



Tommy Ramstedt

# Knowledge and Identity within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge Scene

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KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY WITHIN THE FINNISH  
FRINGE-KNOWLEDGE SCENE





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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the *Rajatieto* scene in Finland. The Finnish word *rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge) was created in the 1970s by a group of people interested in ufology, spiritualism and different kinds of alternative worldviews. The main research questions focus on how leading people within the scene conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge and how their identity is constructed in relation to various types of worldviews that are usually rejected by the mainstream. The theoretical framework includes the concepts identity and knowledge. A central aspect of identity is that it consists of a process of creating boundaries with the self and something other. This study further goes into dialogue with the theoretical concepts "cultic milieu" (Campbell 1972), "rejected knowledge" (Webb 1974), and "stigmatized knowledge" (Barkun 2013).

The study utilizes and develops the methodological framework of scene in order to study and conceptualize the Fringe-Knowledge environment. The scene framework is used when an environment has some type of sense of itself and considers itself to consist of a distinct group of people. The most important aspects of the scene framework is to study the infrastructure of a scene, and how the scene is discursively constructed by its members. The infrastructure of the Fringe-Knowledge scene consists of a number of associations, magazines, and events. Fringe-Knowledge is constructed by its proponents as constituting a form of knowledge that is beyond, and often in conflict with, current established science. Identity and knowledge intersect in the scene, as people within it consider themselves a special kind of people who possess special knowledge. The events are described as safe havens where these people can meet and be themselves. This study provides detailed information about a certain part of the religious landscape of Finland. By utilizing the scene framework this study develops the scene methodology for the study of alternative spiritual and religious spaces. The questions of identity and knowledge show how a certain type of people construct their self-understanding in a late-modern context.

Keywords: *Rajatieto*, scene, identity, rejected knowledge, stigmatized knowledge, cultic milieu, occulture.





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# 1 Introduction

Following the continuing general decline of institutional organized religion across most Western societies during the post-World War II era – a development that is sometimes argued to have brought about a more widespread “un-churching” (e.g. Fuller 2001) or “de-Christianization” (e.g. Brown & Lynch 2012: 338) of Western populations – increasing numbers of scholars have turned their attention to the emergence and proliferation of different types of “alternative” forms of spirituality and religion (e.g. Partridge 2004; Lynch 2007). During the post-war era, Western societies have experienced a number of social and cultural changes which have shaped the religious landscape in a more diverse and individualistic fashion (e.g. Edgell 2006: 89–90). Especially within the so-called “counterculture” of the 1960s and 1970s, an interest in alternative forms of religion and spirituality flourished. This differed from the traditional Christian modes of religious organization and expression (Melton 2001: 373). The emergence of various movements and groups that drew inspiration from sources such as Eastern religious philosophies, Theosophy, and other Western esoteric traditions, led scholars to discuss how these types of religious innovations fitted with theories on secularization. These new movements were seen either as signs of religious revitalization, or they were interpreted as confirming the secularization thesis (Fox 2005: 296–297; Bruce 2006: 35–45).

This study explores a particular alternative religious environment, the so-called Fringe-Knowledge scene, in the specific social and cultural context of Finland. The Finnish word *Rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge) includes phenomena that fall under the category of parapsychology, such as telekinesis and extrasensory perception, and phenomena related to ufology, such as alien abduction and sightings of unknown aerial objects. The term Fringe-Knowledge was introduced in Finland in the 1970s by a group of people interested in ufology and parapsychology to describe “different sciences and worldviews that deal with so called extrasensory phenomena”<sup>1</sup> (Ollila, Palojärvi & Kananen 2012: 3). When I in this study use the terms “religion” and “spirituality,” I use them interchangeably. By these terms I refer to worldviews and beliefs that include supernatural elements and provide a broader framework for addressing existential questions (A discussion of the terms is provided in section 2.1).

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<sup>1</sup> Finnish original: ns. yliaistisia ilmiöitä koskevia tutkimusaloja ja maailmankatsomuksia.

This thesis is a study of how leading proponents of Fringe-Knowledge conceptualize it and how they argue for it as a valid and important form of knowledge. This study further explores how people who are deeply engaged in the scene, such as authors, lecturers, and editors of magazines, discursively construct Fringe-Knowledge as a profoundly meaningful pursuit.

Making sense of loosely organized alternative forms of religious expression presents scholars with certain challenges, especially concerning how one can map and study environments that lack conventional structure and differ from traditional religious organizations. In 1972, sociologist Colin Campbell argued that there must exist a fertile ground from which different “cults,” or loosely organized religious or spiritual groups, spring. This environment he termed the “Cultic Milieu.” Despite its apparent diversity, the cultic milieu was for Campbell something that could be considered a single entity. He regarded the cultic milieu as a “cultural underground,” which included all sorts of deviant belief systems and practices (Campbell 1972: 14–15). Since his essay, the concept of the cultic milieu has been debated, expanded on, and modified to suit the study of various alternative forms of religious expression, and several other concepts have also been suggested (e.g. Partridge 2004 & 2005; Barkun 2013).

As the structure and boundaries of the particular alternative religious milieu that this thesis focuses on are in no way obvious or clear, it is necessary to develop a methodology for empirically mapping and making sense of this environment. For this purpose, this thesis develops and operationalizes the framework of *scene* (outlined in more detail below).

Although the Fringe-Knowledge environment is loosely organized, it is still a distinguishable scene. The Fringe-Knowledge environment can be conceptualized as a certain scene located within the larger alternative spiritual landscape of Finland. Some ideas and practices which are usually referred to as “alternative spirituality” have become very popular and can to some extent be considered part of mainstream culture. Mindfulness, positive thinking, tai-chi, and yoga are some examples of techniques that have made their way into the corporate world, to universities and schools, and which form central and recurring topics in women’s and lifestyle magazines (Carrette & King 2005: 1; Heelas 2008: 7; 252). While there are

supporters of some wellbeing practices, who consider themselves to possess knowledge that differs radically from mainstream notions about human health and wellbeing, the vast number of wellbeing advocates seem to be accepted by the mainstream in general. Indeed, as Paul Heelas notes, wellbeing practices and holistic therapies are generally endorsed by journalists and newspaper editors, and have even found increasing acceptance within the fields of education and healthcare (Heelas 2008: 7; 252). The magazine *Voi Hyvin* (Be Well), founded in 1976, is one of the largest alternative spiritual publications in Finland. The magazine focuses on spiritual growth and wellbeing: “*Voi Hyvin* produces wellbeing for the mind and gives methods for handling stress. You receive advice for understanding human relations in a deeper way”<sup>2</sup> (terve.fi). The magazine covers alternative therapies, mindfulness, interviews with life coaches and relationship experts. *Voi Hyvin* can very much be considered a mainstream publication.

The focus of this study, however, is on a much smaller part of the Finnish alternative spiritual milieu, as it concentrates on people who represent worldviews and notions about how the world works that are, if not in direct opposition to those prevalent in mainstream society, at least generally considered as strange within the mainstream.

Although wellbeing practices are present and indeed popular within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, the cluster of people that this study focuses on are proponents of ideas and worldviews that often stand in stark opposition to what is considered rational, normal, or even sane in mainstream society. Such ideas include beliefs that vaccines contain microchips, alternative views of history that see the ancient Finns as the true founders of European culture, or the notion that film director Steven Spielberg unconsciously channels extraterrestrial beings in his filmmaking. Another example: while the magazine *Ultra* covers wellbeing and self-development, it also deals with “parapsychology and the occult,” provides “extensive information about UFOs and UFO phenomena,” and “the Mysteries of the natural world and history in Finland and abroad”<sup>3</sup> (ultra-lehti.com a).

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<sup>2</sup> Finnish original: Voi Hyvin tuottaa hyvää oloa mielelle ja antaa keinoja stressinhallintaan. Saat neuvoja ihmissuhteiden syvällisempään ymmärtämiseen.

<sup>3</sup> Finnish original: Parapsykologia ja okkultismi. Laajasti tietoa ufoista ja ufo-ilmiöistä. Luonnon ja historian arvoitukset Suomessa ja ulkomailla.

Although these fringe ideas and worldviews may appear to be difficult to combine, and may even conflict with one another, a unity within the Fringe-Knowledge scene is created through a shared sense of rejection, of being ridiculed and criticized by mainstream society. Since the particular environment that this study deals with focuses less on particular practices, but rather is characterized by a stronger emphasis on issues regarding what knowledge 'is', what knowledge can be, what knowledge is reliable, and how it can be obtained, the wide range of wellbeing practices fall outside the scope of my study.

In this study, I utilize the concepts "belief" and "worldview". Although these concepts are often used interchangeably, it is necessary that I clarify what they mean. Belief in general refers believing in a certain proposition – that something is the case. These propositions can be as mundane as the proposition that we still have coffee left, or they might have to do with metaphysical questions as in the belief in God (Braddon-Mitchell & Jackson 2005: 88). When I use belief in the context of this study, I refer to the beliefs that my interviewees and people with in the Fringe-Knowledge scene have concerning Fringe-Knowledge related subjects (e.g. belief in the existence of aliens, parapsychological phenomena, reincarnation, ley-lines, government conspiracies). Beliefs do not, however, have to be absolute beliefs in certain propositions. Although many of my interviewees describe their beliefs regarding some Fringe-Knowledge phenomena in terms of being absolutely sure about the phenomena being real, others have a more unsure stance towards some of these phenomena. One can however say that the existence of propositions regarding Fringe-Knowledge phenomena clearly falls within their structure of plausibility. In the Collins English Dictionary we find the following definition of worldview: "A person's world view is the way they see and understand the world, especially regarding issues such as politics, philosophy, and religion." One can talk about a person holding, for example, a Christian worldview or a Marxist worldview. While a belief consists of a belief in a certain proposition about the world, a worldview can be said to encompass many beliefs and thus provide a broader outlook on the world. For example, the worldview of Dr. Luukanen-Kilde encompasses beliefs in extraterrestrials, parapsychology, conspiracy theories, and spirits of the dead.



This study provides an in-depth analysis of the beliefs of leading proponents of Fringe-Knowledge in Finland. By developing and utilizing the methodological framework of *scene*, this study provides a novel way of mapping and studying loosely organized alternative religious environments. More broadly, the study of various forms of alternative spiritualities contributes to on-going discussions on secularization and religious change. Concerning Finland in particular, exploring the phenomenon of Fringe-Knowledge provides information about a certain alternative religious milieu whose members introduced a new word – *Rajatieto* – into the Finnish language. Although its core membership is small, the Fringe-Knowledge scene has at times made headlines in national news, and constitutes if not an influential, then at least a visible and distinct part, of the broader Finnish alternative spiritual milieu.

## 1.1 Aim of the Study

The scope of eclectic or alternative worldviews and practices is vast, and different ideas sometimes tend to interrelate in unexpected ways. Nonetheless, it is still possible to make some general observations and, thus, identify some main shared topics of interest, recognizable groups, and clusters of interlinked ideas. On the basis of a general mapping of the Finnish alternative and eclectic spiritual landscape, I have identified some of its leading figures – authors, lecturers, and magazine editors – who deal in particular with what Michael Barkun has termed “stigmatized knowledge” (Barkun 2013). The term stigmatized knowledge refers to knowledge that is generally considered deviant and is rejected by mainstream society. Examples of such ideas would include UFO abductions, stories about Ancient Atlantis, and the concept of ley lines (Barkun 2013: 26–27).

The mapping of loosely organized alternative religious and spiritual environments presents researchers with certain methodological challenges. Since the underlying network structure of the Fringe-Knowledge environment has not received much previous scholarly attention, this study will provide an account of how the Fringe-Knowledge environment was created, formed, and how it is currently structured and sustained. A key issue in approaching and mapping a loosely organized alternative religious environment is to have a systematic approach. For this purpose, I operationalize and further develop the methodological framework of *scene*. The framework of *scene* is a methodological tool that

was first developed within the context of post-subcultural theory in the early 1990s (e.g. Straw 1991). The majority of research employing and developing the concept of scene has focused primarily on popular music cultures. Thus, in developing and applying the concept of scene for the study of a different type of environment, in this case the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, this study contributes to the methodological discussion of how to map and study alternative religious environments. The concept of scene will be outlined in detail in chapter 2.3. Already at this point, however, it is worth highlighting that when deploying the scene framework, the researcher has him or herself a central and active role in the mapping of the scene (Moberg and Ramstedt 2015: 166). It is a challenge to map loosely organized alternative religious and spiritual environments that demand no official membership, where people are encouraged to have their own opinions, and where some events or publications may suddenly spring up and fade away almost as quickly. The boundaries of the scene should not be considered as set in stone. Rather, this investigation entails a mapping of the most central media channels, organizations, leading people within the scene, and most significant events. As noted earlier, magazines like *Ultra* also cover issues like self-development, wellbeing and so on. My focus on various stigmatized knowledge claims has also guided my choice of interviewees. For example, I have chosen to interview people who lecture and write on themes such as paranormal phenomena or alternative history. Thus, I have not interviewed lecturers who may visit events to talk about exercise or wellbeing.

A central activity among key proponents of Fringe-Knowledge is to promote various knowledge claims rejected by the mainstream. This is done by lecturing at different events, and publishing Fringe-Knowledge articles, books, and magazines. Promoting Fringe-Knowledge entails advocating that some sources are reliable and trustworthy, and that there are methods that can be used to obtain various types of 'higher', 'hidden', and 'rejected' forms of knowledge, which cannot be obtained through conventional and established channels and means.

The proponents of Fringe-Knowledge actively and continually spread their ideas through certain networks and channels, for example, they lecture at the same events or publish in the same magazines. As such, they are part of a certain scene where different types of stigmatized knowledge claims are circulated. The main research question in this thesis centers on

how and why leading people within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, such as authors, lecturers, and editors of magazines, discursively construct Fringe-Knowledge as an important form of knowledge. This entails investigating how they conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge and why they find it meaningful. It entails inquiring into how and why they became interested in Fringe-Knowledge ideas, involved in the scene, and how they came to actively promote ideas and beliefs that often stand in stark contrast to those prevalent in mainstream society. As proponents of Fringe-Knowledge are part of the same scene, the question of how they conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge entails investigating whether they see themselves as part of a community, and if they do, how they do so, i.e. if the scene has a sense of self-awareness.

Closely interlinked with the question of knowledge, this study also explores the ways in which popular cultural products such as films and television series are used by leading people in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene as sources for the types of 'higher' knowledge sought after. Christopher Partridge has highlighted that popular culture should be recognized as a key factor in spreading and mixing various types of occult and alternative spiritual ideas and worldviews (Partridge 2004: 124). With examples from the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, this study investigates what impacts popular culture has on a certain alternative religious environment in a certain context.

According to authors such as Anthony Giddens and Jean-Francois Lyotard, the late modern context is marked by the decline of belief in overarching "grand narratives" (Giddens 2013: 2). Moreover, the late modern stance towards what is considered to be reliable knowledge has become pluralistic and heterogeneous. We live in a situation in which the status of scientific knowledge is no longer taken for granted (Giddens 2013: 2). Exploring how proponents of Fringe-Knowledge, some with higher degrees from Finnish universities, negotiate how and why various types of stigmatized knowledge are trustworthy, reliable, and important gives an in-depth picture of how a certain distinct group of people make sense of the world in the late modern context.

The aims of the study can be summarized in the following way:

- A) To identify the major media channels, events, and leading people within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. This is done by developing and operationalizing the framework of scene.

- B) To explore how Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed as meaningful within the scene. This entails inquiring into what types of knowledge constitute Fringe-Knowledge, why this knowledge is considered important and valid, and how it can be obtained according to leading people within the scene. The focus is on how leading proponents conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge and what it is about.
- C) To show how Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed as being part of personal identity, and if and in what way, people consider themselves to be part of a larger scene with some type of collective identity.

The scene methodology offers a novel and concrete way of mapping and conceptualizing the Fringe-Knowledge environment. The focus lies on how leading figures within the scene conceptualize and construct Fringe-Knowledge as a meaningful pursuit.

## **1.2 Material and sources**

This study is based mainly on three types of material: semi-structured in-depth interviews, scenic media, and material gathered through participant observation. Other material used in this thesis include material from websites and internet forums focusing on Fringe-Knowledge, and articles about Fringe-Knowledge from mainstream media outlets such as the tabloid evening newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat* and Finnish television programs. The reasons for relying on several types of material are twofold and interlinked. The first reason is that fully utilizing the methodological concept of scene demands that the researcher draws on several types of material. For example, in order to explore how the self-understanding among members of the scene is influenced by discourses on Fringe-Knowledge in mainstream media, it is fruitful to use both face-to-face interviews and mainstream media outlets. The second interlinked reason is that by using the scene methodology and relying on different types of material, this study will be able to provide a more nuanced picture of the Fringe-Knowledge scene than would be possible by simply using one type of material.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were organized around a particular set of topics or themes that the interviewees were asked to address during the interview. The form of semi-structured interviews also

allows for both the interviewee and interviewer to elaborate on new topics and ask further questions that might emerge in the interview situation. Scenic media, such as Fringe-Knowledge magazines or books written by authors within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, represent material that is produced by and for people within the scene and, thus, in contrast to the interviews, is independent from my own influence. The last category of material consists of participant observation at different Fringe-Knowledge events. This type of material gives an insight into what people actually do, how they act, and how they express themselves at different gatherings. In the following, I account for each category of material in more detail.

### **1.2.1 Interviews**

The interview material consists of interviews with people who occupy various key positions within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. These people include editors of and writers for Finnish Fringe-Knowledge magazines, people who organize fairs and events, and scene associated authors and lecturers. All of these people are individuals who are actively involved in both the ideological and everyday reproduction and maintenance of the scene.

The interviewees were chosen after an initial period during which I studied various scenic media and participated at different scenic events. The purpose of this initial research phase was to identify the main topics that were most frequently being discussed in scenic media and at different events, who they most frequently featured as lecturers, and who were responsible for their practical organization.

I chose to interview all three editors in chief of the most significant Fringe-Knowledge magazines in Finland: *Ultra*, *Tähteläiset* (Star People), and *Hermeetikko/Sinikivi* (The Hermetic/Bluestone). Editors occupy important gatekeeping positions as they play a central role in forming the focus and outlook of a magazine and deciding on what topics will be included or excluded. It is not unusual for editors of magazines also to be involved in the organization of scenic events. There are a few other magazines that to some extent deal with Fringe-Knowledge themes, such as *Sielun Peili* (Mirror of The Soul) and *Minä Olen* (I Am). The focus of these magazines is, however, primarily on topics such as wellbeing, meditation, and alternative therapies. Thus, I chose to exclude these magazines and their editorial teams from this study. Eleven people were interviewed, two of

whom chose to remain anonymous. In this study, they are referred to as Anonymous 1 and Anonymous 2.

The interviewees were contacted either via e-mail or by me personally approaching them at various events where they were present. The interviews, all of which were recorded, were semi-structured. Prior to the interviews, a written agreement outlining issues regarding anonymity and the conditions for possible further use of the interview for research purposes was signed. The interviews were transcribed and archived at the Cultura-archive at Åbo Akademi University (archive of folk life and traditions).

