of the self, and which are embedded into the sacred for their link with one's spirituality, work in the construction of a meaningful experience for the participants, as corroborated by them in first instance.

Thus, it is safe to assert that the creators of the practices have composed a formula that, through an informed study of similar techniques, parallels a psychotropic journey with regard to its phases and general shape, and that works for the participants undertaking the trip. Through the closely detailed phases suggested by each school, this can be compressed under the three delineated phases, and also in the liminal phase of the breathwork itself: a smooth musical development that parallels the psycho-physiological shifts is afforded as a reflection of the overall proposition.

On the latter point, this supports the idea explored in chapter 5, on the elements that need to converge for a successful ritual outcome: a cultural reference to help construct it, that gives a background cosmos to the participant from which to depart; a physical activity adequate for reaching the proposed non-ordinary shift of consciousness; and a musical process that helps articulate it all, while also acting as a reflection of the inner and outer developments of the participant, and in relation to the affective responses of the same.

In the following chapters, I will explore whether these same mechanisms apply to other rituals with a similar use of the sonic element, in their common aim of facilitating transcendence.

7. Case Study II: Energy Centres Systems

In my exploration of the musical and spiritual scene in Barcelona, I came across the *Escuela de Sistema de Centros de Energía* (Energy Centres System School, or ESCEN), which uses popular music for the construction of its workshops, along a central physical element, and a focus on a spiritual dimension of the self.

As in the case of Guided Breathwork, ESCEN was formed from existing traditions that have developed into a contemporary practice. Its origins as a gymnastics method resulted in several outcomes, whose most representative schools are the *Energy Centres System*, by Hugo Ardiles,¹ and the *Río Abierto* system, by María Adela Palcos,² put in practice for the first time in Argentina during the 1960s. Both systems work with the construction of bodily focused exercises, conceived to break one's so-called 'blockages' through movement and music, while promoting self-healing at a psychological and physical level, thus helping the participants' personal development. Because of the several authors under consideration here, in the following pages I will be referring to these ritual expressions under the joint label of 'Energy Centres Systems'.

Although both Ardiles' and Palco's systems were major influencers for the creation of ESCEN (*Escuela del Sistema de Centros de Energía*) in Barcelona, which I will address specifically, Ardiles was the main mentor and central reference for ESCEN's developer Patricia Ríos. In the following pages, I will address both the theoretical background at the foundation of this practice, and the musical specificities that ESCEN presents in its aim of reaching for spirituality and further transcendence.

¹ Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles, 'Tu cuerpo en movimiento. Tu vida en movimiento. Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles: Centros de Energía', *Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles: Centros de Energía* <<https://www.escuelahugoardiles.com/>> [accessed 25 January 2018].

² Fundación Río Abierto, 'Movimiento Vital Expresivo', *Fundación Río Abierto* <<http://www.rioabierto.com.ar/>> [accessed 25 January 2018].

7.1. *An Introduction to Energy Centres Systems*

Energy Centres Systems can be briefly described as a movement-focused class aimed for personal development and self-healing, which is scaffolded by a musical process and a sacred cosmos that gives it meaning. To define it, one can refer to the tripartite division of the individual as highlighted by all authors in Energy Centres, consisting of ‘body, emotion, and mind.’ The same elements are translated in practical terms through their materialization in their practices’ methodology, based on bodily movement, affective expression, and consciousness awareness. That is, Energy Centres Systems work through the body, creating physical exercises focused on improving one’s mobility; through an affective approach, highlighted by an evocative musical process; and through mind and consciousness, in the combination of the latter elements, to facilitate the access what are considered to be higher dimensions of the self. The final aim of this work, however, has evolved over time and moved from simple corrective gymnastics to a more refined, inner self-focused method.

The origin of today’s Energy Centres System expressions is to be found in the pioneering work of Susana Rivara de Milderman (1915-1994), developed under the name of Expressive Rhythmic Gymnastics, or GREYG System,³ around 1946 in La Plata, Argentina.⁴ Nowadays, she is better known as the creator of the *Sistema Milderman* (Milderman System),⁵ which has continued to develop alongside with other schools that her students built, based on the initial cosmos that she established.⁶

³ Acronym for *Gimnasia Rítmica Expresiva con Base de Yoga y plástica Griega* (Expressive Rhythmic Gymnastics with a Base in Yoga and Greek plastics). Like in the previous case, most of the work published by the facilitators in these practices is only available in Spanish, and therefore I am not able to offer an English reference.

⁴ Susana Milderman, ‘Auto-reseña actividades 1915-74’, *Escuela de Expresión Humana: Sistema Milderman* <<http://www.sistemamilderman.com.ar/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Reseña-escrita-por-Susana-1915-74.pdf>> [accessed 25 January 2018]; ‘CV de Susana Rivara II’, *Escuela de Expresión Humana: Sistema Milderman*, 1974 <<http://www.sistemamilderman.com.ar/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/CV-de-Susana-Rivara-II.pdf>> [accessed 25 January 2018]; Patricia Ríos, ‘Sistema Milderman: Movimiento Rítmico Expresivo’, *ESCEN: Movimiento y Desarrollo Integral* <http://www.escen.net/folder_articulos/art014.htm> [accessed 25 January 2018].

⁵ See Escuela de Expresión Humana, ‘Front Page’, *Escuela de Expresión Humana: Sistema Milderman* <<http://www.sistemamilderman.com.ar/>> [accessed 25 January 2018].

⁶ It is common for her disciples and those close to her work to refer to Susana’s innate capability for understanding the needs of the body and human nature. Hugo Ardiles points out, in his book *La energía en mi cuerpo* (Buenos Aires: Kier, 2008): ‘I wondered how this connection of Susana with a master that talked to her and guided her was created. It was obvious that new teachings appeared every day, new ways of working problems through gymnastics....What was Susana’s inner connexion that was in permanent creativity? She called this intuition, and told us that each one of us had to keep on developing

Initially the System consisted of simple body movements focused on improving Milderman's rheumatic issues and related afflictions. However, Milderman continued to study and slowly introduce concepts from Yoga and other disciplines to her newly found expressive exercises,⁷ in an attempt to understand the roots of her disease, and to create a model for others experiencing the same issues, or willing to find a way for self-expression and development. Likewise, it soon became clear that music was a key element for emphasising the relationship between the body and affect, as well as consciousness.⁸

The rapid popularisation of the exercises in Argentina and nearby countries also propitiated the later refinement of similar methods in further schools by Milderman's disciples.⁹ Nevertheless, the basis for the overall exercises remain anchored in common parameters, which are worth considering before moving forward to school specificities.

First, it is essential to return to the partition and link between the physical, the affective and the mental, which inform our human nature and construct the individual as a whole, singular entity.¹⁰ All schools have considered the need for balancing these parameters to build a complete, non-suffering self, and have found a key entrance in a common material ground: the physical body. Beginning with the inherently malleable nature of all individuals,¹¹ the body has been considered by all authors in Energy Centres Systems as the ideal point of departure for beginning one's healing, alluding to the material manifestation that makes non-visible issues palpable.¹²

The capacity for change at an affective level, and of connecting with what are perceived as higher dimensions through consciousness awareness, are therefore approached by all

it,' p. 23. My translation.

⁷ Milderman, 'Auto-reseña actividades 1915-74'; 'CV de Susana Rivara II'; Patricia Ríos, 'Sistema Milderman: Movimiento Rítmico Expresivo', *ESCEN: Movimiento y Desarrollo Integral* <http://www.escen.net/folder_articulos/art014.htm> [accessed 25 January 2018].

⁸ Milderman, 'La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética'.

⁹ That is, Hugo Ardiles and Maria Adela Palcos' propositions, followed by Patricia Ríos and other facilitators that are daily trained and help evolving towards a more refined system every day.

¹⁰ Ardiles, *La energía en mi cuerpo*; Vincenzo Rossi, *La vida en movimiento: El sistema Río Abierto. Sanar los bloqueos emocionales*. (Buenos Aires: Macro Edizioni, 2005).

¹¹ Milderman made special emphasis on the plasticity of men, and one's capacity for change. This was an idea forwarded to her students and disciples on later years. Milderman, 'La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética'.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 30; Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*; Ardiles: *La energía en mi cuerpo*.

schools first from the outside. The root of most afflictions is believed to be incorrect or unnatural bodily posture,¹³ which can be read as a manifestation of deeper affective issues leading to a specific pathology, consequently distancing the individual from one's 'higher dimensions' of the self. Once body and affect are properly balanced in this tripartite structure, and do not distract the attention of the individual, higher consciousness and spirituality can find their place to unfold, creating the desired balance.¹⁴

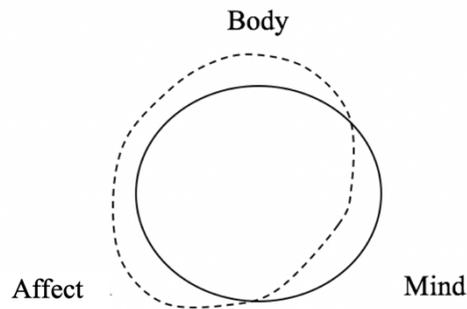


Figure 4. Body, affect and mind: balanced (continuous line) vs. unbalanced (dotted line).

The consideration for the mind and the possibilities of its expansion towards spiritual or higher realms, as perceived by the facilitators and participants in the ritual, is approached differently depending on when each school began its work, and the guiding ideology for each author in establishing a self-tailored sacred cosmos. However, it is assumed that there is a higher realm to be accessed, that may be described within energetic or rather traditional terms, as in an encounter with God.¹⁵ Because of this, the affective and physical healing is ultimately directed towards the reaching of spiritual or transcendental shifts of consciousness.

¹³ For instance, in the case of Susana Milderman the main issue was a rheumatic problem that did not allow her to pursue her career as a singer and performer. For Hugo Ardiles, it was severe arthritis that interceded in his career as a violinist. Milderman, 'Auto-reseña actividades 1915-74'; Ardiles, *La energía en mi cuerpo*; Ríos, 'Sistema Milderman: Movimiento Rítmico Expresivo'.

¹⁴ See Figure 4. Some of the physical restrictions and pathologies that influence the balance of every individual are also considered to be introduced as cultural and social processes, along the more specific personal issues that are shaped through individual history. Therefore, there are physical restrictions that appeal to a restricted emotion, which are shown across large groups of individuals. Milderman, 'La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética'; Hugo Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos: Centros de energía y terapia corporal* (Buenos Aires: Dunken, 2012); Interviewee #26.

¹⁵ Milderman refers to these spheres when making reference to a 'higher consciousness', while Ardiles or Rossi introduce the idea of God more explicitly in their work. See Milderman, 'La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética'; Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*; Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*.

On the one hand, this idea is strongly rooted and complemented by the Eastern Yogic traditions that informed the practice, as well as in the division of the individual in the three established elements. These same sections are associated with smaller parts of the self, represented by the seven traditional chakras used in many forms of Yoga, here referred to as ‘centres’ or ‘centres of energy’:¹⁶ 1st (lower) and 2nd (lumbar-sacral), in relation to the body; 3rd (middle), and 4th (cardiac), affective centres; and 5th (laryngeal), 6th (frontal), and 7th (crown), in relation to the mind.¹⁷

Depending on the way we move, we find seven main centres distributed along our torso, each one encompassing a group of elements that, together, have a characteristic, proper expressive sense.... In Yoga, the Energy that circulates through the body is called Prana [which] circulates through a very complex network of tubes or channels of subtle matter called nadis or Energy Lines. Our Energy Centres are the ones in charge of promoting this circulation and they work as retransmission stations.¹⁸

Thus, the proper alignment of the seven chakras reflects a balance in the three larger areas that they represent, body, affect, and mind, giving a more accurate, relatable field to work within a class in Energy Centres Systems.

On the other hand, to unblock the constrictions that are built around these centres, one needs to move towards a Western psychoanalytic perspective, which introduces the tools to work with. In this context, the figure of Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) takes an essential role. In his work on *Character Analysis*,¹⁹ Reich introduced the concept of ‘muscular

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Each chakra is associated with a body area, and as such to a series of organs, bones, and tissues. Therefore, an affliction in one of these areas needs to be solved by addressing the specific centre that characterises that region. For example, our 5th or laryngeal centre is associated with control, self-judgement, and restriction. It is placed on the area of our shoulders, neck, and face, up to our eyebrows. Thus, developing a stiff neck, would reflect the need to address control and rigidity issues in one’s affective life. See *ibid.*

¹⁸ Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*, pp. 37-38. My translation. Together with this force, Ardiles considers the presence of other powers in the human body, such as Primal Energy, in relation to our basic life maintenance; Fohat, regarding nourishment and vital activities; or Kundalini, which is expressed from the 1st centre up and in relation to nervous energy, p. 114.

¹⁹ Wilhelm Reich, *Character Analysis* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1972).

armours,²⁰ which became fundamental to the Energy Centres Systems cosmos, in its view of the body as a point of entrance for the affective and the spiritual.²¹

Ardiles believed that negative experiences and emotion directly influence us at an affective level, and shape our behaviours in ‘rigidities that are expressed in the body through posture or tense muscular tone,’²² by limiting expression and shaping the physique. In a combination of both these currents, the rigidities and deeper affective issues, related to one’s own centres, are addressed by two key elements: movement and music.

Finally, together with the collective identification that music brings,²³ the capability of sound in taking the individual beyond one’s materiality and into higher dimensions of the self, puts the ‘mind’ element on the table more explicitly:

Through these sounds, we can exit our small world and unite with the universe; thanks to this ‘someone’, who is there in a specific moment, in the music, there is ‘presence’ through its action, even if we do not know its name or image.²⁴

Music then brings a final balance in relation to the three dimensions of the self: first, it helps to maintain focus on the movements and the rhythm, making everyone move at once and around the appropriate centres, thus appealing to the body;²⁵ secondly, through a shared, intersubjective cultural code, it alludes to the participants’ affectivity, bringing

²⁰ Ibid. In his work, Reich’s major postulate is based on *character* armours, which refer to the psyche rather than the body. He describes these armours as barriers which serve ‘on the one hand as a defence against external stimuli; on the other hand it proves to be a means of gaining mastery over the libido, which is continuously pushing forward from the id, because libidinal and sadistic energy is used up in the neurotic reaction formations, compensations, etc.,’ p. 48. This idea is directly linked to the physical expression of such tensions, since ‘every increase of muscular tonus and rigidification is an indication that a vegetative excitation, anxiety, or sexual sensation has been locked and bound,’ p. 340. My translation.

²¹ Ardiles, in *La vida en mis cuerpos*, p. 101, and *La energía en mi cuerpo*, p. 12, makes reference to the role of Susana Milderman in introducing him to the work of Reich, which he further developed.

²² Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*, p. 28. My translation.

²³ Milderman, ‘La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética’; Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*. Rossi, from the Río Abierto System in Italy, in his book dedicated to this system, places special emphasis on this very issue by pointing out that ‘there is a profound alliance between a lot of souls, that in the movement activity with music are transformed into an only soul. This is felt, it is seen, clearly perceived, but it is not understood mentally, and it doesn’t matter!’ p. 191. My translation.

²⁴ Milderman, ‘La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética’, p. 104. My translation.

²⁵ Entraining of physical movement and music is, here, a clear example. Martin Clayton and Laura Leante, ‘Embodiment in Music Performance’, in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, pp. 1–24

affect to the surface; and lastly, because of its inherent ethereal capacity, it appeals to what is read as the ‘otherworldly’, and helps to connect the participant with are perceived as higher levels of consciousness. Thus, music comes to work for the same terms that opened this chapter, and as a socialising element for the whole ensemble.²⁶

These parameters are reflected somewhat differently in the diverse schools that appeared after Milderman’s pioneering work, which need to be taken into account in the specific reading of the practices performed today, within their European context.

7.2. *Centres of Energy: From Susana Milderman to Hugo Ardiles*

In 1966 Hugo Ardiles (1931-) founded his Energy Centres Systems’ school, *Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles* (Dr. Hugo Ardiles’ School).²⁷ Departing from Milderman’s work, Ardiles’ contribution was informed by his own background in medicine, psychotherapy, and music,²⁸ and introduced a more specialised and researched outlook to the exercise. At first, he worked in consonance with Maria Adela Palcos and the Río Abierto System, which presented a closer perspective to his ideas than Milderman’s. However, Ardiles and Palcos ended up developing different approaches rooted in their distinct conception of music and movement, creating two parallel lines of development that have complemented each other ever since. Although there were other systems and schools that bloomed from Milderman’s initial idea,²⁹ Energy Centres System and Río Abierto are its two strongest representations in Europe to this day. Furthermore, within this context, Ardiles’ system

²⁶ See Gilbert Rouget: *A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), *Music and Trance*, pp. 325-326.

²⁷ Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles, ‘Tu cuerpo en movimiento. Tu vida en movimiento. Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles: Centros de Energía’, *Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles: Centros de Energía* <<https://www.escuelahugoardiles.com/>> [accessed 25 January 2018].

²⁸ When he was 17, he joined the Cordoba Philharmonic Orchestra and other ensembles in his hometown in Argentina, and held positions such as first violin in the National University of Buenos Aires Quartet. At 24, he first came in touch with Susana Milderman regarding his anxiety issues, after being awarded a place within the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. He became so captivated by the Milderman System that he decided to stay in Argentina and continue his development in the practice. In his eagerness to understand the results that he was seeing thanks to this gymnastics, and supported by Milderman herself, he enrolled in medicine to try and find ‘the explanations that she could not give’ regarding the effects of the practice. In *La energía en mi cuerpo*, p. 20.

²⁹ Other schools and spaces for Energy Centres in Spain are, for example: Jania: Sistema de Centros de Energía, ‘Jania: Espacio Para El Movimiento’ <<http://jania.org/>> [accessed 30 January 2018]; and Montse Costa, ‘Dana: Centres d’Energia’ <<http://www.dana.cat/es/>> [accessed 30 January 2018].

offered a new way of development that has found further expansion in the work of his alumni, while giving a more specialised role to music.

The background cosmos in the author's practice has been compiled in a single book, *La vida en mis cuerpos: Centros de Energía, terapia corporal* (2012) (Life in my Bodies: Energy Centres, Corporal Therapy), complemented by occasional shorter essays and articles on the same topic.³⁰ When contrasting this volume with Vincenzo Rossi's *La vida en movimiento: El sistema Río Abierto. Sanar los bloqueos emocionales* (2005) (Life in Movement: Río Abierto's System. Healing Emotional Blockages), one finds a similar line of work. Written by Palcos' disciple in the Río Abierto branch, Rossi's book is a complementary account to Ardiles', and offers insight into the collaboration of both schools over the years. The combination of these two, plus the intervention of other professionals in the same area such as Claudia Casanovas,³¹ are ultimately the cornerstone for today's Energy Centres Systems.

Ardiles and Palcos' systems depart from the same cosmos, rooted in the Eastern influences of Yoga in relation to the seven energy centres, the body lines of energy, and one's life force; and the Western psychoanalytical tradition of Reich, with its alternative reading of his proposition of muscular armours. However, they went further into the exploration of another key figure: Antonio Blay (1924-1985).

Blay was best known as one of the fathers of transpersonal psychology in Catalonia over the past century and an expert in several forms of yoga, the introduction of higher levels of consciousness, relaxation techniques, and the understanding of the self through the mind.³² His major contribution, later adopted by Ardiles and other of Milderman's

³⁰ Hugo Ardiles, 'El aire en el centro del afecto', *Uno Mismo*, (Buenos Aires, 2009); 'El centro lumbo-sacro y el estrés', *Yoga Paso a Paso* (Buenos Aires, 2007), p. 1; 'El centro laríngeo y el insomnio', *Yoga Paso a Paso* (Buenos Aires, 2007), p. 2; and others. Ardiles also published a book on his experience in Tibet, regarding his belief and study of reincarnation, along with a smaller volume dedicated to his system, *La energía en mi cuerpo*. Hugo Ardiles, *Regreso al Tíbet: Viaje a una cultura de vidas pasadas* (Buenos Aires: Editor S.A. Javier Vergara, 1998).

³¹ Claudia Casanovas, 'Biografía', *Movimiento Essenza: Percorsi di Crescita Psico-Spirituale* <<http://www.claudiacasanovas.net/index.php?macro=8>> [accessed 5 February 2018]. Casanovas is a specialist in transpersonal coaching, and wife to Vincenzo Rossi. Together they have worked on the development and improvement of Río Abierto's system in Italy, and given numerous workshops for new facilitators and students in transpersonal psychology.

³² Antonio Blay, *Relajación y energía* (Barcelona: Indigo, 2011); Carolina Blay, P. Arrébola, G. Fernández, A. García, and J. González, 'Un recorrido por la propuesta y experiencia de Antonio Blay', *Jornadas: Antonio*

disciples, was centred around his conception of the individuals' intrinsic potential, as constructed by 'energy, intelligence, and love.'³³ Blay considered one's potential to become complete through the actualisation and balance of its composite elements, which afford the gate towards higher dimensions.³⁴ It is not surprising that, given these parallelisms, it reached Ardiles and Palcos' cosmoi, by merging with the ideas described above.

Thus, taking the ideas stated so far into account, from Ardiles' work and its contrast with Rossi's, in representation of the Río Abierto system, one can establish several key points that have influenced today's ongoing expression in the Energy Centres Systems panorama. First, there is an added dimension in the understanding of every individual's world that affords a more complex cosmos, in which interrelations can be formed beyond the physical sphere. This dimension contemplates the coexistence of seven bodies that overlap, coexist, and are co-dependent, to the seven centres of energy or chakras that were already introduced by Milderman.

Blay, 2007 <<http://www.antonioblav.com/Dossier.pdf>> [accessed 24 January 2018]; Carolina Blay, 'Bienvenido a La Web de Antonio Blay', *Antonio Blay* <<http://www.antonioblav.com/>> [accessed 1 February 2018].

³³ Carolina Blay et al., *ibid.*; Antonio Blay, *Personalidad y niveles superiores de conciencia* (Barcelona: Indigo, 1991). See Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*, pp. 25-28.

³⁴ Blay's discourse, in this sense, was strongly focused on God and the ways of approaching and applying prayer and meditation to get closer to his figure. In *Personalidad y niveles superiores de conciencia* (1991), he considers God's presence to be manifested through various means, and states that 'many people think about God as an immense field of energy, that is maybe the base from which the universe and everything that exists is nourished. When one conceives of God in this way, like a *little prince*, this is conducive to an *impersonal* notion of God. And this impersonal notion of God is correct, it is true; God is the Little Prince of everything that exists; beginning of energy, intelligence, and love,' p. 127. My translation.

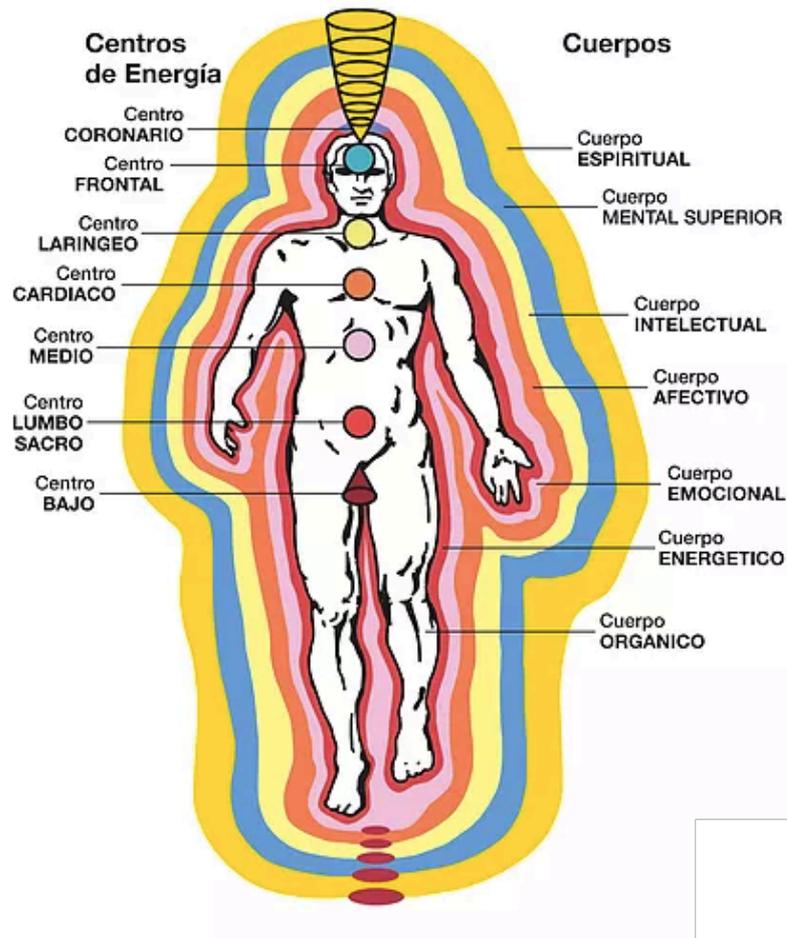


Figure 5. The seven Energy Centres (Centros de Energía) and the seven Bodies (Cuerpos).³⁵

The seven bodies relate to seven different dimensions of the self, from the organic tissue that makes us material beings, through the affective that makes us social, to the spiritual which connects us with the universe. The seven chakras also relate to the diverse kinds of energy that are compressed within ourselves, and which are in charge of different functions, such as managing our affection towards others or being capable of objective self-evaluation. They are also attached to specific body parts, organs, and tissues, and as such interact with them and affect their health. Briefly, their characteristics and functions can be summarised as follows:³⁶

³⁵ Figure retrieved from Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles, 'Tu cuerpo en movimiento. Tu vida en movimiento. Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles: Centros de Energía', *Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles: Centros de Energía* <<https://www.escuelahugoardiles.com/>> [accessed 25 January 2018]. On the left, from top to bottom: Energy Centres / Crown centre / Frontal centre / Laryngeal centre / Cardiac centre / Medium centre / Lumbar-sacral centre / Low centre. On the right, from top to bottom: Bodies / Spiritual body / Superior Mental body / Intellectual body / Affective body / Emotional body / Energetic body / Organic body.

³⁶ As read from Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos; La energía en mi cuerpo*; Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*; Patricia Ríos, 'Un camino de autoconocimiento y transformación interior', *ESCEN - Vida en Movimiento*, 2018 <<https://www.facebook.com/escen.net/videos/1741224829267184/>> [accessed 1 February 2018].

Centres			Bodies	
1	<i>Lower</i>	Comprises the rear part of our legs, glutes, and base of our feet. It is representative of our strength and vitality.	<i>Organic</i>	Represents our material body and all the physical processes that maintain it.
2	<i>Lumbar-sacral</i>	Placed around our lower part of the abdomen and inner thighs. Representative of our instincts and sensuality.	<i>Energetic</i>	Circulates the energy that is created by the organic body. It oversees our physical needs.
3	<i>Middle</i>	Placed around our abdominal area, from our diaphragm to bellybutton. Represents our plasticity and inner affections.	<i>Emotional</i>	In relation to our inner affective life, feelings and affective states. Works with the preceding bodies to afford reactions.
4	<i>Cardiac</i>	Includes our thorax, and our arms and palms secondarily. It is representative of our affectivity towards others.	<i>Affective</i>	Relates to our outer affective expression. Feelings of love and humanity belong to this level. It drinks from the physical as well as the higher bodies.
5	<i>Laryngeal</i>	Comprises our neck, face up to our eyebrows, and fingers. It stands for our capability of reasoning and learning.	<i>Intellectual</i>	Represents our rational understanding of the world, knowledge and practical wisdom. It coordinates the rest of bodies.
6	<i>Frontal</i>	Placed around our cranium and brain. Representative of our perception, creativity, and senses.	<i>Superior Mental</i>	In relation to our abstract mind, creativity and inspiration. Includes intuitive knowledge and potential extrasensory abilities.
7	<i>Crown</i>	Located at the very top of our head and above. It represents our highest level of existence and puts us in touch with the spiritual.	<i>Spiritual</i>	Puts us in relation to the divine, our spiritual plane, our real self, and the Universe.

Table 4. Characteristics of the centres and the bodies.

The centres and bodies delineated in the table above show a stronger connection when put in relation those at the same level – for instance, the lower centre and the organic body. However, each centre can be worked in combination with each one of the seven bodies, thus creating 49 possibilities, which are explored in detail by Ardiles,³⁷ and usually used for the structuring of year-long courses.³⁸ The aggregate of these possibilities affords

³⁷ Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos; La energía en mi cuerpo*. Rossi also offers a description of the interaction of bodies and centres in his work, *La vida en movimiento*, although he does not delineate a specific structure as in Ardiles' case, because of Río Abierto's approach to the relation of music and the chakras.

³⁸ A scheme that first served to teach new instructors the mechanics of the System, which included the 49 aspects of the self, was later developed as a work plan. Ardiles, in *La energía en mi cuerpo*, proposes the following: 'Every seven weeks a series is constructed in which we work one Body, together with one Energy Centre a week. We start with the Lower Centre and go up Centre by Centre until we reach the Crown Centre. On the next series, we go through another Body and do one Centre a week with the

what is the unique personality of every human being, but also every individual's blockages and armours. Once these characteristics are embedded into the movement class, they are put in direct relation to the musical set to mobilise the appropriate energy. Therefore, the music will have to be adjusted to the needs of every centre and body, so movement and sound can cooperate in the breaking of the muscular armours that are attached to them,³⁹ in representation of the afflictions of the participants in the practice.

Another element developed both by Ríos Abierto and Ardiles' system was the theorisation of interferences and complementarities between centres. The same idea was later taken on by the ESCEN school, and combined with the theory of Ríos' teacher to provide a more complete outlook and practice. Within these interacting possibilities, the one which usually gets most of the attention is that created between the 1st and 7th chakras, to which the 4th can also be added because of its role in connecting the earthly to the otherworldly.⁴⁰ Music, on the other hand, reinforces the connection between these spheres, when combining the physical and sacred foci that intervene, contributing 'to extreme states of emotion,'⁴¹ as already stated by Becker in relation to non-ordinary shifts of consciousness.

7.3. *The Next Generation: ESCEN with Patricia Ríos*

From Milderman, through Ardiles and Palcos, the discourse reached its most recent and richest point of development with the creation of the ESCEN school in Barcelona, by Patricia Ríos (1955-).⁴² The sum of the outlined theories and constitutive parts in Energy Centres Systems were the foundation for the workshops that continue to take place regularly in the city, expanded a bit further every day with new incorporations and propositions. When Ríos first moved to Barcelona in 1986, she stayed in tune with

new Body. On the following year, the depth level in one's work will be greater,' p. 72. My translation.

³⁹ Ardiles also goes one step further in the consideration of Reich's muscular armours, already re-interpreted by Milderman, and proposes three different kinds depending on their nature: (I) hard, shown through muscular contraction and body deformity; (II) soft, expressed through excessive flexibility and emotional deformity; and (III) rigid muscular armours, parting from the hard and soft, which can become obsessive or schizoid behaviours. *La vida en mis cuerpos*, pp. 105-106 and 244-247.

⁴⁰ The connection between these centres, and others, was also introduced during some of the workshops in which I participated, as can be seen in fieldwork diary XII, in Appendix E, pp. 449-452.

⁴¹ Judith Becker, 'Exploring the Habitus of Listening: Anthropological Perspectives', in Patrick N. Juslin, and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 138.

⁴² Escuela Sistema Centros de Energía, 'Sistema ESCEN'.

Ardiles' system. However, she soon started to introduce new elements, and to combine them with further teachings from her colleagues in Río Abierto. This creative process resulted in the creation of ESCEN in 2003, which is now the main school for several instructors across Catalonia and Spain.

Ríos defines her system as 'yoga in movement,' similarly to Ardiles' early vision of his Energy Centres Systems as a new form of yoga,⁴³ and often labels it as *Movimiento Rítmico Expresivo Correctivo* (Corrective Rhythmic Expressive Movement), alluding to its characteristics of physical activity and expression release working towards the healing of the participants.⁴⁴ She embedded the traditional movement with music within a wider practice, including *Masaje Correctivo Profundo* (Deep Corrective Massage)⁴⁵ to help dissolve the participant's muscular armours more quickly, and other perspectives drawn from her close relation with the Gestalt Institute of Barcelona,⁴⁶ and their input on transpersonal development.

Although she has not yet published her work as have the others cited here, she stays present in social media and through those channels expands her own ideas about Energy Centres, alongside colleagues such as Valeria Zylbersztejn.⁴⁷ This, together with an in-depth interview and other informal chats, allowed me to trace her main contributions to the evolving ritual, and her visions on its sonic aspects. First, beginning with Ardiles' work and his description of the music to go with each chakra,⁴⁸ Ríos helped clarify which sonic

⁴³ Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Patricia Ríos, 'Sistema de Centros de Energía: Una técnica para sanar cuerpo, mente y espíritu', *Ser Humano Hoy*, 2004 <http://www.escen.net/folder_medios/serhumano_ano2004_num3_01.pdf> [accessed 15 January 2018]; 'Sistemas de Centros de Energía: Terapia corporal para el desarrollo íntegro de la persona', *Athanor* (Barcelona, 1998), p. 33.

⁴⁵ Escuela Sistema Centros de Energía, 'Masaje Correctivo Profundo (M.C.P)', *Sistema ESCEN* <http://www.escen.net/el_masaje.php> [accessed 30 January 2018].

⁴⁶ Institut Gestalt, 'Formación en terapia corporal y Gestalt - Primer curso', *Institut Gestalt: Psicoterapia, comunicació i relacions humanes* <<http://institutgestalt.com/areas-de-conocimiento/actividad/formacion-en-terapia-corporal-y-gestalt-primer-curso>> [accessed 5 February 2018]. Many of the participants in Ríos' workshops and classes are also in frequent contact with this Institute and have been formed within its courses.

⁴⁷ See Patricia Ríos, 'ESCEN - Vida en Movimiento', *Facebook* <<https://www.facebook.com/escen.net/>> [accessed 2 February 2018]. She posts upcoming workshops, news, photos and videos on this website, and keeps her students updated through a monthly email list. Additionally, she has written some brief articles on the System such as: 'Movimiento y desarrollo integral: Un camino de autoconocimiento y evolución personal', *Athanor* (Barcelona, 2004), p. 36; 'Cuerpo en movimiento: Una vía al autoconocimiento', *Athanor* (Barcelona, 2004), p. 38; or, 'Una invitación a expandir y disfrutar de todo nuestro potencial de ser', *Athanor* (Barcelona, 2005), p. 55.

⁴⁸ Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*.

inputs correspond to each centre, as well as the nature of their relation. This key issue, read within the context shown in Board 4 and according to its most current form, can be summarised as follows:

- *1st chakra* or *Lower centre*. The repertoire must be strongly rhythmic, and have a marked beat for the participants to follow with their feet against the floor, connecting to Earth. It may include folkloric and pop music, as long as it stays predominantly rhythmic and percussion is put at the foreground. It gives the participants the energy to start the class and connects them with their vitality.
- *2nd chakra* or *Lumbar-Sacral centre*. Still fairly rhythmic, but more centred on the cadences in the music. It must ‘alternate strong and soft beats,’⁴⁹ creating syncopated rhythms that appeal to hip, pelvic, and lumbar movement. It usually includes Caribbean rhythms such as rumba, mambo or bachata, which also bring a cultural association to the dances that go with them. The movement induced by the music suggests sexual and sensual liberation for the participants.
- *3rd chakra* or *Middle centre*. The repertoire must rely on the music’s affective content, and therefore melody takes a major role in its development. Rhythm and aggressiveness are discarded from a physically expressive perspective, but the repertoire can be meant to induce any emotion from happiness to anger, as long as it helps the participant connect with one’s own feelings.⁵⁰
- *4th chakra* or *Cardiac centre*. Relies on harmonic development to reflect the opening of the heart towards the others, although long melodic lines are also strongly present. It includes more contrast in dynamics and intervallic distance than the 3rd centre, and appeals to communion, to ‘loving one’s neighbour.’ It is meant to promote social interaction and kindness, so anything that may reinforce this from the facilitators’ perspective would be a fit option.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 120. My translation.

⁵⁰ The problem with this and the 4th chakra is that they strongly rely on the taste of the facilitator, on the one hand, and on the intention put behind the work that is done, on the other. Therefore, any musical piece that serves to touch the participants affectively from the facilitator’s perspective would be considered suitable for this section.

- *5th chakra* or *Laryngeal centre*. This centre is based on change, so it may include any repertoire as long as it provides contrast and sudden turns in its development. It does usually include pieces that allude to digital movement and vocal games, such as harp or piano pieces and tongue twisters, as well as playful themes. Since this centre is that of control and restriction, the music introduced aims for the opposite: the unpredictable, the playful, and the casual.
- *6th chakra* or *Frontal centre*: Intends to put the participant ‘on one’s axis,’⁵¹ in equilibrium, and as such makes a review of the previous centres as in a line-up. The repertoire associated with this chakra is, however, softer and must promote introspection. Hindustani rāga music or chill out music would be adequate to represent it.
- *7th chakra* or *Crown centre*. In representation of the higher dimensions of the self, must include very soft, ambient music, although it is also worked from a meditative perspective and in silence. Together with the 6th centre, the repertoire moves around a light sonic input aimed to bring focus. Because of this, they do not have a specific music attached to them as in the case of lower centres.

This outline of the musical process is explained by Ríos as a development that takes the participant ‘from lower to higher frequencies.’ She understands each chakra to vibrate according to its position in the body and what its area of influence stands for. This vibration is thicker the closer it is to the ground, to our roots, and thins out on its way up to the crown centre, in which the transcendental can be finally met.

Her insight on religion and the potential of music to bring the participants to transcendental shifts of consciousness is strongly informed by her teacher and background, although it reflects an updated society in which God is frequently put aside and next to an amalgamation of spiritual propositions.⁵²

⁵¹ Interviewee #18.

⁵² Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London: HMSO, 1989); Christopher Partridge, and Marcus Moberg, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); et al. See Part I.

For me, it is a process. All the process of energy centres is a process of de-identification, of who you think you are, to find who you really are, in your essence, in your deep self. Then, this is where the transpersonal makes an entrance, in this knowledge of the profound that takes one to transcendence. One can choose Tibetan Buddhism, others say God, others say Mahomet, and it does not matter which one is your religion or philosophy. I am less and less on for religion and more for pure spirituality, in which one can find that deep identity that responds to something that is above. (Extract from an interview with Patricia Ríos, performed on 25th June 2016 in Barcelona)⁵³

Finally, it is worth emphasising Ríos' input on the role of silence within the music-focused practice, specifically the silence that follows the end of the liminal part of the session. In this, she finds a special spot for meditation and integration of what has been experienced, in contrast with the shift that one may experience once *in* the exercise itself. It is in this moment, she states, that one truly connects with 'the one that's behind,' one's deep self.

Thus, and having reviewed the evolution of Energy Centres Systems from their creation to its most actualised proposition, its mechanics, and the background cosmos on which it all sits, there is only one question to be asked: how does this all merge in a single session?

7.4. *The Ritual Dimensions in Energy Centres Systems*

In Energy Centres Systems sessions, there are three options to focus on: (a) working one centre at a time, (b) combining more than one complementary centre in one class, or (c) making an overall journey encompassing all seven centres in one go. The chosen modality depends in great measure on the previous experience of the participants in the activity, whether they are new to the system, or have already mastered it. If there is an open workshop, developed mainly to introduce new participants to the practice, it is usually constructed as a complete review of the seven chakras. There are also weekly or monthly classes developed for closed groups, in which this perspective is extended towards a more centre-specific work.⁵⁴

⁵³ My translation.

⁵⁴ There are also yearly programmed intensive workshops in which all centres are worked in more detail

The approach taken by both main schools is also somewhat different. In Ardiles' case, the classes suggested a clearer separation in the work for each chakra, while Palcos did not establish such a clear division, thus maintaining the structure that had been Milderman's:

I suggested to the director of that institute that we ask our instructors to change the Centre at work every week. Although at first this was found interesting, it soon brought rejection by the instructors, and oddness by the students when observing the changes in the class. Some followed the proposition, which demonstrated that the work that should be transformative for themselves, was very restrictive and became 'chronifying'. In my own school I then trained the instructors in this technique, of moving each week from a different Centre, starting from the Lower Centre and going up every week with one of the Centres until reaching the Crown Centre.⁵⁵

Ardiles' strategy was followed by Patricia Ríos within her own system in ESCEN, but not by the followers of the Río Abierto system, creating a divergence that produced two coexisting lines of work, which are still maintained today.

However, independently of their focus on a single or multiple centres per session, each class works on the basis of three clear, major stages, which again correspond to the ritual phases established by Van Gennepe:⁵⁶

1. *Introduction or pre-liminal stage.* Begins with the introduction given by the facilitator in relation to the centre or centres that are going to be approached. The participants are invited to sit in a circle and discuss how the class is going to be developed, and which characteristics of the centre are going to be approached.
2. *Experience or liminal stage.* Corresponds to the central movement and dancing part of the exercise, in which the facilitator starts conducting the participants through

during a whole weekend, as captured on fieldwork diaries VIII (pp. 419-432) and XIII (pp. 453-464), in Appendix E.

⁵⁵ Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*, p. 314. My translation.

⁵⁶ Arnold Van Gennepe, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). I have taken the terms used in Guided Breathwork to describe the three phases that are afforded within the Energy Centres Systems ritual, as a means of unifying the discourse throughout this research.

imitative movements, creating collaborative exercises between them, and building a final relaxation through Yoga poses or asanas.⁵⁷ The only change in perspective between both major schools during this phase depends on the focus of the work on a single centre or more.

3. *Integration or post-liminal stage.* Each session is closed with integrative exercises to help the participant understand what has been developed, such as sharing one's experience with the rest of participants, and some reflections by the facilitators.

Within these phases, music is only present during the liminal stage, as a means to mobilise the participants towards the emotions that need to be elucidated, while structuring the session and regulating the dynamics of the group. Since the musical process is designed to encourage a specific response, it needs to be developed within an intersubjective code that makes it feasible.⁵⁸

The length of the sessions depends on their typology and schedule availability. A monthly workshop may be four hours long, while an introductory open presentation will range from one to two hours maximum.⁵⁹ And while it is usual for the facilitators to book or rent the spaces in which they work, there is not a pre-established or ideal time span, but rather an illustrative notion that ranges from approximately one-and-a-half to four hours per session. This variability is easily adjustable thanks to the technological reproduction of the music.⁶⁰ Likewise, such a reproduction helps to construct a closed, private

⁵⁷ These Yoga poses have two aims: to stretch the body after the dancing and moving exercise, and to finish channeling the energy towards the centre or centres that have been worked. They are included at the end of each liminal stage to wrap it up and transition towards the sharing and integration of the experience. See Milderman, 'La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética'; Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos, La energía en mi cuerpo*; Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*.

⁵⁸ Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*; Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (London: Chicago University Press, 1956); Eric F Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁹ In longer sessions, the liminal phase may include a final massage to conclude, after the asanas and before the integration of the practice on the post-liminal stage, as can be seen in some of the fieldwork diaries in Appendix E. These massages are also taught within the frame of Energy Centres Systems in Patricia Ríos' school, as a part of the three-year course that she has offered since 1992 for alumni interested in becoming new instructors. Although it used to be compulsory within the formation, it is now settled as an extra year-long module. Escuela Sistema Centros de Energía, 'Masaje Correctivo Profundo (M.C.P)'; Ardiles, 'Entrenar con meditación, sanar con masajes'.

⁶⁰ The musical reproduction has evolved in agreement with the technological possibilities of the moment. On the workshops that I took, there were two possible approaches: bringing CDs and alternating them, or having a whole pre-recorded session in one of them; or bringing a laptop with a playlist that allowed better manipulation of the material *in situ*. These two possibilities are shown in the fieldwork diaries

environment for the participants, while making it possible for the facilitator to have control over repertoire, its volume, and its total length.⁶¹

Control over the repertoire is given to specific individuals in the room. According to this intervention and decision capacity, those involved in an Energy Centres class can be roughly divided into two categories: facilitators and participants. The facilitators are those conducting the class, giving the instructions for the participants to follow, and preparing and moderating the overall session. Although experience is a key factor in assembling a successful Energy Centres Systems class, both Río Abierto's and Ardiles' Systems were designed to produce new instructors in their methods, in order for the system to endure and evolve.

Those who studied with Palcos and Ardiles, such as Vincenzo Rossi and Patrícia Ríos respectively, moved on to build new formation courses with their own personal touch and accumulated learning experience. Thanks to this, there are now Energy Centres Systems in several cities in Spain and further afield.⁶² In all of these courses there is always a music module to help the students in their creative process, giving them the appropriate tools for selecting the materials to go with each centre, and to work for each set goal. The students' responsibilities therefore include the construction of an adequate musical process that will serve the ideal development of the energies at work, beginning with testing their own positive response to the output that they have afforded.

Obviously, the capability of the instructor is fundamental to know how to manage this powerful instrument that is the body with music. One must be receptive and passive, to let oneself be directed internally by the music, taking all the parts and dynamics that are played on the musical journey; and, at the same time, be completely receptive, to translate all of one's body energies at music in movement so one's students, in harmony with the instructor, can express it too.⁶³

attached in Appendix E.

⁶¹ Susana Milderman already noticed the great advantage that that technology offered to her musically-guided proposition, and considered it to be 'the miracle of technology, that allows us, every time more, to approach with higher purity the creativity of men. Because in agreement with the expansion that performers and technicians have achieved with sound, it has been possible the expansion that we have been able to obtain with movement,' 'La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética', p. 104.

⁶² Escuela Sistema Centros de Energía, 'Sistema ESCEN'; Fundación Río Abierto, 'Movimiento Vital Expresivo'.

⁶³ Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*, p. 149. My translation.

In addition, in each session there is at least one secondary facilitator or helper, whose role is to support the work of the main conductor of the activity. The participants themselves may have different levels of insight on the practice, and can participate independently of their function as facilitators. They are to follow the main facilitator's movements, especially during the first part of the liminal exercise, and to reinforce instructions for group work, or any indications for free movement. There are no special requirements for them to follow, besides letting go and enjoying the process in the safe space afforded within the dancing space. They are, in short, at the mercy of the musical content and the movements to go with it, as led by the practice's guide.

This passive role contrasts with the active intervention of the facilitators, thus establishing a defined hierarchy within the classroom. However, it is usual for the facilitator not to intervene directly, or to give only brief indications that do not interfere with the participants' process. Likewise, there is space left for the participant to express freely, starting with the brief indications given at the pre-liminal phase and the examples presented by the movements performed by the facilitators.⁶⁴

As regards the environment in which the classes develop, there is not a regular facility built for the specific use of Energy Centres Systems, but rather a variety of carefully chosen spaces offering the desired privacy for the participants. The space is, therefore, taken from the secular space and temporarily redefined within sacred boundaries. The same can be said about the music, which once more is taken from the secular everyday repertoire and placed in a non-ordinary environment, framed within the sacred background cosmos that shapes it. To better understand how the music relates to the frame afforded for the bodily focused exercises, it is necessary to look at the specific music outline from which all the discussed parameters unfold.

⁶⁴ Ardiles, in *La vida en mis cuerpos*, makes special emphasis on the role that the facilitator must undertake, and describes the plan to follow for a successful class or workshop. According to this outline, the instructor must (I) choose a music that will push oneself towards expression, (II) propose specific objectives depending on the centre that is worked, (III) use a strategy to achieve those objectives, and (IV) apply a technique that will allow that strategy to be developed, p. 319.

7.5. *A Musical Analysis of Energy Centres Systems*

The analysis developed in the following pages responds to my overall understanding of Energy Centres Systems as a participant-observer, and takes its particularities from Patricia Ríos' ESCEN, in which I actively took part during my fieldwork.⁶⁵

As previously indicated, there are three major sections to take into account on the construction of the ritual:

- I. *Preparation.* Each session begins with an introduction by the facilitator, which is used to set the mood for the participants as well as to give some guidelines in relation to the centre or centres that are going to be approached. Depending on the nature of the session, this speech addresses different aspects: if it is an introductory workshop for new participants, it will include an introduction to the System as well as a review of the Energy Centres; if it is a class for experienced alumni, which is likely to be focused on a specific chakra, it will comprise a review of the centre and other general observations if needed. This usually takes place in the room where the class is going to develop, within a circle prepared with mats and cushions, that are later taken aside, for the participants to be comfortable. Music is not present during this phase.

- II. *Experience.* The main experience and liminal stage of the exercise comprises the movement exercise itself, which is structured entirely through music. Words are hardly ever used, unless it is a brief instruction by the main facilitator or any chants, screams, and sounds that may be emitted by the participants; 'letting go' also encompasses vocal expression, even if not articulated.

The assistants start by standing in a circle and imitating the movements of the main facilitator, which are guided towards the centre that is to be worked, or the consecutive centres if in an all-centres session. These movements become freer after a while into the process, as a means of addressing every participant's

⁶⁵ All fieldwork diaries regarding the practice, and the analysis on some of the sessions that I have been facilitated, can be found in Appendix E.

needs for self-expression. Exercises in couples are often encouraged as well, both to promote interaction and to find support in the movement from other participants, as well as regarding group interaction – for instance, in collective embraces or circles in which hands are held and movement is again coordinated.

Together with the musical input, this central phase can be divided in three smaller sub-parts:

- i. *Warming up.* The session starts building up slowly to give room for the participants to get into the exercise and warm up. The pieces included in this part grow in intensity accordingly,⁶⁶ while the movements are specifically focused on the corresponding centre, as guided by the facilitator. The character of the repertoire will depend on the chakras at work, but it will build up consistently within variable parameters – for instance, on the beats per minute for the lower centres (which can reach 200bpm), or in harmonic overlaying of melodic instruments for affective centres. Likewise, the volume is usually increased once the participants start moving around more enthusiastically, both to make it clear for listening and to give emphasis to the movement itself.

- ii. *Full expression.* Once the room has warmed up, the characteristics of the music corresponding to the worked centre (or centres) can develop fully, creating a stronger connection between the participant and the suggested body movement. Although the tracks follow one another, sometimes with no space and only a fade in and out, there can be brief moments of pause in between from a physical perspective, if the intensity is bodily demanding. In this section, free movement and any possible interactive exercises are

⁶⁶ Intensity, as built up by music and physical movement, will depend on the energy centre being developed. Thus, if working with a rhythm-centered chakra, the intensity will be marked by the increased bpm and inclusion of percussive instruments, as well as by the suggestion of more energetic movements; while if working an emotion-centered chakra, intensity will be defined by the overlaying of melodic and harmonic instruments, or the inclusion of a wider tessitura, and physical contact between participants.

introduced. Volume is kept high until the session reaches its peak of intensity, with regard to body movement, and allows a shift towards the affective development that corresponds, which is often coordinated with a moment of group interaction.

- iii. *Cool down.* Then follows a progressive cool down in which the volume is reduced and movement is slowed down to a stop. As the end of the session approaches, more neutral repertoires are included, which go better with the stretching or asanas that are performed to close. Depending on the participants and schedule availability, the facilitators can choose to shorten or stretch this part *in situ*. Although it is not unusual to finish a session by reaching total silence, in the event that the workshop takes place in a crowded location, music also serves to keep the participants in the process and to block out any disrupting sounds. In longer workshops, this phase can be wrapped up with a brief massage in couples, in silence.

- III. *Integration.* Once the body movement has developed, and the pertinent asanas have been performed, the participants go back to sitting in a circle, prepared by the secondary facilitators during the last part of the previous section, with the materials at hand to make it a comfortable experience. The main facilitator reflects on the work that has been done and invites the attendees to share their experiences and feelings with the group, as a means of helping them begin the process of integration. Music is not present during this phase. As in the case of Guided Breathwork, the integrative process is understood to be extended in time for several days after the workshop, until fully absorbed by the participant.

As previously stated, the length for a session can vary depending on its nature and on space availability. However, there are some guidelines that can give an idea on the space that each section may occupy. For instance, if the session was to be completed within a single hour, the approximate distribution of each section would be similar to:

- (I) Preparation: 10 minutes
- (II) Experience: 40 minutes, distributed more or less in
 - (i) warming up: 5 minutes
 - (ii) full expression: 20 minutes
 - (iii) cool down, 15 minutes⁶⁷
- (III) Integration: 10 minutes

This shows how music is present in approximately two thirds of the overall session, if not more in longer classes, thus becoming the central point of attention for the ritual. Since the liminal stage is by definition the crucial point in which the status of the participant is suspended and in a process of change,⁶⁸ its musical outline and definition demand a higher level of scrutiny. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the practice to be understood within the established three stages, which help the participants form a comprehensive and integrative point of view.

Regardless of the workshop and the centres that are being targeted, the suggested tripartite structure is maintained in all sessions. That is, despite the different focuses that each centre offers, or the overall journey that is presented by all-centres sessions, there is a pre-established development that is common to every class, which acts as a guide. Furthermore, two main parameters can be drawn regarding the characteristics present in each Energy Centres Systems session, in consonance with those stated within Guided Breathwork: structural characteristics, and stylistic characteristics.

Within the structural characteristics, volume and overall intensity are defined differently depending on the centres and their aims, and define the structure of the session, mirroring the ongoing physical process of the participants. Usually, each class starts at a medium volume range, and rapidly increases as the movement in the room intensifies. This escalating volume is paralleled by the adequate repertoire for the centre, which becomes more specific regarding its defining characteristics. Both parameters finally decrease towards the third part of the session, giving way to the integration part that follows.

⁶⁷ The cooldown would be elongated in the event that a massage was included in the session, as an extra feature to compliment the process.

⁶⁸ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997); Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

Stylistic characteristics can describe the process based on certain common traits: (i) a clearly drawn introduction that slowly introduces the process, which evolves towards faster rhythms or other parameters depending on the centre; (ii) a proposition that describes the centres' needs as specifically as possible, that helps the participant reach the peak of the experience, and enter more affective-focused responses; and (iii) softer pieces that, within the proposed repertoire, accompany the stretching and asanas from a more reflective standpoint.

In visual terms, this process resembles the shape of an amphora, which widens up, expands, maintains its shape, and then progressively shrinks, as in a reflection of the building up, maintenance, and release that these sonic parameters present. In relation to movement, it reflects a higher point placed around the middle section of the overall class, in which a shift from the physical entrance to the affective connection is made. Its sonic signature curve would correspond to the following:

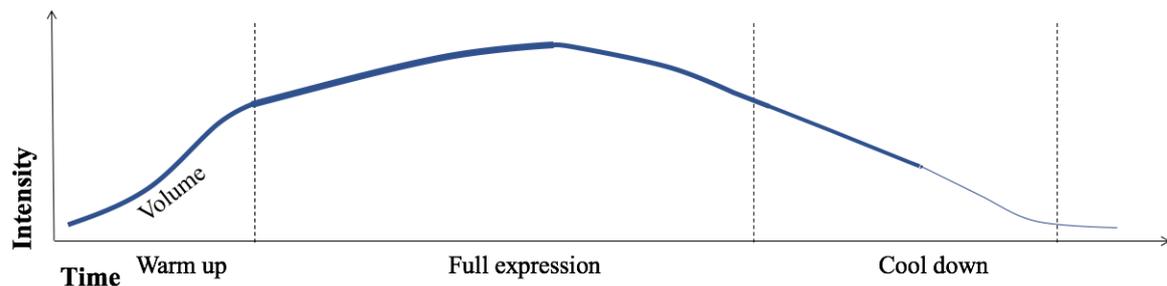


Figure 6. Development of an Energy Centres Systems class.

This same curve, when run through software analysis, does not appear as useful or neat as in the case of Guided Breathwork,⁶⁹ due to the role that both volume and physical activity have in the shaping of the structure presented above. So, although there is a musical input that influences the development of the exercise directly, depending on the focus put on the repertoires' characteristics, one piece could be useful in approaching diverse centres, and as such does not show very variable in a spectrum analysis.

⁶⁹ See chapter 6.

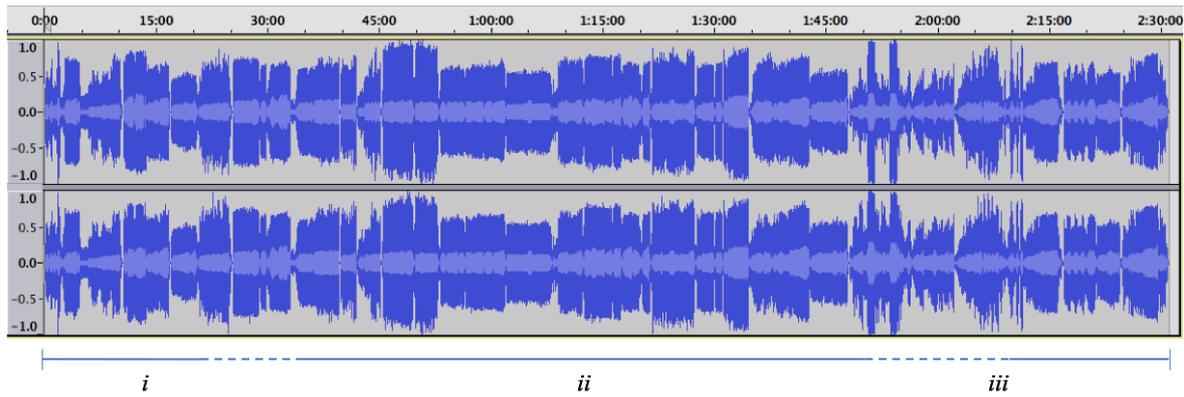


Figure 7. ESCEN session on the Laryngeal centre, by Valeria Zylbersztejn.⁷⁰

Although this does not offer us much information without a close listening to the session, as the example in Figure 7 proves, there is no such thing as a completely closed guide to follow, but rather a malleable development that depends on factors such as the taste or the intention of the facilitator. As can be observed in the 2.5 hour session above, the warming up moves somewhere between 20 and 30 minutes, the full expressive face extends for about an hour and a half, and the cool down is introduced from a point about two hours in. Although this fits the pre-set time scale, it does not apply strictly in the malleable progression that unites one section with another.

In the event that the shape in Figure 6 was to be re-reproduced in consecutive classes to approach all centres, beginning from the Lower and up to the Crown, an added element would need to be taken into account. One could observe the difference in intensity to which Ríos referred as the ‘thinning out’ of the frequencies attached to each chakra in the progressive classes, thus showing yet another variable within the overall process:

⁷⁰ The example has been run through Audacity to show the basic spectre of the complete session in its dB range. It was provided by Ardiles’ student Valeria Zylbersztejn, who is now Patricia Ríos’ closest developer of her system, and to whom I am most grateful for her help within my journey in Energy Centres.

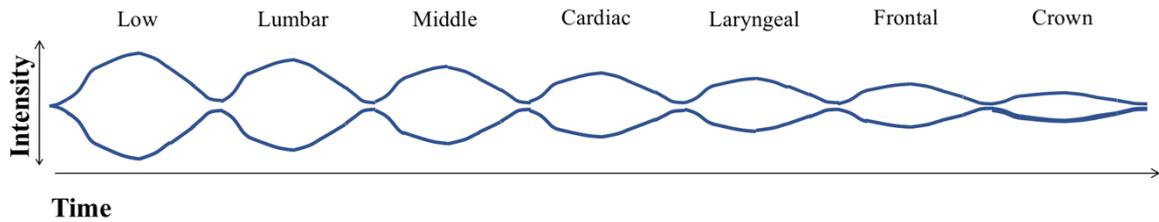


Figure 8. All centres as overall development and intensity in ESCEN.⁷¹

Although the duration and overall development are parallel, when contrasted in terms of repertoire and overall intensity, as described by the overlaying or increasing of sounds involved, one can see a progressive decrease that coincides with the idea of progressive stillness, both in the sound and the movement. This shape, if seen vertically rather than horizontally, would refer equally to the position of each centre in the body.

For a closer look at specifics, a few of the facilitators in ESCEN lent me some of their sessions to analyse more closely. In them, there is a reflection of the diverse possibilities offered by the focus of each session, depending on their length and targeted chakras. In accordance with these parameters, the following tables offer the opportunity to trace the Signature Sonic Curve described above, taking into account any transitional pieces and variables that may occur once theory is put to practice. The corresponding outline for Figure 7 above, for a full four-hour long Laryngeal workshop, is:⁷²

⁷¹ For this to be clearer I decided to double the curve presented in Figure 3, to create an amphora shape that represents the development for each centre, and in each class. To this scheme, Ríos referred to as an illustration from one's vertebrae, as looked horizontally, to match the centres that correspond.

⁷² This session also corresponds to fieldwork diary XI, in Appendix E, pp. 445-448.

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	Title	Author	Characteristics	Bpm	Duration	Time	Section
1	Domestic Pressures	Jóhann Jóhannsson	Waltz, piano, strings, <i>legato</i> , minor	50	2:37	2:37	i
2	La Vie Est Ailleurs	Coeur De Pirate	Feminine voice, piano, slow drums, trinary	60	2:27	5:04	
3	Tree Song	René Aubry	<i>Pizzicato</i> violin, accordion, male airy voice	70	5:41	10:45	
4	Pomme D'amour I	René Aubry	Strings, <i>pizzicato</i> , guitar, major, <i>arpeggios</i> , playful	120 (sub 60)	3:02	13:47	
5	Wonder	Oi Va Voi	<i>Legato</i> violin, guitar, slow drums, soft feminine voice	50	3:20	17:07	
6	Wind Cries Mary	Jamie Cullum	Piano, drums, jazz, feminine voice, brass instruments, syncopated	80	3:36	20:43	t r a n s i t i o n
7	Never Be The Same	Christopher Cross	Piano, drums, masculine voice, minor, electric guitar	120 (sub 60)	4:46	25:29	
8	Continuando	Jehro	Masculine voice, percussion, guitar, piano, syncopated,	120	3:37	29:06	
9	Let It Go	The Piano Guys	Piano, cello, <i>staccato-legato</i> contrasts, background strings	140	4:36	33:42	
10	World Of Light	Stupendams	Vocal games, mixed voices, choral, percussion, syncopated	100	2:26	36:18	ii
11	Close To Me - Cover	Stupendams – The Cure	Vocal games, mixed voices, a capella cover, soft percussion	100	3:38	39:56	
12	No Quiero Tu Dinero (El Rockito)	Las Blacanblus	Swing, piano, feminine voice with chorus, drums, vocal games	160	2:18	42:14	
13	Après La Pluie II	René Aubry	Acoustic guitar, <i>tremolo</i> , piano, reverberation, electronic base	160	3:15	45:29	
14	La Pulce D'acqua	Angelo Branduardi	Acoustic guitar, percussion, male voice, wind and brass instruments	100	4:30	49:59	

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15	Cogli La Prima Mela	Angelo Branduardi	Acoustic guitar, male voice, syncopated, percussion	70	3:21	53:20	
16	Minor Reason	Kaori Kobayashi	Saxo, guitar, drums and percussion, bass line and synthesiser, jazz	110	4:21	57:41	
17	Sunny	Karoi Kobayashi	Flute, percussion, guitar, bass line, jazz, syncopated	110	4:34	1:02:15	
18	Ele Best!	Kaori Kobayashi	Brass instruments, electric guitar, drums, syncopated	120 (sub 60)	6:14	1:08:29	
19	If You Play With My Mind	Cornell Hurd Band	Cello, percussion, natural sounds, guitar, sax	100	4:11	1:12:40	
20	Somebody to Love (live)	Queen	Male voice and chorus, electric guitar, drums, piano	70	5:07	1:17:47	
21	Mission Impossible	The Piano Guys feat. Lindsey Stirling	Piano, cello, violin, percussion	110	3:45	1:21:32	
22	Too Young To Die	Jamiroquai	Male voice, bass line, drums, guitar, synthesiser, vocal games, strings	100	6:06	1:27:38	
23	Shiny	Kaori Kobayashi	Synthesiser, guitar, drums, trumpet, piano, jazz	110	4:02	1:31:40	
24	Virtual Insanity	Jamiroqui	Piano, male voice, syncopated, drums, synthesiser, bass line	100	3:45	1:35:25	
25	Everything I've Got	Ella Fitzgerald	Piano, feminine voice, bass line, syncopated, jazz	170 (sub 80)	3:24	1:38:49	
26	Dream A Little Dream Of Me	The Mamas & The Papas	Acoustic guitar, guitar, bass line, drums, feminine voice, chorus, syncopated	80	3:14	1:42:03	
27	Europa	Santana	Electric guitar, bass, drums, reverberation, long melodic lines	80	5:04	1:47:07	t r a n s i -
28	What A Difference A Day Made	Jamie Cullum	Piano, drums, bass line, male voice, jazz, minor	60	5:09	1:52:16	

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29	Primavera	Ludovico Einaudi	Piano, strings, orchestral, minor, virtuoso	140 (sub 50)	7:24	1:59:40	- t i o n
30	Tribute	Yanni	Strings, reverberated, feminine 'ah' voice, piano, wind, orchestral	70 (sub 40)	6:43	2:06:23	
31	Aria	Balanescu Quartet	String quartet, <i>staccato</i> bass over long melodic lines	70	3:50	2:10:13	iii
32	Vivaldi: Concerto in C, R.558, 'Con Molti Stromenti', 1. Allegro Molto	The English Concert and Trevor Pinnock	Strings, orchestral, virtuoso, mandolin, counterpoint	110 (sub 60)	5:25	2:15:38	
33	Shooting Star	Kaori Kobayashi	Piano, saxophone, light drums, synthesiser, bass	50	5:15	2:20:53	
34	Hallelujah	Leonard Cohen	Deep masculine voice, choir, bass line, drums, electric guitar	60	4:38	2:25:31	
35	These Are The Days	Jamie Cullum	Piano, masculine voice, drums, bass, syncopated, trumpet	70 (sub 40)	3:21	2:28:51	
36	Kol Galgal	The Fools of Prophecy	Acoustic guitar, masculine voice, reverberation, choir	60 (sub 30)	6:16	2:35:07	

Table 5. ESCEN Laryngeal session by Valeria Zylbersztejn.⁷³

In this table, we can see how a class focused on a single centre is developed both in structural and stylistic terms. The liminal phase of the ritual thus develops showing:

- (1) a first 20-minute section designed for warming up and for introducing some of the characteristics that will fully develop within the second section, paired to the Laryngeal centre [i.e. *pizzicati* that appeal to finger movement, or ternary beats that remind of dance steps];

⁷³ 'Sub' stands for 'subdivision' of the rhythm, followed by the participants in relation to the movement.

- (2) a second section that starts building up on the very elements that appeal to the body parts linked to the centre at work. On the one hand, guitar and piano pieces are played, along drumming ensembles, which appeal to the same body movement initiated on section *i*. On the other, patterns which introduce synchopes and jazz-like rhythms are introduced more consistently, while bpm and volume build up along from a structural standpoint.
- (3) After bpm and volume start decreasing progressively, the closing section is brought in, maintaining similar musical elements [i.e. *staccati* and mandolines], but with the inclusion of more reverberation or smaller instrumental ensembles.

This same structure, in the event that the session was focused on a single centre, and that the schedule did not allow such a lengthy elaboration, could be expressed through a briefer musical programme to encompass the same stages through shorter time lapses.

For instance, if addressing the Crown centre in a two-hour long session, a possible outline for the same would be as follows:

	Title	Author	Characteristics	Bpm	Duration	Time	Section
1	Groovin' On A Feeling	Laid Back	Guitar, marked beat, radiophonic and masculine voices, synthesiser	115	3:54	3:54	i
2	Redemption Song	Playing For Change	Masculine voice, guitar, drums, slide	115	4:20	8:05	
3	???	???	Masculine voice, guitar, light drums, clarinet	70	5:31	13:36	
4	Minas Com Bahia	Daniela Mercury, feat. Samuel Rosa	Feminine and masculine voice duo, guitar, light drums, syncopated, chorus	180 (sub 90)	3:20	16:56	
5	Angel	Sarah McLachlan	Piano, feminine voice, reverberated, minor	120 (sub 40)	4:37	21:33	t r a n s.
6	Brindis	Soledad	Acoustic guitar, feminine voice, minor, <i>waltz</i>	120 (sub 40)	4:29	26:02	

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7	Phenomenal Woman	Ruthie Foster	Feminine voice, melismatic, blues, light drums, acoustic, choir	100 (sub 50)	4:27	30:29	ii
8	Ave Maria, Gounod	Soeur Marie Keyrouz & Orchestre De Chambre D'Auvergne & Arie Van Beek	Harp, feminine operatic voice, orchestral, <i>largo</i> , reverberated	60 (sub 30)	3:29	33:58	
9	Silence	Bliss	Acoustic guitar, feminine voice, long syllables, strings, synthesizer, very reverberated	30	5:36	39:34	
10	Qualitati Umane	Thomas Otten	Operatic voice, choir, long syllables, very reverberated	30	2:08	41:42	
11	The Whispering Sea	Al Agami	Feminine voice, long syllables, synthesiser, reverberated, change to spoken masculine voice + drums, cello	30	6:01	47:43	t r a n s.
12	Shamanic Journey	Anugama	Synthesiser, flute, plucked instrument, reverberated, light drumming, 'ethnic'	30	10:27	58:10	
13	A Journey Within	Hubbub	Synthesiser, bells, reverberated, flute, 'ethnic'	30	8:13	1:06:23	
14	Inner Strength, Inner Peace	Hubbub	Synthesiser, 'ethnic' percussion, flute, harp, reverberated	30	7:07	1:13:03	
15	Silent meditation						

Table 6. ESCEN Crown session by Laura Torneró.

Lastly, it is interesting comparing these developments to an all-chakras session, which is often put together for open-door workshops and other one-time events, where there is a will for conducting the participant from Earth to spirituality in a single journey, yet following a similar musical pattern in the sonic discourse. Like in Board 6, the following playlist was put together for a brief session of about two hours:

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	Title	Author	Characteristics	Bpm	Duration	Time	Section
1	Feo, Fuerte y Formal (cover)	El Canto del Loco	Pop-rock, masculine voice, drums, electric guitar, bass line	130 (sub 65)	2:53	2:53	i
2	Lonely Boy	The Black Keys	Rock, simple, masculine voice, feminine choir, drums, electric guitar, bass line	160 (sub 85)	3:13	6:06	
3	Rollin on the River	Tina Turner	Deep, full voices, choir, syncopated, acoustic guitar, percussion, brass instruments	100	4:55	11:01	
4	Satisfaction (cover)	John Lee Hooker, Johnny Rivers	Jazzy, syncopated, male voice, riff on bass, percussion, synthesiser	130 (sub 65)	2:56	13:57	
5	La Bamba, Twist and Shout	Johnny Rivers	Jazzy, light percussion, syncopated, masculine voice, acoustic guitar	140 (sub 70)	6:25	20:22	
6	Hī'ilawe	Gabby Pahinui	Acoustic guitars, male voice, folk	120 (sub 60)	4:11	24:33	
7	Paka Ua	Daniel Ho	Acoustic guitar, reverberated, soft	75 (sub 40)	3:53	28:26	
8	Volare	Gipsy Kings	Rumba, Spanish guitar, percussion, melismatic voice, masculine	120	3:39	32:05	
9	Trista Pena	Gipsy Kings	Flamenco, Spanish guitar, melismatic voice, masculine, light percussion, minor	90	4:33	36:38	t r a n s i t i o n
10	Alma Mía	Bola de Nieve	Piano, old record, masculine voice, minor, romantic	60	2:44	39:22	
11	If I Can Dream	Elvis Presley	Masculine voice, bass line, brass instruments, light percussion, synthesiser	65	3:08	42:30	ii

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12	Love Me Tender	Elvis Presley	Masculine voice, acoustic guitar, reverberated, soft choir	70 (sub 35)	2:48	45:18	
13	Somewhere Over the Rainbow (cover)	Norah Jones	Feminine voice, high pitched, acoustic guitar, syncopated, minor, reverberated, strings	80	5:20	50:38	
14	El oboe de Gabriel (La Misión)	Ennio Morricone	Oboe, orchestral, <i>largo</i> , reverberated, very light percussion, minor	70	2:14	52:52	
15	You Stop My Heart	Melanie Fiona	Feminine voice, choir, percussion, guitar – <i>tremolo</i>	110	3:45	56:37	
16	Chiquitita	Abba	Feminine voices in harmony, guitar, reverberated, piano, percussion	90	5:26	1:02:03	
17	All You Need is Love	The Beatles	Brass and string instruments, masculine voices, choir	100	3:48	1:05:51	t r a n s.
18	Hallelujah	Jeff Buckley	Masculine voice, soft, acoustic guitar, reverberated	70	6:53	1:12:44	
19	Love Unspoken	Kim O’Leary	Feminine voice, synthesiser –strings, reverberated, light <i>pizzicato</i> bass	50	3:20	1:16:00	iii
20	Pick Yourself Up	Diana Krall	Jazzy, feminine voice, piano, solo guitar, light percussion	60	3:01	1:19:01	
21	Candilejas	Indios Tabajaras	Acoustic guitar, reverberated, simple	50	2:06	1:21:07	
22	La Vie En Rose	Louis Armstrong & Itinérarie D’un Génie	Male voice, trumpet, piano, bass, light percussion	70 (sub 35)	3:28	1:24:35	

Table 7. ESCEN All-Chakras session by José Martínez.

In this case, the stylistic elements at play need further review, as there is not a single group of characteristics involved which can be linked to a single only centre, but rather to an overview:

- (1) The first part here comprises the 1st, 2nd and 5th centres.⁷⁴ This can be observed through the stylistic elements and their development in the use of rock rhythms and low-pitched voices [1st]; the progressive introduction of syncopated rhythms and acoustic instruments [2nd]; and the reaching of rumba and flamenco styles which allude to dancing and 'letting go' [5th].
- (2) The second section is then developed from an exploration of the affective 3rd and 4th centres, with the slight lowering of bpm and a focus brought on by melodic and harmonic elements: orchestral and reverberated elements come into play, and feminine voices and minor tonalities are more present. Nevertheless, the progression from 3rd to 4th is brought in by the facilitator and the suggested body movements.
- (3) Lastly, a review of some of the elements that have been already reviewed [i.e. acoustic guitar, jazz rhythms, feminine voices] are re-introduced in favour of the 6th centre, and slowly the 7th centre is approached from a more 'static' perspective [including the use of synthesisers and sustained notes].

As in Guided Breathwork, these examples offer an idea of what may be chosen to play in some specific Energy Centres Systems' sessions. In opposition to the later case, there is not a strict preference for crossfading the songs, but there can be small pauses to give the participants a physical break. Nevertheless, the suggested structure that is common to all sessions must be read from the assessment of the ritual participants, in order to establish the practice's efficacy.

⁷⁴ This is sometimes done, not to disrupt the introspective process that the second section affords, leaving the affective 3rd and 4th for the second section.

7.6. *Reception of the Energy Centres System*

Having outlined the tripartite process that is afforded within Energy Centres Systems, specifically regarding their musically guided liminal stage, the participants' own insights must be considered. In the end, it is their recurrent participation and intersubjective agreement on the practice's foundations that have maintained it as a subuniverse of meaning within a shared cultural context,⁷⁵ and which has provided enough sustainability to afford an 'evolution' towards more refined structures. Here, I will focus on the specific role music plays in the pursuit of the participants' earthly and transcendental goals, beginning from two key standpoints: the in-depth interviews performed during my fieldwork, and my own experience as a participant-observer in several classes, ranging from introductory sessions to intensive weekend courses.

The efficacy of the use of music can be determined from both a physical perspective, for entering the practice, and an affective point of view, regarding one's unblocking or reviewing of memories and attached feelings. However, the physical aspect, which acts as a trigger or a driving force for entering the session, is inseparable from the affective reaction that it provokes.

Let's say that music can activate body movement, it can activate all the dimensions of the self. Then, it depends on the music that you use for the work, that one thing or the other will activate in yourself and other people. (Interviewee #26, facilitator in Río Abierto)

When we assemble a class, or at least when I do, it is assembled to move the specific energy of that centre. Then, all the unifying thread relies on music, and as such the structure is very important, it is basic. From whatever one puts together, the class develops. (Interviewee #22, facilitator in Río Abierto)

The capacity of choosing an appropriate repertoire for each centre or workshop is, therefore, valued from the facilitators' standpoint as the point from which a successful process will unfold. Furthermore, it shows the consideration of the sonic element to be indispensable in its approach towards one's hidden emotions, buried under one's muscular armours:

⁷⁵ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966); Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967).

I would say it is such an important factor in Centres that I would not conceive it without music, and it is this quality of music that has something which goes straight to the soul. Music touches something that only music can touch. (Interviewee #25, facilitator in ESCEN)

It touches a part of your body, I would also say. Musical notes ‘cling, cling, cling’, each one touches a spring, like so, awakening the energy that is in the body. Without music, our work would not exist. (Interviewee #18, facilitator in ESCEN)

Through these statements, the value attributed to music can be observed through participants and facilitators’ opinions alike, along some of the values that form the background cosmos of the ritual, introducing the ‘energetic’ element present within the practice’s imagery.

As underlined on the pages above, music’s functions and uses in the ritual were multiple.⁷⁶ There are several facets of the musical input that are as well noticed by the participants, such as their relation to movement and to memory.⁷⁷

The emotional value of the practice as linked to the music and the movement has been, in a sense, reaffirmed through this workshop. Many of them [participants] have talked about blockages, and how music and movement have helped them loosen them up. One of the participants has even referred to a brief ‘regression’ to the origin of an emotional shield on her middle centre. (Extract from fieldwork diary X, in Appendix E, p. 441)

Music is very basic and that you can see it, for instance, when people are tender because of a break up or a separation: there are songs that touch them so much. These songs make you remember a couple that you had, a relationship, a summer partying out when you had so

⁷⁶ Alan Merriam already outlined the potential uses and functions of music in his work, in *The Anthropology of Music* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), which can be taken as a reference here with regards to the construction of the ritual environment, from its affective potential to the ability of inducing specific states for those sharing a same sociocultural code, in a religious sense.

⁷⁷ This approach has been outlined by several authors both in music therapy, in relation to the benefits of music in bringing back memories, and ecological approaches to musicology focused on the mechanisms of the mind in the recognition of musical patterns and already-heard pieces. Clarke, *Ways of Listening*; Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of a Consciousness* (London: William Heinemann, 2000); Judith Becker, ‘Music and Trance’, *Leonardo Music Journal*, 4 (1994), pp. 41–51. Becker, on the other hand, develops the concept of *deep listening*, that can be assimilated to the kind of listening that is mostly induced within Energy Centres Systems transversally. See Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004); Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer’s Sound Practice* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2005).

much fun.... There is music, reminding those intensively emotional moments that bring you back to that place, like some smells do. (Interviewee #19, participant in ESCEN)

In these fragments, we can see how some affective reactions are afforded through the music, to the extent of reaching personal – almost psychoanalytic-based – memories that work in favour of the goals put forth by the facilitators, for the participants to reach.

This same potentiation of memory can be pinpointed in association with the entrance of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, which depart from the same elements outlined here, while making a step towards the specifically transcendent – one’s ‘higher dimensions’, as defined by Milderman, Ardiles and Ríos.⁷⁸ In other words, the introduction of a musical reference within the context of bodily movement acts as a stimulus for memory, which can be read as a realisation with utter transcendental meaning for the individual, supported by the sacred cosmos that frames it. Some participants are able to recall past events directly associated with their muscular armours.

But, unlike the previous centres, this one was holding a surprise: a big, explosive emotional reaction by some of the participants, that have started yelling, crying, falling to the floor. Although there was a part of the class that had been approaching a totally different mood, a loud guttural scream has brought me out of focus.... Music, here, has been the final trigger, together with synchronised bodily activity, to develop a non-ordinary state for some of the attendants. (Extract from fieldwork diary VIII, in Appendix E, p. 425)

[The System] uses movement to reach sort of a trance and reach those places that normally, with an awakened Laryngeal, are blocking this door and you cannot enter, because the brain is protecting itself. Then, thanks to the music, and this is a good example, a music so ‘wah!’, that is like going crazy, that door lowers, and the defences and the control lower, the Laryngeal is not in control anymore, and then one can enter that zone of one’s psyche that has been hidden there because it was some crap you did not want to see. (Interviewee #19, participant in ESCEN)

⁷⁸ Milderman, ‘La aspiración hacia un equilibrio entre la ética y la estética’; Ardiles, *La energía en mi cuerpo; La vida en mis cuerpos*; Ríos, ‘Sistema de Centros de Energía: Una técnica para sanar cuerpo, mente y espíritu’; and others.

However, such shifts of consciousness are not usually defined with labels such as ‘trance’, due to the assumed link of the term with reality dissociation and alien cultural frames.⁷⁹ Once again, the gap between the idea of the non-ordinary shift and its actual experience, in many of its possible degrees, needs to be reframed for a better understanding of its implications.

In the end, one experiences moments of consciousness alteration. This does not mean that you are not *here*. For me, it is so natural since I was a child, that I have to put words on something normal, but music connects very much with emotion, and for me emotion is a conducting thread towards one’s own history.... It is this thread that allows one to enter these states that are closed, to open them up. (Interviewee #22, facilitator in Río Abierto)

This consideration of the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness can thus be put along the experiences described within Guided Breathwork, as there is not a loss of awareness during the whole process, though there may be a blurred line as regards time-awareness. The temporal alteration implications associated with these phenomena, can also be introduced here from the references made by the participants themselves, as one of the elements that define this non-ordinary experiencing of unfolding events.⁸⁰

I had this feeling that we were there, and it clearly was because of the music. One realises that one of the points here is contact, or the connection, and I remember that there was this moment – which was very intense – when we let go, like the music, and when we finally separated and looked around us everyone was already on the floor picking everything up. I mean, there were not even doing the *asanas*, they were talking, and I did not hear a thing, I promise. (Interviewee #19, participant in ESCEN)

[I remember] a moment in which we were doing this movement on the rail, I was absorbed in my movement, and when I turned around it had been a while since the others had changed their movement, and I was there hooked to that emotional sensation. (Interviewee #24, participant in ESCEN)

⁷⁹ The alien perspective of non-ordinary states and their rejection has been described by several authors in the field, and put in relation to a traditional ethnocentric context that disapproves and associates it with tribal and feminised behaviour. See Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Becker, *Deep Listeners*; Ernesto De Martino, *Morte e pianto rituale: Del lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri editore, 1985); et al.

⁸⁰ Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 9; Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Becker, *Deep Listeners*; David Aldridge, and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006).

However, this can be contrasted with the conscious awareness of any interruptions, for instance, in the event of any malfunctions of the sound equipment or the introduction of an alien sound. Depending on the depth of the non-ordinary shift of consciousness that one is in, the practice's focus may change abruptly creating a gap in the process, thus exemplifying the range of possible shifts that one can get in touch with, and that can be experienced within a same group simultaneously.

When music starts decreasing in intensity and volume, or if there is a pause, it is difficult to keep the focus on the activity, at least in that specific building – the noise from other rooms is usually so intense that it ‘breaks’ the inner process.... Actually, this time during the class the music stopped a couple of times due to a malfunction of the music equipment, and the sudden change of focus among the participants was notable. (Extract from fieldwork diary X, in Appendix E, p. 443)

This exemplifies the connection between the sonic input and the affective development that is afforded, in that with the lack of the former the latter becomes less focused and interesting for the participant. Furthermore, the easy entrance that music provides is often highlighted through its more cheerful, enjoyable facet, which also makes it social.⁸¹

It is the same characteristics that effectively appeal to the body and make it relate to movement, propitiating the interaction with the sonic element that is set forward in an intersubjectively shared context, with a common aim in sight. Since each centre is associated with specific body movements, this element is deemed unavoidable for a successful development in any class.

What it offers that's different, I think is the music and the body, that combination. I believe that with other therapies you can reach this personal growth, spiritual growth. But maybe this one has something more ludic and enjoyable, which is given by music. Then, through this little hole it is easier to enter, in a class in Centres, in the process, in what Energy Centres offers. (Interviewee #25, facilitator in ESCEN)

⁸¹ John Blacking, ‘How Musical Is Man?’, *Notes* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1973); Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*; Timothy Rice, ‘Music as Culture’, in *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 65–78.

It is like these gymnastics rejuvenate you, some say it burns karma, some say it rejuvenates you. It keeps you jovial because movement is life, it is vitality, then moving in that way, it brings out happiness and works emotion in depth through music. (Interviewee #20, facilitator in ESCEN)

This playfulness in music also allows an easier transition within centres, whenever more than one is approached, as in the case of connecting one's lower, cardiac and crown centres in a single transcendently-focused session.⁸² Since in Energy Centres Systems there needs to be a strong connection to the ground, to one's physical reality, so one can successfully move towards – what is to be perceived as – the spiritual, the possibilities offered by music afford a smoother progression between centres, which benefit from an unspoken shared language that helps the transition.⁸³

[She] remarked how our 1st chakra is usually blocked from our childhood onwards when we are deprived from free movement and expression.... She also explained that we were going to move to the 4th centre for a bit, to root the 1st centre and give way to the 7th through it, as a means of uniting the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual. This was actually very clear during the musical development, with a marked delineation of the inflexion between 1st-4th-7th. (Extract from fieldwork diary XII, in Appendix E, p. 451)

These lines show the connection established between body and movement, but they also offer an example of how both areas of development are bound to the theoretical cosmos constructed at the background of the practice. The connection to both the Eastern influences on which the practice drank, and the psychoanalytic brought in by Reich and Blay are also clearly present.⁸⁴

The element of community creation as provided by the sonic input is present in Energy Centres Systems as well, thanks to the collaborative aspect and the need for focusing towards a common goal. As I have shown, a shared focus towards a transcendental or spiritual aim can be magnified by adding music to the equation,⁸⁵ offering a sense of

⁸² Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*; Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*. See fieldwork diary XII, in Appendix E, pp. 449-452.

