

**'Are you content with being just ordinary?
Or do you wish to make progress and be outstanding?'**

New ritual practices in contemporary Sweden

This article examines the emergence and features of new practices in contemporary Sweden, which are being sold to individuals as therapy or coaching in order for them find their 'inner potential' as a means to achieve health, self-realisation and prosperity in life as well as in work. The focus on the inner self and the formation of a new personhood demands new ritual creativity, responding to the individual's longing for intense experiences of transformation and the authentic self. The development of a new outlook on the self is thus the focus of these practices, that is to say, individuals are encouraged to stage new ways to perform themselves. In this construction of a new self, or the image of an ideal self, the layman therapist or coach is very much in demand. In order to discuss these new practices, I have chosen one out of a myriad of enterprises: Health Academy Europe (Hälsoakademin Europa). One reason for a closer study of this enterprise is that it was one of the coaching enterprises chosen in 2009 by the Swedish public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) to give employment coaching, when the Swedish government allocated 300 million euros to buy the services of 1,500 coaches to help approximately 250,000 unemployed Swedes to get work (Hornborg 2009a–b).

From New Age to Next Age

When what scholars have referred to as New Age practices were introduced into Swedish society in the 1960s they were part of a counter-culture including alternative movements against consumer culture. Fifty years later we see less of a cultural critique in contemporary alternative practices, but rather an increasing focus on the individual, who today will not merely be enchanted and enlightened by spiritual wisdom in private life: now the individual can also be given the opportunity to explore a variety of techniques in order to

be enlightened and successful in the market-led society. Massimo Introvigne has discussed this shifting perspective as a 'Next Age' and describes (2001: 59) this further development as the second stage of the New Age movement. Individual happiness, self-development and prosperity are more in focus than the transformation of society and this shift includes a commercialisation of the practices involved.

Paul Heelas has examined how New Age practitioners in the UK in the 1990s developed new ways of selling their courses and expanding into workplaces. The courses were marketed as means to 'enable the person to operate more successfully in obtaining what the world has to offer' (Heelas 1993: 107; cf. Hornborg 2010a, 2007a; Salamon 2002, 2005). Heelas classifies the new rhetoric behind these courses as 'the language of individualistic enterprise culture', employing practices which trigger feelings of being newborn in the 'heartland of capitalism' (Heelas 1993: 107). Often these courses in self-development use a specific psychological (or, as Heelas labels it, 'quasi-secular') jargon and promote the idea that the individuals have unknown inner resources, which with the right guidance, could be released, making them more aware of their potential. From this notion, it does not take much to transform 'the potential' into an idea of a single source, or an essence, dwelling deep inside the individual, as a spiritual quality. Or as Heelas puts it (1993: 108): '...what lies within now lies beyond the ego'.

Most of these new entrepreneurs at first followed the practices of the 1960s counter-culture movements in rejecting religion, pronouncing it to be hierarchical, dogmatic, and offering mostly formulaic rituals (Hammer 2004: 298). As an alternative some of them promoted a spirituality which was said to have the capacity to bring empowerment into the life of the individual. In order to put this 'inner, empowering Source' into practice, a new category of courses was constructed to improve the capacity of the individuals in the service of the company (Heelas 1992; Bovbjerg 1995, 2001). The historian of religions Joel Haviv (2007: 11) analyses these courses as cosmic capitalism, and describes them as a new phenomenon in contemporary society. They have been generated by a change in the market society, caused by the growth of an immaterial economy. The aim of these new practices is that workplaces shall be benefited by releasing inner human resources, hidden inner energies and so forth. In order to materialise this project, new staffs of consultants, therapists and coaches are in great demand and their mission is to stimulate the transformation of the individual. Capitalist society and the market have become enchanted arenas, where individuals realise cosmic visions of the capacities of their inner selves.

NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming), coaching, mindfulness and meditation are examples of practices being used to stimulate the growth of this cosmic capital. Haviv lists (2007: 4) some of the core values needed to promote 'cosmic capitalism', such as intuition, charisma, creativity, flexibility and engagement. Often the aims of the new practices are framed in a spiritualised rhetoric, including terms such as vision, path, mission (Salamon 2001: 155, see also Salamon's analysis of spiritual leadership in 2002 and 2005). One of the main prerequisites for introducing these new practices is globalisation, which makes it possible to introduce religious practices such as the Buddhist practice of *sati* in a Western context under the auspices of the popular concept of mindfulness. Another important factor is the impact of popular culture and the media which in symbiosis with a late modern therapeutic culture (Furedi 2004) puts the individuals and their life-stories at the centre, as is evidenced in talk-shows, soap operas, blogs, Twitter and so on. This Western, individualistic project of acting out one's private life in a public arena is also reflected in the new practices at workplaces, including finding the real or authentic Self.