In order to be able to make the interviews as coherent as possible, I used a list of 19 topics that were all addressed in each interview (for a complete list of the topics see Appendix A). The interviews were structured around the following three main themes:

- A) Personal history and interest in Fringe-Knowledge
- B) Fringe-Knowledge. What is it/What is it not?
- C) Fringe-Knowledge, organization, production, and media

The first cluster of questions in section A) "Personal history and interest in Fringe-Knowledge" relate to what role Fringe-Knowledge might have had and currently has in the life of my interviewees. Asking the interviewees to talk a little about themselves and how they became interested in Fringe-Knowledge-related topics also proved to be a good way of starting the interviews as it usually opened up discussions on the other topics in a natural way. Usually, interest in Fringe-Knowledge had already begun in childhood. Many of the interviewees' personal experiences relate directly to the research question of how and why Fringe-Knowledge is seen as meaningful by my interviewees, and how it may have affected their outlook on life.

The second set of questions in section B) "Fringe-Knowledge. What is it/What is it not?" centers on how my interviewees conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge. This includes questions about emic definitions, in other words, what Fringe-Knowledge "is" for them. This set of questions explores how interviewees might want to, or might be unwilling to, define and set boundaries for Fringe-Knowledge. Many interviewees discussed

relationships and differences between Fringe-Knowledge and other types of knowledge, for example, scientific knowledge.

The questions in section C) “Fringe-Knowledge, production and media” focus on more practical matters, such as how different fairs are organized and what types of scenic media are produced and consumed. Although they have to do with how the scene functions and is organized in practice, these questions also directly intersect with questions of authority and knowledge (e.g. from what sources can you obtain authoritative knowledge?).

Although all topics were addressed in each interview, the order in which they were addressed and the extent to which they were covered varied from one interview to another, as some of the interviewees were keener on discussing some topics and found some questions more relevant than others. I ended each interview with the open question “What do you think about today’s society and the state of the world?,” to which the interviewees would sometimes provide long and elaborate answers on issues such as politics, economics, media, and how these related to Fringe-Knowledge matters.

The length of the interviews varied from slightly under one hour (the shortest) to slightly over three hours (the longest). Some interviewees talked at length about their personal lives and supernatural experiences. In the longest interviews, the interviewees provided elaborate biographical accounts of their lives, recounting how various paranormal experiences guided them through life, and how their interest in Fringe-Knowledge had changed their outlook on society and the human condition. In the following, I present a list of the interviewees, accompanied by a short description of their position and role in the Fringe-Knowledge scene.

#### **List of interviewees:**

**Kananen, Marko**, b. 1967. Editor in chief of *Ultra* magazine. He holds a master’s degree in history from the University of Tampere. His thesis from 1997 deals with how ancient astronaut theories arrived in Finland.

**Keitel, Veli-Martin**, b. 1966. Lecturer and author. He is interested in diverse Fringe-Knowledge- related subjects, such as comparative

mythology, the Mayan calendar and the year 2012, science fiction movies, UFOs and crop circles, esoteric Christianity, and sacred geometry. He is a frequent contributor to *Ultra* magazine. His first book *Väinämöisen Puhuva Puu* (The Talking Tree of Väinämöinen) was published in 2011.

**Luukanen-Kilde, Rauni-Leena**, b. 1939. Author on ufology and parapsychology. Her book *Kuolemaa ei ole* (There is no death, 1982) became a bestseller in Finland. Luukanen-Kilde held the position of chief medical officer of Lapland until 1985. In the early 1990s, Luukanen-Kilde became particularly interested in UFOs and conspiracy theories. She was an active lecturer on Fringe-Knowledge issues until she passed away in February 2015.

**Nieminen, Jukka**, b. 1967. Editor in chief of the magazine *Hermeetikko* (The Hermetic), which was later renamed *Sinikivi* (Blue Stone). Due to the low circulation of *Sinikivi*, the publication of the magazine was suspended in 2013. Nieminen is a frequent contributor to *Ultra* magazine, author of several books on esoteric subjects, alternative history, as well as fiction. He also organizes lectures and maintains the internet forum *Sinikivi* (sinikivi.com).

**Nummela, Asko**, b. 1959. Editor in chief of the magazine *Tähteläiset* (Star People). In addition to having a deep interest in aliens and alien contacts, he is also a practitioner of Tantra. He has a blog on the website *Tantran Maailma* (The World of Tantra, Nummela a).

**Pelttari, Tuula**, b. 1944. Frequent contributor to *Ultra* magazine. She has written several hundred book reviews for the magazine. She has also authored a novel set in ancient Egypt, *Anuba, jumalten tytär* (Anuba, Daughter of the Gods, 1981), and two works of horror fiction, *Susien aika* (The Age of Wolves, 1984) and *Pimeyden sakramentti* (Sacrament of Darkness, 1987). Pelttari received a stipend from the organization *Rajatiedon yhteistyö ry* (Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association) in 2016. One of the motivations for granting her the stipend was her leading stature as a reviewer of Fringe-Knowledge literature (www.rajatieto.fi: a).

**Teide, Timo**, b. 1967. Artist and author. In his artwork, Teide utilizes surreal and cosmic themes and imagery, such as dolphins and penguins in space and in other unearthly locations. He is a frequent contributor to



*Ultra* magazine. He has also authored two books: *Rakkaudella* (With Love, 1999) and *Hiljaisuuden mestari* (Master of Silence, 2001).

**Säilä, Tero**, b. 1953. President of the organization *Rajatiedon yhteistyö ry* (Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association) He is interested in a range of Fringe-Knowledge-related topics, among them reincarnation, paranormal phenomena, and Spiritualism.

**Virolainen, Harri**, b. 1974. Lecturer at Turku School of Economics. Holds a PhD in business management. He published a book on paranormal phenomena together with his identical twin brother, Ilkka Virolainen. The book *Yliluonnollisten ilmiöiden ensyklopedia* (Encyclopedia of Supernatural Phenomena, 2014) received a fair amount of attention in Finnish mainstream media.

**Anonymous 1.** A woman in her 50s who has been active in organizing Fringe-Knowledge events. She has lectured at various events and has on several occasions written for two of the Fringe-Knowledge magazines focused on in this study.

**Anonymous 2.** A man in his 60s who is a frequent contributor to one of the Fringe-Knowledge magazines focused on in this study. He is also a central figure at one of the recurring Fringe-Knowledge events.

The three magazine editors were obvious choices in my selection of interviewees as they decide on the content of the magazines. Tero Säilä was chosen because he is the president of the Rajatiedon Yhteistyö ry and could thus provide me with valuable information about the organization. Although Harri Virolainen is a rather new persona within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, he received much attention because of the book he co-authored with his brother. The rest of the interviewees have written and/or lectured extensively on Fringe-Knowledge and are thus well known within the scene.

There were a few other options concerning interviewees. Among them were UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen, UFO researcher Tapani Koivula, and Sven-Olof Jacobsson, who is an author on conspiracy theories. As the material in this study also consists of excerpts from magazines and material gathered through fieldwork, I chose not to do more than eleven

interviews in order not to make the material too wide-ranging and thus possibly too disorienting.

### **Notes on transcription and translation**

The interviews were conducted in Finnish which is the native language of all of my interviewees. The interviews were digitally recorded after which they were transcribed. There are several ways of transcribing interviews, developed for different purposes. Depending on the purpose, the researcher may use an intricate transcription system or only utilize a minimum degree of transcription detail. John Paul Gee makes a distinction between “narrow” and “broad” modes of transcription (Gee: 2010: 117). The narrow form of transcription may include details such as transcription symbols to indicate the tone of voice, small pauses, hesitations, or gestures and actions made by a person during the interview situation. The broad form of transcription is more focused on what meanings are conveyed through language and not on language use in itself.

As the focus of this study is mainly on the meanings produced through language, the transcription system can be described as a form of broad transcription. In this type of transcription, the text presents the recorded interviews in a way that preserves much of the features of everyday talk and conversation. I have, however, chosen not to at times include unnecessary repetitions of the same words as well as some words that in spoken language are used as fill-in words, for example “sort of” and “like.” As spoken language differs from written text I have somewhat restructured the text and the punctuation in order to make the text more reader friendly. For the sake of clarity and readability the text is in some cases abbreviated which is indicated by /.../. The text is also abbreviated in instances where the speaker starts talking about a certain subject, diverges from it and later returns to the same subject.

When the speaker holds a pause or has finished a point, this is marked by a period mark (.). Diversion from the main sentence by the speaker in order or to make a related comment, or otherwise make an interruption in the main sentence, is marked by a comma (,). A longer pause in speech is marked by a triple-dot punctuation mark (...). Words in slang and words which are intended as metaphorical, or used in a sarcastic sense, are marked by quotation marks (“”). Laughter is indicated by using the parenthesis (laughter). Capital letters are used if something is SHOUTED OUT or EMPHASIZED by the speaker. Throughout this study, excerpts

from the interviews have been translated into English, with the original text in Finnish appearing in footnotes. The same has been done with excerpts from various magazines and books in Finnish.

It is important to note the challenges involved in translating a foreign language into English. According to Béla Filep translating a language is a complex undertaking, which also entails translating culture (see Filep 2009). Filep highlights three questions that are relevant for researchers when translating a language into another:

- Which is a better translation strategy, literal or nonliteral translation?
- What about translating words or phrases that may exist in one language but do not have an exact equivalent in another?
- What meanings and messages do words or phrases carry in one cultural context and not in another? (Filep 2009: 60).

These questions become more relevant the more the languages, translated from and into, differ from each other. As Filep points out, translating language entails translating culture. This requires cultural competence and an understanding of how language mirrors cultural and societal backgrounds. Some words might also demand that the author explains them in more detail. One obvious example in this study is the Finnish word *Rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge) that has no direct equivalent in any other language.

The Finnish language has a significantly different structure compared to English. Any intelligible translation will therefore by necessity entail changing the order of words and the structure of sentences (c.f. Moberg 2009: 31). A word in Finnish may lack a suitable equivalent in English, or it may have a number of equally valid possible translations. In these cases I have strived to make the translation correspond as closely as possible to the meaning of what was said in each particular context.

### **1.2.2 Magazines**

As mentioned above, I have used four different magazines as source material: *Ultra*, *Tähteläiset* (Star People), *Hermeetikko* (The Hermetic) and *Sinikivi* (Blue Stone). These publications make up a category of material that I have myself not been involved in co-producing. However, as a researcher I have played a key role in the process of sorting out and

interpreting the material, and identifying key discourses relevant for this study. Although the production of the material is thus independent of me, I have played a central role in compiling and analyzing it.

*Ultra* appears ten times a year, with two issues being double issues. It was started under the name *Ufoaika* (The UFO age) in 1972. As the focus in this study is mainly on the contemporary Fringe-Knowledge scene, I have systematically studied all the issues between 2000 and 2016. I have also studied some issues from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, but this has not been carried out in any systematic way. *Ultra* is the most diverse of all Fringe-Knowledge magazines in Finland as it covers virtually every aspect of Fringe-Knowledge, ranging from aliens and angels to ancient Atlantis and alternative therapies. The staff of *Ultra* have been slightly secretive about the print of the magazine. In 2008, *Ultra* had an edition of approximately 5 000 copies per issue (Sohlberg 2008: 2014). In an email to the magazine in 2018, the editor answered that the print was “several thousand” magazines. The editor explained and excused his vagueness by saying that he did not want to disclaim that information due to competitive reasons. See figures 1 and 2 for pictures of magazine covers.

*Hermeetikko* (The Hermetic) was founded in 2006 by Jukka Nieminen and Kane Kanerva. The magazine came out six times a year, sometimes rather irregularly. It was discontinued in 2012, after which Jukka Nieminen started his own magazine *Sinikivi* (Bluestone). *Sinikivi* had a short lifespan as only five issues were published before it was discontinued. Both *Hermeetikko* and *Sinikivi* were small magazines, with a print of around 200–300 copies. Both magazines focused on ancient mysteries, conspiracy theories, alternative archaeology, and Western esotericism. I have studied all issues of *Sinikivi* (Bluestone). As I have studied all the issues of *Sinikivi*, interviewed the editor, and been to events that he organized, I decided that to study the issues of *Hermeetikko* from 2009–2012 was sufficient for this study. See figures 3 and 4 for a picture of covers of the magazines.

*Tähteläiset* (Star People), founded at the end of 2012, is published four times per year. For this study, I have studied the first four issues of the magazine. *Tähteläiset* caters to people who consider themselves to be aliens reincarnated on earth in human form. It is a small magazine and has an edition of 100–200 printed copies per issue. See figure 5 for a picture of a cover of the magazine.

These magazines represent Finnish publications that focus on Fringe-Knowledge themes. Although they are different magazines, they quite often cover the same types of issues. The magazines interlink, as many authors who write for *Tähteläiset* (Star People) also appear in *Ultra*. The editor of *Tähteläiset* wrote about his alien contacts in *Ultra* already in the 90s (Nummela 1997: 31). After *Sinikivi* was discontinued, Jukka Nieminen started collaborating with *Ultra*. Of the three magazines, *Ultra* is the most central in this study. This is due to the fact that the magazine is the oldest and largest one, and because of the scenic event *Ultrapäivät* (Ultra Days) that is linked to the magazine.

### 1.2.3 Fieldwork

A third category of material consists of material gathered by means of participant observation during a period of roughly five years (2010–2014) at a both larger and smaller Fringe-Knowledge-related events in Finland. At these events, I have taken field notes about, among other things, the number of participants, the contents of the lectures, and how the lectures were received and discussed by participants. In the following, I list each of these events in turn and provide a brief description of their general character.

*Ufo-konferenssi. Kosminen tietous ja 2012 muutokset* (UFO conference. Cosmic Consciousness and the Changes of 2012), Tampere, 7 February 2010. This event included lectures by Veli-Martin Keitel, Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde, and poetry read by scenic persona Ari Kero, who also hosted the event. Approximately 200 people participated.

*2012 Nyt. Uusi aika – Uusi ihminen* (2012 Now. A New Age – A New Human Being), Tampere, 4-5 September 2010. This event was the first in a series of conferences about the meaning of the end of the Mayan calendar in 2012. The main lecturers included the Native American speaker Rainbow Eagle and the Finnish author Marjut Moisala. The event attracted around 300 participants.

*Talviset Tähtipäivät* (The Winterly Star Days), Toijala, 7–9 January 2011. An annual event organized by UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen and his wife Eija Riikonen. The main speaker this year was the Danish UFO lecturer Asger Lorentzen. The event had around 50 participants and differed from other events in that it was very intimate, as participants

spent the whole weekend together, shared meals at the same restaurant, and lived together in a school dormitory.

***Ultrapäivät*** (Ultra Days), Kuortane, 7–10 July 2011. The event included lectures by artist and author Timo Teide, Veli-Martin Keitel, Jukka Nieminen, and the Indian guru Sudesh Didi. Around 400 people participated.

***Äitimaamessut*** (Mother Earth Fair), Tampere, 2–3 April 2011. This event was a quite typical New Age fair featuring many different stands, offering a range of products and other services. The event had around 300 visitors. The event also featured a musical performance by Finnish Tango Queen Kirsi Ranto.

***Uforock***, Tampere, 21 April 2012. This event included lectures about UFOs followed by rock bands playing in the evening. Around 50 people attended the lectures and the number of visitors tripled in the evening.

***Hengen ja Tiedon Messut*** (The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge), Helsinki, 13–14 October 2012. This is the largest annual fair for alternative spirituality in Finland. The fair attracts around 3000-5000 visitors each year and is organized by *Rajatiedon yhteistyö ry* (The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association). The theme for the event in 2012 was “The Gate is Open.” Many of the lectures focused on or mentioned the end of the Mayan calendar.

***Muinaispäivä*** (Ancient Day), Tampere, 23 February 2013. This event was organized by Jukka Nieminen and *Tampereen UFO r.y.* (Tampere UFO Association). The event featured lectures on both alternative and mainstream archeology. Around 50 people participated in the event.

***Maasäteilypäivä*** (Earth Radiation Day), Tampere, 21 September 2013. This event was organized by Jukka Nieminen and *Tampereen UFO r.y.* (Tampere UFO Association). The event featured lectures on ley lines and earth radiation. After a lecture on dowsing by Leif Paulin, the participants had the chance to try dowsing for themselves. People went outside the library where the event was held and walked around on the lawn with dowsing rods. Approximately 50 people participated in the event.

***Kosmiset parapäivät*** (The Cosmic Para Days), Jyväskylä, 6–7 October 2012. This event included lectures by Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde, Kalevi Riikonen, and Juhan af Grann, known for his UFO documentaries on television. Around 200 people participated in the event.

***Kosmiset parapäivät*** (The Cosmic Para Days), Turku, 14 September 2013. This event included lectures by Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde, Kalevi Riikonen, and Janus Putkonen, editor of the alternative news site *Verkkomedia* (verkkomedia.org), Over 200 people participated in the event.

**Lecture** at Konsa Manor, Turku, 3 April 2013. The lecture was held by Veli-Martin held at Konsa Manor, a cultural and spiritual center in the city of Turku. The lecture focused mainly on comparative mythology. Roughly 30 people participated.

***Ultrapäivät*** (Ultra Days), Kuortane, 3–6 July 2014. This event included lectures by Luukanen-Kilde and American ufologist James Hurtak. The focus was on conspiracy theories and alien contacts.

***Hengen ja Tiedon Messut*** (The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge), Helsinki, 11–12 October 2014. The fair attracts around 3000-5000 visitors each year and is organized by The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association. The theme for the event in 2014 was “The Golden Age.”

These events were chosen because they all focus on Fringe-Knowledge issues. Instead of going repeatedly to one type of event for years in a row, I chose to visit a range of different events in order to obtain a more nuanced picture of the scene. I chose to visit the events *The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge* and the Ultra Days twice; the reason behind this is that the first one represents the largest Fringe-Knowledge fair in Finland. The Ultra Days, in turn, is an event directly connected to *Ultra* magazine.

### **Conducting participant observation**

Participant observation is a qualitative research method rooted in anthropological research. The aim of participant observation is to gain knowledge and insight about some aspects of the lives of the populations studied. Distinctive for participant observation is that “...the researcher approaches participants in their own environment rather than having the participants come to the researcher.” (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey: 2005: 13).

H. Russell Bernard describes participant observation as an endeavor that "...involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives." (Bernard 2006: 342). How to accomplish this depends on the subject of study. Some groups may be closed and secretive, and suspicious or even hostile towards researchers. Others are open to anyone and are happy to welcome everyone that might be interested. The Fringe-Knowledge events I have participated in have been events open to anyone. The only requirement has been that visitors pay a possible entrance fee.

A key issue concerning participant observation is what role the researcher takes and how open the researcher is about his or her intentions. Bernard distinguishes between three different roles that the participant observer may take: (1) complete participant, (2) participant observer, and (3) complete observer. The first role is a role of deception as the researcher does not tell the people studied about his or her intentions. The second role is the most common in ethnographic research. It involves being open about one's intentions, interacting with people, and participating in the same activities as those who one studies (e.g. singing, mediating, and hugging). Taking the third role as a complete observer involves observing people with as little interaction as possible (Bernard 2006: 347).