⁸³ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*; Clarke, *Ways of Listening*; Juslin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*. See chapter 3.

⁸⁴ Sees chapter 7.1 and 7.2.

⁸⁵ Becker, 'Exploring the Habitus of Listening'.

tangibility to the shared cosmos that has been built and intersubjectively agreed. The idea of sharing a space and a cultural code, together with a transcendental background cosmos is, then, fundamental to the creation of a strong self-sustaining community that allows the continuity of the system in time.

Music helps develop a specific energy that creates a collective energy in that moment. Then it is like a circulation between music and what has been created, because there is creation between everyone. I can direct it for it to be created, but it is then created, and co-created between all participants. I assure you that it [a collective feeling] is created. (Interviewee #22, facilitator in Río Abierto)

This extract, on a wider level, shows some of the elements involved in the affordance of an empathic reaction among participants,⁸⁶ and refers us back to entrainment and synchronicity theories in several of their levels, from inter-individual to inter-group.⁸⁷ Thus, the theoretical elements described in Chapter 3 and 4 find a direct echo here.

Also, the delineation of the musical process, associated with centres that depend on our cultural reading for their effective development, introduce ideas to be associated with our cultural imagery and associative meaning. Some facilitators in the practice have alluded to a reading of Jung's work more specifically, in the creation of connections drawn between their musical propositions, the collective unconscious, and the author's archetypes.⁸⁸

There was a relation to musical archetypes here, between the music you play and the movement that is generated.... I realised that on the first part, the most rhythmic, there was this tendency, especially among people with a specific profile, I mean, among women in their forties. There appeared what I call the 'black man archetype,' and they hallucinated that they were in a tribe and that a black man led them onto the dance floor. It was something that I found fascinating, because they did not know each other, they had

⁸⁶ Eric Clarke, Tia Denora, and Jonna Vuoskoski, 'Music, Empathy and Cultural Understanding', *Physics of Life Reviews*, 15 (2015), 61–88

⁸⁷ Martin Clayton, 'Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction', in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, pp. 1–25; Patrik Vulleumier, and Wiebke Trost, 'Music and Emotions: From Enchantment to Entrainment', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1337 (2015), 212–22.

⁸⁸ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Essential Jung*, ed. by Anthony Storr (London: Fontana Press, 1998); *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969).

been in different sessions, but there was the same hallucination of this black guy.
(Interviewee #24, participant in ESCEN)

This, although not directly related to Jung's original theoretisation, shows the understanding of the participant of the psychoanalytical terms involved in the background level of the practice, and thus offers an example of the implication that the average attendee of the ritual has beyond the purely practical sphere that is explored during the liminal phase.

The possibilities offered by technology and the introduction of any desired sound and music within the classroom is, in this sense, a clear point in favour of the creation of specific connotations. They do not only allow the affordance of a common focus, as suggested by the musical input, but can present a variety of sounds that would rarely be found under the same roof in live-music circumstances.

Finally, the contrast of the practice with other propositions in similar fields needs to be understood in great measure from the benefits that this musical input brings, as well as in relation to the well-structured background cosmos that gives it a specific, complete meaning for those committed to the system, in its different schools.

Biodance is like 'cool, the music, super cool,' but its way of working does not seem real to me because it only works with the light, it does not work the darkness.... To transcend and reach our higher and spiritual parts, one must integrate and accept one's shadows, as a human being.... Then, in the measure that one accepts or integrates this, there is transcendence. If not, I believe that the connection with anything above is not real.
(Interviewee #19, participant in ESCEN)

What I think, and still feel, is that [in Breathwork practices] the breathing is very strong. I find it violent, like forcing it down, that's how I feel.... Ardiles always said, 'one must not break one's armours, one must work them out until they are unnecessary.' The process is marked by the student, and if one wants this, wants that, and that too, one will be making one's own way. (Interviewee #18, facilitator in ESCEN)

In sum, the musical process is indispensable to the creation of Energy Centres Systems, as it relates to the many facets that compose it. Music, however, acquires its most

meaningful dimension in its relation to the theoretical and sacred cosmos that scaffold the practice, thus propitiating the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that are sought through an escalated work on the body. The progressive addition of elements to what in the beginning was simple gymnastics accompanied by music, has evolved towards an effective system to combine the three elements on which the practice's discourse has been based: body, affect, and mind.

As in the previous case of Guided Breathwork, there is a convergence of a cultural reference that gives meaning to the practice's background, a physical activity that adapts to the needs for reaching the desired shifts of consciousness, and an articulation found in the musical process that is introduced, which allows a full affective development for the participant. Although the parallels between both cases are already palpable, in the following pages I will outline a third example, to offer a telling contrast.

8. Case Study III: Dance of the Vajra

During the early phases of my research I was introduced to the Dance of the Vajra. The integration of sound in its background cosmos, its use of music to facilitate specific shift of mind, and the body involvement that is introduced into the equation, made it worth of study. Although it fitted the parameters of my research, the Dance of the Vajra is actually a step removed from the other cases that I explored. On the one hand, it contrasted with some of the features that my other case studies presented, as in the use of specifically produced music soundtracks, a stronger relation to a preceding tradition and background cosmos, and as the practice's inclusion of strictly traditional exercises in its frame. On the other hand, the Dance showed a continuity with my other cases, in its embeddedness in a Western environment, its use of technological means for its diffusion and musical reproduction, and its use of music and body to facilitate a non-ordinary shift for the participant. These elements offered an opportunity to introduce a point of contrast to my other cases, as well as a challenge to my goal of analysing the ways in which music works to afford a spiritual shift of consciousness in diverse environments.

The Dance of the Vajra is usually described as a meditation in movement practice. It was first introduced in Italy by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (1938-2018) during the last decade of the 20th century.¹ Since then, it has become a popular exercise for the followers of the master's teachings, which depart specifically from the Dzogchen tradition – considered to be the highest vehicle in Tibetan Buddhism for the reaching of the enlightenment state. The specificity of this cosmos and the belief system which it introduces, was fundamental for the later creation of the Dance of the Vajra, and as such it needs addressing for a more complete understanding, as does the experience acquired by Namkhai Norbu both in Tibet and in Europe.² The overall importance of sound and the uses of music, which show

¹ International Dzogchen Community, 'Vajra Dance' <<http://vajradance.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017]; Prima Mai, 'The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness', *The Mirror*, 2016, pp. 1–5; Buddhistdoor Global, 'Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance With Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche', 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkNSaVF23zQ>> [accessed 11 June 2016].

² Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen*, ed. by John Shane (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2000); Paolo Roberti Di Sarsina, Alfredo Colitto, and Fabio Maria Risolo, 'Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: The Master Who Revealed Dzogchen to the Western World', *Religions*, 2013, pp. 230–39.

a culminating point in the Dance, will be the main issue to be addressed in the pages that follow.

8.1. *An Introduction to the Dance of the Vajra*

The Dance of the Vajra consists of coordinated slow motion movements, performed as a group on a mandala. There is a focus on a musical input, which introduces a series of mantras that, in combination, are designed to promote the spiritual fulfilment of the participants. It was first introduced in 1990 by Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who had already started presenting the Dzogchen teachings in Europe in the 1970s, from which the Dance later emerged. Its main aim belongs to a traditional cosmos, focused in the reaching of one's primordial state [or 'natural' state of mind],³ which is to lead to enlightenment. However, there are further benefits that can be attributed to the practice, such as self-healing at affective and karmic levels.⁴ The music that is introduced serves other aims as well, from structuring and coordinating the dancing ensemble to enabling the entrance into the desired mindset.

To this day, the Dance of the Vajra includes three main dances: (1) the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, (2) the Dance of the Vajra that Benefits All Beings, and (3) the Dance of Three Vajras.⁵ These can be performed independently or connected from complex to simple, as in the order stated here. Since the practice is attached to a sacred background that gives it a deeper meaning, the first and last of the dances, 1 and 3, can only be performed by those who have received proper initiation. That is, due to the hermetic character attributed to some of the practices as belonging to an ancient Tibetan tradition, each exercise in the Dzogchen cosmos needs the proper introduction by a head figure, for the individual to be able to understand and properly integrate its meaning.⁶ However, the

³ The primordial state or 'natural state of the mind' is discussed in detail by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in many of his teachings and seminars, as well as in his work. See *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, pp. 32-35.

⁴ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light*, ed. by Michael Katz (Berkeley: Snow Lion Publications, 1994);

⁵ These correspond to one of the three mandalas that were introduced by Namkhai Norbu, the Earth Mandala, which is also the smallest. According to several interviews in the field, the master was working on further dances that would correspond to the bigger mandalas of the Solar System and the Universe. These have, however, not been introduced. There is yet another peripheral dance, the Dance of the Dimension of Space, or Dance of the 12 As, which develops in parallel to these group exercises, but constitutes an individual exercise. See fieldwork diary XV, in Appendix F, pp. 470-482; International Dzogchen Community, 'Vajra Dance'.

⁶ Elías Capriles, *Budismo y Dzogchen: La doctrina del Buda y el vehículo supremo del budismo tibetano* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: La Llave, 2000), p. 202.

Dance that Benefits All Beings, also known as the Dance of Six Spaces of Samantabhadra, presents an exception that allows its observance, learning, and performance by anyone interested, regardless of their closeness to Dzogchen.

Although most of the Dances' constituting elements are in direct relation to the Tibetan culture that engendered them in the first place, the practice's development as a Western-based teaching has afforded some interferences that allow it to be considered as a developed, complementary exercise, especially regarding its musical input. From the arrival of Norbu in Europe, followed closely by the influence of other Eastern and alien spiritual currents of the 1960s and 1970s, the cosmos that the master presented needed to be embedded in a new environment, that would also come to condition it – or 'evolve' it – in its own way. The reconceptualization of the practice within an already existing wider universe of meaning introduced a dialogue between what was already there and what was introduced,⁷ aiming for a preservation of its original essence through the master's original contribution.

A reading of Tibetan Buddhism had already entered the academic European cosmos in previous decades, as with Jung's commentaries on the *Bardo Thodrol*, also known as *Tibetan Book of the Dead*,⁸ which established an early-century comparative between both cultures. The psychoanalyst's contributions were more recently addressed by Elías Capriles,⁹ as a means to establish some distance from Jung's discourse, and as a point of integration for the Dzogchen practices in the West.

In this context, the debate on religion and spirituality could be extended, due to the transversal consideration of Buddhism as a worldly embedded practice, and not always as a religion *per se*. However, Norbu escapes the label of religion explicitly, and moves into a more spiritually-defined sphere:

Many people today are not interested at all in spiritual matters, and their lack of interest is reinforced by the generally materialistic outlook of our society. If you ask them what

⁷ Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966); Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967).

⁸ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung. Vol.11. Psychology and Religion: West and East* (Cornwall: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 509-526; Kazi Dawa-Samdub Lama, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, ed. by Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹ Capriles, *Budismo y Dzogchen*.

they believe in, they may even say that they don't believe in anything. Such people think that all religion is based on faith, which they regard as little better than superstition, with no relevance to the modern world. But Dzogchen shouldn't be regarded as a religion, and it doesn't ask anyone to believe in anything. On the contrary, it suggests that the individual observe him or herself and discover for themselves what their actual condition is.¹⁰

For such a realisation, sound enters the context in its consideration as the bearer of the original seed of material existence. As such, it is not only present in those practices based on a musical structure, but in the overall development of the practices contained within Dzogchen. More specifically, the mantra 'A' is thought to represent the primordial state, and takes a central role in the teachings, in all its practices.¹¹ The mantra's sound acts as a catalyst for the final realisation of one's true nature, representing the first stage of manifestation of energy in the constitution of being, later followed by rays and light,¹² putting it at the vortex of both human ignorance and realisation.

Furthermore, the traditional mantra 'OM A HUM', which refers respectively to mind, voice, and body, is introduced as an expanded version of 'A', which relates specifically to the emanating vibration that comes from sonic production. From OM A HUM, used in the Dance of Three Vajras, there is a later expansion towards the mantra relating to the six realms of existence, A A' HA SHA SA MA, used in the Dance that Benefits All Beings. This formula finally reaches its maximum development within the Song of the Vajra,¹³ used in the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, which is considered the basis and explanation of the Dzogchen cosmos itself.

¹⁰ Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, p. 31.

¹¹ Represented by the Tibetan symbol ཨ, which is specifically used for visualisation practices and overall Dzogchen symbology.

¹² Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State*, ed. by Adriano Clemente and John Shane (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1989). The author explains: 'Sound is the first stage of the manifestation of energy, which, in the dimension of manifestation, is perceived as mantra. This type of mantra, called the "Natural Sound of the Vajra" since it arises spontaneously, is used in practice to integrate the visualization (of the mandala of the divinity) with the function of one's own energy,' p. 46.

¹³ The Song of the Vajra is of crucial importance in Dzogchen, as it narrates the basis of the teachings, while addressing them through sound. It is sung in many ritual occasions and is also used in its dancing from for the Dance of the Song of the Vajra, the most complicated of the three main Vajra dances. Norbu describes the Song as 'a short, slow, anthemic chant, characteristic of the way Dzogchen works with ritual, that leads the practitioner into contemplation through integration with its actual sound, the structure of its syllables and melody ensuring deep, relaxed breathing,' *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, p. 37. See Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, 'The Song of the Vajra: Essence of the Dzogchen Teaching', *The Mirror: Newspaper of the International Dzogchen Community*, 2011, pp. 2-4; Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *El Canto Del Vajra* (Ediciones Shang-Shung Tashigar Sur, 2004).

Following this, any mantra is founded on its sonic element, which relates to the three dimensions of being: body, voice, and mind.¹⁴ The body, as in the case stated in Energy Centres, becomes the point of entrance from physical reality, which makes the reproduction of the mantra possible. Voice reproduces the sound, moving the energy that is predisposed by the body. This energy is then comprehended by the mind, and through this comprehension one is to be able to realise the true nature of one's original state.¹⁵ Furthermore, the relevance and tripartite conception of the human dimension is well reflected within the Dance of the Vajra in its use of the same three elements for its development: beginning with the body, the dance introduces movement, which ought to be integrated in the state of Contemplation; voice reproduces the mantra that structures the movement within a musical thread; and thus mind can integrate the vibration afforded by sound in its search for the longed 'primordial state.'¹⁶

In the Dance of the Vajra, the inclusion of the sonic element is based on an ideal conception of what Norbu received as a teaching in his deep meditation.¹⁷ This sonic input has been integrated using technological media, and interpreted from its Western context, forming a dialogue between the ideal form that sound took in the master's visualisation and the possibilities of music production of his community. That is, the music that is introduced within the dancing space depends on the European community that developed on Norbu's indications, which are rooted in a different universe of meaning, with a different musical system, and a different conception of sound itself. This implies that, on a practical level, whatever is composed for the development of the practice, which

¹⁴ Ibid., Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*.

¹⁵ Norbu, *Dzogchen*, pp. 23-38. Although the non-ordinary state that is pursued here differs somehow from that outlined in the previous case studies, it can be equally encompassed under the wider umbrella that has been established in chapter 1.

¹⁶ Elías Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen: The Doctrine of The Buddha and The Supreme Vehicle of Tibetan Buddhism - Part I* (Mérida: La Llave, 2003); Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light; Dzogchen*; et al.

¹⁷ In Tibetan Buddhism, the transmission of knowledge can take place via two main paths: the *kama* or 'long' tradition, and the *terma* or 'short' tradition. While in the *kama* tradition there is 'a continuous line of transmission, both of the state of rigpa, and of teachings, texts, practices, sadhanas, and even worldly realization' that passes from master to student in an interrupted line throughout the generations, *terma* lineages 'are said to be "short" because they involve a much lesser number of human links than the *kama* tradition: transmission passes directly from Padmasambhava (eight century CE) to a Revealer or tertön (who could well be our contemporary), who transmits it to his or her true disciples and, most importantly, to his or her successor(s).' Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, pp. 175-176. Because master Namkhai Norbu received his teachings as a *terma* in a deep meditative state, he is considered to be a tertön. See Norbu, *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light*.

follows the guidelines of the master, can only be an example of an ideal form as he conceived it.

After Norbu started teaching the Dance, the melody accompanying each of the three exercises was introduced to some of his alumn, who finally developed it and made it available on CD to the whole Dzogchen community, and to his son.¹⁸ These recordings have been put together in such a way that the participants can use them in their practice from different perspectives, and for different aims: (1) choosing a track that combines all three main dances, (2) choosing a single track that includes only one of the dances, or (3) playing each line separately to practice specific passages.

In almost every dancing session, excepting special events, music is reproduced using a sound system, which, as in the previous case studies, offers several advantages both regarding the community's budget and the participants' privacy. However, this also means that the variability of the sessions is less than in the previously examined cases, as it needs a specifically constructed piece to be developed, and not just any music that fits wider parameters. To this day, there are two main recordings in use, facilitated by Constantino Albini and other members of the community, which will be expanded in the future by potential volunteering members.¹⁹

Finally, it is worth highlighting that, after the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and after establishing himself in Europe, Norbu became an advocate for the maintenance and resurrection of some of the traditions of his homeland, and founded several institutes and foundations for this very issue.²⁰ This has helped the expansion of the Dzogchen teachings and the spreading of the dancing practice, along with other exercises, all around the world, creating a complex movement of instructors and participants which will be

¹⁸ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Music for the Dance of the Vajra*, CD (Berkeley: Amiata Records, 2000); Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Constantino Albini and Luca Prioretti, *The Music for the Dances of the Vajra, According to the Teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu*, CD (Berkeley: Shang Shung Edizioni and Cantus Edizioni, 2015).

¹⁹ Interviewee #14.

²⁰ See Di Sarsina, Colitto, and Risolo, 'Chögyal Namkhai Norbu'; ASIA ONLUS, 'Who We Are', *ASIA* <<https://asia-ngo.org/en/>> [accessed 21 February 2018]; International Shang Shung Institute, 'Home', *The International Shang Shung Institute* <<http://www.shangshunginstitute.org>> [accessed 21 February 2018]. The Dance of the Vajra, on the other hand, is listed as part of the International Dance Council (CID), recognised by UNESCO, in which many of the Dzogchen Community's activities and participants are included. International Dance Council, 'Global Dance Directory: Who's Who in Dance', *Global Dance Directory* <<http://www.cid-portal.org/gdd/index.php>> [accessed 25 February 2018].

explored in the following pages. But first, it is important to understand the background history of the master himself and the specific cosmos in which Dzogchen is placed.

8.2. *Dzogchen Teachings, by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu*

To understand the implications and wider dimensions which the Dance introduces, as well as the need for traditional procedures in its dissemination, it is necessary to consider two main elements: (1) the background of the founder of the practice, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and (2) the background cosmos that predisposed the appearance for the Dance of the Vajra, represented by the Dzogchen teachings.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was born and raised in Tibet, where he was soon recognised as the reincarnation of a previous Dzogchen master, Adzom Drugpa. This early acknowledgement led him to a strict education in several monasteries, and to become familiar with diverse teachings around the country, which he completed before the expected age. It was not until 1955 that he finally met his main Dzogchen Master, or 'Root Master', Rigdzin Changchub Dorje (1826-1961). Soon after, he went on pilgrimage to sacred places in India, Nepal and Bhutan. However, by the time of his return the Chinese occupation of Tibet had already begun, and he was forced to remain in Sikkim, unable to reach out to his family. By his early twenties, unable to return to his homeland, he accepted a position in Italy, in the Italian Institute for the Middle and Extreme Orient, to teach Tibetan and Mongolian languages, and remained in Europe thereafter.²¹

Once in Rome, he planted the seed of the Dzogchen Community, which rapidly expanded in the years that followed.²² In 1976, he began teaching Dzogchen to his alumni, thus breaking the secrecy that had surrounded the Dzogchen vehicle until then.²³ He founded the International Dzogchen Community, and began establishing settlements

²¹ Di Sarsina, Colitto, and Risolo, 'Chögyal Namkhai Norbu'; Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light; Dzogchen*; Jennifer Fox, *My Reincarnation [Documentary]* (Tibet, China: LongShot Factory, 2011) <<http://myreincarnationfilm.com/>> [accessed 30 November 2016]; International Dzogchen Community, 'Dzogchen Teachings' <<https://dzogchen.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017].

²² Fox, *My Reincarnation*.

²³ Ibid.; Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*.

for it, the first of which was near the Tuscan town of Arcidosso.²⁴ Although the teachings of the Dances came to him as a *terma*,²⁵ his embeddedness in the West configured the practice within a shared cosmos, a shared universe of meaning in constant dialogue.

Regarding the situation of Dzogchen in the Tibetan Buddhist universe, it is necessary to outline the initial environment in which Norbu was taught, and from which the practice's core departs.²⁶ To do so, some elements from Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism more specifically, need to be briefly reviewed,²⁷ to understand the place from which the Dance emerges, and the reaching of the enlightened state that is pursued.

There are three paths to consider in this context, which can be also divided depending on the vehicles chosen to travel them, and which will have different interpretations depending on the schools from which they depart.²⁸ Capriles summarises this within the following scheme:

²⁴ See International Dzogchen Community, 'Dzogchen Teachings'.

²⁵ See footnote #17 of this chapter.

²⁶ But as the master himself stated, this does not exclude the validity of the integration of such teachings within further contexts: 'But the truth is that for a Westerner to practice a teaching that comes from Tibet there is no need for that person to become like a Tibetan. On the contrary, it is of fundamental importance for him to know how to integrate that teaching with his own culture in order to be able to communicate it, in its essential form, to other Westerners. But often, when people approach an Eastern teaching, they believe that their own culture is of no value. This attitude is very mistaken, because every culture has its value, related to the environment and circumstances in which it arose', *Dzogchen*, p. 26.

²⁷ Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*; Matthew T. Kapstein, *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Liliana Arroyo Moliner, 'Espiritualidad, razón y discordias: El budismo ahora y aquí' (Universitat de Barcelona, 2013).

²⁸ The main schools in Tibetan Buddhism can be summarised in Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelugpa. Kapstein, *Tibetan Buddhism*.

Path of renunciation	Hinayana	(1) Shravakayana
		(2) Prateyekabuddhayana
	Mahayana	(3a) Bodhisattvayana
		(3b) Sudden Mahayana
Path of transformation	Outer Tantras (Path of purification)	(4) Kriyatantrayana
		(5) Ubhayatantrayana
		(6) Yogatantrayana
	Inner Tantras (Path of transformation <i>stricto sensu</i>)	(7) Mahayogatantrayana
		(8) Anuyogatantrayana
Path of spontaneous-liberation	Atiyana-Dzogchen	(9) Atiyogatantrayana

Table 8. Vehicles and Paths in Tibetan Buddhism.²⁹

The Path of renunciation, or *Sutrayana*, is characterised by the negation of stimuli to its adherent, such as speech, wealth, or specific aliments, as a mean of defiling affect and getting in tune with the practices that led the historic Buddha to enlightenment. This path can be divided in *Hinayana* (narrow vehicle) and *Mahayana* (wider vehicle), depending on the focus of the subject in aiming for self-liberation, or the liberations of all beings alike, respectively. These vehicles can be further subdivided depending on the nature of the means used to reach their common goal. For instance, in *Mahayana* one may find (3a) *Bodhisattvayana*, in which the practicant follows the Bodhisattva path, freeing all sentient beings from *samsara* before reaching enlightenment,³⁰ or (3b) Sudden *Mahayana*, which seeks the spontaneous enlightenment of the participant.³¹

The Path of transformation is constituted of various coexisting paths, such as *Tantrayana* and *Vajrayana*.³² It approaches enlightenment from an identification with a deity or figure

²⁹ Retrieved from Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, p. 91. Here I take Capriles' work as my main point of reference to explain the complex landscape that Buddhism presents, given the scholar's mastery in my specific area of interest. Refer to bibliography for further quotations. Also see: Kapstein, *Tibetan Buddhism*.

³⁰ Samsara is described by Damien Keown as a 'process of repeated rebirth ... or "endless wandering", a term suggesting continuous movement like the flow of a river. All living creatures are part of this cyclic movement and will continue to be reborn until they attain nirvana.' Keown, *Buddhism*, p. 32.

³¹ Ibid.

³² 'In a broad sense, the Path of transformation is constituted by the various yantras or vehicles that make up

that is used for meditation, as a means of keeping one's emotion pure in favour of the final entrance into the desired shift of consciousness.³³ The Path of transformation can be differentiated in two ways by *outer* tantras, and *inner* tantras. Outer tantras form the purification path, and aim for the 'purification of all emotions' before reaching enlightenment. Inner tantras, on the other hand, are more specifically considered within the Dzogchen cosmos, in their inclusion within the old Tibetan or Nyingmapa tradition. In this line of teaching, (7) *Mahayogatantra* is a gradual path, and (8) *Anuyogatantra* is a spontaneous path, both culminating in (9) *Atiyogatantra*. However, these are not considered by the new Tibetan or Sarmapa tradition. In this newer line, these categories are substituted by *Anuttarayogatantra*, which is more similar to *Mahayogatantra*, as it introduces a gradual procedure that belongs strictly to the Path of transformation.³⁴

Finally, there is the Path of spontaneous liberation, which is most relevant here, as it includes Dzogchen as its main vehicle. Etymologically, it means 'total plenitude / completeness and perfection', or 'great perfection',³⁵ and as such represents the higher Path to follow in Tibetan Buddhism. However, as seen above, this path also takes into consideration the inner tantras of the Path of transformation, placing them as lower stages that are only surpassed by (9) *Atiyogatantrayana*, the ultimate vehicle in Tibetan Buddhism.³⁶ In the spontaneous path, enlightenment is introduced by the realisation of

the *Vajra* vehicle (*Vajrayana*), Tantric vehicle (*Tantrayana*), or Secret *Mantra* vehicle (*Guhyamantrayana*).... [T]hese terms include a number of vehicles that must be classified into two different groups, according to the functional principles on which they are based. These two groups are: (1) what the Old or Nyingmapa School designates as "outer Tantras" and that the New or Sarmapa schools call "lower Tantras," which make up the Path of purification and that comprise (a) the *Kriyatantra*, (b) the *Ubhayatantra* (called *Charyatantra* in the New or Sarmapa schools), and (c) the *Yogatantra*, and (2) what the Old or Nyingmapa School calls "inner Tantras" and that the New or Sarmapa schools designates as "higher Tantra," which constitute the Path of transformation properly speaking.' Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, pp. 118-119.

³³ That is, this path does not consider emotion or affect to be inherently impure, but rather to *become* impure within *samsara* (wheel of life). As such, one can keep emotion pure in the identification with a deity that represents such an emotion, *becoming* the deity through the meditative process. Ibid.; Kapstein, *Tibetan Buddhism*; Damien, *Buddhism*.

³⁴ This, together with a clear explanation of the other Paths, is discussed in detail by Elías Capriles in his main work on *Buddhism and Dzogchen*. Nevertheless, the author, who specialises in Tibetan Buddhism and Dzogchen, uploads all his work on his personal website. For further reading: Elías Capriles, 'Elías Manuel Capriles Arias', *Kunzang Namdröl: Elías Manuel Capriles Arias* <<http://webdelprofesor.ula.ve/humanidades/elicap/en/>> [accessed 12 December 2017].

³⁵ Elías Capriles. 'Volume I. Beyond Being: A Metaphenomenological Ellucidation of the Phenomenon of Being, the Being of the Subject and the Being of Object', in *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind, Beyond History* (Mérida: University of the Andes, 2006), pp. 41-42; *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, p. 54; Kapstein, *Tibetan Buddhism*.

³⁶ Furthermore, *Atiyogatantra* includes three series of teachings for the escalated work of the practicant, known as *Semde*, *Longde* and *Menngagde* or *Upadesha* (further divided in *Tekchö* and *Thöguel*). Each of these

the true state of the mind, its real nature, which can be reached by various means.³⁷ That is, in Dzogchen the enlightened mind is approached from a direct and spontaneous realisation of what constitutes one's true or original state. This technique can be read as a step above the preceding paths, which makes Dzogchen more appealing to the West in its immediacy.³⁸

The Dzogchen teachings are, therefore, a vehicle for following the spontaneous liberation path, as understood from the old tradition or Nyingmapa tradition in Tibet.³⁹

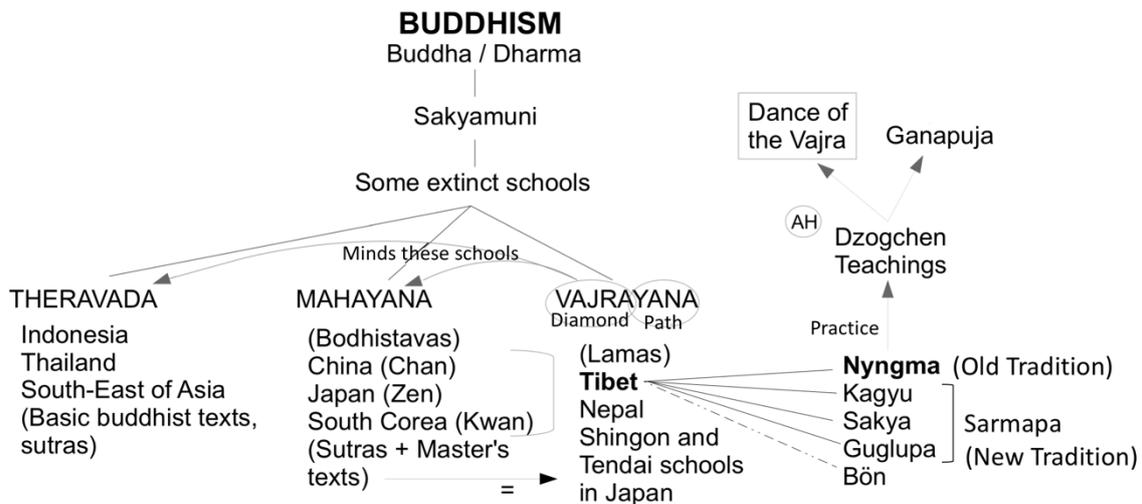


Table 9. Buddhism and the Dance of the Vajra, as explained by an interviewee.⁴⁰

series corresponds to one of the main phases towards Buddhahood, respectively: bodily awareness, space awareness, and mind realisation. See Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

³⁷ These ways of introducing our 'real condition' are related to the three series quoted above, depending on whether they are given orally (conceptual comprehension, belonging to *Semde*), symbolically (intuitive comprehension, belonging to *Longde*), or direct (transcending comprehension, belonging to *Mennagade*). *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

³⁸ See chapters 1 and 2 in relation to the re-conceptualisation of religion in Europe and the West, in a constantly changing environment that appeals to individuality and immediacy.

³⁹ Note that, since it was considered a tradition previous to the establishment of such teachings, Dzogchen also drinks from the previous Bönpo tradition from the same region, which aims for the integration of the enlightenment state in daily life, while taking elements from shamanistic practices predating the establishment of Buddhism *per se*. John Myrdhin Reynolds and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Golden Letters* (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1996).

⁴⁰ This interpretation, offered by interviewee #11, shows the areas of influence of the diverse schools in Buddhism, and may serve the reader as a complementary form of addressing the theoretical background outlined from Capriles' scheme in Board 8. This was originally drawn on paper by the interviewee and in Spanish, for which I here offer an English version.

Although the *terma* for the Dance of the Vajra was only discovered in 1989, as an ancient teaching that had just been resumed, and which earned Norbu the title of *tertön*, or ‘discoverer of treasures’,⁴¹ the Dzogchen teachings are believed not to have a precise origin, or rather to have always existed in time.⁴²

The first incarnated master of Dzogchen was the semi-historical figure of Garab Dorje,⁴³ from whom the teachings intermittently passed on during the following centuries. His central contribution, which helped establish the basis of the Dzogchen practice later on, can be summarised in his Three Statements: (1) direct introduction, (2) not to remain in doubt, and (3) to continue in the state.⁴⁴ This same structure is followed not only in the form of the overall series of teachings that developed from the discipline’s core, but are also reflected in the Dance of the Vajra itself, as a long process for the participant to follow. Furthermore, the relevance of the ‘series of three’ that Garab Dorje introduced, has prevailed in today’s forms of expression in Dzogchen, creating a distant parallel to the ritual phases later established in Western academia, by scholars such as Arnold Van Gennep, or Victor Turner after him.⁴⁵

The Dance of the Vajra appeared in the context of this specific path, as received by Norbu in his meditation. With it, he began to outline what has today been established as another possibility for the reaching of *rigpa*, or the true state of the mind.⁴⁶ The shift of consciousness that it affords constitutes the main aim of the Dance as well, to the point that it may appear as an almost exclusive guideline in itself.

⁴¹ Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

⁴² John Myrdhin Reynolds, and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Golden Letters* (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), pp. 11-18. This is discussed extensively by Reynolds in the following chapters of the volume, regarding the historical origins of the teachings as a tangible fact. However, the discussion on their placement in diverse locations and parting from different sources, relies strongly on the scholars in the field and the oral tradition that has held to this day.

⁴³ That is, as the first material materialised on Earth. The historical dates of birth and death of Garab Dorje are uncertain, and have been discussed by scholars such as John Myrdhin Reynolds or Chögyal Namkhai Norbu himself. According to Reynolds in *The Golden Letters*, his birth may be placed around the 6th century CE.

⁴⁴ Which also correspond to the series of teachings by the same original master. Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, p. 49; Reynolds and Norbu, *The Golden Letters*; Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*.

⁴⁵ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997); Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).

⁴⁶ Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*; Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*; *Dzogchen*; Fox, *My Reincarnation*; International Dzogchen Community, ‘Dzogchen Teachings’.

Even those who have already accessed *atiyana*-dzogchen's Contemplation can use it as a means to *integrate movement* in the state of Contemplation. The same thing applies to the famous 'vajra dance', rediscovered by the tertön or 'treasure revealer' Namkhai Norbu, that is applied currently by the members of the International Dzogchen Community: once one has a clear capacity for remaining in the state of Contemplation, the *vajra* dance helps integrate movement within the state. (Of course... the dance in question may constitute a complete path in itself that allows one to access the state of Contemplation, hold it and, finally, integrate movement in the same state).⁴⁷

The use of music in the Dance is therefore validated as a key tool for reaching the desired shift of consciousness. As Capriles explains,⁴⁸ one can understand the role of music in the reaching of the true state of the mind through the introduction of the concepts of *samskrita* – all that is conditioned – and *asamskrita* – all that is unconditioned, namely *nirvana*.⁴⁹

To reach one's primordial state, the entrance in the state of Truth or *rigpa* must be first mastered. However, this can only be done by becoming free of any conditioning that affords a duality between subject and object: one must overcome suffering and attachment, and maintain a contemplative shift of mind, which are all characteristics of an unconditioned state, *asamskrita*. Conditioned states, on the other hand, are material, determined by time and space, and as such belong in *samsara*. Thus, music cannot lead to straight enlightenment, or the state of *rigpa*, since it belongs in the material world and is, therefore, conditioned.

According to Capriles, one may be able to finally reach a shift of consciousness in which judgement is suspended, but there is a fair possibility of being caught in a delusive state, or what is called *kunzhi lungmaten*, 'the neutral basis of everything.'⁵⁰ This space is not

⁴⁷ Capriles, *Budismo y Dzogchen*, p. 359. Emphasis in the original. My translation (this part of the volume has not yet been translated in English).

⁴⁸ See Capriles, 'Volume I. Beyond Being'; 'Volume II. Beyond Mind: A Metaphenomenological, Metaexistential Philosophy, and a Metatranspersonal Metapsychology', in *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind, Beyond History* (Mérida: University of the Andes, 2006), pp. 305–841; and 'Volume III. Beyond History: A Degenerative Philosophy of History Leading to a Genuine Postmodernity', in *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind, Beyond History* (Mérida: University of the Andes, 2006), pp. 842–1045. Here I base my discourse both on sections of the quoted work and a personal interview to Capriles (Interviewee #17), that helped in the summarisation of the content as specifically referring to music and sound.

⁴⁹ Capriles, 'Volume II', *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Kunzhi lungmaten 'is a condition wherein neither *nirvana* with its free, undeluded Gnitiveness, nor *samsara*

samsara nor *nirvana*, so by staying in it one will not be entering real *rigpa*. From this point, a paradox is introduced, which places music as both as an obstacle and a trigger for the actual reaching of one's true nature. Through the introduction of a sonic input, the mind is given a clue, a hint, that can make one trip over the recognition of music as a delusion. If the shift of consciousness corresponding to the neutral basis of everything is reached during the practice, as induced by the coordination of movement and music, one may recognise the presence of that same shift and use it to catapult towards the final state of *rigpa*, which surpasses the neutral base and introduces *nirvana*.⁵¹ To the etic observer, however, the use of the sonic input may respond to further elements that are more immediate in one's universe of meaning. Therefore, music acts as a reference that must be read from a culturally informed perspective, which conditions the kind of sounds that are introduced in the music, and from the physical element in its coordination of the whole dancing ensemble. The mood that is established by the musical proposal aims for a focused and calmed mental process, which may lead the practicants to different places depending on their mastery of the exercise.⁵²

Over the past decades, the establishment of the Dance as a distinct path within the Dzogchen cosmos has led to further research, which has merged the traditional Eastern tradition from which it originally came with alien elements, proper to the Western environment. Some of the early adherents to the Dance, such as instructor Prima Mai, have begun to approach it from an academic perspective, which has helped its integration into the scientificist paradigm that predominates in its primary places of development, namely Europe and North America.

with its delusive, dualistic, *duhkha*-begetting mental functions, are active: the term involves the word "neutral" because the base-of-all is like a gearbox in neutral, which does not allow the engine to either drive the car forward (which represents *nirvana*) nor does it move it backwards (which stands for *samsara*).⁷ Capriles, 'Volume I', p. 46.

⁵¹ Ibid. Interviewee #17.

⁵² In this cosmos, the Dance of the Vajra is only a method that develops side by side with more traditional practices and ceremonies, such as Yantra Yoga or monthly *ganapujas*, respectively. Nobu learned Yantra Yoga with his maternal uncle, who was a Dzogchen master himself, as well as the first person to recognise him as the reincarnation of Adzom Drugpa. The practice is developed within the Dzogchen Community on a regular basis, along the Dance of the Vajra. To this, traditional Khaita Dances are added, along traditional Buddhist practices such as the mentioned *ganapuja*, an offering of merits to all enlightened beings, for the benefit of all sentient beings. See Di Sarsina, Colitto, and Risolo, 'Chögyal Namkhai Norbu'; Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*; International Dzogchen Community, 'Dzogchen Teachings' <<https://dzogchen.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017].

In her recent paper on the Dance of the Vajra,⁵³ Mai focuses on analysing the nature of the mind, which had hitherto only been noted in terms of its embeddedness in the Buddhist traditions to which Dzogchen adheres, thus showing the development of the practice beyond its initial stages and within a more complex system in which its discussion and academic value are reinforced.

In the scientific field of genetics, current research is exploring the potential of self-healing of the human genome, focusing on the notion that DNA is more significant than the brain for correcting malfunctions in our 'bioenergetic system'. Research shows that the mind exists in the dimension of electromagnetic fields rather than residing in an organ such as the brain. To access the source of electromagnetic malfunction in our bioenergy system, both special sounds and intention are employed.... In sacred dance the physical movements become a symbolic means of transforming into a divine figure or expressing the divine potential in us, making it possible for our obscured states of consciousness to discover our real condition.⁵⁴

With the establishment of the basic elements that constitute the background cosmos for the practice, one may gain a sense of how it is developed, and with what kind of focus. The insight on its ritual elements help it to materialise into a tangible, observable exercise. Although such elements are shared by the three main dances, I will focus primarily on the Dance that Benefits All Beings, as it is the only practice open for non-Dzogchen practitioners to undertake and publicly discuss. However, for a better reading, the ritual dimension of the practice needs to be first reviewed.

8.3. *The Ritual Dimensions in the Dance of the Vajra*

When considering the Dance of the Vajra alongside my previous two case studies, one finds a higher degree of codification, mostly due to its hermetic background and direct

⁵³ Prima Mai, 'The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness', *The Mirror* (2016), pp. 1-6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2. To quote Judith Becker on this matter: 'Trance states can be of different kinds: there is the trance of the performer who feels herself to be one with the music she plays: she plays the mild trance of the listener whose whole attention becomes focused on the music; possession trance, in which one's self appears to be displaced and one's body is taken over by a deity or a spirit; the trance of Sufi mystics who feel themselves unified with Allah; or the meditation trance of Vajrayana Buddhists, who feel themselves become the deity.' Judith Becker, 'Music and Trance', *Leonardo Music Journal*, 4 (1994), pp. 41-42. My emphasis.

transmission belonging to its root cosmos. Nevertheless, its overall development is structured around a tripartite structure that is also shared by Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems: a preparation, experience, and integration of the exercise, within the specific code set by the predominant universe of meaning in Dzogchen.⁵⁵

1. *Introduction or pre-liminal stage.* Although this phase can be elongated or shortened depending on the time available, it usually begins with *guruyoga*, a visualisation practice. Before beginning, the participants agree on which dance or dances are going to be performed, and then proceed to sit in a circle around the mandala, on which the Dance is performed, and initiate the activities.
2. *Experience or liminal stage.* This corresponds to the dancing part itself, in which all participants move separately in a slow, kaleidoscopic manner, creating two lines of movement, one masculine and one feminine. The aim of the dances, as mentioned above, is the progressive mastering of the entrance in the state of *rigpa* or Truth, which is to lead one to final enlightenment. Ideally, the dance is well known by all participants, who can dance with the only aim of remaining in contemplation.
3. *Integration or post-liminal stage.* The session concludes with a dedication of merits in favour of all sentient beings, through a sung mantra. The participants sit back in a circular position around the mandala and maintain the contemplative state as long as possible afterwards.

All exercises in the Dance take place on a mandala placed on the ground, which integrates several elements in its pre-established size and structure – the smaller piece measures about 15 metres in diameter. Although Norbu only introduced three main dances, which correspond to the so-called Earth mandala (Figure 9, on the left), there are six further dances, that were not taught before the master's passing. Of these, three belong to the Solar mandala (Figure 9, at the centre), and three to the Universal mandala (Figure 9, on the right).

⁵⁵ Once again, this partition corresponds to the ritual stages established by Van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage*, and Turner's *The Ritual Process*. To give continuity here, and as in previous chapters, I will be using the categories established by Van Gennep and Turner to describe the ritual's unfolding.

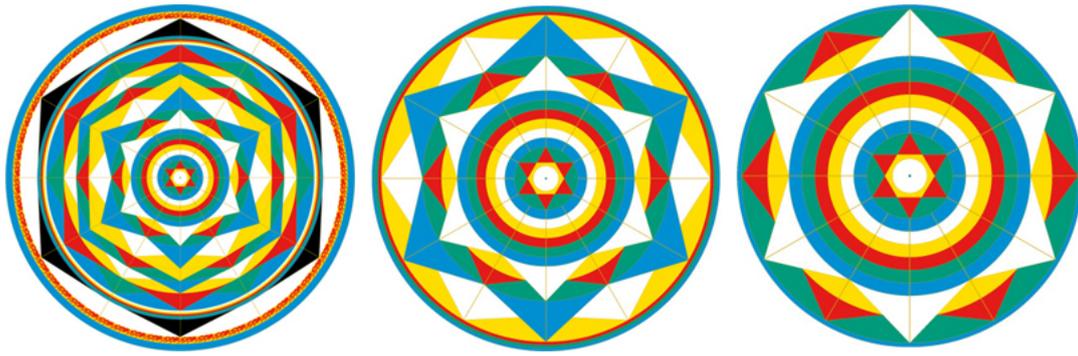


Figure 9. Mandalas. From left to right: Universal mandala, Solar mandala, Earth mandala.⁵⁶

These mandalas are concentric; the Earth mandala is comprised within the Solar mandala, which is again comprised within the Universal mandala. Each corresponds with a different speed, both in music and movement: on the Earth mandala dances are slow, on the Solar mandala dances are faster, then the entrance to the Universal mandala is slow again.⁵⁷ Each of the dancer's movements is connected to a syllable in the mantra that outlines the exercise in what is called a *mudra*, meaning 'symbolic gesture' or 'seal'.⁵⁸ Likewise, there are two kinds of movements corresponding respectively to the left side of the body, considered the feminine or solar side, and the right side of the body, considered the masculine or lunar side. Movements related to solar energy are quicker than their counterparts on the right or lunar side, which are slower. This is reflected in the music itself, which dictates the path for the dancer, helping the whole ensemble move as one.

The Earth mandala is constituted as an image of our globe, as seen from above: the centre of the mandala represents both poles, the outer rim corresponds to the Equatorial line, each coloured ring corresponds to a parallel, and each golden line from the centre to the outer radius represents a meridian. Following from this idea, each space to be stepped on corresponds to an actual location on Earth, as it would on the globe itself.

⁵⁶ Image retrieved from International Dzogchen Community, 'Vajra Dance from Merigan West in Webcast', *International Dzogchen Community. Hellas - Garab Ling*, 2012 <<http://dzogchen.gr/en/news/world-news/vajra-dance-from-merigar-west-in-webcast/>> [accessed 27 February 2018].

⁵⁷ Interviewee #11; Interviewee #14.

⁵⁸ Mai, 'The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness', p. 4.

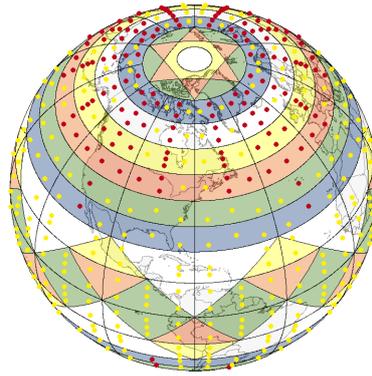


Figure 10. Earth mandala in three dimensions.⁵⁹

Within this scheme, there are two dimensions to be considered: the inner dimension of the individual, or microcosm, which corresponds to one's inner points of energy or chakras; and the outer dimension of the world, or macrocosm, concerning the points of energy on Earth.⁶⁰ Each concentric circle on the mandala is then divided into smaller sections, which are attributed three positions each, as shown by the dots in Figure 10, which constitute the main points of reference for the steps of the dances.

In addition, each circle or *thigle*,⁶¹ is attributed a colour, which corresponds to one of the five elements – earth, water, air, fire, and space – and their associated functions. Likewise, each section of the map is attributed a different significance depending to its closeness to the midpoint of the figure: the centre belongs to the realm of the Gods and enlightened beings, and is usually represented by a manifestation of the carnal union between Samandabhadra and Samantabhadri, symbolising non-duality; the middle section is related to the Demi-Gods and guardians of the higher realms, as a symbol of the impasse between the higher and lower realms; and the peripheral section is attributed to the lower realms, belonging to humans, animals, and Infernal beings. A crystal sphere, representing one's primordial state, is placed in the very centre of the mandala, and the space that it occupies is never to be stepped on.

Because the mandala is indispensable for the Dances, each group forming the extended Dzogchen Community needs one to practice on. However, depending on their overall

⁵⁹ Image retrieved from GIS Matters, 'Overlay Mapping', *Mapping, Location Analysis, Data Visualisation and Database Solutions* <<http://www.gismatters.com/mandala.gif>> [accessed 27 February 2018].

⁶⁰ International Dzogchen Community, 'Vajra Dance'.

⁶¹ Mai, 'The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness', p. 3.

budget and space availability, the place in which it is set may vary. That is, although there are several locations with a specifically built or dedicated place to install the mandala, the situation does not apply to some smaller groups of practice, in small cities or remote locations.⁶² This does not only define the conception of the space within sacred terms more accurately, but also helps in the description of the inner hierarchy and structure of the overall Community. Larger groups and centres usually count with a *gömpa*, a specific building for the learning and practice of the teachings, in which a mandala is painted or installed on the floor permanently,⁶³ while smaller locations and practice groups usually need to rent large spaces in which to place a portable mandala, which is usually painted or printed on large plastic sheets.

The International Dzogchen Community is defined as

non-bureaucratic organisation, with systems of communication and collaboration which respect the various autonomous local conditions. For Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the various Gars (places where students gather to receive teachings and practice together) make up one great mandala, a network that covers the various geographical areas of the world and to which practitioners can refer as places of study or practice and meditation.⁶⁴

It is, therefore, constructed for the communication of the groups around the world that follow the teachings of master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Within these groups, there are two main categories: Gars, in which retreats and major teachings take place; and Lings, centres of practice and where smaller courses are scheduled.⁶⁵ In each of these centres, and regardless of its function, there is an inner structure consisting of three main managers or *gakyils*, which are further represented by regional *gakyils*, and international *gakyils*, which change every few years according to the nature of the Community, thus avoiding the construction of positions of power.

⁶² The distribution of the dancing community in its smaller groups of practice can be consulted at International Dzogchen Community, 'Vajra Dance - Global Mandala MAP', *Uebermaps* <<https://uebermaps.com/maps/1009-vajra-dance---global-mandala-map>> [accessed 20 February 2018]; or, 'Vajra Dance' <<http://vajradance.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017].

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ International Dzogchen Community, 'Dzogchen Teachings'.

⁶⁵ The global and country distribution of these centres can be consulted at *ibid.*, <<https://dzogchen.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017]. This distribution may not coincide with the mandala map showed in the footnote above, as practice groups may not have a specific centre in which to develop the dances.

The *gakyils* are divided into (1) yellow, in charge of economics, in representation of the mind and the mantra OM; (2) red, responsible for activities and projects to be developed at the facilities, representing the voice and the mantra A; and (3) blue, in charge of overall maintenance of the facilities, representing the body and the mantra HUM. These positions can only be accessed by those who have been in the Community for at least three years, and who are in frequent relation with the scheduled practices.⁶⁶ In this way, and thanks to the donations, membership, and contributions for teaching visitors, the Community becomes mostly self-sustained. Furthermore, regarding the Dance of the Vajra and other exercises such as Yantra Yoga, there is a categorisation that applies to the level of mastery on the practice. For the Dance, there are two main levels, which are evaluated by Norbu himself in yearly exams: a first one which includes the Dance that Benefits All Beings and the Dance of the Three Vajras; and a second level that includes the more complicated Dance of the Song of the Vajra.

Once specifically on the mandala, there are two cooperative roles that are separated by gender: one masculine, *pawo*, and one feminine, *pamo*. The mandala fits a total of six *pawo* and six *pamo*, which start and move on different places on the mandala, intermingling.⁶⁷ In the dance, both genders rotate counter-wise; *pamo* always start by moving from their left, feminine side, and *pawo* from their right, masculine side. This is however sometimes inverted mid-dance if the passage requires it, as reflected in its wider meaning.⁶⁸ However, this separation does not exclude the possibility of learning of the opposite gender's part; on the contrary, in the examination of new teachers, there is a separate exam for each of the two parts, for each one of the dances. Thus, the future teacher will be able to demonstrate both genders' movements in all taught courses, and those interested in

⁶⁶ Likewise, the voting and active participation from official meetings can only be done from the three-year milestone participation onwards. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *La comunidad dzogchen: Principios y guías para practicantes y miembros de Gakyil*, ed. by Saadet Arslan, Julia Lawless, and Karin Eisenegger (Argentina: Ediciones Shang-Shung Tashigar Sur, 2003).

⁶⁷ When dancing, the males embody the figure of a *daka*, and females the figure of a *dakini*, which are specially considered in Vajrayana. They are also the deities that Norbu first envisioned when materialising the dance. Kapstein, *Tibetan Buddhism*; Norbu, *El Canto Del Vajra; The Crystal and the Way of Light*; Myrdhin and Norbu, *The Golden Letters*.

⁶⁸ There is an ideal costume to perform these dances, which was introduced by Norbu as well. However, it is rarely used, and mostly introduced for public demonstrations. In the Vajra Dance website, it is described as 'an ornament of the practice. It is a symbol of our real condition, pure from the beginning, just as the Mandala represents the pure condition of our outer dimension: the Earth, solar system or universe. The costume can be a precious support to develop our capacity to integrate the internal and the external dimension.' In International Dzogchen Community, 'Vajra Dance'.

learning the complimentary part will be able to do so as well – for instance, if they already know their assigned gender part. Nevertheless, in public demonstrations of the Dance that Benefits All Beings there is a preference for the performance being embodied by the traditionally corresponding gender.⁶⁹

For the learning of the dances, each course relies on (a) the presence of at least one certified teacher, and (b) direct introduction.⁷⁰ The Dance that Benefits all Beings is not as strict regarding the necessary transmission of a master, for which online broadcasting is often used. During the last years of Norbu's life, this method facilitated the spreading of his teachings towards a wider public that has shown a progressive expansion and growth, thus implying the reduction of seminars and retreats per location for him. Through the access to the direct retransmission that is set forth regularly, with live translation, more people can attend the scheduled retreats and direct introductions.⁷¹ In the end, the use of technology has been key to both the popularisation of the teachings, and their regular development within the practicing groups all over the world.

Regarding the music, the presence of a sound system that is not altered *in situ* distinguishes the Dance that Benefits All Beings from the other studied cases, for which a facilitator is in charge of the succession of pieces, volume, and so forth. Nevertheless, at every session there is one individual who is picked to lead the activities, give entrances for chanting during the preparatory and integrative phases, and so forth, who is usually put in charge of playing the music. In the event that there are more participants on the practice than spots available on the mandala, or in case that someone has not yet learned one of the dances that are chosen to be performed, this person can also be assigned to be in charge of playing the music and adjusting the sound if needed. The composing of the music, on

⁶⁹ This raised a gender-related question during my fieldwork, to which I have not been able to find the answer, regarding transsexuality and other sexualities, which are not specifically addressed in the partition established between *pamo* and *pawo*. However, the consideration of every human as being composed of both feminine and masculine energies, in its representation of non-duality, might be a key to solving the riddle. Yet the traditional context from which both roles emerge needs to be taken into account, in which the main figures are the *dakas* and *dakinis* performing the ritual in a higher sphere. Ibid.

⁷⁰ Prima Mai, who is one of the principal instructors in the International Dzogchen Community, points to the eventual representation of the Dance of the Three Vajras without counting with the specific introduction as well. Mai, 'The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness'.

⁷¹ International Dzogchen Community, 'Welcome to the Webcast Site for the International Dzogchen Community', *Webcast* <<http://webcast.dzogchen.net>> [accessed 1 March 2018].

the other hand, is not bound to a single individual, nor does it represent a single, irrefutable version of the music that Norbu envisioned. Currently, alternative inputs have been suggested to members of the Community,⁷² who can use the opportunity to create their own versions of the Dances' music, following the pre-established melody and indications originally given.

Finally, all practices are developed following the original Tibetan language context, both in the Dances and other events within the Community, such as offering rituals. For a better understanding of all passages, the specific courses for the learning of such dances usually include a translation and guideline to their meaning.⁷³ Nevertheless, in the case of the Dance that Benefits All Beings, the lyrics follow a simple mantra aimed at the liberation of all beings, whose insight is easier to the beginner.

8.4. *The Dance that Benefits All Beings*

The one dance introduced by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu that can be approached by anyone regardless of their affiliation to the Dzogchen community or knowledge of its teachings, is the Dance that Benefits All Beings, or Dance of the Six Spaces of the Samantabhadra.

Its name refers to the dance's nature, as focused on compassion, aimed for the purification of all beings in the six dimensions of existence categorised as Gods, Demi-gods, Ghosts, Humans, Animals, and Infernal or Hell beings. In Dzogchen, Samantabhadra is considered the Primordial Buddha in the ultimate aspect of Buddhahood.⁷⁴ He is pictured as a Bodhisattva, and as such his enlightenment can only go hand in hand with the liberation of all sentient beings from *samsara*. Thus, the Dance refers to the liberation of

⁷² Interviewee #14.

⁷³ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Precious Vase: Instructions on the Base of Santi Maha Sangha*, ed. by Asociación Cultural Comunidad Dzogchen (Berkeley: Ediciones Shang-Shung Tashigar Sur, 2001). These are the teachings on the base of Dzogchen, which include general issues relating to Buddhism, that count with their own specialisation and examination within the Community.

⁷⁴ This phase corresponds to the dharmakaya aspect of Buddhahood, which equates to the highest form of consciousness. Its preceding stages are nirmanakaya, in the physical plane, in which Buddha Shakyamuni existed as an emanation of a higher form; and sambhogakaya, an intermediate state in which one has realised the potentiality of the mind, to which Vajrasattva belonged. Thus, Shakyamuni, Vajrasattva and Samantabhadra compose the Trinity of Primordial Buddhas in all their forms. Reynolds and Norbu, *The Golden Letters*; Capriles, 'Volume I', p. 27; Buddhism and Dzogchen, p. 165.

all beings from the wheel that comprises the six stages from Hell to the Gods' realms, in reference to the Primordial Buddha in his higher form, which is paired with the ultimate goal to attain.

The mantra that refers to these six dimensions and helps structure the dance is A' A HA SHA SA MA. In the dance, this mantra is repeated six times for six rounds in total, each syllable indicating the beginning of one step, thus helping the participants move together. However, there are other musical elements that help these gestures, such as a bell and some light drumming to accompany key actions or *mudras*, that are performed on key moments of the dance. The indications given on the mantra are found in diverse texts of the traditional Tibetan scriptures, which have been translated by Eric Fry-Miller,⁷⁵ and give insight into its sounds and their relation to the specific mantra.⁷⁶ In these, the six syllables are presented as the ultimate path towards Buddhahood.

As noticed, A A' HA SHA SA MA relies on the essential mantra *A*, which can be further expanded as *OM A HUM*. The syllables are presented as based on sound, from which reality further emanates in the form of *bindus* or circles of light. In the text translated from the 'Explanation of the Six Syllables', in the *Mirror of the Heart of Vajrasattva Tantra*,⁷⁷ there is a direct relation to the liberation of the six realms of existence and the nature which corresponds to each of them. This depends on the overall process described within the mantra, that is found fully expanded in the Song of the Vajra,⁷⁸ which better describes the movements performed on the mandala.

The musical element is specifically approached in many passages of the translated texts, and put in relation to the overall cosmos that it represents:

⁷⁵ Belonging to Dzogchen, such as Christopher Wilkinson, *The Mirror of the Heart of Vajrasattva: Two Upadesha Tantras of the Great Perfection* (Portland, Oregon: Christopher Wilkinson, 2017).

⁷⁶ Eric Fry-Miller, 'Sounds of Reality: A Ah Sha Sa Ma Ha', *Buddha Visions Press*, 2015 <<http://www.buddhavisions.com/the-sounds-of-reality-a-ah-sha-sa-ma-ha/>> [accessed 12 June 2017]; 'The Sounds of Reality: A Ah Sha Sa Ma Ha', *Buddha Visions*, 2015 <<http://www.buddhavisions.com/the-sounds-of-reality-a-ah-sha-sa-ma-ha/>> [accessed 2 March 2018]. Some of the root texts quoted here are not available by their given name in the translation through a specific search. Nevertheless, they provide a contrast with Wilkinson, *The Mirror of the Heart of Vajrasattva*; Karl Brunnhölzl, *Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions* (Ithaca and Boulder: Snow Lion Publications, 2007); or Katarina Sylvia Turpeinen, 'Vision of Samantabhadra: The Dzokchen Anthology of Rindzin Gödem' (Portland: University of Virginia, 2015); among other sources.

⁷⁷ Wilkinson, *The Mirror of the Heart of Vajrasattva*; Fry-Miller, 'Sounds of Reality: A Ah Sha Sa Ma Ha'.

⁷⁸ Norbu, *El Canto Del Vajra*; 'The Song of the Vajra'.

The essence of all gathered sounds naturally arose in a long melody as:

A Ah Sha Sa Ma Ha.

When this resounded, these six syllables appeared like a reflection.

My sounds were uninterruptedly heard,

Those sounds did not outwardly proliferate into the ordinary mind.

These original sounds roaring, booming, and thundering

Are the sounds that separate samsara and nirvana.

That resounding melody of *A Ah Sha Sa Ma Ha*

Is the sound of the awareness of the nature of reality.⁷⁹

As for the melodies of these sounds,

The consonants are the sound of accomplishment,

The vowels are the sound of beneficial circumstances.

From these, all dharmas appear

And obstacles on the path are cleared away.⁸⁰

Further characteristics are then attributed to each one of the syllables, relating to one aspect of reality and its development. Specific sounds are included for each one of them and may serve as a point of departure in the creation of specific soundtracks for the dance. These can be summarised as follows:

⁷⁹ Fry-Miller, 'Sounds of Reality: A Ah Sha Sa Ma Ha', p. 7. This passage corresponds to the 'Precious Liberation by Sight of the Most Secret Unsurpassed Great Perfection' from the *Unobstructed Enlightened Mind of Samantabhadra (Treasure Cycle)*, as stated by Fry-Miller. In its completeness, it describes how Samantabhadra came to be and how reality emanated from the six sounds that compound the mantra here discussed.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

	Explanation of the Six Syllables, <i>Mirror of the Heart of Vajrasattva Tantra</i>⁸¹	Pith Instructions on A Ah Sha Sa Ma Ha, <i>Unobstructed Enlightened Mind of Samantabhadra</i>	Revealing the Meaning of the Six Syllables, <i>Unobstructed Enlightened Mind of Samantabhadra</i>		
			<i>Dharmakaya</i> (six primordial wisdoms)	<i>Samboghakaya</i> (six sages) ⁸²	<i>Nirmanakaya</i> (six types of melody) ⁸³
A	Unborn nature of reality, primordial wisdom	Connected small bindus [lights that form reality] circles	Expanse of reality primordial wisdom	Gods	Sounds of Brahma, in the chest
A'	Unchanging emptiness, nature from the unborn state	Chains of bindus	Discriminating primordial wisdom	Hungry ghosts	Sounds of melodies, all throughout the body
HA	Appearance of the unborn, expanse of awareness, reversal of the primordial state	Clusters of life-force bindus	Mirror-like primordial wisdom	Demi-gods	Sounds of cymbals, in the throat
SHA	Liberation into the pure realms, reversal of confusion	Evolution of the life-force connection	Accomplishing primordial wisdom	Beasts of burden	Song of sparrows, in the tongue
SA	Unchanging ground, primordial wisdom, spontaneous presence	Continuum of evolving intertwined curves	Non-abiding primordial wisdom	Hell Beings	Sound of melodies, in the channels of the teeth
MA	Nature of reality, uncontrived awareness, realisation	Ornamentation by rays of five-coloured light	Equality primordial wisdom	Humans	Sounds of cymbals, in the lips

Table 10. Characteristics of the mantra as translated from source texts by Eric Fry-Miller.⁸⁴

Alongside these six dimensions, and together with each one of the realms, there is an associated emotion, as described in texts such as *The Dance of the Vajra*,⁸⁵ of exclusive use by initiated members of the Community. Thus, through the purification of each realm,

⁸¹ Also in Wilkinson, *The Mirror of the Heart of Vajrasattva*.

⁸² Equivalent to the six realms of existence or six *lokas* that are purified throughout the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

⁸³ It follows: 'These six types of sounds also each have ten individual aspects, for a total of sixty. These ten divisions of each are: Sound gives rise to perception; sound of the awareness of equality. Sound that is worthy to hear. Sound that is in harmony with all; sound that is extremely profound. Sound that is charismatic. Sound that is not interrupted. Sound that is pleasing to the ears. Sound that is unmixed. Sound that is clear.' In Fry-Miller, 'Sounds of Reality', p. 19.

⁸⁴ See full disclosure of summary at Fry-Miller, 'Sounds of Reality'; 'The Sounds of Reality'.

⁸⁵ Norbu, *The Dance of the Vajra*; and *El rushen externo y la práctica de los seis lokas*, ed. by Asociación Cultural de la Comunidad Dzogchen (Berkeley: Ediciones Shang-Shung Tashigar Sur, 2005).

there is an addressing of further issues regarding both the inner world of the dancer and the outer world that one experiences. This is strongly linked to the mandala as an objective representation of one's inner points of energy or chakras, the Earth outer points of energy, and the three wider dimensions in which the mandala itself is divided – centre, middle, and periphery.

Since *pamo* and *pawo* move in opposite directions on the mandala, their starting points respond to a different location, which relates to a different realm and emotion. However, on each one of the lines that are performed, the participant moves around the overall mandala completing a whole cycle, thus returning to his or her original position having contemplated the overall cosmos that is drawn.

	Chakra	Syllable	Emotion	Location	Thigle
↓ <i>Pawo</i>	6	A'	Pride	Head	Blue – White
	5	A	Envy	Throat	Yellow
	4	HA	Passions	Heart	Red
	3	SHA	Ignorance	Bellybutton	Green – Blue
	2	SA	Attachment	Secret chakra	Outer triangles
↑ <i>Pamo</i>	1	MA	Wrath		

Table 11. Development of the Dance that Benefits All Beings.⁸⁶

The complete dance includes six rounds, each one containing six phrases, formed by the six syllables of the mantra. At the end of each phrase, there is a sonic indication that guides the performance of a *mudra*, which is similar to that shown in graphic representations of Tara:⁸⁷ one's left hand in the position of the three jewels, and right in the position of abundance – or reversed if performed by a *pawo*. The sonic indication for this gesture depends, however, on the track that is chosen, since the two CDs available differ in this

⁸⁶ See fieldwork diary XVII, in Appendix F, pp. 487-493.

⁸⁷ Tara is the female emanation of Avalokiteshvara, who is considered to be one of the eight Bodhisattvas disciples of Buddha Shakyamuni, together with Manjushri, Vajrapani, Maitreya, Samantabhadra, Kshitigarbha, Savanikaranaviskambini and Akashagarbha. See Damien Keown, and Charles S. Prebish, *Buddhism, The Ebook: An Online Introduction* (Journal of Buddhist Ethics Online Books, 2006).

and other aspects, such as the background sounds superimposed to the musical guiding line.

Finally, the three dimensions of the self, comprising body, voice, and mind, are approached in the Dance at once, as mirrored in dance, singing, and conscious awareness. The physical performance of the mantra represents its content by referring to specific areas on the mandala. For instance, *pamo* starts by purifying wrath, moving first towards the outer triangles of the mandalas, the peripheral circumference that corresponds to the lower realms in which the emotion belongs. Meanwhile, *pawo* moves towards the central area of the mandala, thus approaching the higher realms and its related emotion, pride. In this way, the mantra is physically drawn by movement.

Regarding the vocal dimension, one is to sing the mantra following the suggested melodic line, to help maintain the contemplative state. The melody that was introduced by Norbu, and which serves a guide for the possible tracks to accompany it, can be outlined as follows:



Figure 11. Melody for the Dance that Benefits All Beings.⁸⁸

The singing by the master in this and other practices corresponded to a non-Western musical system, which includes microtones and inflections not notable in the example above. In Figure 11 the melody fits within a pentatonic scale (C, D, E, G, A), consisting primarily of intervals of seconds or thirds, with a maximum interval of a fourth. The simplicity of the line makes it easier for the participant to follow along, and references the

⁸⁸ Transcribed from fieldwork diary XVII, in Appendix F, p. 488. Each number on the score represents the beginning of a phrase. This line is repeated a total of six times.

Western musical system to which most participants are accustomed. Furthermore, this melody does not take too much of the of the dancer or listener's attention, and allows a greater focus on the shift of consciousness that is pursued.

Finally, music aids the mental dimension through a process by which recognition of a delusional state is to take place, allowing the dancer to enter the true state of *rigpa*. It is due to this very nature of the practice as a Dance that it is often conceived as a movement exercise, since it focuses on integrating daily events into a permanent state of contemplation.

Having described the overall cosmos from which the practice departs, as well as the inner frame of the specific Dance, the development of a session in which the Dance of the Six Spaces of Samantabhadra is performed needs outlining. I now focus on its sonic discourse and characteristics.

8.5. *A Musical Analysis of the Dance of the Vajra*

There are three main phases that can be described within the construction of the ritual, but this must be done in the knowledge that the separation of the dancing exercise from other practices in Dzogchen is nothing but a circumstantial event, which I will describe independently for the purpose of this thesis. Following the structure used in the previous case studies, I will outline the process in terms of the preliminal, liminal, and postliminal stages of the ritual:⁸⁹

- I. *Preparation.* Each session begins with the preparation of the necessary materials, which range from the crystal sphere that is placed in the centre to activate the mandala, to the disposition of the sound equipment and any other materials that may be needed, such as cushions to sit on during the initial practice that follows.

Once everyone is ready, the participants sit around the mandala, on the outer triangle sections, to begin the ritual. For this phase, females are to sit on the

⁸⁹ Van Gennepe, *The Rites of Passage*; Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

red triangles, and males on the white ones. There is one guiding assistant assigned for the practice, who leads the *guruyoga*, consisting of nine purification breaths plus an *A* mantra chanted three times with its proper visualisation. In case time is short, these preliminary exercises can be cut by 1/3 – therefore, three breaths, plus one *A*. In the event that there is time for development, the Song of the Vajra may also be sung *a cappella* before the dancing part begins. This preparation helps set the tone for the central dancing part of the practice, by introducing the state of contemplation that must be worked on during the main activity.

- II. *Experience.* The participants move to their starting positions on the mandala, which will depend on the Dances proposed for that day's practice. *Pamo* enters the mandala from the red triangle and stands on the red thigle, waiting for the music to start. *Pawo* enters from the white triangle and stands on the same thigle, both looking out, in preparation for the Dance that Benefits All Beings. From this point onwards, both roles will move in opposite directions on the mandala. At the beginning and end of this section there is a chanted *A* with its respective *mudra*, which opens and closes the liminal stage.

For a complete round of the dance, one returns to the original position in which one first stood. In the event that the three dances comprised within the Earth mandala are performed in one session, their development from complex to simple also facilitates the linking of the three in the beginning and ending positions of the dancers for each one. Once the performed dances are complete, the participants leave the mandala in the same fashion in which they entered it.

The music suggested for the Dance that Benefits All Beings is only required to follow the pertinent mantra, A A' HA SHA SA MA, and to respect the overall character first envisioned by master Norbu. Nevertheless, the most used soundtrack at present, by Constantino Albini and Luca Prioretti,⁹⁰ shows a clear elaboration for each one of the six rounds of six phrases that compose

⁹⁰ Norbu, Albini and Prioretti, *The Music for the Dances of the Vajra*, CD.

the complete exercise. It introduces a steady chanted melodic line, accompanied by a flute and light percussion, to which different sounds are added, which propose an attribution of one of the six realms of rebirth in *samsara* in turn – Gods, Demi-gods, Humans, Infernal beings, Ghosts, and Animals. In the case of the older soundtracks, when still used,⁹¹ there is the same general character underneath, although it is developed without the added sounds that allow the identification of a specific realm. Ideally, participants must follow the recorded chant by singing the mantra themselves during the dance.

III. *Integration.* Once the dancing part is complete, the participants return to sit in their original positions around the mandala, staying in the state of contemplation approached during the experiential phase. The development of this integrative part will depend on whether the participants have received direct introduction, or are rather new to the system and the Dance. Thus, two possibilities emerge:

(a) if all participants have received proper initiation in the true state of the mind, there will be a dedication of merits through a specific sung mantra, which will be guided by one of the participants in the ensemble – usually, the same person that guided the *guryuyoga* practice at the beginning; or

(b) if one or more participants have not been introduced to Dzogchen, the dedication mantra will be omitted, and a chanted *A* will conclude the session.

Although the ritual formally ends at this point, the state of Contemplation is to be integrated into daily life as a continuous experience.⁹² That is, the Dance serves as an exercise to practice the entrance and maintenance of the shift of consciousness that is pursued, for its daily progressive development, with the ultimate goal of staying in *rigpa*, as is done through other activities within the Dzogchen cosmos.

⁹¹ Norbu, *Music for the Dance of the Vajra*, CD.

⁹² Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light; Dzogchen Teachings; Dzogchen*; among others.

Before moving to the general mechanics of the sonic element, it is worth analysing Albin and Prioretti's soundtrack, and their representation of the different realms. In their track for the Dance of Six Spaces, the composers create a fauxbourdon sustained by a tambura, to which an underlying accompaniment of guitar and soft percussion is added, mainly through a tabla and the reverberation of deep gongs, which also act as indicators for the beginning of each phrase, and of specific actions on the dancing floor. At the end of each phrase, when the *mudra* of the three jewels and the *mudra* of abundance are to be performed, there are two consecutive bells that mark the entry of each hand, thus ensuring a coordinated movement within the participants.

Regarding the chanted melody, there is one leading voice, with two secondary ones singing at an octave above and below the first. The melody is followed throughout the whole piece by a flute, which doubles the melodic line of the lead vocals, adding some ornaments. At the end of each round – that is, after six repetitions of the mantra – a trumpet makes a brief appearance to signal the transition from one round to the next. This break is also to be found in between each phrase, as a mark for a momentary pause in the movement, that is immediately restarted by the dancer.

The use of both Western and Eastern instruments presents a very particular discourse which needs to be taken into account as a point of intersection between two traditions. The presence of Eastern instruments within the Western imaginary affords a specific significance for the Western listener, which here is used to induce a state of concentration and calmness,⁹³ deemed optimal for the ultimate goal of the exercise.

The six rounds are assigned complimentary sounds which help differentiate them from one another, and which, according to my interpretation, create a discourse that departs from the animal realm and moves up towards the God realm. However, all of these sounds keep intermingling during the entire length of the piece, creating a continuous thread in the discourse. The most notable sounds in each round are the following:

⁹³ That is, it is inserted in the universe of meaning of the Western participant with an attributed meaning, which is also linked to the emotion that was first associated with it. Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*; Clarke, *Ways of Listening*; et al. On the other hand, Elías Capriles, in *Estética primordial y arte visionario* (Venezuela: University of the Andes, 2000), refers to Eastern music attributes when talking about the 'extraordinary value of classical Hindu music, which is found within the most elaborated, magic, and visionary ones in the world,' p. 152, and on the further discussion of the same topic.

Round	Sonic Specificities	Equivalent Realm
1	Animal sounds: crickets, birds, horses, and others	Animals
2	Sea sounds: wind, seagulls, waves, water	Ghosts
3	Bonfire, storm, wind, raining, breathy sounds	Hell Beings
4	Human voices, bonfire, farm animals, birds	Humans
5	Drums, wind, low voices, battle-call sounds	Demi-gods
6	Rain, storm, synthesiser, reverberated chorus effect	Gods

Table 12. Sounds in the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

In this way, higher and lower realms follow one another, from the simplicity of the animal realm towards the complex, higher Gods' realm, offering yet another approach to the six syllables that construct the mantra and structure the ritual.

There is also a circular motion that is created in returning to an original position, both musically and physically on the mandala, that slowly evolves during the piece. This linearity chimes with the underlying theme of the dance as well: the liberation from the wheel of reincarnation or *samsara*. In this way, the circular movement helps induce the meditative shift of consciousness through reiteration, helping the focus and acting as a trigger, much as the relationship between trance and repetitive drumming in other contexts,⁹⁴ while reinforcing the founding idea on which the practice sits. The development of each round, as well as the overall piece, can be therefore described as an ever-returning round motion, in which intensity rises and lowers. The overall sonic signature curve of the dance can be better represented as follows:

⁹⁴ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Rupert Till, 'Possession Trance Ritual in Electronic Dance Music Culture: A Popular Ritual Technology for Reenchantment, Addressing the Crisis of the Homeless Self, and Reinserting the Individual Into the Community', in *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, Farnham, 2009), pp. 169–88; Scott R. Hutson, 'The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73 (2000), pp. 35–49.

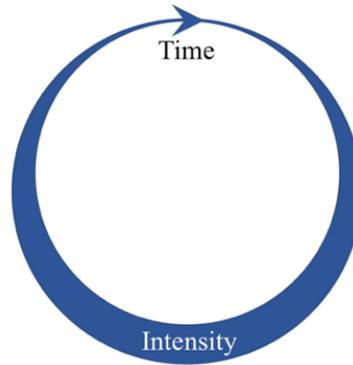


Figure 12. Circular development in the Dance of the Vajra.

The same idea can be applied to both separate rounds and to the overall compositional arc, which also shows a subtle increase and decrease in its overall intensity, as read by the layering of sounds and volume. Although this is clearer from a listener's perspective, it is possible to visualise it on a spectral graph of the track:

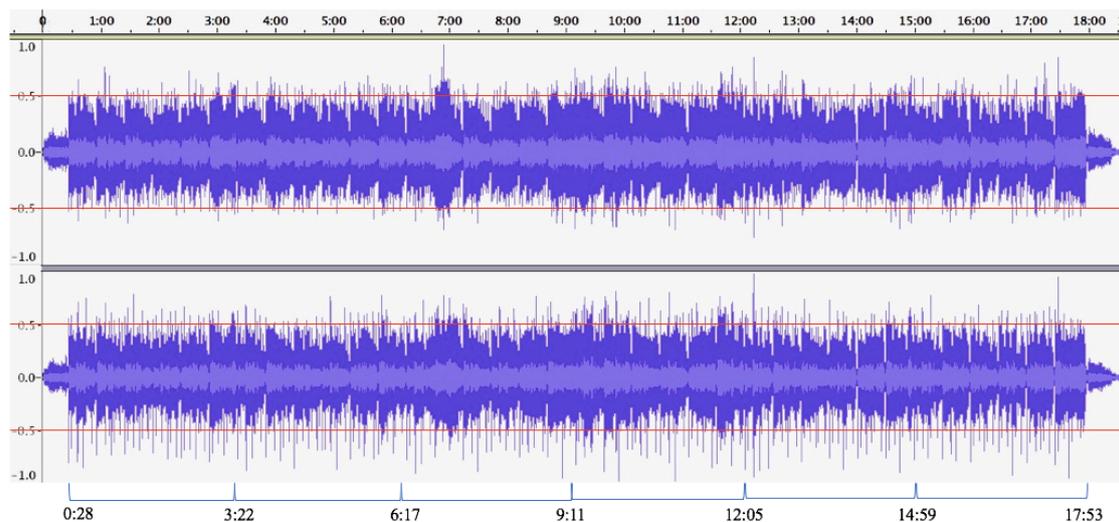


Figure 13. Dance of the Vajra that Benefits All Beings, in 'Music for the Dances of the Vajra'.⁹⁵

This widening shape was not present in the soundtrack used before,⁹⁶ which followed a much more linear path. I tested both tracks' development to corroborate what appeared to be clear by listening to them, by superimposing the spectrum of the different lines in the Dance of Six Spaces. However, this was more noticeable when laying the phrases for

⁹⁵ Ibid.; Norbu, Albin and Prioretti, *The Music for the Dances of the Vajra*, CD. The red lines in the image were introduced to give better perspective of the fluctuations in the spectrum.

⁹⁶ See fieldwork diary XVIII, in Appendix F, pp.494-499.

each round consecutively. Although in the newest track there is not much difference in the sonic spectrum of each phrase, there is an increase in volume and instrumental saturation when placing the same phrases of each round one after the other.

Stylistic considerations in this case are limited by the possibilities offered by Audacity, and are restricted to a traditional music-analytic perspective. Since there is not a specific tripartite structure or guideline within the liminal phase as shown in the previous case studies, repertoire included here and its overlaying towards the central part of the piece has to be read from the elements listed above, which rely on:

- (1) the reading of specific sonorities from the Western context in which they are interpreted [i.e. the tambura or the sitar can be linked to Eastern traditions and what is thought of as 'spirituality' in the same context],
- (2) the understanding of specific intervallic relations and scales to affective characteristics from the Western context where they appear [i.e. minor chords are usually associated to 'sadness']; and
- (3) the need for introducing markers for specific actions, which are portrayed by elements such as the trumpet that indicates the end of each phrase, and act as tempo sub-dividers.

Nevertheless, the influence of some these elements [i.e. end of phrases or overlaying of instruments towards the mid-section of the track] can be observed from a spectral reading of the six lines that form the whole piece:

Case Study III: Dance of the Vajra

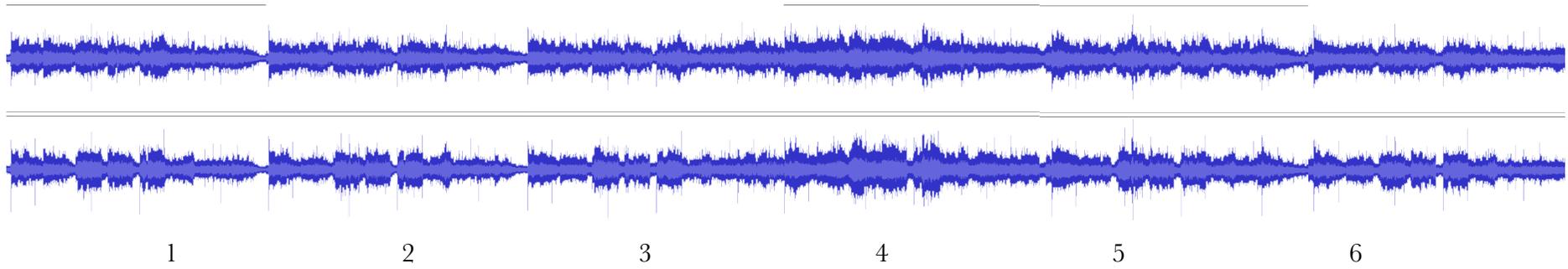


Figure 14. Phrase 1 of Each Round in the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

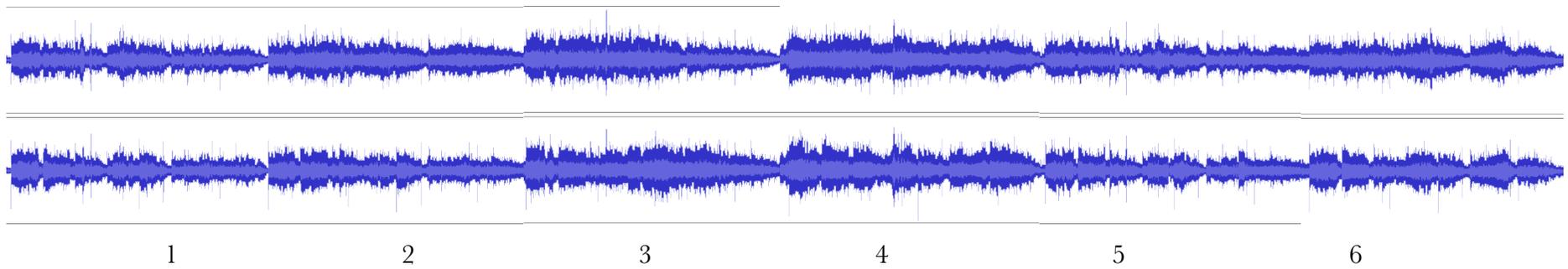


Figure 15. Phrase 2 of Each Round in the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

Case Study III: Dance of the Vajra

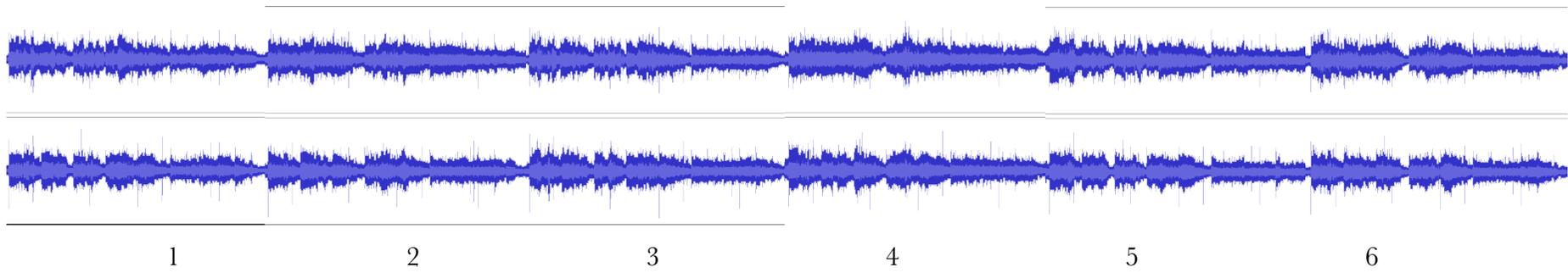


Figure 16. Phrase 3 of Each Round in the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

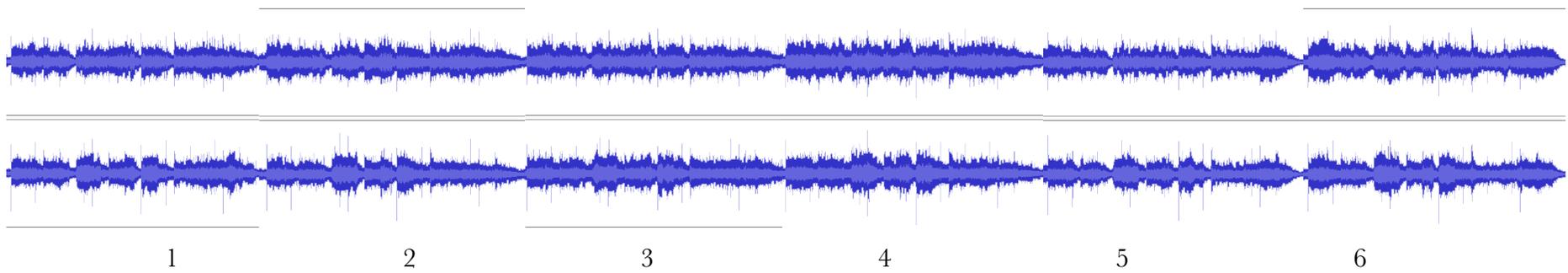


Figure 17. Phrase 4 of Each Round in the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

Case Study III: Dance of the Vajra

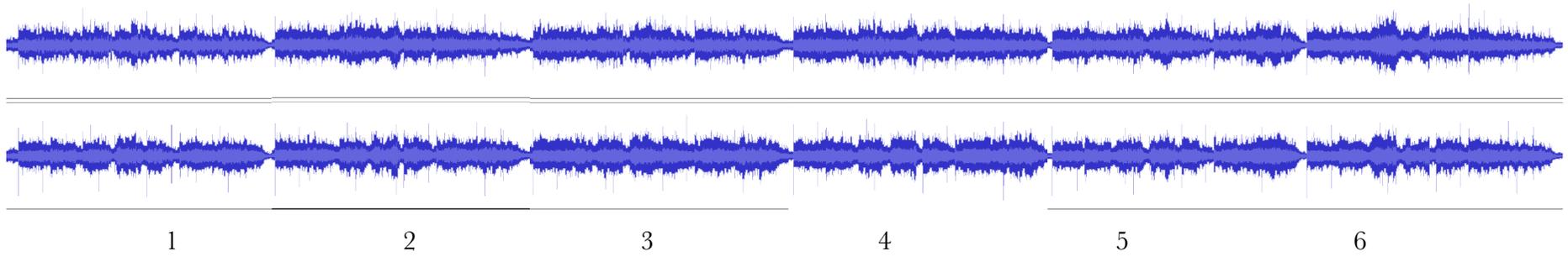


Figure 18. Phrase 5 of Each Round in the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

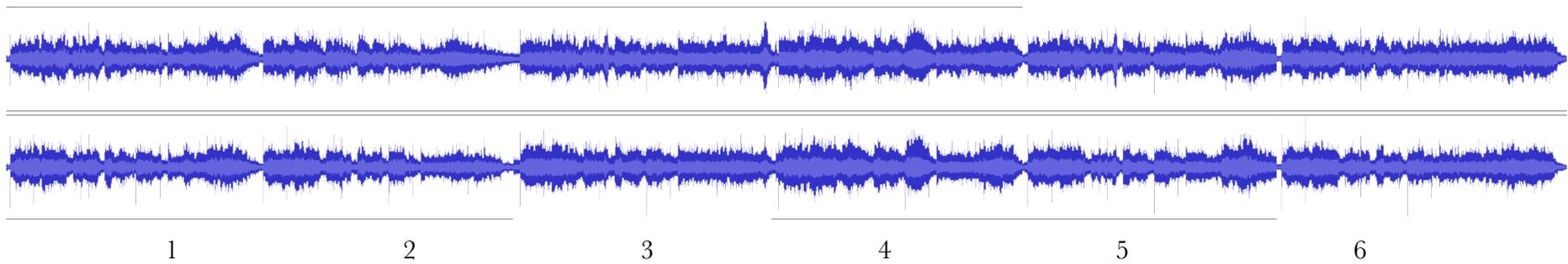


Figure 19. Phrase 6 of Each Round in the Dance that Benefits All Beings.

