

HEX AND THE CITY

Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and the Urban Imaginary in Berlin

Victoria Hegner

The paper focuses on neo-pagan witches in Berlin and the role of the urban context in forming their identity and a new religion. The interplay between the city and a specific spiritual practice and thinking becomes particularly obvious in moments of public representations and space making. Following this idea, the article's ethnographic focus lies on the Pope's visit to Berlin in 2011 and the public protest neo-pagan witches organized in the heart of Berlin-Kreuzberg. The analysis reveals how religious imaginations and experiences were recast and how the urban imaginary of Berlin came into play and was thus reproduced.

Keywords: neo-pagan witchcraft, new religiosity, urban imaginary, Berlin, urban ethnography

This article is about neo-pagan witches in Berlin and the role of the urban context in forming their identity and establishing a new religion.¹ New religions have been flourishing since the end of World War II. Men and women in Western societies increasingly search for religious meaning and practices beyond the dominant belief systems. They take up and blend together different forms and traditions of practice and thought which stem from sources that are considered archaic, mystic, Eastern, and occult. The individual transcendent experience is most important. Dogmas and the idea of a single truth are wholeheartedly thrown overboard. The self is seen as the one and only authority and is thus sacralized (Luckmann 1967; Bochinger 1994; Hanegraaff 1996; Melton 2004; Heelas & Woodhead 2005; Knoblauch 2005, 2009; Beck 2008; Mohrmann 2010).²

Topographical headquarter for those new forms of religion appears to be the (post-)modern city. As the cultural anthropologist Werner Schiffauer and

the theologist Leo Penta recently put it: "The city renders religious innovations, much more so than the countryside." This should not imply a rigid opposition between "the city and the rest". Still, the city holds particular social and cultural qualities. As Schiffauer und Penta go on to explain:

The everyday encounter and confrontation with different social groups and cultural and religious practices within confined space grinds down tradition and gives way for alternatives. Social developments and ... grievances manifest themselves more immediately; cities offer the necessary space, network as well as mobility for innovation (...). (Quoted by metroZones 2011: 20)

Although this has widely been acknowledged (e.g., Cox 1984; Luhrmann 1989; Höhn 1994; Beaumont 2008; Andersson et al. 2011), studies on the interdependency between new religions and urban context,

space and place (making) are still difficult to find. The few researches that do consider the importance of the *urban* within religious developments almost exclusively concentrate on dominant belief systems such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam as well as on so-called immigrant religions, that is, Voodoo in the US. Robert A. Orsi's edited volume *Gods of the City* (1999) as well as Lowell Livezey's book *Public Religion and Urban Transformation* (2000) are groundbreaking within this context. Concerning the interplay between religion, religious practitioners and the urban setting, Orsi pointedly wrote:

... specific features of the urban (...) landscape (...) are not simply the setting for religious experience and expression but become the very materials for such expression and experience. City folk do not live in their environments; they live *through* them. (...) Religion is always, among other things, a matter of necessary places, sites, where the humans and their deities, ancestors, or spirits may most intimately communicate ... (Orsi 1999: 44, emphasis in the text)

Programmatically he followed: "We examine how religious practice in the cities recasts the meaning of the urban environment as the city re-creates religious imagination and experience" (ibid.). For the following analysis on the interplay between neopaganism and the urban context, I will take up Orsi's inspiring perspective and theoretically refine the lens by bringing in the concept of the *urban imaginary*. *Urban imaginary* refers the idea that

a city is not a neutral container, which can be arbitrarily filled, but a historically saturated culturally coded space already stuffed with meanings and mental images. It is these meanings and mental images which determine what is "thinkable" and "unthinkable", "appropriate" and "inappropriate", "possible" and "impossible". (Lindner 2006: 210)

Hence, concerning the study the central question is what images of the politics and culture of Berlin are

at work when practicing neo-pagan witchcraft there. What kind of witchcraft is possible and gets represented? Based on data of a yearlong fieldwork among a loosely knitted group of women witches with its leading figure Xenia, I will sharpen the focus of analysis and draw attention to ritual performance. I will specifically ask what kind of rituals neo-pagan witches create. Where do the rituals or specific performative acts take place? The question is also how these neo-pagan witches create urban space as a sacred *public* space – a space of inclusion beyond social and cultural boundaries, where people outside of neo-pagan witchcraft are encouraged to take part in or, at least, take notice of the witches' peculiar spiritual practice as well as their political activism.³