I chose to take the second role during my fieldwork. If there was collective meditation at some event, I participated in it, emulating the behavior of the people surrounding me. When people laughed or applauded during lectures, I did the same. I strived, however, not to attract unnecessary attention to myself. For, example I did not ask any questions during lectures, and I dressed in quite casual clothing. Being honest and open about one's intentions when doing fieldwork is in general considered the ideal when doing ethnographic fieldwork (Walsh 2004: 229). When conducting interviews, I approached my interviewees in person or via e-mail explaining what type of interview I wished to do with them and for what purpose. However, explaining that I was doing participant observation to all the people at fairs or various events would not have been feasible, and perhaps not even desirable. For example, I consider that there would have been nothing to gain from explaining to the several hundred people at the Ultra Days that I was doing participant observation. However, if I entered into personal discussions with people at these



events, and they asked me about myself, I told them that I was currently working on a thesis and that I was there doing participant observation. In this study, when I mention or describe some activities by ordinary participants at Fringe-Knowledge events (those who are not lecturers or performers), I treat them anonymously as I do not have their consent to publish their names or other details that might identify them. Also, I see no scholarly gain in doing so. When it comes to lecturers within the scene, they are in general more than happy to receive as much publicity as they can. This may not be the case with ordinary visitors to Fringe-Knowledge events, who may even shun publicity, since being associated with Fringe-Knowledge could possibly harm their personal or even professional reputation.

This section has been a presentation of my material. Having many types of material has advantages as well as limitations. Firstly, using several types of material allows me to acquire a broader and more nuanced picture of the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The content of the magazines presents how authors choose to express and disseminate their ideas within the scene. Visiting events gives an insight into how people behave and how lectures are received by the audience. The interviews allow me to ask my interviewees to explain in detail what they mean by different concepts, what they think about the scene, and to ask them to elaborate on their views on Fringe-Knowledge. For example, although Luukanen-Kilde wrote to *Ultra* and lectured many times at the *Ultra Days*, she was never fond of the term Fringe-Knowledge. When interviewing editor Kananen and others, I was able to ask about the boundaries of Fringe-Knowledge, and what is not suitable to be published in magazines. If I would have not personally interviewed people, I would not have been able to obtain these and similar insights.

An outcome of my choice of different types of material is that the different types of material receive less attention than if I would limit myself to one category of material. However, as I noted earlier, the research question demands that I look at several categories of material. Yes, it is true that by only using magazines I could have focused on them more thoroughly. But, then again, the focus of the study would change and it would be another type of thesis. Overall, I see that the advantages of having several categories of material outweigh possible limitations.

### 1.2.4 Self Positioning and Ethical Considerations

One reason why I chose to write a thesis about the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene was that I wanted to study something different, something unusual, and perhaps even exotic. Some anthropologists travel to unknown areas in countries far away and visit almost extinct, secluded tribes in the hope of discovering worldviews, beliefs, and ways of living that differ radically from mainstream Western ideas and notions about the world and our place in it. I discovered that one does not have to travel to remote places and spend time learning exotic languages in order to meet and talk to people who claim to communicate with invisible beings and energies, who have alternative views of history and archeology and how to obtain knowledge about the world. I learned that people like this were to be found nearby, they lived otherwise quite ordinary suburban lives, they would offer me tea or coffee, and would happily talk to me for hours about their worldviews. I discovered a myriad of interlinked fringe ideas and webs of people who organized events and published magazines – an occult underground of sorts that brings together likeminded people to talk freely about ideas that they feel are quite often ridiculed in society at large. When visiting Fringe-Knowledge-focused events such as the Winterly Star Days or the Ultra Days, many participants I talked to expressed joy over being there because it offered them an environment where they ‘could be themselves’, an oasis of knowledge in a world they felt was neglecting spirituality and the paranormal. These were places where during lunch or breaks between lectures people chatted quite commonly about their own experiences of a supranormal character. No one frowned at you or considered you weird if you said you had seen a ghost, claimed to be in contact with hidden masters, or if you claimed to be of extraterrestrial origin.

Stories about the paranormal and supernatural have fascinated me since my early childhood. My father used to tell me and my brothers ghost stories, my brother subscribed to the book series *Mystiikan Maailma* (Mysteries of the Unknown), in which one could read about Spiritualism, parapsychology, hauntings, werewolves, and vampires. In third grade, I and some friends would go into the local woods in the evening and tell ghost stories. In my teens I discovered *Ultra* magazine, I bought several issues and even subscribed to it from time to time.

I have been acquainted with Fringe-Knowledge-related ideas and concepts since my early teens. However, the main reason I was interested in these types of ideas was because of their entertainment value. I did not seek out books on Spiritualism because I was longing to contact the deceased, nor did I read about reincarnation because I had some existential crisis or a need to find out what happens after death. When I read about alternative therapies, I did so because I found the subjects interesting, not because I myself experienced health problems that needed to be treated.

The Fringe-Knowledge scene contains some beliefs and worldviews that I consider rather bizarre. Although I find the late Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde a fascinating person with many admirable qualities, I do consider many of her ideas strange, to say the least. She was educated, had a great talent when it came to lecturing and giving public performances, and she had the courage to talk openly and stand by her ideas, even though she was frequently being ridiculed. Although I can admire some aspects of her persona and career, I find some elements of her worldview quite disturbing. At the Cosmic Para Days in Turku in 2013, she told the audience that the true events surrounding the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 were far more complex than the ideas put forward in the conspiracy theories focusing on planted bombs or radio-operated planes. According to Luukanen-Kilde, the towers were not destroyed at all; they were dematerialized and moved into another dimension. She has made numerous other fantastic claims: vaccines contain microchips; Anders Behring Breivik and the Finnish school shooters were all mind controlled; a secret elite organizes voyages to Mars and visits Jupiter every week. An important question arises here: how does one as a scholar relate to ideas that one considers quite absurd? I have chosen to present ideas and people engaged with these types of ideas as honestly as possible. As I have explored the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, my intentions have been to understand how people within the scene construct their worldview. I have attempted not to misrepresent them or ridicule them. I have taken these ethical considerations into account when I have conducted my interviews and fieldwork. Many of my interviewees have in fact thanked me for the interview, as they felt that it offered them an opportunity to be open about their views and that the interview filled a certain therapeutic function for them.

### 1.3 Composition of the Study

This study is structured as follows. Chapter 1 presents the research questions and the material that is analyzed. The main research question deals with how the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is constituted and how leading people within the scene discursively construct what Fringe-Knowledge is about.

The main material is threefold, consisting of interviews with prominent personas in the Fringe-Knowledge scene, issues from three different magazines that focus on Fringe-Knowledge ideas, and material collected through participant observation at various Fringe-Knowledge events. Other material include Fringe-Knowledge websites, books written by Fringe-Knowledge personas, articles from mainstream newspapers, and television programs where Fringe-Knowledge ideas are discussed.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and methodological framework of the study. For the purpose of studying the Fringe-Knowledge environment, I deploy the framework of “scene,” which is explained in detail in section 2.3. As the scene framework is a new way of conceptualizing an alternative religious environment, section 2.1 provides a discussion on how scholars have previously conceptualized alternative forms of religion. An important part of this framework is to analyze how Fringe-Knowledge phenomena and the scene itself are discursively constructed by its adherents and by people outside the scene. As discourse analysis is such an important part of this framework, in section 2.2 I discuss in detail my understanding of discourse analysis and how it is conducted.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the historical and cultural context for a better understanding of the context in which the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is situated. In section 3.1, I discuss the broader context of late modernity, focusing on how individualism and a relativistic stance towards knowledge are prominent characteristics of the late Western modern condition. Section 3.2 gives a brief historical overview of the religious landscape of Finland. My focus lies on the emergence of various alternative religious groups and organizations. In section 3.3, I provide a discussion of the beliefs, practices, and values among the readers of *Ultra* magazine, which is the most central Fringe-Knowledge magazine. This discussion is based largely upon the study that the Church Research Institute conducted in 2011, when they placed a survey in *Ultra*.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. Section 4.1 presents the structure of the scene, describing its main institutions, magazines and events. The concept of “scenic capital” is discussed in section 4.3. Scenic capital refers to reverence and fame that is attributed to certain people within the scene.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the discursive construction of the Fringe-Knowledge scene. Section 5.1 focuses on how the phenomenon of Fringe-Knowledge is conceptualized within the scene. In 5.2, I discuss how Fringe-Knowledge is related to the personal identity of my interviewees and what role these types of ideas play in their personal lives. 5.1.3 presents how collective identity and a sense of belonging to a scene of likeminded individuals is discursively constructed. Section 5.1.4 focuses on the relative lack of discord with the scene and takes up instances where leading people within the scene disagree on certain issues. Section 5.1.5 focuses on how Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed in relation, or in opposition, to mainstream science and academia. In section 5.1.6, I discuss how popular cultural products, such as TV-series and films, influence the scene and how popular culture is discussed within it. Various utopian hopes and millenarian dreams connected to Fringe-Knowledge are discussed in section 5.1.7. Section 5.2 is devoted to exploring the external discursive construction of the Fringe-Knowledge scene. In this section, I discuss how Fringe-Knowledge is portrayed by mainstream media, and by representatives of the academic community.

Chapter 6 presents the major findings of this study, followed by a discussion of its broader implications and suggestions for further research. This is followed by a summary of this study.

## 2 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical perspectives and methodological apparatus employed in this study. Studying alternative forms of religious expression that differ from traditional religious organizations presents scholars with certain challenges. Such challenges include how one can study loosely structured religious and spiritual environments where membership is not always explicit and where beliefs are not always clear. Alternative religious environments can be seen as empirically elusive in that they are not easily identified, isolated, and grasped (e.g. Sutcliffe & Gilhus 2013: 4–6).

This study develops and operationalizes the methodological framework of scene in order to conceptualize the Fringe-Knowledge environment. The scene-framework is a tool that was initially developed within so-called post-subcultural theory. In short, when utilizing the concept of scene one looks at the structure of a religious milieu, and especially, how it is discursively constructed. As this study presents a new way of grasping and studying a loosely structured religious or spiritual environment, it is necessary to provide a discussion on how scholars have previously conceptualized and categorized various forms of alternative and loosely organized religious and spiritual environments. This will be done in section 2.1.

As a central part of the scene framework focuses on how the scene is discursively constructed (Moberg & Ramstedt 2016: 166–167; 170), the concepts of discourse and discourse analysis are discussed in detail in chapter 2.2. Several forms of discourse analysis have been developed for different purposes. The central focus in various forms of discourse analysis, however, is on how we use language in order to structure and make sense of the world.

The concepts knowledge, authority, and identity are central in this study. As these concepts are in no way self-evident, there is need for a discussion of how they should be understood within the framework of this study. These concepts are discussed in relation to discourse and discourse analysis in chapter 2.2. In the last section, I present the framework of scene.

## 2.1 Conceptualizing 'alternative' forms of religion and spirituality

Although alternative religions have emerged and inhabited the Western religious landscape throughout history, the wider academic interest in them takes off in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Chryssides & Zeller 2014: 1–2; Melton 2005: 6521–6522). It was during this time that a number of new religious groups appeared in the United States inciting public controversy. The emergence of these groups was linked to the social unrest of the era and they were assumed to be merely a passing fad. History would prove that some of these movements and currents were more vital than was anticipated at the time (Melton 2005: 6520). Within academia, the name “new religious movements” (NRMs) replaced the earlier terms “sect” and “cult.” The term sect had originally been intended to make a distinction between the majority religion of a country, to which most people belonged by default, and religious denominations which often opposed values in mainstream society, and in which membership usually was a conscious choice. The term cult, in turn, was developed to designate loosely organized and unstable religious groups, which did not have the more solid structure of the sect. The term cult in particular, however, came to have such negative connotations that it is hardly used anymore by scholars of religion (Chryssides & Zeller 2014: 4–5; 322; Melton 2005: 6522).

George D. Chryssides and Benjamin E. Zeller point out that scholars in the field of new religious movements have no commonly accepted definitions of the terms “new religious movements,” “new religions,” or “alternative religion” (Chryssides & Zeller 2014: 12). The term “new religious movements” is influenced by the study of social movements, which is a subfield of sociology and political science. The organization and influence of social movements can vary to a great extent: they can be “...diffuse, centralized, limited in scope, totalistic, parochial or international, and as such the idea serves as a useful foundation for defining the concept of NRM, since NRMs also possess such different characteristics.” (Chryssides & Zeller 2014: 13). As such, the term NRM covers a wide array of groups with different backgrounds and organizational structures.

The category “religion” is highly debated in itself, and scholars lack agreement about how it should be defined. When it comes to new religious movements, most scholars in the field would agree that groups which hold explicitly supernatural beliefs should be considered as religious

movements. Most scholars, however, also include groups that hold less evident, or even no, supernatural beliefs, such as Raelianism or Jediism, but which organize themselves in the style of religious movements (Chryssides & Zeller 2014: 13). Chryssides and Zeller, however, note that the distinction between “supernatural” and “natural” can be quite blurry (Chryssides & Zeller 2014: 13). The terms “alternative religious movement” and “alternative religion” are often used as synonyms for the term NRM (Partridge 2004: 16; 2005: Melton 6520–6522). The term “alternative” refers to the fact that these movements are usually regarded, by themselves and others as alternatives to the mainstream religion of Western societies, usually Christianity (Rubinstein 2018).

Scholars of religion have approached and conceptualized developments in alternative religion using a wide variety of different terms and concepts. Examples range from (but are far from limited to) terms and concepts (presumably) intended to denote or capture broader transformations, trends, and “movements” in contemporary religiosity such as “cultic milieu” (Campbell 1972), “New Age religion/spirituality/movement” (e.g. Kemp and Lewis 2007; 1992; Hanegraaff 1998; Heelas 1996) “alternative spirituality” (e.g. Sutcliffe and Bowman 2000), “holistic spirituality” (Heelas 1996), and “subjective-life spirituality” (Heelas, Woodhead et al. 2005), to terms and concepts intended to capture (presumably) more specific, both ideologically, spatially, and more clearly geographically demarcated religious spaces such as “holistic milieu” (Heelas, Woodhead et al. 2005), “new age subculture” (Lewis 2003: 118) “metaphysical subculture” (Lewis 2003: 118), “occult/metaphysical community” (Melton 2007: 96), and “stigmatized knowledge milieu” or “stigmatized knowledge domain” (Barkun 2013: 108; 231).

There has, however, always existed quite a degree of confusion as to the precise meaning of such terms and concepts, the empirical basis and conditions for their establishment and subsequent employment, and their relation to and differentiation from one another. Moreover, terms and concepts, such as those mentioned above, have frequently been conflated and employed both simultaneously and interchangeably in much scholarship on non-institutional religion (see for example, Lewis 2003: 104; Gardell 2003: 73). Given that such a large variety of different terms and concepts have emerged to capture closely related and sometimes (at least seemingly) the very same phenomena, it might not be an exaggeration to say that a more widely shared conceptual language for making sense of



notable developments in contemporary 'alternative', non-institutional religion has yet to emerge. However, although I wish to stress the importance of conceptual clarity, I do recognize the difficulties involved in conceptualizing religious phenomena that defy easy conceptualization through already available terminologies. My own use of terms such as "environment," "space," or "milieu" in lack of better terms is itself a reflection of these difficulties.

Accepting these limitations, however, an all-encompassing label such as "alternative religion" may be used when talking more broadly about non-institutional forms of religion in general. In the following, I briefly discuss some of the most influential scholarly renderings of the emergence and character of 'alternative' forms of religion and spirituality in the West.

### **The Cultic Milieu**

Colin Campbell introduced the concept of the "cultic milieu" in an essay in 1972 dealing with how scholars developed Ernst Troelsch's (1931) division of religious phenomena into three categories: church religion, sect religion, and mysticism. Discussing the difference between cult and sect, Campbell asserted that there must exist an environment or milieu that is supportive of the formation of cults (Campbell 1972: 13–14). Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööv describe the cultic milieu as:

...a zone in which proscribed and forbidden knowledge is the coin of the realm, a place in which ideas, theories, and speculations are to be found, exchanged, modified, and eventually adopted or rejected by adherents of countless, primarily ephemeral groups whose leaders come and go and whose membership constitute [sic] a permanent class of seekers whose adherence to any particular leader or organization tends to be fleeting at best. (Kaplan & Lööv 2002: 3)

For Campbell, an important aspect of the cultic milieu is that, despite its diversity, it can be considered "a single entity" (Campbell 1972: 14). According to Campbell, what unifies members of the cultic milieu is a sense of togetherness, stemming from a feeling of being outside mainstream society. Since Campbell's essay, the concept of the cultic milieu has been widely employed, debated, and expanded to include, among other things, conspiracy theories (Barkun 2013), and right and left-wing extremism (Kaplan & Lööv et al.: 2002). Other examples include the work of Christopher Partridge who has developed the idea of the cultic

milieu further by focusing on how works of popular culture with occult and esoteric motifs play a part in underpinning what he refers to as “occulture,” i.e. a cultural environment in which esoteric themes and ideas are continuously circulated, recycled, reprocessed, and modified (Partridge 2004 & 2005).

### **Rejected Knowledge**

In his 1972 book *The Flight from Reason* (later published as *The Occult Underground*), the historian James Webb coined the term “rejected knowledge.” Webb drew attention to the immense interest in occult ideas and mystical thinking in the Western world during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Webb used the term rejected knowledge to denote occult and esoteric ideas that were rejected at that time by society in general and by the scientific community in particular. The term encompasses such varying phenomena as Theosophy, Spiritualism, ceremonial magic, and other forms of Western esotericism. In *The Occult Establishment* (1976), which Webb described as a companion to his previous book, he presented a description of the occult underground that bears many similarities to Campbell’s concept of the cultic milieu:

This Underground of rejected knowledge, comprising heretical religious positions, defeated social schemes, abandoned sciences, and neglected modes of speculation, has at its core the varied collection of doctrines that can be combined in a bewildering variety of ways and that is known as the occult. (Webb 1981: 10)

Similar to Campbell’s cultic milieu, Webb offers a rendering of the occult underground as a melting pot of various forms of rejected knowledge claims. It is an environment where different claims of rejected knowledge can be reshaped, combined, and reinterpreted. Webb also emphasized that the knowledge claims circulating in the occult underground were “...diametrically opposed to the type of society and the ways of thought that were represented by the Establishment culture of the late European industrial revolution” (Webb 1981: 10).