The recurrent widening and shrinking of these phrases, together with the general view of the spectrum shown in Figure 13, align with the mimicking of the physical and mental process sought by the Dance. Even if this practice presents some differences in relation to the previous case studies in its formation around a single musical piece, the discourse behind Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems shows a comparable strategy, according to which there is musical outline to go with their pertinent body activities, and the shift of consciousness that wants to be elucidated.

Although this fluctuation in the music was not present objectively in the old track used for the Dance, the participants I spoke to noticed that the inner development was similar in the use of both the old and new compositions. That is, regardless of the actual increase in intensity – as understood by volume and overlaying of sounds – the perception of the dancer mid-exercise was similar for the participants I approached for this study, also when they danced to the old recording. In this sense, music can be said to mimic and intensify the journey of the dancers by bringing what would be silent experience towards more enriching possibilities.

Finally, it is worth noting that Albino and Prioretti's music represents but one possibility that could work for the Dance, and does not prevent other future soundtracks. Capriles has attributed the facility of creating a piece that works well within the designed context with the label 'visionary art':

This is what I would call 'visionary art', the one that produces a suspension of judgement. Visionary art has been made by many Westerners that are not necessarily realised masters. I mean, a practicant of Dzogchen could easily generate music that had a bit of this effect, if one understands the principle of what is being sought, and has been instructed. If it is a practicant of a certain level... I believe that some have made this music for the dance. Maybe it is only Constantino Albini, who is a good instructor of Santi Maha Sangha, so with more reason it is easier for him to produce a music that has these qualities.... Of course, not everyone that makes music for the dance will have a mystical experience that allows one to understand which is the state, and even less the capacity, of creating a music that induces this state. Then there could be a lot of nonsense pieces on

the way, but I imagine that these would be discarded, and the ones that worked would be incorporated. (Extract from interview to Elías Capriles, specialist in Dzogchen)¹

Taking this into account, there is only one perspective left to consider: that of the participants in the ritual. They are, in the end, the ones with the final word on the efficacy of the employed strategies towards the spiritual, and the final analysers of the practices' benefits on a daily basis, in our everyday environment.

8.6. *Understanding the Dance of the Vajra From the Inside*

Music is intrinsic to the Dance of the Vajra: as it is a dance, there is no question as to whether or not it is a necessary component, as could be the case in freer frames such as Guided Breathwork or Energy Centres Systems. On the following pages, I will focus on the role of music in reaching the contemplative shift of consciousness suggested by the Dzogchen teachings via my ethnographic work: (a) in-depth interviews of regular participants recorded in my fieldwork, and (b) my own participant-observation in the Dance and recurrent practice. Because the Dance is not a one-time event as the other case studies could be, it requires constant practice even to scratch the surface of the desired shift of mind. It must therefore be somehow differentiated from the preceding case studies, particularly with reference to the musical input that, as I have shown, presents unique characteristics.

In my formal interviews with some of the participants, it was clear that sound was seen as an indispensable aspect of the ritual, resonating with what is perceived to be its spiritual dimension:

Music, and lately I also connect a lot with nature, because nature is also music, and where I live there are a lot of birds, of many kinds. When I play the Song of the Vajra, because I play it for them, we are there all together, and they come, also lizards. I sit there and listen. It does help me, yes. And the music that has been made for the 12 *As*: that one makes me go straight into it. (Interviewee #16, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

¹ See Elías Capriles, in *Estética primordial y arte visionario* (Mérida: University of the Andes, 2000).

Music is like a voice, like a prolongation of one's voice. It carries a rhythm, the heart, it has a beat. Spring, summer, harmonisation. And it belongs to everything, it is alive. It is something that works one's emotions a lot, the harmony between people, because when people sing there is group harmony, it is like a collective mind. (Interviewee #13, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

These extracts give a sense of the attributes that the dancers imagine to be present in music, and express the beliefs that inform their listening of music *per se*. The recognition of collectivity, on the one hand, inform us about the values that the participants attribute to the shared experience afforded by the Dance. The description of the coordination of movement and sharing of a single experience expressed by interviewee #13, on the other hand, show the understanding of the participants of a wider theoretical foundation at the background of the practice itself.

Others related music directly to the Dzogchen cosmos, showing an embeddedness of the Dance in a wider frame:

One of the things that opened up this inner space for me, to an inner world that is connected to spirituality a lot, it came from music. Because, if you listen to the master, you know that there are different kinds of sounds that come from different dimensions – inner and outer – of oneself, from the sound that one hears externally, with one's inner sound, and even beyond: a deeper sound that resonates with this primal nature that we all have, that only people who are really connected to this can hear, who do practices of profound meditation. Or, if you wish, contemplation. (Interviewee #12, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

The Dance of the Vajra is a sacred dance, and sound is fundamental to get into it. One even needs to sing in the dance, so you are singing, listening, and go beyond these places. To me it is like *rigpa*, or like outside of time, when time stops. (Interviewee #15, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

These participants deem the presence of sound indispensable, both in relation to the Dance and the other practices included under the teachings' umbrella. They also demonstrate a familiarity with both the teachings presented by Norbu at a practical level, and those retrieved from more theoretical sources. From this, one can infer that the

process of thought and reflection regarding several aspects of the practice, from its understanding of spirituality to the levels of existence presented by the Dance, is well embedded within the community's imagery.

Nevertheless, there is not such a unanimous consensus or agreement on the labelling of the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness. Although the Dance of the Vajra is described as 'meditation in movement,' its embeddedness into the Western context separates the shift of consciousness reached in Dzogchen from those described in a more traditionally-understood trance. This does not mean that there is not a recognised shift of consciousness 'out of the ordinary,' which in this context would be defined by delusion, but that one's *real state* is that which may be reached through the practices, when shedding the continuum of fallacious gazes upon the world that dictate our rebirth in *samsara*.

I do not think that there is any need for finding an alteration of the consciousness to discover our primal facet, I do not think that one needs to turn to this kind of 'different states of consciousness'.... It is a path that uses contemplation, and contemplation is not separated from daily life, it is a state you can gradually discover.... Therefore, the Dance is a dance of contemplation, it is a dance to gain consciousness that we are stepping on our own wisdom. (Interviewee #12, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

The Dance and what I have experienced while dancing is a very easy method to enter this, or to sense that you enter this. If one really enters or not is very subjective, but one is dancing and not really listening, and yet entering the three levels of sounds: the sound that is manifested, the sound for one to sing, inner sound, and then the sound that I consider to be contemplation, essence, that would be the sound that exists without even needing to be manifested. (Interviewee #15, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

Once again, the subjectivity of the entrance to a non-ordinary shift of consciousness – here understood as one's 'real state' – is a point for discussion. The recognition of the true state of mind that all participants are introduced to when receiving initiation by the master must be clearly recognised in following the Dzogchen path, as described in the three basic statements by original master Garab Dorje.² Thus, the state of presence is often described along with the use made of music:

² Reynolds and Norbu, *The Golden Letters*, p. 5; Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*; Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*.

There is always a moment in the Song of the Vajra that I do not get sleepy, I am not drifting off, but there is a moment that I think it carries me or something, and it is like 'hey!', and I go back in place, but there is a space in which I go away. After a while, I remain like this. (Interviewee #16, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

I believe that the dance becomes very interesting when you do not have to think about it anymore, when there is a *click*. It is like music: you do not really think what you are doing, and you lose or find yourself. You are 'beyond time', and sometimes it is very powerful because you are in time, and time goes super-fast, and you have a transcendental experience in music. In the practice of the Dance of the Vajra you experience this. (Interviewee #15, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

The intersection with this description of the entered shift of consciousness seems somehow distant from the maintenance of *rigpa*, which must surpass *kunzhi lungmaten*,³ as the path towards enlightenment is long and may be extended through many future reincarnations. What is relevant within this path is, therefore, the maintenance of contemplation until the 'final' shift of consciousness can be reached – that is, the entrance into a progressively intensifying non-ordinary shift.

Another element associated with facilitating the entrance to the meditative position, is the physical aspect of the exercise. Furthermore, the combination of music and movement connects with the affective factor that is linked to sound. This unites the basic elements that co-create non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, the representation of sound through the body, and body through sound, and the integration of affect.

Music helps me because there is movement, because it is an emotional expression. For me, what helps is that it is a technique that has movement, to remain in my centre, my true nature, because whatever else there is I do not see it as my true state. Not mine, nor that of others. (Interviewee #13, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

³ See footnote #50 of this chapter.

In this case, discussion around entrainment and synchronicity is again pertinent.⁴ Although a measurement of the coordinated movements proves difficult without the recording and analysis of the specific practice, the aim behind the creation of a collectively understood movement is testimony of the intention to move in a coordinated fashion, afforded in first instance by the music and sounds that guide the dance.

The consideration of the dance as a collective practice adds to what Becker called a ‘concentrated religious focus,’⁵ which builds on the intensification of emotion for each participant when overlaid on the musical input:

When you know the theme well, when you have well incorporated it, you are playing with others, there is a moment of conjoint dancing, there is a listening to rhythm, everyone goes at once, with some flexibility.... Then there is a moment in which you transcend form and you simply are in music. (Interviewee #15, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

Even so, according to dancing instructor Prima Mai, there is still a lot of work to be done to develop a strong Dance practice, and to create an accurate sonic input that reflects the original vision of the master, which she describes as a ‘more ethereal, more delicate sound.’⁶ According to Mai, the instruments included in the recordings should represent a universal sound, so the performance must be approached with both Eastern and Western instruments, as in Albin and Prioretti’s recording. As I have shown, the music exists in-between traditions, representing each, while also appealing to its intended audience. The inclusion of tablas, tamburas, and sitars, alongside guitars, flutes, and synthesisers, help afford a sub-universe of meaning, referencing the familiar while imbuing them with a new significance.⁷

⁴ Martin Clayton, ‘Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction’, in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, pp. 1–25; Patrik Vuilleumier and Wiebke Trost, ‘Music and Emotions: From Enchantment to Entrainment’, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1337 (2015), pp. 212–22.

⁵ Becker, ‘Exploring the Habitus of Listening’, in Julsin and Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion*, p. 138. The term ‘religion’ must be understood here in the frame set for the term in chapter 1 as well as within the conception of the discipline as stated by Namkhai Norbu in *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, p. 31. See chapter 1.

⁶ Extract from interview to Prima Mai, facilitator of the Dance of the Vajra.

⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (London: Chicago University Press, 1956); Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Clarke and Eric Clarke, *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological, and Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford:

Finally, the Dance of the Vajra and other spiritually-focused exercises integrated a scholarly knowledge of psychological theories. The introduction of Jung's 'collective unconscious,'⁸ for instance, is common amongst the practices considered here:

I am a teacher in reiki usui, and I also do crystal reiki, that is very cool.... Everytime that I work, I don't mind it being Dzogchen or reiki, because they complement each other, and I use the faster vehicles, because sometimes in Dzogchen I like it when I am working a really strong karmic seed.... If you enlighten that darker part that you have, that is denser, with more seeds, it also serves the collective unconscious. (Interviewee #13, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

This statement helps picture the Dance of the Vajra, and Dzogchen teachings overall, as embedded in a wider Western environment, where there is often a collaboration or shared experience of different rituals and exercises, rather than as an isolation of a single tradition to be followed. Furthermore, this crossing of 'evolved' traditions makes the inclusion of psychoanalytic and traditionally Western elements within the community's imagery in a more explicit way. Jung, as may be observed, is one of the constants across this wide panorama.

Nevertheless, Elías Capriles has focused on Holotropic Breathwork in particular, to place it against Dzogchen teachings, thus contrasting the shift of consciousness that Grof proposes with the real state of the mind from Dzogchen:

What [Grof] considers as 'mental health' is a state that is not transpersonal, it is a personal state informed by transpersonal states that one has already lived, in such a way that one takes the personal as absolutely truthful and gives it great importance, without that being perceived as relative and a bit like an apparition, a bit like a rainbow.... But that is not the state of *nigpa*. In the state of *nigpa* one does not perceive in any way: what is patent is our real condition, it is a transpersonal state.⁹

Oxford University Press, 2011); et al.

⁸ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Essential Jung*, ed. by Anthony Storr (London: Fontana Press, 1998); *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁹ Extract from interview to Elías Capriles, specialist in Dzogchen. See Elías Capriles, 'E. Capriles: Budismo, Dzogchén Y Psicología Transpersonal', *Youtube*, 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNR7qe6oMMw>> [accessed 16 November 2017].

In a few words, he considers the shift of consciousness afforded within Guided Breathwork as a delusional one in which there is, at most, a suspension of judgement corresponding to the state of *kunzhi lungmaten*, the neutral basis of everything. In this sense there is both a critique towards newer systems, and the need for an understanding of different shifts of consciousness that, although sharing the same umbrella category, are not directly related.

What is certain is that in the analysis of this and the previous case studies one finds a common use of the musical element in triggering the desired focus, parallel to the bodily element, and within its background transcendental cosmos. Once emotion and its constructed meanings are incorporated into these parameters, as expressed through music, the ideas already explored in Part I find support. Once one relates the musical content of a specific practice to its environment and spiritual goal – proper body activity, a spiritual background, and a cultural reference on which to pin it down – there is a common outcome rooted in a similar fundamental strategy.

Therefore, a deeper reading from these exercises' similarities, divergences, and common aims must be drawn, in consonance with, and in contrast to, the conceptual ideas first elaborated to comprise them. On the following pages, I move towards a wider analysis of the elements that bind all three practices together, in a shared universe of meaning, from the reading of the nuances approached in the outlining of each exercise, to an encompassing description of the wider elements that introduce them as a reflection of the respective societies in which they are built.

PART III
Analysis and Discussion

9. An Analysis and Discussion of Concepts, Practice, and Sound

The three case studies comprised here are bound in a shared universe of meaning, in which music can bring the individual closer to spirituality. The use and re-signification of both traditional concepts and musical elements for the underlining of these practices calls for a re-visitation of some basic ideas, from the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that they suggest to the affective responses to which they are remitted. In this context, the ritual environment in which Guided Breathwork, Energy Centres Systems, and the Dance of the Vajra take place, provides the key to a wider reality, in which the relation between the ordinary and the non-ordinary are configured in relation to, and in constant dialogue with, the individuals taking part in the rituals. As I have shown, music has a fundamental role in binding and sealing the changing ground of their respective rituals, providing an intersubjective space for agreeing on what can be a fleeting significance waiting to be grasped by each individual.¹

Through a closer look at the structuring concepts and practice in the key exercises that have been outlined, in the following pages I discuss the deeper layers of the main hypothesis underlying this research, according to which music's disposition is fundamental to the affordance of what are perceived as spiritual shifts of consciousness. I then consider all three case studies together to enable a deeper insight into their strategic use of sound.

9.1. *Back to the Beginning: The Basics Under New Lenses*

In addressing the respective background cosmoi of my three case studies, one finds common threads that tie them into a shared universe of meaning. All refer to non-traditional perspectives on the otherworldly, and all show a will for differentiating themselves in what I have termed 'evolved' traditions, as defined in Chapter 5. However,

¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 63.

their co-existence within a shared context must be discussed, as determined by the growing individualism and transfiguration of the sense of the sacred that they share.²

The re-formulation of religion, based on Berger's work,³ shows a continuation of the discourse within all practices. Its link to closed parameters such as an omnipresent force or a closed hierarchical structure may have faded away, but other elements pointing to the affordance of sacred cosmoi and imageries have been sustained, in favour of the maintenance and signification of the rituals at work today. Therefore, the debate lies in the historical baggage of the concept of 'religion', more than its implications for actualised practices that aim for a refreshed perspective in their spiritual approaches.

While some authors such as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu have rejected the term 'religion,' others working within an 'evolved' tradition environment embrace it. As Energy Centres Systems' instructor Valeria Zylbersztejn pointed out:

I am not religious, but I practice the religion of the Energy Centres System. For example, because if I feel like this and I give a class, I connect. It changed my life, it is my life, discovering that this could be my path, and I could not really look for anything else.
(Interviewee #20, facilitator in ESCEN)

Thus, through Norbu's testimony and the one quoted here, one can observe the significance attributed to the religious from two distanced perspectives – the first conditioned by the experience of living under a predominant religious stream for years; the second inserted within a more relaxed context, without specific religious involvement. Likewise, through the interviews portrayed in previous chapters, the Western participants showed diverse positions within the wide spectrum represented by the 'religious' and the 'spiritual'.

² Andrés Canteras Murillo, 'La muta religiosa', in Eduardo Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso: Presencia de la religión y la religiosidad en las sociedades avanzadas*, ed. by Centro de estudios andaluces, Consejería de la Presidencia, Junta de Andalucía (Sevilla, 2007).

³ According to which 'religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established.' Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 7. See chapter 1.

In this context, what some take as line of adherence, others transform into a search for what they understand as spiritual discovery, becoming what Manuel Delgado labelled as ‘spiritual nomads.’⁴ The same term has been used by Josep Maria Fericgla when addressing his workshops in a more informal manner, to highlight the difference between a weekend-long retreat with no further implications and a serious activity with repercussions on daily life, which fits the established contrast between New Age and an ‘evolved’ tradition’s intention.

There are other elements that may also be highlighted and attributed to a renewed vision of religion, which can be traced back to the case studies here. For instance, what Berger called the transformation of cosmology into psychology, or the legitimisation of ‘religious activities as some sort of psycho-therapy,’⁵ seems to be a tendency at the theoretical core of Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems alike. Moreover, this idea aligns with what some scholars have called a scientificising tendency,⁶ which clearly shows in the academic approach taken by the practices’ creators.

Thus, the nuances and perspectives on what may be perceived as an old-fashioned term, opens the possibility for further discussion, or a research topic in itself. The idea of considering religion within a ritual context, however, even if in a secondary plane, re-asserts the role of music within the rituals’ structure in the affordance of extra-ordinary shifts of consciousness. Furthermore, it shows an implication for self-identification and group consciousness, which has been repeatedly underlined as an essential element in the potentiation of what is to be perceived as spiritual value and material transcendence.⁷ The consideration of religion among its lines is therefore necessary, however briefly.

⁴ Manuel Delgado Ruíz, ‘Actualidad de lo sagrado: El espacio público como territorio de misión’, *Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares* (1999), pp. 253–90.

⁵ Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, pp. 168-169.

⁶ Rupert Till, *Pop Cult: Religion and Popular Music* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 187; Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: The Penguin Group, 1966), p. 127. See chapter 2.

⁷ David Aldridge, ‘Religion: The Everyday Forms of Spiritual Life’, in *Spirituality, Healing and Medicine: Return to Silence* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2000); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997); Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004). See chapter 4.

Since music seamlessly intervenes with everyday life,⁸ its capability for alluding to each individual separately, and within a collective environment,⁹ is used as a key tool for creating a homogenous experience for all participants within the outlined practices. This does not only regard the bonding with one another and the finding of a sub-universe of meaning for self-identification, but also the affordance of a non-ordinary experience that serves as a common guide towards a common aim.¹⁰ As I have shown, each exercise approaches this strategy differently – i.e. Guided Breathwork works through a search within the unconscious, rooted on an altered breathing exercise that provides access to it, while the Dance of the Vajra looks for the ‘original’ state of the mind through a meditative, slowly paced dancing exercise –; also depending on their definition of the desired shift of consciousness to be reached and the intensity of the process itself – extended over wider or shorter spans of time, and in relation to their placement on the spectrum of non-ordinary consciousness. In other words, each practice uses extra-musical connotations that better adhere to their design,¹¹ to afford a proper virtual reality that can propel the ritual participant towards the shift of consciousness that is sought. For this reason, music functions both as a tool to extend one’s exploration of reality, and as a means of expanding and customising the experience of time for the participants as needed.

DeNora’s and Partridge’s ideas of music as a prosthetic technology have been helpful in discussing music as a tool for exploring reality.¹² Within my three case studies, music complements the rituals’ afforded non-ordinary shifts of consciousness as a target for forms of being-in-the-world, separate from daily reality, by using sound as a tool in this very sense, affording an extension to reach the otherworldly. In Guided Breathwork, for

⁸ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 20.

⁹ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Robin Sylvan, in *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), underlines the following: ‘[Music] provides a philosophy and a world-view that makes sense of these experiences and translates them into a code for living one’s day-to-day life, something that all religions do. Finally, it provides a cultural identity, a social structure, and a sense of belonging to a community, something that all religions do. On many important levels, then, the music functions in the same way as a religious community, albeit in an unconscious and postmodern way,’ p. 4.

¹¹ Georgina Born, ‘Music and the Materialization of Identities’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 16 (2011), pp. 376–88

¹² Lynne Rudder Baker, ‘The Extended Mind and Religious Thought: Persons and the Extended-Mind Thesis’, *Zygon*, 44 (2009), pp. 659–675. DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*; Christopher Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

instance, it is the rhythmic attributes of the first part of the liminal stage that facilitate the construction of a frenzy, while in the Dance of the Vajra there is a focus on the creation of a steady line of reflection, which is held by sound across time. Thus, music does not only represent a prosthetic technology to explore the world, but a highly malleable one which can help transform a situation depending on its focus and direction at a non-material level.

This idea is also linked to the use of sound for customising one's experience of time,¹³ since it affords a space for the ritual participant to elaborate, while constituting a powerful way for the facilitators to direct the collective experience. Ruth Herbert refers to this idea when she writes that music affords 'the means to "think and be somewhere else" via imaginative involvement'¹⁴ – even if that place is a re-formulated present time, as with the entrance of contemplation during the Dance of the Vajra.

This investment in specific imaginative spaces has a greater depth the longer the ritual is repeated, as the participant becomes familiar with and progressively integrates the suggested procedure.¹⁵ In Energy Centres Systems or in the Dance of the Vajra, for example, participants tend to be involved with the community for longer periods, which allows them to learn the appropriate behaviours that can help them enter the ritual in a more refined shift of mind. Furthermore, they become accustomed to, and socialised in, that very environment, which can then be taken as a point of reference. This does not happen as explicitly in Guided Breathwork, since many participate only once. Nevertheless, practice is emphasised as a fundamental element for those who adhere to the exercise more regularly, like in the other cases.¹⁶

¹³ Ruth Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening: Absorption, Dissociation and Trancing* (London and New York: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011); Till, *Pop Cult.*

¹⁴ Herbert, *ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁵ Ruth Herbert, 'Consciousness and Everyday Music Listening: Trancing, Dissociation, and Absorption', in David Clarke and Eric Clarke, eds., *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological, and Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 179-192.

¹⁶ Interviewee #2, in relation to Holorrhenic Breathwork explained: 'The first time with the train's whistle I got scared. After the relaxation, 'relax, everything is fine,' and then 'toot, toot!', it was like 'what the hell is going on here?' Now it is almost like a signal, like a 'here we go'.... Then there is a thing that hasn't happened to me on the last three breathing sessions or so, but on the first two or three there was a lot of tension, for me, in my hands, and it was quite painful.... I also remember that the first time I started to bend my back and I wasn't able to leave that state, because you kind of shrink within yourself, you know? You don't let go, because of what I guess are one's own initial resistances.' See chapter 2.

Music therefore maintains the experience introduced in the ritual, alluding to the social knowledge of the participant. This depends in great measure on the ability of the facilitator to select and manipulate the sonic input as needed, and on the creator's intuition and imagination for the selection of an appropriate sonic discourse that can successfully parallel the inner process of the participants. As I have shown in previous chapters, the technological tools introduced for such a task show a clear advantage in the possibilities of repertoire, volume range, and increased privacy. Moreover, the same selection and use of familiar elements helps in socialising the ensemble, as Rouget already suggested,¹⁷ by alluding to the common knowledge of the participants and giving them a shared focus that appeals to them.

Having reviewed some of the elements common to all three case studies, I will now turn to the specificities of their distinct musical strategies concerning facilitation of shifts of consciousness intended to heighten a connection to the 'otherworldly'.

9.2. *Three Worlds, One Shared Universe*

In the discussion and analysis of Guided Breathwork, Energy Centres Systems, and the Dance of the Vajra, some common tendencies arise regarding the mechanics in the construction of their musical discourses. It is then possible to see the characteristics that emerge from the practices' sharing of a single territory of meaning, rooted in common structures, beliefs, and social mechanisms. These can be summarised by three distinct foci: (1) their musical content and elaboration, (2) their development and conceptual characteristics, and (3) their ritual and traditionally-based imagery.

¹⁷ Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 325-326.

	Common elements	Guided Breathwork	Energy Centres Systems	Dance of the Vajra
Musical Content and Elaboration	Non-specific repertoire	x	x	
	Specific repertoire			x
	Non-specific instruments	x	x	x
	Guideline structure	x	x	x
	<i>In situ</i> modification of sound	x	x	
	Relevance of volume	x	x	
	Relevance of bpm	x	x	x
	Percussion introduced as a structuring tool	x	x	x
	Relevance of stylistic characteristics	x	x	x
	Use of sound equipment	x	x	x
	Eventual use of live sound	x		x
	Peak moment	Marked	Progressive	Blended
Development and Conceptual Characteristics	Conceivers' academic background	x	x	x
	Facilitators	x	x	x
	Facilitators undertake a separate activity	x		
	Exclusive access to musical input	x	x	
	Community's access to musical input			x*
	Psychoanalysis influence	x	x	x*
	Personal development	x	x	x
	Holistic perception of the Self	x	x	x
	Consciousness beyond the brain	x	x	x

Ritual Imagery	Tripartite ritual form	x	x	x
	Goals set for the ritual development	x	x	x
	Goals set for after the ritual	x	x	x
	Specific location	x*		x*
	Practice embedded within bigger cosmos	x	x	x
	Hermetic nature	x		x
	Buddhist Influence		x	x
	Pranayama breathing	x	x	
	Chakras		x	x
	Yoga		x	x
	Frequency of group participation	Sporadic	Variable	Regular

Table 13. Case studies comparison.¹⁸

Although the three case studies do not coincide in every aspect of their constitution, as shown in Board 13, the bigger picture in which they belong shows analogies that serve the deciphering of their underlying mechanisms.

(1) Musical Content and Elaboration

For each of the three case studies there are questions about musical content and repertoire. The Dance of the Vajra can be seen as distinct from Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems in its inclusion of a specific structuring musical component, as dictated by the sung mantra that guides the dance steps. Yet the sounds that it introduces are not exclusive: although the mantra is always the same, its musical context is subject to variation, as it can only approximate the ideal sound envisioned by master Norbu.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cells marked with an asterisk are subject to specificities.

¹⁹ Paolo Roberti Di Sarsina, Alfredo Colitto, and Fabio Maria Risolo, 'Chögyal Namkhai Norbu: The Master Who Revealed Dzogchen to the Western World', *Religions*, (2013), 230–39; Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Dance of the Vajra* (Berkeley: Shang Shung Edizioni, 2015).

Therefore, the mantra works as an organising device that needs to be followed, but which does not constrict the inclusion of new instruments or resources by those participants making their compositional contribution to the Community. Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems, on the other hand, work without a closed basis, but present a pre-established structure that must be followed in the process of reaching the desired shifts of consciousness. They do not have a set of words to follow, but rather a wider structure that dictates the general lines which the music must delineate, as I have shown in my analyses in chapters 6 and 7. Because of this, one can say that all three practices depend to some degree on following the appropriate structure for their successful outcome. What changes in each ritual is the relationship to the ritual's background cosmos, and the shifts of consciousness that they pursue.

For the same reason, the instruments and sounds included in each exercise are not rigidly prescribed, but are chosen depending on wider stylistic characteristics that enrich and give variety to the activities. This favours maintaining the practices in time, since it allows a flexible content that may change according to the situation and the participants themselves, and evolves with their social environments. In this context, the capacity for relating affectively to the suggested repertoire is essential for sustaining the desired shifts of mind,²⁰ and in relation to the overall spiritual pursuit.²¹ Because of this, the inclusion of a non-static musical element allows an adaptation of meaning for the ritual attendees.²²

Thus, rather than being immovable, as in traditional religious ensembles, there is a dialogue that affords the facilitator some creative intervention, which directly benefits from the use of technological equipment within the ritual frame. One of the advantages of such a technology is, indeed, the *in situ* modification of sound that happens assiduously within Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems, as a means of moulding the session for the specific group participating on each occasion. This, of course, would not make as much sense within the Dance of the Vajra, since its lineal maintenance of volume

²⁰ Eric F Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*; A L F Gabrielsson, and Sly Lindstrom Wik, 'Strong Experiences Related to Music: A Descriptive System', *Cognitive Sciences of Music*, VII (2003), 157–217.

²¹ Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, p. 21.

²² Becker, 'Exploring the Habitus of Listening: Anthropological Perspectives', in Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 127-157; Lawrence M. Zbikowski, 'Words, Music, and Meaning', *Signata: Annales Des Sémiotiques / Annals Of Semiotics*, 6 (2015), pp. 143–64.

and beats per minute works toward the construction of a controlled focus, which presents different unique requirements.

As I showed in my analyses, the fluctuations of amplitude, providing distinct volume ‘sonic signatures curves’ across sessions, in Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems accompany the psychological changes of the participants, as well as their process of entrance, maintenance, and exit from the non-ordinary shifts that they suggest. This includes the fluctuation of the volume itself to adapt to the needs of such intentions. For example, in the Dance of the Vajra volume becomes relevant only in its continuity and maintenance, so the strategy that is followed carries less weight.

There is a similar development attached to the basis of each practice in terms of beats per minute (bpm). The Dance of the Vajra shows a regular metre throughout the entire length of the accompanying song, and the instruments, especially percussion, are in charge of signalling important entrances or changes in performative actions. Nevertheless, it is necessary to maintain a steady rhythm and mantra to enter the meditative state, as this affords a consistency that helps the dancer hold focus, while blocking out any external input that may distract from the state of contemplation.²³

In Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems, there is greater variability in this regard, which supports the rituals’ intentions, and complements the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that they attain; rhythmic variation adapts to the needs of each stage in their respective methods. As I have shown, both practices are built around a progressive increase, maintenance, and decrease in beats per minute (tempo) and volume. These strategies align with that followed by the Dance of the Vajra, in that the musical intensity also mirrors the physical component. The inclusion of strategic percussion is similarly seen

²³ A similar technique was proposed on the occasions in which I got to practice the spinning Sufi dance, on the campus of Can Benet Vives, within the various workshops delivered by Josep Maria Ferigla. See fieldwork diary I, Appendix D, pp. 337-353. As he explained, for the purpose of maintaining concentration and connecting with a higher consciousness, as specified in the background cosmos of the Sufi practice itself, it is usual to ask the novice apprentice to hold a mantra in one’s mind, which is to work as a point of focus. The continuous reiteration of certain rhythms has also been described within music research as a fundamental point for the entrance in some non-ordinary states, as it affects the body of the participant also from an entirely physical perspective. Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Becker, *Deep Listeners*; Will Schrimshaw, ‘Non-Cochlear Sound: On Affect and Exteriority’, in *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*, ed. by Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), pp. 27–43; et al.

in all three practices as a tool to structure their key actions and intentions – to afford momentum in Guided Breathwork, for instance, or a coordinated *mudra* within the Dance of the Vajra.

Finally, the stylistic characteristics of each practice are intermixed with the other musical parameters at work, and serve to locate the different stages of the events in affective terms. As I have shown, this diverges from one case to the other in consonance with their wider structure and underlying statements in their background cosmoi.²⁴ The role of the facilitator, in this sense, is central for the decision of which pieces might be included in the repertoire of each session – or each recording, as in the case of the Dance of the Vajra. At a wider level, stylistic elements rely on the structural indications that afford a relatable ritual structure, but are still based on pre-established parameters such as the avoidance of jazz pieces, or too strongly connotative ones, in the case of Guided Breathwork.

However, the affordance of a feeling of transcendence depends greatly on the balance between a practice's affective intention and its end goals, drawn from both structural and stylistic choices within the rituals. In Guided Breathwork, for instance, there is (1) a clear tripartite structure separated by an encouraging character, constructed from modal and simple major scales; (2) an expansion constructed from an over-layering of instruments, and the inclusion of more complex tonalities; and (3) a retraction towards minor and modal scales with a highlighting of traditionally spiritually-related themes, aimed at the re-integration of 'normal consciousness'. This also parallels the attainment, maintenance, and departure from hypoxia and ensuing apnoea. In the Dance of the Vajra, at the other end of the scale, this inner structure is rather afforded with nuances on a maintained melodic and harmonic line, relying on a stability that is sought, in the pursuit of a more static shift of mind.

Therefore, for these practice-specific strategies, one needs to be able to follow the meaning of what is sonically transmitted by the ritual's format.²⁵ Music can only scaffold the exercise and maintain the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness if it is charted accordingly. This leads to the conclusion that the efficacy of music within the ritual ensemble depends on how it works to mirror and support the physical and psychological states that are

²⁴ For a closer outlook on the analysis for each case study, see chapters 6, 7 and 8.

²⁵ Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus*, p. 31.

suggested, relying on the capability of sound to effectively guide the participant from an affective standpoint.

Although there are sporadic introductions of live music within some of the case studies, mainly for special occasions, all practices rely on the flexible capacity of the sound system. This is especially relevant to the effective construction of the peak that defines the precise liminal point for each exercise, or *limen*, which diverges depending on the physical and theoretical approaches. This is constructed via manipulation of the established parameters of volume, bpm and stylistic choices, with the added dimension of the background cosmos specifically tailored for each exercise.

In sum, the addition of the elements described here work together in the affordance of a personalised experience that adapts to the necessities sought by the ritual participants. This search can take a different shape, depending on different approaches to the spiritual, and on the focus that the practices themselves establish. As such, in Guided Breathwork one finds a defined peak, which is marked by a *breakthrough*, constructed by building the music's intensity from its formal and thematic characteristics.²⁶ In Energy Centres Systems, its peak fits within a progressively growing and subsiding intensity that holds and releases the expanded shift of consciousness, with less intensity kept for a longer time.²⁷ Finally, for the Dance of the Vajra, the peak is stretched over a prolonged period, between the beginning and end of the dance itself, in an almost constant line of development related to its formal/thematic characteristics, which gain in intensity mid-dance, and then decrease again.²⁸

(2) Development and Conceptual Characteristics

In their development and conceptual characteristics, all three case-study practices show similar forms of validation within their Western-marked context, and follow similar strategies for their diffusion.²⁹ For instance, all practices have their own websites, as well

²⁶ See chapter 6, *A Musical Analysis of Guided Breathwork*.

²⁷ See chapter 7, *A Musical Analysis of Energy Centres Systems*.

²⁸ See chapter 8, *A Musical Analysis of the Dance of the Vajra*.

²⁹ See Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles, 'Tu cuerpo en movimiento. Tu vida en movimiento. Escuela Dr. Hugo

as secondary pages and mail bulletins to keep their past and potential future participants up to date. In the Western environment in which they develop, as ruled by technological media, their spreading of information is fundamental for advertising and gathering interest in their propositions.

It is notable that all facilitators were trained in academic contexts, from which the creators – Fericgla and Grof, Hugo Ardiles, and Namkhai Norbu – obtained their highest qualifications.³⁰ The scientific validation found in such specialisations could be seen as giving a certain weight and continuity to all practices in their existing environments.

This also places the practices' creators at a higher hierarchical position, even if not self-attributed, which allows them to be positioned as teachers for future facilitators.³¹ As shown, all practices include programs for the training of new practitioners that can serve to widen their respective communities. On the one hand, this affords a structure for the sessions that allows them to run smoothly and with no complications and, on the other, gives continuity to the hierarchical chain of knowledge that allows the participant to rely on the scientific veracity attributed to the practices on first instance, by hand of the facilitators.

In practical terms, this is shown through the exclusive access to the music in Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems, or its exclusive validation in the Dance of the

Ardiles: Centros de Energía', *Escuela Dr. Hugo Ardiles: Centros de Energía* <<https://www.escolahugoardiles.com/>> [accessed 25 January 2018]; Escuela Sistema Centros de Energía, 'Sistema ESCEN' <<http://www.escen.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017]; Fundación Río Abierto, 'Movimiento Vital Expresivo', *Fundación Río Abierto* <<http://www.rioabierto.com.ar/>> [accessed 25 January 2018]; Fundació Josep Maria Fericgla, 'Fundació Josep Maria Fericgla' <<http://josepmfericgla.org/>> [accessed 12 June 2017]; Grof Transpersonal Training, 'Grof Transpersonal Training', *Holotropic Breathwork* <<http://www.holotropic.com>> [accessed 23 April 2018]; International Dzogchen Community, 'Dzogchen Teachings' <<https://dzogchen.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017]; International Dzogchen Community, 'Vajra Dance' <<http://vajradance.net/>> [accessed 12 June 2017].

³⁰ Most of them hold high academic and non-academic titles: Josep Maria Fericgla has a PhD in Anthropology; Stanislav Grof and Hugo Ardiles are both Medical Doctors; Namkhai Norbu was a professor for several decades in Italy, and holds the title of Chögyal (monarchs from the historical regions of Sikkim and Ladakh) as well as *tulku* (discoverer of treasures). Likewise, Maria Adela Palcos graduated in Psychology, Patricia Ríos in Sociology, and many of their students hold undergraduate titles as well as strong formations in Gestalt or similar schools. Many of the facilitators in Guided Breathwork are also based in Psychology and complimentary fields.

³¹ See chapters 6 to 8. Grof Transpersonal Training, 'CPD Current Certified Facilitators', *Holotropic Breathwork* <<http://www.holotropic.com/holotropic-breathwork/facilitator-listing/>> [accessed 2 January 2018]; Escuela Sistema Centros de Energía, 'Sistema ESCEN'; International Dance Council 'Global Dance Directory: Who's Who in Dance', *Global Dance Directory* <<http://www.cid-portal.org/gdd/index.php>> [accessed 25 February 2018].

Vajra. In the first two cases the facilitators in the room are the only ones with access to the sonic input, as a means to control the development of the events and to obtain a better control over the guidance of the participants in their journey towards the desired shifts of consciousness. In the case of the Dance of the Vajra, there is a higher level of participation from the Dzogchen Community, as shown through the possibility of composing a soundtrack to accompany the dance. Nevertheless, Norbu was the one to control the viability of such proposals, as he was the only one to have had direct contact with the higher spheres from which the practice first descended.

This separation is even more accentuated in the case of Guided Breathwork, in which the facilitator holds a distant position and role from those undertaking the activity *per se*. As in the cases described by Rouget when discussing the entrance to non-ordinary shifts of consciousness for those present in ritual events, the facilitator in Guided Breathwork stands aside and, as the musicant of the session, does not enter the non-ordinary shift of consciousness, but is rather only there to provide it.³² This is different for the other case studies, in which the facilitators participate more actively in the exercises – even if holding an attentive attitude different from the rest of attendees.

Entering some of the wider theoretical considerations that inform the practices, one must emphasise the influence of psychoanalysis and the considerations on the nature of the Self, as it helps to construct the exercises' otherworldly affordances. The relevance of the early psychological imagery brought in by Jung was, in Guided Breathwork and Energy Centre Systems, a key point of departure that would allow the practices' facilitators to afford realms of existence beyond our earthly materiality, which can be read from an already existing paradigm.³³ In the Dance of the Vajra, although there is also a connection towards psychological theories pointing to one's reading of the dream spheres,³⁴ its

³² Rouget, *Music and Trance*, pp. 102-113. This is most clear in the case of Holorrhnic Breathwork, in which Josep Maria Fericgla introduces a big drum to mark the rhythm for the participants to follow, thus becoming the *actual* musicant of the session, beyond his exclusive control of the sonic input. See Appendix D.

³³ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire (New York: Princeton University Press, 1969); *The Essential Jung*, ed. by Anthony Storr (London: Fontana Press, 1998); Josep Maria Fericgla, *Seminario: Músicas e Inconsciente. Textos de Josep M^a Fericgla*, Fundació J (Calella, Catalonia: Societat d'Etnopsicologia Aplicada i Estudis Cognitius, 2009); Stanislav Grof, *When the Impossible Happens: Adventures in Non-Ordinary Realities* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True Inc, 2006).

³⁴ Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light*, ed. by Michael Katz (Berkeley: Snow

connection to the Western psychoanalytical tradition does not have as strong an attachment to pointedly Eastern elements.

Guided Breathwork specifically incorporates Jung's archetypes and his ideas on the collective unconscious as a keystone in the conception of the realms that may be accessed through the breathwork practice. Within the Breathwork imagery there are recurrent pictures that are identified following Jung's theoretical contributions, as in the case of the *anima*, the *animus*, and other key figures.³⁵ Although Jung also informed the theoretical background of Energy Centres Systems, he is not as present in its cosmos as Reich,³⁶ one of the central authors to demarcate the practice.

Besides the direct influence of the literature of these scholars, the wider consideration of one's personal development and dormant possibilities at a wider level can be traced across all practices as well. In each case, there is an intention to facilitate self-improvement, or healing, as highlighted within the framing of the practices as 'evolved' traditions.³⁷ Nevertheless, what is more important is their common conception of the individual as a holistic entity, formed by various levels that work in coordination for the construction of the self. This is seen in Energy Centres Systems and in the Dance of the Vajra, and is implicit within Guided Breathwork, also in its musical proposition. The three human elements at issue are (1) the body, which constitutes a way of entrance from the physical world; (2) the expression, defined as voice within the Dance of the Vajra and as emotion in Energy Centres Systems, relating to the inner dimensions of the individual; and (3) the mind, or consciousness, to approach higher realms of reality. Only through the coordination of all three elements may one achieve what is seen as true transcendence, so music must be matched to and integrated within each activity to provide for all elements in its affordance of the spiritual journey.

Lion Publications, 1994); Elías Capriles, 'Volume II. Beyond Mind: A Metaphenomenological, Metaexistential Philosophy, and a Metatranspersonal Metapsychology', in *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind, Beyond History* (Mérida: University of the Andes, 2006), 305–841.

³⁵ Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. The *anima* and the *animus* are two key figures within Jung's archetypes, which take an antropomorphic form in representation of the feminine and masculine unconscious, respectively.

³⁶ Reich, *Character Analysis* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1972); Hugo Ardiles *La vida en mis cuerpos: Centros de energía terapia corporal* (Buenos Aires: Dunker, 2012); Vincenzo Rossi, *La vida en movimiento: El Sistema Río Abierto. Sanar los bloqueos emocionales*. (Buenos Aires: Macro Edizioni, 2005).

³⁷ See chapter 6.

What gives final significance to the superposition of these elements, however, is the consideration of higher planes in which consciousness can exist: although we are dependent on our physical bodies to *be* individually, and on our affective capacities to do the same socially, what lies beyond materiality is only approachable once this bodily dimension has been left behind. To do so, the suggested non-ordinary shifts of consciousness become especially relevant, and as such music is central to the facilitation of their entrance, maintenance, and final overcoming.

(3) Ritual Imagery

To transcend material reality, the rituals give meaning to an otherwise non-relevant action in the daily life of their participants.³⁸ By placing them within a meaningful context, a sub-universe that makes sense in a wider environment, the pursuit of the non-ordinary shift of consciousness achieves its value and validation. In short, this is done by placing the sub-universe within a ritual frame that reaps further benefits, such as self-identification and collective gathering,³⁹ where music can work more freely in pursuit of what is perceived as the spiritual, with the exclusive focus of the attendee.

Each case study has a tripartite structure that coincides with the phases traditionally assigned to rites of passage, otherwise known as rituals of change of status.⁴⁰ These phases include a pre-liminal or preparation phase, a liminal phase in which the main exercise is comprised, and a post-liminal or integration phase, which can also work as the final shift for the ritual participant in the establishment of a *before* and *after* spiritual experience. The liminal phase of each case study can also be sub-divided into three smaller sections that correspond to a preparatory, liminal, and integrative process, inferred from the peak that they all present, and the preparation and release that frame it.

³⁸ Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, 'Religion and Society', in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (New York and London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1965), pp. 175–202; Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³⁹ Becker, *Deep Listeners*; Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Born, 'Music and the Materialization of Identities'; Louise Child, 'Mantras and Spells: Durkheim and Mauss, Religious Speech and Tantric Buddhism', *Durkheimian Studies*, 9 (2003), pp. 58–67.

⁴⁰ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Turner, *The Ritual Process*; Josep Maria Fericgla, *Taller para despertar a la vida a través de la muerte*, Limited Ed (Calella, Catalonia: Fundació Josep M^a Fericgla, 2015).

In this sense, the goals that are set during and after the ritual cannot be overlooked. In each case, the wider liminal phase seeks a specific shift of consciousness, attached to the breaking of mental blockages. The background cosmos of each exercise defines this differently, as in the dissolution of the dual vision of reality in the Dance of the Vajra,⁴¹ the breaking of physical armours in Energy Centres Systems,⁴² or the re-living of forgotten memories in Guided Breathwork.⁴³ All are framed by the musical discourse and the non-ordinary shift of consciousness corresponding to it, which is likewise illustrated by the suggested bodily exercises. But the work intended for after the ritual has formally ended also needs to be considered, as it suggests a pathway for the participants to relate back to their original reality; it offers a glimpse into the dissatisfaction with societal mechanisms felt by a population increasingly interested in alternative approaches to the otherworldly.⁴⁴ This was evident during my fieldwork interviews, while the attendees' satisfaction, sense of achievement, and worthiness increased notably after the workshops. Having crossed the threshold of a self-exploring and self-developing practice, the participants gain a modified outlook that works to the benefit of their everyday life, thus confirming Durkheim's theory about the veracity of all religions, taking these as a reinterpreted concept.⁴⁵ One may return to the idea that 'if it works for the participant, then it must be true,' as the ultimate form of validation.

The location of the practices contributes to their structural constitution as well, and to an easier development of their liminal phases and attached goals. However, it is common to hold rituals not in a specific location, but wherever there may be adequate space. This space must adhere to certain characteristics – such as carpeted or wooden floors, open

⁴¹ See chapter 9. Elías Capriles, *Buddhism and Dzogchen: The Doctrine of The Buddha and The Supreme Vehicle of Tibetan Buddhism - Part I* (Mérida: La Llave, 2003); Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Dzogchen: The Self-Perfected State*, ed. by Adriano Clemente and John Shane (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1989).

⁴² See chapter 8. Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*; Rossi, *La energía en mi cuerpo*; Patricia Ríos, 'Sistema Milderman: Movimiento Rítmico Expresivo', *ESCEN: Movimiento y Desarrollo Integral* <http://www.escen.net/folder_articulos/art014.htm> [accessed 25 January 2018].

⁴³ See chapter 6. Grof, *When the Impossible Happens; The Adventure of Self-Discovery*; Josep Maria Fericgla, *Epopoieia: Avanzar sin olvidar. Respuesta a las cuestiones más frecuentes tras vivir una experiencia transformadora* (Barcelona: La Liebre de Marzo, 2003).

⁴⁴ Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso*; Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead, Benjamin Seel, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Karin Tusting, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2005).

⁴⁵ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). See chapter 1.

spaces with few or no columns, and little to no furniture – although there are some exceptions: in Holorrhenic Breathwork there is one only place in Catalonia where the exercise is developed, facilitated by Josep Maria Fericgla, which already adheres to these elements;⁴⁶ and in the Dance of the Vajra there is a network of static locations for access by its community, with these characteristics.⁴⁷ This has further influence on the conceptions made around the space itself and its delimitation through sound.

The embeddedness of each ritual within a major cosmos or sub-universe of meaning does not only mean a detachment from traditional forms – such as Catholicism –, but also the inclusion of a wider spectrum of practices and beliefs. Each one of the case studies' main exercises, as outlined here, is embedded into a major context included with other complementary activities: Guided Breathwork has therapy and transpersonal training courses; Energy Centres Systems includes massages and complimentary therapies, such as Gestalt or transpersonal training methods; and the Dance of the Vajra has all its surrounding traditional practices (ganapujas, healing rituals, etc.), as well as Yantra Yoga. This wider structure and incipient institutionalisation also means the insertion of some hermetic rules, however, built around a 'protection' discourse regarding the participants' privacy, and further extended as a point for differentiation from other 'less serious' propositions. During my fieldwork, this was the cause of some inconvenience, such as the restricted allowance for recording or talking about the practices in depth with non-participants. But what I first saw as an issue, I now believe works as a good illustration of the need for control in the diffusion of the constituting elements of each practice and their development.

Finally, the practices' 'closeness to the outside' comes from the traditions that first informed them and their conceptual backgrounds, but these are not exclusive. It is not a coincidence that New Age influences touched these structures at some level, as in their inclusion of Buddhist precepts, Yogic techniques, or concepts like the chakras, which create some parallels between them:

⁴⁶ Can Benet Vives, 'Para el desarrollo armónico del ser humano y la práctica de una espiritualidad real', *Can Benet Vives Campus*, 2017 <<http://canbenetvives.org/>> [accessed 30 December 2017].

⁴⁷ See chapter 9. Prima Mai, 'The Dance of the Vajra and Mindfulness', *The Mirror* (2016), pp. 1–5.

- The influence of Buddhism is clear within the Dance of the Vajra and its major precepts. However, it is also present within Energy Centres Systems, beginning with the consideration of body, voice (or emotion), and mind, as well as in the relevance given to meditation, reincarnation, and other inherently Eastern-derived ideas.⁴⁸
- The chakras are discussed both in Energy Centres Systems, in its basis for development, and within the Dance of the Vajra, in the mandala's representation.⁴⁹
- Pranayama and other forms of breathing techniques are likewise found within the cosmos of all three case studies: as the main element in Guided Breathwork; as a complementary technique in Energy Centres Systems for working through some of the chakras;⁵⁰ and as a technique in Yantra Yoga, within the same cosmos as the Dance of the Vajra.⁵¹

Together with the elements outlined so far, this describes the contextualisation of all three case studies within a shared universe, which are nuanced in the sub-universes of meaning that afford the specific cosmos for each exercise.⁵² As I have shown, music is a major structuring element for all three case studies in this very sense, in coordination and guidance for both the development of the personal journeys of the attendees and the integration within a wider cosmos.

⁴⁸ Hugo Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos; La energía en mi cuerpo* (Buenos Aires: Kier, 2008); Rossi, *La vida en movimiento*. This is also extended to the conception of the lines of energy of Earth, which were illustrated similarly by Ardiles and Norbu in their own work, giving an idea of both the influence of the traditions that preceded them and the similarities within the basic conceptions of the world as humanly formed. See Ardiles, *La vida en mis cuerpos*, p. 128; and International Dzogchen Community, retrieved from GIS Matters, 'Overlay Mapping', *Mapping, Location Analysis, Data Visualisation and Database Solutions* <<http://www.gismatters.com/mandala.gif>> [accessed 27 February 2018].

⁴⁹ These nevertheless do not completely coincide, since the chakras used in the Dance of the Vajra correspond to the Tibetan idea of the same and not on the Hinduistic ones used by Energy Centres Systems. As such, they are placed somehow differently on the body and are different in number (6 for the Dance, 7 for Energy Centres).

⁵⁰ Ardiles, *La energía en mi cuerpo*, p. 7.

⁵¹ Buddhistdoor Global, 'Yantra Yoga and Vajra Dance With Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche', 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkNSaVF23zQ>> [accessed 11 June 2016]; fieldwork diary XV, in Appendix F, pp. 470-482.

⁵² See chapters 6, 7 and 8, for further reference on the specific backgrounds on which each practice stands.

9.3. *Where the Sacred and the Secular Overlap*

From the diverse repertoires of Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems to the possibilities introduced by the music in the Dance of the Vajra, there are some concepts which directly affect the ground on which all exercises stand. A clear example of this is found in the juxtaposition of the sacred and the secular, such as in the affordance of a specific space in which the rituals can take place. For the relation of the sacred and the secular, the music inserted in these case studies presents what may seem like a paradox: the inclusion of non-specific, everyday repertoires in an environment that aims for the otherworldly. However, their apparent opposition is just a friendly encounter at a crossroads, aimed for the embeddedness of developed practices in an equally developing environment.

As I suggested in chapter 2, although the binary opposition of the sacred and secular has been foregrounded in the discussion of religion since Durkheim and Eliade's work,⁵³ they may be better conceptualised as occurring across a continuum. In the end, it is people who influence the sacred, and not only the sacred that influences people,⁵⁴ propitiating a dialectical evolution of society.

The use of popular music affords an easier relation between the participants and the rituals' sonic environments, as it introduces an affective element from the everyday world,⁵⁵ re-contextualised within a pre-existing spiritual configuration. That is, while a piece of pre-conceived music could be effective in the affordance of the expected affective reactions by playing with similar parameters to those explored above, it is the variability of what is introduced and the element of an everyday reflection of one's life which make popular music a better choice for these cases. Furthermore, the possibilities for changing the repertoire alongside the development of trends and social knowledge puts the rituals in an advantaged position that allows them to be maintained in time, by utilising the material that serves as an up to date affective reference.

⁵³ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*; Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: Harcourt Australia, 1959); Manuela Cantón Delgado, *La razón hechizada* (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 2001).

⁵⁴ Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*, p. 168.

⁵⁵ DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*.

This placement of the secular into what is seen as a sacred environment corresponds to what Canteras Murillo labelled a ‘mutation of the sense of the sacred,’⁵⁶ as briefly outlined in chapter 2. According to Canteras Murillo, there has been a progressive transit from a transcendent onto-theological statute to another of immanent origin, which has ultimately led to a ‘contingent sacrality,’⁵⁷ built from reason. That is, the idiosyncrasy of religious thinking has evolved to afford a sense of the sacred which can be better adapted to the individual living in a constantly moving society, in which traditional structures have shown a progressive decay.⁵⁸ In such a context, the secular is re-configured as a sacred element temporarily, in its placement within a sacredly-defined environment.

The overlapping of the sacred and the secular for ritual purposes is not a new phenomenon, however. In the middle of the 20th century traditional institutions like the Catholic church introduced masses in *lingua franca* and further adapted musical content.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, in the ecclesiastic context, the main differentiating element that has facilitated the transformation of the worldly into the sacred is the structure that holds it: the temple. The floating signifier of spirituality is thus put into a tangible form to which the ritual participant can physically relate.⁶⁰ By bringing everyday music into an already sacred space, music is redefined as belonging to that space and sharing its characteristics as sacredly relevant within the building. However, in most of the cases here a transference of the sacred quality from the sacred space cannot take place.

Even if some of the ritual locations are static, as with the campus of Can Benet Vives for Holorrhenic Breathwork, or some *gömpas* chosen to install the mandala in which the Dance of the Vajra can take place, what makes them feasible spaces for the development of the rituals is not their exclusive architecture, nor their specific construction for the task ahead in a new temple form. They resemble the environments in which smaller groups also work: spaces with enough room to move freely, that provide privacy and are comfortable for the participants, usually with wooden or carpeted floors, mats, and

⁵⁶ Canteras Murillo, ‘La muta religiosa’, p. 155. See chapter 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 156.

⁵⁸ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction* (London: HMSO, 1989).

⁵⁹ Burkholder, J. Peter, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, Ninth (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

⁶⁰ Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*.

blankets. Ideally, the interference from the outside world would be kept to a minimum, and thus locations outside of the city or other privileged spots are always preferred.⁶¹ It must be, in broad terms, a space that allows a recognition of an out-of-the-ordinary occasion for the attendee, even if through secular lenses. Nevertheless, the lack of specificity of the spaces that the rituals use does not allow the easy objectification of the sacred that the temple provided. The question is, then, how the sacred space is defined outside of the existence of its specific boundaries.⁶²

In this changing environment, music becomes a transformative element for the ritual context itself, and for the introduction of the sacred, by affording a new focus in which to objectify the otherworldly. That is, within a non-specific space, music works within the delimitation of the sacred and the secular, affording a temporary bubble in which the affective reactions that bring the ritual participants to what they conceive as the spiritual may be unfolded. Thus music becomes both the objectifiable sacred and its delimitator. The sacred needs to be formulated and interpreted for the unfolding of spirituality, however. In this regard, some of the ideas first introduced by the New Age and countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s are especially relevant.⁶³ In their reflection of a changing environment in which the walls of traditional structures started fading away, the Self appeared as the true centre for devotion, and the spiritual was sought within, rather than outside, in consonance with the changing society around it.

For music to work in the pursued exaltation of the spiritual, it must be embedded within a background that gives it meaning,⁶⁴ as with the outlined processes corresponding to the practices at issue here. From this standpoint, one can read the process underlying the pre-established sonic curve for each exercise as affording the appropriate environment for the otherworldly to unfold: music can work as the intermediary towards transcendence. Thus,

⁶¹ See Appendixes D to F. A typical space for any of the exercises would be a big room, with cold-isolating floors, cosy decorations, a good shape and size for sonorisation, and an ideal location out of reach for any disturbing or alien sounds.

⁶² Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion*; Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

⁶³ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); Steven Sutcliffe, and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Joanne Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* (Bath: The Bath Press, 2002).

⁶⁴ Partridge, *The Lyre of Orpheus*.

music works to objectivate the sacred where the temple stood, but it is its connection with the Self as spiritual centre that makes it a key element within the ritual arena.

The participative nature of music can also highlight the intensity of spiritual awareness.⁶⁵ The collective approach towards a shared spiritual goal, with nuances depending on each participant's personal realisation, can enable a more pronounced relation between the self and the ritual process. Finally, it is in the selection of the repertoire that one finds the juxtaposition of the sacred and profane, and the re-signification of music in its new context.⁶⁶ This shows the Self placed at the centre of the spiritual equation, while spirituality itself is highlighted through the use of sound, in accordance with its immediate environment, for the participants to recognise. As I have shown in my three case studies, music can be assigned other uses, which play a key role in overcoming the mundane and reaching the otherworldly.

9.4. *Liminality and Music in 'Evolved' Traditions*

The liminal stage in these three rituals corresponds to their configuration as rites of passage, through which the participant acquires a new perspective on reality:⁶⁷ they do influence the ways in which one interacts with the world after accessing higher or deeper dimensions of the self, and after achieving non-ordinary shifts of consciousness. Josep Maria Fericgla specifically addresses this issue in one of his texts, which he compiled as a logbook for the participants in his sessions:

We live in a society in which rituals fall further every day, being substituted by compulsive and neurotic behaviours, making necessary a search for spaces in which to be in contact with our inner beings. This is clearly an initiation space; it is an authentic rite of passage. The participant is separated from one's daily environment, goes through a process of transformation, and reincorporates again into society.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Becker, 'Exploring the Habitus of Listening'.

⁶⁶ Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*; Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

⁶⁸ Fericgla, *Taller para despertar a la vida a través de la muerte*, p. 19. My translation.

Following this point, one must return to Radcliffe-Brown's statement according to which the ritual is a way to justify a belief, and not vice-versa.⁶⁹ The ritual serves as a reflection of its society at a symbolic level, aims for transcending it, in its attributed function as a bridge between materiality and the otherworldly. Because of its symbolic representation of a wider belief system, Radcliffe-Brown placed more importance on the act itself than the cosmos behind it, as a way for knowledge to be disseminated: a mechanism for maintaining a universe of meaning in time, a way of passing on the values and elements that are considered relevant for future social development.⁷⁰

However, for such a transcendental moment to take place one must walk across the threshold that is built as an impasse between the *before* and the *after*, as a form of reformulating one's vision of the world. Although the liminal stage of a ritual is considered its most essential part, it cannot take place without the proper preparation and integration of the overall process. Considering the relevance of the pre- and post-liminal activities that frame the preparation of the threshold and its outcome, the liminal stage represents the peak point for spiritual realisation,⁷¹ what might be an individually relevant truth, standing right at the border between how the world was seen before and how it will be seen after the practice.

Music therefore functions as a scaffolding device that facilitates and eases this transition, while potentiating its possibilities. This can be seen in finer focus when considering each case study separately, by illustrating the development of each example:

- (4) In Guided Breathwork, the marked peak is a culmination of a progressive escalation, and is presented by the creators of the practice as a short yet intense moment that brings the participant over the edge.⁷² To obtain this effect, the music shows a progressive increase in intensity, directed towards the moment of major emphasis in the participant's non-ordinary mental expansion.

⁶⁹ Radcliffe-Brown, 'Religion and Society', p. 179. See chapter 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Marcel Cobussen, *Thresholds: Rethinking Spirituality Through Music* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008); Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

⁷² Stanislav and Christina Grof, *Holotropic Breathwork: A New Approach to Self-Exploration and Therapy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 42.

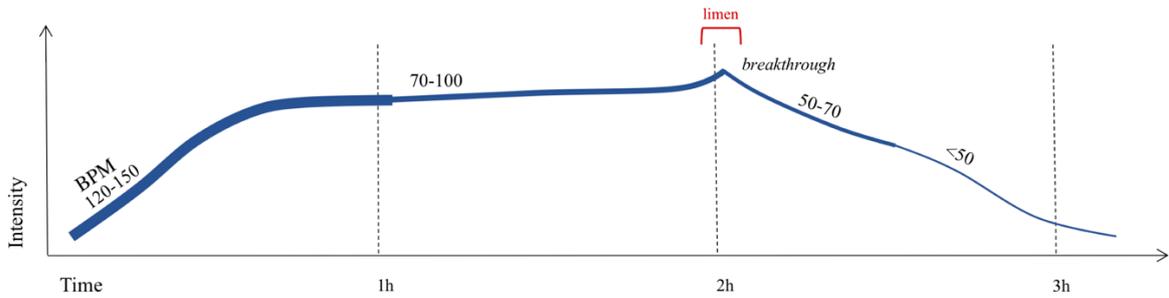


Figure 20. Limen in Guided Breathwork.

(2) In Energy Centres Systems this peak spans a longer duration, and as such its intensity is distributed over a longer period of time, in which the attendee has more space to elaborate on the emotions and affect that are being raised and their attached memories. The music that corresponds to this period displays in detail the characteristics related to the chakra at work in each session, highlighting the main traits through the parameters shown above.

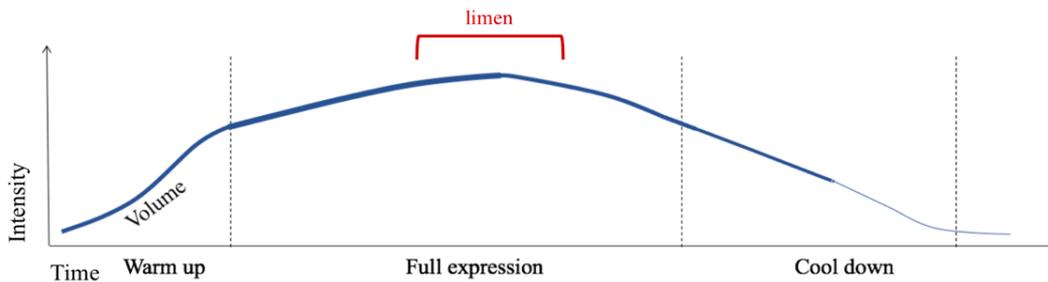


Figure 21. Limen in Energy Centres Systems.

(3) In the Dance of the Vajra the peak is altogether different, showing a distended, slowly increasing and decreasing intensity that helps the participant enter and focus on the meditative shift of consciousness progressively, as well as on each one of the musical phrases, and to then slowly release the tension. Nevertheless, there are several layers to this process behind the overall development of the piece: the construction of each of the six rounds in the dance shows the same ‘circular’ pattern repeatedly, as do the six phrases included in each of these six rounds. The music subsequently shows an over-layering of sounds that build up the turning point towards the middle of the piece.⁷³ Considering

⁷³ See chapter 8.

phrases, rounds, and the whole track, the overall process can be pictured as follows, in an ever-building intensity that reaches its peak at about the halfway point of the song:

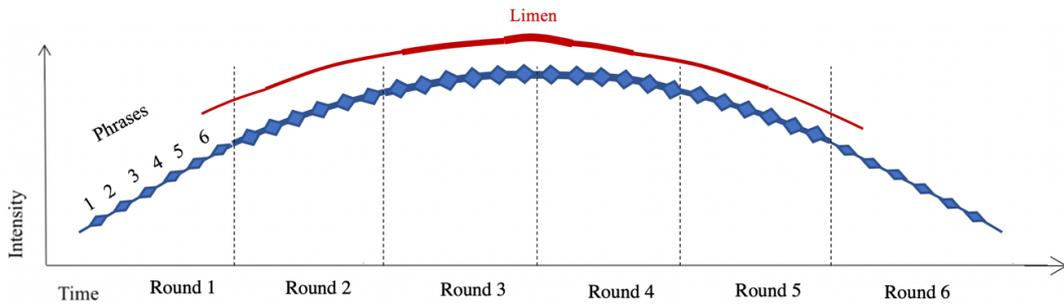


Figure 22. Limen in the Dance of the Vajra.

Or, summarised as a single, simpler image:

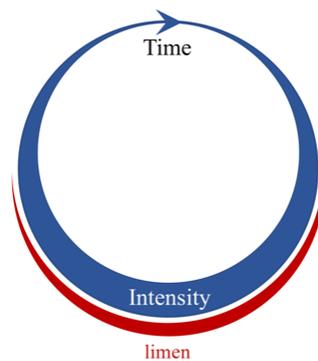


Figure 23. Limen in the Dance of the Vajra summarised.

Through these mechanics, music affords both the aimed shift of consciousness and its following de-construction, fixating a point for maximum expansion depending on the case and aim of the participants. This variability shows the situation of the *limen*, the precise threshold of each case that marks the change of status, in its inherent transitioning ambiguity.⁷⁴

The successful construction of the musical process by the facilitators in each case study appears to be essential for reaching the pursued shifts of consciousness, especially in what can be called their transcendental impasse, which goes beyond the overall spirituality

⁷⁴ This should be understood as an average representation that must take into consideration possible individual variabilities, as it represents an ideal form which becomes malleable at a practical level.

brought in by the participants' gaze. Nevertheless, the construction of this process must be consequent with the parameters at play, and depart from the appropriate background focus that gives them further meaning, and which correlates the physical activity with the exercises themselves. In the end, each practice works as a complete organism, which depends on all its elements for a correct operation and maintenance in time. And yet, although embedded in the same sociocultural root, each of these organisms depends on the same wider universe of meaning within which they belong.

Therefore, there is a symbolic value and efficiency to be employed by the participants as a point of reference for the overcoming of the *before* state, and the transcendence that will allow entrance into the *after* phase. When music is allowed to delimitate the ritual space, the attendee is afforded a vehicle for their inner process, in an observable form.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the push through the *limen* and the reaching of the desired shifts of consciousness cannot be detached from the collaborative dimension of the rituals, without which it would lose its socially-significant strength. Because of this, whether shared or individually experienced, the proper guidance of affect is what lies at the heart of any successful ritual process.

9.5. *Affect in the Unlocking of Transcendental Experiences*

Having reviewed the mechanisms involved in the affordance of a spiritual shift of consciousness guided by musical content, it is important now to consider the affective element. Without affect the overall processes could not take place, whether in driving the ritual participant towards specific actions and reactions by addressing selected repertoires, or as a tool for community gathering and communication.⁷⁶ There is more than one dimension to the arousal of affect through music, however, as can be seen in the collaboration of body and mind towards the interpretation of the sonic content.⁷⁷ A consideration of psychophysiological reactions are beyond the scope of this project, but it

⁷⁵ This process is similar to that presented by Lévi-Strauss when discussing shamanic-healing rituals, see footnote 66 of chapter 2. Following this line of thought, music can then be understood as the actual healer of the session, the one to lead the process in reliance of any practical matters on the facilitator's hands. Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Effectiveness of Symbols', in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1963), 186-205.

⁷⁶ See chapters 3 and 4.

⁷⁷ Becker, 'Music and Trance'; Herbert, *Everyday Music Listening*.

is clear that the correct approach and configuration of the music by the facilitator can enable the participant's cultural understanding from a physical and intellectual perspective, which is essential for a successful outcome.

The affordance of a virtual reality in which one can orient oneself depends on the capacity of the listener to read the suggested input appropriately,⁷⁸ in accordance with the mood set for the session. Energy Centres Systems provides a good example in its presentation of a different repertoire for each session, depending on the chakra or chakras to be touched, and according to any possible transitions between them. Thus, not only does the music appeal to one centre from its frequential range, as defined by Ríos,⁷⁹ but it also refers to a learned cultural behaviour that is attached to sound itself. For this very reason, the lumbar-sacral centre, which is related to one's sensuality, is connected to culturally-read sensual music references, such as samba or salsa pieces; while a higher centre such as the frontal one is linked to ideas of stasis and reflexivity, and therefore linked to sonic suggestions such as Hindustani rāgas or New Age music.

Likewise, it is necessary to provide a cultural frame for entering a non-ordinary shift of consciousness that all case studies provide; otherwise, as Sylvan suggests,

those melodies, harmonies, or rhythms that might evoke a powerful response from someone in one culture may have absolutely no effect on someone from another culture; generally, the physiological and psychological effects do not occur except within learned meaning systems of a particular sociocultural context.⁸⁰

Thus, the capacity for relating affectively to the musical discourse is essential in guiding one's mind flow towards the expected reactions. Music helps the attendee work through the moods that will afford the reaching of the sought shift of consciousness,⁸¹ as accompanied by the proper physical activity to mirror it.

⁷⁸ Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of a Consciousness* (London: William Heinemann, 2000); Clarke, *Ways of Listening*; Humberto R. Maturana, and Francisco J. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1987).

⁷⁹ See chapter 8.

⁸⁰ Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit*, p. 29.

⁸¹ Joel Krueger, 'Extended Mind and Religious Cognition', in *Religion: Mental Religion*, ed. by Niki Kasumi Clements, McMillan I (2016) pp. 237–54.

Partridge recently referred to music's ability to afford an 'affective space,' from which spirituality can directly benefit:

The importance of the non-cognitive dimensions of musical agency in relation to spirituality is well known. Indeed, while some forms of worship are principally silent and contemplative (as in Quakerism), typically worship involves the manipulation of emotion by music. Through music, worshippers are encouraged to praise, to meditate, to reflect and to commit their lives to their deities, just as they are encouraged to dance and to sing at live music events. There are, of course, no specifically *religious* emotions. Context provides content, in that it informs the affective spaces created by music.⁸²

The synchronisation of moods organised around the music allows the participants to see their own experience reflected in others', affording an empathic response that enables this kind of bonding.⁸³ However, this requires a shared cultural code that can afford similar reactions in all attendees, which is necessary for this kind of reflective work. Along with DeNora's idea of shared time,⁸⁴ and Becker's work on common religious focus,⁸⁵ this helps maintain the three rituals at issue here within a society increasingly detached from spiritual- and religious-focused group interaction.

Having considered the basic constitutive elements in each ritual, it is time to focus on their final phase. Each departs from its own musical strategies, aiming to afford specific moods for the participants and lead them towards the desired shifts of mind. Beginning with the idea that there is not a specific music to induce a non-ordinary shifts of consciousness,⁸⁶ the way in which such a shift of consciousness is pursued in a specific practice depends largely on the culture from which the new ritual took its basis. The parameters from which the ritual was built also establish the ritual's idiosyncrasies and major aims: enlightenment for the Dance of the Vajra, the dissolution of muscular and affective armours in Energy Centres Systems, or the unblocking of hidden memories within Guided Breathwork.

⁸² Christopher Partridge, 'Emotion, Meaning and Popular Music', in Christopher Partridge and Marcus Moberg, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Popular Music* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p. 23.

⁸³ Ibid.; Born, 'Music and the Materialization of Identities'; Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁸⁴ Tia DeNora, *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 83.

⁸⁵ Becker, 'Exploring the Habitus of Listening', p. 138.

⁸⁶ Rouget, *Music and Trance*; Cobussen, *Thresholds*.

A practice such as the Dance of the Vajra, which focuses on melodic repetition to afford a meditative shift of consciousness, or potentially to lead the individual to enlightenment, cannot work with a musical curve that describes a different physical process, adopted from a different cultural context whose strategy does not match the context at stake – for example, one characterised by an explosive physical shock, as in the processes used to build a shamanic trance in some Amazonian rituals,⁸⁷ or in Guided Breathwork. Music therefore must act in parallel to the mental and physical development of the participants of the ritual, in accordance with the ways in which a non-ordinary shift of consciousness is approached in its background cosmos. That is, the musical outline of the ritual has to simulate the physical and affective development that the participant must experience to successfully enter the shift of consciousness which is pursued, as rooted in the background cosmos that informed the practice.

In the Dance of the Vajra one finds a ritual that describes repetitive patterns, that can be said to echo a traditional form of meditation based on mantra repetition. Through this repetition, the music affords a dialogue with the previous sonic experiences of the participants, while playing with the culturally constructed meanings assigned to the musical input chosen for the occasion. The bodily activity emulates this process and makes use of the background music to reiterate it, re-creating the physical attitude of the ‘meditative’ shift of mind itself. This then gives way to a relaxed, non-bodily-focused shift of consciousness, which aids the inner development of the individual. For this reason, the musical choice of the practices’ facilitators must be adequate to the participants’ possible interpretations; the music must emulate the participants’ internal affective process as they strive for the transcendental shift of consciousness.⁸⁸

Furthermore, the spiritual focus that this and the other case studies introduce has a fundamental role in the affordance of such otherworldly expectations, in the setting of the right environment for the musically induced, otherworldly feeling of overcoming materiality. The participants’ expectations are determined by the affective path suggested by the practice. This relates once more to the three main elements that intervene in the

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Malcolm Budd, Malcom, *Music and the Emotions* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) p. 47.

creation of a successful ritual formula: (1) a cultural reference that serves its construction, as ‘evolved’ from a previously existing tradition; (2) a specific physical design that acts as a mirror for the shift of consciousness that is pursued; and (3) a musical discourse that binds it all together. The rituals explored here show an embeddedness of these elements in their overall construction, though their true efficacy does not lie within their intricate mechanics, but rather on the participant’s decision to understand and accept such processes as valuable and worthy. Music, in its inherent capacity to transport us virtually anywhere, is the aid to such a search for what lies beyond.

9.6. *Reception and Reflection: The Other Face of the Ritual*

The maintenance and efficacy of the rituals that have been discussed here do not only depend on the creative minds behind their musically-guided strategies, but also on the reception and participation of their public. Because of this, the opinions and evaluations regarding the rituals must be taken into account as another gauge of the efficacy of the exercises. The rituals are designed with appropriate musical process that is experientially appropriate for their public, but who that public is, why they participate, what they best relate to musically, and what their lasting impressions are, are all questions that the rituals’ originators need to bear in mind.⁸⁹

The participants in every exercise of each of the three case studies share similar demographics in terms of cultural and economic status, as well as social background. These traceable characteristics suggest a target public that encompasses a sector of the population most interested in exploring higher or deeper dimensions of the self, on a non-material level:

⁸⁹ For such a reading, I referred to the in-depth interviews performed in the field, although in the elaboration of this thesis I took into account my own experience as a participant-observer too. Therefore, my discussion here is based on what I have experienced, as shown in the fieldwork diaries attached as Appendix D to F.

#	Ritual	Role	Gender	Age	Country	Profession
1	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	42	Spain	Physiotherapist
2	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	35	Poland	Maintenance
3	Holtropic Breathwork	Facilitator	F	55	UK	GTT Instructor
4	Holotropic Breathwork	Participant	F	52	Spain	Teacher
5	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	38	Spain	Therapist
6	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	F	31	Spain	Teacher
7	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	40	Italy	Chef
8	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	40	Spain	Student
9	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	58	Spain	CEO
10	Holotropic Breathwork	Participant	F	54	Spain	Teacher
11	Dance of Vajra	Participant	F	33	Spain	Factory worker
12	Dance of the Vajra	Participant	M	58	Spain	Teacher
13	Dance Vajra / Holotropic B.	Participant	F	38	Spain	Publicist
14	Dance of the Vajra	Facilitator	F	55	Italy	Dzogchen Instr.
15	Dance of the Vajra	Participant	M	38	Spain	Photographer
16	Dance of the Vajra	Participant	F	43	Spain	Landscaper
17	Dance of the Vajra	Expert	M	74	Venezuela	Dzogchen Instr.

18	ESCEN	Facilitator	F	63	Argentina	ESCEN Instr.
19	ESCEN	Participant	F	39	Spain	Student
20	ESCEN	Facilitator	F	49	Argentina	ESCEN Instr.
21	ESCEN	Facilitator	F	51	Spain	Catering
22	Río Abierto	Facilitator	F	58	Spain	Río A. Instr.
23	ESCEN	Facilitator	F	36	Spain	Teacher
24	ESCEN / Holotropic B.	Participant / Facilitator	M	47	Spain	Therapist
25	ESCEN	Facilitator	M	45	Spain	Threapist
26	Río Abierto	Facilitator	F	67	Spain	Río A. Instr.
27	ESCEN	Participant	F	62	Spain	Retired

Table 14. Statistics of attendees in Guided Breathwork, Dance of the Vajra, and ECEN.

These common features show that, on the one hand, this public has the purchasing power necessary to pursue these rituals and, on the other, that there is a cultural curiosity leading to complex searches for answers to metaphysical questions.

As can be seen in fieldwork diary V (Appendix D), Fericgla has kept data for the participants in his rituals, which can be extrapolated to Energy Centres Systems and the Dance of the Vajra, following my own observation:⁹⁰

⁹⁰ I did not develop a detailed quantitative evaluation of these parameters during my fieldwork, since it fell out of my scope. Nevertheless, the reader can refer to the attached fieldwork diaries to draw a broader comparison with Fericgla's data, where impressions and observations were made after each ritual.

- In broad terms, starting from Fericgla's statistics gathered through 2013-4, Holorrhenic Breathwork shows a percentage of participation of about 50-50 by gender, the largest age groups being those between 31-40 years old (29%) and 41-50 years old (33%).⁹¹ Although these data coincide age-wise with the other case studies, in Energy Centres Systems and the Dance of the Vajra it is usual to find a larger female representation. For what I observed age-wise, the larger groups in both ESCEN and the Dance of the Vajra revolved around a 31-50 age range, rarely moved below 31, and only expanded above 65 occasionally.⁹²
- The educational data for Holorrhenic Breathwork show primarily five-year undergraduate certificates, MAs and PhDs (53%), followed by three-year undergraduate certificates and equivalents, such as BAs or Professional Trainings (30%). This was also true for Energy Centres Systems and the Dance of the Vajra, although they were the most inclusive in this regard and in comparison to Guided Breathwork. Departing from my informal and formal interviews, I was able to trace a profile that moved towards post-graduate certificated participants and professionals in sectors derived from specialised training, which provided the occupations that follow.
- In terms of occupation, the larger groups in Fericgla's case fell under 'professionals' (20%), 'technicians' (16%), and 'teachers' (12%). These categories are neither specific nor conclusive, so one may infer that although the participants have different professional backgrounds, the workshops of each scenario need to be affordable for them. According to the data that I collected from a more qualitative perspective, mainly from informal and formal interviews on the field, participants in all three rituals fell within the 'professional' (mostly self-employed entrepreneurs, that ranged from manufacturers to chefs, but also laboratory technicians, economists and similar), or 'teaching' (from a primary to a high education level, including music and plastic arts) categories.

⁹¹ Fericgla, *Taller para despertar a la vida a través de la muerte*, pp. 31-33.

⁹² Note that the table above only includes a list for formal semi-structured interviews, and not informal interviews on the field, which were not recorded.

- The reason for participating in the rituals was shown to be ‘human development – growth of inner world,’ in Holorrhenic Breathwork, at a 65% rate. The broadness of this category can also be applied to the other exercises, and I believe this is worth a closer look.⁹³

In accordance with the latter reason, interviews in my study showed a desire for self-exploration and inner development, but there was also a comparable search for healing from past trauma and resolving present moral issues, for which music was a central point of reference. The focus of participation under these categories can therefore afford further expansion on the debate on secularisation versus sacralisation of society, and on whether there is a need for what scholars such as Casanova call ‘supernatural compensators,’⁹⁴ in the broad market in which these exercises exist.⁹⁵ But it is true that, in the religion versus spirituality debate, most of the participants inclined towards the latter:

I would say that I am more spiritual. Religion is only a tool to manipulate people.... Religion-wise, I did catechism, but at the end I left it because it didn’t interest me much. Now I do keep on studying Buddhism, some Hinduism, Andean Cosmovision.... I like studying a bit of everything, but at the end everything leads you to the same place. (Interviewee #7, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

No, I do not consider myself a religious person at all. But with the years I must say that I have come to consider myself as a spiritual person. When I started on this, no ... I did not believe in anything superior to the human being, because I have studied in the hard sciences, the creation of the Universe, the Big Bang, all of that, it does not need anything above it. But, basically, now I do consider myself spiritual, and I have felt it, I have experience it. (Interviewee #19, participant and facilitator in ESCEN)

With these assertions, we can see the value attributed to the categories of the ‘religious’ and the ‘spiritual’ by the participants, in a fashion close to what Woodhead and Heelas’

⁹³ Other categories were: overcoming fears and phobias (8% of participants), personal formation (8%), finding sense of life (6%), dissolving fear of death (5%), or less frequent options (>5%).

⁹⁴ José Casanova, ‘Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: towards a Global Perspective’, in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead, *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), pp. 17-29.

⁹⁵ Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit*; Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*.

labelled ‘religions of difference’ and ‘spiritualities of life’, respectively.⁹⁶ Thus, by referring to religion in a traditional sense – framed by the Catholic Church, in the context where the practices developed – the interviewees moved far from the definition of religion as suggested in Chapter 1, which following Peter Berger was described as ‘the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established.’⁹⁷ The participants’ conception of the spiritual nature of the rituals thus give us a clue to their perception of the world and the values attributed to the path toward reaching what they consider to be the otherworldly, the unconscious, or one’s original nature.