These moments of "publicity" show that Luckmann's often quoted perspective on the new social form of religion as *invisible* and thus privatized remains only partially applicable nowadays. As the Swiss scholars of religious studies Dorothea Lüddeckens and Rafael Walthert as well as the German sociologist Hubert Knoblauch recently postulated, new religions and religious practices become more and more *visible* and *fluid*. Knoblauch talks about forms of spirituality that have become *popular*. It means they have diffused into broader social contexts and thus started to move away from the social (and thus as well academic) margin (Lüddeckens & Walthert 2010; Knoblauch 2010). The paradigmatic locale for this development, again, appears to be the city (metroZones 2011). The city's imagined and practiced cultural openness, the diversity of highly individualized and intellectualized people as well as the accessibility to a wide range of different economical niche existences give way to this process. However, the interplay between new religions and the city remains ambivalent, as cultural anthropologists Ina Maria Greverus and Gisela Welz have already pointed out in 1990. Hence, new religious practitioners including neo-pagan witches might praise the modern city for its cultural liberalism but they also perceive it "as the root of all evil": as the place of anonymity and of the destruction of nature, as the place of self-alienation and fragmentation of living worlds. Thus, the city contradicts the new religious

ideal of a holistically led life. The practice of new religiosity is seen as an attempt to master the resulting “stressfulness” of urban existence (Welz 1990: 9).

The present article concentrates on the idea of a growing *fluidity* of new religions, since I see fluidity as a central expression of new religions’ urbanity. Hence, I will track the way in which neo-pagan witchcraft has become *visible* and thus public or publically represented in Berlin. The analysis focuses on how the urban imaginary of Berlin comes into play in those moments.

In doing so, I will divide the article into two parts. In the first part, I will provide some data concerning the neo-pagan witches in Berlin and their historical and religious distinctiveness. I will show how the emerging scene in the 1980s has to be understood in the context of a divided city and the special island situation of West Berlin. This part of the article also gives insight into Xenia’s and her group’s specific interpretation of witchcraft.

In the second part, I turn to the ethnographic description and analysis of the Pope’s visit to Berlin in September 2011 and the protest that Xenia’s group organized in the heart of Berlin-Kreuzberg. I will show how this particular ritual performance could be read as both an expression and a production of a specific image of Berlin, with the “myth of Kreuzberg” acting as catalyst.

Overall, the article emphasizes the need for more ethnography and the latter’s strength in studying new religions in relation to the urban; it is time to bring the anthropology of the city and the anthropology of religion closer together.

Hex in Berlin

Since the beginning of the 1980s, Berlin has developed into one of the centers of neo-pagan witchcraft practice within Germany. There are hardly any statistics available for Berlin or for the whole of Germany.⁴ Still, the number of neo-pagan witches in the German capital seems to be so high, that the journal *Body, Spirit, Soul* (German: Körper, Geist, Seele) – a major esoteric magazine in Berlin – lately claimed, that the German capital has the “highest concentration of witches in all of central Europe” (Schäfer

2010: 32). The term “witch” refers to a wide range of very different manifestations of neo-pagan religiosity/spirituality. It comprises followers of neo-Germanic groups such as Asatru as well as practitioners of a rather feminist spirituality – Goddess spirituality – with a pantheon that is not necessarily bound to a specific locale. The “lowest common denominator” is the worship of nature as immanently sacred. Some witches are followers of Gardnerian Wicca – a specific interpretation of neo-pagan witchcraft created by the British occultist Gerald B. Gardner (1884–1964) during the 1950s (von Schnurbein 1993; Bötsch 2005; Rensing 2006). The basic organizational principle is the *coven* – a circle of witches – in which one has to be ritually initiated (Gardner 1959). Wicca first arrived in Berlin during the 1980s, at that time still a divided city. Hence, it is important to note that it was West Berlin where Wicca was first introduced. Vivianne Crowley, a well known witch from the UK, visited the city and started to initiate people into this specific way of practicing and thinking of witchcraft. Estimates on how many covens exist in Berlin nowadays range from four to ten covens.