### **Stigmatized Knowledge**

While both Campbell and Webb were concerned with religious or spiritual groups, Michael Barkun (2013) has developed the concepts of the cultic milieu and rejected knowledge for the study of millennialistic conspiracy theories in the United States. Coming from a political science background,

Barkun develops the concept of “stigmatized knowledge” to “designate a broader intellectual universe into which both rejected knowledge and the cultic milieu may be fitted” (Barkun 2013: 23). Barkun identifies five types of stigmatized knowledge:

1. **Forgotten knowledge:** knowledge once allegedly known but lost through faulty memory, cataclysm, or some other interrupting factor (e.g., beliefs about ancient wisdom once possessed by inhabitants of Atlantis).
  2. **Superseded knowledge:** claims that once were authoritatively recognized as knowledge but lost that status because they came to be regarded as false or less valid than other claims (e.g., astrology or alchemy).
  3. **Ignored knowledge:** knowledge claims that persist in low-prestige social groups but are not taken seriously by others (e.g., folk medicine).
  4. **Rejected knowledge:** knowledge claims that are explicitly rejected as false from the outset (e.g., UFO abductions).
  5. **Suppressed knowledge:** claims that are allegedly known to be valid by authoritative institutions but are suppressed because the institutions fear the consequences of public knowledge or have some evil or selfish motive for hiding the truth (e.g., the alien origins of UFOs and suppressed cancer cures).
- (Barkun 2013: 26–27)

In his work *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (2013, first published 2003), Barkun uses the terms “stigmatized-knowledge milieu” and “stigmatized-knowledge community” interchangeably. Stigmatized knowledge claims provide the building blocks for people and groups who develop what Barkun refers to as an “improvisational millenarian style.” This style is described as distinctive and independent from any single ideological tradition. Instead of relying on a fixed set of religious, political, or philosophical texts or truth claims, the improvisational millenarian style borrows rather freely and indiscriminately from a number of sources (Barkun 2013: 18). As an example of this, Barkun refers to the worldview of the Japanese group Aum Shinrikyo responsible for releasing Sarin gas in the Tokyo subway system in 1993. The leader Shoko Asahara (b. 1955) drew inspiration from esoteric Buddhism, The Book of Revelation, Nostradamus, as well as anti-Semitic conspiracy theories (Barkun 2013: 18). Another example of improvised millennialism was the beliefs linked to the year 2012, which marked the end of the Mayan calendar. Between the years 2006 and 2012

a number of “millenarian entrepreneurs” published books which in bewildering ways combined obsolete scholarship on Mayan culture, the ideas of Rudolf Steiner and Carl Gustav Jung, and beliefs about aliens and crop circles, linking them all to the year 2012 (Barkun 2013: 212).

According to Barkun, the improvisational millenarian style is only able to flourish in an environment where two conditions are present. The first condition is that there must be a wide range of potential material available that can be included in the belief system. In practice, this may consist of bookstores or websites that cater to different types of spiritual seekers. The second condition is that improvisational millenarianism can only spring up in a social and cultural environment characterized by a sufficiently weakened authority structure (Barkun 2013: 19). By this, Barkun refers to a condition in which the authority of religious, governmental, and scientific institutions are not, or no longer, taken for granted (Barkun 2013: 19–20). What is worth highlighting here is Barkun’s argument that a sort of infrastructure (e.g. bookshops) must exist that supplies improvisational millenarian thinkers with material for constructing their worldviews. The concept of infrastructure is something that I develop further in relation to my employment and operationalization of the framework of scene (see section 2.3).

The cultic milieu (Campbell 1972), the rejected knowledge milieu (Webb 1974), and the stigmatized knowledge milieu (Barkun 2013) are all concepts that denote environments where certain types of truth claims and discourses are able to thrive and mutate. The discourses in these spaces – discourses on, for example, the paranormal, conspiracy theories, alternative history – are usually considered deviant and outlandish and are generally opposed to the mainstream, and opposed by the mainstream. What unifies advocates of these discourses is the feeling and experience of being an outsider. These environments thrive on standing in opposition to the social and cultural mainstream; this is the main unifying force that brings adherents of forbidden or rejected knowledge together. As Colin Campbell puts it: “At the basis of the unifying tendencies is the fact that all these worlds share a common position as heterodox or deviant items in relation to the dominant cultural orthodoxies.” (Campbell 1972: 14).

For the purposes of my discussion in subsequent chapters, it is worth underlining that both Webb (1981) and Barkun (2013) also explicitly acknowledge links between certain forms of popular culture and occult

and conspiratorial worldviews. Webb, for example, argued that the worlds of fantasy and science fiction bear similarities to the occult in that both offer a form of “otherness” (Webb 1981: 509). Many authors have indeed been influenced by the occult in their creation of fictional worlds. The works of authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and C.S. Lewis, argued Webb, all epitomize these types of connections between occult worldviews and fantastic fiction:

All three writers subscribe to a form of Christianity: Catholicism for Tolkien, for Williams an interesting personal mysticism which probably owed a lot to his early occult studies, and for Lewis a Neo-Platonic form of Christianity that was not above accepting some of William’s unorthodox theories. The three formed a group called “the Inklings,” which met regularly and included a leading Anthroposophist, Owen Barfield. (Webb 1981: 510)

Barkun, in his turn, coined the term “fact-fiction reversal” to refer to how popular cultural works that are intended as fiction can, in certain contexts, be interpreted as fact (Barkun 2013: 29). Both Barkun and Webb further note how the pulp science fiction magazine *Amazing Stories* played a part in spreading ideas about flying saucers and the lost continent of Lemuria during the 1940s (Webb 1981: 508; Barkun 2013: 32–33).

### **Esotericism and the occult**

Esotericism is a term with several meanings. The word esoteric usually refers to knowledge or teachings that are hidden or secret, and only available to a select few. It is also used to designate the supposed inner meaning of religions, and mythical stories. As a historical current, Western *esotericism* is generally considered to have come into existence during the European renaissance. It includes, among other things, traditions such as alchemy, Hermetism, Rosicrucianism, Kabbalah, and later traditions such as Spiritualism and the Theosophy developed by Madame Blavatsky (Faivre 2005 a: 2842–2843). According to Antoine Faivre, Western esotericism can be identified through four primary and two secondary characteristics. The four primary ones include the concept *correspondences*, i.e. the notion that everything in the cosmos is interlinked; ideas of divine forces permeating a *living nature*; the idea that one can gain access to otherworldly realities through *imagination and mediations* (e.g. rituals, angels, spirits); and ideas about processes of *transmutation* through which the esoteric practitioner’s soul transcends to a higher, more perfected state.

The two secondary characteristics, which are often included but not required to be present, are the concepts *concordance* and *transmission*. The former refers to the existence of a true esoteric core in all religious traditions, while the latter refers to the transmission of esoteric teachings from a legitimate teacher to a pupil (Faivre 2005 a: 2844).

The terms occult and occultism may also signify different things, including the notion that occultism refers to the practical side of esotericism, or that occultism is a degeneration of esoteric worldviews. Occultism is also used as a synonym for esotericism (Faivre 2005 b: 6780–6781). Both the occult and occultism can be used in a broad sense as a term “...to designate a variety of currents (e.g. Oriental mysticism), practices (e.g. channeling, parapsychological experiments), and beliefs (e.g. fairies, spirits, UFO abductions, vampire legends)” (Faivre 2005 b: 6780). When used in this way the term occult, thus, covers much of what is included in the category of stigmatized knowledge.

### **New Age**

Different meanings and usages of the term “New Age”/“new age” have been widely debated by scholars who study contemporary alternative and eclectic forms of religion or spirituality (e.g. Sutcliffe 2007, Chrystides 2007, Granholm 2008). Michael York summarizes the New Age as “a blend of pagan religions, Eastern philosophies, and occult-psychic phenomena” (York 1995: 34). The labels “New Age” and “New Age Movement” became common in the early 1970s as both emic and etic terms. The “New Age Movement” was used to describe groups of people in North America and Great Britain who eclectically combined such diverse ideas as transpersonal psychology, non-Christian religious thought, and a range of esoteric teachings. The concept of a New Age, or an Age of Aquarius, stems from astrological lore and came to refer to the coming of an age of spiritual awakening that would profoundly alter society. Wouter Hanegraaff describes the New Age (*sensu lato*) in terms of the cultic milieu becoming conscious of itself (Hanegraaff 1998: 97). Gordon Melton, in his turn, describes the New Age as “a revivalist movement within a pre-existing metaphysical-occult community” (Melton 2001: 373). In a broad, general sense, Granholm links the New Age phenomenon partly to the mass-popularization of Western esoteric discourse (Granholm 2008). Gordon Melton has provided a definition of New Age that bears similarities with the definition of Anton Faivre. According to Melton, The

New Age movement has the following four distinguishable characteristics:

1. The possibility of personal transformation. The Movement offers personal spiritual transformation in the immediate future, something that usually is considered to be a life-long work in many occult traditions.
2. The coming of a broad cultural transformation.
3. The transformation of occult arts and processes. Practices such as Tarot, Zen meditation or Yoga are re-interpreted and are detached from their original framework.
4. The self as divine. The individual is seen as divine while “God” or the ultimate is usually seen as an impersonal energy or force. (Melton 2001: 374–375)

Wouter Hanegraaff distinguishes between New Age in a limited and strict sense (*sensu stricto*) and New Age in the broad sense (*sensu lato*). In the strict sense, New Age refers to a movement with roots in the cultic milieu of 1950s Britain. This earlier New Age movement had a strong apocalyptic outlook. It was heavily influenced by Theosophy and Antroposophy and UFO beliefs (Hanegraaff 1998: 94–97). New Age in the broad sense came into existence in the latter part of the 1970s when a number of people started to see similarities between different “alternative” ideas and practices and started thinking of these as part of the same movement. New Age *sensu lato* was heavily influenced by the Californian counterculture, and by the so-called “New Thought” tradition which emphasized that illness and unhappiness are the results of wrong beliefs and thinking (Hanegraaff 1998: 97).

The use of New Age as an emic label has greatly diminished since the early 1990s and has even come to be understood as a term with pejorative connotations (Hammer 2001: 74). No other emic term has emerged to take its place, which perhaps says something about a lack of a need for a specific label or identifying marker within this milieu itself. As Jon P. Bloch has noted, while scholars are often eager to create labels and categories, this interest is not necessarily shared by people involved in different forms of eclectic spirituality (Bloch 1998:1). The term New Age has also been used etically by scholars in relation to the terms “religion” and “spirituality,” i.e. in the form of “New Age Religion” and “New Age Spirituality” (e.g. Hanegraaff : 1996; Possamai: 2005).

There are several problems associated with definitions of the term New Age. A common critique is that New Age has become a label that has become too wide and vague. Steven Sutcliffe and Kennet Granholm have pointed out that the term new age is seldom found as an emic term and that it really does not work very well as an etic piece of terminology, either because scholars seldom specify what they mean by the term (Granholm 2008; Sutcliffe 2003: 198).

The criticisms of Sutcliffe and Granholm are valid, but neither of them offers any concrete solution to the problem, i.e. what term, if any, would be more suitable to use instead of “New Age”? Instead of trying to come up with some new label, and potentially adding even more confusion to the matter, I consider it possible to continue to use the term New Age in a general heuristic sense, while simultaneously acknowledging the problematic nature of the label. As George D. Chryssides points out in his defense of the term New Age, scholars also commonly use terms such as Hinduism fully aware of the fact that they are etic constructs used to describe a range of beliefs and practices, some of which only vaguely relate to each other (Chryssides 2007: 13).

### **Alternative- and subjective-life spirituality**

Scholars have used the term “alternative spirituality” to refer to the same kind of subjective and eclectic combination of ideas that others have labelled New Age (e.g. Sutcliffe & Bowman 2000: 10–11). The terms “alternative” and “spirituality” are themselves both rather problematic. Something “alternative” implies an established “mainstream.” In this scholarly debate, however, the term “alternative” is primarily used to denote types of religion or spirituality and religious or spiritual practices that somehow diverge from institutional Christianity in the West.

In *The Spiritual Revolution* (2005) Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead et al. distinguish between “religion” and “spirituality” in the form of a distinction between what they term “life-as religion” and “subjective-life spirituality.” Basically they use “life-as religion” to refer to forms of religion that emphasize scripture or tradition (e.g. institutional Christianity). In “life-as religion” the sacred is generally seen as transcendent. By contrast, “subjective-life spirituality” emphasizes the authority of the individual and tends to see the sacred as something immanent. They go on to argue that subjective-life spirituality, or simply spirituality, is primarily to be found in what they term the “holistic



milieu,” while life-as religion is primarily to be found in what they term the “congregational domain” (Heelas & Woodhead et al. 2005: 5–6; 8).

### **Occulture**

The role of popular culture as an environment for the dissemination and expression of various occult and esoteric themes, worldviews, and ideas has constituted a major point of focus in the work of Christopher Partridge. In his two-volume work *The Re-enchantment of the West* (2004; 2005), Partridge makes a strong and well-grounded case for popular culture playing one of the most important roles in the spreading, circulation, reshaping, and recycling of occultural ideas, concepts, and worldviews. The term “occulture” is a combination of the words “occult” and “culture.” Partridge defines the term:

...far more broadly than the technical esotericist understanding, though it is fundamentally related to it...occulture includes those often hidden, rejected and oppositional beliefs and practices associated with esotericism, theosophy, mysticism, New Age, Paganism, and a range of other subcultural beliefs and practices which are identified by Campbell as belonging to the cultic/mystical milieu. (Partridge 2004: 68)

According to Partridge, occultural worldviews have provided an important and indeed central source of inspiration for many forms of popular culture, while popular culture, in its turn, has evolved into an important source of inspiration for occultural worldviews. Moreover, Partridge argues that popular culture is starting to have an ever more noticeable impact on Western plausibility structures (Partridge 2004: 126). Popular culture can, thus, be seen simultaneously to reflect and shape the religious and spiritual landscape of the West, and beyond. Partridge provides numerous examples of how different types and genres of popular culture, such as vampire fiction, trance- and rock-music, science fiction have been shaped by occultural ideas and have in turn provided inspiration for and influenced various forms of religious and spiritual expression (Partridge 2004; 2005). Partridge sees popular culture as one of the central mechanisms that influence the mixing and dissemination of occultural thought (Partridge 2014: 113), just as Partridge, Webb and Barkun have also highlighted the links between popular culture and belief in UFOs and extraterrestrials (Webb 1981: 508, Barkun 2013: 32–33).

## **Conspirituality**

The term “conspirituality” refers to a mixture of conspiracy theory and alternative spiritual or New Age beliefs (Ward & Voas 2011: 103). Charlotte Ward and David Voas describe conspirituality as a “politico-spiritual philosophy,” a largely “internet-based movement” which has a relatively modest offline presence (Ward & Voas 2011: 104). Conspirituality, which emerged in the mid-1990s, has two central characteristics: the belief central in conspiracy theories, that is, the idea that a secret group is trying to control the world, and the belief that humanity is undergoing a spiritual transformation, which is central in New Age thinking. While the New Age milieu is female-dominated, the adherents of conspiritual worldviews are predominantly male. Conspirituality is a highly flexible phenomenon; there is no requirement to join any certain movement, the content of webpages is usually free, one can choose to what degree one becomes involved, and one can choose to accept, reject, or adapt information according to one’s own belief threshold (Ward and Voas 2011: 104; 109; 114). Conspirituality resembles alternative spirituality in general since an individual is free to choose which beliefs are plausible, and has no obligation to join any certain group. An example of a person who presents conspiritual worldviews, and has a considerable presence and following on the internet, is the British author and lecturer David Icke (b. 1952). According to Icke, humanity must undergo a change in consciousness in order to be able to resist the agenda of the wicked shape-shifting reptilians responsible for much of the suffering in the world (Ward & Voas 2011: 109–110).

## **A number of terms**

As discussed above, there are many terms which aim to conceptualize different forms of alternative religion. Some terms are designed to describe broader shifts and trends in the religious landscape, while others are designed to capture more precise or specific phenomena.

Alternative spirituality may be used as a broad all-encompassing term to refer to a large variety of types of religion outside the mainstream. It may be synonymous with the term New Age and refer to an individualistic religiosity where the individual chooses his or her worldview rather freely by combining elements from different sources and practices, such as Eastern spirituality, meditation, healing, channeling angels. This way of describing New Age is what Wouter Hanegraaff refers to as New Age *sensu lato*, or New Age in a broad sense (Hanegraaff 1998: 97).

Conspiritoriality is a more specific term than New Age in the sense that, although conspiritoriality comprises many New Age beliefs and practices, the central component is a belief in one or many conspiracy theories (Ward & Voas 2011: 103).

Of all these concepts, the most central for my study are the concepts rejected knowledge, stigmatized knowledge, and occulture. The first two of these concepts highlight the fact that occult knowledge claims in general have a negative stigma in society. In other words, the terms serve to highlight the *relational* character of knowledge, pointing out that rejected/stigmatized knowledge has a generally inferior position in contrast to established knowledge. Secondly, the concepts rejected knowledge and stigmatized knowledge give us an insight into how various rejected or stigmatized knowledge claims have a tendency to mix and become represented in the same environment. The concept occulture, in turn, emphasizes how popular cultural products are a key component in the dissemination and mixing of various occultural ideas and worldviews. All of these concepts are influenced and inspired by Campbell's notion of the cultic milieu.

What is central to Campbell's concept of the cultic milieu, Webb's rejected knowledge, and Barkun's stigmatized knowledge, is that they all denote worldviews and ideas that are not accepted in mainstream society. The cultic milieu was for Campbell a concept that denoted an environment whose existence was essential for the formation of "cults," loosely organized and structured movements that were centered on more specific sets of ideas or teachings (Campbell 1972: 13–14). It is important to note the fact that Campbell regarded the cultic milieu as a "single entity" (Campbell 1972: 14). Although various claims of forbidden knowledge were rather different, they still shared the same arena. Webb's idea of the occult underground strongly resembles the cultic milieu in that Webb highlights the underground as an environment where many types of rejected knowledge may exist. Moreover, like the cultic milieu of Campbell, the underground allows for experimentation as various rejected knowledge claims may be combined in new bewildering ways (Webb 1981: 10). Barkun, in turn, uses the concept of "stigmatized knowledge claims" to encompass both Webb's notion of rejected knowledge and Campbell's cultic milieu (Barkun 2013: 23).

Partridge emphasizes that since the 1960s occulture has become something widespread and rather ordinary (Partridge 2014: 116). Esoteric ideas, pagan beliefs, and worldviews that acknowledge different paranormal and extraterrestrial forces and energies, albeit perhaps in a diluted popular form, have become familiar to the mainstream. Knowledge of these ideas is no longer limited to some fringe or secluded groups. Even if people in general may be skeptical towards many esoteric claims and occult philosophies, there is, however, a noticeable interest in them. Occulture, as Partridge argues, is ordinary. At the heart of the process of spreading, mixing and reshaping of occultural ideas and worldviews is popular culture (Partridge 2014: 116).

In the following sections, I present my understanding of discourse analysis after which I show how the methodological framework of scene is utilized as a tool in mapping and conceptualizing alternative religious environments.

## 2.2 Discourse Analysis

According to Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, a discourse can at its most general be defined as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 1). Vivien Burr describes a discourse as consisting of a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that together produce a particular version of events (Burr 2003: 64). Both of these definitions highlight the point that discourses are specific ways of contextualizing and making sense of the world through language and other forms of representation. Burr explains that there may be several different discourses, or competing discourses, surrounding some event or topic. Burr illustrates this by referring to debates surrounding foxhunting. One discourse may describe the practice of foxhunting as a natural way of keeping down the amounts of foxes in order to avoid harm to livestock. Another discourse may instead emphasize that foxhunting is an immoral and cruel practice. Both of these discourses highlight different aspects of foxhunting and may suggest different ways of either supporting or limiting the practice (Burr 2003: 63–64).