Examples from Sweden: a brief history

How is the presence of these Next Age practices visible in Swedish society? Reports from studies in the early 2000s drew attention to the fact that various forms of illness were on the increase in Sweden (SCB 2004). The need for different kinds of treatments, including courses in dealing with stress and shortcomings in individuals' private and working lives, had also opened up a market for new practices in Sweden in the late 1990s, which also offered their services to societal institutions. At first the new entrepreneurs sold neo-spiritual, or quasi-scientific therapies, including courses in training to become therapists. To these therapeutic activities were later on added coaching and coaching training courses. Coaching in Sweden is a new phenomenon, originally used in sports as a win-win concept, and later on transferred into a practice to develop good leadership skills in workplaces. Today coaching practices have rapidly increased and are now sold as practices for individual treatments (for example life coaching) as well as practices in the workplace (for example management coaching). Often coaching and layman therapies are sold by the same enterprises or entrepreneurs. These healing or coaching treatments and educational courses have developed outside the formal Swedish education system, and are not included in the control or validation

processes overseen by formal societal institutions such as Högskoleverket (the Swedish Agency for National Education, an authority for higher education) or Socialstyrelsen (the National Board of Health and Education, a government agency in Sweden, which applies supervision to ensure that medical standards are observed, and to improve patient safety). The new, ritual entrepreneurs are prohibited according to the Swedish law from using what society has defined and protected as titles (for example *legitimerad psykoterapeut*—registered psychotherapist), but have instead invented new titles similar to this protected title, such as authorised, certified, diplomad, accredited or licensed therapist¹. Since the title coach (as is therapist) is not a protected one in Sweden, everyone is free to use it and often the term coach is combined in the enterprises with the same prefix as that used by their layman therapists.

We thus find in Sweden a similar development of these new therapies and coaching activities, as was described by Heelas in the UK during 1990s. In many of these practices the notion of finding the spiritual essence within the individual is in focus. More often, this image is converted into an image of an 'inner potential', an essence in urgent need of being liberated to bring flow to an individual's life. 'Potential' has become the new key word, and it is found on nearly every coach or layman therapist's homepage. The concept is mostly embedded in a quasi-scientific rhetoric, but regardless if the inner essence of humanity is introduced as being spiritual or coined into quasi-scientific words such as potential, we come up against a religious mode of thinking here. Cecilie Eriksen characterises this mode of thinking as 'spiritual essentialism'; the image of an inherent inner, empowering, divine kernel, which the individual should seek out and develop (Eriksen 2007: 81; cf. Haviv 2007: 147; Frisk 1997: 91; Ahlin 2001: 222).

In order to reinforce this concept of a hidden Self, the new ritual practices are designed as individual-centred performances aimed at developing a new orientation in life for the individual and are often followed by intense feelings of inner transformation. Catherine Bell has even proclaimed the birth of a new paradigm of ritual, which is emerging to attract individuals in contemporary society:

1 The Swedish title *legitimerad psykoterapeut* is tricky to translate into English, since licensed and authorised are not protected titles and signify the title of an alternative therapist.

In this newer model, ritual is a medium of expression, a special language suited to what it is there to express, namely, internal spiritual-emotional resources tied to our true identities, but frequently unknown and undeveloped. . . The new paradigm is directed more inward than outward, apt to define community and society in terms of the self rather than the self in terms of the community. (Bell 1997: 241; cf. Hornborg 2010a–b, 2007a–b, 2006.)

In spite of the practitioners' reluctance to talk about their practices as rites, there are reasons, with Bell's definition of the new rituals in mind, to classify them as such. The acts of designing the 'inner self' are ritualised and cast within a formal framing, suited for late modern society, which focuses on 'internal spiritual-emotional resources' and 'our true identities'.