Xenia and “her” group could be best described as followers of Goddess spirituality. Like the majority of neo-pagans, they too claim that their spiritual practice is much older than Christianity and has been aggressively disrupted by it. In restoring “the old path” or “the old wisdom”, they turn to multiple ancient pantheons and take up folkways they consider to stem from European pre-Christian peasants or “indigenous” peoples. Their witchcraft practice has one primary goal: to empower women’s spirituality and to foster female liberation from patriarchy. In the center of worship they put the Great Goddess, which they see as immanently present in every human being. Their vision of spiritual witchcraft comes close to what has been developed by the so-called *Reclaiming Network* (Salomonsen 2001). *Reclaiming* originated in San Francisco, USA, in 1979/1980 and traveled quickly – via publication and individual people – to Europe, arriving in Berlin during the 1980s, like Wicca. Back then, Starhawk, the network’s prominent representative and probably “the most famous witch in the world” (Hutton

1999: 345), visited the divided city, and, as in the case of Vivianne Crowley, only West Berlin. Like Vivianne Crowley, she clearly had an impact on the local witch scene. As one of the veterans from the 1980s and a Gardnerian Wicca, Natol claims: “It was Starhawk, it was her and Vivianne. It all started off with them, when they had come to Berlin in 1986 and 1988” (Conversation with Natol, February 24, 2011).

Within this context, it is important to note that the decade before the wall came down as well as the last years of the 1970s had in general been culturally as well as politically highly dynamic in West Berlin. Out of West Berlin’s unique situation to be a political and economical island in the heart of the Eastern Bloc – a “frontier city” – the city had developed into a kind of “laboratory of social fantasies”. This did not only concern niche existences and subcultures – like the vivid punk, art and squatter scene – but main stream social and cultural structures as well. For example: Berlin was the first West German city besides Bremen, where the ecologically oriented Green Party (*Alternative Liste* at that time) made it into parliament in the beginning of the 1980s. Berlin was also one of the first within the West German context, where anti-authoritarian kindergardens – *Kinderläden* – received substantial communal funding. Again, Berlin was the very first among West German cities where a local left-wing independent newspaper was founded and was successful (the *tageszeitung*, referred to as “taz”). In addition, Berlin was the only West German city with a paid rock-commissioner during the decade, who took care of the many newly founded music bands in the city and helped them to get successfully started (*Geo Special Berlin*, No. 6, 1986; Lindner 1993).⁵

City guide books – which always catalyze and fashion the cultural uniqueness of a city and thus help to turn it into a touristic resource – described Berlin at that time as *the* place to be – as “fancy”, “strange” and “hot” (Schweinfurth 1986: 39, in *Geo Special Berlin*, No. 6, 1986), as a place, that “was ahead of all the smug West German cities when it comes to the feeling of restlessness” (Rosh 1986: 37, in *Geo Special Berlin*, No. 6, 1986). “This is mirrored

in the city’s music, art, writing, theater, fashion, off-scene, punks”, as one author explained and went on: “Every detail taken by itself might be found somewhere else as well (...). Still, nowhere else all those things come together” (ibid.).

The emerging scene of neo-pagan witches, one can say, was an outcome and part of the city’s cultural dynamics during that decade. It depicted an additional, a “spiritual”, expression of Berlin’s “restlessness” and its ascribed “walled-in” hotness and strangeness.

Xenia herself came to the conviction of being a witch during the 1980s after reading Starhawk. Working as an actress for one of West Berlin’s small, alternative theaters at that time, she had to prepare for a comedy play and took the research very seriously. As she unfolds her story of how she found out about neo-pagan witchcraft, she states:

It was a comedy. Its central character was a witch. I took the research very seriously and read everything I could get on witches. I also read Starhawk. Right away I was caught by her ideas. I knew: That’s it. I had done some tarot before. But, Starhawk described what I really wanted to be: a witch. (Fieldnotes, October 22, 2010)