The majority of discourse analytical approaches are based on the same meta-theoretical foundation, namely that of *social constructionism*. This meta-theoretical approach is based primarily on the idea that we as

humans are together constantly involved in constructing and reconstructing our sense of ourselves and of reality. A number of commentators highlight the debates within literary theory and semiotics during the 1960s as especially important in establishing social constructionism as an acknowledged meta-theoretical orientation, although important precursors of social constructionist approaches can also be found in a number of disciplines such as philosophy, social psychology, the sociology of knowledge, and social interactionism (Moberg 2017: 19–20).

The term “social construction” was first introduced in the groundbreaking work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. According to Jonathan Potter, this classic work made two particularly important contributions. The first one was its contribution to the sociology of knowledge, as it outlined the notion that our understandings of the world should be viewed as an outcome of social processes rather than simply being based on supposedly unbiased and objective observations of natural phenomena (Potter 1996: 12).

The second important contribution of the book was its insistence on that the sociology of knowledge should have a “symmetrical stance” towards knowledge (Potter 1996: 12). The sociology of knowledge should thus primarily concern itself with whatever is *viewed* as knowledge in a certain social and cultural context (Potter 1996: 12). Rather than just focusing on whether various truth claims are true or false in and of themselves, the sociology of knowledge should explore how different ways of understanding the world arise in different historical and cultural contexts and how different truth claims impact on societies. Berger and Luckmann illustrate this by stating that what is ‘real’ to a Tibetan monk may differ from what is ‘real’ to the American businessman (Berger & Luckmann 1991: 15).

Another important work that contributed to the notion of social construction was Kenneth J. Gergen’s paper “Social Psychology as History” (1973) in which Gergen argues that psychology, as well as all other forms of knowledge, are historically and culturally contingent (Burr 2003: 13–14). Although social constructionist approaches can be found in a number of disciplines Vivien Burr has presented four basic tenets that are present in most works on social constructionism:

1. A critical stance towards knowledge.
2. Knowledge is historically and culturally specific.
3. Knowledge is created and maintained through social interaction.
4. Knowledge and social interaction are interlinked.

(Burr 2003: 2–5)

In this study, I use these four tenets as basic assumptions or cornerstones for my theoretical thinking. As the first tenet makes clear, social constructionism is critical towards the assumption that we can obtain objective and unbiased knowledge about the world. It opposes what is called positivism and empiricism in the traditional sense. Burr exemplifies this by discussing how the categories by which we understand the world do not necessarily correspond to any natural objective divisions (Burr 2003: 3). This can also be said about categories such as “religion,” “spirituality,” “popular culture,” or “identity,” all of which are central concepts in this study. However, although social constructionism asks us to be aware that our concepts are social constructions which do not necessarily correspond to any objective categories in the real world, social constructionist theory does not argue that categories like these are useless. On the contrary, we need different categories and descriptions to conceptualize the world. Social constructionism therefore rather invites us to adopt a reflexive stance towards knowledge and to question taken for granted assumptions about the world (Burr 2003: 2–3).

The second basic assumption is that our understanding of the world is historically and culturally contingent. Knowledge is historically and culturally specific. For example, our ideas about such things as childhood, sexuality, religion, or human rights have undergone significant changes and transformations throughout the ages (Burr 2003: 3–4).

The third tenet of social constructionism is that knowledge is created and maintained through social processes and social interaction. Knowledge is a product of social processes on both micro and macro levels. Knowledge is constructed in everyday interaction among people and institutions (Burr 2003: 4–5).

The fourth basic assumption is that knowledge and social interaction are interlinked. According to Burr, our constructions of the world are “...bound up with power relations because they have implications for what is permissible for different people to do, and for how they may treat

others” (Burr 2003: 5). For example, if a person is considered to be mentally unstable while committing a crime it may have different consequences than if the person is deemed totally responsible for his or her actions. In this case, it may be a matter of treatment versus imprisonment.

Discourse can thus be seen as a form of meaning making through language and other modes of representation. Perhaps the most famous example of a scholar who had a broad, and according to Norman Fairclough, rather abstract definition of discourse is Michel Foucault (Fairclough 2006: 37). Foucault defined discourses “as practices which form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972: 49). This circular statement emphasizes the *effects* that discourses have on societal structures. Norman Fairclough, who is a great influence on my understanding of discourse analysis, sees discourse as a form of *action* or *social practice* (Fairclough 2006: 63). This implies that when Fairclough uses the term discourse he sees language use not only as an individual activity. Fairclough defines discourse as “a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation” (Fairclough 2006: 63). Discourses are forms of social practices or forms of social action played out in particular historical and cultural contexts. Through language and other symbolic representations we make the world meaningful and may suggest change.

According to Fairclough, discourses are both *constructive* and *constitutive*. By saying discourses are constructive Fairclough points to three constructive effects of discourse. Firstly, discourses contribute to the construction of social identities, both our own and those of others. Secondly, discourses are a way of constructing social relationships between people. Thirdly, discourses are part of the construction of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 2006: 64–65). The statement that discourses are constitutive refers to fact that discourses are not only part of reproducing aspects of society (social identities, relationships, systems of knowledge) but are also part in changing and transforming those aspects of society (Fairclough 2006: 65). Discourses are thus both shaped by the social context they are produced in, and play a part in creating and shaping that social context itself (Fairclough 1993: 134).

According to James Paul Gee, we “...use language to build and destroy things in the world, things like our academic discipline, our church membership, our ethnic affiliation, or our marriages.” (Gee 2014: 90). We

use language and other symbolic representations to construct meaning. Through language and other symbolic signifiers we can construct a number of things depending on what we want: credibility, boundaries, or a certain understanding of some current event. Although discourses have constructive effects on society, not all discourses may have equally powerful constructive effects. As in the case of discourses surrounding foxhunting mentioned previously, there may be several different discourses surrounding some matter or issue. According to Fairclough, discourses "...include representations of how things are and have been, as well as imaginaries —representations of how things might or could or should be." (Fairclough: 2001: 3). These imaginaries may in turn be *enacted*. When discourses are enacted "...imagined activities, subjects, social relations etc. can become real activities, subjects, social relations etc." (Fairclough: 2001: 3).

As discourses have both constructive and constitutive effects on society there are several reasons why it is important to study discourses and engage in discourse analytical work. First of all, and most relevant to this study, analysis of discourses is a way to analyze how people within the Fringe-Knowledge scene conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge and how it is related to their self-understanding and personal lives. Discourses on Fringe-Knowledge are thus seen as the ways in which people in the scene choose to represent themselves and what Fringe-Knowledge is about. These two aspects of discourse is what one, in the terms of Fairclough, would call the constructive effects of discourse. They in turn are interlinked with the third constructive effect of discourse which is how discourses contribute to constructing social relationships. In this study, these social relationships refer to how people engage with each other within the scene, and how they relate to or create boundaries between themselves and people who do not belong to the scene.

Within this study, discourses on Fringe-Knowledge are seen as social practices or actions that create and shape the same discursive environment in which they are expressed. For example, the existence of organizations, fairs, and magazines that focus on Fringe-Knowledge in the forms they exist are the result of discourses on how various stigmatized knowledge claims and alternative sciences have something in common and should thus organize themselves under the same banner. The organization of fairs, and meditating in order to contact aliens are, to use the terminology of Fairclough, examples of enactments of certain types of discourses. This



does not, however, detract from the fact that the formation and reproduction of magazines and events is also dependent on other factors such as the capital needed to print magazines, affordable venues where fairs can be held, skills in editing and computer use, and so on.

To return to discourse analysis, since the 1980s there has developed a number of discourse analytical approaches that focus on how our language use and ways of representation affect and transform our understanding and sense of the world (Moberg 2017: 19). There are several types of discourse analysis, developed for and utilized in fields such as political science, linguistics, psychology, and sociology. Within the study of religions the earliest discursive approaches, which date back to the 1980s, were mainly applied for the purpose of developing a reflexive and self-critical framework (Stuckrad & Wijzen 2016: 2). During the past decade discursive approaches have been utilized and adopted in growing numbers in the study of religion (e.g. Hjelm 2011; 2016; Granholm 2005; 2013; Moberg 2009; 2013; 2016; 2017; Taira 2016; Stuckrad 2005; 2016; Wijzen 2013; 2016).

Norman Fairclough makes a distinction between the types of discourse analysis that are based on detailed analyses of texts and those that are not. Fairclough uses the term “text-oriented discourse analysis” for the latter types of approaches (Fairclough 2004: 2). As I analyze texts in detail – excerpts from interviews, magazine articles, books – my approach is a form of text-oriented discourse analysis. As with all types of discourse analysis, Fairclough’s approach to discourse analysis also emphasizes the role of language in constructing the world. Although my approach to discourse analysis is inspired by Fairclough, it is not, however, a form of “critical discourse analysis.” Critical discourse analysis refers to a type of analysis that is in general used to uncover and shed light on how discourses reproduce or resists social and political inequality, power abuse or domination (Fairclough 2006: 9). This thesis does not, however, have any emancipatory concerns as I strive neither to criticize or defend the people or ideas that are part of the Fringe-Knowledge scene. In the following, I explain how discourse analysis is conducted in practice in the context of this study.

### **Discourse analysis in practice**

There exists several ways of doing discourse analysis. Some approaches are more suitable for certain studies than others. What form of discourse

analysis is employed is dependent on the disciplinary anchoring of a particular study as well as on the theoretical and analytical perspectives employed (Gee 2005: 5). Marcus Moberg stresses the distinction between discourse analytical 'perspectives' and discourse analysis as a method (Moberg 2013: 11). Central to most forms of discourse analysis is the identification of patterns or recurring elements in a body of text or other material. For discourse analysis to be used as a method it is useful for scholars to engage with the material according to some model or systematic scheme. In other words, the researcher should be able to show how the analysis is conducted step by step (Moberg 2013: 11–12). The model used is dependent on the nature of the inquiry in question. Depending on the main purpose of a given study and the specific research questions asked, certain elements will be focused on at the expense of others (See e.g. Moberg 2009: 29–30). As a starting point, the researcher needs to be aware that they are themselves actively involved in the process of sorting out and analyzing the material. As Moberg highlights, every step in a model such as the one presented above involves active choices by the researcher. Every choice will have consequences for what will be considered as data, how the data will be assembled, analyzed, and interpreted (Moberg 2013: 12).

As a guideline to carrying out discourse analysis I rely on a model first developed by Ian Parker (1994). Gordon Lynch (2005) has utilized Parker's model for conducting discourse analysis in research on intersections and relationships between religion and popular culture. According to this model, discourse analysis can be divided up in to the following phases:

1. Converting 'text' into written form.
2. Reflecting on wider associations of the particular words and phrases used in the text;
3. Breaking down the text into specific elements (e.g. nouns) and identifying recurring words/concepts/descriptions;
4. Identifying the 'subjects' (i.e., persons) within the text, what kinds of actions are ascribed to these subjects, what kind of constraints there are on their actions and what kinds of relationships are described between these subjects;
5. Thinking about how the particular descriptions and relationships presented by this text 'address' the reader. What do they say (implicitly or explicitly) about how the reader should respond, act, view the world/particular relationships? What are the implications of not acting in the way encouraged by the text?

6. Identifying the wider cultural discourses that are reflected in the particular way that this text constructs reality/relationships, and potential tensions between these discourses;
7. Thinking about the cultural roots of these discourses, and how they have come to be seen as 'natural' accounts of the world;
8. Reflecting on the way in which these particular discourses support or subvert certain social institutions;
9. Identifying the potential positive and negative effects of the discourse(s) used in this text (including asking who benefits and loses out from this kind of discourse, and what people would gain from supporting or challenging it).

(Parker 1994, quoted in Lynch 2005: 148–149)

The last phase of Parker's model is, however, of less relevance for this study since it is mainly the concern of critical discourse analysis. As noted, this type of analysis is principally concerned with revealing how discourses create, reproduce, or play a part in upholding social or political inequalities or other power relations. Critical discourse analysis is therefore not only concerned with describing and analyzing discursive practices, but it also attempts to reveal the "hidden" effects of discourse (Fairclough 1992: 9). As is highlighted by Fairclough, the "critical" in critical discourse analysis "...also implies intervention, for example providing resources for those who may be disadvantaged through change" (Fairclough 1992: 9). This study deals with the construction of boundaries and how identity and self-understanding is constructed in relation to, or in opposition to, something other, for example, Fringe-Knowledge claims about the history of Finland versus established academic historical accounts. This study, however, is not concerned with making normative statements about the Fringe-Knowledge scene, nor is there any attempt to either defend or criticize some of the claims supported by adherents of Fringe-Knowledge. In the following, I explain what the steps in Parker's model imply within the context of this study:

1. Interviews are transcribed and translated. The findings from participant observation are written down as field notes. Concerning excerpts from magazines, websites, or books, this step does not occur. As a researcher, one, however, makes decisions about choosing the relevant excerpts.
2. Words like "intuition" or "spirituality" may refer to a certain way of understanding the world or to certain values. Certain words may be pejorative or unusual when used in certain contexts.

3. Recurring words might be “knowledge” or “spirituality.” Recurring elements and concepts in a text might be supernatural experiences or descriptions such as “normal” or “strange.”
4. The subjects in a text might be people or institutions within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, or entities such as “mainstream society.” This includes analyzing what the text reveals about the dynamics within the scene and between the scene and mainstream society.
5. This entails looking at what a text says about topics such as parapsychology or alien contacts. What does the text imply will happen if we do not take these phenomena seriously? Are there differences between mainstream views of knowledge and history and how do views within the Fringe-Knowledge scene differ from them?
6. This entails looking at how the text is influenced by, or displays tensions or connections with, wider cultural discourses on, for example, success, happiness, “being one self,” knowledge, education, and health.
7. Many ideas and concepts in the Fringe-Knowledge, like reincarnation or channeling, were already introduced in the West by theosophists and spiritualists in the 1800s.
8. In the context of this study it entails looking at the relation between discourses in the Fringe-Knowledge and institutions such as universities and educational institutions, healthcare, and governmental bodies.
9. As noted earlier, this step is used in critical discourse analysis. I am not interested in making normative statements about the Fringe-Knowledge. My aim as a researcher is first and foremost to give as accurate and honest view of the scene as possible.

That the steps above are used as a guideline for discourse analysis means that in some cases when I analyze my material some steps will be more relevant than others. For example step 6, which entails looking at broader societal discourses, will be relevant if my interviewees discuss some current political event. Step 3 will be very relevant when recurring words and descriptions are used about Fringe-Knowledge.

### **Discourse, authority and knowledge construction**

The discourses surrounding knowledge, authority, and identity are central in this study. The concepts, authority, knowledge, and identity are commonly used both within academic and non-academic contexts, and the meanings of these terms are at times simply taken for granted. Discourses involving these three concepts often interlink. For example, when a person claims knowledge of some matter he or she does so by implicitly or

explicitly referring to one or several types of authority. The authority referred to might vary depending on situation and context (e.g. one's own experience, the latest scientific findings, or that one's mother said so). As these concepts are central in this study I shall discuss them in further detail and show how they are interlinked.

A common understanding of knowledge is that it refers to an understanding of something, for example, how a language works, how to build a house or how to solve an equation. One can talk about many types of knowledge, for example scientific knowledge, "common sense," or intuition. Some types of knowledge may be considered to be general in character, while other types of knowledge may be exclusive in that it is something only experts possess. One of the core areas within Western philosophy is of course epistemology, or the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge. As the philosopher Peter D. Klein puts it, the central question within epistemology centers on what beliefs can be counted as knowledge (Klein 2005: 524–525). The interest of my inquiry is, however, not to study if various stigmatized and rejected knowledge claims are true or false in themselves, but rather to explore why and how they are meaningful for people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene.

From a social constructionist viewpoint, what is considered valid knowledge depends on social and cultural context. What we can construct, and how we construct it, is dependent on the sociocultural context we are embedded in. How our constructions of reality are received is also highly dependent on context (Burr 2003: 3–4). Different people and communities have different plausibility structures. For example, psychologists may attribute the source of intense nightmares to trauma experienced earlier in life. In the Fringe-Knowledge scene, however, people may find it plausible that bad dreams are the result of some conscious demonic or alien force seeking to interfere with human beings.

Central for this study are the concepts of rejected or stigmatized knowledge (Webb 1981: 10; Barkun 2013: 26–27). Both concepts refer to knowledge that in Western societies in general, and by scientific institutions in particular, is considered as deviant, unprovable, or unscientific. This includes, for example, alternative understandings of Finnish history or alternative methods for obtaining knowledge (e.g. channeling aliens). A detailed discussion of the concepts rejected and

stigmatized knowledge will be presented in chapter 2.4. According to Kocku von Stuckrad everything we "...perceive, experience and feel, but also the way we act, is structurally intertwined with socially constructed forms of approved and objectified knowledge" (von Stuckrad 2013: 10, quoted in Johnston 2016: 76). People who are proponents of various forms of stigmatized knowledge, but are living in a cultural context in which such knowledge is in general rejected by the mainstream, find various strategies for arguing that the worldviews they promote are valid. Being a proponent of some type of knowledge or understanding of the world means that you give it some degree of *authority*.

According to John A. Coleman, there is no consensus within sociology about how to define authority. Authority may be seen as interlinked with power or the ability exercise influence over other people. Max Weber a made distinction between power and authority by defining power as the "probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber 1947: 24, quoted in Coleman 1997: 32). Authority, by contrast, was defined by Weber as the "probability that a command with a given content will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber 1947: 24, quoted in Coleman 1997: 32). Although power and authority may be related, they do not have be. For example, a dictator may be able to exercise considerable power although he is viewed as an illegitimate leader. On the other hand, a king or politician may be seen as a legitimate leader but might be unable to exercise power because he is in exile. Authority in the Weberian sense is thus legitimate power (Coleman 1997: 32).

Weber distinguishes between three types of authority: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic (Coleman 1997: 34–37). Scholars of new religions have focused especially on the last type, charismatic authority (Fox 2005: 328–329). This type of authority refers to authority that is based on a leader possessing some kind of extraordinary attributes. This might be magical powers or divine revelation. Rational-legal authority denotes authority that is based on jurisdiction and legal arrangements. For example, police officers or medical doctors possess what Weber calls rational-legal authority. The last type, traditional authority, refers to authority that builds on tradition and societal norms. Concerning Weber's threefold typology it is important to stress Weber worked with "ideal-types." (Coleman 1997: 37). According to Coleman:

These were thought-experiments about logically possible diverse forms or types of social organization. They were meant to serve as heuristic devices for research purposes, to be tested against data and experience. In real life, no pure types existed. (Coleman 1997: 37)

Different forms of authority may thus interlink. For example, ufologist Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde's authority both derives from her being a medical doctor (rational-legal authority) as well as her own experiences of paranormal phenomena (charismatic authority).