Participants frequently referred to the underlying structure and mechanics of the overall rituals, in relation to each practice – Guided Breathwork, Energy Centres Systems –, and the Dance of the Vajra, in this order:

I was focusing on it, actually, and I was anticipating what music was going to be played, to see how I was going to develop. Because those moments in which the music was more relaxing it didn’t bring me to do some things, maybe the moments when I started kicking, if the music does not accompany it [it is difficult]... (Interviewee #6, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

I think that, through the years, when you learn how to move ... there are musics that facilitate the connexion to the centre that is being worked. Then, if you do a Low centre with Supertramp music, you will be able to do it and the people may connect if they look to their bodies as well, but if there are drums it is going to be easier. (Interviewee #25, participant and facilitator in ESCEN)

When there is music one must be present, and to anything else I guess, but especially in music one also uses movement, because music are waves and they are not static, they are in continuous movement, like the Dance too. From the moment that you integrate them into this contemplation it creates a journey that helps you find this primordial state, that you cannot achieve if you are in a state of distraction, you must be present. (Interviewee #12, participant in the Dance of the Vajra)

⁹⁶ Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

⁹⁷ Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 34.

These brief extracts show a relationship with the underlying strategies behind each technique in reaching the otherworldly through music, but the references to the sonic input in terms of bonding, finding a personal identity, or the affective reactions to the same, are almost limitless. For instance, in the first quote we can see the participant making reference to the evoking affordance of music, and how the most rhythmic part comprised within the first half of the Breathwork ritual helped him express his emotions bodily. Likewise, the second quote explains how certain music, when chose appropriately by the facilitator, affords a specific reaction. Both these examples show the relevance of the most intense parts of the ritual exercises where rhythmical and instrumental layering is concerned. Finally, the quote regarding the Dance of the Vajra clarifies the affordances of the music to enter the specific shifts of consciousness that are pursued, considering it both an element to integrate within contemplation and to help construct it.

Nevertheless, there is an essential question regarding the overall effectivity of the rituals: that this effectiveness can be understood by the ongoing participation of old and new individuals, who note the success of the mechanisms put together by the creators of each exercise, in their goal of reaching the otherworldly.

I would say that it has helped me connect with my emotions, which is not a very frequent thing in my daily life. I felt a big change on how music affected me emotion-wise from the workshop that I was in in 2002, because I remember vividly that, since then, I have felt music and been overwhelmed by it, and that didn't usually happen before. (Interviewee #8, participant in Holorrhenic Breathwork)

My life has changed because there was so much pain I closed up on, not wanting anyone to touch me, which had to be normalised.... I believe that I have progressively solved some of my issues, ancestral, and from my memories. (Interviewee #22, facilitator in Río Abierto)

I have found something that's clear. First of all, I have had a good experience because all the other practices, all of them, I have had extreme difficulty to learn them.... I have this difficulty with the other practices, and with the Dance I have it easy, it is the first practice that I have been able to enter through another door. (Interviewee #15, participant in the Dance of the Varja)

Through these participants' testimonies, we thus see how there is an affective development that extends beyond the ritual itself and into the personal life of the interviewees. This shows how the elements listed by Fericgla as 'reasons for participating', quoted above and extrapolated to ESCEN and the Dance of the Vajra, find a correspondence after the ritual has been performed: there is a positive outer evaluation given by the participants for personal development and growth of their inner world.'

Although the true efficacy of each practice is embedded in the individual reading of the rituals, which are given meaning in a shared social context, one can conclude that the musical strategies behind each ritual, structured to follow a specific musical outline, is indeed an effective combination for the search towards what the participants may identify as spirituality, or further transcendence.

Finally, the positive evaluation of the strength of all practices in providing a path towards the transcendental, that adapts to the quest of their participants in specific personal contexts, can show wider characteristics that introduce a reflection of the society in which they exist. Through the effective construction of the practices through their background cosmoi and musical propositions, and as read through their participants' reflections on them, one can find wider trends that ought to apply to other examples. A strategy departing from body, affect (or emotion), and mind, has proved to be essential in the reaching of successful ritual outcomes, focused on the search of spirituality. The construction of a non-ordinary shift of consciousness rooted in the background cosmos of each specific practice, read from the cultural understanding of the participants from both an affective and physical dimension, has shown fundamental to realising the otherworldly, in the form of a re-read rite of passage. Thus, in mirroring the sought shift of consciousness by affording a parallel development to the same 'intensity'-wise, music develops not one, but several roles in the affordance of a physical, intellectual, and affective process to move towards the spiritual and the transcendent.

Embedded in an all-inclusive universe of meaning, music serves the affordance of sacred spaces that are bound to what is to be perceived as one's spirituality, affording specifically-devised mechanisms that detach themselves from traditional structures. We have seen how, in this disregard of specific spaces and repertoires, music allows the final push from the spiritual through to the transcendent, in the adaptation of exercises that support it and

give it life. For these reasons, music's inherently affective content is the last element that completes the ritual, in its capacity for bringing a group together and beyond the mundane, in its role as a prosthetic technology.

Conclusions

In the rapidly changing environment in which individuals in the industrialised West find ourselves, several practices emerge from the need for identification and social orientation. The practices that have been explored in this thesis are illustrative of different ways of relating to the world, yet are just a sample of such socialising processes, which put music at the centre of their equation as the glue to hold and structure the rituals' composing elements. Although some have attributed similar exercises simply to marketing strategies, as superficial searches for the ineffable, the rituals explored here aim to offer a deeper dimension drawn from pre-existing traditions and research.

In coining the term 'evolved' traditions I have inserted these rituals into the larger conceptual map outlined in the opening chapters, regarding their relation to terms such as 'religion', 'spirituality' or 'New Age'. Likewise, the term 'evolved' traditions has served the purpose of affording an emic point of view to approach the imagery of those actively taking part in the rituals, separate to what they consider to be less 'serious' practices. Thus, I have relied on both emic and etic perspectives to build a middle point for describing the goals of participants and facilitators – including participant-observation and in-depth interviews — and what is perceived from a scholarly standpoint – using thorough theoretical review of previous work and music analysis methods.

Through the study of the rituals' musical structure and stylistic considerations, I have been able to track the elements which come hand in hand with the sacred cosmos and physical proposal that they afford, and have drawn what I define as their sonic signature curves. With this, I have been able to analyse the rituals' main features and strategies:

- (I) Holotropic Breathwork offers a tripartite structure, with an equally tripartite liminal phase, that can be seen as an extension from the pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal traditional categories. It is approached from the affordance of three specific musically-built moments that are to appeal to the ritual participants, and help them immerse in their unconscious minds for – what is to be perceived as – spiritual realisation. These include (i) the entrance into an altered breathing

process, accompanied by high bpm and volume, and stylistic choices such as the inclusion of percussion instruments, simple scales and harmonies [i.e. pentatonic, modal scales]; (ii) the modulation towards an affect-focused section, where the volume is kept high and bpm slightly decreases, while intensity is built from the overlaying of instruments and the inclusion of more complex harmonic and melodic choices [i.e. tetrachords, *cantabile* melodies], to get in touch with their inner selves; and (iii) the closing over an apnoea-focused section, with decreasing volume and bpm, to afford what is to be perceived as spiritual realisation for the participant, including stylistic choices such as the introduction of resonance and delay effects along more paused and simple pieces [i.e. Gregorian chant, modal scales, minimalist pieces].

- (II) Energy Centres Systems show a similar structure to the case above, in that it is divided into three main parts corresponding to the traditional ritual phases,¹ and that it shows a pre-defined musical development within its liminal phase. It seeks a dissolution of what are labelled as ‘muscular armours’, and the reaching of – what are to be perceived as – higher levels of consciousness. Unlike Guided Breathwork, this includes different repertoires depending on the centres of energy at work. Nevertheless, the overall structure of the sessions also follows defined steps that are to afford the reaching of spirituality: (i) warming up, where the characteristics of the repertoire are first introduced [i.e. for the Lower centre, binary tempi and percussive instruments], and bpm and volume start increasing; (ii) the reaching of a full-development stage, where the affects that are afforded through the stylistic characteristics find their maximum expression, while bpm and volume escalate towards a peak; and (iii) the progression towards a more relaxed phase, designed for integrating the experience and cooling down the body, afforded by decreased bpm and volume, including stylistic choices such as the inclusion of reverberated pieces and acoustic instruments.
- (III) The Dance of the Vajra is closer to the tradition that informed it, the Dzogchen Teachings, and as such searches for a specific shift of mind defined by its association to Tibetan Buddhism. Differently than Guided Breathwork and

¹ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1997)

Energy Centres Systems, it develops on a specific music theme that corresponds to what the creator of the ritual first envisioned in his deep meditation. However, despite the specificity of the music, the ritual can still be described following a tripartite structure, including a musical focus on its liminal phase. The track mostly used for the Dance includes stylistic elements chosen to represent the journey that is afforded to the dancer, to ‘purify the six realms of existence’. The music can be divided accordingly into six rounds (of six phrases of six syllables), with musically descriptive elements to each [i.e. animal sounds in the first round or human voices on the forth]. The overall practice develops in steady bpm and volume, and relies on the overlaying of sounds for the building and releasing of intensity. Creative choice is afforded to the composer of the track, as long as it follows the pre-set melody, text, and description offered by the creator of the ritual.

Despite the different approaches to the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness offered by each case study, I have shown that their structures are built on similar keystones – namely, a musical evocative process, physical activity, and a focus on preceding traditions – rooted in a shared universe of meaning. All rituals have also been described as sharing some commonalities at their foundations, with a special focus on the (self-)healing and ‘personal development’ that are afforded, as described by the participants themselves, along the shared relation to the music that accompanies them. Music is, in sum, essential in facilitating the ideal environment for each practice to develop, as shown by both their original outlines and their reception.

Two major conclusions can therefore be drawn: (a) that there is a common – yet not specific – musical strategy based on the co-existence of the practices within a shared universe, described by elements such as music’s affordance of affective culturally read reactions; and (b) that this very music works as a wider reflection and modifier of the reality in which the rituals exist.

A Musical Strategy Towards Spirituality

Regarding the music that accompanies the approached case studies, there are several functions that can be outlined which go from the music’s structuring capacity to its

intersubjectively created meanings, that give the rituals a precise direction for the participants to follow. The rituals' sonic guidance indicates the need for a shared code, in which music can afford the specific expression of affect to trigger specific reactions in the listeners. These affective responses are to allow the mirroring of the physical development of the participants, and finally afford a path towards the desired shifts of consciousness that they suggest – for instance, through repetitive movement and musical patterns in the Dance of the Vajra.

Nevertheless, although the music introduced in these activities is different in nature and in its overall construction for each case, it calls on a shared cultural code that they are afforded by their shared social environment. This puts a musically-relatable cosmos at the centre of these rituals, and it is from this environment that each facilitator, for each exercise, chooses the more appropriate repertoire to afford the desired process. In this sense, stylistic choices may include the introduction of Eastern instruments such as the tambura to afford a feeling of calmness, or reverberation to simulate traditionally-defined sacred places, such as a church.

Thus, starting from a shared universe of meaning, each exercise can choose the affects that are to be elucidated to elaborate on each ritual proposition, keeping them under one umbrella no matter how distant their origins and goals. To this, one must link the nature of the intended shifts of consciousness, depending on their place on a scale from a 'convulsive' to more 'static' trance, in traditional terms. The adaptation of the musical process to the non-traditional shift is furthermore represented through the building towards a practice's limen, which defines the processes depending on the intensity of their peaks. This is shown to be accordingly briefer in Guided Breathwork, especially in comparison with the Dance of the Vajra, which shows a more dilluded limen.

This aligns with the paradigm of the inexistence of a specific music to trigger a non-ordinary shift of consiousness,¹ and suggests that there must be a reflection between the affectively afforded shift of consciousness, the physical activity that goes with it, and the

¹ See chapter 2. Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); David Aldridge, and Jörg Fachner, *Music and Altered States of Consciousness: Transcendence, Therapy and Addictions* (London: Ahtaneum Press, 2006); Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Trancing and Emotion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

background cosmos that is introduced to give the practice meaning. Furthermore, this very idea shows that Rouget overlooked the relevance of the structure in the elaboration of non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, rather than considering it a matter worth attending.² As shown through my analysis of the case studies, for each practice to introduce the optimum non-ordinary shift of consciousness and pursued goals, certain elements must be coordinated accordingly:

- (a) Its background cosmos shapes the experience, constituted as a sub-universe of meaning that departs from a more general context or root universe. From this background, there is a set goal that has significance within the specific context, which is to be approached through the entrance into a non-ordinary shift of consciousness that places that goal within reach.
- (b) Depending on the nature of the non-ordinary shift of consciousness and the background cosmos of the practice, the intended affective outline needs to be concurrent – for example, a soft, stable musical line for a meditative shift of consciousness. Nevertheless, the significance given to the elucidated affect must be understood by the participants receiving it, as sharers of a cultural code.
- (c) The construction of such an affective process is reflected on and by the accompanying physical activity. Thus, the musical process afforded for the non-ordinary shift of consciousness must be mirrored by a consequent physical exercise that affords outer expression, while helping construct it reciprocally.

Furthermore, the parameters for this specifically-built outline for each ritual, ideated for the reaching and overcoming of what is to be perceived as spiritual realisation, are elaborated on three basic parameters: volume, beats per minute, and character. The builders of the case studies can therefore regulate their conceived practices, both pre-

² Rouget, *ibid.* Regarding the meaning of music, he states that ‘although such music does play a part in triggering and maintaining the trance state, it does not owe its effect to the properties of its musical structure, or if it does, it does so only to a very small degree,’ p. 96. Conversely, this thesis has found this diminished importance of the musical structure fundamental to parallel the creation of any non-ordinary state. Since I have used Rouget’s ‘trance’ within a more general ‘non-ordinary state’ category, the sonic structural relevance of the exercises has shown more effectively in its outlining side by side with further practices rooted in parallel strategies, which was not afforded to Rouget’s sub-categorisation of the same term.

meditatively and *in situ*, as shown specifically in Guided Breathwork and Energy Centres Systems. Depending on the needs of each case and the affective and non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that they aim to highlight, these parameters serve as real-time regulators to help their direction in every session. On the one hand, they define their sonic signature curve and, on the other, include the potential for suggesting a more varied and enriching repertoire, to be modulated with the advantages offered by the available technological means. Likewise, the possibilities presented by the technological reproduction of sound must be taken into account both as a reflection of the society in which the rituals belong, and as a tool to give privacy and control to the facilitator in each ensemble.

In line with this, music appears to have not only one role, but several. Although it must first appeal to the process highlighted from the parameters that have been established, it responds to further assignments such as the entrainment of the participants or the structuring of the overall sessions. It also fulfils less materially-tangible goals, such as aiding the individuals' inner progress and 'self-healing', through their afforded contact with the otherworldly. This can be seen, for instance, during the liminal phases of the rituals, in which the ultimate leader is embodied by the sonic input itself. The healing and contact with the transcendental, although in the facilitator's hands from a technical perspective, puts music at the centre of the equation.³

In sum, it is thus clear that, at a micro-level, music is constructed from the above elements, to help the ritual participants in their journey towards the transcendental. Each of the exercises that I have described has a successful complementary mechanism, which supports their maintenance: a background cosmos to give meaning to their built exercises and related goals; a physical activity to afford and accompany the non-ordinary shifts of consciousness that they suggest; and a musical outline highlighted by its affective content, rooted in the strategic use of volume, beats per minute, and character of the sonic input.

³ This placement of music as the true guide for the ritual process introduces the idea of the 'neoshaman' as a concept in-between the transitional presence of sound, and the permanent one of the facilitator. However, this debate, together with that offered by other conceptual terms in this research, must be left open for future discussion. See Trude Fonneland, 'Spiritual Entrepreneurship in a Northern Landscape: Spirituality, Tourism and Politics', *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 48 (2012), pp. 11–27; Josep Maria Fericgla 'States of Consciousness and States of Consciousness and Shamanisms', *Fundació Josep M. Fericgla*, 2001
<http://josepmfericgla.org/web_Fundacio_JMFericgla_2/pdf/josep_maria_fericgla_states_of_consciousness_and_shamanisms.pdf> [accessed 28 December 2017].

Nevertheless, music also works at the wider level, in its direct reflection of the reality in which it is embedded within the ritual discourses.

The Dialectical Construction of 'Evolved' Traditions

As with the case of the sacred,⁴ these rituals are not only dependent on their broader contexts, which are shaped in accordance with their participants, but they also aid in the construction of reality from their particular perspectives and contributions. A dialogue is thus afforded between every ritual and the major universe of meaning in which it is placed, namely Western Europe, through the participant giving shape to them both.

In this equation, music acts as a common ground for reference, in which the significance invested in it can be re-formulated. Music may be taken from a general social context and re-signified for rituals and their attendees in an equally dialectic process. In many occasions, the introduction of an actualised sonic input – such as pop music in Energy Centres Systems – presents an overlapping of the categories of the sacred and the profane, and a blurring of the boundaries linked to their inherent social nature. This can be read in the negotiation of the religious, the spiritual, or the sacred, and in the fact that they are imagined as static concepts where they should be understood as fluid. Thus, music adapts to the sacred as the sacred adapts to the music.

The same line of thought applies to the mutating significance of the sacred, as shown through the cases studies themselves.⁵ Music does not only serve at a specific level for each proposition, but also has a role in the affordance of a temporary space in which the sacred can be objectified. Furthermore, spirituality is no longer encompassed by a designated space, such as the temple, but rather by the inner Self belonging to each ritual participant. In this way, music can highlight spirituality for every attendee, while providing a virtual space for it to unfold and become tangible, and moving the experience out of the ordinary.

⁴ Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion (The Sacred Canopy)* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967). See chapter 2.

⁵ Andrés Canteras Murillo, 'La muta religiosa', in Eduardo Bericat Alastuey, *El fenómeno religioso: Presencia de la religión y la religiosidad en las sociedades avanzadas*, ed. by Centro de estudios andaluces, Consejería de la Presidencia, Junta de Andalucía (Sevilla, 2007).

In this non-ordinariness, music functions as a unifier and as a method for self-identification. As seen through the three rituals considered here, music introduces materials from the attendees' daily environment, affording them a point of reference and suggesting a shared reaction – from classical music to technological equipment. Thus, in the synchronisation of the participants' moods through sound,⁶ and in the overcoming of an intense physical activity, one's own experience is reflected by the other participants, which affords an empathic response ultimately leading to strong bonds,⁷ of the feeling of having shared an intimate activity, and a common approximation of the transcendental.

In this sharing experience, one's self-definition is enabled by the ritual group and by the wider universe to which the music belongs. Along with this self-definition is an annihilation of the potential feeling of non-belongingness or *anomia*,⁸ given as a reason for participation in Fericgla's analysis, regarding the 'growth of one's inner world.'⁹ One of the goals of this research was to assess the effectivity of the rituals in providing the transcendental experience that they promote, and thus the final say was given to the participants themselves for corroboration. The overall assessment of these elements was positive, as shown through interview extracts in chapters above, thus proving the efficacy of the exercises suggested by the ritual creators in the affordance of what are thought of as spiritual and transcendental shifts of consciousness.

The changing environment that has given way to the practices studied here exposes a reflection of the 'spiritual life' of their participants, within the societal context from which they depart to experience the re-structuring view enabled by the rituals' musically-afforded limen. This same dialectic context, in which music takes a central structuring position, has aided the definition of the explored practices as 'evolved' traditions, in their re-interpretation of pre-existing exercises. In great measure, their effectivity and maintenance are due to their weighted background cosmoi and preceding lores, which offered a familiar point for departure.

⁶ Joel Krueger, 'The Extended Mind and Religious Cognition', in *Interdisciplinary Handbooks on Religion - Mental Religion: The Brain, Cognition, and Culture*, ed. by Niki Clements (MacMillan, 2016).

⁷ Carolina Labbé and Didier Grandjean, 'Musical Emotions Predicted by Feelings of Entrainment', *Music Perception*, 32 (2014), pp. 170–85.

⁸ Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁹ See chapter 10. Josep Maria Fericgla, *Taller para despertar a la vida a través de la muerte*, Limited Ed (Calella, Catalonia: Fundació Josep M^a Fericgla, 2015), pp. 31-33.

At its macro-level, music has been shown to work on multiple levels, from the introduction of a component in which to objectify the sacred, to its function as a common point of focus in which to feel identified. Nonetheless, it may be concluded that all of music's roles, from the micro and macro perspectives, benefit from the inherent capability of music to work as a prosthetic technology, handled by those who benefit from it. Music offers endless possibilities for directing, influencing, and shaping reality, particularly towards what is to be perceived as spiritual realisation. And it is in these possibilities that the practices find their validity as humanly created sacred strategies.

Final Thoughts and Future Directions

As can be read throughout the attached fieldwork diaries, my perspective as a researcher progressively 'evolved' alongside my understanding of the practices' mechanisms and uses of music. The fact that I opted for participant-observation allowed me to move from an etic vision of the rituals to their most emic dimension, and made it possible to track my own evolution both as a researcher and as a participant. Although I learned a great deal through my extended dialogues and interviews with the other ritual participants, the role of the activities' creators at a mediatic level was fundamental in my gaining a grasp of their origins and later influence on the so-called Western world. Through access to their websites, interviews, and books, it soon became clear that the rituals that they introduced were nothing but a reflection of the moment in which they existed, a *nouvelle* way of addressing the world that departed from socially shared ideas and the will to explore them further.

For the participants in the practices who were not trained as facilitators, music was deemed essential for a full and successful process. As I have shown, the suggested musical developments accompanying each ritual are adapted to form a whole experience, within which the physical, affective, and consciousness elements function together and complement each other. What makes the musical process valuable from a receptive perspective is, therefore, its strategic presence and reflection on the intended non-ordinary shifts of consciousness, which become one with the ritual.

Through this thesis I have referred to phenomena such as losing track of time, or diving into the musical experience from an experiential perspective. The main element to highlight was the influence – and even modification – of one’s listening and interpretation of the introduced sound, from that specific position. This allowed me to gain insight into the two possible perspectives of the music’s reception, as a participant and observer, and I believe improved my understanding of the overall processes while avoiding the ‘armchair’ ethnological stare within the field itself.

This research has shown interdisciplinary influences from complimentary fields, which have benefited and widened the scope of this study. There are inevitably questions that remain unanswered, from both the conceptual and analytical perspectives, which could be developed from this space: from the significance of the shaman in re-formulated contexts, through the role of such rituals as social mechanisms for cohesion, to the physical processes associated with the triggering of certain affects through music; the list of possibilities is almost endless. This research therefore has the potential to be extended within similar fields where music falls at the centre of the equation:

- (a) A deeper exploration of the afforded shifts of consciousness through the collaboration of an interdisciplinary team, to include an analysis of the psychological and neurophysiologic parts not approached here, following the work of scholars such as Martin Clayton, Costas Karageorghis, and Carolina Labbé, among others.¹⁰ This would allow an observation of the medical aspect noted here via the healing claims of the explored rituals, and a comparison with the rituals’ inherently social mechanisms.
- (b) Since the creation of specific shifts of consciousness has traceable elements and parameters, it is of further interest to apply the conclusions reached here to environments outside the scope of the described rituals – for instance, in favour of affording focused mind shifts for actors, sports players, public speakers, or

¹⁰ Martin Clayton, ‘Entrainment, Ethnography and Musical Interaction’, in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, pp. 1–25; Martin Clayton and Laura Leante, ‘Embodiment in Music Performance’, in *Experience and Meaning in Music Performance*, 2013, pp. 1–24; Wiebke J Trost, Carolina Labbé, and Didier Grandjean, ‘Neuropsychologia Rhythmic Entrainment as a Musical Affect Induction Mechanism’, 96 (2017), 96–110; Labbé and Grandjean, ‘Musical Emotions Predicted by Feelings of Entrainment’; et al.

anyone seeking a specific mind-set before a key action. An interdisciplinary team, including myself, has started working with the videogame industry in Spain to afford bonding and affect-developing exercises among groups of students at a scholarly age, following Ruth Herbert's recent studies on music experience and daydreaming among teenagers.¹¹

From the methods and structure of these pages, which have moved between my desk and the field, music has held its status as a floating signifier for everyone to interpret freely, and central to the creation of a feeling of spirituality among ritual participants. Music's role as binder of the compositional elements in the journey towards the otherworldly, from the social to the strictly individual, is embedded in the ritual imagery of our universe of meaning, such as in Guided Breathwork, Energy Centres Systems, and the Dance of the Vajra. The common strategies behind these rituals lie in the inner structure that they afford for their participants, which open the gate for similar constructions to develop. Nevertheless, a final validation for such processes can only be awarded by the listener, breather, or dancer, willing to explore the paths that music opens in the reaching toward spirituality.

¹¹ Ruth Herbert and University of Kent, 'Experiencing Music: Inside the Minds of Teens and Tweens. Dr Ruth Herbert', *Youtube*, 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HzM9kMva_o> [accessed 10 March 2019]; Ruth Herbert, 'Ruth Herbert at KOSMOS Workshop "Mind Wandering and Visual Mental Imagery in Music"', *Youtube*, 2018 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnpSBF095UQ&t=2378s>> [accessed 10 March 2019].

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A. List of Interviewees

	Ritual	Role	Gender	Age	Country	Profession	Date
#1	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	42	Spain	Physiotherapist	25/06/2014
#2	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	35	Poland	Maintenance	25/06/2014
#3	Holotropic Breathwork	Facilitator	F	55	UK	GTT Facilitator	16/09/2016
#4	Holotropic Breathwork	Participant	F	52	Spain	Teacher	12/11/2016
#5	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	38	Spain	Therapist	20/11/2016
#6	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	F	31	Spain	Teacher	28/12/2016
#7	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	40	Italy	Chef	06/02/2017
#8	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	40	Spain	Student	23/03/2017
#9	Holorrhenic Breathwork	Participant	M	58	Spain	CEO	14/09/2017
#10	Holotropic Breathwork	Participant	F	54	Spain	Teacher	29/12/2017
#11	Dance of the Vajra	Participant	F	33	Spain	Factory worker	13/03/2015
#12	Dance of the Vajra	Participant	M	58	Spain	Teacher	10/02/2017
#13	Dance Vajra / Holotropic Breathwork	Participant	F	38	Spain	Publicist	20/02/2017
#14	Dance of the Vajra	Facilitator	F	55	Italy	Dzogchen Instructor	12/06/2017
#15	Dance of the Vajra	Participant	M	38	Spain	Photographer	06/07/2017
#16	Dance of the Vajra	Participant	F	43	Spain	Landscaper	22/07/2017
#17	Dance of the Vajra	Expert	M	74	Venezuela	Dzochen Instructor	05/08/2017

#18	ESCEN System	Facilitator	F	63	Argentina	ESCEN Instruct.	25/06/2017
#19	ESCEN System	Participant	F	39	Spain	Student	11/07/2016
#20	ESCEN System	Facilitator	F	49	Argentina	ESCEN Instructor	22/09/2016
#21	ESCEN System	Facilitator	F	51	Spain	Catering	07/02/2017
#22	Río Abierto	Facilitator	F	58	Spain	Río Abierto Instructor	20/02/2017
#23	ESCEN System	Facilitator	F	36	Spain	Teacher	24/02/2017
#24	ESCEN System / Holotropic Breathwork	Participant /Facilitator	M	47	Spain	Therapist	24/02/2017
#25	ESCEN System	Facilitator	M	45	Spain	Threapist	18/07/2017
#26	Río Abierto	Facilitator	F	67	Spain	Río Abierto Instructor	24/07/2017
#27	ESCEN System	Participant	F	62	Spain	Retired	03/08/2017
#28	Other - Tibetan Buddhism	Participant	M	71	Tibet	Monk	28/06/2016
#29	Other - Tibetan Buddhism	Participant	M	59	Spain	Historian	01/07/2016
#30	Other - Tibetan Buddhism	Participant	M	50	Tibet	Monk	22/08/2016
#31	Other - Wicca	Participant	M	39	Spain	Security	04/07/2017
#32	Other - Wicca	Participant	M	37	Spain	Teacher	04/07/2017

B. Semi-Structured Interview Item Schedule

The following item schedule corresponds to some of the questions asked during fieldwork semi-structured interviews, and they should be only taken as a guideline. Prompts were used during the interview to explore the answers of the interviewees further.

- Age, gender, country of origin and residence, occupation.
- Relation to music-spiritual practices, initiation.
- Personal background (if necessary in relation to practices).
- Which kind of music do you listen to and what do you use it for?
- Do you prefer listening to music by yourself or around other people (as in musical practices: concerts, sacred spaces...)?
- What does music do for you?
- Do you consider yourself religious? + background
- Do you consider yourself spiritual? + background
- Do you follow any teachings by a guru/person of reference? Why did you choose that practice?
- Do you participate in complementary activities to the main practice/different ones?
- How many workshops do you attend every month/year on average? Do you use the practice sporadically or are you always in touch with its schedules?
- What do the practice/s you participate in help you with?
- What does the music they include do for you?
- Would there be a difference if music was not present?
- Does music help you achieving a non-ordinary state of mind (meditative state, trance...)?
- Would you say music and body movement have any connection in the practice?
- How do you relate to the music the practice/s propose? Would you use it outside of the practice arena?
- How would you describe the ritual's music and how it evolves during its development?
- Other comments?

C. Informed Consent

New Rituals and Music in the Western World in the 20th and 21st Centuries

This doctoral study aims to study practices occurring nowadays in the Western World, specifically in Catalonia, to better understand the role that music plays in the affordance of a religious/spiritual feeling for the transcendence of self. In other words, I will be looking at how music is constructed and received by the ensemble participating in the ritual, as well as at how it affects the body and emotionality of the attendants. I will see how music relates to the activity and its relation to the practice itself, as well as the different parts of its construction.

The practices I will be observing will be analysed mainly in musical terms, but I will also need to describe some of the elements that are relevant in the ritual as a whole, to understand its constitution better. In any case, if there are any restrictions to be made in relation to the explanation of any parts of the exercises, the participant can make it explicit to avoid diffusion of restricted ritual elements.

The potential information to be collected during the activities will be bound to academic purposes only. The name of the participants and groups, as well as the physical locations of the activities, will be set as *anonymous*. Some parts of the interviews may be transcribed in the thesis to illustrate the practices.

Eulalia Febrer Coll

I, _____ certify that I have been informed about the fieldwork developed by EULALIA FEBRER COLL in relation to her academic doctoral studies, and I agree to collaborate in the research she is developing. I certify that I consent to this agreement being of sound mind and memory, and that I am conscious of the willingness of my participation.

The participation in the activity has been agreed and the terms established in relation to the participant observation have been previously discussed.

At any time and in no need of justification I am free to withdraw my participation from the study being developed.

Signed,

D. Guided Breathwork

Fieldwork Diary I

‘MUSIC AND THE UNCONSCIOUS’ SEMINAR

7th-9th March 2014, Can Benet Vives

(Translated from original in Catalan)

Friday, 7th March

I have taken the train at half past eight from Passeig de Gràcia, feeling a bit nervous. I have stopped at Sant Celoni, where a girl was waiting for me, to take me from the station to the country house in which I am now. She is participating in Fericgla’s seminar as well, but she had already been here on the first weekend’s part of the cycle of this course, which I was unable to attend because of my schedule. Thanks to her participation, I have been able to get to the country house with no added cost, which would have increased if I had had to take a taxi or pay for the trip to one of the guys in Can Benet – if they had to pick me up from Calella.

When I’ve gotten off the train, this woman and another man in his forties or fifties were waiting for me. They have both been my trip companions up to the house and have procured me with an enjoyable ride. We have gotten up the mountain in a 4x4 through a road that goes up to the Nature Park of El Montnegre, where the landscape widens up on each step, escaping from the pollution of the city. We have started driving deeper into the natural environment and the fresh air, that contrasted with the urban landscape and the tall buildings behind us. Around 7pm, the views from up here were breath-taking: the Sun was covering the mountains around us, and offered a glimpse of its reflection on the sea.

Within half an hour we have arrived in Can Benet Vives, while the day was touching to an end, giving the installations there a wonderful colour. The country house consists of a group of remodelled buildings among which there is a general room and dining room, in which they also serve some desserts and infusions for the visitors – there we’ve had to take a plastic glass and write our name down on to it, so we can keep it for the whole weekend —; an annexed building with some bedrooms, all of them with bunkbeds that fit four to eight people; and a third house in which there is a space left for seminars and Fericgla’s office – for what I’ve been able to see. Besides, there seem to be other rooms in case there are several seminars or courses happening at once, as well as complementary common spaces.

On arrival, we’ve moved straight to the bedrooms, although we have had to change to another space later on because of a misunderstanding – it seems like there was a lot of people staying there on the same weekend and the organisation had a specific distribution for the available spots. As soon as I’ve gotten into the main room I have met Marta, to whom I spoke on the phone some days ago to confirm my stay, and the rest of the participants have started arriving. I have also been able to make the payments and necessary formalities to enrol in the course, with a total cost of 295€ — which is illustrative of its access being restricted to a specific public.

The inscription also required proof of a University degree – or similar —, to ensure the desired learning environment. The man with whom I have shared my ride has told me

that Fericgla is quite strict when assessing the profile of the people participating in his workshops, especially regarding those with any mental illnesses. Apparently, this public frequently gathers at these ‘spiritual retreats’, where they find themselves sheltered, but Fericgla restricts it because of the problems that their participation could offer – both to the participants themselves and to others around.

While some other participants kept on entering the room, I have been surprised by one of my old classmates from ESMUC, who is a violinist and finished his undergrad as the same time as me. With her, we have moved to the new room and set up our space in the two bunkbeds there, which my car-mates have coincidentally also ended up choosing, completing the space available.

We have made our beds – we had sheets and blankets at our disposal, left in the room for us to use —, and with all the information and necessary material –we have been facilitated some textbooks edited by Fericgla, with complementary texts, a CD, and some leaflets — we have headed to the room where the first session of the seminar was taking place. Although we were supposed to start at 7.30pm, it was already 8.30 when we’ve gotten into the talk – meaning that we’ve wrapped it up past 10pm. I can’t say that it has been the most enjoyable seminar for me, not because of a lack of interest but because of my own body – menstruation and hormones all over the place. Even so, I believe it has been an interesting first contact.

Transcription from notebook – 7 March 2014, first session

[We start the session by dancing (we all dance for about 15 minutes). Presentations. Various interests to assist the seminar, from love for music to personal growth goals].

Archetype manifestation in sensibility, consciousness, perception and behaviour. Intuition irreducible to the knowledge formally transmitted by music.

Cosmic consciousness (*Anschauung* in German), many denominations (further than the individual one, non-local consciousness, eternal, infinite, in philosophy = Akashic field → all knowledge accumulated in one space) → Mnemosyne’s Realm according to the Greek. Fact that has become more evident, what the Chinese call the ‘previous Universe’.

Growing interest of scientists → Each human being as a receptor of the eternal transmitter.

Not only mystic connotations. Each receptor also contributes to this central transmitter → contribution to the expansion of the total of information available to everyone.

→ Important in music, ability to ‘tune’ more or less frequencies and emissions, + religious experiences that go beyond the ego.

Diverse situations that get us close to this consciousness, for example, in cases of near-death experiences. Incontestable that consciousness is not dependent on the body, the body is just a receptacle. + Musical perceptions (for example, the sound of the Sun at dawn, low basic sound).

* Van Lommel, *Conciencia cósmica más allá de la vida* → In relation to the sounds that appear when experiencing physical death or a panic experience (connection to something superior). Example: astronauts, shipwreck survivors, states of expanded consciousness.

DMT: substance endogenous to the body, basis of ayahuasca (used to extreme the pharmacological process that is given naturally in the body). In relation to dreams, it encourages them. This substance is subject to MAO, the enzyme that regulates DMT → we don't have consciousness of our dreams during the day because the second substance counteracts the first (DMT is continuously segregated). + IMAO (inhibitor of MAO). When the inhibitor doesn't work, we don't dream.

Ayahuasca as a participant of both. But at least one difference between resurrected dead individuals with memories of what happened and those without it in relation to the segregation of DMT in the brain: the first ones have high levels of the same or have ingested it.

Living music is the one which opens a window to this cosmic consciousness (experience beyond pleasant or unpleasant → it produces an answer, sympathy or antipathy). It produces a liberating catharsis. For example: Sufis work to reach a state beyond exhaustion → gyratory dance, to break the barrier of the superego (everything that is limiting by enculturation, internalization through the 'social norm'). Need of breaking the resistance to reach a liberating catharsis. Entrance in a mystical state, where an action can be reiterated over and over (for example, fasting).

[Audio. First movement of 5th Symphony by Shostakovich] → Military conflict, imposition and resolution. Low instruments as the voice of authority, resolved by wind instruments (medium tones). Resolution beginning from intellect. They all come together in the end for its constitution.

Brass instruments associated to authority, military. Flutes to break contention (spiritual instrument *par excellence*) → Middle East, wind, transcendence. Human dimension.

Carols = also break our defensive barriers, they produce a state of regression (reinforcement of defence mechanism in some occasions: repression / dissociation → division of the ego (negation). Music as capable of creating a bridge above defence mechanisms. It works by resonating.

Remembering is the only thing that saves us from madness, returning to the memory of identity... → Music therapy's importance (different 'schools'). Music potentiates memories → remembering childhood, who we are... Compensation on wakefulness of defence mechanisms, music as compensatory in societies.

Electronic music = generation of new sounds that could not be heard before. Synthesizers. Example: Aphex Twin, Schultz, Vangelis... Marie Poine, Lauris Anderson... Alio Die (band).

Understanding of 'daily life' with the creation of relaxing music, chill out music... (agitation compensation) → it acts on emotions, brings back space to inner life.

[21.15h Film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Tomorrow 8.30h – Collective meditative walk].

Once done with this first contact, and now quite tired because of the time that it was, we have headed to the communal dining room, where dinner was waiting for us: pumpkin cream, baked potatoes, hummus, *escalivada*... It shocked me that everyone had to take their own dishes, although it is reasonable since this is not a hotel, but a space for resting and meditation, where they also schedule some seminars. It is kind of a school in the mountains, a communal home for a few days. After dinner, I was able to talk to some of

the other assistants I had just met, and we were served some dessert in the communal room. We all sat next to the fireplace for a while, while we waited for the last activity of the day.

Around 11.15pm we headed back to the seminar, where a big screen and a projector were set to play *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, which is about the search for a sound able to move sacred mountains, and which according to Fericgla is interesting because of the people who appears in the film and the expressions on their faces – ‘there aren’t expressions like these anymore,’ he pointed out. Most of us watched the beginning of the movie and headed straight to bed, although some other attendees stayed to see the whole thing.

Thus, the first day has come to an end, short but intense. Let’s see what the second one brings.

Saturday, 8th March

After a hectic night in the bunkbeds – the man on the bed below me was snoring —, we all woke up to start the day around 7.30am. My roommates have gone for what Fericgla calls a ‘Walk for Peace’, a collective walk to meditate along the pathways around the house. Meanwhile, I’ve taken a shower – they have rosewood incense in the main room, which had given my clothes a very strong scent — and arranged a few things. What a surprise when I realised that I left my camera’s memory card at home! That means that the pictures that I took yesterday weren’t saved, so I’ll have to take new ones with my phone. What a bummer! Luckily, on the afternoon one of the assistants has offered to send me his shots, which are of higher quality.

Once ready, I headed to the general room, but it was still very early and there wasn’t anyone there to have breakfast yet, so I walked down to the garden to make some time. There I’ve found one of the assistants contemplating the landscape, and we chatted for a while. We talked about non-transcendental stuff, and he explained how he ended up in the seminar, and the origins of his interest in music: some years ago, after high school, he found himself in an undergrad ‘with future’ — Economics — by coaction of his parents. After that, though, he realised that his true passion was music, so here he is now, exploring it. He was the first person I talked to, besides my colleague from Uni, so at first I didn’t know how he would react to my prospected research. I noticed that the assistants to the seminar are, in general, professional people with personal motivations that go beyond transcendental or metaphysical spirituality. Even so, it is true that some of them have talked about their recreational use of drugs to induce specific states in a similar direction.

We got into a conversation about cinema, and time flew. In the end, we had to have breakfast in a hurry, so we didn’t miss the session scheduled for 9.30am. When we got to the dining room, most of the assistants were finishing their breakfast – cereal, yogurt, sponge cake, fruit. We then headed straight to the seminar, where the first session of the day took place.

Transcription from notebook – 8 March 2014, second session

Amazonian cultures = pragmatic, transpersonal conception → one looks to compact with an impersonal or cosmic strength that transmits capacity of action (analogic fact). Experimentation through psychoactive plants, break with super-egoic barriers. Ex: ayahuasca in the Amazonian jungle.

Listening, beats and intervals. Importance of music as a mnemonic aspect → strengthening with personal and trans-biographic memories. Difference between hearing and listening (!). To remember one has to listen, not just hear. Important to teach how to listen. (Leonard Cohen – live concert, art of attracting attention and inviting to listen → stimulation of the public to direct the attention to people).

Not-listening = means of psychologic resistance (defence mechanisms). Important asking oneself why certain music is more appealing than others, sign that something happens in the process. → Looking for music with cardiac rhythm to calm the listener. It awakes the intrauterine memory of the child.

Another way of favouring the listening is by controlling the silences (quality of the good musician and the good speaker). Silences to feed the listening. Silence has various connotations (symbolic, emotional) + influence on the unconscious:

- Negative silence: result of fear, inhibition, repression → that's why authoritarian people make questions with no answer.
- Initial silence: expectation, previous to experience, to action. Expectative silence, that opens for what is to come next → Point of anxiety (important learning to manage it) → in relation to interest in the future. For an experience to happen, there has to be some imbalance. In unconscious music, it is important to reach the exact point of anxiety. If it does not 'create soul', music cannot serve this purpose.
- Expressive silence: draws attention towards something, makes emphasis on what's to come next → in music it is fundamental to create focus.
- Final silence: post-discovery, post-experience. Important to close psychotherapeutic sessions.

Rhythm marked by the beats, but importance of the space in between them. The use of music comes from 'what's not there'. Five basic rhythms of the body: physiologic, cardiac, respiratory, of the fluids, and the *chi*. Each one of them implies having to talk about other rhythms.

Unconscious rhythm, time within no-time, atemporal time. Outside the time of consciousness, outside ordinary time. Also therapeutic time that is needed to dissolve the defensive barriers of the individual (use of dance, for example) → Ex: openings, function of jumping over defence barriers. And elaborative time after, to elaborate the experience.

Interactive time: previous to musical or therapeutic experience. Musicking is an experience. This implies stepping out of the ordinary to enter the space of experience (different time). Important interphase between experiences and daily life. Also in relation to sonic waves, longer ones occupy a larger space and are held for longer inside oneself than higher ones. It is hard to break the interaction with a low sound.

Impulses as limits that mark the interval (space between hits). Intervals as the soul of music, and beats as its matter.

Everything in the universe has a pulse, has rhythm: Earth has rhythm, the Moon and the planets have rhythm.

In the interval between pulses equals time, while the impulse is what makes it act. Attention to the intervals, because they are the ones that lead to eternity.

Two fundamental moments in daily rhythm: dawn/dusk (15') → 'mystery door'. Moment of interval, of great silence. Whole beats are the repetition of similar acts within similar intervals. Identic acts in identic intervals = death, does not exist in life.

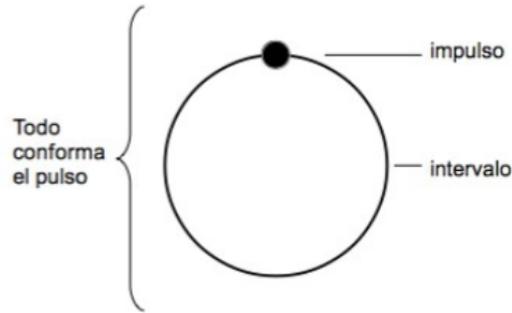


Figure 1. Everything creates the beat. Impulse. Interval.

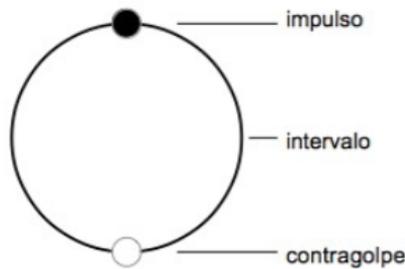


Figure 2. Impulse. Interval. Counter-beat.

Subtle fluctuation between beats of a pulse (ex: sampled music = dead, does not have the small fluctuations of life).

Cycles cannot be perceived at a human level (for example, if they happen every century or thousand years). In every cycle, there's an audible part (hit, note) and not audible (interval). Two possibilities: going with the impulses or imposing.

In the interval, there can be a counter-beat → to mark the exact medium point of an interval.

Silent impulse necessary for music. Necessity of the beat for a counter-beat (good music makes this internally, it omits the beat). In all music, there is a silent impulse that marks the vital guideline. Cosmos = pulses that intertwine each other (only the counter-beat generates anxiety).

[Practical exercise: breathing. We lay down on the floor and try to match our breathing to the rhythm of our heart. Then we do a movement exercise to the rhythm of our heart, we walk to the rhythm of our blood stream, etc.]

[Practical exercise: audition. Reaction on *nô* theatre music. Some assistants feel the music on the opening of their stomachs or on the chest. Problem in the code, not assimilated]

M&U session, structure:

- I. Introduction
- II. Madness
- III. Death
- IV. Resurrection

Universal in every experience (and should also be present in every concert).

Necessary madness to go down to the unconscious. Posterior silence or stillness (death), followed by a period of re-elaboration or resurgence. This same universal structure can adopt many forms, but it is always the same. It has or can have diverse subdivisions. Every session of music therapy has this structure. Musicking is a journey to the unknown and has to be worked.

Music and the Unconscious Session: The journey towards one's inside must be encouraged by music → milestones:

- Entrance (support but not drowsiness)
- Narcissism (encounter, secondary narcissism as a defence mechanism)
 - o Primary: that of children, necessary.
 - o Secondary: more or less pathologic, defence mechanism. Music leads the here and now, but fear to confront it. Narcissism to avoid the experience of the moment → Myth of Narcissus and Eco: scape from pain → Terrified by own pain, remission. Problem in getting stuck at this level in many cases, impossibility to go any further.
- Biographic revision, also universal, it is never something pleasant or frivolous. Here begins the phenomenon of memory. In music therapy, at least this stage must be reached. The following step is harder to reach. (A 'bad trip' can happen if one tries to pull out of this phase by force, idem in drug use → different understanding depending on discipline or religion.
- Impasse / Encounter with death. When the biographic review is deep one reaches an encounter with death, the inexorability of death is physically understood. This point is where the dissolution of the ego takes place. Need for leaving space to the not-knowing.
From one level to the other there is an important distance → difficult to assume, people usually get stuck in the 3r stadium. If the barrier is trespassed, one reaches implosion. Impasse not as a level but as a barrier.
- Implosion. Need for absolute trust in the guide to follow the process towards this step → Not blind servility, need for help. Implosion as an explosion inwards, end of the madness process. The structure ends up dismounting on itself (or continued in psychotherapy).
- Death. Resolution of the implosion with the experience of death, ecstatic. The implosion equates to a catharsis and the experience of death is ecstatic.
- Archetypical visions: there can be a resolution in the experiencing of death. Connection to the collective unconscious. In relation to archetypes.
- Resurgence.

These parts can intermingle, but there may be problems in-between, such as the separation of narcissistic visions from archetypical ones. Difference in explaining it with words and impossibility to do so. The first one is more superficial, etc. but not its only indicator → better with intuition, it depends on the person. On resurgence, there's a stabilisation of the whole process.

Pathologic narcissism makes it almost impossible to move forward, difficulty to progress.

We finished the morning session half an hour before the specified time on the schedule, so we spent some time outside before heading back for lunch, and had a bit of a chat. There were interesting reflections on the contents of the class, as well as some other opinions on further interests. One of the assistants talked about his interest in reiki and

the incorporation of music into the process, but we left the conversation for later. Another participant, who is a DJ in Barcelona, brought his opinion on Fericgla's explanations and showed interest in my studies. I cannot complain about the company I've found, they all are very nice. Before we had time to go deeper into the conversation, one of the managers at the place rang the bell that hangs next to the main door to let us know that the food was ready.

Lunch has been once more vegetarian: onion and semolina soup, a sauerkraut cake with mayo, and yogurt and lemon cake for dessert. The classes are long, so we are quite hungry during our meals, which makes us appreciate how nice everything is. Besides, the table is an interesting place to have a discussion, and I've found out some of the interests of some of the assistants. Most of them had already been in Can Benet before, or had participated in the first part of the seminar. It being such a young public, in general between 22 and 40 years old – although there are also some 70yo participants —, shows a basic interest formed around personal and musical development, rather than on developing their own identity as such. That is, everyone seems to find Fericgla's psychology interesting, but they offer their own contributions to it, and put it in relation to their own knowledge, to drink selectively from the materials that they are procured with. I can't discard the search for the European 'self' and the limits of the unconscious either, or the transcendental questions that worry us and put us in emotionally uncertain situations: the 'why' and the finitude of our existence on Earth, and the paths that music opens beyond it. It is true, however, that most of the participants find a connection regarding the use of hallucinogenic substances and the theory we've been given.

After lunch, we had a couple of hours to rest before the next session, scheduled for 4pm. Some headed to the rooms to brush their teeth, go to the bathroom, and so forth, and then we sat in the sunlight for a while – which is so nice here, in the mountains. The views from up here are not to be underestimated either: the peaks, the valleys, the small houses and hermitages... but also the sea at the distance, that provides the most pleasant contrast.

I sat in the grass next to the reiki practitioner, who was now barefoot, hoping to retake the conversation we started before. I've found out more about his interest in reiki and some recent studies on the influence of music on the unconscious, as well as about the new ways in which the seminar has helped him to listen. Although he has always had some interest in music, he explained how he didn't know how to listen to it, or how to properly read the reactions of his body before this seminar. Actually, his interest from now on is to take everything that he has learned to give a better musical construction to his reiki sessions, to keep in mind his client's mood changes and the paths to their unconscious, as potentiated by a correct use of sound.

We have talked about the problems that appear with the use of sound in a reiki session and about how many people use music to shut the awkwardness of silence down. The music that is chosen for these sessions is basically based on the premise of 'relaxation'. If it's calmed music, what is sometimes labelled as meditative or ambience music, it is good enough for their set goals, but it does not go further than this.

After a while, my ex-University colleague has joined us and has explained some healing techniques that she performs with her grandmother, based on the canalisation of energy through the palm of their hands. Differently from reiki, this has the aim of creating a reaction in the body when confronted with external invasions or pain, while reiki aims to heal, focusing on an issue and removing it.

While talking, we started hearing someone chanting with lower-harmonics, similar to overtone singing, which caught our attention. We saw some of our colleagues sitting next to the pool, improvising with a flute and a tambourine, so we approached them. The redheaded guy that I met earlier was emitting some surprising guttural sounds, with great resonance – and, why fool us, this is not the first thing you expect to hear coming out someone’s mouth in Catalonia.

With one thing and the other, we had to run to the seminar not to be late again, but I believe that we all enjoyed the short break.

Transcription from notebook – 8 March 2014, third session

An experience that helps us transcend our ego is the acceptance of death → producing expanded states of consciousness.

Outline specifying the steps that should be followed in a M&U session:

- Opening: information of the process, frenetic music (but noble), exercises (dancing, for example), getting to know the other participants... The emotional tones with which to start the session should be low and virile (transmission of certainty), even severe (they show limits) + verbally marked.
- The second step includes symbols (use of non-verbal symbols) and enthusiastic music that takes the participants beyond their limits → firm music that pushes through the journey → There’s always fear and, in this way, it is not repressed but it helps the participant to go through it.
- Following this, there has to be a biographic review through music (% arbitrariness). Therefore, music has to allude to a fight against the father → furious and cruel (kids with no considerations among them, memory of primitive stages). For example, percussive African music.
- In this itinerary, there must be a bend that alludes to original sexuality → lascivious music, erotically charged, importance of breathing... Also, it must go through voluptuousness (afterwards) → 8-10 years, beginning of carnal sexuality (unconscious). Beginning of embarrassment when seen naked. This point of puberty gives way to the beginning of consciousness and one’s first big personal crisis → individual consciousness.
- Following this → carefree music, to palliate the roughness of the beginning of this consciousness (for example, samba). Development of the capacity of extraction. In this route, it is useful using explosive music, besides voluptuous and cheerful. It must favour the breaking of independence chains → Alternating music. (This, together with carefree and nostalgic music, all together).
- Back to a dark step → Non-linear itinerary, it twists on itself (‘fern leave’ shape). Dark and whining music at the end of puberty. Followed by boundless music that accompanies the breaking out of the chrysalis, and joyful, humble, kind music... For example, choral music. This moment is also accompanied by fight and loneliness → Music that alludes to loneliness, search for identity (more or less painful).

This point marks the reaching of catharsis. If one follows the process from here, there is an entrance into the ecstatic process.

Catharsis: emotional unloading, resonance of the inner world with music.

Ecstasy: sacred experience that nature allows a person to see oneself from the outside (*ex stasi*, seeing oneself from the outside).

- For this, it is interesting having one more biographic review, but with another sort of music: Musical allusion in relation to childhood, now focused on lullabies and carols. + Possibility of including poetic texts in the music.
- Then one can jump straight to adolescence → pastoral and religious music, transpersonal and cosmic dimensions. + Inclusion of the father's figure once again (entrance in the adult world) → low, serious music. Ex: Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. Followed by sweet, feminine music, seclusion-like.
- Finally, sympathetic music to provide a good exit point. For example, movie soundtracks.

[Audition: Peter Poland Mary] → Final integration of a M&U journey, with well-balanced music, clean in the melody and the sonic resources, with a low volume.

[Similar audition...] → Important in relation to the specific person / country / etc.

After the death experience, everything that follows is rather silence or transcendence.

[Audition: Patrick Cassidy, 'summary' piece, in process].

- Dangers of a M&U session

People with reality distortions must not undertake a 'music and unconsciousness' session → Madness is frequent around meditation centres, raves, etc. It can produce musicogenic epilepsy, not very frequent but existent.

Our consciousness works by contrasting diverse functions → in epilepsy this does not happen, different parts of the brain are switched on 'all of the sudden' and at once (that is, in case of musicogenic epilepsy, different from "normal" epilepsy → the individual senses when the undifferentiated functioning of the brain is going to happen, and they can foresee it).

Another frequent danger is that of a psychotic crisis. Sometimes it is unknown by the own patient previous to its manifestation → Appears through uncontrolled euphoria in moments previous to the seizure. It can happen after a session.

Important differentiating it from a spiritual emergency.

We finished this session around 6.15pm, since there was a Sufi music concert planned for later and the musicians were about to arrive – and Fericgla had to greet them. It was an open concert everyone could attend, including dinner, for 25€. Before the pre-concert talk, we had half an hour to rest and most of us headed to the main room. I was able to talk to one of the assistants to the workshop that had been living in Can Benet for a while, taking care of some activities and maintenance of their installations. He tries to attend as

many activities as possible to get spiritual training, as he explained. Actually, after dinner we extended this conversation a bit more, which was shortened by the time available. Some other assistants showed up and we talked a bit about the speech we were about to hear, before heading back to the seminar room.

Transcription from notebook – 8 March 2014, pre-concert talk

Music is previous to language. Used by shamans and great philosophers of history. Music = ring that connects the body and the soul → Bridge.

Existence of great wise men and institutionalisation of shamanic practices (Sansuri, Al-Farabi...) → Systematisation of music, taken to hospitals (beginning of music therapy).

Different tonalities for different effects. The effects of music can be measured at various levels: physiological (up to 8-9 cm into the skin and some ancient parts of the brain), + it effects the endocrine system → expressive function.

That is, music = allows to express another dimension. Besides the cathartic effect, there's the balancing of emotions. → Neutral music (not sad nor happy), it's a way of making us express ourselves. Its matter is, therefore, the soul.

Intermediary role of music → ancient Greeks placed it “in the middle” of the sciences, bridge function. For Sufism, spirituality and music go hand in hand.

Various levels in the world, the most basic being music as intermediary between superior and inferior levels. Music as carrier of information (in all spiritual traditions for the experimentation of the self). → Mantras as sacred vibration that activates interior meanings.

Important: the information carried can be different. The human quality of the composer is essential. Consciousness level of the music therapist is what heals → through vibration. + importance of the performer: subtle issues that go beyond the basic and that are unmeasurable. Related at a consciousness level.

We all have a beautiful voice (Sufism), but we need to work on it.

Rhythm → micro-pauses, they depend on the execution of each musician on each moment.

Levels of consciousness that resonate with superior levels. Need for being careful with the music that one listens to → other side of the story, it can do more harm than good → change of aesthetic criteria, it can go unnoticed because of its beauty.

Sufi music therapy system: Based on Ottoman music that divides the tone in 9 parts → microtones or *comas*. When combined, there appear a lot of tonalities or *maqams* (+500) → they usually work with 20 main ones.

The different tonalities differently the different parts of the body differently + other parameters → systematisation until nowadays.

Access to more subtle vibrations → The information of how Ancient people applied these has not reached our days (re-elaboration of the system by the teacher the speaker).

Ziriab on Al-Andalus era, trip to Córdoba → Foundation of the first European conservatory, he brought the *maqams* that originated flamenco, *nubas*... → It has its own roots.

Improvisation is essential → the musician is the channel and with one's improvisation comes the necessary information.

During a second pause, when we waited for the musicians to get ready, I found out about some of the other activities that other people staying at Can Benet were developing, some with babies and children. There was a Tibetan ritual taking place in which they bless the children, and a shamanic ritual that I didn't understand quite well with the information I received. Even so, it was a brief contact with other activities taking place, and I'll try to find out more through Fericgla's website.

After the talk, the actual concert has followed. It consisted of various parts: a first one to present the instruments and a part of the central-Asian repertoire, a second one in relation to Sufi music therapy, and a last one focused on their brand spinning dance and consequent repertoire.

Although the musicians were first year students, the man who lead the talk, Jordi Delclòs from the School of Music Therapy and Sufism of Barcelona, constructed the performance gracefully. He explained the role of the diverse instruments (ney, rebab, and lute), and talked about the history of each one of the pieces they played. He also encouraged everyone to participate in the chanting and from the music therapeutic experience that the music itself offers. The assistants were people from Can Benet, the alumni from the seminar, and five additional attendees.

During the second part, the participants were invited to lie down on the floor with their head pointed towards the musicians, so they could be guided through the music therapeutic experience, which aimed to refer to certain body parts through specific *maqam* – similar to Hindu *ragas*, but with curative goals developed by Turkish literates from various historical periods. They also invited everyone to participate in the spinning dance, that lasted about half an hour, and became a remarkable experience, even if I didn't participate actively – so wanted to see how it developed.

To finish, two of the workshop participants joined the rest of the musicians and improvised for a while with their own instruments. Meanwhile, the rest of assistants were singing under Delclòs' direction.

After the didactic concert that we were offered, we all headed towards the dining room, where dinner was waiting for us: vegetarian pizza, salad and *escalivada*, plus some delicious dessert. With a full belly and having performed enough physical activity for the day, we sat on the sofas at the entrance for a while before going to bed.

I'm not sure if I've commented on this before, but before each one of the sessions of the seminar, Fericgla made us dance somewhere between fifteen minutes and half an hour to 'get rid of our laziness,' and to activate the body. With the diverse tracks, we all danced in a circle however we preferred, without watching what the others were or weren't doing, without bothering with any judgements from the outside – we didn't really know each

other that well and no one was too shy, so we had no trouble jumping into it. I believe this also helped us to sleep better at night, as it got us physically tired.

After dinner, I chatted with the participant that was living up there for a bit, about what he had previously commented on. He told me that he is a participant of an institution in Barcelona, run under Fericgla's charge, in which they work on personal spirituality and self-development. There, he had already practiced some Sufi dance as a meditation method. This has made me think differently about some ritual practices, which I had first found closer to religious expression than reflection.

We talked for a while before I made my way back to our bedroom to work on some writing and get ready for bed – besides, I needed some time alone to reflect on the day. I am finding myself more comfortable here now, but I'm still craving my bed tonight.

In any case, tomorrow is our last day. Brief and intense, but very rewarding.

Monday, 10th March – in relation to the 9th

Yesterday I got home late at night and left these brief lines in the air until today, to sum up yesterday's experience at Can Benet – from a more awakened perspective than I could have offered last night.

The morning came faster than the day before, since I slept better – even if I woke up a few times as well, after my bunkbed-mate's snoring. The girl I knew from ESMUC had to wake me up so we could see the sun rise and hear its sound, as Fericgla had encouraged us to do the day before, but we both overslept.

We woke up around 8am to have a shower and breakfast before the beginning of the morning session, after gazing at the landscape for ten refreshing minutes. Since it was quite windy, we decided to go into the general room and head to the assigned dining room, where we already found some colleagues having their first meal of the day. The breakfast was full: cereal, yogurt, bread, ham, cheese, coffee, orange juice... and it went by quietly, with a conversation here and there about the gastronomy of different places.

When we were done, we run to the seminar, where the next-to-last session was about to take place. This time, it consisted on three parts: a first one with a brief talk by Fericgla, a second one with a gyratory dance practice, and a last one for the participants – two of them — to present some papers that they had prepared in relation to the previous weekend's seminar, to obtain a diploma for the course.

Transcription from notebook – 9 March 2014, forth session

[Start with dancing, as in the rest of sessions]

Rhythm marks action, melody marks emotions → emotions = life. Harmony alludes to social relationships.

In a good M&U session the chosen music is important → it must be living music. To reach the unconscious, it is important to begin with low music, with rhythmic predominance, followed by human voices, screams... → Impact on the skeletal system.

This helps in breaking the formalism of rhythm and keep on adding instruments, more complex melodies... To reach catharsis (alternating binary and ternary rhythms, beat and counter-beat → alternation or simultaneity).

When getting to the implosion and death experience, the journey must turn towards very soft, medium to high-pitched sounds → escape mechanism, guide to the outside. → End of the session with cheerful, not-too-serious tunes (vs. action).

[Reflection about last night's concert → Important idea of the sonic network and looking for music from the inside to the outside, and not backwards. Heart over technique].

→ (Follows from) Dangers of a M&U session

Differentiating psychosis from spiritual emergence. Different inner space → psychotic individuals do not recognise their inner emotional state, they do not connect with it. Present = inner emotional disconnection.

But there are experiences that open the transpersonal dimension of the person. If someone does not know this process, the reaction may look like a psychotic crisis.

With opening and closing of overwhelming emotion = entrance in psychotic crisis. It can happen after a session. Differentiating criteria → difficult childhood, sexuality and intimate life... Elements in relation to the order of life, the beginning of the manifestation of life. In a spiritual emergency, there's more order + psychotic people reject help instead of looking for support.

A spiritual emergency takes about a week to set, but about six months to do it completely → important walking with company in nature, abstaining from musical or drug experiences. In a psychotic crisis, the individual may look for some release in drugs, unmeasured sex, etc. → Essential that psychotic crises do not happen in a specific moment (up to a 7% of the people who are put through similar experiences can suffer this).

Personal development built on knowledge and experience, they must develop at the same time → Knowledge of life.

In experiences with the unconscious, 3 steps:

- Elaborating the experience, giving it shape (verbalising, organising), transmittable.
- Integrating the experience → fixing it in our memory, letting it out of the unconscious to put it under the light of consciousness.
- Open paths to action for the experience to go through everyday life. → Fundamental integration in art (music, for instance). Learning to express and understand the own vital experience.

Without values, we get caught by desire that chains us to the past rather than the future. Initial theory or comprehensive framework necessary before activities of this kind, to be able to integrate the experience.

- ISO: Sonic Identity (In Spanish: *Identidad Sonora*)

Each living creature in nature has a sonic identity. In human beings, it is formed by extrinsic noises (trained, they are part of our cultural knowledge → different for each culture), and intrinsic (created by one's own body).

The more intrinsic sounds are used in M&U, the better → they go straight over the consciousness barrier.

Sonic identity is a summary of everyone's identity (use of one's own body) → it is the last thing we lose. At an individual and collective level, it is essential. Idem in musical fusion (recognition of roots, for example, in flamenco).

ISO is cultural, psychologic and multisensorial integration of each body, not only sonic.

Tomatis: people can only reproduce what has been heard → imbalances in one's voice in relation to one's childhood and blockage of a specific sound → recovering tonalities that have been blocked to the ear (psycho-diagnostic test).

One of the requirements for a M&U session is ending up with a well-integrated ISO → only way to find the own voice through "the other".

Creating one's own ISO

- Through the other, asking the other how oneself sounds like.
- Our ISO is a dynamic element, changing (ex. difference between generations in their voices).
- It is important to use the body for this conformation, for example, how one interacts physically with an instrument → Keeping everything in mind, experience of one's own body.

Similarity between one's voice and the rings of a tree (concentric rings). It is built and transformed, it has to do with the non-verbal dimensions of life. Important keeping in mind the songs that have marked the sonic identity of a patient in music therapy → Keeping in mind one's culture, geographical context in which it developed...

Long and soft connections between songs, important minding the transition from one to another → in the connection our consciousness creates the music that plays.

[Audition. Example of a transition from one song to another, from Vangelis to Peter Paul and Mary] → Reflexion on the effect that this transition produces. Creation of a bridge through the unconscious (logic tonal transition, unconscious structure creation). → Creation of a sonic web. Idem in M&U session, logic transition –if not intended to insert a surprising element or silence.

Another ingredient in ISO is found in its aim → different uses of voice depending on context (it is not the same talking to a single person than to an auditorium). It is determined by its function.

The construction of identity is not based on specific patterns, it is created through life (preferences, etc.), It is important being clear so there are no misunderstandings, + code (indications, beginning with a bell for example, straight limits).

Likewise, space marks and determines whatever is going to happen inside the individual. In relation to the ISO (for example, to interpret, acoustics are a main factor). Space ≠ blank sheet; there are laws that regulate it (+ common sense). The ISO is affected by body position (different voice when seated or standing, for instance).

How we place ourselves in space is more important than space itself. Importance of clarity in the sonic references. In expanded states of consciousness, it is fundamental to discriminate (identification also through clothing). → Not moving from your designed spot if reference is essential.

Use of symbolic energetic and emotional fields.

[Spinning dance activity. To keep on spinning for a long time it is essential looking around in a 'special' way, not putting one's focus on anything in particular. If it's our first time we can look at our right hand, the one we have up. To keep focused, we have to repeat a 'mantra' to ourselves, such as 'I am Eulalia'. If we achieve ego release we will see something like a tornado around us, and ourselves in the middle while everything else spins. When we are done, we have to lay down on the floor on our stomach, after stopping progressively].

[Activity: Paper presentation].

As usual, we got started by dancing for a while, but we kept on a similar state when beginning the dancing exercise, after a brief pause. During this small stop, one of the assistants showed us a melody that he had composed, since he wanted to play for a while during the break – we did not have time for this in the end, unfortunately. After a while, I had to go to the bathroom outside – menstruating while on the field is very much not pleasant.

Around 1pm we got started with the second part, the Sufi dance. Fericlga gave us the instructions, for those who had never spun before, as the exercise requires a specific technique to be able to spin for an extended period of time, even hours. We spun for about twenty minutes to the sound of music. It was an interesting experience, and it went by faster than I thought it would. I did not get sick, so I did more or less accomplish the main objective for the occasion.

We meditated for a while when we were done, and we proceeded to listen to our colleague's papers, that they had prepared to get their course's diploma – after attending both weekend seminars. The first one to talk, after sitting in a circle in which we explained the sensations that we had during the spinning experience, read a brief work on Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, in relation to the theory given by Fericlga.

It was almost 2pm and we had to get ready for lunch, so the other paper would have to wait until later.

After eating and tidying everything up, I went back to the rooms to pack my bag and undo my bed, since my ex-Uni-colleague had offered to give me lift down to Mataró during the evening. Thus, I would be able to save some money for the travel, and I would arrive home earlier. Even so, our ride arrived a bit late, so we were able to attend most of the last session of the seminar, referred to the importance of our diet in the reception of music. This was only preceded by another participant's paper, that developed according to his dedication to the DJing world.

Transcription from notebook – 9 March 2014, fourth session

[Activity: Paper presentation]

- Diets and Music

Strong relation between diet and music (this also fits drugs taken at some concerts).

To listen to music well, one needs good blood flow towards the ear → Because of it, it is a good idea listening to music upside down, and having an alkaline body (rather than acidic).
→ This implies not eating acidic foods (besides homeopathic ones).

The best diet to keep an alkaline body is based on 80% grains, 10% vegetables, 10% meat, fish and protein.

+ Techniques such as holorrhenic breathwork can alkalise the body up to +2 points → healing method, discovery of sonic shades never perceived previously. → Important direction or orientation.

* Holorrhenic Breathwork: breathing through music to induce an altered state of consciousness with healing and philosophical aims.

- Music and Daydreaming

To induce guided daydreaming states. Theorized by Hans Karl Loiner → He realised the similarities between the art of schizophrenics and contemporary art. Common use of LSD on those years, etc.

“Catatonic fantasy”. Begins sessions with music for a therapeutic use beginning from his own tests.

Before this session, we had some spare time to rest in the Sun and conversate for a while. This time, quite a few of us sat outside on the upper terrace, opposite to the general room, to share some music preferences and experiences. My old University colleague brought her violin, so anyone who wanted to try holding it could do so, and we talked about our learning experiences, along with other non-transcendental topics.

Although we had to leave before the last class was over, since our ride was waiting for us, everyone stood up to give us a hug and wished us a good trip back home. Even if we had not known each other for that long, we all teamed up pretty quickly.

We took off around 7.30 or 8pm, so I got home quite late in the end. Now, all that's left is space to reflect on the experience.

*Fieldwork Diary II***HOLORRHENIC BREATHWORK**12th April 2014, Can Benet Vives

(Translated from original in Catalan)

Some days have past, in the end, since I went to Can Benet and decided to sit down and write down my experience. The flu and the intensity of the journey have forced me to postpone it until now, four days afterwards. It was a long day and the problems on my way back home didn't help. I missed the last train from Calella, and was forced to take a taxi to Barcelona after freaking out for a while and having been awake for an entire day straight, focused, and exercising. I intend to capture my experience of the activities that were developed on Saturday, 12th of April, without making too much emphasis on the rest of the social events of that day, that were mainly trivial-conversation focused and revolved around getting to know the other participants in an extra-professional way. Even so, I believe it is important to highlight that there were fourteen people there, six women and eight men, between twenty-five and forty years old approximately, from a middle-to-upper social class. Some of the assistants came from Barcelona and its surrounding areas, but there were people from Madrid and the Basque Country too, as well as a girl from the Middle East. The workshop was about 300€ and it included the participants' accommodation, meals, and the activities of the workshop itself – similar to my own experience from last month.

One of the assistants, that I knew from last month's seminar, summarised some aspects of the first day of the workshop for me, since I wasn't there. He told me that it was mostly an introduction, and that they did some drawing for the Hartman Test.

Morning – 9.30am to 2.30pm

The first contact when entering the room, the same one in which we developed the activities for last month's seminar, was a bit strange: I had been allowed to get into the session without paying the pertinent part of the workshop, only for one of the three days, and I did not know exactly up to which point I was able to get involved or observe, so I decided to go for some trial and error. Later, Fericgla would be the one to tell me which activities I was allowed in and which ones I was not, in case they needed an extra participant or something like that. He was accompanied by Gloria, a woman from the institution who also participated in some of the exercises. At first, I was shocked by her dressing all in white, because I didn't understand her role there. In the afternoon, however, I saw that she was there basically as Fericgla's assistant, with specific knowledge of the process.

I was told that I wasn't allowed to take pictures or recordings of any kind during the activities, since it is a pretty personal experience for the individuals there, but what I wasn't expecting was that I would not be able to take notes *in situ* either. So, what I did on this first part was to try and retain as much information as possible, and rapidly write everything down on my notebook during the pauses. The second part, during the afternoon, was a bit different and I was allowed to take notes on the go. I really appreciated this, because the process was long, and it included lots of nuances.

At the beginning of the session, Fericgla welcomed us all and told us about his position regarding the workshop's diffusion. He told us that he considered it a hermetic activity, meaning that no one was allowed to explain what happened beyond the walls of the room, in terms that weren't focused on one's own experience. This, from the start, supposed a handicap for me in relation to the later writing down of the practice: which data can I quote when I'm trying to explain something? In any case, I had been granted permission to talk about the musical process.

Once this point was made, he invited us to get rid of our watches and mobile phones, to let go our time control during the experience, as well as to avoid any dispensable texts. In the same way, he invited us to remove any objects that could interfere with our physical movement – such as earrings or necklaces –, to 'get rid of all material objects' that are so indispensable on a daily basis. Once we had done this, we still had to remove something else: our fear and retention. Then, we got started with a long free-dancing session that lasted for 30 to 45 minutes, in which songs of every kind were played, to encourage the activity: *La lluvia nunca vuelve hacia arriba* by Pedro Guerra, Safri Duo, an *Oh Happy Day* cover... The reaction of the assistants was varied, but in general everyone ended up openly participating in the dance and expressing themselves all around the space.

After this, our guide made a signal for me to step back, so they could begin the scheduled activities, which were going to be developed in pairs. After one of the girls injured herself during this process, he asked me to join the group for some of the exercises, so any of the assistants was left without a partner. On the other hand, by standing as a participant-observer I was able to watch what was happening from two different perspectives – from the inside, and from the outside. To observe the ongoing activities, I sat on a corner of the room, on the carpet, so my presence was not too interfering for the participants.

The process went *in crescendo* aiming to bring the assistants closer, and to help them get to the last activity with more trust on their partners and facilitators, as well as on themselves. But I will get there.

The first of the activities consisted on choosing a partner and sitting on some mattresses that were at our disposal in the room – which was about 7x15m. The attendees were provided with pillows and blankets, so they would be more comfortable, and had to sit in front of each other with their legs crossed, while looking at their respective partner in the eye. This had to be done 'in honesty with themselves, not making associations with the face they were looking at, entering into the person and letting their partner enter into them, without judgement.' The only sound to be heard at this moment was that of some birds outside, and some people doing other activities elsewhere. During the weekend, there were four workshops going on at once, so the house was taking in more than 80 people under its roof.

The first activity lasted for about 15 minutes, until the guide considered it to be over and thanked everyone, while encouraging a change of partners for the next exercise.

The second part was developed in the same way, by looking at each other to create an 'empty space', this time encouraging some light physical contact, that was to be done in a 'kind way and if the need arose, being respectful with the other and their attitude about the contact.' For this, they had to sit a bit closer. In the background, the same environmental sound. After a few minutes, some felt the courage to start physical contact,

and put their hands on the other's knees. Some touched each other's arms and hands, chest, and bit by bit everyone started diving into the exercise.

While I was making my first annotations on my notebook, Fericgla caught my attention and asked me to leave the room. He then asked why I was taking notes – and I was surprised, keeping in mind his career as an anthropologist —, and requested I did not do it, or only during the pauses. Then, I went back into the space where the activities were taking place, trying to remember the details, so I could put them down on my notebook rapidly during the pauses.

The activity ended in the same way as the previous one, and the session continued with yet another change of partners that led into the third activity. Now, they had to sit in front of each other with their eyes closed, and they had to touch one another focusing only on their touch, on their fingertips. The one receiving the contact, on their part, had to let themselves to be touched. The only requirements were having the same open attitude than before, touching and being touched without expecting anything from the other person, feeling the skin and the textures of the body, and respecting their partner's 'erotic zones'. This was made one turn at a time and lasted about fifteen minutes, in silence, with a 'thank you' that marked the end of the exercise. As in the previous case, some participants started touching their partners faster, while others were shy and did it more discreetly.

The music started playing on the fourth activity, although it was basically and strategically placed there to fulfil an aim. The exercise, once the partners were exchanged, consisted in talking by turns and without stopping, while the other person received the more or less random speech without producing any kind of interaction, without making expressions or intervening: they just had to receive what the other one was saying, 'like a stone.' I've mentioned that the music was basically strategic because it responded to two specific goals: in the first place, it blocked the others from hearing alien speeches, and, on the other hand, it encouraged the participants to be more active. Fericgla progressively turned up the volume to force them to speak louder. What he chose to play was very appropriate to create an environment of generous chit-chatting, since a pleasing and cheerful atmosphere was created. The music could be easily compared to the atmosphere created in a pub – jazz-fusion music, major tonalities, lyrics in foreign languages that wouldn't interfere in the conversation, about 120bpm, reiterative. In other words, the music created the right atmosphere for the kind of conversation that was pursued, which was a causal and relaxed one.

After 20 minutes or half an hour, the activities changed towards another discourse. The mattresses were put aside, and they stepped into a more physical, group-interactive activity – after a brief pause of three minutes in between, that I used to take some notes. I was asked to participate in this activity to add extra possibilities to what was planned, since with me joining in the members of the workshop became an odd number. It was about running all around the space of the room in a disorganised way, creating groups of people depending on the indications given by Fericgla. In other words, everyone run casually until an order was given, to which they had to build groups of 2, 3, 4 or whatever the number was. There was also the possibility of the indication being '2 and a half', for instance, which supposed that the "whole" participants would have to hold another person in the air, who would become the 'half'. It was mostly a game of transition, from the intensity of the first ones, with a fast-tempo music in major tonalities, with a cheerful

aspect that invited to join in the activity, with a Benny Hill kind of vibe. The people that could not find a group had to leave the circle until the next round.

Once this 'grouping' activity and the music were over, the mattresses were put back on the floor in an aligned position. The next exercise was about going through the mattresses doing cartwheels, backwards and sideways. After this, the same activity was suggested by coordinating it between two, three and four people at once, and finally with all the assistants trying to spin together. The result was basically some dizziness and a more relaxed attitude, in general.

Up to this point, the use of music had been strategic to coerce the individuals to act in a certain way, to motivate them to carry out the designed exercises in a fluent manner. The next and sixth exercise, in which I also participated, was performed once again in silence, since it required a passive attitude. It consisted on 'letting go' and trusting 'the other'.

The exercise began developing in couples, so I was not participating actively in it. It consisted on letting oneself fall into the arms of the other, first by facing them and then backwards, repeatedly. This was followed by a riskier activity, consisting of letting oneself fall on the back and on the face on some mattresses; then from up a chair on two mattresses; then from a table; then with closed eyes; then from a chair on a table with closed eyes and on three or four mattresses... Basically, it was an exercise designed to get the adrenaline going, and to build on the trust. On the last 'levels', Fericgla asked the assistants to shout out loud when falling on the mattresses, to let go their voices. Bit by bit, all the participants began accepting the activity, although it is not relevant at a musical level, since it was produced in silence. On the other hand, the kind of attitude that was encouraged and the response it received is essential. On the last activity of the day, some of the participants that were less likely to let themselves go would be the ones to receive the strongest impact from the music, which was a surprise.

The activity that followed was also developed in pairs and required the trust in one's partner. I was asked to participate due to a small injury of one of the assistants, that couldn't walk properly. It was also a two-turn activity and it took place with no music playing, to facilitate the communication it required. It was basically a guidance activity, where one had their eyes covered and the other had to lead the way, not giving any kind of verbal information. On the first round, I was in the 'guiding-dog' group, and we were instructed not to speak under any circumstances to whom we were guiding, nor letting them go, as well as to follow the indications that Fericgla was giving and taking care of our partners so they wouldn't stumble over any objects in their way. The ones with their eyes blindfolded would be encountering obstacles to bump into, as mattresses on the floor, blocking their pass, or pillows with which they would be hit. The activity developed without the guided ones knowing what was going to happen.

We were instructed to walk faster, to change directions and disorientate the person who we were guiding... But there were also some problems: three of the couples, in which I am included, misunderstood one of the instructions and at a point we let go the hand of our partner. This supposed a strong reprimand at the precise moment as well as afterwards, even if – in our defence – he hadn't been clear at all. There were also obstacles like strong and sudden sounds, as well as small explosives in a bucket, and the sound of a racing car at a high volume.

This round finished fading into the next one, in which I wasn't feeling like participating, but had to give someone a person to guide. In this case, we were the blindfolded ones and we did not know exactly what we were expecting. We were equally guided through the room with all the blockages – mattresses, pillows —, but after that and out of the blue we were led to the outside of the room, where – barefoot — we had to walk hand in hand with our guides, who lead us towards different sound sources like the fountain in the patio, the bells at the entrance, or one of the groups there, talking about another activity. To this, there were also some scares added, like when they threw freezing water on our backs. Finally, our guides let us go and we had to wait for a while before going back in, with our eyes still blindfolded.

We were then guided towards an exercise that was bounded to the previous one. When we entered the room, we had to lie down on the mattresses that were placed on the floor again. After some minutes, soft music started playing, non-measurable, with natural sounds such as birds, whales, and sea waves. Fericgla told us to get comfortable on the mattresses, with a very calmed and paused attitude, and so the activity began.

With a tranquil and soft voice, he started indicating the steps of a meditation. First, we had to imagine that the mattress on which we were lying was our own personal island, where no one could enter nor leave without our consent. We had to imagine, on first instance, the landscape that we wanted for our island – wooded, tropical, whatever — and the sky that we wanted – a starry sky, a sunset... Our island was covered by a golden cupola, that insulated everything external that we did not want there. 'But there are some other inhabitants in the island,' he proceeded, 'such as your feet. Those feet that no one ever thinks about, that are there but receive no attention. Maybe they just want a caress from your hands, a little attention.' This was followed by including our legs, arms, hands, face, in the island. Meanwhile, the music slowly started to become measurable, although it was still slow, about 60bpm. It also started to transform towards minor tonalities, that were barely there before, and towards modality.

Then, Fericgla encouraged us to create bridges, if we wanted to, towards other islands, to create connections, using our extremities. Bit by bit, the music started to modulate towards a major tonality and began increasing in bpm – although my perception was a bit distorted by the activity. After creating these archipelagos, he encouraged us to form continents, joining other groups of islands, while the music started developing towards a triumphant major tonality, accompanied by a bass drum that the 'guide' himself started playing, creating a sensation of achievement, of success in the final task we had been entrusted. Within some minutes of connection with the others, under the sound of this march, the volume louder every time, now around 80bpm, the activity was conducted to an end.

With the ending of the music, we also found the ending of the tension that had been building up, and everyone loosened their extremities to let go. The musical development of the last part was somehow similar to works such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, although I did not recognise the exact piece.

Finally, I had encountered an activity conducted by its musical structure, that allowed me to establish some parameters within which the reactions of the participants were based.

The penultimate exercise of the morning took place in pairs as well, that would rotate up to three times. They created a circle with the mattresses all around the space to mark

some boundaries and avoid collisions with any objects, since everyone had to be blindfolded. The activity consisted on staring at one's partner, interiorising them, their face, their expression, and then covering one-self's eyes and walking randomly around the created space. Once they were separated enough, they had to 'guide themselves with their intuition and trust' to find their partner again. When they found someone, they had to speak their own names low in the ear of the other, and check if that person was their partner. If they did it well, they had to encounter the other person intuitively at once. When they found their partners, they removed their blindfolds and got out of the circle. The activity was developed in silence, three times.

To finish, all the mattresses where placed on the floor for one last meditative activity. It consisted on a reflection on the topic of death – that announced the ways in which they would be expected to behave during the evening. It was basically a brief meditative speech by Fericgla, in which he talked about the inexorability of death and the meaning of the life of each of the attendants: their existence on Earth, their path on Earth, dispensable in each case. He highlighted the importance of imagining the time of the one's own death so one could be prepared when it came. He then asked the participants to think about the last hour they had passed and encouraged them to consider if it had been fully lived, or if they would regret if it truly was their last. It was a speech mostly focused on a *carpe diem* ideology, that aimed to encourage the assistants to take their daily life with bigger enthusiasm. During the brief time this was going on, Fericgla played some piano music in the background, in a slow tempo, about 60bpm, in a minor tonality. It looked like it was chosen carefully to create the reflection it aimed for.

Then our lunch break came, although the bells in the dining room had rang about half an hour ago. We had lunch all together in one of the dining rooms of the main building, without any time control yet, and we had some spare time before starting the afternoon activity, which happened sometime around 4.30pm – or so I guessed. I chatted briefly with some other assistants, but they weren't outstanding conversations, since we did not focus too much on the development of the activities, but more on various personal issues. A girl explained how she used to work in a lab with embryos, and it looked like she was attending the activity due to her discomfort towards her job, that took place in a dark environment, which included 'moral wondering', as she pointed out. She found it difficult to be in there for long. Another guy commented that he was attending the workshop to improve his 'personal development' skills.

During this pause, I wrote down some of the thoughts that had come to my mind on the development of the exercises as well, and I defined three important parameters on the use of music: (I) beats per minute – in other words, tempo —, (II) tonality – to which I then added 'character' —, and (III) volume. I noted that the use of music wasn't specific, there were no precise pieces to be looked for, nor specific instruments, only a typology that was well adapted to the parameters in which it was to be analysed.