Several of these expanding neo-spiritual and coaching activities are influenced by the idea of mind–body therapy, which has been classified as 'varieties of techniques designed to enhance the mind's capacity to affect bodily functions and symptoms' (FAS 2007: 5). Also a typology of rituals of what Catherine Bell has classified as East–West hybrids are popular and marketed as yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, Qi gong, Reiki and so forth. She says that in these hybrids 'doctrine and ethical teachings are downplayed in favour of language that stresses highly personal processes of transformation, realisation, and commitment' (Bell 1997: 189–90). One example of these very popular East–West hybrids is the previously mentioned mindfulness. In a similar way as spirituality in neo-spiritual or some coaching contexts is introduced as a universal human essence, rites such as the Buddhist practice of *sati* are disembedded from their religious context and introduced as a pure technique. They are practised in at least three contexts in Sweden: in clinical therapy as stress reduction, in Buddhist religious contexts, but principally in the new, expansive sector of private enterprises which offer mindfulness techniques to individuals or workplaces as a means of reducing stress, anxiety and of increasing working capacity.

One of these enterprises which offers both coaching and layman therapy is the Health Academy. Since it is one of the coaching companies in Sweden that was employed to give employment coaching, I will now continue this article by introducing and discussing this enterprise as one example of these new, self-certified entrepreneurs and practices.

Health Academy Europe

The Health Academy was founded in 1995 by two women, and has been to date (2011) expanding, now offering a variety of courses, including ones which offer individuals training to become therapists, coaches, or to experience ‘happiness and mindfulness’. The leaders have, among a variety of newly constructed titles, chosen to refer to themselves as a certified (therapist or coach) or diplomad coach of health. The focuses of the practices are health, rehabilitation, coaching and how to feel good. On the website of the enterprise there is a video which starts with a group of women dressed in white walking along a sandy beach (just to mention: the leadership in layman therapy and coaching could be estimated at 80% female). The message is that the Health Academy uses cognitive methods in its therapeutic and coaching practices, and it declares that the solution to a variety of problems lies within the individual: ‘you are your future’ (Health Academy 2011k). According to the spokesmen, 4,000 participants over 15 years have been involved in the enterprise’s activities. In the marketing of the Health Academy’s services, the enterprise stresses its unique competence, which is ‘to support individuals in reaching their goals, by applying, amongst other things, mental training, mindfulness, and training in communication skills’ (Health Academy 2011h). The message is ‘Are you content being just ordinary? Or do you wish to make progress and be outstanding?’ (Health Academy 2010b)— both the coach and therapist training courses are said to provide ‘an inner as well as an outer journey’ (Health Academy 2011e). The goal is described thus: ‘what we together create will cultivate your—and others’—lives’ (Health Academy 2011c).

Inner potential as a key concept

How can practices such as the ones the Health Academy offers be classified? What is the key concept in these practices? In 2006 the Health Academy had ‘spirituality’ on their website as a part of their educational programme to become a certified coach, but in 2011 references to spirituality are all gone (Health Academy 2006).

Today the Health Academy, like similar enterprises, prefers instead to refer to the key concept of ‘inner potential’. One reason for abandoning the image of an empowering spirituality in coaching (and therapeutic) practices and introducing ‘potential’ instead could be that this concept is easier to market to public institutions. The goal for a certified therapist is to ‘. . .offer guidance

for individuals to find and express their unique *potential* in order to follow a path to greater freedom and human growth' (Health Academy 2010a: 4, my italics). Potential is also a key-word for the certified coach, who is given the goal to '...release the full *potential* of the individuals, in private life and at the workplace' (Health Academy 2011f: my italics). This inner potential is further referred to in explaining why the individual is responding in different ways in communicating with others: 'When I meet some people, I become my potential and when I meet others I move as far from it as possible. I can see that who I become, and am, is to a great extent a function of how others view me, how they relate to me, and if they relate to my potential or not.' (Health Academy 2011i.)

The concept of inner potential comes close to what Cecilie Eriksen defined above as 'spiritual essentialism'. But how can we classify these practices? Are they rites? This focus on the inner self—'potential'—and the formation of a new, late modern selfhood demands surely a new, ritual creativity. The Health Academy's practices could be analysed as formalised acts which follow these new ritual models, the individual-centred rites, using a 'special language', aiming to express 'internal spiritual-emotional resources', as described above by Bell. The enterprise's advice is to 'lead yourself and others to a harmonious life!' (Health Academy 2011k) and the goal is to design improvement for the life of the individual by employing these kinds of individual-centred rites: 'The practice of coaching is thus offered for all kinds of being in the world: life coaching, health, career...even in working with developing organisations, management coaching and a coaching leadership' (Health Academy 2011f). Coaching, defined as an individual-centred rite, will give an individual the means to transcend the 'ordinary' everyday life and thus find a more unique and self-fulfilled position in this new life.