Since then, Xenia has explored and practiced neo-pagan witchcraft intensively. In 2000, she decided to open up a Center for Old Wisdom in Berlin. There she offers her spiritual healing abilities to interested women – to a lesser extent also to men. Most importantly, she organizes the eight neo-pagan festivals of the “earth year” and exclusively invites women to celebrate the moon as a symbol as well as the actual embodiment of the Great Goddess. Among other witches in Berlin, the group is known as the Moon-Women. Most of them come from a middle-class background, two are artists (photographer and painter), one is a professional astrologer, again one works in the pharmaceutical industry, three are nurses or teachers and one has her own business and works as a hairdresser, some are retired. The cast of the group, however, changes time after time. There is a number of core attendees, but even they do not

come regularly. The social dynamic is deliberately set. For Xenia, it corresponds deeply with Berlin's city life which is, as she says, also ever changing, never static. Never have I witnessed a sabbat or esbat,⁶ where *all* of the Moon-Women were there. Yet when they plan a public event such as a performance, where they want to be seen and acknowledged as neo-pagan witches with a specific understanding of the world by people outside of witchcraft and by the media, they make sure that everybody shows up. They even activate the loose network among the different groups of neo-pagans, Wiccans and individual – “solitary” – witches in Berlin. The network is rarely used, due to the fact “that everybody is always so busy in Berlin and only finds the time to mind her own business and group” (Interview with Xenia, September 30, 2010). Only in those rare public moments does the network get to work. One of those few events, where “everybody comes”, had been the protest against the visit of Pope Benedict XVI. The demonstration had to be officially registered with the police beforehand, which presented the very first moment of creating and thus claiming “publicity” by the witches – a moment of getting “fluid”.

The following thick description is an analytical experiment. I try to show how the urban imaginary of Berlin is reproduced though the ritual protest performance of the witches and simultaneously I aim to lay open the way in which Xenia's group generated a public space as a future *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1990) of their religion.

The Pope, the Witches and the Myth of Kreuzberg

On September 22, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI visited Berlin. Xenia had the idea of organizing a “public witch event” on this day. Xenia thought of the event as a joyful protest against the Catholic Church and against its patriarchal dogmatism. During the process of planning the protest she wrote an e-mail to me:

The idea is: Berlin witches sing a lullaby for the Pope. I know where the Pope will stay overnight. It is at Lilienstraße, at the Apostolic Nuntiatur.

The lullaby should say that the Pope overslept modernity. The Catholic Church still closes its eyes to the fact that at its order 9 million witches (...) had been murdered.⁷ (...) Somehow it must be a funny campaign as well; a campaign that catches the attention of the media. I imagine a horde of brave women who gather in Middle Age clothing or in witch-robos of our times. (...) They climb the cemetery wall. (I have already checked out how to break through the barricades on this day.) At midnight we have to be as close as possible to the Nuntiatur in order to sing the lullaby. (E-mail, May 7, 2011)

About 40 women and men gathered for the witch event in an area not far from the Pope's apartment, in front of the subway station Südsterne and right in the heart of Kreuzberg – one of the “alternative”, yet symbolically always gentrifying quarters of Berlin (Lang 1995, 1998). According to a recent, sociological survey of Berlin inhabitants' life situation and sense of living, Kreuzberg can be classified as a *creative quarter*, where

a lot of artists, creative minds ..., students and migrants ... live, with an innovative and risk-taking mentality ... The financial situation and status remain ... below average [within the city, V.H.]. This is, however, compensated by the high degree of urbanity [in this quarter, V.H.] and the feeling of social cohesion. (Hertie-Berlin-Studie 2009)

Certainly, the geographical place for the gathering was determined by the Pope's address. Still, the location Kreuzberg and its ascribed status as being “creative” or “alternative” seemed to suite the gathering group and its social and cultural characteristics very well. To a certain extent, the demonstration with its concrete site could tentatively be interpreted as a play on and reproduction of the overall urban imaginary of Berlin. Surely, Berlin's imaginary is shaped by a diverse set of images or motives (e.g. being “provincial”, “unrefined”, “proletarian”, a representative of Germany yet an exceptional case – hence “not German”). The reputation

of being “creative”/“alternative” (and bankrupt, but nobody seems to worry – summarized in the narcissist city slogan *poor but sexy*) appears to be one of the most important images of the city. As part of Berlin’s imaginary, it belongs to the city’s “symbolic economy” that fashions Berlin’s cultural singularity and turns into an economic resource.⁸ In short: to be “poor” but “alternative” and “creative” sells very well. Kreuzberg still appears as a cultural and topographical manifestation of this image. As the German urban anthropologist Rolf Lindner points out:

Since the 1960s, since the building of the Berlin wall turned Kreuzberg ... into an enclave, the quarter has appeared to be something like a Land’s End, a territory, where the last indigenes – the so-called “Icke”-Berliners [Icke: colloquial for “I”, proper German word: ich, V.H.] – met with the

first wave of Turkish migrant workers and with the frugal yet hard-drinking cynics, who all had chosen this redevelopment area with low rents as their exile. During those years Kreuzberg became “a refuge of the not adapted or not yet adapted people, where the colorful and the dreary chaos as well as the artistic proliferation prospered.” (...) For almost 30 years Kreuzberg was something like a “Mecca for dropouts”. During this time Kreuzberg became a myth (...). (Lindner 1998: 9f.)