### **Identity and the discursive construction of boundaries**

The concept of identity is commonly used in a variety of fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy. Each of these approach the concept with their own particular theoretical and methodological apparatus (Coupland 2007: 2210). The concept of identity has further developed due to various movements within the social sciences. Movements such as postmodernism, feminism, and post-structuralism have challenged the assumptions that underpin understandings of modernity, and how the identities of individuals and groups, as well as their relationships, are considered to be constituted (Coupland 2007: 2210). According to Christine Coupland, the concept of identity has been conceived in three ways during these movements:

First, that of a knowing and conscious subject, second as a product or outcome of social relationships, and finally as both outcome and resource in interaction between the self and other. (Coupland 2007: 2210)

There are thus different philosophical assumptions involved in different definitions. Essentialist definitions have the tendency to see the "self" as a set of fixed personal characteristics. On the other hand, social constructionist perspectives in general take a non-essentialist approach towards the concept of identity. Identity is seen a socially constructed rather than being of a timeless and essentialist character. In other words, identity is constructed through language and social interaction (Burr 2003: 106).

Vivien Burr demonstrates how we through language give something or someone an identity. When, for example, we categorize ourselves or

someone else as sane/insane, or working class/middle class, these classifications are culturally and socially bestowed identities rather than some essence in the person we are identifying (Burr 2003: 106). Identities may be self-proclaimed or ascribed by someone else. Self-proclaimed identities and identities that are ascribed can be rather similar or even opposite constructions (Joseph 2004: 8). A person may have a sense of himself or herself as extremely smart and open minded, while others conceive of this person as naïve and stupid. In this way we have multiple identities; our own conception of ourselves as well as the identities that are bestowed upon on us by others. According to John E. Joseph we also have multiple identities in another sense. As individuals, we have several roles we take on in relation to others (Joseph 2004: 8). One may, for example, be an atheist, a housewife, a medical doctor, and a Star Trek fan. Identities may thus overlap and people may have several identities. Depending on the context we are in some of our identities are more prominent and relevant than others

Identities are expressed and enacted through language and other symbolic representations. As mentioned earlier language does not only function as a means to express ourselves but also forms, restricts and shapes our understanding of the world, and thus also of ourselves. As Burr points out, our identity is shaped by the discourses surrounding us. We are surrounded by discourses concerning age, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and religion, just to mention a few (Burr 2003: 106–107). Our identities are constructed by identifying with, defying, or negotiating with, different discourses that surround us.

Chris Weedon highlights the relational character of the concept of identity. Different identities are thus typically constructed in relation to other identities. Identities are often constructed in relation to what they are *not* (Weedon 2004:19). Weedon illustrates this in the following way:

...identity presupposes some degree of self-recognition on the part of the subject, often defined in relation to what one believes one is not. For example, from our earliest years we learn who we are and what this should mean. We learn that we are female or male, even though we may not identify with or conform to 'socially appropriate' forms of female or male behavior. (Weedon 2004: 19)



Identity is constructed from, and in relation to, a shared set of cultural understandings and categories. The discursive construction of identity is also a construction of boundaries as individuals and groups create boundaries to distinguish themselves from others. Sometimes such boundaries are created through an exaggeration of differences. This may be the case in identity construction among political leaders and parties, religious groups, as well as within academic disciplines like sociology or anthropology. In his study of the construction of identity among American New Age followers, parapsychologists, and skeptics, David J. Hess writes about a dialogical concept of identity, asserting that "...identity is constituted not by essential characteristics but instead by a set of relationships to the Other, or whatever is *not* the Self." (Hess 1993: 43). In his study, Hess shows that the "self" among the New Agers as well as skeptics tends to be constructed in direct opposition to the other group.

One may talk about personal identity as well as collective identity. Collective identity refers to a shared experience of belonging to a certain group of people who have something in common, for example nationality, political views, certain hobbies, and lifestyles. A crucial part of any ongoing relationship between people is that they share the same conception of reality. What reality we live in is expressed through our language (Gergen 2012: 32). Kenneth Gergen points to this by remarking that if a person lives in a world in which there exist holy men and divine powers, and another person lives in a world where such things do not exist then these individuals might have a hard time communicating with each other (Gergen 2012: 32). David Snow (2001) notes that:

Although there is no consensual definition of collective identity, discussions of the concept invariably suggest that its essence resides in a shared sense of "one-ness" or "we-ness" anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of others. (Snow 2001)

There are three points in this quote that are highly useful for conceptualizing collective identity. Firstly, collective identity consists of a shared feeling of "we-ness." Secondly, this sense of "we-ness" does not actually have to be anchored in any real or objective attributes. The third important point is the relational character of collective identity, i.e. seeing one's own collectivity in relation or contrast to other groups and sets of

people. Concerning the subject of this study, it is important to emphasize the point that collective identity consists of “we-ness anchored in real or imagined shared attributes”. Identifying with “real or imagined shared attributes” includes identifying with supranormal entities and forces. For example, the magazine *Tähteläiset* (Star People) targets readers who consider themselves to be of extraterrestrial origin. People within the Fringe-Knowledge scene may feel a closer connection to the supposed inhabitants of Sirius or Arcturus than they do with people surrounding them in everyday life. Collective identity in this study thus includes a feeling of “we-ness” shared with real or imagined people and entities.

That a person is religious or has a religious identity usually denotes that a person holds beliefs, worldviews, or performs some practices that are invested with some type of ultimate meaning, spiritual significance, or otherworldly currency. These beliefs and practices might be linked to or inspired by a set of beliefs, rituals, or mythologies found within various religious institutions and traditions. A characteristic element of a person’s religious identity is that his or her self-understanding is related to a broader overarching context, or set of ideas that have to do with some form of ultimate meaning (Moberg 2009: 37–38). For example, a Christian might consider the world as fallen and full of sin, which will in turn influence how he or she understands his or her place in the world. An UFO contactee might believe that he or she is an alien incarnated upon earth and this belief might make that person feel special and unique. Religious identities, like any other identities, are always constructed in certain social and cultural contexts. Moreover, as identities in general, religious identities have a *relational* character (Moberg 2009: 37). This relation can be opposition to another group, like in the example above concerning New Agers versus skeptics. This relation does not, however, have to be negative, it can also be positive, or quite neutral. One can feel, for example, a great positive connection with the culture of ancient Egypt or one may simply feel rather neutral towards the ancient civilization.

Personal identity may change over time. The same goes for religious identity. Scholars have used the notion of “negotiating identity” to refer to the psychological processes that take place when individuals are faced with choosing the ways they live their religious, cultural, and ethnic lives (Stirling, Shaw & Short 2014: 22). The concept of identity negotiation has been used especially in research dealing with how immigrants and minorities choose to interact with a surrounding society in which they are

a religious, cultural, or ethnic minority (e.g. Ajrouch & Kusow 2007; Stirling, Shaw & Short 2014; Weedon 2004). As the phenomenon of Fringe-Knowledge is largely considered strange or deviant in mainstream society, the people who promote Fringe-Knowledge related issues often feel a need to negotiate their identity, and justify why they hold worldviews that differ from what is generally considered normal or rational.

In this chapter, I have discussed discourse analysis and showed how it is employed in the context of this study. The majority of different types of discourse analysis are based on social constructionism. Briefly, social constructionism holds that our understanding of the world is the outcome of social interaction and social processes. Discourses in turn can be defined as a type of social practice, the particular ways in which we understand, talk about, and conceptualize certain subjects. In the context of this study, discourses should be understood as the way in which people within the Fringe-Knowledge scene conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge and what it is about. Identity in this study refers to ways in which people discursively construct themselves in relation to Fringe-Knowledge concepts and ideas. Collective identity refers to a sense “we-ness,” or a sense of sharing or having some attributes in common with other people (or in the scope of this study it may also be entities like aliens). Holding the view that some type of knowledge claim is true implies that you give it some amount of authority. What is considered knowledge is historically and culturally contingent, and thus different people and groups may have different views about what is considered valid knowledge. Central for this study are the concepts of rejected and stigmatized knowledge (Webb 1981: 10; Barkun 2013: 26–27).

## **2.3 The Concept of Scene as a methodological framework**

This subchapter presents the methodological framework of scene. In a nutshell, it is a systematic way by which one can approach, map, and study alternative religious spaces in practice. This subchapter is largely based on the article *Re-contextualizing the Framework of Scene for the Empirical Study of Post-institutional Religious Spaces in Practice*, on which I collaborated with my supervisor Marcus Moberg (Moberg & Ramstedt 2015).

The explanatory and analytical utility of terms and concepts used within research on alternative religion is obviously contingent on an as clear as possible explication of their intended meaning and application. For example, regardless of the specific term or concept being used, questions often arise as to what exactly (at least partly) spatial concepts such as “milieu” (Barkun 2013: 108), “circle” (e.g. Lewis 2003: 104) or (at least partly) ideological concepts such as “subculture” (e.g. Lewis 2003) are intended to denote in the contexts in which they are being used. In particular, clearer explication of the concrete *practical* makeup of alternative religious spaces that different terms and concepts are intended to capture has often been lacking in the wider scholarship on various types of alternative religion or spirituality. This is not to say that the importance of accounting for the practical makeup of alternative religious spaces would not have been noted in the past (e.g. Campbell 1972; Jorgensen 1982). There is, however, still a need for more clearly articulated methodological frameworks designed to help scholars make sense of exactly *how* particular alternative religious spaces become formed, established, maintained, and reproduced in *actual practice*.

### **The framework of scene**

The methodological framework of scene was first developed within so-called post-subcultural theory in the early 1990s (e.g. Straw 1991). Post-subcultural theoretical perspectives themselves – e.g. on *neo-tribes* (Maffesoli 1996) and *lifestyles* (Miles 2000) – initially emerged out of a growing dissatisfaction with subcultural theory, particularly in the form it had been developed in the mid-1970s by scholars associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (e.g. Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004). Given its origins in these debates, the framework of scene has so far primarily been both developed for and employed in studies of popular music cultures, including a few studies of popular music cultures with a marked religious component (e.g. Moberg 2011; 2015). At first glance, it might therefore seem somewhat strange to aim to modify and re-contextualize a framework originally designed for the study of popular music cultures for the study of alternative forms of religion or spirituality. At closer inspection, however, the methodological utility of the framework of scene for the empirical investigation of a much wider range of social and cultural phenomena in actual practice becomes clear. As a term or concept, “scene” has itself been employed in rather ambiguous ways in a few studies of alternative religion in the past (e.g. Gardell 2003: 73). In order to be able to move beyond such ambiguous

uses, in the following I provide a detailed outline of scene as a methodological framework.

First of all, however, it is important to distinguish between scholarly and colloquial understandings of “scene” as a term or concept. As Keith Kahn-Harris (2007: 15) has pointed out, the term scene can hold a range of different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. It may refer to an actual concrete, space such as in the case of theater. It may also serve to denote particular social or cultural arenas or spheres that revolve around some more specific activity, such as in/on “the British political scene.” These are both examples of everyday understandings of the meaning of “scene,” but the latter moves us closer to how scene is understood in post-subcultural theory, namely, as “something much more definite and located that connotes something ‘subcultural’” (Kahn-Harris 2007: 15).

Understood in this way, scene denotes a methodological framework that is principally aimed at highlighting the interconnectedness of different *structural, material, spatial, temporal, aesthetic, and discursive* dimensions of particular, and varyingly geographically embedded and connected, social and cultural spaces. The framework, thus, emphasizes *holism* as it is primarily aimed at highlighting how these above-mentioned interrelated building blocks each contribute to the formation of particular social and cultural spaces that come to constitute more than the sum of their individual parts. Importantly, the framework of scene does not pre-theorize its objects of study and, as such, has little analytical utility in itself. It is instead primarily intended to provide researchers with a particular way of *locating, approaching, and mapping* different social and cultural spaces in actual practice. Indeed, it is this flexibility that makes it possible to employ the framework of scene in a wide range of different types of research as well as in combination with a wide range of different theoretical approaches (cf. Kahn-Harris 2007: 21; Moberg 2011; 2015).

### **Locating scenes on place-based scales**

In contrast to institutional, organized religion, alternative types of religion often tend to be described as being characterized by loosely organized networks of people who coalesce around particular sets of religious ideas and practices. Compared to institutional organized religion, such descriptions are, of course, generally accurate. However, as Partridge (2004: 62) writes in relation to Campbell’s concept of contemporary “cultic

religiosity”: “...there seems to be a strong tendency for even diffuse cultic spiritualities to coalesce into networks and organizations...some of which have a short lifespan...and others of which become established as cultic networks”. Indeed, at closer inspection, while not necessarily structured as *organizations*, and while remaining less formalized, alternative religious spaces often turn out to be much more firmly structured than they may initially seem. It is with regard to this – the actual practical makeup and structure of alternative religious spaces – that the framework of scene has much to offer the empirical study of alternative religion.

When a particular alternative religious space is viewed as a scene, it is approached as a particularly geographically located and structured spatial and discursive environment that brings together people who share an interest in or sensibility for a certain set of religious or spiritual ideas, teachings, and/or practices. Scenes typically become structured along place-based scales and become connected to certain geographical or geographically connected locations. Kahn-Harris explains this as follows:

The term scene is rarely applied to a particular space unless there is a substantial degree of both scenic structure and construction. The term scene is meaningful to members when it describes a space that is both institutionally distinctive to some degree and has some degree of self consciousness. Scene is most frequently and unanimously used in cases where geographical boundedness (embodied in civic institutions such as cities or in nation states), institutional and aesthetic distinctiveness, and scenic discourses coincide. (Kahn-Harris 2007: 101)

The formation and reproduction of scenes occurs on different, although usually closely interconnected, place-based scales: locally, nationally, regionally, transnationally, and globally. Through the establishment of structural connections and communications between certain geographically connected local and national scenes, regional scenes may develop. These may then coalesce in transnational or global scenes. The relationships between these different levels of scenes are characterized by frequent overlap and intersection (Kahn-Harris 2007: 99; Moberg 2011: 407–408). Indeed, the more internationally diffused a scene becomes, the more diverse and difficult to conceptualize as a particularly geographically structured and discursive space it also becomes (cf. Moberg 2011: 407). The main point to note at this stage is that people involved in certain scenes often interact “within a complexity of

overlapping scenes within scenes, which allows – potentially at least – for movement” between them (Kahn-Harris 2007: 99). For example, people and institutions who are prominent within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, at times appear at events where the focus is on wellbeing. At *Viisas Elämä-messut* (Wise Life-fair) in 2016 the author Harri Virolainen, who I have interviewed for this study, gave a lecture on mental and physical wellbeing ([viisaselämä.fi](http://viisaselämä.fi)), whereas at *Hengen ja Tiedon Messut* (The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge) in 2014, the focus of Harri and Ilkka Virolainen’s lecture was on supernatural and paranormal phenomena (Hengen ja Tiedon Messut 2016. Messulehti: 3).

### **Scenic structure**

The development of a scenic structure constitutes an important prerequisite for the establishment and reproduction of any scene. In Kahn-Harris’s (2007: 100–102) version of the framework, which is chiefly developed for the study of popular music cultures, five main dimensions of scenic structure are outlined: (i) infrastructure, (ii) stability, (iii) relation to other scenes, (iv) scenic capital, and (v) production and consumption. In the following, I will explain each of these in turn.

Exploring the structure of a scene entails mapping its central institutions and accounting for its reproduction on an everyday basis. *Infrastructure* constitutes the most significant of all dimensions of scenic structure. A scenic infrastructure consists of a web of interconnected *scenic institutions* through which a scene becomes established, sustained, and reproduced. The most important of these would include (but are not limited to) various types of specialized scenic media such as magazines and various types of online media, books and publishing houses, associations and organizing bodies for different types of events and gatherings, as well as these events and gatherings themselves. Generally, the degree of institutionalization within scenes correlates with their degree of independence, autonomy, and stability over time (Kahn-Harris 2007: 100).

For alternative religious scenes existing at the margins of mainstream majority ‘religious markets’, developing independent means for the production and distribution of scenic media, such as books and magazines, becomes crucial for the establishment and survival of such scenes in the first place since they provide scene members with important forums for information-sharing and interaction. The ongoing development and increasing cost-effectiveness of online digital

communications has made the infrastructure of many scenes increasingly Internet-dependent. When exploring the general character of some particular alternative religious space, the framework of scene therefore provides researchers with a framework for making sense of how that space is formed and how it “works” in actual practice through the mapping of its structure at particular points in time (cf. Moberg 2011: 409).

Approaching post-institutional alternative religion in a particular national context utilizing the framework of scene begins with the researcher aiming to gain a birds-eye view of the state of the phenomenon of alternative religion in that particular national context. This entails locating and becoming familiar with relevant media such as magazines, publishers, websites, associations, events, etc. that are focused on some form of alternative religion in general. By doing this, the researchers is in a better position to distinguish between certain main areas of interest, more specific networks of people, and the structures through which these are formed, reproduced, and sustained.

I shall briefly illustrate this in relation to the contemporary broader alternative religious environment in Finland. The Finnish alternative spiritual magazine *Voi hyvin* (Be Well), as its name suggests, mainly focuses on ideas and practices related to wellbeing and alternative therapies. These topics are also frequently dealt with in the magazine *Ultra*; the oldest alternative spiritual magazine in Finland. However, *Ultra* also typically features articles about topics such as alternative history, UFOs, and extraterrestrials – topics that are virtually never covered in *Voi Hyvin*. Thus, while *Voi Hyvin* primarily caters to a broader readership of people who are generally interested in alternative spiritualities or some particular wellbeing practices, *Ultra* primarily caters to a more specific group of people who share an interest in Fringe-Knowledge-related ideas.

Comparisons between different forms of media need to be complemented by comparisons between different types of associations, gatherings, and events. For example, the largest alternative spiritual fair in Finland, *Hengen ja tiedon messut* (Fair for Spirit and Knowledge), is an obvious starting point for obtaining a general, overall picture of the current state and scope of post-institutional alternative religion in Finland. Organized



since 1983 by *Rajatiedon yhteistyö r.y.*<sup>4</sup> (Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation), it attracts 3000–5000 visitors annually and covers virtually every main element of what is usually included under the label “alternative spirituality.” See figure 6.

In comparison to this event, a smaller annual event such as *Talviset/Kesäiset tähtipäivät* (Winterly Star Days / Summerly Star Days – the event is regularly held in both summers and winters), which usually attracts between 50–80 participants, is marked by a much more limited focus on certain sets of religious and spiritual ideas chiefly related to UFOs and extraterrestrials. Although this event is quite limited in scope, participation nevertheless requires a notably larger investment of both time and money than a visit to the Fair for Spirit and Knowledge does. At an event such as Winterly Star Days /Summerly Star Days, participants spend nearly all the time of an entire weekend together, sharing rooms, meals, and participating in the same lectures and activities. In comparison to larger fairs, smaller, more narrowly focused events of this type carry much potential to evolve into important loci around which likeminded people can meet as *co-participants* (in contrast to mere “visitors” or “spectators”), form contacts, lasting friendships, and a sense of community.

In addition to different forms of media and events, alternative religious scenes also tend to include smaller associations and organizations of various sorts that attend to the everyday reproduction of the scene through engaging in core scenic activities, such as publishing and the organization of various types of events. The most significant association of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation. It took over the publishing of the magazine *Ultra* in 1974 and also founded its own publishing house *Kustannus Oy Rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge Publishing) in 1976. In addition, the association hands out grants for research in the field of Fringe-Knowledge and runs a free telephone-service called *Rajatiedon auttava puhelin* (Fringe-Knowledge Help Line).