Science as the key reference

When the alternative, or counter-culture movement known as New Age developed in the 1960s, many practitioners had an ambivalent relationship to science. Some of them clearly marked a difference—their practices were radically different from scientifically based ones: some said that science had limited techniques and that they added alternative practices to fulfil healing outcomes, while others said that science and alternative practices were in parallel, only using different languages (Hammer 2004: 238–41). But for the Next Age practices, science has become an important point of reference in

the branding of enterprises. In order to sell their courses to ‘secular’ individuals, as well as to public institutions, it is important for the Health Academy and similar practices to gain legitimacy. They clearly stress that they work according to scientific methods—in this case the cognitive method—including referring to research reports at the Departments of Psychology at Lund and Stockholm University. But what is not said is that Health Academy layman therapy is not included in these research reports, nor do they mention that it is not even included in the universities’ programmes.

The Health Academy has chosen ‘academy’ as a key word in the branding of their enterprise’s name and writes on its homepage about the training of certified therapists:

We have a partnership agreement with Lund University. The Health Academy AB works with the Department for Service Management at Lund University. This partnership implies that students at the university may get in contact with us during their education, including as part of lectures and academic project works. (Health Academy 2010a: 2.)²

Their coaching training prospectus also refers to a ‘partnership with Lund University which for us is. . .an inspiration and for you a guarantee of quality’ (Health Academy 2010b: 2), but in what way Lund University can guarantee the quality of the enterprise’s education is not explained. Further the enterprise refers to studies carried out at Stockholm University concerning the benefit of using cognitive models in working with stress and mental illness:

Sick-leave, allowances and production losses caused by mental illness in Sweden cost billions each year. Organisations which use cognitive methods for their employees may, according to the above-mentioned examinations, reduce the amount of sick leave taken and thereby reduce production losses. (Health Academy 2010b: 3.)

2 According to the Dean of the Department for Service Management, the enterprise has been invited to the department to introduce their company, but the Health Academy’s education is not a part of the university. The Dean says there are partnership agreements with many companies whose activities are of interest to the Department for Service Management, but which in no way imply that within the frame of this partnership any validation of the enterprise is undertaken. (Personal communication with the Dean, September 10, 2010.)

Thus the Health Academy also introduces its training courses and treatments as having a 'cognitive orientation': '[t]he Health Academy AB has chosen the cognitive method as part of the coaching training course, since it has well documented beneficial effects' (Health Academy 2010b: 3).

In validating the enterprise, the Health Academy refers to students at the Department of Psychology at Lund University who are said to have conducted a survey about the coaching training course, which shows that approximately 3/4 of all the participants who have finished their coaching education at the Health Academy saw positive changes in their general condition of health, in their ability to handle stress and in their prosperity in both their private and professional lives. Further, the results show that approximately 90 per cent of the participants experienced improvements concerning their working skills, relationships, ability to work according to goals and competencies (Health Academy 2010b: 4-5).³

When the Health Academy offers the course in 'Happiness and Mindfulness' it is introduced like this: 'The most popular course in the student body at Harvard has now come to Sweden! The course is based on scientific research which is introduced in a happy, easy-going and fun manner.' (Health Academy 2011g.)

The above quotations show that science and references to scientific reports are important for the Health Academy. Since the enterprise and its education is not a part of the formal Swedish educational system and the public authority that oversees higher educational institutions, it refers, as do many other Swedish coaching companies, to membership of ICF, the International Coach Federation, which presents itself thus:

...founded in 1995, the ICF is the leading global organisation dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high standards, providing independent certification, and building a worldwide network of accredited coaches. . .With more than 17,000 professional personal and business coaches representing more than 100 countries, the ICF is the voice of the global coaching profession. (Coach Federation 2011.)

3 According to the Dean at the Department for Psychology, Lund University, it is not with the Department itself that this cooperation has been agreed, but the enterprise has asked students in psychology to act as consultants in order to produce these reports (Health Academy 2010b: 4-5).

Although the ICF is one of the largest organisations of coaches, there are many others in the United Kingdom and USA, and it is hard to judge which one of these to choose as the most credible (Coutu & Kaufman 2009: 96). Also it is not indicated how the ICF validates or reviews the practices of each coaching entrepreneur.