In this mythical area witches started to gather at sunset (for the following description: fieldnotes, September 22, 2011). Some of them I saw for the first time. Several people had put on their self-made Wicca garment and some were dressed in linen robes which were indeed supposed to invoke associations with the late medieval/early modern period and



Ill. 1: A woman dressed up as the Element Fire at the witch-demonstration against the Catholic Church and the Pope, September 22, 2011 in Berlin-Kreuzberg. (Photo: Victoria Hegner)

the Renaissance – the epoch often remembered as the “burning times” among witches. Others came in their casual clothes. A few had dressed up as the elements: air, fire, water and earth. Some had put on their ponchos. With their choice of clothes they demonstrated that part of their spirituality drew on [Indian] shamanism as it is practiced in Latin America. There were two women who wore a T-shirt with Lakshmi on it, the Hindu Goddess of wealth and prosperity. Finally, some brought along brooms. In their fancy outfits they looked like the fairytale witch from the *Grimms*. This mixture of dress semantics already made clear the joy and wide range of self positioning as witches.

Furthermore, it was a remarkable material manifestation of the eclectic nature of the witches’ spiritual practice. One of the Moon-Women started to draw a huge spiral using flour. Aside from the initial

gathering, it was one of the first steps to claim and construct concrete public ground for the witches and their performance. The spiral represents the eternal circle of death and rebirth. It symbolizes the female principle of life for neo-pagan witches since, in their cosmology, it is the Goddess and not the God who creates life, gives birth and who – as the Crone (the old wise woman) – signifies death and dies and is reborn. The symbolism, however, is hardly known by outsiders of neo-paganism. Yet, particularly for the Moon-Women, it works, so they call it a “super-sign” within the urban context. Drawing the spiral, according to the Moon-Women, seems to unfold a form of energy, through which city dwellers attain an awareness of the “interconnectedness” of every living organism and their own connectedness to the earth – an awareness that is supposedly lost in the city. As Xenia once explained to me:

These are so-called super signs [spirals together with ritual performance, V.H.], which we create, in order to evoke (...) within the archaic consciousness of people the feeling of reconnection with the earth. It should evoke a form of attentiveness (...). We do this for the other people (...) basically for the consciousness of the city dwellers. (Interview, September 30, 2010)

Once the woman had finished drawing the spiral, an impressive spectacle of neo-pagan witchcraft unfolded. Women and men gathered in a circle, they sang songs from the Reclaiming repertoire. They also sang spiritual songs and rounds they created right on the spot, and which were afterwards forgotten. They started to dance. After some time, Xenia gave a passionate speech invoking the Church’s guilt and responsibility for the “burning times” and proclaiming female emancipation and free sexuality. Overwhelmed by the enthusiastic reactions of the group as well as of Kreuzberg bystanders and some curious policemen and women, she exclaimed: “Our female bodies belong to us. Let’s have multiple orgasms.” More and more nosy bystanders joined the assembly; newspaper- and TV-journalists showed up and began interviewing the *Hexen*.



Ill. 2: Xenia gave a passionate speech at the witch-demonstration against the Church and the Pope, September 22, 2011 in Berlin-Kreuzberg. (Photo: Manuela Schneider)

Some well-known urban characters came along, such as the “Comet”, who usually hangs around the Mauerpark, a touristic public park in Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg. Everybody seemed to know him. The “Comet” joined dancing, while artfully blowing huge soap bubbles. It was a great happening which came to an end when the two women who wore the Lakshmi-T-shirts stroke up the mantra in honor of the Hindu Goddess and the policemen started to shake hands with the *Hexen* – thanking each other for “good and inspiring cooperation”.