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<sup>4</sup> The abbreviation “r.y.,” also “ry” without the punctuation marks, stands for *rekisteröity yhdistys* (registered association). A registered association has legal capacities for the realization of non-profit purposes. A registered association is considered a legal entity and may, for example, own property and sign legal contracts. Political parties, trade unions, athletic clubs, charitable organisations and hobby clubs are examples of non-profit associations.

In this scene framework based-study, associations, events, and media such as those mentioned above are approached as scenic institutions. This entails exploring the extent to which these scenic institutions contribute to the formation of a distinctively structured space that is focused on the exploration of more specific sets of ideas and practices.

### **Scenic capital**

The notion of scenic capital, which builds on the concept of “subcultural capital” as initially developed by Sarah Thornton (1995), refers to the different forms of merit, reverence, or notoriety that certain people involved in a particular scene may accumulate or acquire in accordance with the logic of that scene. For example, people in gatekeeping functions who are involved in the forming and maintenance of the infrastructure or ideological development and reproduction of a particular scene usually achieve a high degree of reverence within that scene (Kahn-Harris 2007: 101; Moberg 2009: 48). Exploring scenic capital thus essentially entails identifying “who’s who” in a scene, whether their status is largely ascribed to them by others, whether it is largely self-proclaimed, or some combination of the two (which most frequently tends to be the case).

The nature of scenic capital varies according to the general ideological character of scenes. Scenes frequently also contain different forms of capital which can usefully be distinguished from each other. For example, a general distinction that applies to most scenes is that between what could be termed “ideological” and “mundane” scenic capital (cf. Kahn-Harris 2007). While ideological capital is mainly gained by and ascribed to people who contribute to the ideological and discursive reproduction of scenes, mundane capital is instead primarily gained by and ascribed to people who are most actively involved in the everyday practical maintenance and reproduction of scenic institutions.

To illustrate, let us briefly consider how these different types of capital can be identified in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. For example, Tapani Kuningas (1945–2009), the former editor in chief of *Ultra*, was long an influential persona in the scene. He was an active member of the first Finnish UFO association *Interplanetistit* (The Interplanetists) already in the 1960s and later also in the association Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation. Following his passing in 2009, all of the largest alternative spiritual magazines in Finland published obituaries to him, and at the 2010 event

*UFO-konferenssi. Kosminen tietoisuus ja 2012 muutokset* (UFO Conference: Cosmic Consciousness and the Changes of 2012) the main organizer of the event also delivered a special speech to honor his memory (Ramstedt, field notes). Through his involvement in the practical everyday reproduction of the scene, Kuningas can clearly be described as a person who possessed a considerable amount of mundane scenic capital.

Let us also briefly consider an example of a person who instead accumulated considerable amounts of ideological capital within this same scene. The Finnish medical doctor Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde (b. 1939) came to public attention in 1982 with her bestselling book *Kuolemaa ei ole* (There is no Death); a study of parapsychology with chapters on topics such as telepathy, mediumism, clairvoyance, poltergeist activity and reincarnation, as well as a text produced by means of automatic writing. Luukanen-Kilde gained an international reputation when her book became a bestseller in Finland and the other Nordic countries. She soon thereafter started appearing as a frequent guest on Finnish television shows and lecturer at various alternative spiritual fairs. Since the mid 1980s, Luukanen-Kilde has become particularly known for her elaborate conspiracy theories about an evil power elite that governs the world in secrecy. In the years prior to her passing in 2015, she was herself the main attraction of many Fringe-Knowledge associated events. She can therefore clearly be described as someone who had accumulated a considerable degree of ideological capital within the scene.

### **Production and consumption**

Production and consumption constitute integral elements of the practical reproduction of any scene. Depending on the particular focus and aim of a given study of some alternative religious scene, issues of production and consumption can be afforded more or less weight. But let us briefly illustrate what looking at scenic production and consumption would involve in relation to the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. Different fairs which allow for practitioners and entrepreneurs to display, promote, and inform about their products and services constitute central institutions of the scene. The same applies to different magazines focusing on Fringe-Knowledge topics. These fairs and magazines serve to reproduce the scene and afford it continuity. The most important point to note in this context is that the reproduction and survival of events and magazines is contingent on logics of economic viability, i.e. the continued production,

promotion, advertisement, and consumption of goods (e.g. books) and services (e.g. various therapies).

Economic factors of this type have been explored in some detail by Guy Redden (2005) who has argued for a “market model”-approach to post-institutional religious phenomena frequently coupled together under the heading of “New Age.” Redden approaches individual seekership and participation in New Age “circles” as “a form of social mobilization that, like any other – including more traditional forms of religious membership, requires the development of material infrastructures that allow participants access to the resources offered by providers on certain terms. Commercial relations are the dominant mechanism determining such access in New Age circles” (Redden 2005: 234). Drawing on the work of Hamilton (2000), Redden thus draws our attention to how the “producer-consumer relations” that characterize participation in New Age circles has led to the development of a “commercial movement infrastructure” (Redden 2005: 235; see also Holloway 2000).

The reason why the framework of scene as developed here places such a strong emphasis on scenic structure is primarily practical. As already noted, in order for scholars to be able to adequately explore a given particular post-institutional religious space, it becomes crucial to first gain an adequate understanding of its practical workings. Through mapping how that space becomes *manifested in* and *visible through* its particular structure in and across certain geographical locations at certain points in time, that space is also made considerably more apprehensible, graspable, and communicable. Crucially, however, it needs to be openly acknowledged how, like when utilizing any methodological framework for the purposes of mapping and describing the practical workings of any more specific social and cultural space, any outlining and mapping of the structure of a particular post-institutional religious scene inevitably also involves a substantial degree of “scene-construction” on the part of the researcher doing the mapping (cf. Moberg 2011: 410).

### **Scenic construction**

While exploring the structure of a scene primarily has to do with mapping that scene and striving to gain an understanding of how it “works” and is sustained as a particular, more clearly delineated space, examining the construction of a scene instead primarily has to do with exploring its ideological traits and the meaning-making practices that go on within it;

i.e. what a scene is “about” in the lived experiences of the people who are actively involved in it. It is crucial to note, though, that *any* exploration of scenic construction needs to be based on and carried out in relation to a thorough explication and understanding of its structure. Scenes are constructed in three principal ways: through (i) *internal discursive construction*, (ii) *aesthetic construction*, and (iii) *external discursive construction*. In the following, I account for these in turn.

### **Internal discursive construction**

As Kahn-Harris explains in his presentation of the concept of scene, internal discursive construction “refers to the extent to which people inside a scene discursively construct that scene as a distinctive space whether or not the term scene is actually used. Through processes of internal discursive construction scenes become visible and recognizable to members (Kahn-Harris 2007: 100). Examining the internal discursive construction of a scene makes up a vital stage in any scene framework based study of any given alternative religious scene since it entails looking at that scene from “within” and exploring what meanings individual scene members discursively attach to their own engagement and involvement in that particular scene. In doing this it is important to keep in mind that scenic participation may take a large variety of different forms and that not all scene members necessarily participate in the internal discursive construction of a scene in the same ways or to the same extent. It becomes vital, therefore, to strive to identify the individuals who appear to contribute most to the internal discursive construction of a particular scene at any particular point in time. This is because the bulk of the most active and intentional internal discursive construction within scenes tends to be carried out by and between individuals in gatekeeping positions who possess larger amounts of scenic capital.

Let us consider one example of how internal discursive construction occurs within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. The UFO-spirituality focused Winterly Star Days event of 2011 was highly centered on the notion that the majority of the people who attended this particular event were actually aliens or angels in human form. According to the book *Universaalista opetusta kosmoksesta* (Universal Teachings of The Cosmos, 1993,) authored by the event organizer and UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen, a large portion of all people who are interested in different types of alternative spiritual ideas are not actually humans but extraterrestrials

from other planets. Riikonen summarized the main points of the book during his lectures (Ramstedt field notes).

This book plays a central role at every Winterly Star Days / Summerly Star Days event. The 2011 event culminated in a gathering of all participants in a large room for what was called *Perinteinen Kosmisen Rauhan ja Maan Palvelus* (The Traditional Service for Earth and Cosmic Peace). Kalevi Riikonen's wife, Eija Riikonen, read out a text called the "The Mythical Call," which is also found at the end of Universal Teachings of the Cosmos. The text tells the story of how, in a distant past, a group of aliens called the "Galactic Council" sent out a request to all "rainbow warriors," aliens, and other beings in the universe, asking them to reincarnate on earth in order to help make the planet a more harmonious and peaceful place. After the text had been read, participants meditated for about 40 minutes. Afterwards they were encouraged to recount to other participants what they had experienced. Many participants recounted having experienced aliens and angels entering the room during the meditation (Ramstedt, field notes). The Winterly Star Days of 2011 thus aimed to discursively convey the notion that the people who were participating in this event were actually incarnations of extra planetary supernatural beings and, as such, that they were part of an exclusive group of people with a higher, and indeed cosmic, purpose.

Some very similar processes of internal discursive construction can be identified in an article in the inaugural issue of the magazine *Tähteläiset* (Star People) by its editor in chief Asko Nummela. In the article, Nummela presents himself as a contactee with origins in the stars. He outlines the defining traits of a person who is either an extraterrestrial from the *Enkelikunta* (Angelic Kingdom) or a *Deeva* (Deva), a form of nature spirit. Nummela's description discursively constructs the identity of a contactee or other person who considers him/herself a non-human. According to Nummela, a *Tähteläinen* (Star Person) is a sensitive individual who does not feel at home anywhere on earth, has a deep longing to some undefined place in the universe, often has strange dreams, and may develop paranormal abilities (Nummela 2012c: 8).

In this way, events such as the Winterly Star Days or magazines such as *Star People* discursively ascribe their participants or readership a certain identity. Moreover, through such discursive construction both, events and magazines such as these are constructed as central elements of a wider

space that is dedicated to the exploration of a more particular set of ideas, beliefs, and practices. Importantly, it is through being both structurally and discursively mutually associated with each other that events such as the Winterly Star Days and magazines like *Ultra* and *Star People* come to constitute, and come to be *recognized as constituting*, individual building blocks of a larger particularly structured and discursive space.

### **External discursive construction**

External discursive construction refers to the ways in which scenes may become discursively constructed outside of the scenic space itself, for example, through the ways a certain scene may become represented in mainstream media (Kahn-Harris 2007: 100). External discursive construction may thus mostly affect public opinion about a particular scene, but it may equally also affect the self-understanding of a scene itself in a range of both direct and subtle ways.

The Fringe-Knowledge scene is quite seldom covered in Finnish mainstream media. When it is, however, it tends to be humorously portrayed as a curious environment of deluded individuals who are prone to childish, wishful thinking. For example, in 2009 several Finnish mainstream media outlets, including the public service broadcasting company Yleisradio, noted the high amount of views of a filmed interview with Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde on the video sharing site YouTube (yle.fi). In the interview Luukanen-Kilde claimed that the swine flu scare of 2009 and subsequent vaccine controversy actually was a grand plot orchestrated by the malevolent power elite that she believed secretly governs the world. In the interview, Luukanen-Kilde claimed that the aim of the plot was to make this power elite rich through the selling of vaccines and, moreover, that the vaccine in reality is a poisonous compound that will in time be activated in order to eliminate two thirds of the world's population. Keeping in line with earlier approaches of Finnish mainstream media to issues of this sort, most of the reporting focused on simply recounting the general content of the interview while altogether refraining from providing much by means of scrutiny or analysis at all – a style of reporting that served to work up a representation of Luukanen-Kilde as a humorous and deranged individual whose extreme views (and by implication those of her followers) were undeserving of serious commentary.

As the YouTube video circulated on the internet, a Spanish translation of the video erroneously identified Luukanen-Kilde as the Finnish Minister of Health. This was in turn picked up by the Tunisian tabloid *Assabah*. In a report published by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ministry notes the incident when *Assabah* in November 2009 published the story of Luukanen-Kilde's swine flu conspiracy. On its front page, the newspaper ran the headline "Disturbing statements by the Finnish Minister of Health: The United States are trying to kill two thirds of the world population"<sup>5</sup>. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that Finland received embarrassing publicity because of the false news story. The Ministry was sufficiently bothered that it contacted *Assabah*, which published a correction of the erroneous claim (Ulkoministeriö 2010).

When exploring the external discursive construction of a scene, one thus needs to consider how mainstream media representations may not only influence wider public opinion but also filter through into and influence the internal discursive construction of a particular scene. Examples of other types of external discursive construction that might be worth considering depending on the main focus of a study include the discursive construction of certain post-institutional alternative religious scenes by governments and authorities and other religious communities and institutions.

### **Aesthetic scenic construction**

Depending on the interests and aims of individual researchers, looking at issues of aesthetic construction may reveal interesting features of a given scene. Looking at aesthetic construction may involve (but is far from limited to) exploring the imagery and symbolism used in scenic media (such as in books and magazines) and scenic events, clothing style, various types of scene-related artifacts and other types of paraphernalia, and affective and auditory elements such as the use of particular types of sound and music (e.g. chanting and various types of "spiritual music").

Taking clothing style as an example, a few well-known Fringe-Knowledge personas sometimes dress in unusual and exotic ways. For example, the scene associated author, lecturer, and artist Timo Teide sometimes used to dress in a Star Trek uniform (Lassila 1998: 12). To take another example,

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<sup>5</sup> Finnish original: Suomen terveysministerin huolestuttavat lausunnot: Yhdysvallat pyrkii tappamaan kolmanneksen maailman väestöstä sikainfluenssarokotuksella.



Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde, in what might have been an influence from British author and grand conspiracy theorist David Icke, attached special spiritual significance to the color of her clothing. At the UFO conference I attended in Tampere 2010, Luukanen-Kilde was dressed in a blue t-shirt that had a picture of a flying saucer and bore the text "Love and Light" (See figure 7). At the Winterly Star Days of 2010, a lecturer who presented himself simply as mister "Y" was dressed in a white jumpsuit, reminiscent of the costumes habitually donned by Raël (Claude Vorilhon) of the UFO religion the Raelian Movement. Some eastern aesthetic influences can also quite easily be identified at Fringe-Knowledge events. For example, the entrepreneur and "esoteric alchemist" Jan Mikael Maros who sells crystals and jewelry, and hosts *Kivikahvila* (The Stone Café) at the Ultra Days habitually wears a red and gold colored fez along with shirts in rainbow colors.

The methodological framework of scene provides a valuable practical tool through which one can empirically locate, demarcate, and more concretely pin down particular alternative religious spaces. The benefits of conceptual clarity aside, being able to adequately account for the practical workings and concrete makeup of particular alternative religious spaces greatly aids both the construction of sound research design as well as the communication of research results.

Since scene as a methodological framework has not to my knowledge previously been employed in the study of alternative religion, it is best outlined and explicated through its actual application on particular alternative religious phenomena. Alternative religious phenomena – in this context, Fringe-Knowledge in Finland – in turn become considerably more graspable and possible to pin down more concretely when approached and conceptualized as scenes.

To clarify the scene framework further I see it useful to end this chapter by providing a couple of notes of what the framework does not do and what it is not. The framework is designed to be a methodological mapping tool and does not theoretically pre-determine any inner workings of a scene nor the societal conditions in which a scene arises. The scene framework is thus a way of exploring what certain environments with certain characteristics looks like. As mentioned before, in order to call an environment a scene, it has to display some degree of self-consciousness or self-awareness. To obtain a greater theoretical understanding of how

any given scene functions, scholars must combine the scene framework with theoretical notions and concepts. As the Fringe-Knowledge scene, is an milieu that focuses on alternative knowledge and spirituality, the theoretical concepts that I see to be most fruitful for understanding the inner workings of the scene have been derived from scholarship that deal with environments where alternative religious ideas and alternative knowledge exist and mutate; such as Campbell's cultic milieu, Webb's rejected knowledge, and Barkun's concept of stigmatized knowledge. If the scene framework would be applied in the study of a spiritual or religious scene that is much stricter concerning beliefs or practices than the Fringe-Knowledge scene, then other theoretical models would probably be more useful.

As discussed in section 2.1, terms like esotericism, new age, alternative spirituality, conspirituality, and so on, may be used to denote certain *types* of alternative religion. The scene framework is a mapping tool which helps the researcher locate and map a certain environment that has a sense of itself.

### 3 Historical and Cultural Context

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the historical and cultural context that is helpful for understanding the phenomena of Fringe-Knowledge in Finland. This chapter begins with a general overview of some of the major social and cultural shifts and changes that Western societies have experienced during the postwar era. This overview is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it is during the 1960s that the so-called “occult revival” takes place. The postwar era witnesses the emergence of various occult and spiritual groups and is a time during which a number of alternative spiritualities and eclectic religious worldviews become increasingly visible and widespread. The second, and closely interlinked, reason is that several sociologists (e.g. Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000) have stressed that a reflexive and relativistic attitude towards knowledge is an essential feature of late modernity. As one of the central research questions in this study revolves around what is considered reliable, trustworthy and essential knowledge for people within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, it is motivated to consider how leading sociologists have portrayed the stance towards knowledge they deem characteristic of late modernity. In section 3.2, I provide a brief overview of the religious landscape of Finland.

#### 3.1 The Late Modern Condition

In order to capture major social and cultural transformations from the early postwar era onwards, a large number of terms have been suggested, such as “network society” (Castells 2000), “post-industrial society” (e.g. Bell 1973), “post-modern society” (e.g. Baudrillard 1996), “liquid modernity” (Bauman 2000) and “risk society” (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; 2000). All of these terms have their own connotations as they focus on different aspects of societal change.

In this study, I shall refer to the current era as *late modernity* (Giddens 1991) in relation to my discussion of how the construction of identity has become more of a personal project than perhaps it ever was in earlier times. A reflexive attitude towards what may be considered “knowledge” and “truth” can be argued to constitute a main characteristic of postwar Western society and culture (Giddens 1990: 38–45). This reflexive attitude towards knowledge is also crucial for understanding the contemporary

popularity and proliferation of alternative spiritual ideas, beliefs, and practices, which stress individual choice and freedom (Bruce 2002: 85–88).

In the scholarly debate about modernity and its consequences for societies one can, broadly speaking, identify two types of main narratives. One tends to project a rather nostalgic view of pre-modern societies and focus on the negative features of modernity (e.g. Lasch 1980). The other main narrative, although acknowledging problematic aspects, is instead more celebratory of modernity, emphasizing its liberating effects (e.g. Giddens 1991). I want to underline that this is a broad distinction, as sociologists and historians usually tend to view modernity as having both positive and negative social and cultural consequences.