Prosperity and branding

For the Health Academy coaching is a means of becoming prosperous —‘Coaching gives prosperity’ (Health Academy 2011f)—in private as well as in professional life: ‘The training course for a certificate in coaching sees the individual as a whole. A human being who experiences a balance between work and leisure time and is in a good relationship with family and friends not only feels better, but performs more effectively in all areas of life.’ (Health Academy 2010b: 2.) The Health Academy says its ambition is to create workplaces which promote the joy of working, which further increases the profit for the company: ‘Feeling good in the workplace produces better results’ (Health Academy 2010b: 3). The individual is given ‘the tools to develop and use the full potential of the organisation’ (Health Academy 2010b: 3). In one of the toolkits offered, the participant is encouraged to ‘sell oneself’ and in the other to ‘develop oneself’ (Health Academy 2011j). It is important for the new entrepreneurs to study branding and marketing, in order to succeed when they are offering their services on the market, and this is thus included in the training: ‘Your new profession demands a knowledge of branding and marketing’ (Health Academy 2011f).

The Health Academy also gives references from participants who have completed their training. On their website we can read stories of how coaching has changed the lives of the participants:

After my training with the Health Academy I have acquired new values. To be able to inspire and motivate others is a wonderful opportunity. . . I have knowledge of how to motivate, coach and listen to clients in a radically new way. I see the possibilities inherent in everyday life, and the Health Academy has given me inspiration and pointers which I use everyday (Health Academy 2011d).

The Health Academy, along with similar entrepreneurial organisations, has found a new niche in contemporary society, selling courses which put health,

self-affirmation and self-development at the centre. Their models of how to achieve prosperity clearly reflect contemporary society, but they are also models *for* the individuals, showing them how to find ways of fulfilling their dreams in their own social context. The dreams are however embedded in a list of prizes for the courses. Compared with a formal, public training to become, for example, a psychotherapist, the attainment of a therapist certificate involves a relatively small amount of supervision or meeting time. The courses are also easy to attend; for example the coaching training course is designed so that 'you may combine your work with your education' (Health Academy 2010b: 2). To become a certified coach at the Health Academy includes five meetings and the fee is 3,900 euros (Health Academy 2011n). To become a certified (layman) therapist costs 9,500 euros (Health Academy 2011l). One week is needed to acquire a diploma in health coaching, and the fee is 950 euros (Health Academy 2011m).

Employment coaching

As mentioned before, the Health Academy was one of the enterprises that was engaged by the public sector for employment coaching. It was clearly marked in the instructions from the government that employment coaching should not be a therapeutic practice, or include rehabilitation for the unemployed. Since coaching is a layman practice, and not formally defined, the practice of employment coaching was left for the entrepreneurs to define. One newspaper in Sweden, *Aftonbladet*, found that 10 per cent of the employment coaches offered exercises in affirmation or visualisation, Sedona or EFT healing (Pettersson & Sundell 2009) and the television Channel 4 showed that many of the employment coaches practised the unscientific method of Neuro Linguistic Programming (for the discussion of NLP and science see, e.g., Heap 1989: 141–2, 148–9; Sharpley 1987: 106; Craft 2001). These investigations by the media opened up a debate about employment coaching and its relation to New Age, or layman neo-spiritual, therapeutic practices.

How did the Health Academy describe their method of employment coaching? It was said to be based on the 'latest research' (but there are no references except from a book written by one of the enterprise's spokespersons) and the model that is introduced is said to be useful for 'personal development' (Health Academy 2011a). Although unemployment has societal, structural causes and it was said in the instruction from the government that employment coaching should not be therapeutic, we see in the employment

coaching model of the Health Academy an individual-centred rite with therapeutic ambitions involving transformation of the individual by designing a new way of being. The rite is made up of four steps which ‘[i]dentify your personality and your needs, devising a plan of action based on the steps that is unique for you and your situation’ (Health Academy 2011a). The unemployed clients were thus enjoined to follow four different stages: Fire, Sun, Meadow and Ocean:

Fire: possibilities

Who am I? What do I want? What is my goal? What is my field of excellence?

STEP 1: Identify your personality...

Sun: inspiration and motivation

What inspires me? If everything is possible, then what shall I do? . . .

How do I want to feel when I achieve my goal?

STEP 2: Design yourself. You are unique and totally fantastic when you are you!