Reflecting back on this event, the Moon-Women saw it as one of the rare, yet ideal public realizations not only of the eclectic character of witchcraft, but of the anarchic nature of witchcraft, in so far as nothing was planned beforehand besides the date and the location. No strict hierarchy seemed to rule the event, even the policemen seemed to have had partly joined the event, and still it was a great public success. The event left such a deep impression that Xenia suggested declaring the Südsterne as one of their central ritual places. For Xenia as well as the other women, the square in front of the subway station with its densely populated apartment blocks, its different corner bars and the constant busy flow of people, provided an urban space to effectively go public and create a diverse audience for the witches’ spiritual practice and messages. The mythical image of the area, the witches’ (spiritual and political) goals and the concrete architecturally formed appearance of the place intensely interacted and coincided. Hence, at the following *Totensonntag*, an Evangelical holiday to remember the deceased, the Moon-Women planned the next public performance in commemoration of “the wise and free spirited women, men and children” that had been burned at the stake by the Church. This demonstrated an additional form of eclecticism: to incorporate a tradition of the “enemy” – as Xenia likes to call the Church – and ascribe one’s own meaning to it. Thereby the women created a place of remembrance – *a lieu de mémoire* – and started to put neo-pagan witchcraft on the symbolic as well as concrete map of Berlin. Kreuzberg is certainly not a spatial coincidence. Considering its mythical image, it is one of the Berlin areas

where there is the possibility to go public as witches, as eccentric as this self-ascribed identification might sound, because to call yourself a witch suits the myth and place of Kreuzberg well.

Conclusion

For a long time, new religious developments have been a marginal field of research within cultural anthropology/European ethnology. In view of the lively and highly differentiated discourse on the growing significance of religion/religiosity in post-modernity, it is time to throw one’s hat and expertise of ethnography in the ring. Although new religions are a global phenomenon, locality matters decisively, and it is precisely long-term, qualitative research which has the capacity to bring the latter’s significance to the surface. In times where we find that national cultural identifications, images and boundaries not only become more fundamental but seem to simultaneously crumble rapidly, it appears to be the (post-)modern city with its (staged) cultural singularity that shapes practices of new religions deeply. New religiosities in themselves become an expression of the urban. They mirror and enforce urban transformation. Thus, to understand the on-going cultural religious processes in post-modernity, studies on new religious practices and cosmologies have to be more closely linked to an anthropology of the city.

As I tried to show in the case of neo-pagan witchcraft – one of the fastest growing new religious branches worldwide – the interplay between the city and the specific spiritual practice and thinking becomes particularly obvious in moments of public representations and space making. Hence, when the Pope came to Berlin and neo-pagan witches organized a public protest, forms of expression were clearly shaped by the cosmology of a Goddess spirituality: drawing a spiral, dressing up as the nature elements, singing and dancing to Reclaiming chants and claiming free sexuality and female emancipation. Being situated at a loud and exhaust-laden cross road, in front of a subway station and across many corner bars, the representation got a decisive *urban* twist. Even the spiritual meaning of the spi-

ral was urbanized by being interpreted as a “super sign” within the city, which should evoke a feeling of “reconnection” to nature. As religious imagination and experience were thus re-cast, the image of Berlin as “alternative” and “creative” was staged and re-produced. The “myth of Kreuzberg” was once more publically manifest.

Notes

- 1 The women from the Moon-Women-Group and the Reclaiming Group welcomed me into their homes and rituals. To all of them I owe a special dept. I am particularly grateful to Xenia Fitzner, Melany Matzky and Faye as well as the anonymous peer-reviewers for their pointed comments on the first draft of the paper. Thanks also to Matthew Finnemore for proofreading the text and sensibly correcting my English. All translations from the German language are by the author.
- 2 Within the academic discourse, we find different approaches towards the definition of new religions. Some scholars emphasize the undogmatic character of new religions. Others, again, don't see the rejection of dogmatism as a criterion for classifying new religions at all. Within their studies, they focus particularly on contemporary split-offs of dominant belief systems such as Pentecostal churches. See, e.g., metroZones (eds.) (2011). Some researchers substitute the word “new” with “alternative” religion. They take into account, that the latter is not a historically *new* phenomenon. Again, some scholars suggest the term “new spirituality” and avoid the word “religion”, since for them, the term implies a certain theological coherence, which they do not see in new/alternative forms of religion/religiosity. I will use the term “religion/religiosity/spirituality” throughout the article. In doing so, I avoid the dualistic schema, which the differentiation between religion/spirituality implies (coherent vs. incoherent). I will use the terms new/alternative religion/religiosity/spirituality synonymously.
- 3 This concept of *public space* is shaped by the *ideal of inclusion* as it is put forward by city planners. See the study by Beate Binder (2009).
- 4 The only statistics I could find was in an article by Reena Perschke. According to her, 300 to 400 Wiccans and solitary witches live in Berlin. She extrapolated the number from interviewing ca. 10 Wiccans and solitary witches who told her that they are organized in groups of 10–20 people. Perschke then estimated that she had interviewed representatives of approximately half of the existing groups (Perschke 2003).
- 5 See other Berlin city guide books, e.g., *Richtig Reisen Berlin* from 1982. The latter has a chapter on Berlin's