Some of the things that the attendants commented on during the pause in relation to the music referred mainly to the importance that they gave to it at an emotional level, at an inner motivational level. I really appreciated that everyone was open and interested in my research project, and that they offered to have an interview once the workshop had passed, after some days of rest.

Afternoon – 4.30 to 10pm

After a while, we headed to the room where the activities were taking place to begin with the second part of the day. However, and first of all, Fericgla called us off because of the poor level of engagement of the group, that he found to be too dispersed and not well focused on the exercises, that were not paid enough attention... In relation to the 'incidents of the morning', specially, to the 'guiding-dog' exercise. This was followed by a round of questions to see how the participants were feeling. The great majority of them expressed that they felt satisfied but tired, to which the guide responded with calling us off one more time, making emphasis on the low level of attention that we had in relation to our daily lives, and the effort it supposed for everyone trying to focus on mundane activities. The mandatory free-dance session chained this to the main activities of the workshop themselves. The songs that were played during this dancing part were, for example, *Mama Inés*, *Gagnam Style* or *Y nos dieron las diez*, along with some hip hop and electro music. We wrapped it up with the same song that had opened the morning session, by Safri Duo.

Following this, a last activity took place, before starting the Holorrhenic Breathwork *per se*, which is the central part of the workshop, towards which the previous exercises had been leading to. It consisted in a same-sex pairs' activity – 3 female pairings and 4 male pairings —, in which they had to sit in front of each other on the mattresses once again. First, our 'guide' got everyone to look for their pulse somewhere that they could easily feel it – wrist, neck or chest — and made emphasis once again on the finitude of life. 'When we stop feeling our heart, we will have stopped living,' he sharply concluded.

To this, the activity itself followed, in which they had to tell the person in front of them and 'from the heart', whatever they would have said to their fathers that they never had the chance to or dared to tell them. The association that popped into my mind was the 'Oedipus' complex' all the way. As Fericgla himself pointed out on the seminar that took place last month, this is one of the most controversial parts of the vital process of most people, their first great love and great confrontation, etcetera, and for that I think he gave it this approach, to prepare the 'true journey' about to come.

In ten-minute turns each, the participants expressed whatever they would have said if they had been speaking directly to their fathers to their partners. In the background and with the same aim that in previous activities, there was music playing specifically to receive a determined reaction from the participants. This time, it did not only have the function of 'giving privacy' to the conversation so the other groups weren't able to hear their mattress-neighbours – it also intended to move the participants, to put them in a specific mood. The music chosen by Fericgla was, indeed, some carol-like music, *largo*, *vibrato*, melancholic. For example, he played a version of *Noche de paz*, sung by a baritone, and a choir. If we compare it with what he explained some weeks earlier, the strategy becomes clear.

The general attitude towards the exercise was melancholic, and most of the assistants found themselves deeply moved. Once it was over, the 'guide' gave the participants the chance to write anything they wanted down on the notebook that they had been given, and in relation to any reflections that they could have made. Meanwhile, I also took some brief notes. Now, the music moved towards a relaxed character, filled with major tonalities and cheerful rhythms that contrasted with the emotional shock of the exercise.

After this, the specific preparation for the Holorrhenic Breathwork began. Fericgla asked everyone to pick a partner for the activity, the partner that would be accompanying them in the process, and with whom they would be sharing their experience. Then, they had to decide who was going to breathwork first. Once they had made up their minds, Fericgla told them that the decision was going to be inverted, so whoever decided not to breath was the one who was going to go first. He affirmed that the exercise was going to consist on going far into a feeling of dizziness, and that it was not going to consist on simply 'getting high'.

Before starting, the participants were given five minutes, and they were encouraged to use the bathroom before starting the process. They were told to go excrete if they could, since it was better to start the activity with an empty body. They also had to go and find a bed sheet, pillow and blindfold, together with their notebooks if they did not have them there yet. While the participants were doing this, Gloria and Fericgla started preparing the room for the breathworking session. They put the mattresses on the floor in such a way that they were accessible, they burnt some strong incense – to which Gloria referred to as 'Vatican incense' — and a candle. The light was turned down as well, just leaving the light of the afternoon to light up the room.

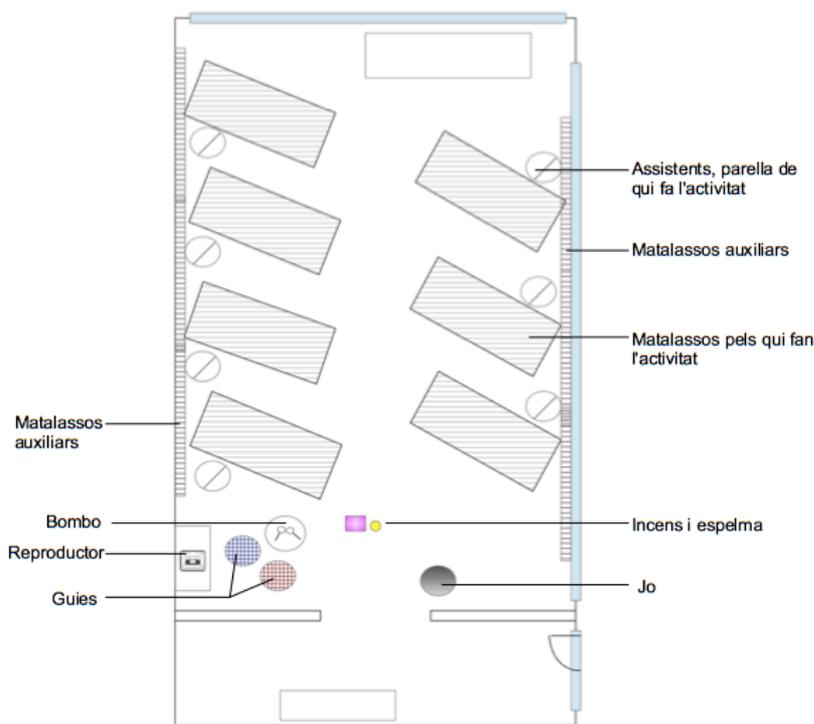


Figure 3. On the left, from the top: Assistant mattresses, drum, music player, guides. On the right, from the top: Assistants of the couple who is doing the exercise, assistant mattresses, mattresses for those doing the activity, incense and candle, me.

While the space was filling up with a dense smoke and a penetrating scent, I tried to ask some questions to Gloria, first, and then to Fericgla. She answered normally and said that she heard various theories about the incense but did not know why Fericgla specifically used it. He, on the other hand, on my question about the importance of incense, just ignored me and asked 'why are you taking so many notes? Wasn't it the music you were interested in?'. With him being an anthropologist, this keeps bothering me: isn't it obvious that everything is part of the musical experience?

Finally, the activity was about to begin. Proper and clear indications were given on where the nearest bathroom was, and indications about the necessary objects to have near those who were doing the exercise – the assistants needed to take care of this: a plastic bag – ready and open in case the breathers needed to throw up —, a couple of glasses of water and paper – to give it to the breathers or wet their lips —, and a blanket in case they got cold. The ones assisting the participants in the activity had to be totally available to any request, trying to ensure that the person they oversaw was as comfortable as possible, and getting themselves comfortable since these exercises are hours-long. They also had to get rid of any objects that could cause a potential injury and all that could cause any kind of pressure on the body – on the women’s case, for example, the bra. At this point, I allowed myself to get the notebook and start taking some notes of a process that, according to the guide himself, was about to last for several hours.

Once everyone was in place – the mattresses were chosen randomly, and the assistants laid down with their eyes folded straight away — as shown on Figure 1, the activity itself began. But before going any further, it is essential to make a brief explanation on Holorrhenic Breathwork: it consists on a process of existential integration of one’s own death, that is, a process in which through accelerated breathing and evocative music – chosen strategically to alter the unconsciousness of the participant –, and with the help of a guide, the participant is led to one’s last living moment, as a mean to free aspects of their own biography that are impediments in any kind of way. The process is reflected on a theoretical level on the notes I took on the field during the Music and Unconsciousness seminar last month.

Finally, the guide warned the participants that some physical intervention was about to be made – manipulations — if he observed anyone who was getting a blockage on some of the stages, or if he saw that there was some externalising of any pain on someone's body –if some limbs got rigid suddenly, or if the participants themselves called for help. To all this, he added a key word for the participants, with which to show that they wanted him to stop – *basta*, in English: stop —, so it could be distinguished from any other verbalisation, if they were in pain but wanted to keep on going with the experience. Ferigla and Gloria oversaw this more-or-less medical part, always respecting the privacy and bodies of the participants.

Holorrhenic Breathwork – 6 to 10pm

I wrote down all the changes that were going on and how each one of them affected the assistants if relevant, and so I will reflect it here. Every number corresponds to what I understood to be an important change in the music or the attitude of the attendees. This was the process of breathworking that followed:

1. First, a state of relaxation was induced throughout a Hindu *raga* performed on a sitar. Probably the *alap* part, according to its non-metric and exploratory nature. The guide was telling the participants to relax, to let go, to do anything that their bodies asked for if they felt the need, reminding them of the figure of their own assistant at their side, at their entire disposition. This process of preparation lasted about ten minutes, in a low and deep volume, with no defined metric and with the fluctuation of the *tambura*. At this point, the participants were still breathing normally, yet deeply.

2. A sharp stop gave way to a sudden epic-like music that made everyone jump, contrasting with the state that they had been induced. The volume went up considerably,

and suddenly. The bpm were accelerated to 110-120 and the bass-drum joined the march with all the strength with which the guide was able to play it. The percussive music, with very amplified low frequencies, started building some very interesting responses from those who were breathing, while they breathed uninterruptedly to the proposed rhythm – always inhaling and exhaling through the same vent. Meanwhile, the guides cheered them up and encouraged them to follow the process on the indication “¡venga, valientes!” (in English: “come on, be brave!”). Some started to shake a bit and to convulse. There was a guy that even got up to give more emphasis to the breathwork.

3. This first strong moment was followed by a xylophone, *presto-prestissimo*, in a major tonality, more animated, and with the bpm going up. Some of the participants, with problems to breath at this high speed, started subdividing their breathing to adapt it approximately to 80bpm, at some points. Some chants of feminine voices were added to this, in a choir, to create a more emphatic response. Three out of the seven participants were at this point semi or totally incorporated and were gesturing intensively. A girl, after some minutes, threw up in one of the plastic bags that they had at hand, due to the effort.

4. A tambourine started playing on the rhythmic bass, merging with it, while it got slowly superposed by the drum played by Fericgla. This was followed by metallic sounds and a speech in German, an audience applauding it, and some very prominent low frequencies – on a base that gave continuity to the music. The speech, I realised a few moments later, was Hitler’s. It popped into my mind, then, the importance of what Fericgla highlighted on the introduction of a paternalistic figure. This relates to the previous seminar, in which we were introduced to the topic of music and the unconscious, but I should verify this to compare the process with the theory. The volume and the bpm remained constant around 110-120.

5. Then the main theme of the *Indiana Jones* movies by John Williams jumped in, and kept getting alternated with the rhythm in the background, which was still strong. The participants started to convulse and make abrupt movements, they started looking agitated. One of them was on their feet and was helped back to their mattress.

6. This and a brief *decrescendo* gave pass to a slap-like bass line, while the tambourine of point 4 was still to be heard on the rhythmical base. This faded out towards some classical symphonic music, that restarted the volume when incorporating the sound of the bass drum. A while later, and going back to the emphasis of the beginning, in quite high bpm yet, the two guides approached one of the participants that, at that point, had had one of the most passive attitudes. It looked like he was breathing rapidly and intensely but wasn't affected much by the process. Therefore, they asked him permission to perform a manipulation, and soon after he kept on going with the process.

7. Then, the music turned towards a happy character, that reminded me of Tyrolese music, while the volume was kept medium-high. Meanwhile, the guides approached one of the girls to apply the same pressures they had been applying to the other guy. She was shaking a bit before this, and showed some improvement afterwards.

8. To this process it followed some drum music, that could have been African – I did not recognise it. The low frequencies were prominent, and the bpm were kept around 100. The guides kept on going with the manipulations – now it was the turn of a girl that, until then, hadn't been showing any emotions whatsoever.

9. Some 'tribal-like' chants accompanied by drums followed this, in a similar fashion as the previous theme, now going up again to 120bpm while the volume was kept stable. Actually, it could be considered a prolongation of the previous point. Another guy was manipulated with similar results.

10. The music transformed then into rock, the sound of a phone and some feminine intense chanting, which alternated. The sound was presented in a chaotic way, and everyone shook even more, the brusque movements hadn't stopped yet and they became even worse. The music was modulating between what was playing and a guitar solo, an accordion, drumming polyrhythm... Meanwhile, the guides kept on going with the manipulations on another guy. After that, the bass drum was incorporated to the sound to highlight the beat, and to make emphasis on the activity for those who started finding themselves in a distant state of consciousness.

11. With the beginning of the 'Toreador' theme of Bizet's *Carmen*, the guide left the bass drum, producing a consequent drop on the volume. Even so, this change was not noticeable in what refers to the reactions of the participants, which had already reached a kind of uneasy state. At that point, the guy who was more active, and who was now standing up, was the one to be approached for a manipulation. With a big 'thank you' scream he fell down and, after a while, he started crying. The crying, from this moment, started spreading among some of the participants.

12. Some chants then entered the scene, that reminded me of the Tuva chants or the ones reproduced by the band Huun Huur Tu. The guide incorporated himself once again to the bass drum while the bpm were going up, reaching about 120-140bpm. The volume was also turning louder, and the participants were twisting around. Almost none of them was following the breathworking process at this point, or they were in trouble keeping track of it.

13. This led to a symphonic-like kind of music once again, with a choir and no lyrics. Once more, the tonality was triumphant major and the volume still high. The guides then addressed themselves to the last guy they had manipulated to apply more pressure on him. When it looked like all the participants had calmed down for a few minutes, the shouts of this one reactivated some of the other participants, mostly when the bass drum was again incorporated. The high frequencies of the music started to go in the sounding landscape with some bells, yet the basses were still resounding in the body, and the chants were still going on. With a *ritardando* the tension started to grow, while brass instruments and percussion predominated, to reach again on the main theme. During this rise, one of the participants had stood up and strongly started to kick a mattress, so one of the guides and her assistant tried to calm her down. Meanwhile, one of the boys started crying.

14. All this process started to relax with the dropping of the bpm to 80, while the music went to a *largo, legato*, that derived to the last part of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. This was combined afterwards with some parts of Händel's *Messiah*, until reaching a glorious 'Viva Cristo Rei' in a major triumphant tonality, which the guide combined with the bass drum effusively. The bpm were stable around 80-90. The last rays of sunshine were starting to disappear, so I estimated it was around 8pm.

15. The music, in a binary rhythm, was strengthening the attitude of progress, and the tension grew up to a great resolution, accompanied by the live percussion. The question that I asked myself at that point was, basically, why some of the assistants were yelling,

standing up and convulsing while other lied almost impassibly next to them on their mattresses.

16.- My train of thought was cut by a sudden change in the music, now playing what could be labelled as “Latino-pop”. This was accompanied by a small *diminuendo* in the volume.

17. And we were back to orchestration, now Baroque, and the assistants started calming down a bit. Even so, when the guides walked towards a girl at the back of the room some others heard it, and got semi-incorporated. This only lasted for a few minutes, and eventually everything would calm back down again. In this environment, now more relaxed, one of the guides was able to turn on some more incense. The process culminated in a V-I-V-I coda, that lead to another stage of the process. I must say that, at this point, my headache – due to the volume of the music, the yelling, and the penetrating incense – was starting to bewilder me, and I think influenced my focus.

18. A soloist guitar accompanying a voice came in, with a song that I have found out to be Pedro Guerra’s. To this song, a girl responded crying intensely, while all the breathers remained lying down on their sides on the mattresses, now calmly. No one was breathing to the rhythm of the music any longer, everyone looked like they were lost in their thoughts.

19. This was substituted slowly by an *Ave Maria* accompanied by a harp. The lyrics were performed by a soprano and in a minor tonality, that promoted the crying of two more assistants. The bpm went down to 60, and put the assistants back in a state of reflection, but the process wasn't over yet – one can't refer to mental relaxation at the same level as physical relaxation. The volume had been equally going down and was kept low.

20. Another soprano was taking the main role, with the theme I posteriorly identified as *Mare Mia* by Diane Navarro (‘Mare mia, tu me das la vida’), with a very relaxed rhythm, reverberation and warm rhythmic. Towards the end of the song, the intensity started growing up again in an emotional sense, to which the participants responded. This was mixed by the guide with the sound of a baby crying and a child babbling, plus a laugh in the end.

21. A fade out lead to a fauxbourdon with a single voice overlapping. The caretakers started covering some of the breathers with bed sheets and blankets, while others had been covered during the process. The voice was substituted by a cello and the bpm dropped to 40-50. In this state, some of the breathers’ caretakers started writing down on their notebooks about the experiences they believed were pertinent, and I started a brief reflection: had all of that been auto-induced? In other words, the predisposition to go into ‘trance’ is fundamental, but was that so? Which were the factors to intervene more actively? Now it was almost closed night outside.

22. With a step into a cello and piano song, I realised that we had been listening to minor tonalities for a while. At this point, one of the guides distributed some sponge cake to the ones that had assisted the session, the caretakers, as well as the breathers, and myself. The volume was now low, and all the music was shaped in a reflexive kind of way. Actually, this is supported by some of the lyrics that were developing – for example, a song with lyrics by Franco Battiato.

23. At this point I was a bit confused about the process and what followed. Were we on a conclusion: were they leaving some space to the participants that had been into the process, or was this included in the process? One of the caretakers, at this moment, started to cry shyly, letting the tension go. The volume and the bpm were kept low. The low frequencies had disappeared progressively, so now everything was very crystalline sounding and clear. The music was repeating incessantly, as in a minimalistic piece.

24. To grasp a point of attention there was, then, an *a cappella* Lord's Prayer cover, very melismatic. A few moments later some orchestration merged in, but it rapidly faded away towards a non-measurable chant.

25. In the background, the bells were ringing announcing dinner, so I supposed it was 9 or 9.30pm. The music, then and after being kept in minor and modal tonalities for a while, jumped to major, to a classical piano theme that modelled between one and the others. This led to an orchestrated *waltz*, but only briefly, since it rapidly changed again towards a voice-and-guitar song – 'Marisol' style —, in a low volume.

26. This was followed by a *Domine*, still placed between major and minor tonalities. Meanwhile, the slow and soft music was starting to anaesthetise me. Therefore, I took the notebook to write down that the process was maybe divisible in two big blocks bound together, that had to be contrasted with my notes from the seminar from last month.

27. Then entered a tango, in a minor tonality, although more cheerful and with a low volume. This, was bound to some symphonic music with lots of reverberation, very *legato* and *largo*, which I could not identify.

28. The cellos were back, together with the contrabasses, to accompany a Gregorian chant, producing an interesting mixture between modality and tonality. A jazz saxophone was also incorporated to the mix at some point. Bit by bit, the potpourri started unfastening to lead the music to one of the themes in *Carmen*, and the participants slowly started sitting back up.

29. This was still to be followed by a nuptial march accompanied by a choir and an English pop song that turned the environment into a more casual and re-animated environment. The sounding session was over with the popular American song *Glory, glory, hallelujah* in a moderate volume, according to what had taken place.

30. After some minutes of silence, the two guides sat down on two small benches and made a reverence with their head touching the floor. They spoke some words of encouragement to those who had breathed and congratulated everyone for the work done. Fericgla also told them to have a shower before dinner. Even so, if someone wanted to stay and meditate or rest there, they were free to stay in the room. It was over 10pm and I had to give an end to my stay at Can Benet.

Like this, my stay in El Montnegre was over. Now I just have to see how I can apply and reflect the theory that the 'guide' himself gave us in relation to all this process. The reflections to be made are quite a lot, and the questions too. If I can be in any other workshop where they go into this kind of activity, I think it would be more efficient at the time of making a proper analysis of the material.

Appendix D

The way back home was long. I had lost the last train to Barcelona, and the day after my whole body hurt and left me in a catatonic state. Finally, I made up my mind and started writing down these brief pages. In the end, I can only say that it was quite an experience and that, if I can have some rest for a few days, I would be happy to go back and repeat the experience, to have a better contrasted perspective of what I witnessed.

Fieldwork Diary III

HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK

17th May 2014, Holotròpics, Barcelona
(Translated from original in Catalan)

Finding a place in Barcelona where Holotropic or Holorrhenic Breathwork workshops are developed is not as difficult as being able to access them. This is not only due to their secrecy and reticence towards the focus of this study, but also because of the high fees they ask for to participate.

Less than a week ago, I was lucky enough to get in touch with a small group dedicated to Holotropic Breathwork, whose facilitators were instructed by the creator of the practice himself, Stanislav Grof. A young man of about thirty years old agreed to give an interview. Thanks to this, today I've been able to access a small practice with a few people, in the centre of Barcelona, although this time I've participated, and not only observed – actually, this was the only requirement that they set for me. The price, in the same way, has not been too high, and the facilitator has provided a 20% discount after recognising my situation as a student. Therefore, the result has been a brief session for 80€, that has begun at 9am and ended up at 3.30pm, approximately.

The man leading the workshop made an appointment for me on May the 6th and talked to me about how he usually develops his sessions. He explained that there are usually very few people in his workshops, and that because of it, it is too invasive having an external observer. However, he invited me to participate actively as a breather and caretaker in their next session. In this regard, he introduced me to the work of his teacher, and commented on the importance of the *set* and the *setting*, that are described in detail in the author's literary work. He explained that they are usually about four to six people in each workshop. They also organise some of them in Switzerland, where the interest for the practice is higher than in Catalonia at the moment.

The only problem I was faced with in this case – and keeping in mind the differences of procedure with other schools such as Holorrhenic Breathwork — was that the importance given to music was not the same as in the case that I had previously observed. While in Can Benet, the music acted as the conductor for the experience, but in this case it seemed like they approached sound only as 'evocative material' that would facilitate the entrance into an expanded state of consciousness, that was however not indispensable to build the practice. Even so, I thought it would be interesting to see the differences that they suggested, and how these were reflected on the overall process. If the sessions are essentially constructed on a musical structure, how can it not be relevant?

Thanks to the kindness of the facilitator and the way in which he introduced the workshop, I decided to participate actively in it. So that is what I did today, 17th of May 2014.

Saturday, 17th May

After leaving home at 8.30am and walking in the Sun for half an hour, I have arrived at the location where we were to develop the practice. Yesterday, at night, I got an email

from the facilitator with some specifications for the next day: wearing comfortable clothes, a bottle of water to be refilled there, and a blindfold to cover our eyes.

The floor and walls of the room in which the activity was about to take place were wooden, and the environment inspired calmness with its simple but cosy decoration. At the end of a long corridor, the facilitator pointed me a room where I would be able to change my clothes. There was already another girl there, who had just left her bag in the same room.

When I got out to the main space, in which the breathworking was to take place, we introduced ourselves and the facilitator let us know that there was one more participant on its way, so it was going to be the four of us for the session. The girl I had just met had breathed in other occasions and, this time, she was attending only as a caretaker, since we were so few people participating. In this way, she would be able to take care of us while the facilitator supervised the whole thing, and we would be able to go through the process in a single session of breathworking, finishing past midday. At first this shocked me a bit, since the facilitator himself had emphasised the importance of adopting the two roles on a session to make it complete – breather and caretaker —, but I guessed that having just one person breathing would be awkward – and tiring for the others. While we were waiting, the facilitator handed me a medical form to fill in and for him to evaluate, that analysed the capacity of the participants to undergo the exercise. Among the specifications, I had to indicate if I had any psychological disorders, cardiovascular problems, breathing problems, any kind of epilepsy, pregnancy, etcetera. The personal interview around this and other points took place once we had handed in the form.

After a while, the other man participating arrived, and we got started with the activities planned for the day.

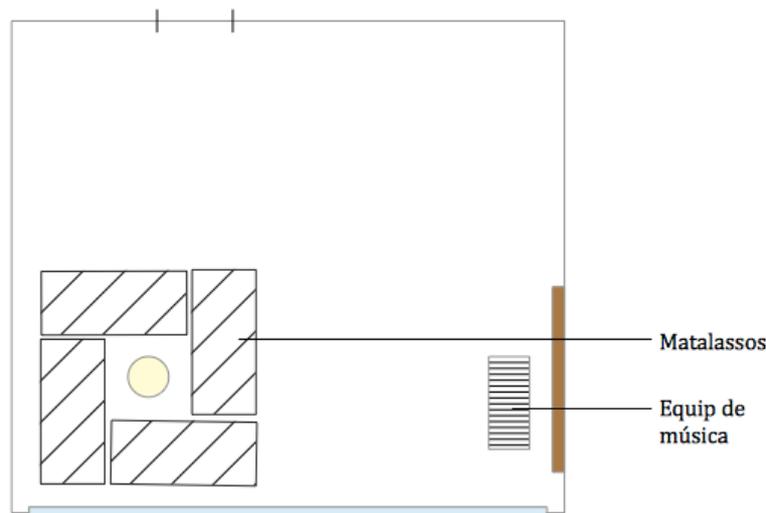


Figure 4. Mattresses / Sound System.

We all sat down on the prepared mattresses, around a centrepiece with a candle and some decorations, and got started with the first part. This consisted on a theoretical introduction and a description of the whole session and the parts of which it would consist. To retain the information, I took some brief notes – translated below.

Transcription from fieldwork diary – 17th May 2017

A session of holotropic breathwork consists of three parts: preparation, experience, and integration.

The preparation begins when someone decides to participate in the activity, but it requires the theoretical part to give sense to the whole experience. It is important to understand Stanislav Grof's story and his disenchantment with psychotherapy: he wasn't finding the relation between theory and what they did on a daily basis to be the same.

He got to know LSD thanks to Albert Hofmann, a scientist that synthesised a sample through an experiment that he was undertaking in a lab, to identify a list of symptoms he had been feeling while working. After experimenting with the consequent effects, he sent some samples to different locations specialised in psychotherapy for its testing. Grof received one of this samples of LSD-25, a key fact that supposed an opening to his own career, to which he had been feeling less and less bonded to.

Another perspective opened for him when he tried the substance for the first time. He usually explains that, at that time, he wasn't open to individual experiences of transcendental nature, because he had been educated in a Soviet-rationalist, very strict context, but that the test he took transformed his perception of the world.

With the use of this substance, he started feeling a renewed interest for psychiatry, although its banning once it found its way out of the laboratories and got popularised among the general population supposed a clear inconvenient. He then got in touch with other psychotherapists, the main creators of the so-called 'new therapies', and together they created what they would later label as 'Transpersonal Psychology' movement –focused on the potential of the human mind, which goes beyond people, influenced by Orientalist movements such as Buddhism and its search for Enlightenment.

It was at this moment when Holotropic Breathwork was discovered → He said he discovered it because he started making it up according to the opinion of the participants, taking in account their experiences and contributions.

'Holotropic': from the Greek, *holos* + *trepein* (tendency upon the whole).

Vision of the ego parting from one's mother's belly. From unity to duality with separation at birth (separation from 'self' to 'not-self'). After this, thought appears, and there is yet another separation created in relation to the body. Limits start being placed, identification and de-identification while growing up → How we see ourselves.

Creation of a partial image → We leave things we don't want aside, things we don't want to remember or keep in mind, we keep them in another box. According to holotropic breathwork, it is necessary to include these aspects to embrace the totality of ourselves.

→ Induction to non-ordinary states of consciousness –our consciousness is fluctuating, we have different approaches to consciousness on our daily basis. While on these states, the 'rules' change: we usually live time and space chronologically, but we don't do it in the same way while we are dreaming, for example. These are the states that humanity has always been looking for. It allows us to learn and heal ourselves. First it was common among shamanists and, after that, in a scientific environment.

The breathing increases the oxygen in our blood, but the CO₂ does as well, so the alkalinity of one's blood rises. Therefore, four possibilities open up:

- I. Sensorial experiences.
- II. Biographical experiences –reviewing episodes and sensations related to this, for example.
- III. We can be sent back to our birth moment, and to our intra-uterine life –perinatal experiences.
- IV. We can go beyond our own existence → this would have been dismissed psychologically. These episodes do not have to have a hierarchical order. The figure of the internal healer of every individual is fundamental, since it is who decides what is going to be reviewed or what is going to be felt during the experience. It honours the experience of the person and gives confidence on what is shown –one knows what is convenient for oneself, from one’s own inner wisdom → homeopathy-like.

Healing depends on the acceptance-level of the experience and its intensity, since one has to go in the direction of the experience and trust it. This gets easier with practice and experience.

Another pillar is what is called ‘cross yoga’ → Horizontal position – of interpersonal relationships — vs. vertical position – of thought. What happens inside each person, in relation to one’s interpersonal relationships, is vertical.

Vertical as connection to one’s own history. Sometimes it leads to a projection from the vertical dimension to the horizontal: for example, when someone starts a fight because ‘the other one looked at him funny’, it is clear that the outside aggression comes from the inside.

In holotropic breathwork the vertical dimension is the only one to be worked with, differently to what is done in other disciplines such as the Gestalt school. For example, when hearing a song there is a reaction, but it is empowered from the inside and not from the outside. Therefore, it is interesting to get the sensations from the outside and put them in the vertical dimension → Ask myself: have I felt this before? Give way to one’s own history and letting what happens inside me work its way to the outside. This relates the feelings from the outside with other inside feelings, and leads to verticality – from horizontality to verticality.

Five pillars when practising holotropic breathwork:

- I. Breathing fast and constantly, not leaving pauses between inhalation and exhalation. Similar to ‘lightning up a fire’, accompaniment for emotional state: the spark is lightened up and, bit by bit, it starts growing and producing reactions.
- II. Evocative music created in a curve. It neither creates nor destroys the experience, but adapts to the ‘typical experience’. It is a leading train.
- III. Body manipulation in case of tensions, etc. Co-created work → It can be worked on or not, depending on the breather’s preference. Intensification, pressure from both parts, equal to the resistance of the person. If anyone needs to shout or express any emotion, they are encouraged to do so. Stopping only under the word “stop”, when bodily manipulations take place.
- IV. Drawing a mandala.
- V. Sharing with the group. These two last phases belong to the integration phase. About ‘falling sleep’ → if the experience is too relaxed, approaching + other possibilities –light

sleep, intense returning, necessary step... Long treatment in case someone wants to work on it. The integration part is important to wrap the experience up, without therapy, only the own experience. The person breathing has to keep in mind this process and do anything one feels like within the boundaries of the mattress → safe emotional and physical expression. If someone does not know how to express oneself, one can ask the facilitator and a solution will be procured.

It is important not to leave the session until it has ended, expressing everything vertically and not horizontally. There can be some 'tetany', drowsiness or tension on the limbs.

Possibility of corporal work or manipulation. When the experience is over, it is important to leave a period for 'landing' it, so the facilitator can check on the participant before giving the journey a definitive end.

It is an intense experience for the caretaker as well. Its task becomes a sacred contract with the breather. It is important not to use any techniques – such as reiki — without asking for the other's consent first, since the work and the experience has to be left to the breather.

The caretaker's job is that of being there for the breather, being aware if he asks for some water, a blanket or anything else. The caretaker has to keep their own experience in a secondary level, so the breather can have the main experience. Also, a breather is never left alone, it is non-negotiable.

Finally, the facilitator arranges the space and prepares it. Generally, this is a role with low intervention, only in case someone needs a pillow, a breather would open their eyes, if there are any problems with the experience – for example, if someone is feeling breathless —, or in case the breather specifically asks for it. It is important that the breather asks anything they need.

Once this theoretical part was over, we had our brief personal interviews with the facilitator in relation to the medical file that we had filled in, and we were free to ask any questions. This was brief and focused on us having any problems, on our emotional state previously to beginning the process.

We then got started with some preliminary relaxation and interaction exercises. All these activities proceeded without any music playing, but they are relevant due to their preparatory nature for the process, which is entirely musical. This helped us get closer to the other assistants, with whom we were working with.

We started making a circle in the centre of the room, and moving the different parts of our body to relax it: our ankles, knees, hips... making circles and rotating them. After this, we danced for a few minutes, first alone, then in pairs, to the sound of a Bollywood-like soundtrack, freely. This was followed by an activity consisting on walking randomly around the room, not following anyone, changing directions when we wanted to. We walked on our toe-tips, our heels, looking at the other participants in the eye when walking past them... We had to wave at each other, adding some light physical contact when finding someone in our way, and finally doing the same effusively – like we hadn't seen each other for twenty years. All this lasted about fifteen minutes, but was useful to get closer to each other, keeping in mind that we had just met.

We also tried a brief 'confidence' exercise, consisting of letting oneself fall back while another participant caught us in the air, and vice versa. Finally, we met again at the centre

of the room and said our names while doing a gesture that the others had to mock. Merging in a big hug, we wished each other a good experience and, in this way, we had reached the main part of the workshop.

First, we changed the disposition of the mattresses and the other participant and myself picked up our water and blindfold to cover our eyes.

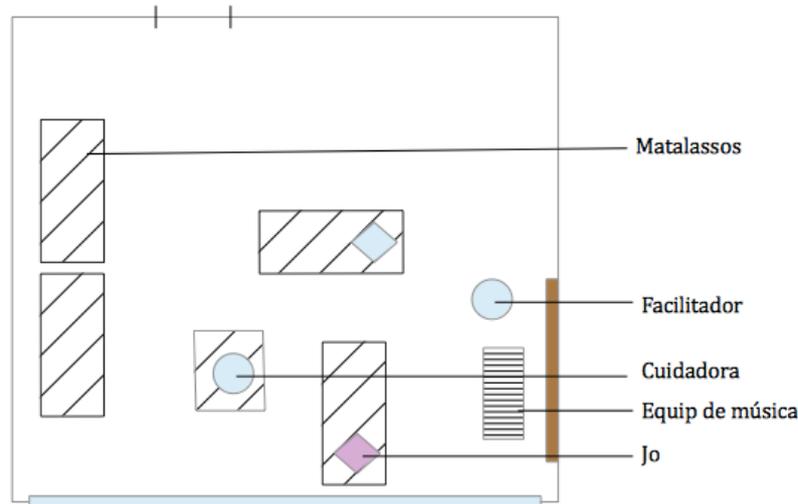


Figure 5. From the top: Mattresses / Facilitator / Caretaker / Sound System / Me.

We arranged the room as shown in Figure 2, and jumped into the main exercise. First of all, the facilitator guided us through some steps to relax our body: we had to imagine a golden bubble covering our feet, and moving up to our knees, slowly all the way up to our head, relaxing us. Up to this point, we had been breathing normally. It was basically a conventional and effective relaxation exercise. The problem in the description of what followed is that I wasn't all-conscious of the process, from this point onwards, when we started breathing 'holotropically'.

Although there wasn't any incense nor the facilitator was imposing any process strongly as Fericgla did on my previous experience, everything became blurry rapidly. Actually, I wasn't conscious of the music during every step of the process. Even if I had moments of lucidity where I heard it, during others it disappeared, and I got lost in the process along with my consciousness – or my unconsciousness. Now I only remember clearly the beginning and the end of the process. Because of it, the facilitator told me that he would hand me the whole musical session for me to analyse and re-listen to.

The three-hour-long process felt like fifteen minutes, and all that I remember are basically sensations. When I began breathing, and during the first part, I was really uncomfortable: breathing this way is heavy and one's body starts getting strange reactions. I was facing up the ceiling, and I was feeling cold. Because of it, after a few minutes, I asked our caretaker to cover me with a blanket, to see if the feeling went away. Also, I was starting to feel really dizzy and it totally felt like I was going to throw up if I kept going. A headache that I hadn't been aware of since then began intensifying and I thought it maybe wasn't the best day to be doing that, but I tried to keep it 'vertical', as the facilitator asked us to do before.

I kept on going for a while, I rolled on one side, and I lost a bit the perception of the *here* and *now*. I found myself in an empty space, while lots of thoughts were going through my mind but not a single one stayed, nor had more relevance than the previous. They were just coming and going in what seemed a simultaneous act, yet non-existent. I was in-between wakefulness and sleep, a curious state to describe, where everything became crystalline and anything had a significant weight.

This weird state came and went away three or four times. Every time I went back to 'consciousness', I realised I had stopped breathing holotropically and re-started it, but it wouldn't last long since I was 'away' again. At some point I heard this triumphant music, some strong major tonalities that encouraged us to breath. Although in this practice I wasn't supposed to follow the rhythm strictly, I varied the intensity and the strength of my inhalations and exhalations, depending on what I felt like, and as a sort of experimentation.

During the second or third time I was 'back in consciousness', I was aware of my surroundings, I had turned up again towards the ceiling and re-started the breathing, strongly. Some minutes later, I realised that my hands were completely rigid, in a pincer or claw kind of shape. I was feeling cramps all over my arms, more intense than the tingling that I felt at the beginning. I rapidly related it to what our facilitator described as 'tetany', and assumed it was a sign of me doing the practice well, since he said that it is a normal condition among 'beginners'.

Since my wrists began to hurt bad, I tried to close my hands. The sensation was similar to the one that one gets when one hits oneself on the elbow, on the 'funny bone'. When I was finally able to close my hand, I began closing it so tight that I was stabbing myself in the palm with my own nails, hurting my fingers, so I tried opening it again. I turned on my side and with the help of my arms and both hands I got to normality again. It was a painful process, that left a tingling on my arms which lasted for hours. I do not remember the precise moment in which I was in, nor the music that was playing. In any case, I know that we were still on the curve-of-intensity period, since the rhythm and the magnificence of what was playing were pushing me to keep on breathing. Actually, it started to become an automatic process after a bit of trial and error.

After this, I fell once or twice in a sleepy state, since I had decided to turn around again to face the ceiling, with my legs folded to avoid turning around. While I was coming back to reality, I realised that more relaxed and soft music than before was playing, so I began breathing normally, assuming that the process was about to be over. I felt the urge to go to the toilet, so I asked my caretaker to help me get there. When I got out, I removed my blindfold, went back to my mattress, and sat down for a while.

Then the facilitator approached me to ask how I was doing, how it went, and what I felt. He asked me how I was feeling with my body, my breathing and my chest, and finally asked me to lay down a bit more before finishing the session, and to re-enter the breathing process for a while, now slowly, softly.

He was by my side the whole time, semi-incorporated, and had one of his hands on my shoulder. The music that was playing was 'environmental', and there were whales and other natural sounds playing on the record. While I was reintroducing my breathwork, I still had to fall into a semi-conscious state one last time, although now I felt wrapped in

a comfortable warm sensation. I then realised that the un-comfort that I felt at the beginning had been disappearing progressively to lead me into the state in which I was now, strangely familiar, like that of a Sunday morning when one's still in bed, with lots of blankets on top, during a cold morning.

Bit by bit, I started losing the breathing rhythm and I started to feel breathless, to which the facilitator replied applying some pressure on my chest with a blanket. Then I started to land again, now definitively, thankful for these last minutes. Unbelievably, three hours had passed.

I saw that the other man was still laying down with his eyes covered, while I was commenting the experience with our facilitator. He asked me if I felt well enough to start drawing the mandala, and start the integration part, to which I responded affirmatively. I didn't know what I was expected to draw or how, but I got on it with the first things that crossed my mind. This was the result:



Figure 6. First mandala drawing.

While I was drawing this, our caretaker told me a bit about her own experience, and we talked about some less transcendental things. We told each other some stories, and kept silence for a while as well. After a few minutes, the other participant came in and started his own drawing, just when I was finishing mine.

Once I was done, I returned to the main room where the mattresses had been re-located to their original position. Our facilitator and caretaker were there waiting, and while the other attendant was finishing his drawing I ate some nuts that were there at our disposal, next to some fruits, at the entrance. I also checked my mobile phone in case I had missed any important calls, and went back into the main room.

After a while, the other participant got in and we started the last part of the workshop, the one consisting on sharing the experience. The facilitator introduced this part, that had already been started as *integration*, making reference to its importance and explaining to us that it is a phase that doesn't last the same for everyone, that it can last for hours, days, or even a couple of weeks. He also said that it is normal to be revisiting some moments of the experience, or to have some 'revelations' during this time. He encouraged us, the breathers, to share our experience using what we had drawn, the mandala, and so we did.

To my own surprise, our experience hadn't been so distant in some respects, especially on the feeling of it being something I cannot fully describe.

Finally, the facilitator gave us some final advice and recommended us to sleep a few more hours than usual on the following day, find activities that we found pleasant to spend our time on, take care of ourselves for a couple of days and, especially, not to take any hasty decisions. On this state of relaxation, sometimes the feeling of having seen something transcendental – he told us — makes some people act impulsively, so it is important to keep some distance from this kind of decisions for a week or two. He also pointed out that we might have had some exteriorisation of the process, such as a cold or a headache, but that it shouldn't last.

He gave us a sheet resuming all that he had explained, in case we had any doubts, and recommended us leaving our mandala in sight for a few days to help us reflect on what we had felt, so we could make sense out of the things we had put in it – that we maybe did not yet understand.

Like this, we finished the session and returned to our daily lives. It was about 3.30pm in the afternoon, but it felt like only a few hours had passed since we entered the room. I had lunch and returned home with a pleasant sensation on my body.

Even if the theoretical foundations of the discipline are precise, I think it can take various focuses depending on the person living it. For me, it has been a meditation-like experience and a pleasant body relaxation process, in which I felt more comfortable than I expected, but neither transcendental nor a door to my own biography have shown.

I will review the process once I have the music, to check if it really can be assimilated to what I felt, and the phases that I think I went through. Let's see if, when I hear it again, I remember any moment that I don't recall now, or if I can apply some of the categories I established at Can Benet, that are already feeling appropriate.

Without a doubt, the configuration becomes clear under my eyes as a rite traditionally configured in three phases, but can one talk of new rituality? For now, I'll give space to reflection.

Fieldwork Diary IV

HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK

14th June 2014, Holotròpica, Barcelona

(Translated from original in Catalan)

Yesterday it was an intense day. I received an email specifying that I had to arrive at the designated location where the practice was to take place at 8.45am, so we would have time for the personal interviews before starting the breathwork, and do both ‘rounds’ that are included in a whole breathwork practice – so we would finish around 9pm. As the previous time I was in, we were asked to wear comfortable clothes, a bottle of water and a bedsheet for the mattress. I also grabbed some lunch and clothes to change, my notebook, and – just in case — my recorder.

Like on the previous occasion, I was allowed in only as a participant, so I opted to access as a participant observer once more. This time I would be in both sides of the practice – breather and caretaker —, so I would have more space for observation. In fact, the heavier part of the experience reflected here is based on the ‘conscious’ part that took place during the evening, since it was my turn to breath during the morning. When breathworking, the effort and the perception of the music were conditioned by the situation that I was brought in, so it was somehow distorted. Even so, I believe that the possibility of a double point of entrance has showed me some aspects that can’t be observed from the outside alone. Therefore and up to this point, I have been in two breathing sessions and two observations in total.

On Saturday, I left home and walked towards Barcelona’s city centre. There weren’t any opened shops yet, and the city was yet sleeping, even if it was not that early. I got to the historical centre and, once I found the place in which the practice was to take place, I entered the building – an old apartment block in the heart of the city, well preserved, with a big inner patio. At the end of a corridor, I found the room, and I was received by a woman to whom I had spoken to on the phone the previous day – and who is also a participant in the Holotròpics group, so she had recognised my name in the application form.

Although I got there at the right time, many of the attendees were not yet there, and it took them a while to arrive. It looks like the activities are always delayed a bit after the programmed hour, as one of the other participants there – who is a frequent participant — told me. This same man, the first person to whom I spoke, a 38-year-old industrial engineer, ended up being my breathing partner later on.

On the previous day to the workshop, in the evening, there was a theoretical session on breathwork for those who were breathing for the first time, or for those who wanted to attend it anyway – with its correspondent 30€ fee. So I could save some of my budget, and since I had already received the theoretical part on the previous occasion, I was able to attend the practice day directly. Even so, I reviewed some of the notes that I had taken on Grof’s books to refresh my memory.

After arriving at the premises, I paid the 140€ that the workshop costed, and filled in the medical form – the same one that I had filled in last month, so I could have a brief

interview with one of the three facilitators that were there for the session. There were only two Italian girls and another man doing the same as me, who were about to get in and talk to the facilitators. Then, it was my turn.

I walked into the room where the things for the interview were laid, and in which the previous day the theoretical explanation took place. On the floor, there were some tools for the elaboration of the mandalas later on – papers, paint, brushes... We talked about the physical and medical conditions that were specified, and about my last experience, as well as my academic background. My interviewer also asked if I had ever experimented with psychotropic drugs, and recommended not guiding myself by what I had read nor by what I had experienced before. He also invited me to embrace the session without any kind of expectation or goals to reach, and so I tried to do.

After this, the woman organising the workshop – who was also participating as a facilitator – accompanied me to the room in which the activities were about to take place, and showed me a dressing room in which I could change, and where the bathroom was. They had prepared a small table with some nuts, biscuits and fruit, next to the main room, in case someone wanted to have a snack or land after the breathwork experience. The main room was big, with stone walls and barrel vaults, which I guess were preserved from the building's original structure. It however had very little sunlight coming in through some small windows. The wooden floor, brand new, gave it a comfortable, welcoming look that contrasted with the cold wall, but presented a nice addition to it. Across the room, there was a separation made by two stone arches that held the room's structure together and gave it a distinguished personality.

After I had had a look around, I changed my clothes and went back upstairs to wait for the rest of the participants to arrive. Since there were still a few people to arrive, I was told it was alright to go and have some coffee while waiting, so I went to the cafeteria next door to see if some caffeine would wake me up – the night before I hadn't slept much with the heat in the city and all the nerves.

When I was back, there were only a few people left to have the interviews, so most of us started moving downstairs to the main room, and waited for the exercises to begin, the dynamic part previous to the breathwork. We were eleven people in total, some from Barcelona and others from other places in Spain, as well as two Italian women, a Greek man, and a Finnish man. The demand for these workshops is higher in Barcelona and Switzerland, which are the principal centres where most of the Grof-qualified facilitators live. Because of it, many international interested individuals opt for travelling to these locations. For those who are interested, they also offer other activities and courses in other European locations, but these are mainly centred in Catalonia and some places in Switzerland – or so I understood.

Before getting started, I was able to talk to a man that was about to go into his fourteenth or fifteenth experience, and he explained how it had helped him and how hard it was at first, him being a rational and controlling person. He told me that the way in which the music was set in the workshops was fantastic, that it was very well put together and that it helped him very much with his personal process. We talked a bit about his life, and asked me about mine, until the rest of attendees arrived and we were able to jump into the preparation exercises.

Like in the previous workshop, we started by walking around the room, first normally,

then faster every time, looking at each other in the eye, then backwards, smacking each other's bottoms when walking past them... We jumped, clapped and included some other activities in this first block. After this, we moved to some 'confidence' exercises: we had to look for a partner that was about our same height and weight, and we did the 'falling backwards' exercise, in which we had to catch each other. We then went into a 'guiding-dog' exercise, changing partners, in which one had to be guided through the room with closed eyes, and then vice versa.

Once we had done this, we formed a circle and danced to some music, that I believe was chosen somewhat randomly, with the only aim of being dynamic and helping the activity develop. In turns, we had to dance imitating the other participants, mocking their moves, and then freely. We wrapped it up with introductions, in which every person had to make a gesture for the other participants to mock, while saying the person's name. When this part was over, and after releasing some fears and tensions, the holotropic session was introduced. It must have been about 11.15am by this point.

First, we were asked to form pairs with whom we felt a rapid connection. The man that I had spoken to before and I formed our breathing partnership. Then we agreed that I would be the first one to go and that he would be breathing during the afternoon, since he preferred it that way and I didn't care much about the order. Since we were an odd number of participants, one of the groups consisted of three people – so one person would care for two during the morning, and then two would care for one during the evening.

After this, we sat down in a circle and the facilitators proceeded to explain the way in which we had to breath, what could happen to us – tetany, for example —, how much it would last, and which would be the role of everyone in the room. They emphasised that the only rule to follow was *safety*: this would be the only reason why a facilitator would intervene a breathing process – that is, in case of physical, emotional or psychological discomfort, to a level that compromised the participant's safety, or if it was explicitly requested.

The breathing had to be done forming a cycle in which there wasn't any space left between inhalation and exhalation, in a faster and deeper way than usual. However, it was not mandatory following this rhythm all session long, which would last about three hours. They explained that during the first twenty to thirty minutes it was necessary making emphasis in this kind of breathing, so the body would go into the desired dynamics, but that then each participant would see how they preferred to approach it, depending on their own experience. Therefore, if someone felt some intense emotions, they would adapt to the nature of each one of these, and would be able to go back into the loop making incision on the breathing pattern at any time. They remarked the importance of one's 'inner wisdom' or 'inner healer', that would guide each individual through the process.

Once the explanation was over, we grabbed our necessary items to undergo the practice, while the facilitators prepared the room. When we went back in, the mattresses were laid and the lights had been dimmed, so all we had to do was getting ready and chose a mattress. The disposition of the room was as follows:

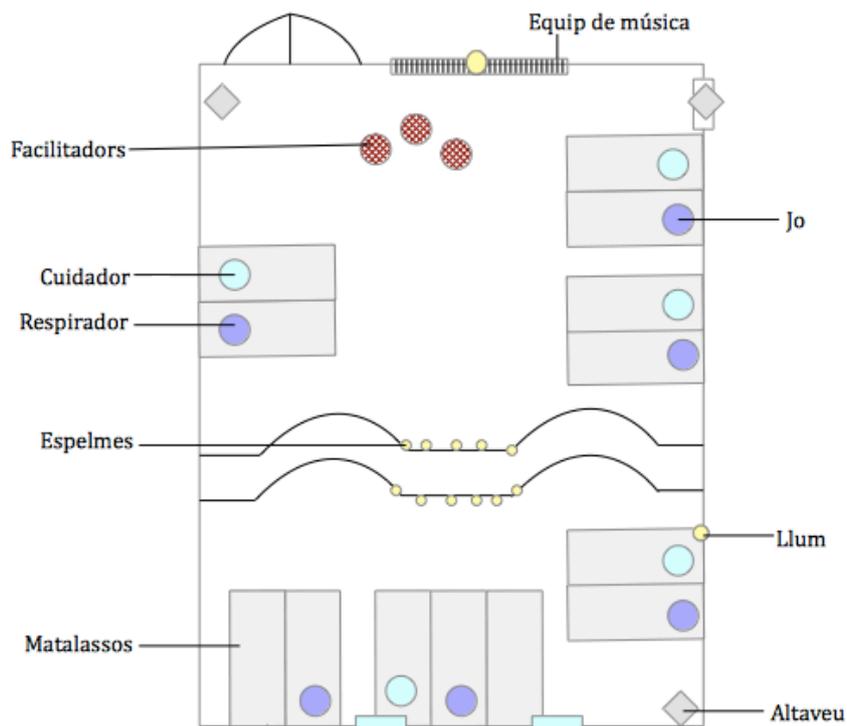


Figure 7. Room disposition. Left, from the top - Facilitators / Caretaker / Breather / Candles / Mattresses. Right, from the top – Sound System / Me / Light / Speaker.

Those who were going to be breathing first, laid down on the mattresses with our blindfolds on, after accommodating our bedsheets, and taking some blankets and pillows to make ourselves comfortable. Even so, before jumping into the experience, the facilitators approached each one of us individually to wish us a good journey and gave us a brief hug.

Once we were all lying down with our eyes covered, one of the facilitators introduced a brief relaxation exercise, that would give way to the breathwork itself, like in the previous cases I had observed. Basically, it consisted on progressively relaxing the different parts of our body, imagining a sphere of light going up our extremities, relaxing our legs, spine, belly, arms, face... We had to start opening up, little by little, until we reached our heart, to which we also had to give its own space, as we had to do with our mind. We then started breathing ‘holotropically’, slowly, so the facilitators could check if we were doing it correctly before starting the musical process.

A few minutes later, the music started playing, and so our experience began. Like in the case from last April, I can’t talk objectively and specifically about it due to the hypoxia state that I was in, besides having a blindfold on. Even so, I can say that this time, differently from the previous occasion, I was more conscious of the musical process, specifically during the first and final part of the experience.

I started up feeling quite uncomfortable – I don’t like ‘losing control of my consciousness’ — but I tried breathing as I had to, while the music input became more and more rhythmic. There were drums and rhythmic chants playing, that encouraged us to follow the process. I can’t exactly recall when I lost my ‘normal’ consciousness, but before reaching it my extremities went into tetany, and the stiffness started crawling up my face.

I felt curious about what would happen if I intensified this, and I observed that with the help of music it was easier accompanying my breathing with some physical movements – however contained. I still have a hard time understanding the violent reactions of some participants.

I decided to roll on my side, and I don't remember much until a while later, besides some clear images and a state similar to drowsiness, that could be described as the state in between wakefulness and sleep. I had a pretty neutral sensation, at first, in which I saw myself with books in my hands, surrounded by stone walls that resembled a Medieval building. When I tried to rationalise this or take consciousness of what was happening, it rapidly crumbled down and came back as a dream from which I had just woken up. I guess it can be explained in relation to the evocative music and the semi-conscious state that I was in, so I do not consider it as a vision, strictly speaking. Even so, there were times that some recurrent images crossed my mind very explicitly and vividly.

I went in and out of this process three to four times, until I reached a second tetanisation on my limbs, now softer than the one before. We were already around what I thought it would be the second hour of the process, according to what one of my interviewees had described, in which the music became more sentimental and emotional, loosening the rhythmic part. In this occasion, I remained conscious for a short period of time, and I can't recall much until I had to stand up to go to the bathroom. I had tried waiting a few minutes to see if the need to go faded away, but I finally had to make a quick move. My caretaker walked me there, and I tried not losing the thread of the process, but when I sat down on the toilet I had to wake up rapidly, since I had had a problem with my period and needed to change my underwear.

It was an abrupt interruption and, afterwards, it was difficult going back into the process again. However, I rapidly fell into a last tetany, now weak, going up my jaw during the last bit of the experience. We were reaching the end of the second hour, approximately, and the music that was playing transmitted grandiosity and feelings of embracing humanity, of love. After a few minutes, all of the sudden, I noticed that my eyes were full of tears – I had gotten emotional because one of the songs that I had recognised, which I associated with a feeling of expansion. The intoxication and the emotivity of the music were finally causing their effect in a palpable way.

After this, some tribal chants and other musics followed, which started softening the process progressively. I still had to lose track of 'normal consciousness' one more time before coming back 'to reality', at last. It was hard for me to get up, when I had already landed, because I was comfortable and enjoying the music. Towards the end, I could hear the screams of another participant that unsettled me a bit, since she sounded like she was having a tough time, and was crying out loud.

Once I decided to uncover my eyes, it wasn't long until one of the facilitators approached me to ask how I was doing. I explained that I was still feeling some cramps on my hands because of the reiterated tetany, and she asked me if I wanted to work on it. Since they had encouraged us to say yes, and to see what this would consist of, I agreed. She proposed making some pressure against my hands, so I could push back against hers, balancing our strength. Although it did not work much on relieving the cramps, it helped me get rid of accumulated tension. Then, she asked what I felt like doing, and recommended I ate something on the annexed room. She told me to come back afterwards to see if I was ready to go upstairs and draw my mandala. There was still some music to go, about fifteen

minutes I assumed, since it was already fading away and focused on relaxing repertoire, almost metric-less and with fluctuating sounds. The man with whom I was working with brought me some water, and looked after me really well. He accompanied me outside and explained how his own experience had been – basically, he didn't have much work to do with me, and began falling sleep towards the third hour with the relaxed music and all.

We then got back in, and I sat back on the mattress again. The same facilitator approached me once more and, after a while, I went upstairs to draw my mandala as she had proposed. There was only one other awake participant, and the music kept on playing. I changed my clothes, grabbed my bag and lunch, and calmly went upstairs to draw my mandala before leaving for some fresh air. I had some clear images in my head that I wanted to put down on paper. This was the result:



Figure 8. Second mandala drawing

As one of the other participants pointed out later, during the integration part, ‘some of us are musicians, we don't draw’, but we try to do something with what we have at hand. Now, comparing the mandala with my last one, I see that this experience had more shades, it was more detailed and specific and not as primitive or novice as the first. I guess that, even so, no mandala is like its predecessor, if we take in account that we won't probably find two identical experiences.

Once I was done with the drawing, I left for lunch and left it there as we had been asked to do – until the last part of the day we wouldn't be needing it, and it was alright to leave it there for the paint to dry. Although I was meeting for lunch, I did not get to clear up my mind before going back in again, around 4.15pm.

The facilitators suggested that we didn't eat much during lunch, since it wasn't all too good for breathing, especially for those to jump into the activity later. They suggested that we ‘remained a bit hungry’, and left the possibility of satiating ourselves at night, so the evening exercise would develop at its fullest. Therefore, having had a small lunch and some coffee, I went back into the room where the other participants were also starting to

arrive. There, the man I was about to take care of wanted to talk to me before the practice started, to explain some things regarding his concerns. Actually, before the breathwork session in the morning, we had had ten minutes to talk about our health, things that we would like our caretaker to know, etcetera, and now we had to close up the same process for the second breathing session.

We went downstairs and chose one of the mattresses at the back of the room, where we placed the bedsheets and he got comfortable. Differently from the morning, now we would jump straight into the breathing without introducing any prior exercises, so we would have time for the complete circuit that had to be closed with the integration and ‘sharing’ of the experience at the end.

My breather explained that he didn’t like to be intervened much during the sessions, so if he needed anything he would let me know raising his hand or with some other gesture. He also told me that he sometimes threw up, if the experience was intense, so I placed a plastic bag nearby, plus some tissues, his water and some extra pillows and blankets. The disposition was close to the one during the morning:

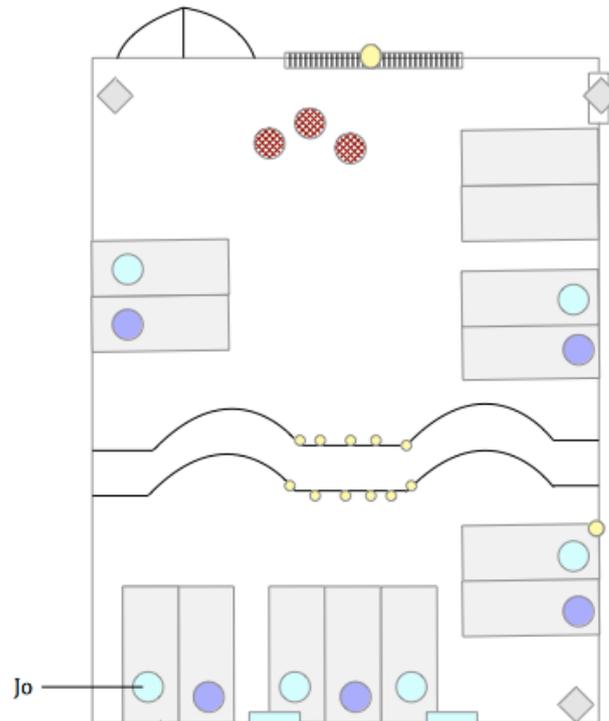


Figure 9. Evening room disposition / Me.

Like we had done before, all the participants breathing laid down and covered their eyes with their blindfolds. One of the facilitators began with the relaxation exercise, while another lightened up some candles in the centre of the room. The light, once again, was dimmed, and the ambience became pleasant and intimate.

They began with the same relaxation exercise that we had undertaken during the morning, in which they were guided through the different parts of the body that they had to relax, their mind, and opening their hearts, etcetera. Once this was complete, they were signalled to start the ho+lotropic breathwork. While they were doing this, the facilitators

run around the room checking that everyone was doing it right, and after a few minutes the music started playing. The curve that was described during the 3.15h that it lasted, can be divided into three parts according to intensity, bpm-volume, and time. I believe that it can be illustrated as follows:

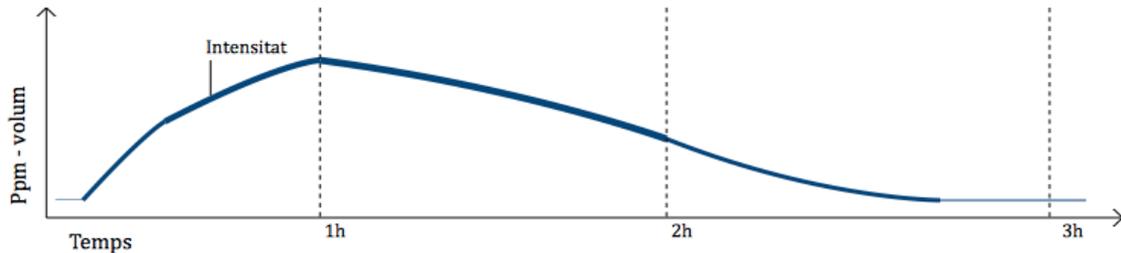


Figure 10. Development of Holotropic Breathwork. From left to right: Bpm-volume / Time / Intensity.

The reactions of the man who I was caretaking developed in agreement with the described curve, and the sensations that the music tried to transmit in each part. First, the music described an ascending curve both in bpm and overall intensity – that could be measured according to the parameters of tonality, character and dynamics. The reaction of the assistants unfolded in relation to this ascendant curve, focused on rhythm and percussion, rhythmic tribal chants and simple harmonies. I guess this was the case of the previous session as well.

At first, the music slowly escalated in intensity, but the breathers weren't still in a state of hypoxia or expansion of their consciousness, so their physical reaction unfolded progressively. Even so, many of them were starting to look agitated. My breather was moving his legs to the rhythm of the drums, and the girl next to him was making walking and circular motions with her legs. With the growing intensity of the volume and music, everyone started reacting more aggressively – besides one woman that had a more passive attitude. All of the sudden, the man I was taking care of started convulsing, curling up, stamping, moving all over the mattress... And one of the facilitators approached us to help me look after him, so he wouldn't bang his head against anything or something like that. The girl next to him was also starting to wrestle herself, and one of the other facilitators had to hold her so she wouldn't harm herself. She was extending her arms and turning around on the mattress.

When I checked on the clock, an hour had already passed, and some more emotional music was being introduced, with a higher volume still. Now most of the participants were calmer, and two of them had sat up to help with their breathing, without any abrupt gestures whatsoever. A man, at the end of the room, was having trouble with his shoulder, and one of the facilitators stayed with him to help him out. My breather asked me to walk him to the bathroom, and so I did, slowly so he didn't fall, placing his hands on my shoulders so he could follow me. When we were back, he stayed quiet and calm during a fairly long time.

The next half an hour was calmer, after the first outbreak, while major tonalities and rhythmic patterns were still playing. Many of the breathers stopped breathing 'holotropically' and they didn't catch up with it until some minutes later, when the music started descending towards minor tonalities and emotive characters. I supposed that, as it

had happened to me before, they probably lost track of their ‘normal consciousness’ and entered the sleepy or ‘apnoea’ state caused by hypoxia.

During the last transition there was a second high point in relation to the reactions of the participants, that started to look uneasy again, towards the start of the third hour. The man I was caretaking had already told me that he could be throwing up, so when he started moving around and coughing, I prepared the plastic bag. He started convulsing again, and one of the facilitators approached him. They talked for a minute and he agreed to be manipulated on the stomach – and he screamed and cried until it was over. Then, he remained calm, facing up, and asked for water a couple of times.

We had gone into our third hour and everything was calm. Some of the other participants had also been agitated and had emotional reactions in accordance to the music, but I wasn’t able to pay much attention to it. However, it was obvious that the musical curve had been followed with a lot of precision: two high points, one at the beginning and one entering the third hour, before the music started descending in intensity. There was still about one hour of music left, and the session became longer than the one of the morning. I think one of the facilitators added some extra relaxation music towards the end to give some extra space to those participants still in the process.

After a while, when the music was already metric-less and full of natural sounds of whales and birds, the man that I was caretaking asked me to help him get to the bathroom again. When we were back, he laid down and rested for a few minutes until a facilitator approached him to see how he was doing. Meanwhile, the others were checking on the rest of participants. Little by little, some of the assistants left the room, and once my partner was feeling alright we also moved to the annexed room so he could have a snack.

We went back in and he laid down for a while, with his eyes closed, before wrapping up the exercise and going upstairs to draw his mandala. He told me to stay downstairs, since he was feeling confident enough to move upstairs by himself, so I stayed and changed my clothes. We then had about half an hour of spare time until the last part of the session began. Also, there was a girl in the room that didn’t finish her process until about an hour later, so we patiently waited outside.

I made a quick call on the phone, and then talked to some of the participants that were also waiting there. We prepared our mandalas and waited in the annexed room. Two of the assistants explained that they are musicians, and how they felt in the workshop. We were then called back in again, around 8.45pm. We all had our mandalas at hand, and were ready for the ‘sharing’ of the experience.

The facilitators had re-arranged the mattresses in a circle, and in the centre they had placed some decorations to make it cosier. There was a bit of incense scent coming in, although it wasn’t too strong.

When we were all there, the facilitators encouraged us to share our experiences freely and briefly, within two to three minutes per person, with the help of what we had drawn on our mandalas. They had also placed some biscuits and nuts in the centre of the circle, and passed on a bowl with some chocolate and candy. The experiences had been different for each participant, and only one of them referred explicitly to the music that had been played. He commented that music always helps him undergo the process, and that it pushed him to keep going this time as well.

At 9.40pm we were done with the 'sharing', and we all thanked the facilitators and our breathing partners, to close the workshop properly. Before finishing, the facilitators asked that we didn't share the experiences of others explicitly, to be respectful with them, so I won't be going into any further detail regarding these. They also encouraged us not to share our experience with people that weren't going to listen. Finally, they gave us some documents with advice for the following days, and asked us to be careful until we 'landed'.

After this, we said our goodbyes and left. At 9.45pm I was leaving the workshop and the old building, and dived into the worldly ambience of La Rambla, full of people alien to the experience I had just gone through. Luckily, Jordi was waiting for me close by, so I didn't have to walk home by myself. I had dinner and went to bed, and slept long and deeply.

Today, I still have the reminder of the effort that I made on my arms, but I feel relaxed. I have been able to be in both sides of the practice for the first time in a single session, and I have contrasted the theoretical elements with what I had previously experienced only from the inside. The most useful part for me was actually the one in which I was caretaking, since it presented a clear and close experience of the reactions of the breathers to the music. It has been, in a few words, a good practical experience for my journey.

*Fieldwork Diary V***HOLORRHENIC BREATHWORK**14th - 16th October 2016, Can Benet Vives*Friday, 14th October*

First night at Can Benet. My boyfriend drove me all the way from Barcelona to the mountains of El Montnegre, where the retreat is located, to help me cope with the nerves. Only yesterday I went to talk to Josep Maria Fericgla about the possibility of attending some of his workshops without paying the full price, which is way more than what I can afford with my budget. He told me it was alright for me to come here and only pay for the accommodation and food, and invited me to come today, Friday the 14th. In exchange, I will be putting his Foundation on my thesis as a funder, since the total I will save from two workshops or so would be the same as about 400€.

Knowing how his workshops develop, I guess it is normal to be nervous. I can already smell the *palo santo* – rosewood — invading everything and getting into my clothes.

Anyway, I got up to Can Benet a bit late, around 8.30pm. The road up the mountain has been long, and because it was already completely dark it was kind of difficult to move forward with the car through the narrow dirt roads. The air up here is chillier than in Barcelona for sure, about 14°C. Jordi left me at the entrance of the complex and I got in, at about the same time some people were going out to welcome us. I recognised the man from maintenance that I had already met on my previous stays, along with another girl who is currently working here.

As soon as I got into the room where the introductory talk was taking place, I got shocked by the amount of people gathered – about 30 —, but the nerves I had been holding all day weren't going anywhere. Fericgla talked about the nature of the workshop, the need for knowing how to die to live better, and has gone through some pretty scatological ideas on how to assist those on their deathbeds, especially in hospital environments. He paralleled it with what was going to happen to us in the workshop 'once our ego vanishes' with the practice of Holorrhenic Breathwork, and he proposed the metaphor of a carriage on which is difficult to stay put. In a few words, he drew himself as the conductor of the carriage, and us being the cargo, doomed to jump off at some point when the confusion becomes unbearable – that is, the confusion in which we will be summed during the practice. Staying longer on the carriage only depends on experience and perseverance, apparently, but everyone is going to jump off at some point, he says. He elaborated on the importance of the state of confusion and the need of embracing it when experiencing it during the practice. Finally, he went into some of the symptoms that precede and announce death, since – he affirmed — we might experience them as well when we come close to the moment of transcendence in the practice – including a dry mouth, vomits, or spasms.

After the talk, I moved to the bedrooms, where the others had already left their belongings, and chose a bunkbed, after Myriam's indications – Fericgla's assistant. We had dinner in one of the dining rooms in the big central building and had some small talk. Most of the participants were there for the first time and were quite nervous and expectant. The meal was followed by a one-to-one interview with Fericgla, where we were asked about our biggest issues at the moment. According to this, he commended us to

elaborate three drawings as a way of assessment for him in relation to the upcoming practice. Before going upstairs, finally, I paid Myriam the agreed amount – 170€ for the accommodation and food, rather than the 350€ or so that the whole thing actually costs.

I met some of the participants, with different backgrounds and experience in the practice. We are, indeed, a diverse bunch. However, and because of the price of the practice and everything, everyone here belongs to a middle-to-upper class environment – economists, chefs, entrepreneurs, some school teachers.... To those who I introduced my research, they showed a lot of interest and have even asked me to continue our conversation during the following days.

There is also no phone signal up here whatsoever, so I won't be getting any contact from the outside until I am back home. Anyway, tomorrow at 8.30, breakfast will be served, and at nine the adventure begins. Wish me luck.

Saturday, 15th October

With all the activities and the excitement of these days I didn't start writing this until Monday the 17th, but I put down some fieldwork notes on the go, on the log-book that we were handed on the first day, so I could put them into more detail afterwards. The log-book itself is quite complete: it includes some advice for every stage of the workshop – before, during and after —, statistics, and book recommendations among other things; plus, a large space to write down our own thoughts and experiences. This has actually served my fieldwork purposes well, since it didn't look too 'out-of-place' if I stopped to write something down, and I guess it has made everything more comfortable for me and everyone else – not feeling observed or too observant is always appreciated.

I believe it is relevant to summarise the 'participant's profile statistics' included in it here – traced in relation to 2013-2014 —, which Ferigla's foundation collects from the initial inscription/medical forms:

- Total of 597 participants – all workshops.
- Gender:
 - o 51% women
 - o 49% men.
- Age – largest groups:
 - o 29% between 31-40 years old.
 - o 33% between 41-50 years old.
- Education – largest groups:
 - o 30% Three-year Certificates and equivalent (BAs, Professional Training...)
 - o 53% Five-year Certificates, MAs, PhDs
- Participation interest:
 - o 42% Personal and inner development

It is also important to make emphasis on one of the matters that the log-book includes, and that Ferigla also highlighted on Friday night: the practice's character of *rite of passage*. In a few words, the breathwork exercise has been ideated as a rite that makes the participant face a *before* and *after*, together with the consequent liminality stage that the breathwork practice itself represents. It tries to compensate, in a sense, for the 'lack of rites

of passage' towards which our society has evolved – although I am not very sure about this affirmation. It will be worth it to come back to the handbook when I go further into the analysis on upcoming months, especially in what regards these more or less theoretical issues.

The first morning developed pretty much exactly as it did on the workshop I was in two years ago, with the exercises that I transcribed here from my fieldwork notes. We had breakfast about half an hour before we started, and then moved to a big room annexed to the dining space that we were assigned for the weekend. It was about 70m², with a lot of thick, patterned rugs covering the floor and big windows on three of its four sides. The mountain views from there were amazing, and the light coming in gave it a glowing quality which I found to be quite charming. They had four big speakers hanging from each corner, and a big music station with all the facilities to store, mix and 'DJ' the sessions [see Figure 1, taken from Can Benet's Facebook website].¹



Figure 11. Workshop space.

We started our first day of activities at 9am, handing in all our watches and phones to 'get rid of time control' and just let it flow. We were asked to hand in our earrings and other jewellery or other objects that could potentially injure us while dancing or breathing – and, also, to 'get rid of those possessions we did not really need'. We got started by dancing for a while, to activate the body and leave all awkwardness behind. The musical choice responded basically to the aim of making us move and start interacting with one another, warming up our muscles: pop-rock songs to let ourselves go, and from *Ojalá que llueva café* to *Mambo #5*.

We proceeded to bring up a bunch of mattresses that were stored in a room downstairs, next to other guest rooms and the men's toilets. From here to almost the last exercises before lunch, everything developed in silence – or with small ambience sounds provided to block a pair working together from hearing those working near them. These activities were most certainly designed to create a feeling of community among the participants and to familiarise them with one another for the central activity, which was the breathworking. Although we had small breaks, Fericgla was strict with the timing – we were not to make

¹ Figure retrieved from Can Benet Vives 'Para El Desarrollo Armónico Del Ser Humano Y La Práctica de Una Espiritualidad Real', *Can Benet Vives Campus*, 2017 <<http://canbenetvives.org/>> [accessed 30 December 2017], by Rafael Flores <<https://www.facebook.com/CanBenetVives/photos/a.599395756775077.1073741833.447377908643530/599395886775064/?type=3&theater>> [Accessed on 10 July 2017].

anyone lose a minute of their time, which they could never have back. Because of it, if someone was late after a break, they had to stay outside until the next exercise.

The intensity of the activities escalated progressively, from calmed exercises with small interaction to fully active and interactive ones. Here I briefly outline them in the order they were introduced:

1. We start by choosing a partner and sitting on a mattress face to face. We had to look into the other person's eyes, without judging or making any gestures. Just embracing each other's gaze.
2. We change partners and go into the same exercise, adding small body contact if we feel like it.
3. Change and same position. We both close our eyes and one touches the other – on non-erotic body parts —, feeling their skin. The one being touched has to embrace the other one's hands, and then we switch roles.
4. We put the mattresses aside and find a couple with a similar body complexion to ours. Then, one of the two lets themselves fall into the other one's arms, first from the front, then from the back, and we switch roles – luckily, there was a girl that was somewhat and awkwardly similar to me in height, weight, and looks, with whom I got to work.
5. Then we start with the mattress exercises where we make cartwheels all along the room. Then in couples – rolling around on the mattresses together. Then in trios. Then we try making a cartwheel all together forming a big clump of people –and it obviously doesn't work, but it's fun.
6. This is followed by some exercises that escalate in intensity where we let ourselves fall on a mattress. First on our faces, then on our backs, then from the top of a chair, from the top of a table, from the top of a chair in top of a table... Adding more mattresses as needed so we don't hurt ourselves.
7. We get into the guide-dog exercises where, again in pairs, one puts on a blindfold and is guided by the other through the room. I start in the first group with the blindfold on, and we are guided in all directions within the workshop space, where obstacles keep on being put around for us – mattresses on the floor to make us trip, we get hit by cushions by the hand of Fericgla, then he lights up some firecrackers that fill the room with the smell of gunpowder, to make us react... It was a fun exercise to do, but a man bumped into me and gave me the biggest bruise ever on my leg – and another girl broke a toe!
8. On the second guide-dog exercise our roles changed. Now the guides had to lead the ones with their eyes covered outside, where they could feel the leaves, the trees, the water that was poured on their backs by Fericgla... And when we are done, we are instructed to wait at the entrance of the room once again and get our eyes covered as well.
9. One by one, we are guided back into the room and on separate mattresses where the 'island' exercise begins – and music finally shows up. It basically consists on a

relaxation exercise guided by Fericgla, where we have to imagine that our mattress is our island. We can build our island to our own taste, with our own sky and landscape. Then we have to start taking into account the other inhabitants of the island: our feet, our legs, our genitalia, our arms, our hands... Finally, if we want, we can start making contact with 'other islands' by extending our arms and reaching to our colleagues, forming archipelagos, which can then be transformed into a whole continent where we all come together.

Although the music starts only as ambience music, a bit *rāga*-like, it progressively transforms into an orchestral piece, of which one becomes aware when starting to make contact with other companions. It warms up in intensity, starting to include percussion and brass instruments, unfolding in a triumphant finale when the 'continent' is formed. Fericgla puts his hands on his big drum and accompanies the music live, louder each second. The process, in a few words, is designed to make a last communal approach for the participants, as it intensifies and reaches 'the top of the mountain'. If I have the chance, I should ask Fericgla about the specific song he uses – although he will probably refuse to let me know, cautious as he is with his music.

10. To this, silence follows again, and an 'intuition' exercise in pairs. We have to look to our partner, feel them, their presence, and then, when we have interiorised them, put on our blindfolds and disorientate ourselves in the room. Then, we had to find the other following our intuition. We did this twice. An important point to make this activity safe was that the mattresses were disposed circularly as barriers, so we didn't bump into any furniture or walls, as they would be on the Holorrhenic Breathwork part of the weekend.
11. Finally, we lied down on the mattresses again, with our blindfolds on, and with the music of a piano – *largo*, simple, with minor brushstrokes — we were given a brief speech by Fericgla on the importance of being prepared for the moment when our death arrives, and on its inexorability.
12. We were then given some time to write down any thoughts we liked on our log-books – which I used to reflect on all this process in my fieldwork notes. We also practiced the Holorrhenic Breathwork technique for a while, for those who didn't know how it worked, and were given an hour and a half for lunch and some rest before we got started again. Because we didn't have watches or anything else, they used a bell to let us know it was time to come back in, about fifteen minutes before we got started.

My nerves started to show their head again after a complete morning of exercising.

During the lunch break, which must have started around 2.30pm, I got to know some of the participants a bit better and really got along with some of them, which were about my age. However, most of the conversation was focused on the breathwork practice that was about to follow, since many of the participants – all but 3 or 4 — had never done or seen it and didn't know what to expect from it. I found out that some of them are musicians as well, and they were interested in my research, which was nice.

And after a while, there we were, back into the room to keep on with the exercises. Again, we started the session with some dancing and group interaction. The music, again, was

varied and focused on the purpose of easing our nerves and stiffness. It included varied genres, and the women were asked to focus on moving their shoulders, while the men should focus on their hips, as a highlight of the most problematic areas for each genre.

Soon enough, Fericgla asked us to form pairs for the breathwork experience, and everyone started to do so. I almost thought that I was going to be the last one standing when I saw one of the guys that I got along with, coming out of the crowd with his arms open to me. Great!

We were asked to decide who was going to go first, and my partner stepped forward. However, I did not know if Fericgla was going to do what he did last time, and make the one who stepped forward go second. Thankfully, he did not.

The ones that were going to breath were instructed to go to the bathroom and pick up their pillows from upstairs, together with their blindfolds and their bed-sheet covers. The ones that were going to accompany them, had to grab a bin bag – in case the breather needed to vomit —, some paper and water – to moisturise the breathers’ lips every now and then —, both our log-books, and anything to be comfortable during the long hours ahead of us – such as pillows or blankets. Fericgla gathered us, the caretakers, and gave us some brief indications on how to take proper care of the one going through the transcendental experience. Meanwhile, the ones about to breath started coming into the room and choosing one of the mattresses that Myriam and Fericgla had disposed on the floor for the experience, as shown in the following sketch:

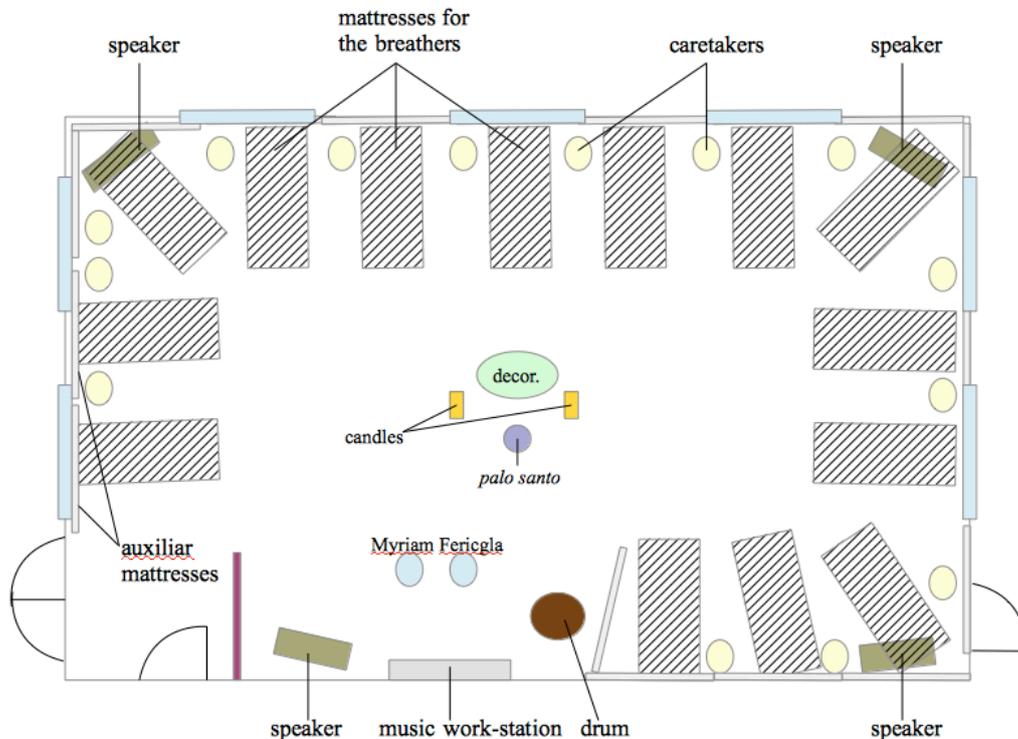


Figure 12. Room disposition.

They also placed some auxiliary mattresses all over the walls and other sharp places, so the breathers would not harm themselves if convulsing or moving around. The smell of rosewood already filled the room.

Once the breathers had their blindfolds on and everyone was properly disposed, Fericgla started with a relaxation exercise for the first, who were reminded to let go, embrace the confusion and keep trying. It was a basic relaxation exercise, only accompanied by the sound of what sounded like the *alāp* part of a *rāga*. Once everyone was ready and completely relaxed, he announced the beginning of the breathing part. The sound of a whistling train filled the room at great volume, and the rhythmic section was in.

Although this time I was in a different perspective from the first time I got to observe the practice, I was more or less able to keep track of the process as I had previously analysed it, with all its sections and its evolution. However, and maybe because my focus needed to be on my breathing partner, the first and second sections I have previously outlined in relation to the Breathwork practices seemed to merge a little. In other words, although there was a rhythmic-to-melodic development in the first and second sections, they played with the other quite intensively, so there wasn't such a clear distinction as there had been in previous workshops that I attended. However, it is important to keep in mind that because of the *in situ* character of the musical development, it is subject to variation according to the responses of the listeners.

In any case, a first all-rhythmic section was first introduced, which lasted for about forty-five minutes to an hour, in which the breathers got 'propelled' forward by the sound. Fericgla made a lot of emphasis with the drum at first and all along the first section, to keep on reminding the breathers of the rhythm that they should be following and to encourage them. Soon enough, the reactions began in the room – some of the breathers sat up, and soon all there was in the room was movement. For a while, I lost track of the music while watching my partner and the others in the room, although I tried my best to keep an eye – or an ear — on what was going on. The music was as loud as expected, the beats per minute reached 140 or so, and the character remained primary, 'tribal' if one wills.

This section merged so smoothly with the following that the change was almost imperceptible. As I would notice on the following day, because of Fericgla's insistence on the rhythmic process, one almost doesn't notice that rhythm has been merged into a more melodic or harmonic repertoire than before. I recognised that we were in the second section both by this, by the harmonic expansion, and by the consequent reactions of the breathers. Fully focused on the practice, the emotional reactions which belong to it started to emerge, and the body manipulations begun. No need to say that it was for sure impressive from the outside for those watching for the first time, as it was for me when I first encountered the practice.

The third section was probably the most easily recognisable of them all, since it really established a rupture with the previous hours, after the music had reached what in Holotropic Breathwork is called the 'breakthrough' – the most emotionally and musically explosive theme of the process, the peak of the mountain, the bottom of the iceberg, or whatever one wants to call it. On the other hand, it was emphasised by Fericgla in the sense that he stopped going back for the drums. This also helped me realise that the apnoea part of the exercise is in fact ideated to develop on this section, and not before or

intermingled with the breathing. Of course, this is a state that starts with full intensity but that also drops to normality fast enough. In any case, the section included the usual ‘religious’-like, *a cappella*, reverberant songs that accompany the recovery of the breather.

One by one, those lying on the mattresses started sitting back up, and their log-books were handed to them, so they could rapidly reflect on their states and immediate thoughts, with vanish really quickly after one is done – as it happens with a dream after waking up. My partner was almost the last one in getting back up, if not the last one. The music had already stopped, after a process of about 3 to 4 hours. Fericgla did the mandatory reverence in front of the *palosanto*, which had been lightened up again by Myriam during the last stage of the process, and which was now filling the room entirely. I need to ask him why he does it if he concedes me an interview sometime.

The breathers were instructed to go and get a shower – they got sweaty during the most intense part of the process, and during the body manipulations especially — while the caretakers were to put everything back in order in the room. However, our task was to accompany them as much as we could as well, so I walked my partner upstairs in case he felt like he needed help with anything before going back to the room.