Meadow: how it is and how it can be

What resources do I have? How can I use them?

STEP 3: Focusing on the goal and taking the first steps forwards.

Ocean: goal

What to do when I have achieved my goals?

STEP 4: Define your goals. Now it is up to you to make everything come true according to the goals and qualities you have set.

(Health Academy 2011a.)

Focus on the individual lies in the phrase that introduces the rite ‘Who am I?’ Employment here includes more than getting a job; the individual is encouraged to ‘[i]dentify your personality’ in order not to just get a job, but a job that is perfectly suited for him or her: ‘everything is possible’ (Health Academy 2011b). The individual-centred rite follows the pattern for transformation of the individual, since the mission is to ‘design yourself’. We also find a way to sacralise the Self: ‘You are unique and totally fantastic when you are you!’

It is also said that the responsibility of the individual to get a job rests on the individual—not the coach—and this is stressed in the coaching practices. The problem with the individual-centred rites (compared with the traditional

liturgical rituals) is that the rite may fail. The advantage with the traditional liturgical rituals is that they use a secure 'language', whatever the intentions of the individuals are (Rappaport 1999: 115, 164, 252, 323). As long as the liturgical rules are followed, the performative quality is guaranteed. But, if the participant doesn't experience strong feelings of transformation during the coaching process—one of the main performative tasks for the individual-centred rites—the result could turn into a critique of the coach, offering useless practices. But the coach always has a backdoor and it is all down to the individuals if they fail. The Health Academy includes in their description of the employment coach's responsibility the proviso that

[t]he person you are coaching is fully responsible for everything. . . : his or her project to find a job, his or her life, family, economy and dog. . . It is not you as a coach who shall deliver or produce anything. . . It is the responsibility of the unemployed to attain their goals, whatever the circumstances are. If there are no jobs, the individual needs to take more responsibility. To wait and hope that the situation will get better is to be a victim of the circumstances. (Health Academy 2011i.)

It is obvious in this instruction that the coach only has responsibility for the conversation; to find a job is in the hands of the unemployed client, that is the 'project' of the unemployed person. If there are no jobs, the unemployed person must take more responsibility, because it is not the coach 'who shall deliver or produce anything'; that is to say, the smaller the number of jobs on the market (which is a structural problem), the more responsibility lies on the individual (the responsibility of the individual is at the centre). The most sinful thing is to act as a victim of the circumstances.

According to this view it is only the unemployed person who can fail, not the coach. However, the reports on the Health Academy website, written by people who have participated in employment coaching, say that even those who didn't get a job were content. Partaking in the coaching practices gave even these people strong feelings of having changed and of self-affirmation: 'my self-confidence grew', 'I got the tools to manage on my own', 'I know that everything is now possible if I only believe in myself', 'she [the coach] made me realise what my ambition was in life and how I can, by myself, make this come true', 'by focusing on my inner strengths and qualities I got my motivation back and could focus on what I really wanted', 'I have moved from being an insecure young woman who didn't believe in herself and her ideas to being a strong woman with all my trust within, looking at a bright future'

(Health Academy 2011d). Since these stories from the participants are put on the Health Academy's website, they must, of course, be interpreted as commercials for the company, but they also show how the individual-centred rite creates strong feelings of transformation. These practices of transformation which offer a new direction in life, including discussing existential questions with the coach about how to perform this new life, are situated in a new context in Swedish society: within the public sector employment service. By offering coaching practices, this public institution has become an enchanted and enchanting place where individuals can devise a new outlook on their lives and in practising this, empower themselves.

Some remarks

Coaching and neo-spiritual therapies clearly reflect their contemporary context in their efforts to devise practices that will work both as models *of* society, and as models *for* society. These new practices could be classified as new rituals, adapted to late modern society with a focus on the individual, the inner self and prosperity. The ambition is to encourage the participant to design a new, empowered self in order to turn dreams into reality and to find hope for better circumstances in life. If the concept of the market is prosperity, these practices also promise (instant) prosperity, both in life and at work. Structural problems are often reformulated to be individualised and are depicted as arising from a lack of connection with the inner self. The new entrepreneurs are more adapted to contemporary society than the earlier alternative movements of the 1960s, specifically in their construction of titles, in the importance of references to science and in the lack of a critique of the market society. As representatives for the 'Next Age' practices, they have, more easily than the former New Age practices, managed to be employed in workplaces and even in the public sector.

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