“alternative scene and subculture”. It begins: “Nowhere else in Germany does such a multifarious alternative movement exist which is at the same time firmly anchored in projects, collective companies of any kind, in women's centers, *Kinderläden*, bars (...) and law firms” (1982: 92).

- 6 Sabbats: the eight festivals of the earth year; esbats: rituals at full moon.
- 7 Today's researchers on the witch hunt estimate that the number of burnt witches did not go beyond 50,000. Concerning the creation and reproduction of the idea of the “nine million witches burnt”, see the article by Wolfgang Behringer (1998).
- 8 In her study *The Cultures of Cities*, Sharon Zukin employs the term “symbolic economy” of cities to describe urban culture – urbanity – as a new economical resource of global metropolises.

References

- Andersson, Johan, Robert M. Vanderbeck, Gill Valentine, Kevin Ward & Joanna Sadgrove 2011: *New York Encounters: Religion, Sexuality and the City*. *Environment and Planning A* 43:3, 618–633.
- Baumont, Justin 2008: Faith-Based Organizations and Urban Social Issues. *Urban Studies* 45:10, 2011–2017.
- Beck, Ulrich 2008: *Der eigene Gott: Von der Friedensfähigkeit und dem Gewaltpotential*. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Weltreligionen.
- Behringer, Wolfgang 1998: Neun Millionen Hexen: Entstehung, Tradition und Kritik eines populären Mythos. *Historicum.net*: URL: http://www.historicum.net/no_cache/persistent/artikel/826/. Accessed January 10, 2013.
- Binder, Beate 2009: *Streiffall Stadtmitte: Der Berliner Schlossplatz*. Wien: Böhlau Verlag.
- Bochinger, Christoph 1994: “New Age” und moderne Religion: *Religionswissenschaftliche Analysen*. Gütersloh: Kaiser.
- Bötsch, Barbara 2005: *Leben mit der großen Göttin: Biografien, Glaubensweisen, Hintergründe zur Göttinreligion in Deutschland*. Regensburg: Lipa.
- Cox, Harvey G. 1984: *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Gardner, Gerald 1959: *The Meaning of Witchcraft*. London: Aquarian Press.
- Geo Special Berlin* 1986: No. 6. Hamburg: Gruner + Jahr.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1996: *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden & New York: E.J. Brill.
- Heelas, Paul & Linda Woodhead 2005: *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub.
- Hertie-Berlin-Studie 2009: *Sieben Berliner Lebenswelten: Kurzbeschreibungen*: http://www.hertieberlinstudie.de/presse/pressematerial/texte/Lebenswelten_Ueberblick.pdf. Accessed January 10, 2013.