The last section of the breathing experience included sharing one’s experience for those who felt like it, and a feedback element by Fericgla for those who wished to listen to his advice. This developed mostly from a psychoanalyst perspective that I did not expect, in the sense that he used the Hartman test that we had to do with our application and the drawings of the previous day to analyse what happened to the breathers. In any case, I am not going to get into detail on this matter since I don’t want to trespass on the participants’ privacy.

After this, which lasted about an hour, dinner was served. Most of us were famished, it had been dark outside for hours and we had no clue about what time it was. One truly loses the sense of it while focused on the practice. I cheated a bit when I got to the bedroom and I checked my tablet – which I brought in case I wanted to write down some fieldwork notes — and checked what time it was. It was half past midnight. Anyway, we did not talk much while having dinner, everyone was exhausted from the long day and those who had breathed did not feel like immediately sharing anything else. So, we left it at that, with the promise of being woken up fifteen minutes before breakfast was served on the next morning. That should have been 8.15am in the morning.

The next day it was my turn to breath, and even if I was nervous about it, I fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow.

Sunday, 16th October

Last day. It felt like we had been up there for a week, and most of the participants were sore from the previous day’s exercises. Thankfully, I had been keeping in good enough shape to be able to follow everything without getting too tired – some fitness as a complimentary strategy has been on point, after all.

We got up, showered, got ready, and went back downstairs for breakfast. The mountain air was chilly and refreshing, the Sun was showing between the clouds and I was ready to get started. I greeted my breathing partner, feeling like we were already closer, even if we

did not know anything about each other – the practice, I would say, works its purpose of making people feel close well.

Once in the big room, we started by shaking our nerves off with some dancing, once again. Differently from the previous dancing sessions, this one included some pair-dancing with some old fashioned Spanish *pasodobles* and waltzes. Once we all had danced with almost everyone else – it took a while — we were ready to go into the main part of our experience. It had really worked to loosen our nerves, at least before ‘the big moment of truth’.

However, before we jumped into it, we had one last exercise to go through – I remembered that it was also included in the workshop that I had attended previously. It consisted on sitting down on the mattresses in pairs, and telling each other everything that we had never told our mothers but we would have liked them to know, as if they were them. Meanwhile, the listener just had to sit there and embrace the words, not making any judgements or saying anything back. There was some crying, and some holding back as well. This, finally, lead us straight into the practice.

My turn. We were asked to go to the bathroom and to pick up our pillows and sheet-covers, while the caretakers were instructed like we had been on the previous day in relation to the ‘needs of the breathers’. To sum up my experience, I transcribe what I wrote down on my log-book just after I ‘came back’ from the experience – translated:

Transcription from notebook – 16th October 2016

It has been the most lucid experience I have had while breathworking. Even if the weekend’s mood has been feeling quite melancholic and sad with all the ‘complexes’ with the father and the mother, my case has fallen quite far from the topic. The central point for me, so to speak, has been friendship and the need for opening my heart.

By the way, now it is clearer why people scream and cry so much: the body manipulations. IT HURTS. However, it has helped me loosen a few screams I had been holding for a while.

Now, while I am writing this, the music is still playing. As it happened yesterday, the first and second sections have been quite intermingled and confusing, to the point that it has looked more like a bipartite structure.

It has started as it did yesterday, with the dancing, and the relaxation exercises once we were on the mattresses. I am still surprised by the need of moving around that I have felt. Maybe now that I am beginning to get used to this ‘world’ I can let go more easily.

The relaxation has been accompanied by an *ālap*, followed by the train whistle and rhythmic music, etc. Has it really been... 3 hours or so? Anyway, the central part has indeed included more harmonic action, and the ‘breakthrough’ has happened with Händel’s *Messiah*, I’d say. Special mention to the Star Wars BSO, of course → If this is not proof that the music is an input which determines one’s experience, I don’t know what can be, since for me it is listening to John Williams and automatically thinking about my friends, fun, cinema, costume parties...

The last part going on now is long and the music choice is quite depressing. Now it's playing 'no me dejes nunca más' [Franco Battiato's *La sombra de la luz*]. With all the environmental spaciousness of the accompaniment.

In short, I think it has been a useful experience, to observe the practice from the inside and the unexpected reactions that it provokes. The only problem, in fact, is that while one breathes it is almost impossible to be aware of the detail of the musical development. Luckily, I have this part mostly covered by my previous analysis. Now a melancholic cello is playing. While I wait for everyone to 'wake up', I'll go to the bathroom.

I guess now we'll have lunch (?) or we will do the sharing part. I don't know what time it is, but I guess around 2pm. Let's see if we can get our phones back already...

Happy. I am taking with me both an academic and a personal part from his workshop. Who would have thought so?

P.S. There has been a brief moment in which I have kind of seen silver geometric shapes on the black background, like a kaleidoscope. Interesting, but relevant? I don't know.

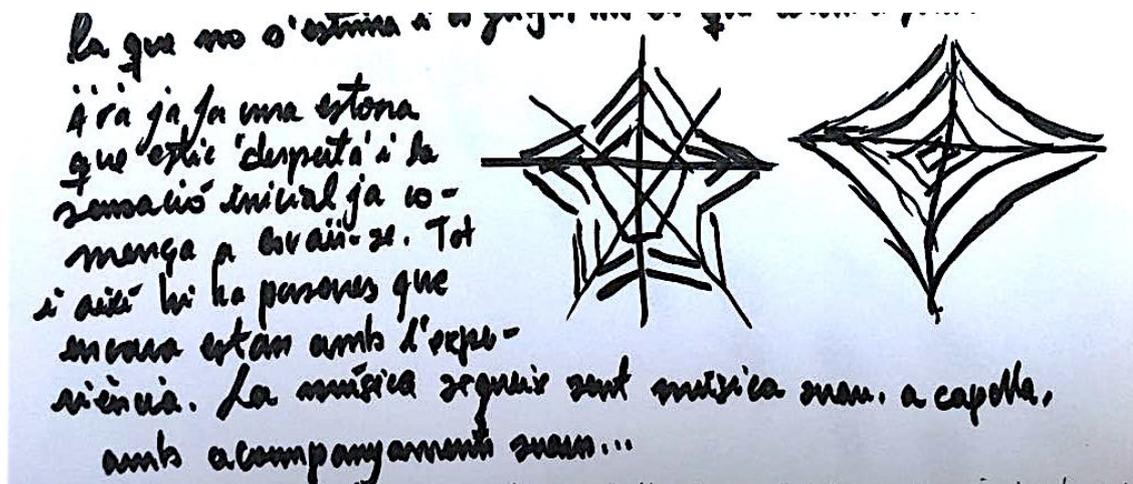


Figure 13. Extract from my logbook.

It's been a while since I have 'woken up' and the initial feeling is starting to fade away. Even so, there are some people still *in* the experience. The music keeps on being soft, *a cappella*, with light accompaniment...

Now, reflecting on these brief notes, I would say that music actually works its function in the practice. It is funny how I did not notice it so explicitly in Holotropic Breathwork, and I am wondering if now that I am more used to it I'll be able to follow the same process if I can get back in touch with Grof's school. Also, in what regards the 'gathering' capabilities of the ritual, I must applaud the strategies used by Ferićla: I do feel like I have known my breathing partner forever, but I barely know his last name. There *is* a feeling of having shared something special. I'm amazed.

After the music had stopped and everyone was 'awake', the breathers were sent to have a shower before lunch. We were going to have the sharing part afterwards. Now that us all had done the exercise, it felt like the communication channels were more

open than yesterday, when only half the group had breathed. However, those who were ‘coming back to real life’ were still feeling a bit numb, including myself.

Once lunch was over, the last sharing circle was set, and some final remarks were given by Fericgla. He announced a general ‘theme’ for the workshop, a thing that all participants had in common without even noticing – in this case, it was the fact that they all lived in their own ‘fantasies’, unaware of the real world. He referred to this as the ‘big miracle’ that happens in every workshop. The ‘small miracle’, on the other hand, was the fact that we had probably encountered a friend in our breathing partner. Because of it, he recommended we set a date with them just to get to know each other better.

He pointed out that we may be feeling anxious on the following days, and that it would be useful to take a day off, only for ourselves, if we had the chance. He as well recommended some books and movies to accompany our understanding of the process that we had been through, and talked about a piece that he himself wrote to cope with the incorporation of the breathwork experience after a workshop. Also, he mentioned a CD that I would love to put my hands on.

Finally, he passed on some forms: a questionnaire, a ‘suggestions’ sheet for the days to follow the workshop, and some information regarding the *Escola de vida i simultaneïtat* (School of Life and Simultaneity) that he promotes together with his workshops and courses in the Foundation of his own name. This last thing is an interesting compliment to the thinking that he wants to install, which he accompanied with the exposition of his ‘biggest dream’, his ‘utopia’, in which a 1% of the population will have attended at least one breathwork workshop in their lifetime.

When the session was over, most people went up to get their things and got ready to leave, although some of the participants were still staying for another night – for example, those from further locations in Spain. We took a picture together, and finally got our things back – phones, watches, time control at last.

We said our goodbyes and I got a few phone numbers for possible interviews. We even made a list with our emails to keep in touch, if possible, although the idea will probably fade away within a few days, when the ‘community’ feeling also does.

In any case, I have a lot to reflect on during the following days, but I believe it has been as much a useful experience as I could have wished. Hopefully, I’ll be able to attend some more workshops, and to ‘just observe’ at least one. Interviewing some of the participants shouldn’t be a problem either.

So far, so good!

Fieldwork Diary VI

HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK

12th November 2016, Holotròpics, Sabadell

It's been five days since I had my last breathworking experience, and I hadn't had time to sit down and put myself together to write everything that happened, in a day that lasted the usual but felt like a long week. Breathworking is, among the three cases I am considering, always the most self-involved, in the sense that it requires extra-physical effort when over-breathing and moving around. Now that it's been a few days, I believe that I have more perspective to reflect on the process, so here goes nothing.

I took the train from Barcelona to Sabadell at 9am, so I could get there before 10, when the theoretical part of the workshop was to be complete. This theoretical part is designed especially for first-timers and for those who are alien to the theory of Stanislav and Christina Grof's work. It is reflected on previous fieldwork entries, on my first experiences in the field, and it usually includes a description of the process, of how it was created, and the possible 'secondary effects' it may present – such as tetany, which for me is so common.

When I arrived in Sabadell the air was chilly, and so it was the air inside the building where we were to develop the workshop. Fortunately, they had the central heating ready and everything prepared with blankets, and some snacks. It took me a while to find the location, and I had to call one of the facilitators to help me get there. Her husband answered the phone and gave me directions, since she was delivering the pre-workshop talk. In no-time, I was there filling in the medical form they ask everyone to complete before the experience. Here I translate its initial statement:

The breathwork sessions are directed to be personal-growth experiences and should not be considered a substitute for psychotherapy. Holotropic Breathwork may imply intense experiences accompanied by strong physical and emotional liberations. This workshop is not appropriate for pregnant women or for people with cardiovascular issues, acute hypertension, some diagnosis of psychiatric pathologies, fractures or recent surgery, acute infectious disease, epilepsy, or active spiritual emergencies.

If you have any doubts whether you should participate in the session, it is essential that you consult your doctor or therapist, as well as the organisers of the workshop.

This is followed by a series of questions regarding one's health and medical issues, as well as an emergency contact. When everyone was done filling them in and the talk had concluded, one by one the participants were asked to have a brief 'interview' with one of the facilitators so they could properly assess if there were any problems at all that would invalidate a candidate for the breathworking experience.

While we were waiting, I got to talk to some of the participants. We were a total of 7 participants, 4 women and 3 men, which fitted well in Fericgla's categories for his workshops in what regards age groups and professions. The price, once again, was what I feel to be representative of the public they reach out to – 110€ per person. The most part had never participated in one of these workshops, although a couple of assistants had been in dozens of them, since the 1990s.

There were two facilitators for the day, from the *Holotròpics* ‘firm’, to whom I had spoken to previously. I had already worked with them both, although on different workshops.

I had a bit of trouble with one of them after I had submitted my MA dissertation on Guided Breathwork, because he did not agree with some of the methods I had used – apparently, I was not clear enough when informing him about them. In any case, we seem to have solved these. I brought them a consent form and a copy of my ethics form, which was approved by Cardiff University, for them to see that what I am doing is a thorough research. However, they refused to sign off the consent form, claiming they did not find it necessary, and gave their verbal consent so I can use the workshop experience from my own perspective – and without involving any other participants in any description without their consent. They also asked me to specifically quote them as GTT (Grof Transpersonal Training) approved professionals, since they have found practitioners who claim being breathwork facilitators without having undertaken the proper formation, to which I agreed. So, making use and embracing the British Forum for Ethnomusicology’s Ethics Statement <<https://bfe.org.uk/bfe-ethics-statement>>, I consider the asking-for-consent to have been properly managed.

Once we were done with the interviews and everyone had changed into comfortable clothes, the workshop was ready to begin. As it is a short one-day workshop, the introductory exercises are quite brief in comparison to Holorrhenic Breathwork. The space where it was to be developed, on the other hand, was small – about 20 or 25m². Here it is a brief scheme of the space once the mats were on the floor:

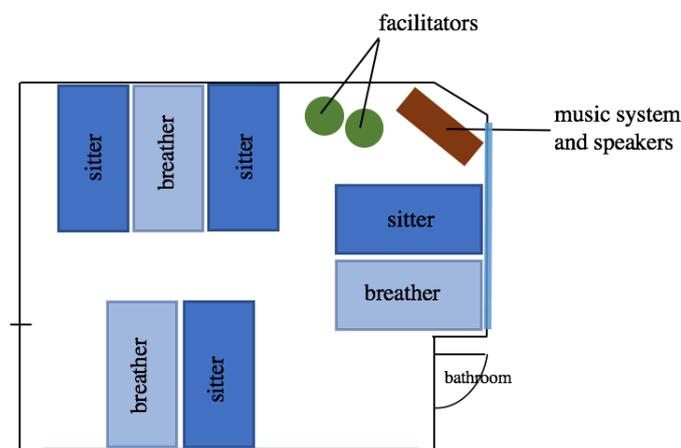


Figure 14. Room disposition.

We spent about half an hour developing these warming-up exercises, to start on the body movement and to begin creating a bond with those around us. First, in a circle, we started moving our feet, legs, hips, arms, and neck, as in a traditional pre-exercising warm-up. Then, we proceeded with some more exercises that were focused towards both body movement and group interaction, such as:

- Walking around the room. Then walking backwards.
- Walking around looking at the people around us in the eye.

- Walking around touching one another gently. Then the same but touching the others on ‘unexpected’ body parts (an ankle, the nose, a toe...).
- Walking around greeting those around us as if we were good friends that hadn’t met in a long time.
- Then, in pairs, a ‘guiding-dog’ exercise with music, inside the room. Then changing roles. Music only came into play at this point, to help us move and dance around, while the previous exercises had developed in silence.
- Dancing freely, then mimicking one of the participants when pointed by one of the facilitators. The music, once again, was designed to make us move around and loosen our nerves a bit, but did not correspond to a necessarily narrow description.
- Small round of presentation. Each one had to introduce themselves accompanying it with a gesture, which the others had to repeat along with the name.

As it can be noticed, the exercises escalated in intensity as they moved forward. However, due to the short amount of time at our disposal, they had to be cut to about half an hour or $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour – rather than all morning, as in Can Benet.

When we were done with the exercises, we were asked to find a partner. We just had to look around the room and agree with another participant with our gaze, to work together. One of the groups consisted of 3 members, since we were an odd number of people – this way, two would breath in the morning while one took care of them, and vice versa in the second session.

To this, it quickly followed the setting of the room: while we were to talk with our partners about possible signs we’d make if we needed anything, or any other relevant problems, the facilitators set exercising mattresses on the floor – two or three stuck together for the breathers to be comfortable — some blankets, pillows, etcetera. We each had some water, paper, and a bag, prepared for the breathers. The ones to go on the ‘first round’ were signalled to lie down with a blindfold and get ready – which I forgot to bring from home.

Before starting, the participants were instructed to breath deeper and faster than usual, not leaving spaces between exhalation and inhalation, but they were not necessarily supposed to follow the music’s rhythm or anything – in Holotropic Breathwork everyone has to find the best way to go into the experience relying on one’s inner healer. That is, as long as there is no space in between taking and exhaling air, the rhythm can be set by the own breather and adapted to each moment of the individual experience. This, as I found out, influences the overall exercise remarkably, since it is really easy to stop breathing ‘holotropically’ and losing consciousness of the environment – going into an ‘unconscious’ state, which is not ‘sleeping’. In Holorrhenic Breathwork, the constant reminder of the rhythm and the emphasis of the facilitators create a totally different process and experience.

My partner and I decided that she would be the first one to go, so once back in the main room she lied down and got ready for the activity. The session got started with a relaxation exercise, in silence, in which the sitters were also invited to participate. It was a quick,

basic relaxation exercise focused on separate parts of the body from the toes to the head, conducted with a calming, soothing voice. Then, the sitters were asked to sit back up, and the music shortly begun. I hadn't noticed before, but there was a clock in the room right in front of me which came in quite handy to have an idea of the musical timing and the overall development. It was a few minutes past noon.

As expected, the music started encouraging the breathing process, with a predominantly rhythmical character that appealed to movement, to a keep-on-going mood. I didn't recognize any of the pieces that sounded, or almost any of them – one of the facilitators later told us that the session had been put together by a Canadian girl who had just obtained her GTT qualification, so maybe she was using local repertoire or small bands alien to me. In any case, the first part of the breathwork process usually includes electronic pieces and ethnographic recordings that are not part of my common musical choice, or that are not that easy to find if not looking for them expressly. The section included the usual categories contained in this part, in what regards tempo (around 120bpm), instruments (drums, electronic), character (rhythmic, non-melodic), and the usual loud volume – which, in this case, was limited by the location in the middle of the city.

I was expecting to come across what is usually the middle section around an hour into the process, but it was not getting there. An hour and 20 minutes later, the shift did finally occur – I was starting to get confused by the sudden structural change! This middle part, which includes the 'breakthrough', lasted for about 30 minutes, and shifted towards the expected repertoire: slowing of bpm, inclusion of orchestral and brass instruments and pieces, V-I cadences, a 'grandiloquent' character, and so forth. At the 'edge' of the section, between the final part, a kind of movie soundtrack piece played, which was giving the indication for the big release, the big break before the descent. However, the second part being so short got me into thinking that what I had previously established as the 'typical' Guided Breathwork session's structure is only a guideline onto which each facilitator can find a different approach. This idea, on the other hand, was reinforced after my turn of breathing, since the session fitted almost perfectly into my 'pre-established pattern'.

Anyway, back to the first session, everything was quiet. Two hours had passed by, and now we were getting into the third part of the breathing session – the music started to become more relaxed, Gregorian chants and reverberated voices started to play, melancholic music and tempi *largi*, that progressively slowed down while everyone started to 'recover'... This last part lasted for about 40-45 minutes, so the total duration of the session had been 2h and 45 minutes approximately. Everyone was still blindfolded when the music stopped, and they bit by bit started 'waking up'. During the whole process, I had to walk my breathing companion to the bathroom a couple of times, but the overall thing was quiet – so much I had to ask for a jumper to put on since I was getting cold. No extreme reactions, no screaming, the session run smoothly without any aggressive reactions. After the workshop, I got to perform a brief interview to one of the participants, and she agreed on my own perspective on the 'loosing of consciousness', that occurs in the middle section of the exercise, when you 'forget' to breath, even before I told her I experienced something similar. She was a first-time breather, and got a bit disappointed by 'not having noticed what was happening around her' for a long while, which doesn't seem to happen with Fericgla that often.

When my partner 'got up', the facilitators asked her about how it went, what had she felt. They do this with every participant when they go back from the exercise and take their blindfolds off – as a first integrative part, I guess, to help them verbalise their immediate

sensations. I waited until she was ready to go on her feet and out for lunch, and I did the same thing. Many of the attendees went out for lunch, but I had brought some food from home – which I devoured in a few minutes —, so I stayed in. It was, after all, 3pm, and I hadn't had any food since 9am in the morning.

After all the participants were gone, I went to grab a coffee with one of the women there – the one that I later interviewed. The fresh air was revitalising after having spent almost all morning in such a small room.

We were back shortly after, ready to start the evening session at 4.15. I had eaten fast and a bit too much, so I didn't feel like breathing so intensely. But it was my turn.

Before jumping into the breathwork, we did a brief warm-up to get back into movement – only consisting in a brief body-parts movement – and had a 'collective hug' moment to desire everyone 'good work' and luck. With no time to lose, we got on the floor, covered ourselves with some blankets, and got comfy. My breathing partner let me borrow her blindfold and an extra-blanket that she had brought from home. It felt nice being covered, cold as it was outside.

Everything ready to go. First of all, the facilitators, one after the other, approached me and the rest of the breathers of this second round to wish us luck and to remind us that they were there for anything we needed. I told them I was a bit nervous, to which they responded that it was 'because I cared about the practice' – which is nice. He also reminded me that it was a somehow different process from the one I had been in with Ferićgla, and not to worry. To this, it followed the relaxation talk that lead us into the breathwork itself, and we were invited to embrace the process with 'what the Zen Buddhists call "the mind of the beginner"'. Shortly after, the music begun.

I started breathing holotropically, trying to focus on the music, but not as fast as I did in the Holorrhenic case, since the approach is different in this case and I wanted to test the differences – besides, breathing so fast is absolutely exhausting. It always takes me a few minutes to get into the breathing cycle: at the beginning, I have to focus hard on not leaving spaces between inhalation and exhalation, to which the music helps a lot, and only after a while it becomes an automatic motion. The repertoire, as in the morning session, consisted of electronic pieces and ethnographic-like recordings with group and children chanting, drums and low frequencies that appealed to 'moving forward'.

Soon enough, when the over-breathing started to kick in, I began to feel discomfort. It was just like there was someone sitting next to me that had this 'black aura', and my mind got split between what I was feeling and what I knew was actually there, which was nothing at all – sort of like when one is dreaming but aware of it. In any case, I felt like moving my arms to feel the space and rotated on one side, then the other, to try and find a more comfortable spot. It wasn't working, so I just decided to ignore it – or 'confront it', if one wishes – and keep on with the breathwork. It wasn't long before tetany started to show its head, and my arms and legs started to feel numb, so I slowed down the breathing.

I had lost track of time, but the music was still rhythmic and displaying the same repertoire, so I figured we were still in the first hour – if going 'according to schedule'. After a bit, I 'lost consciousness'. This is where Ferićgla and his drum really come in handy, to be honest, since it makes you stay in the loop. I guess here I stopped breathing

and got into the apnoea or ‘light breathing’ state. I was in and out of this ‘place’ for a while, started to recognize pieces from the second part of the process during my moments of awareness, then back into the unconsciousness, etcetera. Suddenly, I had to go to the bathroom, and the music in the background was orchestral, a bit movie-like, not sure of which specific piece. I was already noticing that the process was quite different from the previous session, in that the second part was stretched for way longer than before. It was probably an equitable 3-part process in length. However, I was feeling dizzy because of all the oxygen in my system, and I couldn’t focus much, so I don’t know to which point I am being reliable here.

When I was back on the mat, after a while, I was feeling comfortable and nice, so I kept on with the breathing until I dropped down into the apnoea again. When I ‘came back’, I was not sure about how long it had been. It felt like hours had passed, and I lifted my blindfold a bit.

One of the facilitators then approached me and asked me how I was feeling. There was still one hour of music to go, so my ‘black out’ should’ve been only a few minutes long, even if it felt like forever. He asked me if I felt like starting the breathing again with him next to me. And back to tetany, now on my face – the only possible thought on my mind: ‘not this again’. My jaw was so tight I was starting to get a headache, so he helped me release it by moving it up and down – it was probably not beautiful to look at, since I felt like chocking with my own saliva. I wonder how I looked from the outside. The music and what was going on in my body did not match, at this point, since I had interrupted the breathing process, or my body did for some reason, but I kept on working while soothing music was playing in the background, now with a significantly lower volume.

After a while, he encouraged me to move my extremities, to tense my arms so I could release the stiffness. I don’t understand why this happens to me in Holotropic, but did not in Holorrhenic. This last ‘section’ was more of a body-feeling part than the others, as if my whole nervous system had contracted. My abdominal muscles were working hard on the breathing, and the stretching felt like I had been crunching forever. Not the most pleasant experience, I must say. When I felt a bit more relaxed, I slowly got back from the breathing and slowly into the ‘real world’. The exercises that the facilitator had been proposing were probably good for my back tensions, after all, but it is always funny and weird. However, this last part had been so physically intense that the music had felt into a secondary sphere. Nonetheless, I can still recall hearing it dropping in intensity bit by bit, taking in the usual repertoire of *a capella* voices and reverberated sounds. Then silence.

The same facilitator remained sat next to me and asked me how I was feeling, what had I experienced, and we chatted for a brief while. I tried my best to create some kind of an emphasizing bond with him, so he could do the same with me. Maybe the stressful experience was related to the stress that *he* has put into my research, by making me feel like I am not thorough. Am I not doing my best to conduct every step professionally? I believe I am.

When I felt like getting up, I was sent to an annex room, where the blank mandalas were waiting for us to paint. I tried to reflect my experience in a three-part image, that could help me remember how it had been and what I had felt, and which corresponded to this weird long-as-ever breathing exercise. If anything, I’ll have a (not-so-) beautiful art collection after my PhD is done.



Figure 15. Third mandala drawing.

I tried to reflect on the three-part experience I had had, so I could remember how it felt more easily. The painting of the mandala is what they call the ‘first part of the integrative process’, in the tripartite form of the workshops: (I) preparation, (II) breathworking, and (III) integrating the experience. It is then used both to ‘share’ the experience with other participants and for oneself to keep, since it is supposed to show further details of the activity as time goes by, when one looks further into it. This part differs from that of Holorrhenic Breathwork in that the integration in the last is only verbal, or maybe written, but not put down in a drawing.

Following the process, when everyone was done painting their mandalas we went back into the main room, where the mats had been rearranged in a circle. There were some candles in the centre, along with some candy. We sat on the floor and were invited to share how it went for us, although it was emphasised it was not compulsory. It was also highlighted by both facilitators that no one was to discuss someone else’s experience outside of the circle, because of the privacy of the experience. Finally, we were given some ‘indications’ for the following days: to take care of ourselves, resting, trying to write down our experience or express it artistically... As usual, we were also reminded to be careful with whom we shared our experience with, and when, since people could not take it seriously and trivialise it for us. And, most importantly, they made emphasis on the importance of not to ever breathing by ourselves at home because of the risks it can present.

When we were done and with this final part – which is actually extended some time as an ‘integrative process’ for everyone — and started to get ready for our trip back home, it was past 9pm.

Before leaving, I asked the facilitators about the papers I had handed them at the beginning of the day, and they remarked that ‘they didn’t understand what I was saying there’ and ‘what they were signing’, since it looked like it was them that were participating in my project. Although I thought it was clear, as had been reviewed by me and my second supervisor, I explained it again to them. And as I have previously exposed, they refused to sign them off, alluding to our verbal agreement, so we left it at that. They asked me to

specifically quote them and told me they'd be interested in the project, since they valued a research that not only looked *at* the practice but also *into* it from an experiential point of view. I just hope this doesn't bring me any trouble in the future.

Shortly after, I was headed back to the train station with two other participants that were also going to Barcelona. It felt like it had been a weekend-long day. On the train, one of the women agreed to be interviewed there, now that everything was fresh, and the other facilitated me her contact details so we can keep in touch for another occasion. Hearing her experience also helped me to reflect on my own, and made me realise the importance of having chosen both an observational and participative method on this.

Now that it has been a few days, I feel like I have breathworked more than enough for this year, so maybe from January onwards I'll try a couple more workshops. However, I guess it is good that I feel ready for the analysis. First, I'll let it rest and set for a while.

*Fieldwork Diary VII***HOLORRHENIC BREATHWORK**10th – 12th March 2017, Can Benet Vives

Last weekend I was in yet another breathwork workshop in El Montnegre, to address Holorrhenic Breathwork one last time. It worked as a way to close the fieldwork of this specific case study, since I have been able to attend as an observer rather than as a participant. It was not easy, because they don't usually let anyone in if it's not participating, but they did an exception for research purposes, as they have done in the past. This, in any case, was not as restrictive as it may seem, because I ended up being involved in a great part of the activities from the inside too. Here I will transcribe and expand on the fieldwork diary that I elaborated while up there [translated].

We reached an agreement as we did last time, and I only had to pay for my accommodation there – this time it was only 90€, since I was not breathworking. It is always a bit challenging being there as an observer – Fericgla having the strong personality he has. However, it was productive and everyone there was understanding about my position. They asked questions and made contributions from their perspectives, that are always welcome – I could not have asked for a better environment to be in while 'observing' the breathing session. Also, I met with one of my colleagues from ESMUC, who has participated in a few of these workshops over the years, which was great for a musicological-complementary perspective. I am looking forward to meeting him in a few days to know his point of view. So here it is how the experience went.

Friday, 10th March

On Friday, I prepared for the long weekend in Can Benet. I packed enough clothes, so I would be able to change as many times as I needed, knowing that they would be a couple of tiring, sweaty days, and went up to Montjuïc with Jordi to get our car. Can Benet is two hours away from Barcelona, and he offered to take me there and pick me up, in case I was tired, and to be safe on the road. Otherwise, I would have had to take the underground, then the train, then a taxi up to the old farm house – which I did in the past, but it was exhausting. We were asked to bring another participant with us, who was going from Barcelona and did not have the means to get up there. She has been one of the closest people to me there, to talk to and to be with, and I am looking forward to meeting her in Barcelona soon.

Once up there, we prepared our beds in the assigned bunkbed rooms, and went downstairs to wait for the initial speech. The rosewood and myrrh smell already invaded the main room, but it didn't bother me as much as on the first occasion I was there. Actually, it has kind of become a familiar smell that welcomes me every time I go back there, and I find it somehow comforting.

I did not take much notes on that first evening:

Transcription from fieldwork diary – 10th March 2017

We arrived at Can Benet at 6:45pm, almost the first ones. Payments, etcetera, and we get to know some of the participants as they start arriving. Soon after, we go to an annex room to the main hall for the initial speech → presentations, introduction to the subject of death... (see notebook).

Post. dinner, I talk to Fericgla about my participation and he says we'll talk about it tomorrow. I don't have to do the interview for the Hartman test or anything, since I won't be breathing.

Arrangement to meet tomorrow at 9 for breakfast, and at 9:30 we'll get started. During the talk, he also discussed that deciding to participate and signing in for the workshop is a first step in itself, a first "stage" for the course.

+ Rejection towards 'spiritual tourists', that go to a different workshop every weekend, filtered through the name of the workshop. *[Post. note: "Awakening at Life Through Death" is a strong statement that already filters some of the participants, that's why he says that the first step is going through the shock of the name of the course itself, + deciding to participate].*

He guided us through the same basics than last time, on the previous workshop in November, when he addressed the same matters and topics as an introduction. This was his #210 workshop. He made emphasis on the *use* of confusion and the importance of not running away from it, plus a couple more suggestions for the breathers – which were basically focused on 'constantly trying' and 'letting go'.

Some of the participants did not arrive until the following day in the morning. There were both experienced and first-timers already there to make their contributions to the group. As usual, the average age was around 40, me being the youngest once again, only followed by a couple of participants in their 30s. Most of their occupations were in the middle- to upper-class range too, as they usually are – self-employed, most of them. There was a total of 18 participants, 11 men and 7 women – besides a woman from Can Benet who also joined us on the last breathing session, the masseuse for the weekend, and myself.

After dinner, we spent some time chatting, while the assistants were completing their interviews and assigned drawings for the Hartman test. Around midnight, I went upstairs and prepared to go to bed, knowing the following day would be intense. I set my alarm to 8am so I would have plenty of time for a shower before the common bathroom got crowded. I knew that our phones were going to be taken away during the next morning, so I sent out a few messages to my family to let them know I was alright, once I managed to get some signal – which up there is an accomplishment on itself. We were the only group in for the weekend, which is uncommon, but it also gave us plenty of space.

Despite the nerves which always haunt me when on the field, I had a great sleep that night.

Saturday, 11th March

The first morning passed by as in previous occasions, with the same exercises I have discussed before and a casual use of music. Nonetheless, it is always useful to get to know the other participants, to create the bond that is later reinforced during the breathwork sessions. All the sessions took place in the same big room that we were in the last time, with all the rugs and the big windows, with the Sun coming in and welcoming us with its Spring tonalities. I'd never get bored of that space and its views.

Transcription from fieldwork diary – 11th March 2017, 9.30am to 2pm

Alarm at 8. Shower and coffee while we wait for breakfast, in the Sun. We start the workshop, as always, dancing – *Lollipop* by Mika, *La lluvia nunca vuelve hacia arriba* by Pedro Guerra, etc. to start moving around and letting ourselves go, after leaving behind our 'time' (phones) and 'material possessions' (jewellery, etc). → Yesterday Fericgla pointed out how the workshop is a compression of time within time.

Beginning of the session, exercises in pairs (I step aside together with the masseuse, so they can go ahead).

1. Looking at each other in the eye;
2. Looking at each other in the eye and touching the other lightly;
3. Touching your partner and letting the other touch you, in turns (arms, face);
4. Talking without stopping, in turns;
 - Music/background sounds (nature) so they can't hear other pairs and to fill in possible awkward silences (?). + 3' pause
5. Forming groups while running around the room (the masseuse and myself get in) + fast-paced music to keep us moving fast. Whoever doesn't find a group has to step out until the next round.
6. Trust exercises. In pairs, pushing each other back, then letting us fall backwards, etc., so our partner can catch us.
7. Mattress exercises. Rolling on them, letting ourselves fall on them from escalating height. No music. + 3' pause
8. Guide-dog exercises. This time I get to do the second part outside.
9. Island exercise on mattresses. Music designed to follow de discourse (?) Fauxbourdon when he speaks (strings, orchestral) and incorporation of other sounds when he refers to different parts of the body, for instance (drums—feet, genitals—melismatic chants...) and progressive crescendo → Melodic line in minor tonality, repetitive, superposition of "layers" of instruments, especially when creating the "archipelagos" and the "continent" ← Accompanied by drum, live.
10. Intuition exercise, x2.
11. Final relaxation/reflection with mattresses on the floor, on topic of death → Piano accompaniment, loose chords, base for speech (similar to exercise 9).

Lunch around 14.30. We have 1h 30' of pause (but first, a shower please!).
+ Yesterday he commented that on workshop #200 there was live music for the breathing sessions (part of the celebrations).

The morning was tiring at a physical level, but it helped everyone to let go of their nerves, especially those who hadn't been in any workshops before. Although I was not expecting to get in for the preliminary exercises, it was fun and it helped me to go through the morning with ease, knowing that it would be a while until we got into the breathing practice *per se*.

After lunch, we sat around for a while and chatted; some people took a short nap. We were going to be called by the bell fifteen minutes before the session started, as always, since we had no means to measure time from that point on. On the evening session, I was able to have my notebook with me for the whole session, although I was there to help with the session if needed too. I got to describe some of the pieces by their characteristics, since Fericgla never lets me know the exact songs he is playing, and I have the worst memory for specific pieces. Also, he likes to mix up songs, to go back and forth between them, and so on. Besides, it is not that important that I know *exactly* what is sounding but *how* it is sounding and the specific characteristics – let's remember that the specific songs change from session to session and depending on the facilitator's mood, but they work on the same pattern each time. In the end, it is a *model*, and not an immutable reproduction. In any case, I'll point out some of the fragments or pieces that I recognised to give a better idea of the repertoire.

Transcription from fieldwork diary – 11th March 2017, 4.30 to 12am

Preliminary exercises with music – we dance for about an hour. From “Mambo #5” to techno, etc. We dance in pairs (*pasodoble, waltz...*) to relax our bodies → But first, turns to see how everyone is feeling. He comments on the “theme” of the workshop = Rigidity.

Partners are chosen for the first breathwork session (random, with closed eyes). They practice the breathwork method and are sent out for the breathing-practice exercise for 15', while we stay and prepare the mattresses to begin.

Once they get back, breathers are sent out to pick up their bedsheets, blindfolds, and log book, go to the bathroom, etc. Caretakers go to the bathroom and get back to receive instructions for the caring – plastic bags for throwing up, paper, water for the lips, and rest of usual instructions.

SESSION I [as transcribed from notebook + *later comments in cursive*]

Initial explanation and indications. Fericgla refers to the role of the drum = to reinforce musical input.

1. “Amazing Grace” a cappella (+ choir incorporated soon after, soft) – *Cover by Judy Collins, it includes the thunderstorm sounds that I thought were superposed on Session II, towards the end.*
2. Merges to fauxbourdon + sitar/piano – Beginning of indications to start breathing, 3-4 profound inhalations from the stomach, chest, back... General

- relaxation guided by the facilitator – ‘relájate’ (in English: ‘relax’). Silence at the end of the recording (15’).
3. Beginning of Holorrhenic Breathwork with train whistle and wheels starting to roll on tracks, full volume.
 4. Merges to ... + brass instruments. Strong lows and masculine chants. Adds live drum – *My colleague helped me identify this as Vangelis’ ‘Mythodea’, 1st movement.*
 5. Reinforcing rhythms jump in → It transforms into ‘techno’ music with digeridoo. The facilitator encourages the breathers to keep going, the assistant checks that everyone is breathing properly. + drum. Bpm 120-140 approx. → drum subdividing. Some of the assistants begin to shake a bit on the mattresses. Facilitator encourages them to follow the music – “va, va, va, ¡sigue la música! [*go, go, go, follow the music!*].
 6. Changes rhythm + ‘Caribbean’ chants with marimba. Major/modal, bpm =. + drum (very loud).
 7. Drums rhythm + digeridoo (or similar) → only rhythmic. Physical reactions continue to help the breathwork.
 8. Can-can song – *aka. Offenbach’s ‘Infernal Gallop’ from ‘Orpheus in the Underworld’* — mixed up with crying baby + drum in and out. Importance of brass instruments.
 9. Music that incorporates audible breathing (‘cha, cha, cha’ → like *kecak* but breathier (?) + rhythms with drums). Bpm 120-140. Some reactions and convulsions begin to occur.
 10. Merges to *Indiana Jones’* main theme with mixed in rhythms (support? → predominance of brass instruments). He accelerates the tempo a bit from the mixing table → the base is still from the previous song!
 11. Mixed of #9 with percussive piano (+ o – modal, focused on rhythmic element). Cymbals, percussion + reinforcement with live drum.
 12. Brass instruments, + shouts, + *Psycho*-like strings (the drum is so loud I can’t hear the music well). It merges with a speech by Hitler, the *kecak*... And finally, it only remains the ‘base’ (#9 + rhythmic piano) → He encourages them more, and the reactions are maintained. Incorporation of a masculine voice to the music + drum.
 13. New theme goes in, feminine voice chanting loose syllables + similar rhythm (same?) follows in the base. Electric guitar goes in with spare notes...
 14. Base is maintained and a ringing phone plays, adding to the rest of the music with the piano, the chants and everything.
 15. Change of chants (group, ‘tribal’-like) + drum, ↑ volume. *Kecak* and responsorial chants. Some participants start to convulse a bit more.

16. Jump to fair-like or band-like music (brass instruments) → Percussion is not as strong as before, softer.
17. Drum solo is mixed in, then left by its own (only rhythm) ... + Does not last long.
18. Moves on to orchestral music with predominance of low frequencies and brass instruments + percussion. Tonality is maintained between Major and modal. Longer notes begin to go in with the same instruments. Bpm still high, but begins to change towards the melodic section. The music stops! Rapidly starts again and Fericgla runs to the music equipment to check it.
19. Change to a similar theme but with more electronic instruments and long 'A' chants in the base. Predominance of brass instruments and rhythmical base (follows from previous one).
20. Turns to chants (similar to Gregorian chants) in Latin, plus cello base (orchestra), rhythmic. It reminds me of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*... Strings go in and intense percussion is maintained, although the bpm have started to decrease. – *Looking back, I believe it was Vangelis' 'Mythodea' again (10th movement?)*.
21. Merges with final cadence to a percussive solo + shouts 'from the jungle' → *prrr* sounds + chants (language?) Unison chants, 'ethno'...
22. Opera (baritone + orchestra) in Major – looks 18-19th Century (*Ai vita mia... Mon cuore...*) + drum. I don't recognise it, could be almost any opera from that period.
23. Electronic percussion + strings (minor?) It jumps again and stops for a second so Fericgla changes it for a percussion piece with sleigh bells and drums... He encourages the breathers to keep going.
24. Merges to Hymn, chants with an electronic base. Men's choir singing with closed mouth ('mmm') and whistling. Harmonic element ↑. "Triumphal", Major. Some emotional reactions start to show. – *Once again, this belongs to Vangelis' work: '1492', first section of the album.*
25. Jump to orchestral music, lightly accompanied (baritone), base more or less rhythmic-percussive, provided both by instruments and choir. Both brass and strings. Major. Bpm are maintained but the percussive element drops. Mixes with 4th movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony and continues. Fericgla introduces a gong that reinforces the descending scales that are playing. Strings. Cadence V-I-V-I.
26. Shift to Hallelujah – Handel's *Messiah*. Choir and orchestration. More feminine voices start joining in. Reinforced with drum – 'Viva Cristo Rey'...
27. Feminine voice, in concert, with guitar accompaniment, light → 'Glory, glory, hallelujah' – *aka. The Battle Hymn of the Republic, I have not been able to find the specific singer.*

28. String piece, rhythmic element not present anymore + masculine choir, back and forth from minor and Major tonalities, bpm down to 80 + o -. Some of the participants cry.
29. Mixed choir, a cappella, 'Ave' in Latin. Minor/modal.
30. Strings, legato, reverberated... "Defiéndeme de las fuerzas contrarias en el sueño nocturno cuando no soy consciente" → Masculine voice. Bpm down to 60 + o -.
– *The song is 'La sombra de la luz' by Franco Battiato.*
31. Violin + piano (loose chords), 'melancholic' melody, minor → Feminine choir → lullaby + crying baby ('mama') ← the violin has disappeared, maybe it was superposed to the base.
32. Feminine voice a cappella, with lots of reverb + strings in the background. 'Padre nuestro' – 'Our father' sung prayer -. Some of the participants begin to 'wake up' + writing on log book.
33. Soft piano arpeggios, very reverberated + strings in the back (almost a fauxbourdon). Molto largo (60 bpm + o -). Minor. Volume ↓↓.
34. Violin + accompaniment in *pizzicato*, largo. Modal/minor. Reverberated, simple.
35. Acoustic guitar with reverb, alone, melody and arpeggios + masculine voice. It's a version of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* – *One of the participants recognised the artist, Jeff Buckley.*
36. 'Mare mia'. Feminine voice + reverb, fauxbourdon and soft percussion – *Diana Navarro, Spanish version of the song.*
37. Strings, *molto leggero*. Minor. Repetitive in melody, intermingled voices...
38. Applause and feminine voice + guitar goes in – 'soy agua, cielo, playa...', 'mezclada con cosas humanas, cosas mundanas'... Incorporation of a bit of soft percussion. – *Mercedes Sosa's 'Soy pan, soy paz, soy más'.*

We are reaching the end, outside night has fallen, and a while ago the assistant has brought some cake slices for the caretakers. Some have sat back up, others are still laying on the mattresses with their blindfolds on... The musical process has followed the expected process, but it is obvious that it cannot always be fit in the model *perfectly*.

39. Choir + orchestra with strings. Goes in with some rhythm by the lower strings while the choir and higher strings trace a long melody... Feeling of finalisation. Some percussion goes in to emphasise the sensation of 'grandiloquence', etc. It sounds a bit like *Pirates of the Caribbean* to me, but softened. I don't identify it.

Fericgla lets us know that he'll play 2 more songs and close the session → The 4 of us (Fericgla, Myriam, the masseuse and myself) will sit in the middle to finish (salutation/reverence?).

40. ‘El noi de la mare’ cover – a *Catalan lullaby* — + masculine voice and some percussive reinforcement with a tambourine.
41. To finish, a ‘*Domine*’ with a masculine choir, reverberated with a string base. I have heard it before but can’t remember the name... Feminine voices are incorporated to the choir and an instrumental part. Bpm 60 + o –. Volume quite low, everyone relaxed, and we finish.
42. The last piece is the piano one that always plays in the end. All in the centre in line + salutation.

(3h 30’ in total)

[Follows in fieldwork notes] When leaving at the end of the session, indications for those who have breathworked, etc. Half-an-hour pause before the last part of the day (integration). Fericgla reminds me that I can talk about the music but not of whatever happens in the workshop. I don’t know exactly what he means, if to specific personal issues of the participants, or to general matters as well. In any case, I do not have a specific interest in describing individual workshops beyond the sounding phenomenon – besides the elements that are in direct relation. For this matter, I have my own experiences and the interviews.

While waiting, one of the participants has pointed out that the final salutation has to do with the Escola de Vida (School of Life) which is organised from there too. It is not especially relevant, but it’s nice knowing where it comes from.

Half an hour later we have gone back in, and the mattresses were already disposed in a circle for the sharing + ‘devolutions’. It has lasted for a long while and, finally, we have moved on to dinner. While I am writing this down I am told it is 12.15am, so it could be worse. Now we can chat for a while and go to bed. Tomorrow we’ll be woken up half an hour before breakfast, with the bell, and then we’ll be ready for the second session. In sum, it has been an intense day, yet productive.

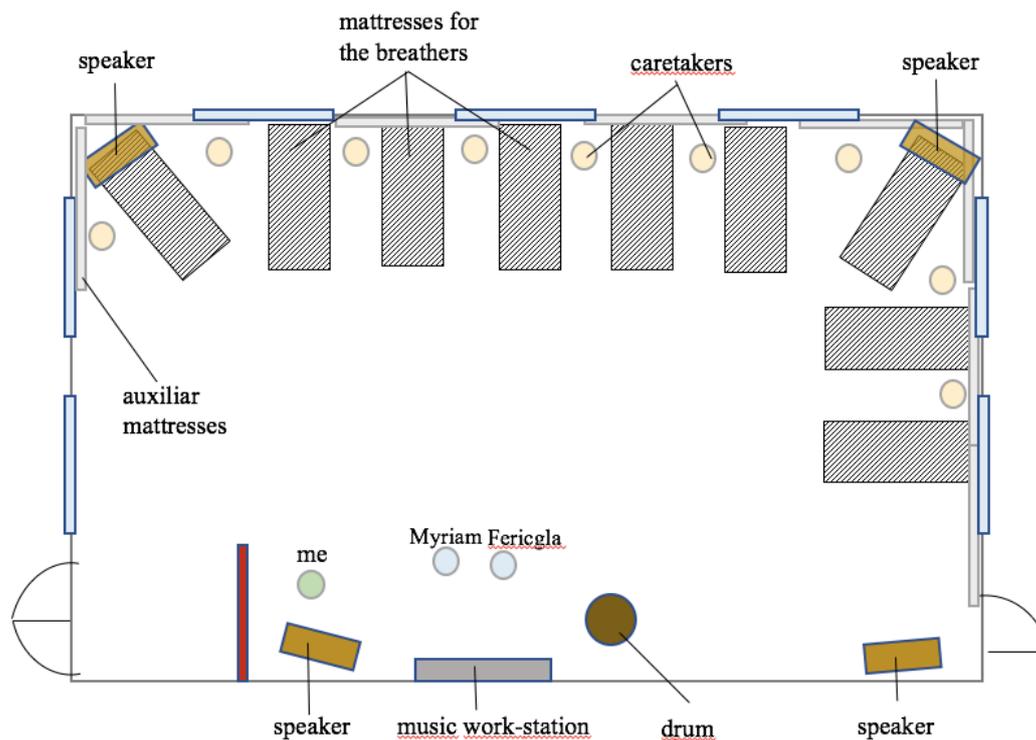


Figure 16. Room disposition.

Sunday, 12th March

The following day brought me the opportunity to compare two sessions in a row from an ‘observing’ position, which hadn’t happened before. What I encountered, as I expected, was a roughly similar process with its variables. As Edmund Leach already pointed out when talking about the political systems in highland Burma, although the anthropologist can observe certain patterns, these are never exactly reproduced in real life, but must be taken as a model for analysis. In the same sense, the session included certain variables and let me notice how, depending on the breathers, the first and second sections become shorter or longer. I believe this is shown through the song-by-song description I made for this, in comparison to the latter. Here it follows the Sunday-fieldwork part:

Transcription from fieldwork diary – 12th March 2017, 9.30am to 2pm

I asked to be woken up at 8 to another participant, who was going to wake up earlier, so I didn’t have to coincide with everyone in the showers and wait in line. Around 8.30 they rang the bell: 30 minutes until breakfast. I go downstairs and prepare myself a cup of coffee while some of us wait for the last day to get started, with all the movement and the breathing to come.

Beginning of the session with dancing for about half an hour, with songs such as: *Ojalá que llueva café* by Juan Luís Guerra, *Ay mama Inés* by Orquesta Huambaly, *Tengo un novio tantriko* by Las Ketchup, *Que llueva, la Virgen de la cueva*, etc. We follow with a Sufi-spinning exercise (the room doesn’t fit everyone for this exercise, and only some start spinning). The music is just like the one that we used on the Music and the Unconscious seminar, with Jordi Delclós. Little by little, we all jump in and take turns. After this, 10’ break and preparation

for the second breathing session. We prepare the mattresses while the participants go get their things.

SESSION II [as transcribed from notebook + *posterior comments in cursive*]

Pertinent indications and reading of a reflexive text before getting started, written by a nun, on the topic of death. Without delay, we get into the session.

1. Relaxation exercise, idem yesterday (same base with fauxbourdon/sitar/soft piano, and ‘relax’ indications). Volume ↓.
2. Train whistle and same first song to start the breathing,  ... Percussion + brass instruments, and masculine choir (+ feminine, low), unison. He begins to play the drum to the rhythm and to encourage the breathing. Volume ↑ — *Vangelis’ ‘Mythodea’, 1st movement.*
3. Moves to percussion with various instruments and electronic melody superposed (simple development + low feminine voice). Fericgla continues playing the drum and encourages the participants ‘va, va, respira...’ – *go, go, breathe...*
4. Change to song with percussion, previous theme maintained on the base,  and enters digeridoo with percussion + drum, intermittently → like a *batucada*.
5. Song with trumpet and double bass (+ other brass instruments). Major. Simple harmonic development. Rhythm reinforced by live drum.
6. Merges into a marimba and voice piece (masculine + responsorial choir). It is the same one that he used yesterday, to which I referred to as ‘Caribbean’-like. He encourages them to let themselves go.
7. Goes to marked rhythm with a tambourine. The live drum doesn’t let me listen to the music. Drums percussion in the background. Bpm 120-140.
8. Rhythm follows and is superposed to a Carroll interpreted by a feminine choir → Jumps to *Indiana Jones’* main theme, still maintaining the same base. Brass instruments. Bpm ↑. Finally, the same base continues with the live drum accompanying it at full volume.
9. Change to orchestral piece (strings) → *Violin concerto*, rhythmic accompaniment. He soon adjusts the volume, ↑. Bpm still ↑ and predominance of rhythmic base.
10. It gets mixed with other percussion and evolves towards a piece with accordion and feminine chants, that sound ‘traditional’ (it sounds like the recording of a Mediterranean popular song), in Italian, raw voice. I can’t understand any of the lyrics.
11. Merges into a ‘tribal’ chant with drums. Unison, masculine voices. Turns up the volume and live drum accompaniment (to increase bpm?).

12. Changes to feminine chants with percussion. Simple modal melody, predominance of percussion. A bass melody enters, and some guitar chords as well.
13. Keeps on mixing songs + ringing telephone sound, it evolves towards a piano piece while the base is maintained. Random electronic sounds... and finally change to a rhythm, with a marimba. There are a lot of lines being mixed up...
14. Marimba and percussion. Bpm ca.200, masculine chant ('shouted'), 'tribal'-like again. Some sounds enter the mix, which sound like screams, under the percussion. Fericgla encourages them to keep going.
15. Bizet's *Carmen*, 'Toreador' aria. Predominance of brass instruments and percussion, + strings.
16. Sudden change to a chant with a drum ('shamanic'). Single man and drum.
17. Change to masculine choir, harmonic development widens up (reinforcement with live drum). "Explosion" with brass instruments and percussion superposed (+ electronic base with keyboard), and goes back to original theme with strings, piano and choir. + brass instruments/piano again... 'In domine'... – *This corresponds once again to Vangelis' 'Mythodea', which has been recurrent during the weekend.*
18. Goes to rhythm with strings, brass... Hymn, and change to:
19. Song with very marked drum, about 100bpm + live percussion on top. Only rhythmic.
20. Change to ..., with brass instruments and explosive percussion. Vol. ↑ + drum.
21. Masculine choir with closed mouth (= yesterday) and electronic base – *Vangelis' '1492', first section* —. Triumphant, the facilitators encourage the breathers to let go, above the high volume.
22. Jump to *batucada* song, bpm ↑, encouraging continues... The windows have misted up with the contrast of temperatures from the inside and the outside, like yesterday.
23. Circus-like song with percussion and brass instruments, sounds like a brass band, like a music parade. I don't recognise it.
24. Händel's *Messiah*, 'Hallelujah', same as yesterday.
25. Merges to Baroque/Classic piece, 18th century (?). Major, + wood-winds – *It was Bach's 'Sleepers Awake'. I am helpless at recognising pieces, thank God my musicologist friend gave me a hand with this!*
26. Follows the same line, piece with *basso continuo* on harpsichord (Baroque).

27. Jump to acoustic guitar with reverb, masculine voice with reverb + harmonica. Soft percussion and strings. Melancholic, etc. (emotional). ‘Los oasis siempre son espejismos’... Most of the participants are already covered in blankets, it has been quite a sudden change from the 1st/2nd part. – *Oasis* by Pedro Guerra.
28. Step to orchestral piece, minor, strings. I don’t identify it. Bpm ↓, vol. ↓ Harmonic and melodic expansion. ‘Dramatic’. Myriam starts the incense again. In general, the songs of this section are longer than the others.
29. Acoustic guitar and recorder → Modal melody, ‘Celtic’. Sings in Basque. Masculine voice + ‘lara la la’...
30. Orchestra, strings (Beethoven?) Paused.  V-I-V-I. The assistant offers sponge-cake slices to the caretakers. In general, more of an active session than the last.
31. Very reverberated strings (violin) and soft entrance of base, minor, melancholic, volume ↓. Authentic cadences. Some of the breathers start ‘waking up’ and writing their experiences up on their log books.
32. Gregorian chant, *a cappella*, reverb.
33. Piano + woman’s voice (‘Un sendero solo de penas mudas llegó hasta la espuma...’, ‘La canción que canta en el fondo oscuro del mar, la caracola...’) – *Thanks to the lyrics I was able to identify this song as ‘Alfonsina y el mar’ by Mercedes Sosa.*
34. Reverberated mixed choir (same as yesterday, ‘Ave...’) Bpm ↓↓ Vol ↓ A cappella.
35. Song in Portuguese, masculine voice a cappella + water sounds – *I haven’t been able to find this one.*
36. Follows with water sounds. Superposition of choir and the water sounds fade out. Mixed, a cappella + piano enters with accompaniment, notes, arpeggios and lone chords + violin melody, largo. – ‘*Deep Space*’, by *Bill Douglas*.
37. Thunderstorm sounds followed by ‘Amazing Grace’ (same one that he used to open yesterday’s session, begins *a cappella*, etc.) It ends with thunderstorm sounds as well.
38. Las piece – piano + ‘reverence’ (in the centre).

(2h 30’ in total)

[Follows in fieldwork notes] We finish and 1h 30’ for lunch; the bell will ring 15 minutes before the last part. Since lunch is not ready yet I think it’s probably not 2pm yet. We finish with the ‘devolutions’, final talk, pictures and goodbyes. After this, we are ready to go home.

Since the first session of the weekend lasted for almost one extra hour, the whole structure varied somehow in comparison to the second. This especially affected the last one, which was noticeably shorter in some sections and as an overall, 'feeling-wise'. However, I believe it gives a great example of two quite different staging forms for the same practice.

When we were done, Jordi was already waiting for me and the girl that came with us. On our way back, we had a nice chat and she agreed to be interviewed sometime soon, while giving me some of her ideas and feelings on the weekend. I can't wait to put all of this into perspective, and to compare it with the first breathing session I was ever in!

E. Energy Centres Systems

Fieldwork Diary VIII

ESCEN

8th-10th July 2016, Casa Rural Portavella (El Ripollès)

Friday, 8th July

Today is the day. The first time approaching the ESCEN System in the field, and I'm quite nervous. Maybe I'm the first homesick fieldwork researcher, or maybe it's just my own insecurity when approaching alien situations in which I might be perceived as an intruder, watching from two perspectives – that of a curious, personally involved individual, and that of the anthropologist. Nevertheless, it's only the second perspective which I am worried of giving away too intensely.

We have met at 6pm at the agreed location in Barcelona, in the Eixample district, so we could leave all together to the rural home where the workshop is being developed – Portavella, on top of the mountains of Santa Margarida de Vinyoles, in the El Ripollès area. Although today we are not many up here – about twelve, six men and six women – tomorrow some more will arrive in the morning. The first people I have met before the departure have been some seniors and middle-aged women, so for a second I worried I was going to be the younger one here by far. Some of them have been doing 'centres' – as they refer to the Energy Centres System – for decades, others more than a few years, and some of them have begun to get the proper formation to become facilitators themselves or are already instructed. Also, not all of them are from Catalonia: many have come from cities hours away such as Bilbao, and there is even an Italian man in his sixties, who has come expressly all this way!

Anyway, we have taken off on our 3-hour-long journey to Portavella, moving through the Friday traffic coming out of busy Barcelona to finally get here. The woman I have travelled with and the owner of the car is a 29yo from Logroño. The other two people that have shared the journey with us are a middle-aged woman, who is a facilitator herself, and the Italian man. Since I have taken the front seat, the younger girl and I have been chatting for a while about the practice, among other trivial stuff to make the trip more enjoyable. She explained that, although she is being trained to become a facilitator in ESCEN, she feels like she is not ready yet to fully commit herself to a group of people that relies on her knowledge to work their 'centres'. That is, although she is close to her final exam, the technicality of the System makes it a life-long journey rather than a short-term goal to achieve. In the same sense, she has pointed out how Patricia, the main facilitator and creator of the School in Barcelona – who is also developing the weekend-long workshop – is a great, capable woman, who really knows her way around the body and the music which connects with it. Patricia even mixes more than one centre at a time during her classes, which apparently is not an easy task, to accommodate the process to a restrictive schedule. However, she says, the musical choices associated to each centre are quite personal, in the sense that some proposals work better for some participants and not so much for others.

Our driver has also participated in other practices which can be considered similar to the one I am about to submerge in, such as ‘biodance’. However, she explained how she didn’t really like its approach because of its rigidity – in the sense that there isn’t much freedom for the participant to feel or interpret their own process. In regards to the music which accompanies the ESCEN practice specifically, she has pointed out how relevant it is to understand its role, and how underestimated it is in the whole process of formation for new facilitators – even if they have a specific ‘subject’ on the matter in their courses. In other words, although music is one of the constitutive bases of the practice, it sometimes falls in a secondary level or gets eclipsed by movement and the inner process of the listener.

She has specifically made reference to the ‘state’ in which the participants arrive while dancing, moving or exercising in the workings of the different chakras. Knowing this has been both a surprise and a relief, since I was not really sure to what extent the categories I had preconceived could be applied to this specific activity. When I talked to Patricia in last month’s interview, she only made reference to the meditative state encountered between one and another centre, but not to any specific ‘conscious’ processes during the experience. In Patricia’s words, the energy on which one has been working is re-distributed after the exercise towards an energetic centre or chakra, and the whole body, positioning the ‘non-ordinary state of consciousness’ not on the music-induced moment of the activity, but afterwards. Perhaps it could be said that different states are encountered in different stages, but I would definitely place the one Patricia refers to as ‘meditative’ in a purely body-reactive category, which echoes the process undergone mentally during the musicked process. I’ll have to remember to check this with our driver for the weekend.

When she asked how I came across the practice, I explained to her my research purpose, even if Patricia asked me not to do so explicitly in an academic or ‘formal’ way, so it wouldn’t influence the participants’ performances. Not telling her or ‘hiding’ it didn’t seem like the right option whatsoever. However, it turned out better than expected since she had been in the academic world since a few years ago, when she decided to take a different working path, and has been very understanding of my intentions. The other facilitator and the man sitting in the rear seats have joined the conversation and have also been very supportive and shown interest in the subject – especially since I am a musician, a closer figure to which they can relate. After all, it is not a secret that a great part of the participants in this kind of workshops are middle- to upper-class, usually intellectually inclined, and embracing of both scientific and spiritual spheres. Intellectual curiosity, in this sense, does not fall too far away from their daily environment.

After a couple of hours, we have finally left the motorway and started to come across rural landscapes, with their typical Catalan houses made of stone, their cows and their green fields. We have started going up the mountains in the last bit of the road, approaching our destination – which also happens to be a rural hotel. The path was narrow and unpaved. We have even come across a cow on our way up with a little bell tied to her neck that has been willing to let us through. The landscape full of green and streams looks like if it has been taken from a fairy tale, with the sun starting to go down behind the peaks. And then, at the end of the road, on top of the hill, the amazing stone house and tower are awaiting. The views from the top of these pre-Pyrenean areas are just breathtaking, especially during dusk and in the early hours of the morning when the sky is full of orange and pink.

We have parked our car and have been received by two friendly – humongous – dogs. After entering the main building, we have been led to the rooms where we are to stay. Since I chose the cheaper option for accommodation, I'll be staying in a large room with bunkbeds with a few more people. The other 'private' rooms are to be shared with two to three people as well, so I decided this option would suit me as good as any other. I just hope I'll be able to sleep – I've brought earplugs remembering my last experience in Can Benet Vives. We have left our belongings in the room and gone back to the central building where the kitchen and dining-room are located, and have prepared to have dinner. Some other people have started arriving as well to spend the night and participate in the workshop, from diverse points in Catalonia. They are fully committed to the System and I get more nervous by the second while I introduce myself. Or is it excitement?

It was almost 10pm when we were served a vegetable soup and some quinoa with veggies and tofu. At this point, the mouth of my stomach was so closed that I have only managed to get in a few bites. Since the place is an ecological farm, we have had to pick a napkin – and a clothespin with a written random word — so we could keep using it all weekend, and the water is served straight from the tap.

Outside, the air is surprisingly cold for this time of the year, and some raindrops have started to fall, even if the sky is not fully clouded. We have talked for a while, and I have discovered that some people have been in this practice longer than I have been in the world, that is, more than 25 or even 30 years! It is, no doubt, an heir of the sixties and seventies which has transformed itself to adapt to the new public decade by decade. Actually, as Patricia mentioned, it has been evolving since its premature creation on the second half of the past century, by the hands of different professionals.

Tomorrow, breakfast is at 8.45am. At 9.30am the rest of participants are arriving and at 10 we are starting our first class. I can't wait to see how it develops.

Saturday, 9th July

Last night I slept surprisingly well. I've only been woken up by the alarm clock I set for 7.45am to have time to shower before breakfast. But I had to forget something, of course, so I didn't have any soap or shampoo. Luckily, there was some hand soap that has done the job. When I've come down to the dining room, although the food was not ready yet, most of the participants I met yesterday were already there or on their way – not my roommates though, who were still asleep when I left the room. While waiting, we have been sitting outside, enjoying the morning sun and the spectacular views, although not talking much, eager to get our morning coffee. Patricia has also come down from a private room in the tower building at the opposite side of the yard, and has introduced me as 'a musician', not giving away anything about my fieldwork just yet, which I've been letting out little by little to those approaching me in relation to my participation. Most of them know each other, since they work all year long together in the workshops in Barcelona or Bilbao, and it being my first time has raised curiosity.

A generous breakfast has been served with coffee, orange and apple juice, biscuits, toast, cake, yogurt, fruit, and even different dairy-free milk options. Soon after, around 9.30am, some more participants have started to arrive. However, we have ended up starting the first session of the workshop a bit late, since some of them had been delayed in the traffic while coming up. Some young girls of about 27 or 28 years old have arrived when we had

already started the first session – two of them come from South America; they moved to Barcelona expressly to get involved in ESCEN movement and have stayed in the country ever since. In total we are 19 people participating, predominantly women and between 26 – I'm the youngest after all — and 70 or so. During the day, I've learned that most of them work in jobs related to economy, marketing, teaching, and academia. One of the women that has arrived past 10am has been working as Patricia's assistant all day, as a second facilitator to help and control the participants and their performance. That is, while Patricia was guiding us through the movements and activities of the session, this woman has been helping with body posture and individual exercises for those who needed it.

Finally, we have moved to the room where the classes are being developed, a square room with a big arcade going across its centre and a natural stone wall at the rear, about 8x8m. The floors are made of wood, but we have brought blankets and beach wraps to perform the floor exercises more comfortably. The sound system consists of two big speakers placed on the back wall and a small stand to play the CDs or to plug in a computer. In Patricia's case, she has a pre-recorded CD with all the songs that she intended to use for each centre, which structure the session and leave her free to conduct the body movements. She brought one CD for each one of the sessions, and keeps it well organised with the titles and timing of the class, although she can shorten or extend it, play with the volume, etcetera.

10 to 11.30am – 1st centre or Low

Although everyone was quite comfortable sitting in the sun outside, we have managed to get all the participants in and start our first session, focused on the first energy centre or chakra, which is placed on the lower body – mostly on the legs, particularly the rear part, and the gluteus. Luckily, I picked up exercising clothes and not just comfortable ones, because we have sweated profusely with all the movement that this centre implies. The session has been, in a few words, what I needed to let go the nerves, since it presented an explosive bodily proposal, close to a fitness class in the way in which it worked the muscles.

We have started forming a circle, all facing inwards and following Patricia's instructions of movement. It has been an intense physical activity in which we have started hitting the floor with our heels, progressively upping the intensity, walking and dancing around the room. Our legs have been the absolute leaders of the class, although our arms have had a role too when accompanying the movements. The music chosen for this energy centre is focused on the roots, on the body instinct, had a clear beat on the 1st and 3rd pulses of the bar, supported by low frequencies that made hitting the floor intuitive. It created a curve which upped its intensity fast to be maintained for a while and then drop progressively towards a cool-down stretching part – that is, it presented a tripartite form of (1) warming up, (2) development and (3) close, which was parallel to the musical structure.

The interaction with the other participants has been active as well, mostly during the second part, when we all have come together in the centre of the room, pushing with our arms and body towards the middle, hand against hand, arm against arm. There have also been some activities in pairs focused on the same strength movement, where we have worked one against the other pushing our backs together. Our connection with the Earth and ground has been emphasised as it should be our focus of attention while working on

this energetic centre, and the music echoed some stereotypes that alluded to the same idea: ‘tribal’ sounding songs, lots of drumming, group chants, low frequencies and hard beats; but also disco – Bonney M, for instance — and electronic pieces which resounded in the body. In each case, all music relied strongly on a Western-comprehensible repertoire.

Towards the end, the beats per minute (bpm) and volume have been diminishing, aiming to low both our heart rate and to start wrapping up the activity. The music’s tonality has stayed predominantly major, although some modal systems have showed in some occasions, alluding to this ‘primal’ sense. Therefore, I can say that the parameters I previously used to track the musical development of Guided Breathwork can also be applied to this case – those of character/tonality, volume, and bpm.

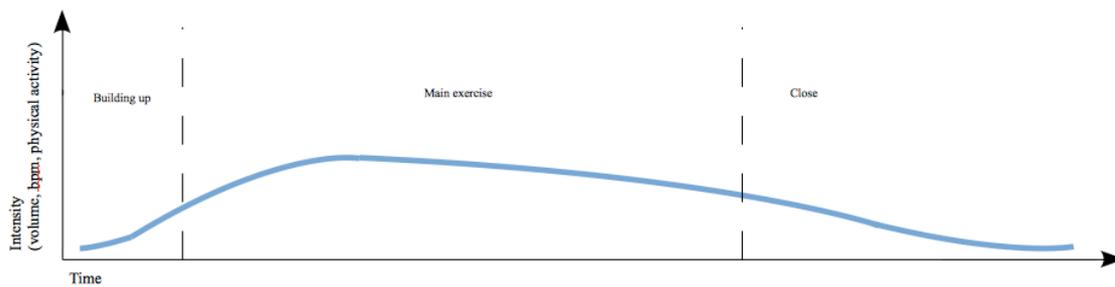


Figure 17. Development of an ESCEN class.

After stretching and already in silence, we have been invited by Patricia to reflect on what we had just worked on, and have been given a 30-minute pause before the next session started. One of the girls has pointed out how each time the session turns out different, and how this time it had been very well constructed and beautiful. The hand of the facilitator, in this sense, is a big factor to keep in mind, since it is a single individual who chooses the sonic material and the specific focus to give to the session. She has taken out a notebook and told me that she was going to do some writing to reflect the process, so I thought it would be alright to pick up my own and do the same. During the workshop, I have been participating and therefore not been able to take any notes *in situ*, which is a disadvantage. However, as it happened with Breathwork, it would be too intrusive to allow one person in the room ‘just to watch’ while the others are letting out intimate behaviours. Because of it, I have been writing down a few notes after each session and then transcribing and expanding them here, on these lines.

We have had a brief break with tea, coffee and some chocolate to bring our strength back before moving on.

12am to 2pm – 2nd centre or Lumbar-Sacral

Moving up on the body, we have jumped to our 2nd energy centre once everyone was back. This one is located on the pelvic area, and is extended to the inner part of our legs and to the outer part of our feet. It is differentiated from the second one not only in its upper location, but also in relation to the areas of influence on the legs themselves. It can be worked in a similar manner as the 1st centre, by muscularly freeing those areas which it represents. Because of it, the music which accompanies its development invites hip

movement and is mostly focused on Caribbean-like rhythms, which allude to this area of the body.

It is important to remember that each chakra influences not only an area of movement in the body, but also all the organs on the same. Because of it, each area is associated to specific processes and emotions, which are worked through body movement and music. That is, each centre of energy has its own influence on the rest of the body and the mind, and a malfunction of one can affect how the personality of the individual is revealed.

The musical process which accompanied the work on this session, whilst not as muscularly tiring as the previous one, was equally as intense and has been similar to the previous session with the parts that composed it: preparation, main exercise, and close.

As in the previous occasion, the music started with rapidly increasing intensity, and presented a diminution in volume and bpm on the third part of the process. Some of the songs that starred in the first (main) part were playful, always focused on hip movement, such as 'Mayonesa' by Chocolate, or 'Solo se vive una vez' by Azúcar Moreno. As in the previous case, most of the songs were in a major tonality and easy to the ear. We have started by following the facilitator, but soon everyone has started moving on their own, once again emphasising the element of human contact. Everyone moved around the room, danced with other people back with back, and sensuality – regarding the senses – filled everyone's bodies.

After seven or eight songs, the decrease in bpm has led us to the stretching part of the exercise, which they refer to as 'asanas', as they are called in yoga. This part has been developed in pairs and has focused on hip-coordination movements once again. We had to find a random participant to work with, and through a close hug we had to 'become one' while moving, focusing on the same hip area. The music progressively moved towards a Hindustani-like raga which became non-metric little by little. The hug lasted for at least half an hour and, to be honest, it was not the most comfortable experience for me. Slowly, and towards the end of the exercise, we moved to the floor and on the blankets, where the hug was to continue, aiming for total relaxation until the session concluded.

Once in silence, after a while, we have sat up in a circle, and Patricia has asked us to 'share' any thoughts, pointing to the relation between the second chakra and fluidity, sexuality and liberation. It is, she said, the one centre mostly associated with Tantric Buddhism. And in this way, we have concluded our second session and headed to the dining-room, hungry after all the exercise we've been through.

While eating, it has come up that it was my first time doing 'centres', and again the questions of how, why and when have arisen. Everyone was energetic and chatting, but soon most people have gotten up and moved to the shower and had a quick nap before re-taking the long evening session. Not much ESCEN-centred talk has been going on, since the activity was quite intense and everyone was eager for a rest, but it has been a good occasion to get to know some participants to whom I hadn't talked yesterday. I've asked some of them about their start in the System, and about the relation they had to music, in a subtle way, and many stories have come up concerning other continents and workshops all around the Europe. As I failed to write anything down at this point, there's not much I can say concerning our conversations, besides the interest and vocation of those involved in the practice.

4.30 to 9pm – 3rd centre or Medium, and 4th or Cardiac

Break over, and back to the beautiful arcade room. I was already feeling tired from all the morning movement, but I have pushed myself to focus and notice what was going on around me. Patricia has combined both the 3rd and the 4th centres or chakras in one go, since they are quite close and can be combined or, better said, transitioned easily. Therefore, we have kept on going on our way up from the 1st to the 7th.

The structure and musical proposal which guides each class has been once more similar to the previous, although the middle part has extended longer in this occasion, so we'd be able to go from one centre to another, and stay on each one for a while before decreasing the intensity. In any case, most of the exercising part has corresponded to the 3rd centre, while the 4th has rapidly evolved towards a more tranquil exercise. Even so, three parts can be more or less identified in what regards the construction of the session.

The 3rd centre is focused on the bellybutton area, in what I imagine to be a lumbar belt that embraces the soft middle part of the body, where most organs reside. This, in Patricia's words, is the part of the body where emotions are held, and where they can be faced and worked on – that is, emotions of joy, nostalgia, sadness, pain or whatever one is hiding in the own 'muscular shields'. We have started rotating our body and stretching it on the lumbar and abdominal area, with the help of our arms. As in the previous cases, we have started following our facilitator and then moved to free body expression, walking and dancing around the room.

Although the movement was still quite intense, it was noticeable how it had been decreasing since the first class. Even if the session started on a major tonality, as a link to the previous centre, it quickly changed towards minor scales, *a cappella* voices and acoustic covers, such as acoustic versions of 'What a Wonderful World' or 'The Sound of Silence'. Music has not played with one only field, nor focused on one emotional state exclusively, but has rather made its way between changing characters, that have evolved towards a reverberated and religious-sounding repertoire for the transition to the 4th centre – something similar to Gregorian chants and reverberating voices with simple accompaniment. In this process, the fast-increasing intensity of the body activity has started to lower after being maintained for a while, as it did in the previous occasions.

However, unlike the previous centres, this one was anticipating a surprise: a big, explosive emotional reaction by some of the participants that have started yelling, crying, and collapsing on the floor. Although there was a part of the class that had been approaching a totally different mood, a loud guttural scream has brought me out of focus – there has been a girl with an especially strong reaction, who has been assisted by Patricia and other participants until she has been able to join the rest of the group again. Some others were crying too, and some more screams have followed. My first thought on this has been that it doesn't differ that much in relation to Guided Breathwork, especially after watching how everyone developed and interacted with music, movement, and one another. Music, here, has been the final trigger, together with synchronised bodily activity, to develop a non-ordinary state for some of the attendants.

After the workshop, Nidia has pointed out that some of the music that is played on this centre sometimes puts on the table fast movement patterns that remind her of 'African rituals' or trance states – which are embodied similarly as such in some occasions,

apparently. So, is the alteration of one's consciousness through body exhaustion and sound that far away from a trance practice after all?

After a while, and on the change of the musical material towards a more romantic repertoire, we have entered the 4th centre or chakra, the one of love. Once again, we have formed a circle and held hands, while returning for a moment to a reminiscence of the 1st centre on a foot-based movement – the woman that drove me from Barcelona has explained to me that they are actually related, and that because of it sometimes they are worked conjointly. I can only be thankful that I met her, and that she was that willing to guide me through the whole weekend!

We have let go of the circle and returned to a scattered distribution in the room, while we started performing hugging movements with our arms, as shown by Patricia, and have had to slowly approach another participant, to hold them in a hug. At first, we continued moving with the music, but as it slowly dropped in bpm and volume we all started to keep still, focusing on the hug. Here, as in the 2nd chakra, music has progressively guided us to the end of the session, after approximately 30 minutes. However, hugging strangers is apparently not my biggest strength, and it has been quite hard to let go and not feel compelled to walk the other way. It is true, however, that there has been a small lapse of time where I have lost myself in my thoughts and forgot about what was happening around, perhaps because of the exhaustion.

Once the music has stopped and we all have separated, we have merged in a last collective hug, keeping in the middle both the facilitator and the young girl that had the strong reaction only some moments before. With this, we have concluded the session and stopped for a quick break before finishing the work on the cardiac centre. No one was in the mood to talk much, so some people have stayed in and others have started going out and sat on the grass for a while. After writing down some notes on my notebook, I've come back to find 'the driver' in the room, lying down and resting. Since I hadn't understood clearly the difference between the 3rd and 4th centres in musical terms – and because the structure had been so similar to the previous classes in its tripartite structure – I have asked her about it, and then the whole session has become clearer:

The 3rd centre is focused on emotionality, on one's emotion, and it does so individually. The 4th chakra, although it is a centre of emotion as well, focuses on sharing it with the other; it is a 'giving' centre in relation to that emotion. Therefore, if one traces the music that played on the session, one can interpret a subtle difference on the intentionality of the chosen songs, depending on if they arise sensations of compassion and sharing, of world loving, or more personal issues such as melancholia. Adele, for example, and as she has highlighted, works fabulously for the 3rd centre, while it wouldn't for the 4th. She has also started to describe the music which accompanies each of the centres that we had already worked on – I transcribe it here as it is written on my notebook, translated.

Transcription from notebook – 9th July 2017

[The same woman that drove me up to the workshop] has clarified some points to me in relation to the exercise we just completed, in relation to the 3rd and 4th centres (+ interview on Monday) → Differences between 3rd and 4th on the point of view (one is more individualistic than the other, 3rd is very emotional because it is placed on the solar plexus, that is soft and doesn't have a bone shield to cover it).

In relation to music, main characteristics of the centres we have worked today:

1st: rhythmic, that incites movement, beat on the 1st pulse of the bar, easy to follow, tribal allusion or primitive (also disco, i.e.).

2nd: normally centred on Latino rhythms, songs that make you move the hips. Pop songs work well (she likes to play Latin-American songs).

3rd: they must touch emotionality, bring emotions of nostalgia, joy... with which to relate at an emotional level. On today's case, a cappella covers or with acoustic instruments, almost operatic, classical piano, etc.

4th: difficult to define? She relates it to wood-wind instruments → on today's session there played some religious-like songs, or relaxing ones, to accompany an intimate movement with others.

Everyone has started coming into the arcade room again around 7pm, and we have started to place the blankets and all on the floor to start a massage that would close the day. It has been a long massage which we gave to the person who we had worked with during the last session, and they gave it to us back, focusing on the sternum and back area where the 4th centre is supposed to influence the muscles and bone structures. In this way, we have finished working this centre more intensively. So I had to give a massage to a 67 year old man, and he had to give it to me – while topless. Not the greatest time of my life, but kind of fun.

These two hours have passed in silence, following the instructions of the facilitator, and then we have headed straight to dinner, where some bean salad and veggie cake were waiting for us. Short after, we have headed to the showers to get rid of the body oil we used for the massages, and headed straight to bed. It is past 11pm now. It has been a long day, my body feels tired although energised, and I only want to put my head on the pillow and forget about everything until tomorrow morning.

Sunday, 10th July

My alarm clock went off at 8am, but everyone was still sleeping in the room. There have been about 10 people in here tonight, since some of the participants that arrived yesterday have chosen the same bunkbed option as us. After twenty minutes or so, I have finally gotten up and headed to the shower to wash my hair and get refreshed before our last day begun. When I've come down to the dining room, breakfast was already served and some people had already started to eat. Thank God for coffee.

We have chatted for a while, commenting on yesterday's sessions briefly. They asked how I had perceived and felt it, being my first time. I've been called 'brave' a few times for going straight to an intensive workshop instead of trying a single class first, which I think is funny, and tried to turn the conversation towards their experiences. In any case, not much talking has been focused on the activities of the weekend during the breaks, but rather on previous experiences and life matters which have given me an idea of where these people come from, what their position is, and why are they here.

They have all been really kind to me, and whenever I have revealed my research they have shown interest and even pointed out some things that they thought might be useful

to consider. However, it has not been long until we have moved to the arcade room to keep on going with the activities, now with a full belly and all day ahead of us.

10am to 12.30pm – 5th centre or Laryngeal

Still with sore legs from yesterday's dancing, we have moved on to the following centre in our way up from the 1st to the 7th. The 5th centre, Patricia has pointed out, placed on our neck and face, is where we keep rationality and tension, including the area above the collar bones and shoulders. Because of it, the verb which better describes the work for this chakra is 'to let go' or 'to release'. The aim is to loosen up all extremities, especially the neck.

The music which has followed the bodily process on this class could be easily separated into three categories that can be fitted into the previously established phases – which, by the way, also coincide with the three phases of the ritual described by Van Gennep. This way, the session has started with (I) Broadway-like songs which worked really well with regards to long, fast movements with the extremities, and extensions, to get us warming up. In general, the frequencies had been going up in the repertoire, in the sense that they got progressively rid of strong bases and up together with lighter body movements – this does not mean, however, that they have disappeared completely, since they have still been used on the following section to emphasise the harmonic development.

On a second, more central part, the repertoire has moved to (II) orchestral pieces, or orchestrated versions of popular songs – for instance, it has been funny when 'Let it Go' from the famous movie Frozen sounded, re-formulated in a kind of orchestral format, unfolding all its harmonic capacity. Here, effects of reverb and delay have been present, since they helped emphasising this extensive musical development, also alluding to the changing character of the 5th centre.

With this, the bpm have started lowering bit by bit, and finally (III) the volume has dropped and the repertoire has changed one last time towards classical slow and minimalist pieces. In this whole process, the tonalities have travelled from major to minor, like in remembrance of all the past chakras, and to keep moving on towards the more spiritual part of the same. It has been the most clearly defined session of these days, or maybe I just started recognising patterns more specifically, since the three parts have been maintained in all sessions. In any case, I adapted the following figure to the sounding proposal – taken from the previous scheme drawn on the 1st centre section:

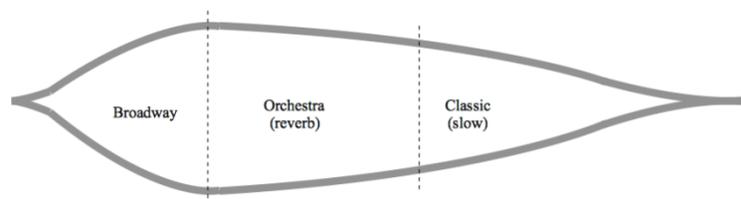


Figure 18. Structure of the Laryngeal session.

Each of these sections have been described physically in consonance as well: we have started copying Patricia's movements, then moving to free-style dancing; on a second

moment, we have worked in pairs, dancing together and helping each other with the fast, extensive movements; and the final third part has been slower, still in couples, to close the session. When entering the last part, my partner and I have moved closer to the door – it is super warm in Catalonia. We have begun working head against head, and contact has been emphasised. We have worked rubbing and pressing one head against the other, until the music has led us to stillness, and then we have laid on the floor maintaining physical contact until full silence has been reached. However, we have moved progressively from a standing position, back to back, to a floor front to front one – since the assistant facilitator has been preparing the floor with the blankets for us. She has been doing this work all weekend, almost un-noticeable, but always taking care of everyone and approaching us if we had problems with some movements, for instance. In my case, she helped me during the 3rd centre when I was having trouble with where to go to with my moves.

The sensation I've got from these repeating patterns, which have been decreasing in intensity since the beginning, is that of a funnel, or a succession of funnels that become narrower every time. My prediction for the following is that they will keep on decreasing body as well as musical intensity.

After the exercise, we have been given a 30-minute break in which we have had coffee, and some melon and watermelon to keep our strength on for the last session. In this way, and after writing down some brief notes about the experience, we have moved on to the arcade room one last time.

12 to 2pm – 6th centre or Frontal and 7th or Crown

Once we were all back in, we have prepared the blankets and disposed ourselves in a circular position, facing inwards, as we have started the rest of the classes. This session has been by far the most relaxed, consisting of slow body movements and, towards the 7th centre, stillness. In one sense, this has corroborated my idea that both music and physical activity start up really strong on the bottom chakras and then decrease on their way up to the 7th. When I talked to Patricia during our interview, she made emphasis to signalling how 'the frequencies' start weakening or sharpening while one works one's way up from the 1st to the 7th centres, so it makes sense on a bodily level as well.

The 6th centre of energy is placed on the skull, and has a main focus on the space between the eyebrows – which in yogic traditions is also called 'the third eye'. The 7th, on the other hand, is located on the crown of the head, and it's supposed to open like a flower to connect with upper dimensions, with a more spiritual sphere.

We have started by working independently, copying Patricia, and stretching all or our body to 'align' the chakras before properly entering to the specific centre-focused work. To this, it has followed some coordinated stretching with a partner, to help us really tighten more difficult muscles, and once again working on the human contact element which is introduced into the practice from the beginning. Finally, we have finished these exercises on the floor, reaching a meditative position – with our legs crossed –, and have begun a brief guided meditation focused on expanding our mind and body from the 7th chakra.

The music which has accompanied the whole process has maintained a relaxed character. However, it has ‘loosened’ up more towards the end, when the meditative exercise has started, and some natural sounds have also been introduced. For the main part, we have been working on extended fauxbourdons – harmonised — with superposed instruments, always moving on Western scales, even if they had that ‘Eastern’ touch, using instruments such as piano, harp or guitar. There hadn’t been any lyrics involved during these centres – and I realised that they hadn’t been present since about half way into the 5th chakra.

Summarising, after the floor stretches, we have sat with our legs cross and have passed through the 6th chakra briefly before getting to the 7th. When working on the 6th we had to focus specifically on the space between our eyebrows, and then create a ‘tunnel’ to the centre of the head that had to go up to our crown, and out to ‘space’. To my surprise, while working on this I have been able to feel my focus of attention as a little pressure on the places of the head that we were targeting, and it has been quite pleasant. While we were going up and ‘opening’ our 7th centre, Patricia – who has been guiding us all the way through — has made a comment which I found relevant: ‘our *consciousness* ascends up to other spheres and observes.’ Is it possible, viewed from another perspective, that the activity as a whole plays with diverse states of consciousness, depending on the body area and activity?

The music has finally turned into silence, and we have ‘returned’ to our body before finishing the session, when we all have sat in a circle and been invited to share our last thoughts. No one was really in a chatty mood after the meditative journey, so the facilitator has pointed out that we were just reflecting on ‘the meaning of silence’. Little by little, we all have started getting up and going outside, fully relaxed. Before going to the dining room, many of us have headed to the natural, ecological pool that they have on Portavella to fight the heat and clear our mind. The water comes from a natural stream and has no chemicals, so it was cold and invigorating.

Short after, we have gone up to our rooms and got ready for lunch. One of the participants – the man that I worked with on the 4th centre – has sat next to me during lunch and we have been chatting about his experience both in ESCEN and in other practices, such as Holotropic Breathwork. He has invited me to send him an email so he will be able to send me some sources to read. Another woman with whom I have worked with on the 5th centre has also pointed out how she is a Gestalt professional, and has invited me to look up the name ‘Claudio Naranjo’ on the web. As I’ve already said, they have all been really kind and have shown interest in my research from their own intellectual perspectives.

Some people have left short after lunch, some others have stayed for a while. We have paid Patricia for the workshop – 110€ – and the services of the rural house – 80€ –, and started packing. Before leaving, we have taken some pictures of the group and said our goodbyes. I am writing these lines after a 3-hour-long journey back home, which hasn’t felt as long as the other way around, even with the sun right upon us. Slowly, the rural fields have given way to the city landscape and we have entered Barcelona, leaving behind the relaxed weekend on the beautiful mountains of Santa Margarida. I can only say that it has been better than expected, and that an overflow of ideas connecting all of the theoretical background I’ve been working on are coming and going fast in my mind. Now, I just need some rest to take it all in.

Tuesday 12th July – Afterword

It's been two days since we got back from Portavella, and some things I didn't write down have come back to me while re-reading the lines above.

First, it is important to highlight the element of community, since it was not only noticeable on the practice but also highlighted by some of the participants on several occasions during our brief conversations. They pointed out how different it was listening to music by themselves – which doesn't mean that they don't enjoy it — to putting it in common with the rest of people in the workshops. That is, the experience intensifies and changes when there is a common focus, as many authors working similar fields have pointed out in the past. Some of the participants are actually musicians – one learning the oboe, another used to play in a rock band – and many have participated in dancing activities, so they like to focus on the musical terms of the practice.

Secondly, on our way back, while talking to my driver – to whom we paid for the transport, of course — she pointed out the existence of a 'zone of separation' between the energy centres, which I find quite important: She described how from the 5th centre up the focus and work on a spiritual level rather than on the physical one, which represent the earthier chakras. However, it is important to go through all the others before turning our heads towards this sphere, since it is fundamental to be well rooted on reality not to lose ourselves in 'the higher spheres', as other practices tend to do. That is, we could separate centres 1 and 2 by being the most physical ones, 3 and 4 as the emotional ones, and 5 to 7 as the spiritually relevant ones – as I understand it.

The idea of the music being Western-based also came up, corroborating the theory according to which we can only relate emotionally to that which we understand or have experienced in the past. Although some non-Western music can be included – depending on the taste and desires of the facilitator –, sound is always used towards a specific end of elucidating a specific reaction, both bodily and psychologically.

Thirdly, some participants have been mentioning 'Río Abierto' all weekend, but it has only been afterwards that I have asked about it. It is a similar discipline that comes from the same creator of the practice, but is focused differently on some aspects. They used to – or do still – work in Barcelona and the Catalan area, so I'll try to reach them – especially because its main facilitator is apparently a great melomaniac.

I also talked to Patricia about the possibility of joining the group from October on, when they start their weekly meetings again, but we'll have to negotiate the price – it is 50 to 85€ a month, and I do not want to spend all of my funding on a single fieldwork case and run out of options. This makes clear, however, that the public to which these activities are addressed is not a 'low-class' working community, but rather a well-positioned group with intellectual and spiritual curiosities.

And finally, a brief note on the funnel-like structure which I mentioned above. Indeed, the music and body movement created a time-extended process where body and music intensity progressively decreased, even if each one of the parts can be parted in three at the same time, as a small sub-structure. I believe that it can be represented as a whole in the following way:

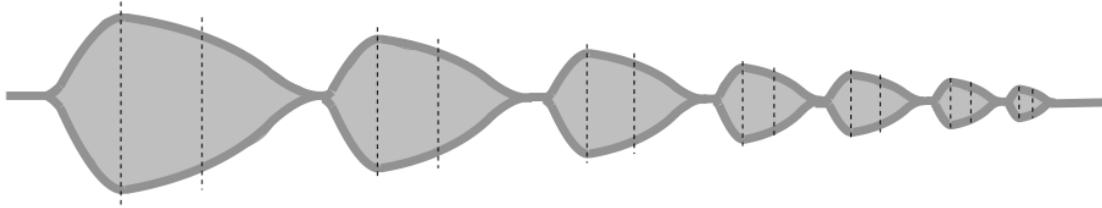


Figure 19. Centre development from 1st to 7th.

This, if looked vertically, would correspond to the journey from the 1st to the 7th chakra, and it does so horizontally in temporal parameters. Although it is a rough idea, I believe it represents the main progress and the independence of each part in respect to the others.

In the end, I can only say that it has been a great weekend, with a lot to work on and a pile of new concepts. Yesterday I interviewed the girl that had been helping me understand the practice at the retreat, so all adds up to a more rounded expression of what these days have been about. I can't wait to keep going!

Fieldwork Diary IX

ESCEN

Update + Fieldwork 8th-9th October 2016, Barcelona

Since the intensive workshop that I attended in Portavella last July, I had to wait until September for the classes to start running again. Luckily, I have been able to keep in touch with Patricia and to start following the work of the first thinkers and creators of the Energy System School – Hugo Ardiles, Wilhelm Reich... Nidia, on the other hand, has also been very helpful and has given me a lot of information. She has already finished the formation and become an official instructor in the System, so I am really happy for her and looking forward to attending one of her classes sometime.

Patricia introduced me to Valeria Zylbersztejn as well, another instructor formed with Hugo Ardiles, also from Argentina and installed in Barcelona since the eighties or nineties. She has conceded me an interview and has invited me to attend some of her classes. Although she runs them every week I will only be able to attend the ones that happen on Saturday on a monthly basis because of my working schedule – and because they are quite expensive. My fieldwork is actually being limited quite dramatically by my income, since all the workshops I have planned to attend request a 40 to 180€ fee, depending on the days/hours and everything else. And that's just one of the three case studies I am observing. This however reaffirms the fact that they are middle-class oriented practices, which point to a specific world of inner problems quite afar from more 'basic' ones. Especially in Guided Breathwork, I am trying to get an arrangement so I will be able to attend more than one workshop – are by far the most expensive ones, because they also include stay and food in most cases, so no less than 300€ per workshop.

In any case, I have started to attend some classes with both Patricia and Valeria. I attended one a couple of weeks ago after my interview with Valeria, where they prepared all the chakras for further specific work, beginning in October. This is, they had a couple of classes where the structure was ideated to go through all centres rather than just one, as they do on a weekly basis once the school year has started. Another session which happened last Friday, October the 8th, was structured similarly. It was presented as an 'open event' to introduce the practice to new people, so it was more general. All these are presented in order on the following lines.

Friday, 8th October

When I got to the location where the open doors was taking place, I thought that Patricia was only going to be talking about the centres and explaining the System, but she also included a full dancing session which lasted about an hour and a half. My clothing choice was not the best for the occasion. When I arrived at the designated place in the Eixample district, she was about to start the class and the assistants were sitting on the floor in the middle of the big room. There were two men and six women – including me –, between 35 and 60 years old, more or less, some of them new to the practice, plus a few who had already attended some workshops. Valeria was also there to help Patricia during the class. As I would see the day after, it is usual to have a second person in charge who can keep an eye on the participants in case the main facilitator misses something or is too busy to attend to a specific individual.

The session thus started with an explanation of the chakras or energy centres, and a brief review on how the practice was created and what its theory relies on. Patricia made emphasis on the importance of the inner, real self, and how our muscular armours –in relation to Reich’s theory — and the environment that build them hold our true self ‘in the back’. She referred to one of Buddha’s quotes, as she had done before in some of our brief talks, in which he stated ‘I am the one who lies behind’ – although, to be honest, I don’t know if this is an actual quote.

After a while, we got started with the exercise itself, beginning with the first chakra and working our way up. According to the music which belongs to each centre, we kept going up for the next one every 3-4 songs. Therefore, the first ones relied on the beat quite strongly and encouraged us to hit the floor with our feet; the following ones moved towards Latin-American rhythms focusing on hip movement; and so forth.

Patricia started by guiding us through the different exercises, especially helping those who hadn’t been in any workshops before. However, when we reached the 3rd and 4th centres the movement started to become freer. We worked in couples in some moments, but it was more of a group-focused session where we all had contact with one another.

As it happened in the previous classes and as the interviewees had pointed out, the 3rd and 4th chakra were focused on emotion development, in the sense of love contraction and expansion respectively. However, these two are quite personal in regards to the musical choice, so the physical indications of the facilitators become fundamental. The aim, let’s remember, is to go from our stomach – where self-esteem and internal emotion is held – on the 3rd, to our thorax – where expansive love or the love for the other resides — on the 4th. I hope to be able to study this subtle change further if Patricia lends me some of her music sessions.

The 5th centre includes the shoulders, hands and neck, along with the face up to the eyebrows. Because of it and to encourage their movement, cabaret-like songs and musical/Broadway themes are usually included. In other words, music that features syncopated percussion and brass instruments is the main protagonist of the section. Actually, here there was a revitalisation of the movement which had started to fall down with the introspection and extroversion of the previous centres, due to the changing nature of the chakra, only to lead into the stretching and *asana*-s part, and the final ‘release’.

The last section, starting with the 6th, corresponds to the ‘third eye’ and starts to reach towards spirituality. It is usually accompanied by calmed, almost beat-free music that recalls all the Eastern stereotypes englobing yoga and Hindustani music. It also usually includes natural sounds ideated to relax the listener, to help distend the muscles and articulations with the *asana* postures. Finally, when we were about to go into the 7th chakra, which is all about meditation and spiritual connection, the noise of another activity in the hallway was so loud we left it there, so an almost silent final section never occurred.

It is funny how the ‘sections’ in which the chakras establish are, in some sense, parallel to the phases that one goes through in Guided Breathwork – I hadn’t really noticed since recently. That is, (I) they start by focusing on rhythm, on the body, on the earthly, (II) then move forward to the emotional, the moving, the melodic and harmonic

development, (III) and end up with a reflective, spiritually focused process, described by calmed, reverberated pieces to accompany it. In this sense, both practices differ from the Dance of the Vajra, which integrates all three elements – body, mind and speech – in one go, so to speak, rather than on separate moments.

In any case, back to ESCEN, once we were done with the dancing we were all invited by Patricia to share how we felt and what we thought about the workshop. Everyone looked quite relaxed after the stretching final part and had enjoyed the movement, for what they said. Some of those who had already participated in other sessions compared it to them, and those newly arrived to the movement referred to their expectations and realisations. What caught my attention, however, was how one of the participants related the exercise to his previous work in ‘personal development’. He had been in a course to get in touch with the ‘inner child’, and it felt representative of what the assistants were expecting from the Energy Centres System – the label of the ‘new ritual’ resurges from time to time when I have almost forgotten about it.

When we were about to leave, I noticed that Patricia had brought a lot of CDs rather than pre-recording an only musical development for the session, which is relevant because of the options it gives her in directing the class. In other words, having more music at her disposal means she can ‘DJ’ the session according to the needs and reactions of those participating. Once everyone was leaving I asked her about it, and she agreed to facilitate a pre-recorded session to me so I could analyse it more calmly. The structure of the session, once again, if put into a shape, resembled a funnel – strong intensity at the beginning, high intensity in the movement, and progressive decline towards a meditative state.

This would also be the case on the day after, Saturday the 9th, although we focused on the 2nd and 5th centres exclusively. On these monthly sessions, Valeria works with one centre at a time – or two complementary ones – in detail, for four hours straight. The methodology is quite similar and the music also follows a funnel-y shape, in the sense that it starts strong and progressively lowers in intensity towards the end. But let’s start from the top.

Saturday, 9th October

I arrived at the place where we were about to have the class with Valeria, in the Barcelona district of Poble Sec. It was 10.20am in the morning and I felt a bit sore in one of my feet from last night’s class – luckily it was alright by the time I got it warmed up. I waited outside, since no one was answering the door, and I figured I was the first one there. Two more participants arrived and we waited a few more minutes until a man opened the door: two or three of the assistants were already upstairs and hadn’t heard us calling. In any case, there were still some more people to arrive, so we chatted a bit with Valeria, who was waiting for us, and payed for the workshop to her – in my case, I had to add last time’s class, 15€, which made a total of 55€.

The space she had chosen was a big tall room, apparently used for dancing classes during the week, with the outside wall full of big windows to the street – and the front building, which I was a bit self-conscious about since it would be so easy for anyone living there to watch us jumping and making funny movements. We sat down on mattresses in the centre of the room and waited for the rest of participants to arrive. Some of them had been in

the ESCEN school for longer than others, out of the 10 people participating – of which 3 were men, and 7 women. One of the women that was already there, to whom I talked while we were waiting, told me she was an instructor as well, and that she was there to help Valeria with the class. Apparently, a second facilitator is always there as a backup, as I already pointed out.

Valeria, differently from Patricia, brought her laptop with a long pre-made playlist – rather than CDs — and skipped a couple of songs here and there, modifying the session *in situ*.

The class, although longer, felt like it did not run as smoothly as the ones I had attended with Patricia, but maybe it was because of the intensive character and the focus on a single group of chakras. It worked the pelvic and inner thigh area in detail with the 2nd centre, then moving forward to the arms and neck with the 5th, and it became quite exhausting towards the third hour – a fact that can also help to potentiate a non-ordinary state, as it's done in other contexts.

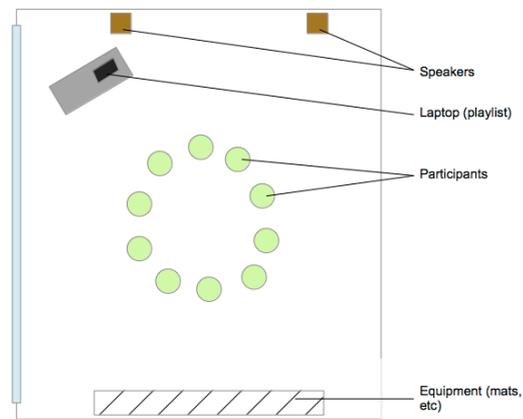


Figure 20. Class disposition.

The first songs were more paused, since we needed to warm up a little bit, and focused on the pelvis. The music on the first part of the session did not vary much, but relied strongly on rhythms that appealed to the proposed area and to movement in general. The second part, which was linked to the first, had more changing repertoire because of the nature of the 5th centre – although it never got fully detached from the 2nd chakra that we were also working.

Because it was such a long session of constant movement, it also included more paused songs from time to time, which helped us recover, especially on the 5th centre part. In fact, these moments were used by the facilitator to bring us all together in the centre and promote interaction, to which she had pointed out before we started – to the importance of the activity being developed in group.

One can think about the whole class as a long progress with a small inflection where hip movement gave way to shoulder and neck mobility. So, in a sense, it was parted in the working of each chakra, although it never got totally separated. I say this because the musical choice expressed it more specifically than the movement: we kept on bonding hip and upper body movement, but the musical curve that Valeria had drawn included a kind of separation where Latin-American rhythms gave way to a changing repertoire closer to what is expected for the 5th. Her lead, on the other hand, was also focused on the hips and inner thighs, more intensively on the first part than on the second.

Because I had to participate and couldn't just watch, deciphering each of the musical inflexions was not very easy, so here I intend to capture the experience from the inside, hoping to develop a proper musical analysis once I get some of the material from the facilitators.

In any case, the activity included interaction in pairs as well as in groups as expected, potentiating the bonding between participants. In a more schematic way, the session developed as follows:

- Warming up. We all start in a circle by following Valeria's movements. The music starts by encouraging hip movement, in what regards its character – emphasised by the percussion and the syncopated rhythms. We start with small movements, waking up the body, and put our focus on the pelvic area which holds the 2nd centre.
- Little by little, the movements become bigger and the music evolves towards a succession of energetic songs which are ideated to work the quoted area. We keep on working in a circle, but soon we are given freedom to move in accordance to our own bodily needs. Although changing, the main 'characteristics' of the music that correspond to the worked area remain the same.
- Free movement is followed by couple interaction, and we follow Valeria's indications. We dance back to back, for instance, insisting on hip and pelvic movement. However, the musical choice does not necessarily represent the lower intensity of the moment, and it keeps on changing – this is why I was talking about the session not being as 'smooth' as the ones designed by Patricia, because there were some abrupt musical changes, for example in beats per minute, that interrupted the bodily integration of what was suggested.
- After a long while, we start coming together in the centre of the room, forming a tight – sweaty — circle. We embrace the physical contact with our colleagues and keep on moving slowly. It was as well appreciated as a moment for 'having a rest' from all the exercise, as a moment of pause before we got into full movement again. The music, here, lowered in intensity and found its preparation for the 5th chakra – it started varying, going from the harmonically unfolded to the pure rhythmic, back and forth.
- This represents a moment of inflexion and separation towards the entrance in the 5th chakra, since when we were back into separated positions we started what could be described as another 'cycle'. Again, we followed Valeria's indications and started focusing our attention on our arms, hands and neck, as promoted by the syncopated, brass band focused music.
- As we did on the previous chakra, we were soon given more space for movement and expression to work individually, then in couples. As expected, the music kept on varying, but it stayed 'on top' of intensity for quite a while, respecting what I now find to be the usual development for each centre we work – the funnel shape that I have been talking about. Some of the pieces that played, from the top of my head, were a cello version of the popular 'Let it Go' theme song from the Disney movie, a James Bond's soundtrack, and some cabaret/Broadway-musical pieces.
- As on the previous centre, we finished by working in pairs as the music faded out, and we finished off working on some *asanas* on the floor, before moving to the last section of the workshop, which consisted in a massage in couples. The stretching part was most welcomed after the three intense hours of moving around and

exercising. Here, the music accompanied the progressive calm and rest that we were entering. The last part went by in silence while each one massaged and received a massage by another participant. I even had some reiki done on me by my partner – which maybe also exemplifies some of the hobbies and tendencies of some participants in these ensembles.

Once we were done, it was already 2.30pm and I was starving –and so was everyone else. I won't deny that there had been a few moments when I just wanted to sit down, but had to push myself through the movement. This, as I mentioned before, induces a certain state of consciousness which, in its own way, differs from the daily, and which I hope to consider in more detail through further workshops and, more importantly, interviews. Let's remember that the state of consciousness is better described from the inside, as Becker, Aldridge, or Rouget before them already highlighted.

It has been my first full workshop focused on one – or two — chakras exclusively, besides the work that we did on the intensive one on July. Because of it, the musical choice is more explicit and the movements that go with it are reduced to selected areas. However, the general 'shape' of the class and its development wouldn't differ much from a '7 centres' one, in that it follows a tri-partite structure: (I) warming up and working the proposed centre/s, (II) exercises in couples/groups, (III) *asanas* and reflection.

I am looking forward to being able to attend more of these specific-chakra classes in the following months, so I can have a broader perspective and I can compare them in action. So far, it seems to follow what I had outlined on my first approach, but it also opens new questions. I guess time will tell.

Fieldwork X

ESCEN

5th and 11th November 2016, Barcelona*Saturday, 5th November*

Time for the monthly workshop with Valeria, in which she focuses on one or two chakras exclusively. Last time we worked the 2nd and 5th centres, and this week it was the turn for the 3rd and the 6th. These two complement each other as well, although in a slightly different way: while the 2nd and 5th chakras were worked together with a ‘division’ in their development, the ones that we have approached this time found a connection built by the aligning of the centres *from* the 3rd *to* the 6th. I’ll explain this in a second.

Today, I woke up not feeling too well, with a cold and tiredness from the week dragging my body – the Dance of the Vajra course I had been on was intense. Even so, I decided to get up and charge my batteries for a full-morning dance workout, and went up to Poble Sec – where we had had our workshop last month. At 10.30am I was there at the door, and let in fairly quickly. A man who had been in the previous workshop has greeted me and another participant at the door, and we have gone upstairs where some participants were already waiting to get started. When everyone was there, we were a total of 16 people – which by the way makes 40€ x 16 = 640€ for 4 hours of the facilitator’s time. Not a bad deal.

As usual, we were more women than men by far – 13 women and 3 men — and I was the youngest. I think the statistics shown by Fericgla, the ones that he handed us on the Holorrhenic Breathwork workshop from last month, would also accurately apply to most of the participants in ESCEN – in exception, maybe, of the profession/study level.

Once I’ve got there Valeria was greeting the participants that had arrived, and did the same with us. She has been trying to organise a workshop for next summer in Menorca, where I am from, and has been asking me for help and advice, so she commented on that briefly. I thought it would be a good opportunity to ask her for an ‘exchange’ in our interests as well, since we were talking about workshop organisation and she asked about my research: I proposed to include her as a ‘promotor’ of my thesis, as well as I did with Fericgla, in exchange for having my fees reduced for the workshops. She told me that she wasn’t sure about it, that she would prefer to talk to Patricia first to see what we could arrange. Anyway, I ended up paying for the full workshop. I know I am not sounding very cheerful today, mainly because of a brief discussion I have had with another ‘interviewee’ which has been giving me trouble. Never mind.

We’ve started by sitting in a circle in the centre of the room, on some blankets and floor mats. All the participants had already participated in previous workshops except for one woman, so Valeria has done a brief introduction to the System for her and proceeded to walk us all through the process she had ideated for the day. We were going to start on the 3rd or ‘middle’ energy centre, placed on the centre of the body – around our belly area — and work our way up through the 4th and 5th to the 6th centre, where we would stop again after the ‘alignment’. That is, different to last month’s workshop when we worked the 2nd centre and then jumped to the 5th, we were going to escalate from the 3rd to our third eye. This would work not only to enter the spiritual state that the 6th chakra already anticipates,

but it would align the four centres that we were going through for better results. At this point, I was anticipating that the ‘funnel’ shape that I had seen in previous cases would also apply, without the division that it had presented on the session from last month – and, indeed, so it has.

Before getting started with the dancing, we have done some warming up, which has been especially focused on our neck and upper body, but we have jumped to the moving part fairly quickly. First song of the day: ‘Could you be loved’ by Bob Marley. We have started by following Valeria’s movements as usual, which were, from the beginning, focused on the belly and lower back area – more intensively at first and before starting going up. While we were moving, I’ve tried to retain the songs that were playing, and I have managed to get out of the circle for a second and write some down on my phone. After all, Patricia has not sent me any of her material yet – I’ll ask again, but should be aware that she might not be comfortable with it. In any case, I can use some of the videos she has on Youtube about her sessions to analyse the musical material more accurately.

Some of the songs that played on the first part and which I could recognise were the following (in order):

- ‘Mandy’ by Westlife
- ‘Luka’ by Suzanne Vega
- ‘Que te vaya bonito’ by Rosana
- ‘Life’ by Des’ree
- ‘Isn’t She Lovely’ by Stevie Wonder
- ‘You Are the Sunshine of My Life’ by Stevie Wonder
- ‘Good Morning Starshine’ by Oliver Dragojević
- [Country song that I didn’t recognise]
- ‘Can’t Stop Loving You’ by Phil Collins
- ‘I Can’t Live Without You’ by Mariah Carey
- ‘Someone Like You’ by Adele
- ...

After this I have lost track of the songs but I have been able to recognise some of them here and there – I was too immersed in the movement to get out again, since we rapidly got into the collective part. In any case, I believe this brief sample can give an idea of the ‘categories’ touched specifically for the 3rd centre, and how they appeal to our ‘emotional body’. This is fundamental in the tracking of the three sections in which the chakras can be more or less divided – 1st and 2nd appeal to our physicality, 3rd to 5th appeal to our emotionality, and 6th and 7th to our spirituality.

However, as I have pointed out elsewhere, separating the 3rd and 4th chakras is not that easy, in that the musical choice is quite personal and can only be differentiated by its ‘introspection’ or ‘extroversion’. Because of it, the nature of the movements appears to be the best indicator when travelling from one centre to another, since when on the 4th we start on moving more our shoulders and embracing contact with other participants, while the third is ‘middle section’ focused and more individualistic.

After a while of dancing separately and following Valeria, we have started coming together for the middle section of the workshop, which always seems to include this gathering of all the participants and the human-contact element. I remember hearing

some people cry on this part, while ‘Tears in Heaven’ by Eric Clapton was on. This ‘emotional explosion’ has been as well corroborated by many of the participants towards the end of the session, when we have been invited to share our experience, which has been accompanied by some ‘trance’-like comments that I found quite relevant.

This gathering part has been followed by the consequent 5th centre change, in which a great variety of feelings are mixed to appeal to the centre’s instability. The movement has also gone back up in intensity for a while, with some boleros and romantic songs – which have followed the main theme of the 3rd chakra well, before slowly entering the 6th. This section has also been easily recognisable by the arm, shoulder and neck movement it goes with, once we have had stepped aside from our ‘soft’ body centre. The musical curve created by Valeria has been smooth enough to progressively turn down the heat, the beats per minute and the volume, and to induce a more relaxed/meditative state, which has been accompanied with some *asanas*. The stretching has felt great after the previous two or two-and-a-half hours of dancing, and has appeared to be more effective for the same reason in what regards the entering in a relaxed mood. One thing that I have noticed is how the lyrics slowly have faded out and given way to a more instrumentally-focused repertoire, which could be easily labelled as ‘chill-out’ – with its Eastern-like sonorities, wind instruments and reverbs.

We have finished by having a massage-part in pairs in the last 40 minutes or so, focused on the forehead – where the third eye is located. This was also to help us make a step deeper into the meditative, non-judgemental state that this centre represents, and to slowly conclude the session. The most part of it passed by already in silence, after Valeria had been on and off on her computer checking on the music and DJ-ing the session as she does.

When we were done, it was already 2.30pm, but I was not feeling especially hungry. There were some things to eat served on the table that we were open to have at any point during the workshop – some chocolate and sponge cake that, of course, I couldn’t have – along with some water. In any case, when we were done with the massages, we have sat back in a circle in the middle of the class, and been invited by Valeria to share our experience. It has been enlightening to see how some of the participants verbalised their feelings, since it has been more intense for them than it has been for me – besides, the 3rd and 4th chakras aren’t my areas of strength. The emotional value of the practice linked to the music and the movement has been, in a sense, reaffirmed through this workshop. Many of them have talked about blockages, and how the music + movement has helped them loosen them up. One of the participants has even referred to a brief ‘regression’ to the origin of an emotional shield on her middle centre. They have also referred to the music, which does not usually happen as explicitly, by highlighting its emotional and personal value, and the enjoyment of the musical choices for the day.

Before leaving, I have been able to ask two people for an interview in relation to my research, which is great. After all, and besides the lack of energy I was feeling this morning, today has been the most productive day research-wise. Besides, I won’t be able to attend next month’s session because it takes place at the same time as the Postgrad Conference in Dublin, in which I’m presenting a paper. I hope they won’t work the 7th, most mysterious chakra, without me!

Next Friday there is an ‘open doors’ event next to my place, as it was last month, and I am planning on attending. Maybe Jordi will come as well, since he is curious and I could

totally use a close person to give me another point of view – is this even considered a research method? I will include the experience on this same document as soon as I've been there.

Friday, 11th November

Open doors day, and I feel the flu watching me around the corner. This hasn't been my best week for fieldwork-ing, but I haven't let this drag me down. Jordi finally decided to come with me to the workshop, that was taking place just a couple of blocks away from our flat, and it cheered me up – it is always nice sharing a personal interest. Besides, Patricia told me that she had so many people interested in the workshop that she had to leave some of them on the 'waiting list', so it would have been rude not to attend.

We arrived quite early to the location, and there were only a couple of people waiting. Meanwhile, we helped Patricia with the setting up of the room – mattresses on the floor, etcetera. She told me that she was waiting for an assistant, and that Valeria wouldn't be there because of a back injury. The man that has been there helping her was basically in charge of assisting the music and the spatial disposition, in case we needed mattresses, for example, as Valeria or whoever is there usually does.

Although not everyone had arrived yet at 7.10pm, we got started. Only 3 out of the 16 participants had never been in an ESCEN class, nor knew almost anything about how it worked. Among the rest, some are regular assistants to the weekly classes and others are eventual attendees on monthly workshops. There was also a girl from Zaragoza, who practices the discipline there with another instructor. On the other hand, and as usual, we were more women than men, and the predominant age group moved around 40 years old.

We got started with a brief introduction to the System for the new assistants – also as a review for the rest — and Patricia explained her own background as a sociologist, and how she has been teaching 'centres' for 35 years. She then moved to a chakra-by-chakra description, making emphasis on the qualities of each and the parts of the body that they relate to. She rapidly presented the connection between ESCEN and Yoga, as well as with Wilhelm Reich's postulates on the muscular armours. However, she mainly focused on establishing a relation between the centres and their scientific validation – 'scientists are showing a growing interest in the connections between the mind and the non-material, the spiritual...' I believe it was especially relevant that she made emphasis on the relation between the 7th chakra and the idea of humankind being made out of 'the same material as the rest of the universe', since the discourse reminded me of a guy I met on this year's Mind Body Spirit festival in London, who develops a practice called 'Stardust' that works on this same principle – that we are all made of the same materials as the rest of the universe, and therefore we are connected to it.

In any case, after the brief presentation we moved on with the main part of the workshop – we put the mattresses on which we were sitting aside and started moving. Despite of the cold floor and the chill autumn air, we rapidly warmed up our muscles and joints with a first, more explosive dancing part. As usual, we got started with our first chakra, following Patricia's movements, and moved our way up to the 7th. The music that Patricia chose I believe was pretty much the same as last time's, which brings me to another idea that she mentioned: that of every workshop being different from its precedents, in that the energy

and movements that are created in each occasion change depending on the participants and ‘the energy of the group’.

The session flew by, maybe because I already knew what to expect, and because I was more or less able to track in which centre we were on at every moment. The movement/sound combo that describes each chakra is now clearer, and it appears to me that it cannot be understood separately, in what regards the sound and the body. In other words, the music is reinforced by the movements that accompany it so much that a same song could be used on two different areas/chakras and it would bring totally different results – that is, depending on the bodily proposal. The movement + music are, in the end, what gives the key on what centre we are working at each moment.

I won't be describing the music that goes with each chakra, since I have outlined it in previous entries. However, it is important to remark that we spend about 2-3 songs on each chakra. Once we got to the medium and cardiac centres it started getting quieter, and contact with the other participants was reinforced, first in pairs and then as a group. I realised that the 5th centre also works a little bit as a connection to the 6th in that it touches so many different emotions and movements, as an ‘alignment’. This also leads me to what Patricia herself referred to during the long-weekend course on July – the 5th centre being a changing one, and the need of having a good ‘earthly basis’ to build on the 6th and 7th that are more ethereal. After the workshop, Jordi referred to this ‘5th chakra moment’ as strange, since the collective movements as a group looked to him like we were worshipping an elementary ‘force’ or energy, with our arms and palms facing the ceiling. To this, it followed a group ‘hug’ that only dissolved in the stretching part, represented by the development of the 6th chakra.

Although we were running out of time – we had to leave the room at 9pm — we got enough time to go through both the 6th and 7th centres rapidly. However, when the music starts decreasing in intensity and volume, or if there is a pause, it is difficult to keep the focus on the activity... at least in that specific building –the noise from other rooms is usually so intense that it ‘breaks’ one’s inner process. I should check on this by asking other participants. The importance of the ‘setting’ is hence clearly highlighted: not only the predisposition and participation of the assistants is important, but also how the environment around one is constructed. I guess one of the reasons the retreats work so well is because of this same matter – when one is isolated in a mountain or an area surrounded by nature introspection becomes easier, music sounds clearer, and the outer distractions are reduced.

Actually, this time during the class the music stopped a couple of times due to a malfunction of the music equipment, and the sudden change of focus among the participants was notable. The music leads the individuals through the different phases, accompanies them, fills in the blanks and creates a specific atmosphere, a process. When this is interrupted, it clearly disconcerts the listeners. I suspect that the entrance in a specific state of mind is also one of the reasons for it – when in complete focus on emotional expression, relying on music, its substitution with mundane noise brings the listener back to one’s daily life and reality so abruptly that it takes some time to ‘change one’s chip’.

We finished the class by lying on the floor on mats, reaching like this the 7th centre, after having performed some *asanas* on the floor as it corresponds to the 6th centre – with its respective, ‘chill out’ music. After this, we still had some minutes left to collect ourselves

in a circle and share our experience, how we felt, or anything that we felt like saying. Some comments were made in relation to the collective-feeling that is created during the practice: 16 strangers coming together in an only movement activity sometimes comes as a big surprise for those not expecting it, since through music and movement invisible bonds are created – which dissolve as soon as separate ways are taken afterwards.

I also got time to have a couple of words with Patricia before leaving. She is going to Argentina for a month to visit family and friends, so she will be a bit disconnected from Barcelona for a while. I commented to her what I had introduced to Valeria in relation to the possibility of including them as promoters in exchange for reduced fees, and we left it pending for an upcoming meeting in one or two weeks before she leaves. In any case, I won't be able to participate in any workshops until January or February, so I'll also have time to reflect on the material and information I have received so far, so it's not an urgent matter.

After we left, having Jordi with me was useful to reflect on a process I have already started to integrate, from a newly-introduced perspective. He told me how he remembered some of the songs, and he noticed the changes between them, when the music was more active or passive... However, he 'let himself go', so there were points when he was not totally aware of what was playing – only of its nature and relation to the body. He didn't like some aspects of it – he described it to be 'religious' or 'worshipping' in some ways, maybe 'secretly religious' — although he was surprised by the shared-feeling-and-space that was created as well. I believe this is mainly caused by the strong dedication of some of the participants, and the integration of certain theoretical elements that are assimilated as a *credo*, in a way – plus the strong communal element that is built, of course.

As always, there is a lot to reflect on. I hope I can get a session sooner or later that I can listen to in more detail. There are some public videos on Youtube that I could use, to relate it with the body movement more specifically, which Patricia asked me to refer to her in case I wanted to use them. But now I can't set my mind on this: tomorrow it's the turn for Holotropic Breathwork, and I am exhausted. Whoever said fieldwork is the easy part of research, please leave the room.

Fieldwork XI

ESCEN

14th January 2017, Barcelona

First workshop of the year: Energy Centres with Valeria. The air was chilly in Barcelona this morning, while I was going up to Poble Sec for the four-hour-long session, at the usual location. I hadn't been in an ESCEN workshop since November, because I was away in December, and these only take place once a month. I mean, there are other sessions of ESCEN every week on a regular basis, but they are closed groups with a high price, that perform one to two hour-long sessions rather than full morning ones. In a few words, I have to manage my resources to be able to get involved in all three of my case studies, both economically and time-wise. On the other hand, one workshop a month gives me a lot of material to work with, and I want to be able to process it when analysing it.

I was a bit nervous when I got up today, because these are long, bodily demanding sessions, but I jumped out to the street and got there ten minutes before the start. I was the second one there – usually people get there at 10.30 sharp or a bit later, as was the case today. The same man that had opened the door for me on previous occasions was quick to respond to the door bell, and upstairs we went, carrying some blankets that were there for us to use. Upstairs, the big room was freezing, and all the windows which look so nice during warm days did nothing to stop the cold. Thankfully, there were four gas heaters that we have got running intermittently on the quieter parts of the session, when not dancing.

Once upstairs, Valeria has greeted me as always, with her big smile and a hug, and has asked about my holidays, my trips and everything. She commented that there is this workshop going on today and tomorrow with two facilitators from Río Abierto, on Humanistic Transpersonal Psychology, and that it is totally worth attending. After I told her I was not sure about it – again, it is quite expensive, and not directly related to the research — she told me I could get a small grant to attend so I would have to pay only 100€, rather than 140€. There is another workshop in February which I may be attending, if I can figure out if it will be worth it for me to 'invest' in it. I don't doubt it will be fascinating, but I am starting to worry about my expenses, to be honest. It is an extensive course that lasts for many weekends during the year, maybe ten or twelve, so the total amount for it goes up to 1860€. Yes, that much.

In any case, after a while people started arriving. Valeria's usual assistant has not been able to make it to the workshop, so one of the girls that I met on July at Portavella has taken her role. When everyone was there, we were a total of 12 people, 10 women – including Valeria and her assistant — and 2 men. Today, however, several of the women were younger than the usual 'average', which is usually about 40 or 45. It is not that relevant, but I believe it exemplifies that these are not practices closed to a particular age group, but that they can have the attention of younger participants too. The statistics, nevertheless, don't usually fall in this direction.

We have put some folded blankets on the floor, forming a circle, surrounding them with the heaters, and the first part of the workshop was ready. Some of the participants have arrived while Valeria had already started speaking. She was in a hurry because she is involved in the organization of the Río Abierto thing, so there was no much time to lose.

She started the explanation for the session talking about the centre that we were going to work: the laryngeal or fifth. This centre includes the neck area, shoulders, arms and fingers, and our face up to our eyebrows, and this time we were focusing on it almost exclusively – I say *almost* because we have connected it to the second centre in some points, as we connected the second with the fifth on the workshop that worked this one primarily.

Paraphrasing Valeria, the laryngeal centre is the centre of control, of rationality, the centre that tells us that we are not good enough, that has been built culturally and has marked us in one or another way since our childhood. Because of this, she has made emphasis on the importance of the perspective from which to work it, in difference with other sessions with lower centres – we had to listen, listen to ourselves, to our ‘inner truth’, to discover something about ourselves that this centre may have been blocking. ‘Our body is truthful,’ she has pointed out, ‘words are not’. This, on the other hand, meant that we were not going to focus so much on following the movement, but on following our thoughts. Or, in other words, the imitative work was going to be there, but the importance of the session lay in focusing on our inner selves, on what the de-blockage of the fifth centre was telling us.

After the brief introduction, we have gotten up, put the heaters away, and started moving. The music started soft as usual, encouraging movement bit by bit. The movements have started focusing on the neck from the very beginning, and everything was cracking in my back. After a while, it has felt like my spine had been re-aligned, and the feeling of taking pressure off my back was great – almost like a self-massage. Maybe these movements, together with the music that helps them, won’t take me to realise any ‘truths’ about myself, but they will help with my posture for sure! It makes sense that Susana Milderman and Hugo Ardiles choose to call it ‘corrective gymnastics’.

This also takes me to a thought that has been wandering in my mind during the session: that the music and the movement only make sense in conjunction, because the discourse would be too subjective if the two elements were separated, as I had already observed. By this I mean that any song can be interpreted from various bodily-performative places, and that according to the moment in which they are played, they are subject to different interpretations. Therefore, it is their combination with the movement of a specific part of the process that makes it especially valuable.

At the musical level, the fifth centre is always difficult for me to describe because they picture it as ‘changing’ and ‘unstable’, and as such the facilitators choose music that doesn’t stick to clear specific rules, like the other centres. However, because this time we were only working the fifth, I have been able to trace some of the characteristics that have composed the music of the session more specifically. But can these actually be transversally applicable to this centre? I will have to keep an eye on it.

- Techniques that appeal to finger movement – *pizzicato*, *staccato*, *tremolo*...
- Instruments that support these same movements – Spanish and classical guitar, piano, accordion...
- Playful voices – ‘doo-doo doo doo doo’, ‘aaah ah ah’, responsive choirs, gospel-like voices...
- Syncopated rhythms – swing and other jazz-y themes, 2/4 with strong pulses on the second time, musical/cabaret...

- Bowed string instruments, orchestral pieces that fitted with these other parameters and that appealed to arm movement...

The structure of the session has been quite clear in this sense, because the first part has included more of the first categories than the latter, together with softer, warming-up songs, that have been accompanied by slow arm and neck movements. We have started dancing around 11am, and the building up has found an inflexion around 12, with the most 'powerful' themes placed around that time, up to 12.45 from where it has started descending most remarkably. In a few words, the actual dancing session has lasted two and a bit hours. But let's go through it step by step.

On the first part, we have started by imitating Valeria's movements, which were centred specially on the neck and shoulder area. At first they were smooth and slow, and they have been increasing in intensity and involving the hips – second centre — a bit. The music focused a lot on these 'digital' movements, with the guitars and pianos, and because of it there were a lot of 'jazz hands' along the way too. As usual, this first part has been more individualistic, everyone following Valeria, and not as intense as other centres which involve stronger movements – but still physically tiring.

After a while, the music has started to include powerful gospel-like voices and bow string instruments, percussions which appealed to the second centre – mostly Latino rhythms—, voice games – 'doo doo', 'tada tadada' —... And the physical expression has widened to include the whole body. It hasn't been long until everyone has started taking off layers of clothes.

Of course, it being the fifth centre, the *Frozen* cover could not fail to appear. It makes more sense now – that they choose it — since it includes an *arabesque*-like piano interlude, and still maintains the musical essence that appeals to extremity extension and so on. We have worked in pairs for small sections, not going too far into it as other times, and kept on following Valeria until she has asked us to move freely. This would have been about one hour and a bit in –the clock in the room always helps me have an idea of where we are in the process.

Towards the end of this section, songs like the *Mission: Impossible* theme song have played, and we have moved briefly to the floor and around the room, running and jumping, filling the space. The point of inflexion, however, has come with *Somebody to Love*, by Queen, from which movement has started decreasing. After a while, we have started going back to imitation, playing with each other's hair, then hugging... and the 'group moment' has happened. We have merged in a group-hug, everyone a bit sweaty and eager for a rest – although I was comfortable with the workshop this always takes me out of the process, I do not appreciate this kind of contact with strangers much... but maybe it is just my '4th centre's blockage' speaking, who knows.

This is when I have realised that the music that was playing could be actually used in some other parts, maybe, if suggested between to other themes. I mean, the choice of songs is specific to the process as a whole, but the movement guides it so much that the music alone would be interchangeable during some points.

After a while, we have dissolved this 'collective embrace' and moved to individual work for a while again, with gradually decreasing intensity. Some Santana has played while we

moved feely, and shortly after a last dancing exercise in pairs has closed the dancing part. We have helped our partner release some tension on their neck while moving around in a slow swinging, combining a sort-of massage and the dance. The music, by this point, was closer to a 'chill out' session than anything else, helping us slow our pulse down and relaxing. The shape of the session could not be closer to the 'model' I established, so I believe it would be great being able to use it as an analytical example.

To finish the day, we have had to talk to our dancing partner for a while on how we had felt, what we liked and did not like... Maybe it's because I am not that surprised anymore with the System, but today's session felt more comfortable than the others and I found a better connection with my dancing partner – this time, a woman in her forties with whom I had coincided once already. Following this has come a twenty-minute massage part, in turns and in silence as usual, which has stretched from 1.10 to finished at 1.50pm. Although the heaters were back on and we had moved them closely, it was really cold, and even with all the blankets we have all ended up feeling a bit stiff. On the other hand, having a massage is always nice – this time on the back.

The remaining thirty minutes or so have been dedicated to 'sharing' the experience. We have sat in a circle and everyone has talked a bit, as requested by Valeria, as a way of connecting with this fifth centre. Music, once again, has been strongly present in the discourse – most comments have been around how much they had enjoyed it, and how it served them to detach themselves from their self-consciousness and so on. I share these opinions: the session has been great, one of the best I have been to. Because of it, I have asked Valeria if she would be ok with recording the session for me in a CD or a pen-drive, so I can analyse it more in detail and re-listen to some of the songs. I know this request has been accepted in the past and then they have never recorded anything for me, but I have faith this time I will get it.

Valeria has told me that she is very busy with all the workshops and being a single mum of two, but that she will try to find a moment to grab a coffee and talk about this and the Menorca thing – the workshop she wanted to organise there during the summer. I had already paid my 40€ at the beginning of the workshop and it was getting late with all the chatting, so I have started putting my shoes on and getting ready to leave. I have managed to talk to a guy that is into ESCEN, Yoga and many other things, to see if he'd grant me an interview – he agreed, so we'll be setting a date soon.

I am eager to have the full music session and to analyse it properly. To this day, all I have is my own recollection of the workshops I have been in, so it would be nice to have something more 'material' to get a grasp on! Next month, it is the turn for the 6th centre, but I believe that the workshop coincides with the second part of the Dance of the Vajra at the Kundusling, which I can't skip, so maybe I won't be able to attend another session until March. In any case, if I am not slowing down, I should have more than enough material by May. Let's keep running!

Fieldwork XII

ESCEN

4th March 2017, Barcelona

Yesterday it was March the 4th, and I finally got to be in an ESCEN workshop that was focused on the 7th – spiritual — chakra, which was combined with others for its full development. I had not been in a 7th-centered one since last July's course in Ripoll, and I was eager to have another approach to it, now that I've come to a deeper comprehension of the practice. It was maybe one of the last workshops I've been into for now, not counting the one I've been invited to next July, so it was pretty exciting.

I woke up early, looking forward to it, ready for everything but the fact that was *that* time of the month. I hadn't been in this situation for a while now, thankfully, and at least it wasn't a Breatwork workshop as in other occasions. Those times were utter emotional and practical chaos, so I am glad it won't coincide with next week's fieldwork in Can Benet – so I've got that going for me. I walked up to the usual location in Poble Sec, at 10.30am sharp. This week has not been as cold as it was on previous months, but the air was still a bit chill as I walked uphill, and I guessed we'd still have to use the heaters to warm up the room – indeed, we did use them for a while.

Once I got there, the usual guy opened the door for me, as he always does, although this time there were already a few people on the main floor starting to prepare for the session. Valeria greeted me quickly, since she was busy with a conversation with another participant, and in I went. While I was taking my shoes off, I recognized one of the girls that did the long-weekend workshop in Ripoll too, during last July. She explained that she is training to become a facilitator, and working hard to attend weekly classes. Since it is a two-year course, and she is approaching the end of her first year, she was probably already getting on with it when we met. There were also a bunch of people I had met on previous occasions that usually come to the monthly workshops, so we had a bit of a chat before getting started.

Since some of the assistants were running late, we paid for the session beforehand to the Argentinian senior lady that sometimes helps Valeria out. It was 40€ each, as usual. We were 14 participants this time, among which 10 were women and 4 men, between the ages of 27 and 65 – more or less. Among these, two of the women are ESCEN trainees and a couple more are already certified facilitators, but most participants just gather for these monthly events, and do not dedicate their entire time and income to the practice. However, it is true that many of them combine the Energy Centres System with other activities, exercises or therapies that can – or cannot — complement it.

At 10.45am everything was set and ready, the laptop plugged in, the snacks on the table, the sports mats on the floor – to isolate us a bit from the cold... and the curtains closed, since there have been some complaints by some of the neighbours because of the loud music, apparently. Besides, there always is this woman watching us from the other side of the street, from her balcony and through the big windows, so it was also a matter of reducing visual contact, I guess. In any case, we gathered in a circle and Valeria started with the usual explanation for the specific workshop and the centres that were going to be worked.

Although the main focus was going to be put on the 7th centre, we were going to combine it with the 1st, as a way of “connecting the Earth to the Sky”. Valeria attached a promotional poster to emails for the session, which included the following explanation:



Figure 21. Promotional poster for the session, by Valeria Zylbersztejn.

In translation:

SATURDAY 4th of MARCH from 10:30 to 14.30h
Body and Energy in Movement
Uniting the Sky with Earth

The “tribal energy” of our **lower centre** stimulates our certainty, auto-affirmation and self-confidence. It contributes to our soundness and perseverance, it gives us the necessary strength to defend our space and draw our limits. It is the base, the support for our physical life. From there to the **crown centre**, above the physical body, we connect ourselves with the essence, the cosmos, the transpersonal, the spiritual consciousness, our inner teacher, finding the necessary harmony of “myself” in “everything”.

Sancho Marraco St., 6. Poble Sec
Barcelona

It is important to have ‘good roots’ on the ground to be able to go ‘up’ towards the spiritual while maintaining a sense of reality, as Patricia and Valeria usually remark. Therefore, we were going to start by moving our legs and smashing our feet on the ground, promoting

knee and hip-joint movement – without going further into pelvic swinging, which belongs to the 2nd centre, or up to other centres. Valeria made special emphasis on the importance of focusing on exclusive leg movement, even if our energy kept on moving upwards to other centres. She remarked how our 1st chakra is usually blocked from our childhood onwards when we are deprived from free movement and expression, and required to ‘be quiet’ or ‘stop moving’, so she asked us to try and let our energy out. She also explained that we were going to move to the 4th centre for a bit, to root the 1st centre and give way to the 7th through it, as a means of uniting the physical, the emotional and the spiritual. This was actually very clear during the musical development, with a marked delineation of the inflexion between 1st-4th-7th. Finally, she guided us through some basic stretches before starting to move, and specified once more the importance of staying on our quadriceps, glutes, calves, and general lower body. This would be also a preparation for the meditative part of the workshop that would help us keep our spines straight, when seated in a meditative position, focused on the 7th centre.

The music started playing as soon as we were done, some minutes before 11 am. It began in a more relaxed, warming-up fashion, as it does, and we started imitating Valeria’s movements in a circle, first focusing on our feet and flexing our knees. Because this centre is worked through strong beats, which are usually fit into 2/4 or 4/4 metrics, the smashing of the participant’s feet on the ground tended to accelerate, not following the tempo, so Valeria had to remind everyone to *listen*. When she plays the music louder, the assistants usually don’t have any problems following the beat, but in this case, it was getting a bit lost in the noise of our own steps. It included a wide repertoire – which I believe is one of the advantages of working through technological media — from ethnographic recordings, through Michael Jackson, to some dance and techno. As long as it fitted the beat well and stayed in major tonalities or modal tones, it was good to go.

We kept on moving focusing on the lower body, rotating in both directions, focusing first on one leg, then the other, accompanying our movements with the palm of our hands, coming closer and further, narrowing and widening the circle, mostly following Valeria’s indications. We pushed, pulled, and worked in pairs for a little bit, back to back. Because of the energetic movements, we all started taking off some layers of clothes, and some of the older participants decreased their ‘impetus’ considerably. This part also included a specific hand position that had not usually been present, which resembles a praying symbol with both hands put together over the head, and which – curiously enough — reminded me of some parts of the Dance of the Vajra.

The transition to the 4th centre ended the strong-beat tendency quite sharply, modulating all the sudden to a minor tonality with less of a marked beat on its base. Usually, these transitions are smoother and they play back and forth between two centres before stepping from one to another. However, in this occasion, it was quite precise – in fact, it seemed like the ‘musical signal’ had worked for everyone as a clear indicator for the next part of the workshop: the ‘collective hug’ moment. With a more emotionally ‘expansive’ repertoire, we started moving closer and embraced the group as a way of connecting with our 4th chakra, for a while. From this, we moved to some freer movements and expression and to the ground, when we started finally getting to the 7th centre with some *asanas*, about two hours into the process.

We stretched our legs and the parts of our body that we had used the most, on the floor, both by ourselves and with the help of other participants. The musical input was now relaxed, and it became almost beat-less towards the end, during the ‘meditation’ part.

Some piano and reverberated voices sounded some *raga*-like themes... the same music that a Breathwork session would include on its last section, which includes what one could label as ‘musical-spiritual topics’ – Gregorian chants, *a cappella* voices, *ragas*, faux-bourbons with stringed instruments... The predominance of woodwind instruments was remarkable to in the transition between the 4th and the 7th centre, which reminded me of an interview that I made, in which the interviewee referred to the cardiac centre as ‘wind’-focused.

While we were finishing our stretches, some of Valeria’s assistants for the day started laying mats behind us, so we could use them to isolate ourselves from the cold floor. They also left some of the usual blankets at hand, which were of use on the very last part of the session – the massage. We sat with our legs crossed and our spine straight, closed our eyes and focused on the 7th centre, in a vague meditative state. Since it does not have a specific focus or method as in the Dzogchen teachings, it is a bit confusing in what regards ‘what we should be doing’ or ‘how’. The music continued to be soft, metric-less, and reverberated, until it finally got to a stop. This last part did not last for long – or it did not feel like it, in comparison to the rest of the centres.

To wrap everything up, we went into the massage part of the session, in pairs. It lasted for about half an hour, or fifteen minutes each. To this, it followed a small discussion in groups to reflect on our experience on the workshop and on the centres that we felt that needed a bit more work because of personal-history related blockages.

It was almost 3pm when we finished, and I was late for a lunch meeting, so we did not spend much time talking. The session felt like it was clearly divided and readable for everyone there, in the sense that it walked us through the movements, the centres and the rhythm of the class. Although the 1st chakra is always intense, the 4 hours went by quickly enough. I will be looking forward for the workshop I’ve been invited to next July, to see how all my thoughts have evolved, and how a proper analysis of the musical material turns out. Is it melancholia if one’s not done yet?

Fieldwork XIII

ESCEN

7th-9th July 2017, Mas Vilartimó (Lluçanès)

One year after my first Energy Systems intensive workshop, here I am. During this time, my perception of the practice has changed, as well as my understanding of it. Some things that made me really uncomfortable on that first experience are now desirable for a good session, while others keep on being difficult for me to approach. Today is the day after my arrival in Barcelona and, on the following lines, I am to describe the way in which I perceived this workshop's process, parting from my fieldwork notes and the discussions I had with some of the assistants during our spare time up at Vilartimó's country house.

During a brief chat that I had with Patricia a couple of months ago, we agreed that I'd be able to attend the intensive workshop with no fees applied in exchange for including ESCEN's name as one of my funders for the PhD – in the same way that we arranged it with Fericgla at Can Benet Vives. This has become a helpful strategy for both of us, since I am low on funding and can use any help to approach the field, while she gets free promotion for the System. Therefore, I only had to pay for my stay there, which included all our meals – 90€, plus transportation — but not for the workshop – that was worth 110€. Patricia even made sure I had appropriate options for my stomach issues, since she has digestive problems as well, so my stay could be as comfortable as possible.

With no further discussion, this is how the weekend turned out.

Friday, 7th July

The house where we stayed was an hour and a half away from Barcelona, so we agreed to meet next to Patricia's, in the Eixample district, and share a couple of cars on our way up there. I was asked to bring mine, which is a big jeep that can go through rough paths. However, I am not very comfortable driving on the driveway for long distances, especially when I am tired, and thankfully Jordi offered to drive me and some other participants, then pick us up on Sunday. On our way back, we were tired and sleepy, so I very much appreciated having someone awake to drive the car.

We met at 5.30pm. There were three people waiting there already, and soon after some others arrived. It was no surprise that I was the youngest, although at the country house we also met with some 30-somethings that were there to participate in the course. I travelled with three older ladies in their 50s, while three other people took off with Patricia. The ride was pleasant, although it was super warm outside – about 35°C. We chatted for a while and I got to know a little bit about the backgrounds of my fellow travellers: one of them was jumping in to the intensive course as a first-time experience; a second lady already knew Patricia, but had never worked with Energy Centres – she does Yoga assiduously, and takes part in some Buddhist practices such as the *pujas* in Casa del Tibet, in Barcelona —; and finally, a third one that had been working with the System for a while.

We talked about the fundamental role of music in daily life and in the practice. The Yoga woman commented on how she is instantaneously moved by specific instruments or specific sounds – such as the *hang*, for example — and how some sonic inputs have the

power of taking her to a specific state of consciousness. This is, in the end, what is approached through the culturally-acknowledgeable music that is chosen in this kind of practices. We discussed the relation between the mind and music for a while, among other issues, until we got up there at around 7.15pm.

Patricia's car was not there yet, so we waited for her arrival for a few minutes before moving on. The pathway to the house was rough and our phone signal disappeared as soon as we started going deeper into the countryside and up the hill, in the region of El Lluçanès. The views were great on the last part of the road, the air was fresh, and the house where we stayed maintained the essence of the old Catalan countryside.



Figure 22. Porch and main house at Mas Vilartimó.

Once the other car arrived, we took our bags and Patricia's sound system – that she brought with her just in case — and went into the house. It was built with a closed inner patio, to which the main house and the old refurbished barn – the room that we used for the sessions — faced. It is a large house with various stories and original wooden floors that do not seem to have been renewed in over a century. Everything creaks and the decoration remains anchored in a time not-so-long-ago. This time I was lucky enough to get into a room with a normal bed – not a bunkbed for once — to share with two other people. There we had some sheets to make our own beds, and as soon as we had left our belongings in place we went downstairs to the main balcony, and waited for the rest of assistants. The instructors – or 'helpers' for the weekend — were put in specific rooms annexed to this big terrace.

This same space is where we had all our meals, with the chill air and the arid landscape at sight. We couldn't have asked for a better location to have our morning coffee or our moon-bathed dinners. We were served some tea while waiting, and it was already past 8.30pm when the rest of assistants arrived. Patricia had a session prepared for that evening, a sort of introduction for the weekend, but we ended up not having time for it whatsoever – dinner was going to be served at 9pm.

There was a man that offered giving a hand to Patricia, bringing his own sound system to provide a better sonic environment for the dancing exercises. In exchange, he was excused for the workshop fee as well. They both set up the equipment while we waited and talked until our meal was served. I chatted for a while with him on the following morning, and he explained the importance that he gives to the music in the practice, and the need of having 'good sound quality' for a better result. Since he works with these materials, it was easy for him to bring them and set everything up.

There was also a main helper for the sessions, as there always is, who was the same young man that I once coincided with at an open-doors workshop next to my place in Barcelona. Some of the girls that arrived later on were younger than the rest of participants that were already there, about 30-40 years old – with some of them I had coincided last year. One of these young women was pregnant, but nevertheless willing to participate as much as she could – and she did almost everything with the rest of us, regulating the intensity as needed.

On the next morning, some more assistants arrived, including yet another one of Patricia's helpers, completing the 21 booked spots that were set for the weekend. During these days, I was able to encompass us all between the ages of 27 and 69. When we were all there, we were a total of 16 women and 5 men. Their background stories were comprised in a usual middle-to-upper class sector, and a big bunch of them had been formed in Gestalt Psychology or similar fields. Most of the participants belonged in Patricia's 'closed group', and only a few were sporadic participants or newcomers. This provided the workshop of a variety of inputs and some really interesting conversations along the way.

We were served dinner – boiled veggies and rice for me, plus baked apples —, introduced each other, talked about the workshops, our experiences, non-transcendental daily-life activities, and I got to present my research to some that didn't know about it. Some people that I met last year remembered and asked about my progress, which I thought was very kind of them. They all seemed interested in the research, and asked questions here and there if anything popped into their minds. At 10.30pm or so everyone started to get ready for bed, so we took everything that was still on the table to the kitchen, embracing the 'community' aspect of these ecologic/communal places once more.

I got to talk to a French girl for a long while during dinner. She had been formed in Energy Centres in Argentina, with another one of Hugo Ardiles' disciples, and was now going back to France for a few months, to visit family and friends. She used to work for the French Embassy, and because of it she had to travel quite a lot. She explained that she had been working for them for 10 years, since she was 23, but had to let it go in her search for her inner self – mainly through the ESCEN System itself, which brought her a better insight of what she really wanted in life.

Once upstairs, I took some time to write down a few notes so I didn't forget what we had talked about, and to keep constancy of my perception of the environment so far, before brushing my teeth and getting ready for our first night there. These are the bullet points I scribbled down on my bed, as they were approached in the conversations that I had, translated:

- ESCEN > Yoga, because it is not as 'cerebral', it resounds with the body, one does not have to think *what* one is doing as much as in Yoga.
- Music is expressed through our body, we must learn the physical part first so we can rationalise it later on. Relation body-music.
- Architecture and sound: how the resonance of specific places help with this relation with music, + other topics, non-transcendental.

- Another woman has mentioned how music brings her to specific stadiums of her life, and helps her connect with her emotions at a memory level.
- The French girl says that she likes the Energy Centres System because you can dance to anything, you can dance to Beyoncé if you like!
- Most of the comments favour the idea that music helps us transcend the material world and its ongoing temporality, it relates to a spiritual level.

After a while I checked the clock: it was 11.30pm and we had a long day waiting for us in the morning. We were going to be served breakfast at 9am, and get started with the first session at 10am. I was eager to see how it was going to develop, and that kept me awake for a great part of the night.

Saturday, 8th July

On the first morning, I woke up a bit earlier than many of the assistants, so I'd have time to have a shower and get ready without having to wait or hurry. The shower did not work as well as one would have expected, but the cold water helped in waking me up. I got dressed and walked downstairs, where breakfast was going to be served.

There were already some participants talking, waiting for coffee. I took a short walk around, and I met with a couple that had just arrived, whom I interviewed some months ago. They were both surprised to see me there too, and greeted me with a big smile.

Later, while having breakfast, I got to know that one of the participants had been snoring all night in one of the rooms, and there were some upset faces around. Breakfast did not help much for most of them, since it consisted of toast, coffee and tea, and homemade jam, but there was nothing savoury to add to the bread – which is a *must* for many people in Catalonia. However, the attitude rapidly changed when we got into the first session of the day.

10am to 12pm – Low Centre

At 10am, we got into our first session, that'd be dedicated to the low or 1st centre, which corresponds to one's feet, hamstrings, glutes, and legs in general. The room where we were going to develop all the classes had been recently refurbished with new wooden floors, and had some nice lightning coming in from its windows, at the back. It was larger than last year's room, and the speakers were distributed evenly as shown in Figure 2, one next to each one of the stone arcades that held the roof. In this way, the sound was evenly distributed.

We got started with a brief explanation by Patricia for those who were participating for the first time. She referred to the origin of the System, the location of the first centre and how it is worked.

After these brief sentences, we started moving around. The intensity of the music, at a high volume, escalated quickly while we followed Patricia's movements, smashing the

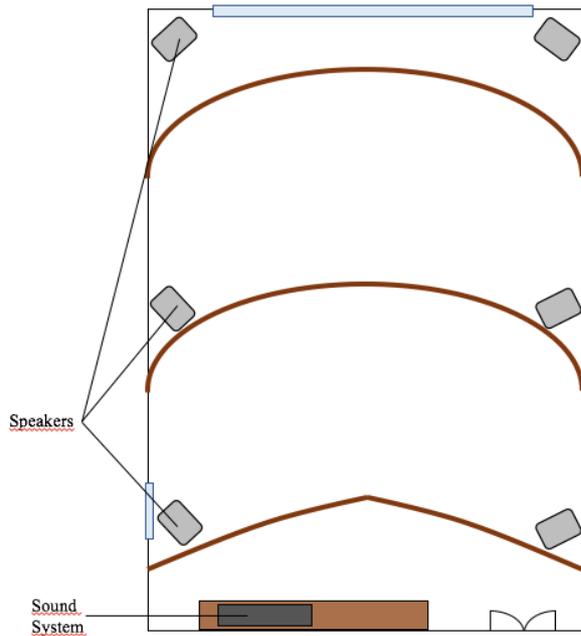


Figure 23. Room disposition.

floor with our feet, flexing our knees. The repertoire was not as straight rhythmic as in other occasions, but it included a strong, defined base to follow. It did not matter much the content or tonality of the songs themselves, even if they were predominantly major, as long as there was this marked base. As I would see in the development of the sessions, it is more about how movement and sound are put together than about what the sound itself introduces – tonality or thematically-wise. This is usually clearer on the 3rd and 4th centres, that include the subjective part of the ‘musicant’ more specifically.

With this, I mean that it included some melodies or simple harmonies besides the essential rhythmic element, which is the common thread. However, they were not relevant factors for the task ahead, since what mattered was the percussion focus.

We worked in group for a while, in couples and interacting with our strength against each other, which is the predominant emotion attached to the centre itself. After a while, the intensity started decreasing.

Towards the end, we were all lying on the floor, working in couples with our feet soles together, pushing back and forth, with less movement every time. When we reached complete silence, we moved to a brief meditative exercise to direct our energy towards our **crown or 7th centre**, thus integrating it in the first session rather than the last. The indications given by Patricia were to ‘connect with the energy of the universe’ and to ‘feel the energy beyond our skin’, our ‘aura’, and try to expand it.

In general, the session followed the shape that I had already established in previous occasions, similar to a funnel, that is quickly enlarged and then slowly narrows again. Although the session did not feel as intense as in previous occasions, it followed the tripartite form of (I) introduction – with rhythms increasing in velocity, and depth in the frequencies —, (II) development – maintenance of high intensity through various insistent rhythmic patterns, introduction of electronic music, ‘African’-like themes... –, and (III) closure – progressively decreasing intensity, lowering volume, relaxed rhythms.

We slowly came back from the meditative state and were given a 30-minute break. During this pause, we had to try and keep the state of mind that we had been left with during these last minutes. We were served some tea and biscuits on the main terrace, and I used my time to make some brief annotations on my notebook, so I didn’t forget how the first class had developed.

12.30 to 2.30pm – Lumbar-Sacral Centre

At 12.30pm we were back in the room, ready to jump into our second energy centre. Patricia started by giving a brief explanation like before, and talked about the areas of the body that this chakra included, and how we were going to work it.

We then got started by slowly moving our pelvis and hips, with calm music that started to increase towards the third song. At first, we were all following Patricia's movements, first one foot in front, then the other. On certain moments we worked in pairs, to help each other with the movement and its fluidity – it didn't have to come from the legs, but from the articulations of the pelvic area.

Most of the music included Brazilian lyrics and Latin-Caribbean rhythms that brought the attention to the desired body parts. It was mainly developed on a plucked-string instruments repertoire, although it also included some marimbas and other percussion. We moved freely for a long period of time, focusing on the movements and their sensuality – in the sensory sense of the word. Patricia had to remind everyone to follow the rhythm in some occasions, if everyone's movement became too chaotic.

After a while, the intensity started decreasing, bit by bit, and we joined in a collective hug, that was then moved to a circle in which we moved all together 'as one', rotating our hips. It slowly decreased in intensity until reaching an end for the session, when we held hands in the same ring position.

Patricia made a brief insert at the end, and commented on the 2nd centre being the first 'ocean' of the body, together with the 4th and the 6th. That is, the energetic flow is narrow on the 1st centre, enlarges on the 2nd, narrows on the 3rd, enlarges on the 4th, and so on – see Figure 24. The 2nd centre is, therefore, one of the centres in which energy is wide and expansive, in contraposition with the individuality or narrowness of the 1st or 3rd centres.



Figure 24.
Oceans.

After this, it was already lunch time. We were given a couple of hours in case anyone wanted to take a nap or take a shower and get some rest, before beginning with the evening classes.

Before lunch I went upstairs to change my shirt and write down a few notes, while the food was about to be served. We were all quite hungry and appreciated how good everything was. We did not talk much while eating, since we were tired after the two morning sessions. However, we had some spare time afterwards that was useful for me to talk to some of the assistants.

I sat with Patricia's main helper and one of the younger girls for a while. They explained that they had both undergone some Gestalt training in Barcelona, in parallel to the training for the ESCEN System. The girl asked me about my PhD, since she is thinking of applying for a Master's degree herself. She thought that what I was doing was 'already been researched', which surprised me since I have not found any literature of the musical process and its construction to reach non-ordinary states of consciousness in new ritual

formulas whatsoever, neither taking movement as one of their main elements. However, after explaining this in more detail, she seemed to agree with the terms I was presenting, not leaving her scepticism aside.

We then moved to one of the rooms, so we didn't bother those trying to take a nap, and continued with our conversation. This girl asked about my ideas on the ESCEN workshops, and asked who I preferred between Patricia and Valeria. In her case, she preferred Valeria's style because she found her movements clearer and easier to follow. Patricia, on the other hand, constructs the musical process in a smoother way, with all sections marked with the specific stage of development of the class. This is only proof that personal preferences and personal styles are a key factor when approaching a session, as they influence not only the repertoire but also the reactions of the participants depending on their capability of sympathising with them.

On the other hand, we briefly talked about the 'hermetic' facet of the workshops – since I wanted to know their opinion to put it in contrast with the case of Breathwork. Patricia's helper affirmed that it referred more to a 'not talking about specific individuals giving details of who they are' than 'talking about what happens as a process'. I believe this is the same that is assumed in the case of Breathwork: as long as I don't talk about specific participants, giving away hints of their identity and so forth, I am free to talk about my own process and what I felt or saw happening around me as part of my experience.

Time flew by, and we were called for our first evening session some minutes before 5pm. It was time to move up towards our 3rd centre.

5 to 7.15pm – Medium Centre

Once everyone was back in the room, we moved forward to our medium or 3rd centre. As in the previous occasions, Patricia started with a small word about the centre, the areas that it comprises and how it is usually worked, before giving way to the first song of the evening.

The session followed the usual 'shape', which I have described in previous entries, although the intensity had now decreased in respect to the preceding centres, as it does. We got started with a bit of a 'warm up' in which we all followed Patricia's movements, which then grew in intensity, and finally slowly decreased towards static silence. In this occasion, the chosen repertoire included predominantly minor tonalities – in opposition to the 2nd centre, for instance, that was lighter and predominantly major.

The lyrics included a lot of Italian and 'belcanto'-like sung melodies, reverberated choirs that were almost religious-sounding, some guitar and single voices, some bluesy themes... But it predominantly relied on piano and violin combinations that entered almost every song here and there. It aimed for romanticism and introspection, to go with the area of influence of this chakra.

We did not work in group during this part, and the contact in couples was scarce, following the individuality that is pursued to 'connect with oneself'. We were encouraged to close our eyes once the music started decreasing in intensity, and to connect this centre with any others if we needed to. Towards the end, we all lay on the ground with some

blankets, finally in silence, for an introspective meditation that lasted about 20-30 minutes.

Patricia ‘woke’ us up again by introducing some cheerful, major-tonality music, to help us land our thoughts. Before closing up, she talked about the two possibilities that this centre offers: (I) ‘rejoicing in one’s pain’, or (II) expanding what one feels, bringing it to the outside more positively. However, even if these are the two extremes, an adequate balance is to be found in the middle, she highlighted – that is, in daily life.

This corresponded once more to the tripartite form, which divides the session in: (I) introduction + following the facilitator’s movements to get tuned in; (II) development, in which everyone starts to move more freely + following the facilitator only during short periods + interaction with other participants; and (III) closure, in which the intensity of movements starts decreasing and a state of meditation – or stretching — is reached.

After we were done, around 7.15pm, we were given some minutes in case we wanted to go to the bathroom or have a cup of tea, and a little bit of rest. After this, we were going to dive into a massage, in pairs as we did last year, integrating the ‘deep corrective massage’ therapy that Patricia herself practices and teaches.

Although I thought the massage was going to be performed around the 4th centre, we ended up doing an ‘overall-body’ massage, specially focused on the legs and sacrum area. This took place between 7.45 and 9.45pm, more or less, with no music involved whatsoever. When we finished, dinner had been ready for a while so we hurried up not to be rude to the people hosting us.

We chatted for a bit, not focusing on the workshop but other superficial stuff to relax for a while. When I wrote down my last notes, it was already 11.45pm, and we were exhausted from the long day. On that night, I slept better and with fewer interruptions than the previous day – thank the earplugs! Sunday was our last day, but it promised some action as well.

Sunday, 9th July

I woke up at 8am, like the day before, to have time to use the bathroom with no queues. On the previous night there was a long line to have a shower, and I figured I’d do it in the morning – I hadn’t sweated much. I got ready and went downstairs for breakfast, and since it was not ready I used my time to have a short walk around the house and see the pond full of frogs behind the building, that we heard from the dancing room on the previous day. What a contrast with those workshops in the city, where we keep on being thrown out of the process by all the street noises!

After breakfast, we paid for the stay/workshop to Patricia’s helpers, and then moved downstairs to start the first session of the day. Although I was dreading it, it ended up passing by faster than ever. We got started with the 5th centre, rather than the 4th, that would have been the ‘logical’ one to follow, which Patricia scheduled for the closing of the weekend. This is, we jumped over one centre and addressed it later, during the pre-lunch session. This also had another explanation: regarding the overall intensity of each one of the centres, which start strongly on the 1st and decrease bit by bit towards the 7th, the 5th centre usually presents a bit of a ‘revitalisation’ of the movement during its first-to-

middle part. Because of it, I believe that the scheme that I introduced on my previous intensive workshop could be better formulated as follows – in comparison with the previous model:

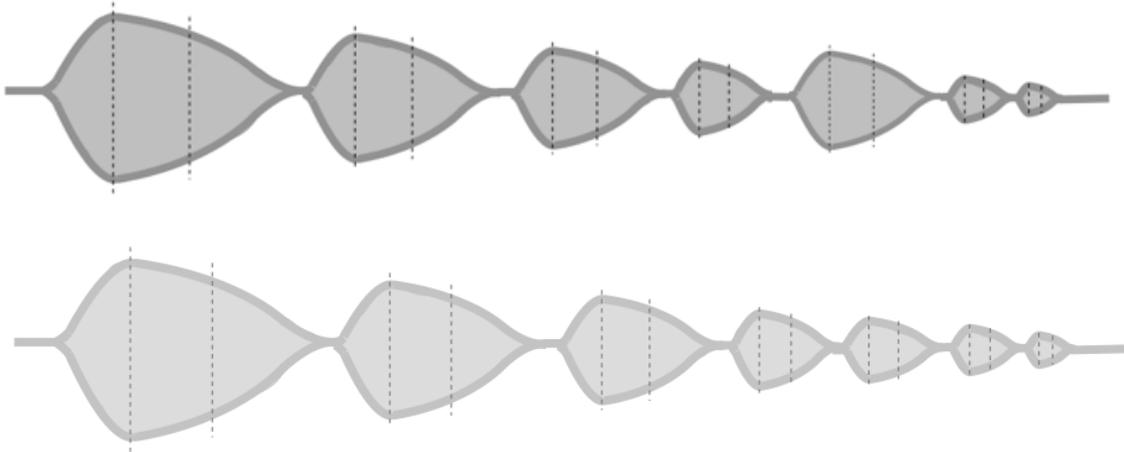


Figure 25. New development scheme (top) vs. last year's scheme (bottom).

At 10am we were all ready to start our first session of the day, with renewed energy after a good night's sleep. We ended up not having much time for the frontal or 6th centre as an overall, although we sort of went through it on the last session during a short meditative activity that closed the day. I'll get into this later.

10am to 12pm – Laryngeal Centre

The laryngeal centre is changing by nature, and as such it includes switches and jumps between musical repertoires. However, the tripartite form is still sustained, and can be divided into three major tendencies, one for each part – like I will introduce in the following lines.

As we had done in the previous sessions, we began with a short explanation on what the 5th chakra does, what it blocks, etcetera, before jumping into action. This time, however, we began with some stretches – first by ourselves and then in pairs — since the centre involves a lot of neck movement and this can prevent injuries from starting out 'cold'. The main instructions consisted on letting go of our neck stiffness, our head, and letting the body follow it – not vice versa, as we usually do.

Soon the music started playing, (I) first slowly while we followed Patricia's movements and indications, rapidly growing in intensity. The repertoire started including faster tempi, more syncopated rhythms to accompany the extending or 'snapping' of our extremities. When the session was reaching its higher point, (II) we were given some free space to move around the room, so we could 'let go' of our body as we pleased. I was getting dizzy with all the head and neck movement, but one of the girls that had undergone the formation to become a facilitator did a great job in helping me go past it. The music included cabaret-like songs, syncopated jazz rhythms, instruments that appealed to digital movement – such as accordions, guitars or harps. To this mid-section, it followed (III) a slow decrease in intensity, especially in what regards tempo. We worked in pairs for a

while, coordinating our movements, and slowly moved to the floor. We ended the session moving slowly and freely on the floor, until we all remained still – following the progressive lowering of the rhythm, the inclusion of ‘chill out’ music, stringed instruments, and so forth. One of the last songs to play reminded me of a Hindu *raga: largo* and reverberated.

We wrapped up the session with a brief neck massage in pairs, in silence, and were given some spare time before our last session for the weekend, that would be focused on the 4th centre. There was coffee and tea served in the main terrace, so up we went for a bit of a chat and some rest.

12.30 to 2.15pm – Cardiac Centre

Some minutes later we were back in the room, ready to approach the cardiac, ‘expansive love’-focused centre. Patricia wanted to leave this one for the last session, since it worked also as a ‘goodbye’ for some of the participants and helped everyone to get in touch with their emotions – the pregnant girl and another older participant were leaving the ESCEN classes, for now, after a long period of weekly attendance, and it became quite emotional towards the end.

Before we began, Patricia commented on how we did not have time to integrate the spiritual centres that much during the weekend, and how she had tried to include the seventh here and there, so we got to touch it somehow. The 6th, on the other hand, is usually worked as a point of ‘alignment’ for the rest of centres, so it was indirectly worked both during the rest of sessions and through the *asanas* at the end of some of the sessions. We would also work with these two centres shortly at the end of this very last session, but I’ll get there.

This was not a ‘usual’ class, since it was focused as a final ‘coming together’, but we centred most of our movements around the specific area that comprises the 4th chakra. Patricia wanted to create a ‘group environment’, and chose to work around this topic with slower music than usual, that approached ‘the heart’ closely. It is relevant to mention that we had to focus on the *exhalation* of air, rather than on its *inhalation* – which is inverted in the 3rd centre, in which the important part is taking air *in*.

We got started by following the facilitator’s movements, opening and closing our arms, trying to expand our thoracic cage, our sternum, and contracting it. Because of the difficulty in approaching this stiff area, there was a lot of arm movement involved, specifically in what regards the performed ‘opening’ movements.

The music that was used focused on orchestral pieces, reverberation, and an almost ‘religious’ quality brought in by choirs in Latin and Italian. There were cheerful and sadder songs, but they all introduced the symphonic, brass band expansion elements to the outside, almost triumphantly. The lyrics and harmonies inspired what could be described as ‘bonding’ or ‘brotherhood’, but even if we worked towards this, we did not achieve the ‘collective hug’ moment as was expected by some of us.

Once more, this is an example of how the System presents a collective practice that can vary depending on both the environment, the mood of the assistants, and the musical input that supports it. We worked in small groups for a while, and then all in a circle, but did not get to that moment in which we all gather in the centre of the room – this used to

make me so uncomfortable, but now it does not bother me much, maybe because I knew a great part of the assistants, or because I am already anticipating it.

The rhythm and sound started slowly fading away, as they had done in every other session, and we ended all up in a circle, holding hands, and then on the ground sitting with our legs crossed. At this point, Patricia introduced a final ‘energy canalisation’ exercise in which we had to feel the energy coming from the hand that we were holding on the left, direct it through the heart, and send it out towards the hand that we were holding on the right. After a while, we were asked to canalise the energy coming in from our 7th centre as well, making it travel through the heart, to ‘feed it with the energy of the Universe’.

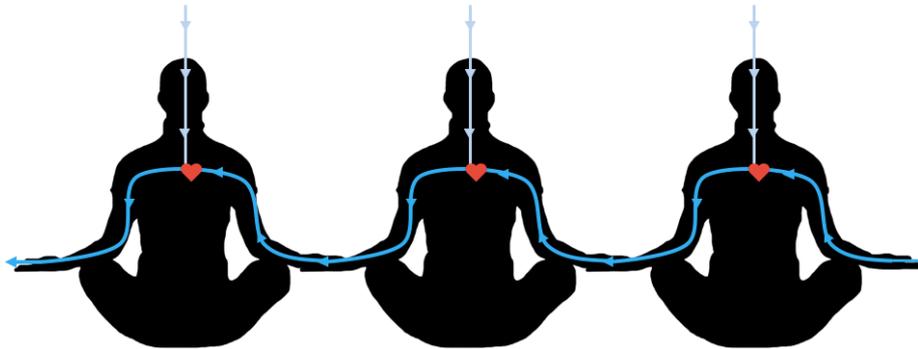


Figure 26. Canalisation of energy in group.

This went by in silence, and with the same mood we finished with a round to speak and share our thoughts about the weekend. I will omit the specific contributions of the participants to respect their privacy, and will only highlight the strong feeling of ‘belonging’ that was transversally approached by most of the assistants. Some of the people that had a strong emotional reaction during some of the sessions – especially on the 5th and the 3rd centres — also made emphasis on their experience.

Maintaining this relaxed environment, we closed our last session. Lunch was going to be served at 3pm –paella and vegan cake, and there I was stuck with my boiled veggies — so everyone went upstairs and got ready. We were all so hungry that there wasn’t much talking when the food was finally served. I sat next to the French girl with whom I had gotten along with, and exchanged numbers for possible interviews with some of the participants.

It was about 4.30pm when we were done, and I saw Jordi’s car entering the field that surrounds the house. The three women that were coming with us got their bags and everything they needed, we were wished a saved journey – and luck with my PhD! — and off we went. The trip back to Barcelona started with comments on the music that was playing on the radio, discussing to which center we would attach it, but soon after we all started falling sleep or closing our eyes. The heat was overwhelming, in contrast with the chill air up the hill where we had been staying, and it was great having someone lively and awake driving the car.

At 6.30pm we arrived in Barcelona, but we still had to go park the car and take a bus, so by the time I got home it was past 8pm. The weekend had been long and I hadn't slept that well, but the feeling I had was of closure, and it still is, of having wrapped up an extensive fieldwork that has even helped me with some issues at a personal level. I can't wait to jump into the analysis of all the material I've gathered and the intense experiences I've lived.

F. Dance of the Vajra

Fieldwork XIV

DANCE OF THE VAJRA

18th June 2015, Dinas Powys (Wales)

After having approached the Dance of the Vajra from a brief literature review and an interview with Gloria – my main introducer to the practice –, yesterday I was able to attend one of the activities developed by a group of followers of the Dzochén Teaching in Dinas Powys, South Wales. Gloria and I had been looking for this occasion since March, because they are a bit selective about the possibilities of participation, and she really wanted to show me the ritual. Finally, we managed to arrange a visit.

This afternoon I arrived at Gloria's place to pick her up on our way to the train station. I was there a bit early, so we had a cup of tea and commented a bit on the practice. She talked about its usual development and recalled some of the elements that we had discussed during the previous interview we had. She told me that they perform three dances and that the whole ritual has three phases: (1) a first one of preparation, (2) the dances themselves, and (3) an integration of the exercise and blessings. She then explained her personal interest towards the Buddhist ensemble, and her approach to its theoretical background. She is not what one would call a religious fanatic, but a practicant of different schools, who embraces various teachings and doesn't fix her understanding of Buddhism under one single teacher. According to what she told me, she prefers the teachings of the Zen school, but enjoys practicing some of the Dzogchen activities. Yet, that is not the case for every participant: some of the assistants on today's exercise were quite focused on what their specific guru promulgates – Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the creator of the practice –, and they only take under consideration his version of the spiritual activity. Actually, one of the 'conditions' in this and other branches is the absolute faith in the Master, along with the importance of letting the *ego* dissolve to be able to reach Enlightenment.

We then walked to the city centre and took the train to a town near Cardiff, where the main organiser of the dancing ensemble was waiting for us, to take us to Dinas Powys by car. When we arrived at her place, there were some people around already, some of them waiting to come to the dancing practice too. It looked like they had been developing a yoga workshop and exercising, and that some of them were staying at her place for some weekend activities. We were offered tea, and waited about twenty minutes there until she had everything ready to go. Meanwhile, I was asked about my PhD, that Gloria already had introduced previously for me, and the aim of my research – it was me in the role of the suspicious anthropologist once again. The organiser didn't look very pleased with my explanation and disagreed with some of the terms I used, even if I tried to be as respectful for the practice possible. She pointed out that it was not a *new* practice, since it had been developing for about 30 years now, and when I explained that I am working on the 20th and 21st centuries, she didn't seem to understand what I meant, or wasn't interested in it. The other women showed more interest in the research, and we exchanged some ideas and experiences. After a while, we got in the car and left to the centre where the dance was to be developed, with all the equipment that they would need.