- Höhn, Hans-Joachim 1994: *Gegen-Mythen: Religionsproduktive Tendenzen der Gegenwart*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- Hutton, Ronald 1999: *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Knoblauch, Hubert 2005: Einleitung: Soziologie der Spiritualität. *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 13, 123–131.
- Knoblauch, Hubert 2009: *Populäre Religion: Auf dem Weg in eine spirituelle Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Knoblauch, Hubert 2010: Vom New Age zur populären Spiritualität. In: D. Lüddeckens & R. Walthert (eds.), *Fluide Religion: Neue religiöse Bewegungen im Wandel. Theoretische und empirische Systematisierungen*. Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 149–174.
- Lang, Barbara 1995: Berlin-Kreuzberg: Bilder einer Vorstellung. *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 91:2, 223–247.
- Lang, Barbara 1998: *Mythos Kreuzberg: Ethnographie eines Stadtteils (1996–1995)*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Lindner, Rolf 1993: Berlin – Zone in Transition. *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 2:2, 99–111.
- Lindner, Rolf 1998: Vorwort. Von “Freakland” zu “Slumland”: Zur Mythologie Berlin Kreuzbergs. In: B. Lang (ed.), *Mythos Kreuzberg: Ethnographie eines Stadtteils (1961–1995)*. Frankfurt am Main & New York: Campus, pp. 9–15.
- Lindner, Rolf 2006: The Imaginary of the City. In: G.H. Lenz, F. Ulfers & A. Dallmann (eds.), *Toward a New Metropolitanism: Reconstituting Public Culture, Urban Citizenship, and the Multicultural Imaginary in New York and Berlin*. Heidelberg: Winter, pp. 209–216.
- Livezey, Lowell W. 2000: *Public Religion and Urban Transformation: Faith in the City*. New York: New York University Press.
- Luckmann, Thomas 1967: *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lüddeckens, Dorothea & Rafael Walthert 2010: Fluide Religion: Eine Einleitung. In: D. Lüddeckens & R. Walthert (eds.), *Fluide Religion: Neue religiöse Bewegungen im Wandel. Theoretische und empirische Systematisierungen*. Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 9–17.
- Luhrmann, Tanya 1989: *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Melton, Gordon 2004: Toward a Definition of “New Religion”. *Nova Religio* 8:1, 73–87.
- metroZones 2011: Einleitung. In: metroZones (eds.), *Urban Prayers: Neue religiöse Bewegungen in der globalen Stadt*. Berlin & Hamburg: Assoziatio A, pp. 7–24.
- Mohrmann, Ruth E. (ed.) 2010: *Alternative Spiritualität heute*. Münster, New York, München & Berlin: Waxmann.
- Nora, Pierre 1990: *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis*. Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach.
- Orsi, Robert 1999: Introduction: Crossing the City Line. In: R.A. Orsi (ed.), *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 1–78.
- Perschke, Reena 2003: Neuheidnisches Hexentum. Wicca. Pagan. Freifliegende. In: N. Grübel & S. Rademacher (eds.), *Religion in Berlin: Ein Handbuch*. Berlin: Weißensee Verlag, pp. 525–529.
- Rensing, Britta 2006: Der Glaube an die Göttin und den Gott: Theologische, rituelle und ethische Merkmale der Wicca-Religion, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lyrik englischsprachiger Wicca-Anhänger. Ph.D. thesis, unpublished manuscript, Friedrich-Schiller-University, Jena.
- Richtig Reisen Berlin* 1982: Köln: DuMont, pp. 1–78.
- Rosh, Lea 1986: Der wunde deutsche Punkt. *Geo Special Berlin* 6, 36–37.
- Salomonsen, Jone 2001: *Enchanted Feminism: Rituals, Gender and Divinity among the Reclaiming Witches of San Francisco*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Schäfer, Heidrun 2010: Kreativ oder reaktiv? *Körper, Geist, Seele* 2, 31–33.
- Schnurbein, Stefanie von 1993: Walküren des Neuen Zeitalters: Zum Frauenbild neugermanisch heidnischer Gruppen der Gegenwart. In: D. Pahnke (ed.), *Blickwechsel: Frauen in Religion und Wissenschaft*. Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, pp. 143–174.
- Schweinfurth, Reiner 1986: Schön schräg und schrill und scharf. *Geo Special Berlin* 6, 39–44.
- Starhawk 1979: *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Welz, Gisela 1990: Urbanität und Spiritualität: New Age als städtische Subkultur. In: I.-M. Greverus & G. Welz (eds.), *Spirituelle Wege und Orte: Untersuchungen zum New Age im urbanen Raum*. Frankfurt am Main: Institut für Kulturanthropologie und Europäische Ethnologie, pp. 9–29.
- Zukin, Sharon 1995: *The Culture of Cities*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Victoria Hegner, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Cultural Anthropology/ European Ethnology at the University of Göttingen. Using ethnographic methods, she is particularly interested in the interplay between new religious practices and the urban context and culture. A recent publication is *Urban Witchcraft and the Issue of Authority*, in: A. Fedele & K. Knibbe (eds.), *Gender and Power in Contemporary Spirituality: Ethnographic Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
(Victoria.Hegner@phil.uni-goettingen.de)