There were just five women attending the dance that day, of about 30-40 years old. They explained that they dance every week at the same place and same hour, and that the number of assistants varies depending on the week. I was also asked to draw out any questions I had, since I wouldn't be able to get answers during the practice. The issues we approached are highlighted on the fieldwork notes that I attach here. Also, this is when I found out that I wouldn't be able to watch the whole practice: I haven't received the specific teachings of the guru, 'the permission' to pursue or watch the specific practices, and therefore I wouldn't be allowed in – it would be bad karma for me and the other participants.

After arriving in Dinas Powys, we entered a spacious room in a bright-white building, where we unfolded the mandala that the organiser had brought, which was about 20x20m. Gloria explained that since they didn't have a permanent space to develop the dance, they had to bring the mandala and place it on the ground every time, together with the music reproducer and speakers – these were a normal computer and two regular speakers that weren't too loud, but enough to fill the tranquil environment of the room. Next to the entrance door, they placed some Tibetan incense, a representation of the mandala and a picture of the dakini that Namkhai Norbu used for inspiration. There were also two candles placed in the centre of the mandala, acting as a point of reference for the participants, as a representation of the guru and all the Buddhas.

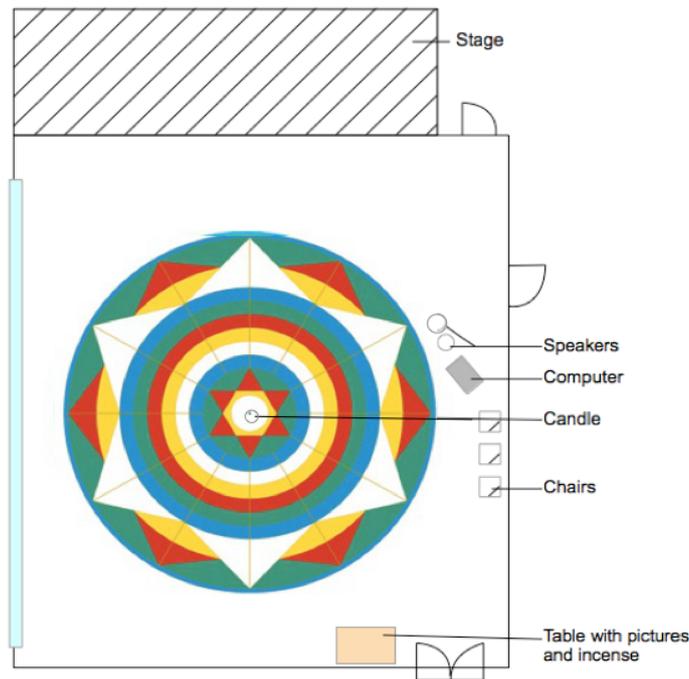


Figure 27. Room disposition.

The first dance they were going to perform was the only one I had access to: the Dance of the Six Spaces, since it is an open, universal dance. However, the other ones and the final stage of the ritual were restricted to those who had received the specific teachings. Therefore, after the first dance I left the room and sat in a pub for an hour, where I used my time to take some notes on what I had seen.

These are the transcribed lines that I took during the whole fieldwork trip:

Transcription from notebook – Dinas Powys, 18 May 2015

3 measures for the mandala (similar, they can't be changed)
Each colour represents 1 element: air, earth, fire, water and space →
fundamental for the creation of the other elements (they represent a
circle, a chain).

Centre of the mandala = guru, master (it can't be stepped on, they
have no right to do so).

3 known dances, +1 being taught now, +1 in process (on the mandala
of the universe, different from the mandala of Earth now used).

First: 9 breathings (hand to the nose, to open the channels of the
body), + 3 “ah” mantras. Each person sitting on the mandala with
legs crossed. First breathings taking the hand to the nose. One time each side, starting with left.
Inhaling while going up, exhaling while going down. Then, two times bending forward
inhaling, and back exhaling.

Beginning first dance. Start standing on red circle, + “ah” mantra with hands open looking
forward. Slow dance in circles, describing a spiral in and out of the mandala, first towards the
centre and then out (repeated). The participants have their eyes semi-closed most of the time.
Gloria tells me that they always have to return to the original position at the end of a line.

The music starts playing after the “ah”-s. Flute, acoustic guitar and natural sounds. Same
singing melody in repetition, + drums to mark the rhythm. The lyrics are a mantra: A, A, HA,
SHA, SA, MA = Practice of Samantabhadra (blue Buddha), representing original pureness,
no-dualism.

After a while a bell is added to the music, then more chants (feminine), animal sounds
(elephants, e. g.), and nature sounds. The intensity of the musical curve increases with time,
and in each phrase, to decrease towards the end. The dancers use the sung mantra as a guide
to their steps, and they sing along eventually. When they start/finish a phrase, they put their
hands in a specific position: the right hand looking up like a vessel, the left hand up with the
thumb and ring finger touching and the others extended.

The melody is simple, not wider than a sixth. Successive degrees most of the time, some thirds
tops – no major steps between notes. Modal → to be transcribed. About 60bpm.

Crescendo and inclusion of percussion and chants towards the middle of the piece. It lasts for
about 20 minutes.

At this point, I had to leave rapidly, since they do not usually leave gaps between the
dances, so I used my spare time to write down all the elements that I had missed while
watching the practice or talking to the participants – specially the organiser:

The dances can only be seen if the specific teaching has been taught to the person directly
from the Rinpoche → if not, it is bad karma for all the participants. To perform each dance
the pertinent workshop has to be pursued.



Figure 28. Universe
mandala.

Different dance for men and women.

Their main aim is getting ready for their daily lives, they don't give that much importance to the ritual itself but as a way of getting prepared for the Way.

The ritual is developed in 3 phases:

- Beginning, preparation (breathings + 3 "ah")
- 3 dances
- Dance of the Six Spaces
- ? (Not seen)
- ? (Not seen)
- Blessings and closure (Not seen)

The two new dances being developed are livelier, they are not from Earth but from Universe (different mandala to perform them).

Each colour represents an element and each point of the mandala is associated to a geographical location (specific) of the planet. The mandala is a representation of Earth flattened from its X axis → blue circle on the outside = equator.

The guru obtains all his teachings from *termas* (visions elaborated in his meditative life). The music is obtained through this means. He noted it with the help of some musicians and then the community developed it; they created a more complex sonority that was approved by the Master.

First dancers = 30 years ago.

Questions

- Do they reach an expanded state of consciousness through the dance?
- What do the participants think is the main aim of the music in the practice? Is it of principal or secondary importance, for the coordination of movement?
- Are all the participants Buddhists? Are there other means that drive people to participate?
- How would the participants describe the music? Is it similar in the rest of the dances? Does it follow a process? → I can't see the whole curve without seeing the other dances.
- How many participants are there usually? How many are needed?
- What happens with the ritual clothes? Is it important to wear them/does it have a specific significance?
- Can I receive the teachings of the guru?

After an hour or so, Gloria called me and told me to go back to the room. The environment was very quiet and everyone looked very relaxed. They were counting the money needed for the rental of the space, so I gave them a small amount to contribute to the development of the activity.

I sat down on the floor with them, and using the last minutes before we left I asked them some of the questions that I had written down. The organiser explained how the ultimate aim of the dances is to reach Enlightenment: within the dance, one gets rid of one's daily problems, and approaches the three channels used to move closer to the 'divinity', that is, body (dance), speech (singing along, reciting the mantras), and mind (focusing on the body to get rid of the *ego*). The state reached throughout the dance is the *ideal state* of contemplation to be in, so when you dance or recall the dance you go to that place again. When feeling upset or remembering something specific, on a daily basis, one can go back

and embrace this state. Eventually, then, one remains always in that space and becomes finally Enlightened. We all are, in the end, Buddhas being built through the continuous reincarnation in *samsara*. The dancing practice is a quicker way to Enlightenment.

Talking about how it worked for them, in relation to the music and the feeling they got from it, the participants highlighted the peacefulness it brings and the space-fullness around while dancing. The music, in this sense, worked to induce the ‘expanded state’ that they looked forward to achieving. On the other hand, they pointed out its more pragmatic aspect regarding the coordination of the dance. What they said, in any case, was that the feeling reached while dancing is quite difficult to describe, and that it requires practice to get loose enough to embrace it. A girl who was starting to get into the dancing world told me that she is still a bit focused on doing the right movements and stepping on the right places and colours. The others agreed that practice is required to embrace the space-fullness feeling that they described. The music, in this context, is what puts everything together and coordinates the whole ensemble.

The organiser also pointed to the common work of music and dance – on the specific colours and locations of the mandala – as a channel of reverberation with the body. This is to say, if one steps on the right places while the specific mantra or note is playing, one gets the whole experience, the total connection to what the guru transmitted.

After some other quick words, we left the building. It was already ten o’clock at night, and we had to go back to Cardiff. The organiser gave us a lift to Gloria’s place, and meanwhile we spoke of the project that I am developing and the usefulness of what I saw. The organiser did not seem very keen on having me there often, but the other girls, once again, were interested and encouraged me to get the appropriate teachings so I could go and dance with them.

When we arrived, Gloria told me that she was going to teach me what I need to do to be able to see the whole ritual, which teachings I must receive from the Rinpoche, and which books I must read. In the end, she pointed out, it is just a matter of trust from the community and following the steps that they mark. The perspectives on the practice attendance are, therefore, quite good. Today was a tease of what the dance can offer, since it was only a first approach. I expect to get a better look of the whole exercise once I have entered the teachings and have read more of the specific literature. Some questions remain, though, and it would be useful to have an interview with some of the participants in more detail.

The overview of the activity has been good so far, and I really think I can contrast it with the previous activities I have observed. It looks like the Dance of the Varja is come to stay.

Fieldwork XV

DANCE OF THE VAJRA

On My Approaches from September to December 2016, Barcelona

The Dance of the Vajra may stop surprising me at some point, but I don't think that the community built around it ever will. I have created strong bonds with them, and entered that blurry zone in the field between work and friendship. I would lie if I said I haven't contemplated the possibility of focusing exclusively on the rich background on which the whole dancing practice sits, thanks to the great environment they have created for me.

I had not written down a proper fieldwork diary yet on the Dance of the Vajra, both because the process has been different from that of other fieldwork cases – slower and more escalated —, and because I had not managed to put myself to it.

Before moving to Barcelona, the only direct contact I had had with the Dance had been the one time in Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, just at the beginning of my research, during the summer of 2015. In that first session, I discovered the existence of the Dzogchen Teachings and its practice, in a very short encounter with a dancing session, on which I then made a fieldwork-diary entrance, only preceded by an interview with a co-worker of mine at the time – also from Spain. The way in which music is used both to articulate the physical activity and to lead the participants to a meditative-like state of consciousness has kept my interest ever since.

Almost a year and a half passed until I arrived in Barcelona and actively started my research on the field. However, before I arrived I had already prepared and undergone the webcast teachings by the creator and master of the practice, Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, thus obtaining my initiation or *direct transmission* that would allow me to go into further teachings and practice. I also took my time to research the Dance online, and tried to find literature that would help me when properly entering the ritual arena. The Master's autobiography, which has been turned into a movie called *My Reincarnation*, was also an enlightening point to understand his background and the merging of the Tibetan tradition with the European culture.

Regarding the literature part, I have only *now* been able to get my hands on it, since it is usually only produced in small batches exclusively for practicants rather than the wider public. In a few words, it cannot be found in libraries in the most part, so it was tricky for me to get around it. I'll get into this later.

In a sense, I had been approaching the dancing practice wrongly: detaching the Dance from the rest of the Dzogchen cosmos is, for every participant, unthinkable. The Dance of the Vajra, which is formed by several dances, is only a small part of the complete teachings which Namkhai Norbu has received through his meditative experience throughout the years. He is, in fact, still developing all these other teachings at the age of 78, while travelling and spending time in retreats all over the world.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, the Dance of the Vajra pursues the meditative-like state of *total awareness*, which is also the central focus of the rest of Dzogchen teachings, as given both by Namkhai Norbu and other teachers of the same 'branch' – some of whom he

himself received teachings from, and that have served to the building of the tradition he diffuses nowadays. However, in my PhD I will only be focusing on the Dance, since it is the clearer example to be found in this – new? – tradition in which music and body movement *expressly* merge towards the aim of extending one's consciousness. Here it is where I should enter Judith Becker's ideas on *trance* and non-ordinary states of consciousness, but no need. On the other hand, it is true that the rest of the case studies I am considering also include a larger background: they are not only focused on the practices of breathworking or dancing respectively, but also on the specific literature and complementary activities that go with their background *cosmoi*.

Once I was back in Barcelona – and after I had found a proper flat and everything else, which took a while —, I was ready to jump straight to the field. On July, I had already started to work with the ESCEN System, and the Dance of the Vajra was the last contact step to complete all my three case studies, since I had already had contact with the guys from both Breathwork schools. I found an online address on Barcelona's Dzogchen community website, dedicated to Dzogchen Teachings, so I gave it a try – after being unable to find the opening hours of the centre or any other contact numbers.

On the 12th of August, I finally met one of the girls from the Dzogchen centre – or *Kundusling* —, which is near to La Rambla, in the Gothic neighbourhood at the heart of Barcelona. The *Kundusling* is to be found at the very top of one of the old buildings of the area, which still preserves its original staircases, inner patio and imposing wooden doors. The first time I got there I had some trouble finding the flat, took the wrong set of stairs, and couldn't stop looking around – the old marble and frescos, the windows and wall decorations. Five floors and about two hundred steps later, I finally made it to the flat. Although the entrance to the centre itself is modest, the whole place is like an oasis in the middle of the cluttered city.

In the main room, the *mandala* for the Dance has been painted directly on the floor. The room is at least ten metres high, with a pointy roof that has a skylight in the centre. One of the walls preserves its original uncovered stone, and the others have windows which fill the room with light and offer a view of the city. The wooden floor is comfortable to walk on with no shoes, as it is required. The room fits the mandala and there is even space left – they have a small library, a big TV, and other furniture in there, including pillows for some of the practices in a big shelving structure — so it must be about 100 to 120m². They have a decent music system on one corner and, on the opposite side, there is an old fireplace with a picture of the Master and some other decorations. There are pictures and canvases all over the walls, centred on the colours of the five elements presented by the mandala. Besides, the attic's patio can be accessed from there, and they have hung Tibetan flags and placed plants all over, decorating the space. It is, in a few words, an amazing space to be in, practising or not. I wonder what it was used for before they rented the space.



Figure 29. Gönpa at Kundusling.

In any case, I first met my contact there, with whom I had been speaking by email during the previous week to set a day. We sat in the mandala room and another guy showed up after a while – he has recently been named the blue *gyakil* (in charge of centre’s maintenance and cultural activities), so he is around a lot. This position is one of the roles given in the Dzogchen communities of each city, along with the one of red *gyakil* (in charge of the activities and projects), and the yellow *gyakil* (in charge of economics). There is, in fact, a well-structured hierarchy parting from the Master and down to the smaller communities such as this one.

Moving forward, I explained my research to my contact – let’s call her E — and the blue *gyakil* – P —, and they put a lot of interest in it from the first moment. Actually, most of the people still check on it from time to time to see how it’s going, or ask me questions if they have any. It is, in the end, a way of letting the world know about the teachings and the Community itself.

While we were talking, E had been setting up her laptop, since she was about to explain a practice that was taking place that night, and how to perform it, to another girl through Skype. She handed me a sheet of paper with the practice written on it so I could write down the steps next to the text. The exercise was due to take place on that same night via webcast, so I asked to participate – or we sort of agreed on it —, as a way of formally starting my contact with the community in the city. It was the practice of a *thün*, which I will not discuss here because is not strictly related, although it is included in the Dzogchen practices. In any case, we went through it with all the *mantras* and *mudras*, and reviewed it to be well prepared with all the visualizations to do and so forth, for the night. The Master was going to be live at 12am, since the retreat location where he was in a different time zone – and I will not lie, it was hard getting up and focusing, but I made it.

The *thün*, which is a pillar practice in the Dzogchen tradition, includes music as well. In other words, the text on which the practicants work is sung by the teacher, and followed by the participants, who sing along. It's not surprising that much of the ritual scenarios they set forth are surrounded by a musical input, since they value three main elements for the entrance in a state of total awareness and further enlightenment: voice, mind and body. Music is, in the end, a straightforward way to include all three elements at once. However, the fashion in which the Master sings is somehow different from the Western musical tradition, as it includes microtones and inflections which Norbu incorporated during his formation years in Tibet. This has been adapted by the practicants in this particular environment to better fit their own musical parameters.

After that day, I did not hear from E in a while. Most people were going on holidays, and I had to go home for a week for personal reasons – so there it was: the well expected August break. In Spain, it is usually too warm to work or do anything on that time of the year, so it is quite usual for everyone to take a break until the weather becomes less stifling and they can go back to work.

After I was back from Menorca, I texted E again to ask her how she was and if she was already back in the city, and to see if there was anything planned at the *Kundusling*. They were planning a practice of *shitra* for a girl of the community who was ill – and who, sadly, passed away after a few weeks —, but I hadn't received the transmission so I was unable to attend. However, she told me that it was alright for me to go to the centre and see the dancing practice on their next meeting, even if I could not do it because I hadn't learned it yet, so that's what I did. If I do not remember wrong, this was on the 18th of the same month, since the week before I was travelling to Brighton for the biannual IASPM Conference.

On that occasion, I was able to perform the *guruyoga* – thankfully that's one of the few things that I already knew — and to sing along while they were dancing the Song of the Vajra and the Dance of the Six Spaces, two of the three main dances that have been already transmitted by Norbu. He has been working on another three dances that are to be performed on a bigger mandala – the Mandala of the Universe, larger than the Mandala of Earth on which these are danced —, but he has not given them out yet. The *guruyoga*, on the other hand, can be described as the preparatory or *pre-liminal* stage of the ritual, where three 'A's are chanted with their respective visualisations, and nine breaths are taken in a rather specific way.

They performed three of the complicated dances one after the other, connecting them – that is, without spaces between them. The music has been thought so it can be used separately or as a continuum, depending on the time and knowledge of the practicants. On their CDs, they include the music with phrase-separation, so it can be used to teach/learn each phrase separately or to work on a specific part, for example. Because I did not know the whole Song of the Vajra – I had only heard it a couple of times —, I was given a small book where most practices are compiled and explained in detail – for example, the *mudras* are indicated next to the phrases with images, and there are small pictures to help with the visualisation parts. The guy that I had met on the previous occasion, P, did not know the Song of the Vajra dance either, so he sang with me and jumped on the mandala during the transition towards the dance that followed. We finished the session by dedicating merits to all the gurus, which is always done as the concluding or *post-liminal* part of the ritual dance, or any other Dzogchen practice for that

matter. It is also chanted and in Tibetan, as are the rest of the texts included in the practices. I had to more or less improvise this, to be honest – I was not sure how it went, although it is now clear after weeks of practice.

At last, some days later, there was a workshop announced for the 18th of September to learn the Dance of the 12 *As*. I quickly signed up for it and payed the correspondent amount – which I believe was about 50€. E texted me a couple days before to ask me if I was going to attend, due to my shown interest in learning the dances, which I very much appreciated.

On the day before this, Saturday 17th, there was also a workshop of Yantra Yoga for beginners at the House of Tibet, to which I also wanted to attend and which was structured in two sessions. They were going to go through the eight basic movements on which the practice is built, four on each day. Unfortunately, the only way I was going to be able to manage attending this and the Dance was skipping the second day of Yoga. The instructor was alright with it, of course, since both practices belong to the same *corpus* and they complement each other in the Dzogchen teachings. So, I was able to get some insight in the bodily focused Yoga practice founded by the Master on the first session, and took the full workshop on the Dance of the 12 *As* on the following day.

I should definitely learn more about Yantra Yoga if I had the time. In a few words, it is a Yoga system focused on breathing exercises combined with movement. That is, it is a non-static Yoga system which focuses on inhaling and exhaling to reach a state of *total awareness*, as do the Dance and the rest of exercises in Dzogchen. The breathing that is used in this can also be found to some extent in the dancing, and more explicitly in some visualisation and recitation practices as a main focus.

In any case, I have not kept on attending the regular Yoga meetings at the centre due to time and economy matters. Once again, these workshops cannot be maintained on the good will of people, so they usually ask for a more-or-less reasonable price – definitely more reasonable than in the case of Breathwork, but still high. On the other hand, and even if it is related to the whole Dzogchen cosmos, Yantra Yoga is not the practice I am mainly approaching – it does not include music, as it is performed in silence — and I am short on time, so I prefer to focus on the musical processes. This does not mean that I did not enjoy the one-day course: it was great, and felt good on the body, so if I have the opportunity to do it anytime again, I'll be happy to.

Because of the self-subsistence nature of the Dzogchen community in Spain, and around the world in general, they have ideated a system to create some income with these activities. They also have an 'associate quote' – about 150€ per year — which gives advantages to associates on a global scale, such as access to closed webcasts, the possibility of replaying them, and so forth. On top of this, there is a 'friends of the centre' quote in Barcelona's ling, specifically designed to maintain the space – which includes access to the library and discounts for activities, for example. Finally, there's a 'donatives' box to which everyone can contribute, besides the specific prices for specific activities, store products – which they have there on display —, etcetera. This is, on the other hand, why they need a certain hierarchy inside each community under the Dzogchen umbrella, to make sure that the economics of the whole shed are well managed and non-profit focused – although I believe there's a part that goes straight to the teachers in case of workshop or course teaching. Here it is when the yellow *gyakil* shows up for management.

Moving forward, the juicy part of the weekend came with the 12 *As* workshop. The only problem with it is that I am not able to discuss some of the elements that constitute it, or to explain the movements that are reproduced, as it is a practice only to be performed and learned by those who have received the transmission only. Out of respect to the Community and their goodwill in allowing me to ask infinite annoying questions, I'll leave some 'conflicting' parts aside – in the sense of 'compromising the required transmission'.

During recent days, I have agreed to go into detail only in relation to the Dance of the Six Spaces – or Dance that Benefits All Beings —, also regarding the musical element, so here I will stick to the general matters of what I have learnt. I will try to visit the Canary Islands early in the year and ask Norbu himself in person, if he gives me a few minutes of his time, to see what I am exactly 'allowed' to discuss. I'll also get into this later, since it involves the organisation of the library at the *Kundusling*.

As I mentioned, the workshop was developed on Sunday the 18th of September, and it was instructed by S – now one of the closest 'informants' I have. She is a professional dancer and fitness teacher who has been practicing Dzogchen for some years, and who recently got her certificate as an approved Dance of the Vajra teacher. There are various levels of expertise in Dzogchen, and all of them have to be evaluated by Norbu himself in person, in an exam kind of format, where the candidates have to both dance and answer to a series of questions on Dzogchen theory.

E introduced me to S after the course. I had some trouble getting to the centre because, of course, there was a race crossing the city right when I was running short on time! Bus lines were suspended, taxis were not allowed through some streets, and taking the underground involved a couple of line changes that would have taken me forever. Anyway, E had already explained some of the basic ideas of my PhD to S, and she was as well receiving as the others had been about it when we finally met. When I got there, they were already starting the presentation of the activity.

The course was to be supervised by one of the 'right hands' of the Master, Prima Mai. She was not able to be in the *Kundusling* in person, so they set the 48-inch TV in the corner of the mandala room, with the webcam and Skype, for her to supervise the activity. They mentioned how she helped the music to *become*, parting from Norbu's indications and putting it into a tangible experience for the practicants. Unfortunately, I have not been able to talk to her yet, but as she lives in the Canary retreat where Norbu has his permanent residence, I will try to catch her on the same trip – if I finally manage to get there.

The music, as other parts of the practice, was revealed to Norbu through a long period of time, when entering profound meditative states, so that's where the sounding part of the practice begun. In this sense, the 'final product' which accompanies each dance is somehow arbitrary, as it has been put together through a third party in the West, while resting on 'Tibetan' grounds. In other words, it has been created parting from the Master's indications, as received in his meditation, and composed taking in account traditional Western methods rather than those learned by Norbu first, so it can only be a representation of an ideal sound – but again, what is not? This music usually includes Eastern instruments and other sonorities added in studio – usually nature sounds, such as animals or sea waves —, which are representative of the state they are trying to induce, and the environment they want to create for the practicant. It is slow pathed and

reverberated, and the chanting is substituted by wind instruments that replace the ‘A’ sound, or simulate it.

The dance, although it can be performed on a *mandala* just like the others, does not necessarily need one – it can be visualised by the practicant in any space —, and, differently from the others, too, can be practised individually rather than in a group. It follows a musical development that goes through 12 chanted *As*, as the name itself indicates, for 12 times in a row. However, this is not one of the three main dances which are bonded to the mandala, but a secondary dancing practice which corresponds to the same group. There are, therefore, four dances that have already been taught by Norbu, since 1990.

In this dance, music serves various purposes, beginning with setting a regular path for the different movements of the participants. As the name indicates, the sung mantra goes *A, A, A, A...* up to twelve *As*, and to each it corresponds a movement. So, in this sense, there’s a partition that indicates a change with each syllable. On the other hand, the musical process describes a circular motion which goes along with the circularity implicit to all Dzogchen teachings – *samsara, tigles, mandalas*, and so forth. In a few words, music does not only *create* a path but also *illustrates* it.

The three dimensions contemplated in Dzogchen and other Buddhist traditions – voice, mind and body — are thus put together by music similarly to what Gilbert Rouget described to be the role of music in trance environments. That is, music serves to socialise the ensemble, putting a bow around movement, consciousness and expression to unify it, also creating a communal feeling.

To go into the description of the musical material without compromising it, some elements can be discussed as well, such as its tempo, instrumentation or reproduction. The last one, the reproduction, is interesting from the perspective that it is usually introduced through technologic media rather than live. The music equipment, as well as in the case of Breathwork and ESCEN, is fundamental to the correct development of the exercise, since it makes possible the presence of the sounding element – gathering an ensemble and including certain sounds would not be possible in every circumstance. On the other hand, when learning one of these intricate dances, especially the Song of the Vajra, it is really useful being able to stop and replay each section as many times as necessary. The freedom it gives to the practicants, since they are not ‘watched’ by external individual, also adds to this equation.

With regards to the movement, on this first workshop I learned that the feminine (*pamo*) and masculine (*pavo*) parts have a specific distinction, not only in the movements but also in the overall Dzogchen cosmos. Basically, the masculine part represents lunar energy and the right side of the body, while the feminine part represents solar energy and the left side. This has further implications both in the dance and the music, since when articulating the masculine side of the body the movements become slower, and the syllables of the music elongate. The feminine side, on the other hand, includes both faster movements and somewhat faster singing. This, however, is not as clearly represented throughout the Dance of the 12 *As* as it is on the others, because of the brevity of the same.

After a few hours, we were done with the workshop. We dedicated merits and stuck around for a while. It is, after all, an easy dance with only twelve repetitive movements –

a great one to start with — that did not take much time to learn. We were about 20 people in the course, because there hadn't been one on this specific dance in Barcelona yet and the people from the community wanted to be in it. The age group was — and usually is — somewhere around the 40s on average, with younger people in their 30s and older people in their 60s. In a few words, I am usually the youngest. Usually, there are also more women than men, at least among the group I practice with most of the time. Altogether, it makes it into the 'statistics' of the gender and age participants of the kind of practices I am considering more generally.

From this day forward, I started attending the Monday sessions at the *Kundusling* every week. Before that, they always have a Yoga session, and on other days they also include other sessions, sometimes dancing and others just *ganapujas*. These practice sessions enabled me to start creating a bond with the community and to, little by little, start going into the understanding of the theoretical — and extent — part that it has as a background. I usually get there by noon, we dance for a while — first the 12 *As* and then the rest of dances — and after a while we go back home. During these days, I started to understand some of the mechanics behind the structure of the *Kundusling* and the global community, the ways in which they address 'the Master', the backgrounds of those participating more or less regularly... And of course, it gave me more insight in the musical practice of the Community, and the specific pieces that go with the dances.

I have found this specificity to be only one of the main differences that separate the Dance of the Vajra from the other case studies: both ESCEN and Breathwork use pop music that keeps alternating, while following a pattern in each session, while the Dance sticks to specific musical inputs created for the specific occasion — besides the following of the circular pattern I already mentioned. This, I believe, has to do with the different nature of the practice, in respect to the other two:

When I first encountered the Dance, it appeared to be similar to the other two cases, quite 'New Age-y' and based on a scientific-psychedelic paradigm. Nonetheless, and even if it counts with some of these elements because of its recent 20-to-21st-century nature, it is more strongly rooted in a specific tradition than the other two — that is, in the Dzogchen teachings. For this reason, it must be somehow separated from the other two cases, while it serves as a point of differentiation that perfectly exemplifies the diversity of new practices established in Europe and the so-called 'Western world'. The state of consciousness that they aim to reach, together with the mixed nature of its origin and music, makes it similar overall to the other practices, while its specific background — mainly Tibetan-focused — helps to differentiate it.

A few weeks later, after having attended the practice sessions for a while, it was time for the workshop of the Song of the Vajra. There had only been one course in Barcelona some years ago on this same dance, and none since, so everyone was eager to attend. In this occasion, I really connected both with the practicants and the state that these dances try to induce — with the rest of practices that go along with it. I believe the few days it lasted served well to my relationship with the other participants, as they got to know me better and to see me not only as an observer.

Luckily, I was quick in making my reservation and got a spot on the course. It's worth remembering that, on the mandala, 6 *pamos* and 6 *pavos* can dance at once — although the *pavo* role can be taken by a woman and vice versa —, so there weren't many spots available — otherwise, we would have to take turns. To teach the course, another one of Norbu's

closest practicants – and teachers — came to Barcelona. Her name is Luda; she is originally from Russia, in her 50s, and lives in the Canary Islands with the Master in the retreat. She is also a great dancer.

On this occasion, we were going to learn the first part of the Song of the Vajra dance, because it is a really long and complex one, so it's usually divided in two or three parts – in this way, when a first part is well assimilated, the practicants can add another chunk to it. This is the way in which the Master himself first taught it, adding the second part after a while, Luda told us. The course lasted from the 28th of October until the 1st of November – making use of a small national holiday —, and it was 160€. The second (and maybe third) part is going to take place sometime around February.

We were six women learning the *pamo* part, and two men and two women to learn the *pavo* – S was one of these two women to learn the masculine part. On the third day or so, two other women from the Community attended the workshop, so we had to take turns when practicing some of the parts. However, the last days were mostly focused on rehearsing the movements, point by point, than on adding new steps – which we also did —, so it was not a problem.

On the first day, we got started at 6pm and finished around 9pm. The first part of the session was dedicated both to doing the *Guruyoga* and singing the Song of the Vajra, and more importantly, to explain some basics on the practice and the mandala on which the dances take place.

The Song of the Vajra represents the most essential mantra in the Dzogchen teachings, as stated by Norbu himself, 'the primordial manifestation of sound'. It acts as a mantra, and is used as many other Dzogchen practices to help the practicant to discover one's real nature, making emphasis on the sonic element expressly.

Usually, when starting a practice, women sit on a specific point of the mandala while men sit on another with a different colour – women on the red outer triangles, men on the white ones. In this occasion, however, the larger number of the first group introduced a more relaxed disposition. So this is how we went through both the *Guruyoga* and the explanation, which included these few indications in relation to the Song of the Vajra. The same disposition took place before every session and at the end of the same, with the preparation and dedication of merits respectively.

Luda, on this first part, explained how the mandala represents both our inner and outer selves, the location of our chakras and specific locations on the planet: the colours that form the mandala and their disposition, together with the golden lines that divide each section in sub-sections, which are put there in accordance to Earth's specific points of energy, and in direct relation with the succession of our chakras in the body. Therefore, the mandala would represent a flattened hemisphere of the world, which would be connected with an exact one on the opposite side, inverted.

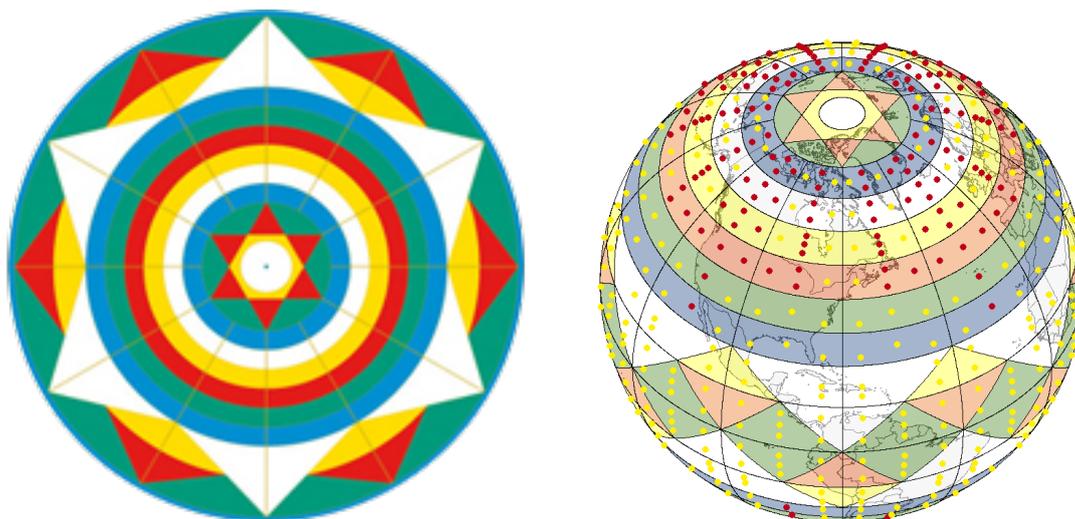


Figure 30. Earth mandala and its representation on the actual Globe.

On the other hand, the concentric colours would correspond to our chakras, starting from the middle: seventh and sixth with white, fifth with yellow, fourth with red, third with green, second and first with blue. At the same time, these colours represent the five elements of fire, water, air, earth and space, so the symbology is well rooted in the symbol of the mandala itself.

When dancing, it is important to place the feet on specific colours and sections to receive the benefits of the practice and perform it correctly, as did the bodhisattvas that the master first visualised on the same mandala when he received the *terma*. On the other hand, the centre of the mandala itself is never to be stepped on when ‘activated’, since it represents the ‘energy centre’ of the practice; it is where the Master and all the Enlightened Beings reside, where the purity of the *vajra* is to be found. This perfect centre, which is also a point of focus in some parts of the dances, is usually represented by a crystal sphere, which is placed in the centre during the dancing.

The instructor also got into the three ways in which the Dzogchen teachings pursue the state of *total awareness* – through voice, body and mind — and how each of these have a role to develop when dancing. She put an emphasis on the importance of singing the mantras or lyrics while dancing to really connect with the practice. With this, the final aim is being able to reach a state of total awareness with more ease every time – and with the addition of other Dzogchen exercises.

Finally, she explained some of the differences between *pavo* and *pamo*, some other technicalities, and we jumped into the dance. On that first session, we only got time to learn two lines, but it already proved to be complex and physically demanding in the need for repetition in the learning process. We also had to take turns to learn the feminine and masculine parts, since they have different moves – sometimes it’s only a mirror movement, but the colours that are stepped on change, so the whole phrase has to be closely studied.

On the following days, we continued with the workshop from 11am to 6.30pm, with a break in the middle for lunch, and finished on the 1st of November at lunch time – so it was a total of 8 sessions. Through these days, I got to learn not only the specifics of the

dance, the importance and thought given to each line, but also the way in which music develops for each one of them. Luda reiterated on the importance of following the path set by the music, the long and short syllables, the movements as corresponding to the right or left side, and the importance of following the song with our own singing. Sound is, in the end, the main focus of the Song of the Vajra.

Grosso modo, each movement goes attached to a syllable – sometimes two movements in one, depending on their speed — so it serves to set the path for the dance, as music usually does. However, it goes a step further, since the intention behind each line gives a hint to the listener on where to put their focus. This has been discussed in detail by the master in closed books for the Community, where he specifies the meaning of each one of the lines and the repercussions this has on its performance.

At some points, the instrumentation also serves as a point of reference for movement. For example, if there's a part without singing or with a long syllable that encompasses more than one movement, the incorporation of a rhythmical pattern or some other indication helps to maintain the appropriate speed for the entire group. This is mainly because of the lack of a marked rhythm and the fluctuating quality of the music itself: it is easy when dancing to try and rush the slow movements, so the music reasserts the calmness and introspection that is sought after.

The recording that was played for the sessions is one of those that I mentioned earlier, which have separate tracks for all the lines. These have been expressly recorded for the practice parting from the indications of the Master, as have the rest. Differently from the latter, this one includes the specific singing of the lyrics of the song by a masculine, reverberated voice, accompanied both by string instruments, wood-wind instruments and mixed natural sounds.

The first part of the song, which is 12 verses, was only finished by 2pm on the last day, to give an idea of the complexity of the movements – again, it is not only the body movements *per se* that one must learn, but the appropriate positions and colours to step on the mandala. The musical/singing part comes in by itself after repeating a line a bunch of times. The second part, Luda promised, is harder and includes more rapid movements, so it is important that there is a space between the learning of the first lines and the last to allow the students to practice and have solid knowledge of the first before moving on.

The overall song could be described as a somehow reiterative circular motion, where the melodic range is not too wide and the instrumentation does not vary much. In a sense, the lyrics resemble a recitation more than singing, although a fundamental point of importance is put by the teachings themselves in the sonic quality of the same. Of course, the song has to be approachable by the practicants from an interpretative point, so I guess it being too complicated would be counterproductive. Also, it would step away from the aim of reaching the state of total awareness and self-observance that it pursues.

The regular practice of these dances should lead the practicant to the gates of this specific state of mind, in which one gets to detach from secondary thoughts and the careful following of the steps. That is, with practice, the choreographed movements become (sort of) automated while still requiring concentration, and this allows the entrance into a self-aware, non-dual state between the mind and the body, the self and the bodhisattvas, and so on.

Unfortunately, there isn't much that I can discuss here in detail because of the hermetics imposed by the authorised transmission of the teachings. Luckily, there is one open dance which I mentioned already – and that I am yet to learn – which I will openly be able to discuss: the Dance of the Six Spaces or Dance that Benefits All Beings. I hope I will be able to learn it before the end of my fieldwork period, or otherwise I will have to make an approach from the outside only. This would not be so terrible, because I have already learned the mechanics behind the dances in great part, even if I would prefer to describe it from the inside as well. But in the end, the singing, the melodic range, the path and accompaniment of movements are pretty similar – they are usually danced all one after another, so there can't be a strong section that separates them, nor in rhythm or in style.

During the pauses between sessions in this five-day-long course, there was also some action that helped me to understand the reasons behind the participants' interest in the practice, their daily jobs, personal concerns, and expectations for the future. The community element is stronger among this group than the others I have approached, because they are not submerged in an only-time gathering, but a recurrent one. In other words, the participants in the Dzogchen teachings need to go through a time-consuming initiation and learning path that requires more perseverance than other practices which are more immediate – such as Breathwork or ESCEN. This does not mean, however, that the community element in the other two must be discarded, since it is the quality and depth of the same that varies.

Nonetheless, there are levels of mastery in all three of these case studies, as they can be approached from an only-participative perspective, or they can be taken as proper teachings which require examination, supervision, etcetera. In this last case, the final aim for the students would be to become facilitators of the practices themselves, or to enter the knowledge behind these in strong detail.

This leads me to S' recent obtaining of her first level of mastery, which I also mentioned above. There was a retreat in the Canary Islands some weeks ago, and various practicants from all over the world went there to take their exams. She was very excited about it, and explained how she was able to get into the dancing state and not feel nervous, even with the presence of the Master – to whom she has great devotion. The theoretical part, she said, was the one that she was not so sure about, because it can be anything in the whole cosmos of the Dzogchen teachings, a question about *anything*. However, the master was not too severe and the questions were reasonable, so everyone passed. S is now a certificate teacher for the Dance of the Vajra, so she is the one to guide our Monday practices and the one to help us with our doubts and correct our mistakes.

To this moment, we have kept on practising every week, now focusing almost exclusively on the Song of the Vajra to prepare for the second part. I don't know if I'll remember the easy steps of the 12 As, because it's been a while.

There have been some interruptions in this practising for everyone due to other obligations – in my case, mostly conferences —, but we have kept a good rhythm. We are usually the same people around, but there are a few assistants who show up from time to time, mostly on courses. They also gather on other days of the week and do further activities, but my working schedule and rest of activities keep me away on most occasions. In any case, I feel like in these few fieldwork months I've gone far in the research. And I am also happy that I still have some months to spare to get to the bottom of the teachings – or as far as I can within this short period of time.

A major step for me within the community was being able to get more involved with the organisation of the centre: on the 14th of November, I was asked to become one of the library's managers because of my academic background. It is quite a small library, with no more than 200 books and 50 DVDs, but they didn't have anyone interested in organising it, and because it *really* needs some work and a system, they had it closed to the public. When I stepped in, it was a win-win both for them and me: they get someone who watches it regularly and follows the loan of books, organises it and refreshes the inventory, while I can get more involved and have all the literature available.

The problem with the major part of the Dzogchen literature is that it is only available to those who have received direct transmission, so it is not commercialized outside the Community. Because of this, I had been having a hard time finding anything useful that would let me in some technical issues. Although there are some elements I will not be able to discuss openly, it will help my understanding of the practice and my analysis in musical terms. I am looking forward to having some more time to get into it.

The girl that has been managing it so far has been the yellow *gyakil* for a while, but her responsibilities are so many that she wanted someone to help her out. On the 21st of November, and two weeks after that, we set a date so she could explain to me the basics and show me how she had been organising it during previous years. She sent me the documents for the inventories, lists, and so forth, and we started working on it on the 12th of December. It was a bit out-of-step already, but we will manage.

Unfortunately, she has been having some health issues and has now left to the retreat in the Canary Islands, to spend a couple of months. This, on one hand, delays the tuning-up of the library, but, on the other, gives me one opportunity I had not contemplated yet: she invited me to visit her around mid-to-late January when she is already set in the Islands, so I can meet the Master and ask him directly some questions I've been having. Whenever I have had a doubt, I have asked her or S, and I've tried to be straight-forward in relation to my PhD and my interests, but some of these should be better addressed by Norbu himself – for example: which literature can I quote on my bibliography? Which parts of the practices am I allowed to discuss? Can I transcribe any parts of the music?

After this, the holidays arrived and most of the people were going to be out of the city or with their families, so the *Kundusling* would be closed for a while. Thankfully, this break has given me time to reflect on all this process and have a brief rest, which I hope will give me some perspective before I start things running again on January.

Hopefully, I will learn the rest of the dances and will be able to work on the music during the following months. There are also some interviews I need to plan, now that there's a formed relation between me and the other practicants. As Rihanna says, 'work, work, work'... but I can't wait!

Fieldwork XVI

DANCE OF THE VAJRA III

17th - 19th February 2017 – Song of the Vajra: Part II, Barcelona

Last weekend it was time for the second part of the Song of the Vajra course. We had been practising the first part for a while at the Ling during the last weeks, and had had an intensive practice day two weeks before this as well, when a lot of participants gathered to ‘consolidate’ the part they had already learned, and get ready to incorporate some new lines. It is, in the end, quite a complicated dance, so it was useful for first-time learners. We also had lunch at the centre and a bit of a chat during the day-long activity, so I would count Saturday the 4th as a first session complementary to the course. However, many of the course assistants were not there, and it ended up actually delaying the progress of the new part.

Because it is a precise dance, with feet, arm movement, and colour selection involved, the instructors decided to break it down into three parts, to take place on three different weekends, the first one being the longest – which I already discussed in a previous fieldwork diary. Let’s remember that the mandala represents both our inner centres of energy and Earth’s ones, which are captured through concentric circles of different colours, divided into 12 ‘slices’, which are then again subdivided into three smaller sections each. Depending on the steps, the specific centres change, and depending on the bodily movements, the teachings attached to specific lines do too. In the case of the Song of the Vajra, each line has a precise meaning in relation to our way of experiencing and being in the world, so each movement is different – in comparison to the Dance of the Six Spaces, or the 12 *As*, which repeat the same lines over and over.

This is the reason why from the outside it may look quite simple and fluid, but it requires consistent practice. This, on the other hand, means that reaching the state of contemplation that the practice aims for is utterly difficult in a consistent form – unlike the more immediate methods that other exercises present, such as those introduced by my other case studies. The final aim, in any case, is being able to hold the state of contemplation at all times, so the dance is only one of the various methods that may lead to it within the Dzogchen teachings. These methods encourage a rapid entrance in the aimed state of mind, and present them as one of the main characteristics of the teachings themselves – the direct entrance in the *rigpa* state —, although its steadiness is to be learned slowly. They point this out on their international website as well, together with the rest of the description of the discipline:

Dzogchen or 'The Great Perfection', is considered the summit of all Tibetan schools, the highest and most immediate path towards spiritual progress.

Rather than a religious doctrine it is better defined as a system of inner knowledge, given the great importance to the development of individual awareness. This spiritual path, which is open to all, involves working towards self-awareness; personal freedom is an essential aspect so there is no obligation to follow rules or take monastic vows. The fundamental practice consists of reaching a deep knowledge of oneself and one's essential existence through the various experiences of daily life. For this reason, Dzogchen is particularly well suited to the needs of modern society. (*International Dzogchen Community*, <<https://dzogchen.net/dzogchen/>> [Last viewed on 27th February 2017]. My highlight in bold.)

Norbu himself already taught this specific dance – the Song of the Vajra dance —, in the same broken-down fashion, and has continued to add small changes and details through the years, so students have to be alert to follow his updates, which are reinforced by qualified instructors here and there. The music, in the same sense, was delivered to some of his students so they could give it a tangible form.

This brings me to the recurrent idea that many practicants frequently mention: that Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche is our time’s Dzogchen teacher, reincarnation of a Rinpoche from the Nyingma school, in which he was introduced to the teachings of Garab Dorje, following the Tibetan tradition of passed knowledge through reincarnation. That is, he is a teacher born in our era, who has introduced new teachings and recovered older ones for the benefit of all beings belonging to the late 20th and 21st centuries. This supposes a great advantage, in the sense that the movement Norbu leads is constantly updated and reviewed, having an *only one* major point of reference – unlike other ‘leaders’, or facilitators, among the ‘evolved ritual practices’ that I am approaching. In any case, his figure of authority serves not only the maintenance and updating of the teachings, but also to the existence of only one line of practice. This, as I have seen in the past, does not happen in Guided Breathwork or the ESCEN System, mainly because of their more flexible structures. Otherwise, in Dzogchen, Norbu represents the maximum authority, as recognised by his Rinpoche status.

Moving forward, the course started on Friday the 17th at 6pm. It was 80€ for the three days – although affiliated members had a 20% discount —, which was to cover for the instructor’s travel expenses and the maintenance of the centre, mostly, as I understand it. During the weekend, the number of participants varied a bit depending on the personal schedules of everyone there – some people couldn’t make it to the Friday or Sunday session, for example —, but the overall total of participants was 11 *pamo* + 7 *pawo*. That is, 11 people learning the feminine part – 11 women —, and 7 people learning the masculine part – 5 men and 2 women. This supposed that Luda, the instructor, had to break each line down a total of four times so everyone could learn it, since only six *pamo* and six *pawo* fit on the Earth’s mandala at once, and they both have different movements. As usual, I was the youngest, while the oldest would have been in their 60s.

On the first afternoon, I was the second one there, as I arrived a bit early, and I helped Luda to set up the music equipment and prepare the room for the *guryuyoga*. I talked to her about the chat I had had over Skype with Prima Mai, and about my research, to which she is always open and curious, and after a while participants started arriving. Some of them had never learned any of the dances – including the first part of the one we were on about —, others had learned them but had not practised in a long time, and some were there to review/consolidate the whole thing. Besides, S was learning the *pawo* part, although she has already been officially examined for the *pamo* part. Because of the wide range of levels of expertise, a big part of the course was dedicated to reviewing the first part and going into specific, more advanced gestures.

When everyone was there, Luda placed the crystal sphere in the centre of the mandala, and we sat around it to get started. We did 9 deep breaths – left, right, centre —, 3 *As*, and chanted the Song of the Vajra from top to bottom, following the instructor’s lead, *a cappella*. Then she quickly reviewed some of the basics of the mandala for those present there for the first time: representation of inner and outer centres of energy, the five colours

for the five elements, feminine and masculine parts, specificity of each line in the Song, and so on.

To this it followed a first dance from the top of the Song to the mid part – which was the last point that we had learned. However, the participants that had not learned it before had to stay out for a bit, also as a way of making a first approach to the movements and the music – unlike the Dance of Six Spaces, this one cannot be found online as it requires direct introduction. We reviewed it a few more times to make sure it was solid, and some of the first-time learners were able to follow some of its parts. Besides, during the following two days we reviewed the last four lines prior to the middle section, which were a bit blurry for some of the present – myself included —, one at a time in each one of the sessions.

Finally, on that first day, we got to add a whole new line to the part that we already knew. We repeated it several times, first *pamos* – in two groups —, then *pawos*. We tried dancing the whole Dance from the top up to that point, and soon after it was already 9pm, so we dedicated merits and wrapped it up until the next day.

On the following day, we were at the Kundusling by 10.45am to proceed with the payment of the course and to get ready before the start, at 11am sharp. We ran a first session from 11 to 1.30pm, and a second one from 4 to 6.30pm. On each one, we started with *guruyoga*, before elaborating on further moves for the dance. Luda put an emphasis on the tripartite form of the practices, which always start with a preparation – *guruyoga*, or in Van Gennep’s terms: pre-liminal phase —, followed by the main part of the ritualised part – in this case, the dance, or what would be the liminal phase –, and the closing at the end –dedication of merits, or post-liminal phase. This same pattern was developed on Sunday too, as we got to the end of the second part of the Song.

Not much happened during the sessions on which I can go into detail – because of the hermetic nature of the teachings and the slow progress that it presents —, besides a few points I believe that are important to highlight, which do not compromise in any way the specificity of the practice. However, it is worth remembering that the technological reproduction of sound and the possibility of isolating single phrases of the overall pieces make work a lot easier. As in the Dance of Six Spaces, the vocal range is not too wide for the participants to follow, and each inflection is quickly associated to specific moves on the mandala. That is, sound helps the dancers to remember the specific movements by relating them to specific phrases, so if a single line sounds one can rapidly relate it to the place it belongs on the mandala.

During the course, while repeating one of the lines, it crossed my mind: what would happen if I stepped on the centre of the mandala and the glass ball rolled away? The centre is the most ‘sacred’ space during the ritual, as it is a point of focus, which represents the authority of the Master and all Enlightened beings. I know it is totally secondary to the musical input, but I was curious anyway. And just like it was a granted wish, someone did exactly why I had been wondering... and kicked the ball trying to cross to the other side! There was a tense moment of silence, most people looked at Luda expecting a reaction, while S chased the ball across the room and put it back in place. The only comment made, however, was something like ‘that’s why we do not cross this middle section, you have to walk around it to get to another place on the mandala’. Not that big a deal, mystery solved – but phew!

On Sunday, I was able to stay there for lunch with a bunch of other people, as we had done in previous occasions. Everyone brought something from home, and we cooked and shared a big meal before sitting around the big table. When everything was set, food and wine on the table, we had a short *ganapuja* – which I had never been into — which includes a chanted ‘prayer’ as a lot of other practices do in Dzogchen. It mostly serves as a ‘benediction’ in Christian terms, where the practitioners make an ‘offering’ of food to ‘accumulate merits’. That is, they dedicate the profit of food to all beings, whilst putting special focus on the necessity of death so one can eat –that does not only include direct deaths such as meat-related ones, but also vegetables and legumes that imply the death of thousands of insects and plants. On the other hand, wine is usually put under a lens too, as Elías Capriles mentions in his book *Budismo y Dzogchén* (Spain: La llave, 2000), because of its de-focusing effects on the drinker. Although it is not strictly related to the Dance, it forms part of its cosmos, and as such it was quite interesting to watch from a first row.

Again, it was a practice developed in Tibetan, as are the rest of the lyrics and mantras in this school. I was quite impressed that most of the assistants knew all the words, even not knowing exactly what they were pronouncing. The new contributions of Norbu are mainly centred on the Dances and Yantra Yoga, so many of the surrounding rituals belong directly to the tradition in which Norbu grew into. However, a glimpse of the West, if not more, can be perceived in the first.

Besides this, I gathered exciting news: there is going to be a course for the Dance of Six Spaces! This dance is for everyone, as it does not require direct introduction, and I will be able to discuss it openly in musical terms. I was not counting on the possibility of doing the course in the period assigned to my fieldwork, so I could not ask for more. Also, the topic of this specific dance came out on an interview during the previous week, and I think it will work perfectly as a central example for the overall practice. On the other hand, Luda also agreed to have a Skype interview sometime soon, so everything is going great – I just hope I’ll have the time to do it all.

The rest of the course, however, was quite lineal and not much happened besides the learning of the lines. The music, as I mentioned, gives hints to the dancer with the subdivision of its slow tempo using percussion instruments, and not only the chants, as one would expect. There are parts where more than one movement is fit into one syllable, while others are slower, mostly depending on the meaning of the teaching behind the line. I’ll describe the instrumentation when I analyse the Dance of Six Spaces, since it is quite similar and will give a better idea of how it sounds. And finally, the chanting: it has to be counted in as an indispensable part of the Dance too, together with the mind and the body – it’s already in the mantra, OM A HUM.

There is one more part of the dance to go, which is taking place next month, plus one course to learn the Dance of Six Spaces, and that should cover all my fieldwork on this case – not forgetting about the Monday gatherings and other complementary activities that are going to take place, in which I am counted in. I can’t wait to sit down and put everything into perspective.

Overall, it was a nice weekend to spend with the Vajra family.

Fieldwork XVII

DANCE OF THE VAJRA IV

31st March - 2nd April 2017 – Dance of Six Spaces, Barcelona

Although I hadn't foreseen it, I was very pleased to be able to attend a full course on the Dance of Six Spaces last weekend. I was afraid I would not be able to actually learn the only dance I can openly discuss, but after a change of plans and the recent graduation of S, it was scheduled – and I was thrilled. This adds to the fact that I was unable to attend the third – and last part — of the Song of the Vajra dance on the 17th-19th of March, which was disappointing. I had already learned the rest of the moves and was looking forward to completing the intricate lines. Luckily, this weekend's course made it up for me – and I guess I'll be able to learn the last part of the Song of the Vajra through some practice days at the Ling.

The course lasted from Friday, 31st of March, until Sunday, 2nd of April. It was a weekend-only course, since the dance includes only six lines that are repeated six times. In sum, it is quite a bit simpler than the Song of the Vajra, so we also had more time to go into smaller details. Because of this, S – our instructor for the occasion — was able to space the learning of each phrase evenly without rushing through anything. We learned the first line on Friday night, the following three on Saturday, and the last two on Sunday. We even had some extra time to practice the whole dance – the six rounds in a row —, which gave us a better idea of the dance as a whole. There is another course scheduled for the first weekend of May for those who already know this dance and want to go into further detail regarding both the movements *per se*, and the meaning of each one of the lines. This course will be given by an instructor that has been in longer contact with the practice and the Master, so it will be an opportunity to get a closer look to what goes on at the smaller level in the dance, if needed. However, my budget is shrinking by the minute, so I'll have to skip this one and focus on the literature and interviews to cover any existing gap.

Friday, 31st March

Back to this weekend's workshop, we met on Friday at 6pm at the usual location – the Dzogchen centre — to get started. The first day is usually a 'first-contact' kind of day, which serves as a means to start moving and planning the rest of the sessions. Because the Dance of Six spaces is an open dance, there were a couple of participants there who hadn't received the Master's transmission, but were curious about learning the method and getting in contact with the Community. This affected the development in some ways: for example, we weren't able to dedicate merits as usual at the end of the session, because they were not to listen to the specific mantra. However, it was great to see how it adapted to a more open environment, and how – taking out these details — in the end the result was basically the same. The reason for this, is that Norbu considers the practice to be of benefit and use for all beings alike, independently of their knowledge of the true state of the mind – although it can also be seen as a point of entrance for new adepts.

We started by sitting around the mandala and with S introducing the basic instructions: colours of the mandala, representation of our inner and outer chakras –principal and secondary one, both on Earth and on our bodies—, the 'sacredness' of the centre (including the green inner *tigle*), the *terma* received by the Master, etcetera. She also got

into the relation of the specific Dance with our emotions – pride, envy, passions, ignorance, attachment, and wrath — and their relation to each one of the six levels of existence in *samsara* – Infernal beings up to Enlightened beings. These emotional levels are purified through the dance, since we all have them attached to our specific chakras, although the same practice can be combined with the ‘Purification of the 6 *lokas*’ by itself for a more powerful or complimentary effect.

When we were done with the theoretical part, we moved on to the music and the *mantra* that structures both the sound and the dance: A’ A HA SHA SA MA, which also refers to the six chakras and levels of existence, as I understood it. She hung up a simplified score in the room too, that remained there to help the participants with the lines during the weekend.

S explained the importance of the *A* sound, since it is supposed to be the first manifestation of reality to come in existence, the point from which everything else departs. That is, the *A* sound represents the purest sound, the one which most directly relates to our emotional selves, and as such the first one to create vibration, which moves through space, therefore creating movement.

This idea was presented by a couple of the participants of last year’s ‘Mind, Body, Spirit Festival’ in London as well – at least, by those whose speeches I got to listen to —, which I believe is significant as a point of common agreement among some ‘alternative’ spiritual scenes / reformulated traditions.



Figure 31. Transcription of the melody in the Dance of Six Spaces.

We sang the first line a couple of times so we could start ‘feeling it’ before we got into the practice, and related to the guidance aspect that the syllables would have during the dance, since they mark the path of the steps themselves.

Then, we got up to do some warming up exercises, which included walking around the room paying attention to *how* we walk – first stepping on the heel, then the weight moves towards the tip of the foot while the other already starts setting its heel, etcetera. This is, in the end, how the steps are taken during the dance on the *mandala*. We then practised a couple of specific movements that are recurrent, including the *mudra* that is repeated at the end of each one of the lines – which, for the *pamos*, corresponds to that shown by Tara in many of her representations, and is inverted in the case of the *pawos*.

Once we learned these more specific and intricate details, it was time to learn the first line, and so we did, to start familiarising ourselves with the path that the dance establishes – specifically those who hadn’t been on the *mandala* before.

The first thing we noticed was that at the end of each one of the lines, and as an indicator of the end of the *mudra*, there is a bell sound that acts as an indicator, so it is easier to move together and in time. There is also a secondary bell when the *mudra* starts, and some light drumming to indicate the rhythm along with the singing of the *mantra* all along the

practice. All these, when put together, make it easy for the dancers to follow the proposed rhythm, although it can be tricky at first because of the slow pace – balance has to be re-mastered if one is not used to moving at this speed, actually.

The session was over around 9pm, and after a nice first taste of what it would be like, we were off home to rest for the following day, which was starting at 11am. We finished sitting around the mandala and chanting an *A* to dedicate merits, since we were not able to sing the specific mandala — yet.

Saturday, 1st April

On Saturday, we got started with a bunch more people than the previous day. In total, we were 7 *pamos* and 7 *pawos*, in the usual age range. We proceeded with some of the payments on that second session too, 80€ for the whole weekend, and with a bit of a chat that ended up delaying us for about 15 minutes. It was raining a lot and the main room was humid and cold. Because the skylight has to be repaired, there were also some leaks to take care of every once in a while, so that we didn't slip on the mandala. However, the day moved on quite normally as everyone started to feel more comfortable with the dance.

Once we got started, S explained how each one of the six lines that are danced represent one of the six main emotions, attached to a specific *lokas*. However, *pamos* and *pawos* start from different points on the chakra spectrum – *pamos* from the bottom, first purifying wrath, and *pawos* from the top, first purifying pride. To get a better understanding of this, I asked S to help me build a scheme before lunch, so it would be clearer from the outside. This is what she explained:

Structure in Dance of Six Spaces

	Chakra	Syllable	Emotion	Location	Mandala's <i>tigle</i>
<i>Pawo</i>	6	A`	Pride	Head	Blue – White
	5	A	Envy	Throat	Yellow
	4	HA	Passions	Heart	Red
	3	SHA	Ignorance	Bellybutton	Green – Blue
	2	SA	Attachment	Secret chakra	Outer triangles
<i>Pamo</i>	1	MA	Wrath		

As it is clear from this, the chakras on the Tibetan practice do not correspond to those proposed by most Yogic practices, which include 7 points of energy. Besides, this system takes into account secondary chakras, which are fed through the principal ones. This, on the other hand, is fit into the sequences of 6 that the Dance proposes: 6 syllables for the *mantra*, 6 lines, repeated 6 times, in relation to the 6 principal emotions, and so on.

On this second day, we did not have time for preliminary exercises, since the beginning of the session was delayed for about 15 minutes, waiting for everyone to arrive and get ready, as usually happens. So, we jumped straight into the reviewing of the first line and the addition of the second. Once we start learning the lines it is usually a slow process, and music only starts to play once the participants start to move more fluidly and to integrate the colours, arm movements and so on. The group of *pawos* was especially slow to learn their part, so there were many sections in which the *pamos* were there to sing the lines – and backwards when it was their turn.

S made emphasis on the importance of following the syllables, which act as an indicator of the beginning of a new step each time. We soon added the first *A* with which each one of the dances begins – or, in the case of a complete *thün*, with which the dances are opened and closed. That is, once we were ready to dance a couple of lines in a row all together, *pamos* and *pawos*.

Around 2pm we took a break for lunch. Most of us stayed there, cooked and had a common meal as we usually do in these courses. Once we were done it was already past 3.30pm, but everyone was ready and eager to head back to the *gompa* to keep on adding steps to the dance, and so we did. The *pawos* were the first ones to dance during this session, so I made the most of it and read some of the material they have in the centre's library to complement what S had explained to us, after she pointed out a couple of good lectures for me. Unfortunately, many of these are for intern community use only, and they specify that their content is not to be disseminated outside of the same, so I won't be able to discuss them – nevertheless, this does not mean they are not useful for me to understand what's going on and then apply the adequate 'diffusion' of their basics.

In the evening, we added two further lines before finishing at 7pm. It developed as it did during the morning, first dancing spare lines, then adding them to the ones we already knew, then dancing together – *pamos* and *pawos*. To play the music, once the movements were clear, some of the assistants took turns to sit next to the reproducer and hit 'play' as needed – although the lines are separated in tracks, the remote was not working properly and it required someone standing next to the sound system. And on we went for the following 3 hours or so.

We finished the session by dedicating merits, sitting around the mandala and chanting an *A*. With this, we closed the day and were ready to head back home to rest, looking forward to the following day when the dance would be complete. It had been a slow-moving day, but we had accomplished four out of the six lines there are by the time, so it could've been worse.

Sunday, 2nd April

Unlike the day before, the Sun was up in Barcelona on Sunday, and everyone was eager to experience the Spring on their skin, so the streets were full and Sunday markets were set all around for tourist attraction. Because of this and the race that was happening across the city – again —, I got delayed on my way to the Kundusling. I should have foreseen it, because it is more frequent than I'd like to admit – not remembering a race that stops all the traffic, and having to walk for thirty more minutes than expected. My bad.

In any case, when I got to the Ling they were already dancing and the *pamos* were finishing to learn the 5th line of the dance. Luckily enough for me, I am a quick learner and the line was not hard, so I integrated it fast enough to keep on track. Besides this weak start, the day moved on as the previous, calmly and with a relaxed atmosphere. We got to learn the last line before lunch – which we delayed a bit, until 2.30pm. In this way, we would have all evening to get into details and to move to the whole practice, to the entire dance.

A curious thing happened: during the last hour or so, some people wanted to take their socks off so they wouldn't slip on the *mandala* with some of the movements, to which S responded with a clarification: there's a reason why they use special shoes – or socks – when dancing, and that's to respect the sacredness of what the space itself represents. However, she let them dance barefoot, while reminding everyone to respect the mandala with their minds if that had to be the dancing situation at a certain point.

We wrapped up the morning session sitting around the mandala as always and dedicating merits. This time, however, we proceeded to dedicate as we normally do, with the specific mantra and all. I'll have to ask S how did she establish a point of difference, or when did the not-introduced participants become able to participate in that part, since it is not clear for me at this point. Maybe after some hours of course one understands the *rigpa* state as introduced through practice, so the initiation is complete. I don't know.

This time around, when the clock hit lunch time, I went out for a while, but I was back in the centre for coffee and some banana bread before 4. The interesting part came during the afternoon and evening when we got to put everything together. We were 7 *pamos* and 7 *pawos*, as I mentioned, so we had to take turns. This way, I got the chance to see it from the outside as well as from the inside, and to experience both perspectives.

The last session of the weekend started with 9 breathings and three *As*, while we sat in a circle around the mandala as usual, thus completing the 'pre-liminal' phase of the dance we had jumped over during some of the previous sessions. S explained some points around the introduction of the practice by the Master during 1989 and 1990, and got into the reasons for the strength of the practice:



Figure 32. Us sitting around the mandala.

The first Dzogchen teacher was Garab Dorje, who lived many centuries ago in Odiyana. He passed on his knowledge to Gomadevi, one of his most remarkable students, from whom Norbu himself received initiation afterwards, through a profound meditative state. Between Gomadevi and Norbu there were other initiates as well, such as Guru Padmasambhava or Mandarava. However, the Master's knowledge came from this princess directly, not from the last receivers of the teachings. However, the short lineage

is put forward as a reason for both the importance and the energetic strength of the practice. In fact, the dances were unknown among Dzogchen practitioners until about 27 years ago, when he introduced them.

S also opened a round of questions before moving to the dancing part, which I used to ask for a clarification regarding the dancing of the 6 lines for 6 times: Is each one of the rounds related to a specific chakra too, or does the dance go through all six chakras every time? As it turns out, it is the second, and the dance is repeated six times to intensify the purification of the six *lokas* repeatedly. Therefore, the musical disposition will not be descriptive of a different centre each round – which is important for my posterior analysis.

After that, we went over the whole dance separating both groups – *pamos* and *pawos* — to finish making every step clear, and we finally got together for a couple of complete *thün*, which were supervised by the instructor. The first time, I got to do the whole dance, which is tricky in terms of one's own focus – you have to stay in a very specific state to not fall out of the steps, which probably become automatised for a while, still demanding a certain level of attention. I believe I finally got to see, at a very small scale, the state of consciousness which is truly intended to be induced during the dance – what the Master and other Dzogchen teachers call 'the true state of the mind' or the *rigpa* state. Singing the mantra as one dances does actually help in maintaining this state more easily as well, so there is another use for the 'body, voice and mind' idea.

On the second time around, I left my place to another participant so I could watch it from the outside and focus more specifically on the music. Although it starts more or less calmly, once one of the two groups move on to the 3rd centre it intensifies with the entrance of animal sounds – which correspond to the beings of that specific *loka*. I believe that the scheme I traced on my first time around the practice still represents well what happens in the whole experience: because the practice is repetitive, it moves on and on in a circular motion, that is directed towards the reaching of the pursued state of mind.

The music that accompanies the piece is usually the same recorded version – except in cases where they use previous ones or live music, which are less frequent — which is both sung and followed in melody by a flute. The scale that is used has a small range, which allows the participants to sing along, while it prevents any kind of distraction related to it. However, the most important element to highlight, besides the *tambura*, flute and other string instruments that relate to each one of the energy centres, is the percussion.

As I have mentioned before, there is a bell that signals the end of each line and marks the *mudra*, but because it is such a slow-paced dance there is also a percussive element present that helps the dancing ensemble to *move together*, as a 'single organism'. I am looking forward to breaking this down in a more analytical manner during the following months, to see if it is just the impression that it makes, or if the music really grows in intensity towards the middle section to decrease towards the ending point – is it truly *the same* line six times in a row, or does each one vary in some way depending on the point in the whole song where it is placed?

At the end of the day, we were all somehow confident about what we had learned during the weekend. So, we finished with the expected dedication of merits, and a small gift for S as a thank you for her time. It was around 7.30pm when we were done, and as much fun as I was having, I had to get going home to prepare the following day's lectures. The good part about this dance is that I can 'review' it by watching online videos of

demonstrations, which does not happen with the Song of the Vajra or any others because of their hermitic nature.

I believe this short entrance gives me a better perspective of the practice, as I am able to discuss some issues that are banned in other parts – such as in the Song of the Vajra. At this point, I am really looking forward to the more analytical part of the research, but I can't wait to get some more practice with the people of the centre. This, in any case, shouldn't be more than extra help with understanding what is happening.

Fieldwork XVIII

DANCE OF THE VAJRA V

On My Approaches from April to July 2017

It has been almost a year since I started my fieldwork journey in Barcelona, and it is now reaching an end. Throughout this time, I have been able to dive deeper into all three of my case studies, but the Dance of the Vajra remains somehow a separate case. I have undergone several workshops, but have not been able to accomplish some of the goals that I set for myself, both due to time and budget matters.

Here, I intend to make a last review of the process that I have been in from a fieldwork perspective, including both the *pros* and *cons* of my experience. There are also some new ideas that have appeared here and there, during our short gatherings to practise the dances, that are worth highlighting. Although it has probably been the case that I have worked with the most – taking in account that I’ve been there almost weekly for several months — there is not much that I can talk about besides my experience of the dance and the music as a continuum. In other words, there isn’t a peak experience which is surrounded by changing music and reactions like in my other two case studies, but rather a longer process that is built bit by bit, week after week, with the same musical focus. Nevertheless, there is a common thread that binds them, which consists of their use of sound and the body to reach a specific state of mind, and their fairly new incorporation into the current ritual tendencies in the so-called ‘Western’ environment.

After my last entry on the Dance of Six Spaces, there was a change in our scheduled meetings at the Kundusling, since S was no longer able to attend the Monday gatherings. Then, I got a lecturing job that coincided with most of the other events that happened between May and July, and my assistance ceased to be regular. However, I’ve been able to make time to keep on dancing, and to integrate the practice to the point that I don’t have to be watching my steps so intensively any longer – which is a big achievement. The people attending these weekly meetings have somehow changed as well: some new people have incorporated, and some others have stopped attending – or we haven’t coincided that much.

On the other hand, after we learned the Dance of Six Spaces, we have not continued to practise the Song of the Vajra so often. It is quite a complicated dance, and if we don’t have an instructor there or someone who knows it well, it is difficult to keep track of all the movements. Put simply, if we get lost during the Song of the Vajra, it is too difficult to continue with the movement for most of us, so I hope I’ll be able to catch up with S some other time and give it a push.

Therefore, during most of our meetings we have stuck with the Dance of Six Spaces, which has helped me to get a better insight of the only dance that I can specifically discuss due to its ‘universal’ nature, so I won’t complain. After a few months, I would say that I now can – sort of — let myself go and enter the sound, go into the sung mantra and the state of mind that is pursued. I have discussed this with some of my interviewees, and they agree on the fact that there are brief moments in which the mind stops while everything else keeps on spinning, a short moment of calmness that makes the reiterative practice worth it – even if it’s for a few seconds.

At the end of April, some weeks after the Six Spaces course, there was an event in Barcelona in which the Dzogchen Cultural Association participated with the dance. It is scheduled every year in Barcelona, under the name ‘Fira per la Terra’ – Fair for Earth, in English. It usually encompasses a great number of spiritual and New Age-like exhibitions and workshops, as well as lots of market stalls with ecological and handmade products. It lasts for several days, and it is placed all over the space available on Passeig de Lluís Companys and Parc de la Ciutadella, next to the Gothic district. The space for the dance was right at the entry of the Park, next to the Castell dels Tres Dragons, so it was a good location for public visibility.

Since they needed 6 *pamos* and 6 *pawos* to complete the mandala, and there weren’t many people available, I was invited to join in – I was the newest *pamo* of the ensemble. The accuracy of the movements and the coordination of all the participants in public demonstrations must be flawless, so I was a bit nervous about it – I didn’t make any mistakes, thankfully. Also, the *pamo* roles needed to be performed by women, and the *pawo* by men, unlike when learning them inside the Community’s space, in which everyone can learn any of the parts regardless of their gender.

On the big day, we met at the Kundusling in the morning to go over the dance a couple of times before we moved to the designated location, so we could solve any last-minute doubts that we had. Some of the participants attending were from Figueres, up in Catalonia, where they also meet regularly to perform these dances. They don’t have a *gönpa* there, however, so they brought the mandala that they use to practice – which is printed on a big plastic canvas.

We went through the movements separately, first the feminine group, then the masculine, and then practised the whole dance together, making sure that we were all moving at the same time. We were also reminded to *sing* the mantra while we were dancing, as it is supposed to be done, for an accurate representation of the exercise. The dancing exhibition was scheduled for 4pm, so we had lunch at the Ling before walking to the Park. There were a few inconveniences along the way, but the whole demonstration turned out alright in the end. For starters, before leaving for the Park one of the *pamos* stepped out, since he didn’t know the steps well enough and made the whole thing look unbalanced. Therefore, there was one extra space on the mandala that, in the end, wasn’t filled. This, in any case, was in favour of a better visibility of the practice.

When we arrived at the assigned place, there was a small stage assembled with speakers and a sound system at disposal for the participants in the Fair. Those who are usually in charge of the sound technology issues at the Kundusling approached the sound technicians there and prepared the CD with the soundtrack that needed to be played, and made the usual soundchecks. Because it was an open space and it was windy, it wasn’t as loud as one would have expected, nor as clear, but it worked its purpose of coordinating the movement and helping in the entrance of a – more or less — meditative state.

While we were unfolding the mandala, we realised that we had forgotten to bring the crystal sphere with us, the one that’s placed in the centre of the circle, so one of the assistants had to run back to the Ling and get it. Meanwhile, because the day was too windy, we had to duct-tape the mandala on the floor so it wouldn’t fold in on itself or move while we were dancing. In about fifteen minutes, we had everything in place and were ready to start. One of the participants also brought his camera to film the dance,

and later proposed that I used the material for my research, which was very thoughtful of him. I hope I'll get the audio-visual sometime soon.

S grabbed the microphone and announced the activity that was about to take place. She made a small introduction in relation to the origin of the practice and its relation to the Dzogchen Teachings, and caught the attention of some of the visitors that were around. However, no one approached the mandala too closely – besides one girl that thought it was an open activity, before explaining it. Then, we got into the dance with its six rounds.



Figure 33. Myself dancing at Fira per la Terra.

Because it is only about 20 minutes long when isolated from the other two dances, we repeated it one more time fifteen minutes later. We were all focused on making the right movements and singing, so it turned out pretty coordinated both times. This, on the other hand, influenced our capability of entering the state of mind that is pursued – the ‘dzogchen’ or primordial state —, since it forced all dancers to leave any thoughts aside for the time being.

Before concluding the presentation, S greeted everyone that had watched us and announced of one of Norbu’s talks in Barcelona, and some flyers were distributed for those interested. We then folded the mandala back and said our goodbyes before leaving for our respective routines –the people from Figueres were taking the mandala with them, so there was no need to rush back to the Ling on that same day. As a whole, the practice turned out OK, but I don’t think the sound quality let those watching appreciate the soft hints of the musical input.

Although this day wasn’t planned in my initial calendar – and it turned out great —, there are some other issues that I did not manage to achieve during the fieldwork period that I had established. First, and in relation to Norbu’s talk, I have not been able to meet with him at any point, after several attempts. He is always travelling and it is hard to find him staying put somewhere for a long period of time, while not giving seminars or courses, and on the short period that he stayed in Barcelona, he didn’t stay long. Because of it, I wasn’t allowed any time with him when I contacted his secretary, although I was wished good luck with my future endeavours. His talk, on the other hand, was cancelled right when I was in the train on my way to hear it, because of some problems at the University campus. In a few words, I have not been the luckiest person for these matters. His advanced age, finally, has also been an inconvenience for a possible meeting somewhere else, and as it happened with Ardiles and Grof, their being behind a strong boreoarctic barrier didn’t help. In any case, these enormous problems in reaching them present an argument in themselves, as one will notice.

In regards to the maintenance of the Kundusling's library and the project that we had of re-labelling all its items, it remains paused. The *yellow gyakil* has been ill for a long time, and I haven't seen her in months, after she came back from her retreat in the Canary Islands. However, I've been granted access to its items as one of the persons in charge and a member of the Association, which has helped me with the understanding of some specifications of the dance and the Teachings themselves.

Another positive input has come from my talks with Prima Mai, one of Namkhai Norbu's closest students/facilitators, who also participated in the creation of the musical material that is used now all over the world for the dances. She was trained as an artist, and is especially interested in the musical part of the practices, so we have had a couple of conferences over Skype to discuss some issues that I wanted to check with a certified instructor – that was close to the musical production, if possible.

During our last talk, she explained how the music was developed and the ideas that she had for future sonic projects. In sum, there were some guidelines introduced by Norbu when he revealed the melody of the mantras that he had heard in his meditation, but the product that was created can never be the ideal proposal that he perceived. One can assimilate its sound to Plato's 'Myth of the Cavern', in that there's an ideal 'truth', an ideal 'version' of the music, that is occult to us living in the cave – we are only able to listen to its 'shadows'. What one can make is, therefore, limited, but as accurate in shape as possible parting from the instructions of the Master.

Because of this, Prima thought of a proposal to introduce to the Community, which would suppose that everyone who wanted to would be able to edit or work on the basic mantra's melody, creating alternative dancing soundtracks that would serve a same goal. This is interesting not only because of the possibilities that it offers, but also because it shows that the music is not 'unique' – there isn't an only valid musical input to go with the dancing, but a *scheme* that guides the construction of the practice. This, on the other hand, clearly resonates with the way in which the other case studies that I am approaching work with sound. However, the matter of preference and adaptability remains, since there's the added element of facilitating the entrance into the specific state of consciousness through sound, that may not be achieved by all proposals – if they step away from the 'ideal' model that was perceived by Norbu. Their use through time will be the one to tell, I guess.

In any case, during some of the interviews the participants affirmed that they felt like the 'intensity' of the existing music grew towards the middle section, as I have previously noted. That is, with the dancing and chanting, they felt like more instruments or volume were added towards the central section, so I thought I would try to corroborate it through some sound analysis software – there are two different versions of the soundtracks for all the dances, so far, so I've tried this with only one of them for the moment.

The same mantra is repeated six times for a total of six rounds, so I took the first phrase of each one of the six rounds and played them one after the other. What a surprise it was when, hearing them like this, I realised that there weren't any actual changes nor in volume, instrumentation or any other parameter whatsoever. Therefore, what makes the actual intensity for the listener must be simple reiteration, plus the entrance into a focused state that allows the listening of subtler changes during the listening.

Here we can see the six first phrases of the six first rounds, one after the other:

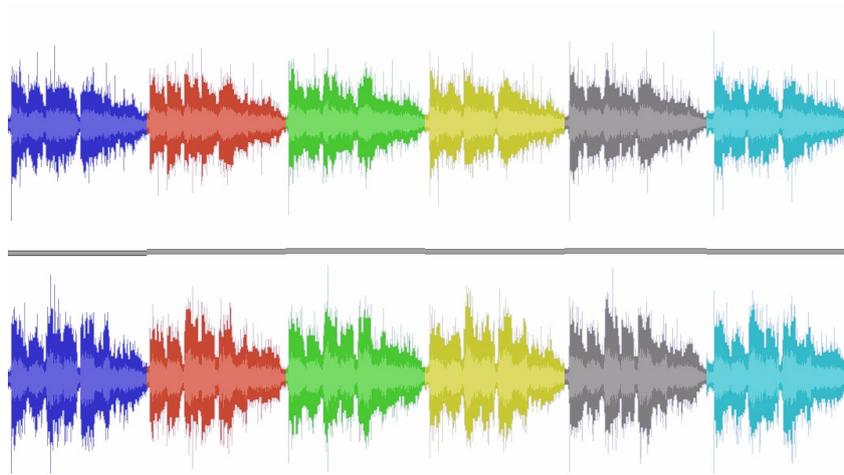


Figure 34. First line of the six rounds

Just to make sure, I superimposed the phrases one on top of each other, to find out that, indeed, they presented the exact same spectrum – only the interpretation varied with the added human factor.

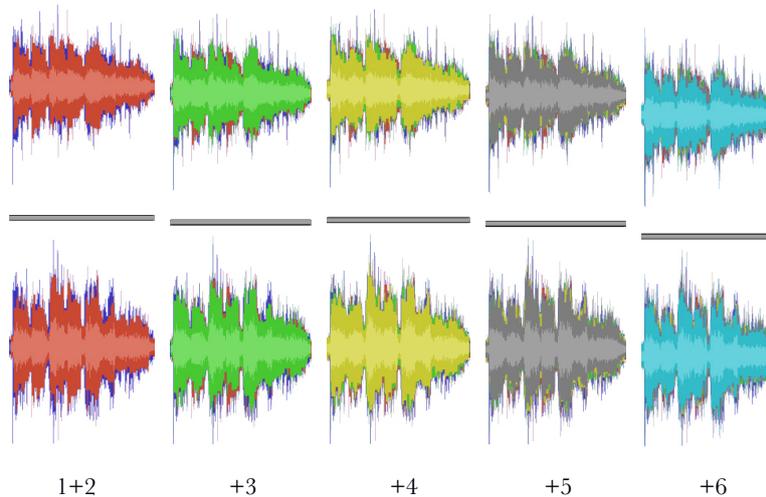


Figure 35. Superimposition of the first phrase of each one of the six rounds.

The same happens with the rest of the phrases. Let's take the fifth one, for instance, which in sonic terms corresponds to the *loka* of animal beings. The sound of these are mimicked by the instruments, but the version does not add the actual natural sounds themselves. Because of it, I believe it will be worth it making a second assessment on the second recording – most recent —,⁷⁴⁰ just in case that it does present a variation in its sonic qualities.

⁷⁴⁰ Outlined in chapter 8.

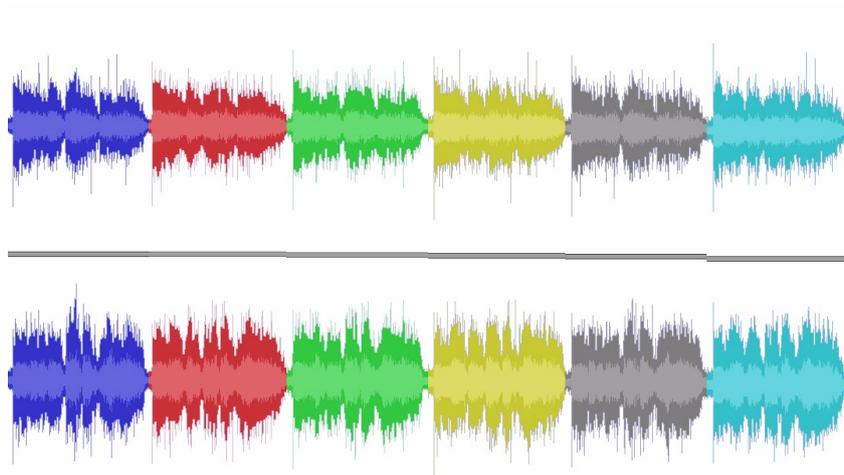


Figure 36. Fifth line of the six rounds.

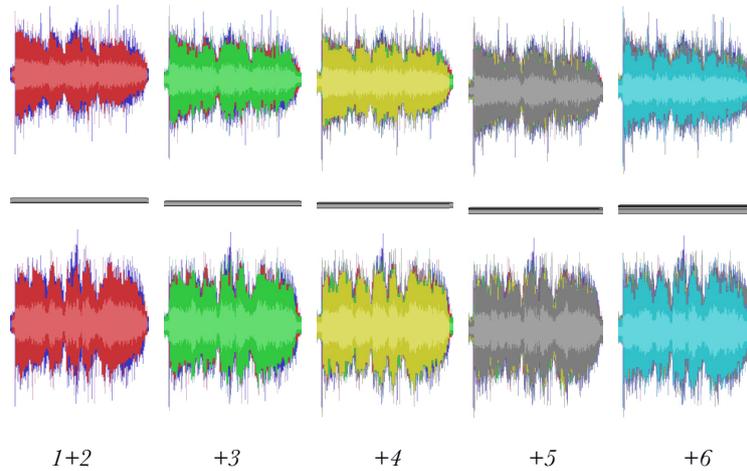


Figure 37. Superimposition of the fifth phrase of each one of the six rounds

This brief corroboration brings me to the end of my trip so far, in which sound has turned out to be something different than I expected from an experiential perspective. In this sense, I am glad that I've gotten to observe this and the other practices both from the inside and the outside. It is, once more, an affirmation of what Judith Becker thought 'trance' to be – understood as any non-ordinary state of consciousness different from the ordinary, in relation to a sacred cosmos —: an experience better described *from the inside*.

I am looking forward to diving into the analytical part that now follows my work, and I hope that I'll be able to make sense of all the material I've gathered so far. Meanwhile, I'll keep on dancing.