Although scholars may argue about the positive and negative effects of modernity, such as increased personal freedom versus narcissism, alienation, and anxiety, there is a general consensus concerning the actual social and cultural changes modernity has brought and which sectors of society have been most impacted. For example, although the erosion of traditional family units can be argued to be either liberating or leading to increased alienation and insecurity, there is agreement among scholars that modernity has had an impact on family relations. Also, scholars are generally in agreement regarding the processes that enabled the shift from pre-modern to modern societies. In his critical guide to social change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Matthew Adams has identified ten areas or topics that have been repeatedly discussed in the debate on modernity and its consequences (Adams 2007: 1). These interwoven areas of topics of change are (1) globalization, (2) technology, (3) the body, (4) reflexivity, (5) time and space, (6) homogenization, (7) transnational corporations, (8) individualization, (9) polarization, and (10) gender. All of these areas are important in understanding the human condition and social change in the post-1950s Western world. However, for understanding eclectic alternative religion and alternative spirituality in the West, I shall mainly focus on reflexivity and individualization, while remaining aware that these changes are interlinked with the other changes mentioned.

### **Individualization and reflexivity**

Scholars such as Anthony Giddens (1991), Christopher Lasch (1980), Zygmunt Bauman (2000), and Ulrich Beck (1992) highlight that the postwar era is in many ways considerably different from earlier times.

Especially the focus on individualism and the reflexivity characteristic of the late modern condition have made the creation of one's own identity an ongoing project. We have become free, forced, or at least obligated, to choose from a range of different things: what to consume, what ideology or religion suits us best, what sorts of relationships we want, how we want to behave and live our lives. In comparison, traditional societies were stricter and had different ideas about how individuals should live and express themselves. As Kenneth Gergen puts it:

In the traditional community, where relationships were reliable, continuous and face-to-face, a firm sense of self was favored. One's sense of identity was broadly and continuously supported. Further there was strong agreement on patterns of 'right' and 'wrong' behavior. One could simply...be, for there was little question of being otherwise. (Gergen 1991: 147, quoted in Adams 2007: 44)

According to Adams, the publication of Giddens's *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) had a major impact on academic interest in the concepts of reflexivity and self-reflexivity (Adams 2007: 43). These concepts have been argued to describe something central for the human condition in the contemporary West. The term self-reflexivity refers to a state in which old roles and ways of behaving are no longer taken for granted. It refers to a mental condition, or view of the self, which has emerged due to a number of ideological and technological changes and innovations that have played a central role in the shift from traditional to post-traditional societies.

In a world of rapidly mutating networks of finance, labor markets, travel, technology, communication and human interaction, our sense of time and space and our view of ourselves has become reflexive. We do not simply rely on tradition to tell us how we should live our lives, how to behave, or how we should be. We have an increased freedom to make our own choices (Adams: 2007: 47; Giddens 1991: 18).

Although the concepts reflexivity and self-reflexivity have been widely discussed within sociology, the idea of the reflexive self has also come under a great deal of criticism. According to Adams, the critique revolves, among other things, around that there actually exists little empirical support for this kind of notion (Adams 2007: 51–52). Another type of criticism highlights that the concept of self-reflexivity, while emphasizing the autonomy of the individual as an agent that is constantly reflecting

upon the world and his or her own choices, tends to neglect emotional, habitual, and unconscious dimensions of selfhood. This type of critique points out unconscious and semi-conscious factors that pose boundaries for our ability to exercise reflexivity (Adams 2007: 53–54). Another related critique emphasizes the culturally relative dimensions of reflexivity. As Jeffrey Alexander notes, as reflexivity arises in certain historical periods, it “...can be understood only within the context of cultural tradition, not outside of it” (Alexander 1996: 136, quoted in Adams 2007: 56).

### **Reflexivity, Relativism and Knowledge**

Self-reflexivity is connected to the concept of risk and to contemporary views of scientific knowledge. Giddens explains that in a world in which people have an increased freedom to choose from different styles and roles of behavior, and where scientific and technological knowledge is rapidly expanding and changing, the world has come to be experienced as an increasingly insecure place (Giddens 2000: 45–49). As an example, Giddens shows how the institution of marriage has a different character today than it used to have in traditional societies. A couple of generations ago, people who were married “knew what it was they were doing” – marriage was to a great extent regulated by tradition and custom (Giddens 2000: 46). As traditions erode, people no longer take institutions like marriage for granted.

In spite of scientific breakthroughs, which have allowed for developments such as mechanized farming, the railway, the contraceptive pill, or communication technologies that have greatly impacted on how we live our daily lives, Giddens argues that people in late modernity actually have a rather relativistic stance towards scientific claims. We can no longer “...simply ‘accept’ the findings which scientists produce, if only because scientists so frequently disagree with one another...” (Giddens 2000: 49). Giddens gives a number of examples of how rapid advances and changes in science during the past fifty years have actually contributed to eroding the status science once presumably had. The still ongoing debate over climate change constitutes a prime example of this (Giddens 2000: 47). Even ideas about, for example, the health effects of the consumption of coffee, sugar, and fat are constantly being challenged. The result of this is hesitation to take scientific claims at face value.

If we do accept that individualism and reflexivity are essential parts of the mindset and ethos of Western societies, how does this impact religion in

the Western world? Building on the thoughts of philosopher Charles Taylor (1991), Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead et al. contend that there has occurred a “massive subjective turn of modern culture” (Heelas & Woodhead et al. 2005: 2). People today tend to make decisions relying on their own subjective values, rather than the guidance of external authorities or traditions. The emphasis on the experience of the individual can be seen in all social domains; within healthcare, education, the workplace etc. According to Heelas & Woodhead et al., this subjective turn permeating Western culture on the whole, can also be seen in how people approach religion and spirituality. They increasingly prefer more playful, subjective, and experimental ways of spiritual and religious engagement (Heelas & Woodhead et al. 2005: 5–7).

When Steve Bruce (2002) explains the popularity of New Age or alternative spirituality, he points out the mode of relativism that permeates late-modern industrialized countries. He argues, that the popularity of New Age, which appeared in the West during the last quarter of the twentieth century, can be explained by it being a form of religious expression that goes well together with dominant assumptions and ideas of the era. These ideas and assumptions include, among others, relativism and an emphasis on individualism (Bruce 2002: 85–86). Although technology and access to information is necessary for the spreading of any kind of alternative spiritual thoughts, conspiracy theories, or unconventional pseudo-scientific ideas, Bruce is not convinced that mere access to information is enough to explain why people today are more keen to trust themselves as authorities on deciding what is to be considered reliable knowledge: “It leaves unexplained why more people feel they are competent to decide what is information and what are the mad ramblings of the deranged.” (Bruce 2002: 87).

Similar to Giddens, Bruce argues that increased education and the increased number of practitioners in different academic fields have undermined the authority of scientific communities rather than increased their respectability. For example, in Great Britain the number of people in full-time higher education doubled from 1970 to 1991. Education has become too common and accessible to simply command respect by itself. Also, the natural sciences and their sub disciplines, each straining in their own directions, have themselves become too esoteric and too confusing for anyone outside the discipline to understand (Bruce 2002: 88).

The ethos of individualism can be seen in people's attitudes towards knowledge. A person may choose to believe that concepts like the chakra system or "spiritual energies" are more valid than the current bio-medical view of the body's nervous system. One of the outcomes of a world where everybody is allowed their own opinions, Bruce argues, is relativism. If everybody feels entitled to make up their own mind, one possible end result would be endless disagreement and conflict. This problem is solved by taking a relativistic stance towards knowledge. We generally accept that individuals have the right to live their lives as they see fit and to choose from a variety of options (Bruce 2002: 86–87).

This short overview has focused on a few aspects relevant for understanding the broader context in which various forms of subjective religious beliefs and discourses spring up and are able to exist. The ethos of individualism, the insecurity about and ambivalence towards science, and the reflexive and relativistic stances towards knowledge can all be seen as playing their part in providing a broader cultural breeding ground for the cultivation of alternative and fringe ideas and worldviews.

### **3.2 Religion in Finland**

To comprehend the present day religious landscape in Finland, a brief discussion of the country's religious history is necessary. Beginning at the Reformation in the first half of the sixteenth century and ending in the current day, this sub-chapter provides a general historical overview of the religious landscape of Finland. The focus is on structural changes in society and on the emergence of so-called alternative religious currents and communities. As this chapter is based on research made by Finnish experts in the field it also provides an general outline of previous scholarship on alternative religiosity in Finland.

#### **From the Reformation until the Act of religious freedom**

Until the Swedish-Russian war of 1808–1809, Finland constituted the eastern part of the Swedish Kingdom. The initiative for the Reformation in the Swedish-Finnish realm came from the Swedish Crown in 1544. The Lutheran faith was made the official religion of Sweden-Finland. The foundation for a uniform Lutheran culture throughout the kingdom was laid at the Synod of Uppsala in 1593 (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2005: 38). The period between the Synod of Uppsala and the Great Northern War (1713–1721) is commonly referred to as the Period of Orthodoxy.



During this period, state power became increasingly consolidated and centralized. Religious uniformity was seen as a positive element by the state power. The position of the Church was reinforced to further extend its influence over people's everyday lives. Church attendance became compulsory and absence from Sunday sermons without a valid reason could be punished by fines. Although religious life during this era became increasingly homogenized, some old popular religious beliefs and folk traditions managed to survive (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2005: 39; 43–44). During the period of orthodoxy, the Church and state became increasingly interlinked and the clergy became part of the state administration. The clergy's duties included, for example, the declaration of royal announcements in Church (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2003: 25). In the eyes of the people, the secular and religious authorities were essentially the same. (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2005: 41). The foundations that were laid for a notion of a culturally and religiously unified nation state during this time still in many respects left a lasting mark on Finnish society on the whole (Ketola 2003: 23).

After the Swedish-Russian war of 1808-1809, Finland became a part of the Russian empire. Finland was given the designation Grand Duchy of Finland as it was incorporated as an autonomous part of Russia. The Lutheran Church continued as the official church of the new Grand Duchy. In 1822, Tsar Alexander I issued an order to abolish all freemasonic orders in the Russian empire and thus also in the Grand Duchy of Finland. A reason for the prohibition was a fear that revolutionary ideas undermining the monarchy and state were discussed and taught in freemasonic orders. Tsar Nicholas I renewed the ban on freemasonry in 1826 and specifically ordered that no new secret societies were be formed in Finland. All military and government officials were ordered to resign from freemasonry and to pledge never to join any secret society in the future. This ban still made it possible for a private citizen to be a member of a freemasonic order abroad. This ban was further expanded in 1848 when Nicholas I issued another prohibition concerning the Grand Duchy of Finland in particular. This prohibition made it illegal for all nationals of the country to be members of freemasonic orders or any other secret societies whatsoever (Ahtokari 2000: 96–99).

In 1898, Tsar Nicholas II appointed Nikolay Bobrikov as Governor-General of the Grand Duchy of Finland. Bobrikov's ambitions included making Finland a Russian province that would be governed by the same

laws as the rest of the Russian empire. Although the Finnish public, as well as cultural personas from many European countries, protested the “russification” of Finland, Bobrikov’s authorities were extended and he continued making constitutional changes. After Bobrikov was assassinated in 1904, his successor was less interested in tying Finland closer to the Russian empire. The policies of russification were rolled back following Russian defeat in the Russian-Japanese war and general strike in Russia in 1905 (Alhback 1995: 8–9).

After the Russian revolution of 1917, a short but bloody civil war broke out in the former Grand Duchy of Finland. The southern part of Finland was controlled by the socialist forces, generally called the “Reds,” while the conservative-led senate, called the “Whites,” controlled the northern parts of the country. The anti-religious policies of the labor movement made the clergy of the Lutheran Church a natural ally of the Whites. The war ended in victory for the White forces. After the war, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland became a state church (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2005: 56–57).

In 1922 a new Act of Religious Freedom was passed. The so-called Dissenters’ Act of 1889 had given Protestant so called free church denominations (e.g. Baptist, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist) the right to register as religious communities. This Act had allowed citizens to leave the Evangelical Lutheran Church, but only for the purpose of joining another protestant denomination. The new Act of 1922 made it possible for every Finnish citizen to leave the Evangelical Lutheran Church and other religious denominations without the obligation to join another (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2005: 57–58).

### **Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Spiritualism**

Following the establishment of the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, Theosophy spread throughout the Western world. Newspapers introduced theosophical ideas to the general public in Finland in the late 1800s. In Sweden, the first theosophical lodge was founded in 1895, but the founding of a theosophical society in Finland was made impossible due to restrictions by the Russian authorities, which considered Theosophy suspicious. In Finland, the end of the 1800s and beginning of the 1900s can be seen as a time of great social upheavals. Theosophical ideas arrived in Finland at a time when the Lutheran church and clergy were facing mounting criticism by the growing labor movement (Viitikko

1981: 64–65). Theosophy first became fashionable among the Swedish-speaking upper classes. As Theosophy offered a form of spirituality that was seen as an alternative to the dominant Lutheran Church, theosophical teachings were also embraced by some leading figures in the Finnish labor movement. Due to writings on Theosophy in leftist magazines, theosophical ideas became widespread in the country although no theosophical society could be founded. Theosophy, which offered an apparent religious worldview, was viewed negatively by the Lutheran Church as well as anti-religious circles within the labor movement. Although the leftist evening paper *Työmiehen Illanvietto* (The Working Man's Evening Entertainment) stopped publishing articles about Theosophy in 1902, leading Finnish theosophists continued to support leftist ideals. When a Finnish branch of the Theosophical Society was eventually established in 1907, a great number of its founding figures had a background in the labor movement (Viitikko 1981:64–66). According to Yrjö Viitikko, early Finnish Theosophy was highly bent towards Spiritualism during its initial stage of development. Spiritualistic themes were discussed at the society for some months until they for some reason were abandoned altogether (Viitikko 1981: 61). For understanding the developments of Theosophy in Finland, it is important to keep in mind the predominantly Christian context. A trait of Finnish Theosophy was its strong focus on how Christianity could be understood in the light of theosophical teachings and concepts (Viitikko 1981: 68).

Pekka Ervast (1875–1934) is one of the most influential personas within Finnish Theosophy. As he was walking the streets of Helsinki in May of 1895, carrying some theosophical literature in his hands, he saw an individual dressed in a monk-like robe. Ervast became convinced that this was a so called “Hidden Master” or “Mahatma,” who according to theosophical teachings are here to guide the world and help humanity (Ahlbäck 1995: 90). Ervast was one of the most active members of the Finnish Theosophical Society until 1920, when he left the society to establish his own spiritual group: *Ruusu-Risti* (The Rosy Cross). The Rosy Cross, which thus sprung out of the Theosophical Society, highlights the importance of The Sermon of the Mount and embraces an esoteric understanding of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. The Rosy Cross became a registered association in 1931. It had 271 members in 2007 ([uskonnot.fi](http://uskonnot.fi)). Ervast's esoteric ideas included a prophecy about Finland as a special place in the world from which a new spiritual wisdom will arise (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015: 25–27). The phrase *Valo tulee pohjolasta* (The

Light Comes from the North), which Ervast coined, is still used today by various people within the Finnish alternative spiritual milieu, although they might not be aware of the origin of the phrase.

As Rudolf Steiner formed the Anthroposophical Society in 1913, a number of Finnish people joined it. A study group was organized the same year in the Helsinki area. A Finnish branch of the society was founded in 1923. The first Steiner school in Finland was founded in 1955. The heyday of Anthroposophy came in the 1970s. Anthroposophy grew more visible and active than before. New local groups were founded in five cities. Also, the society started organizing a number of seminars and lecture events (Sohlberg, 2008: 207; 2017: 131). I would suggest that the growth of Anthroposophy in the 1970's can be linked to the zeitgeist of the era. As Anthroposophy offers a number of alternative practices, such as pedagogics, biodynamic agriculture, and anthroposophical medicine, it catered to a growing interest in alternative lifestyles. The Finnish-language organization *Suomen antroposofinen liitto* (Finnish Anthroposophical Union) and its Swedish-language sister organization had 673 members in 2018 (uskonnot.fi: k). The influence of anthroposophy is, however, much larger. Parts of anthroposophy, like biodynamic agriculture, and the 24 active Steiner schools in Finland, attract people who have no anthroposophical conviction (Sohlberg 2017: 131-132).

Spiritualism, which had spread throughout the United States like wildfire following the Fox sisters' rappings in Hydesville in 1848, was reported about in the Finnish press during the latter part of the 1800s. Spiritualism was practiced in private homes and had an experimental nature. Causes of rappings and dancing tables were debated in Finnish newspapers and were attributed to phenomenon like electricity, animal magnetism, spirits, and gullibility (Holm 2016: 75-77). In the beginning of the 1900s, several famous mediums visited Finland and a Society for Psychical Research (*Sällskapet för psykisk forskning*) was founded in Helsinki in 1907 (uskonnot.fi: a).

Spiritualism gained increased visibility in Finland when author Helmi Krohn (1871-1967) became devoted to Spiritualism after attending a lecture by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in London in 1928. Krohn was a prolific author and translator. She wrote biographies, plays, and children's books and translated over 150 books from English to Finnish (Holm 2016: 118). She also translated spiritualistic literature from English to Finnish. She

was helped in this task by Gerda Ryti (1886–1984), the wife of Finland's fifth president. Apart from translating 15 books on spiritualistic topics, Krohn also wrote 10 books on Spiritualism herself, some of them with the aid of what she believed to be the spirit of her deceased father (Holm 2016: 30; 164). Finnish Spiritualism is highly influenced by Anglo-American Spiritualism. While spiritualists in the Anglo-American world organized themselves into formal churches, Finnish spiritualism organized itself into associations. The national association Suomen spiritualistinen seura r.y. (Finnish Spiritualist Association) organized itself in 1946 as an ideological association. This meant that members belonging to the association could also be members in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (Holm 2016: 234–236).

Regarding scholarship on esoteric currents in Finland, the last years have witnessed increased research. The multidisciplinary project *Uudet Etsijät* (Seekers of the New: Esotericism and the transformation of religiosity in Finland during the era of modernization, 1880–1940) will study the impact of esoteric thought on art, politics and culture during the period 1880–1940. The project is led by Maarit-Leskelä Kärki and includes researchers from the universities of Turku, Tampere and Helsinki. As Tiina Mahlamäki points out, historians have often overlooked the impact of esoteric currents on Finnish cultural life. For example, when Finnish literary history was written in the 1930s, scholars of Finnish literature were reluctant to admit that mystics like Emmanuel Swedenborg could have had any deeper impact on national authors like Aleksis Kivi (Mahlamäki 2010: 164; 177). The project *Uudet Etsijät* started in 2015 and will continue to 2020. As scholars linked to the project already have indicated, esoteric thought was much more widespread during the era and impacted Finnish culture more profoundly than previously recognized (e.g., Leskelä-Kärki 2006; Kokkinen 2008; 2011, 2013; Leskelä-Kärki & Harmainen 2017; Mahlamäki 2013; 2014; 2018).

### **Religion in post-war Finland**

After the Second World War, Finland was still primarily an agrarian society. Approximately half of the population worked in farming or forestry. Industrialization had in comparison to the other Nordic countries been relatively slow. After the war, however, industrialization and economic growth became key elements in social policy. At the risk of oversimplifying, one may say that Finland transitioned almost directly from an agrarian society to a service society (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola

2003: 45). The 1960s and 1970s witnessed rapid urbanization as many people moved from rural areas to larger population centers. Immigration increased extensively in the 1990s. The largest groups of immigrants came from Russia, Estonia, and Sweden. The largest number of refugees have arrived from Somalia, Iraq, and parts of former Yugoslavia. Immigration is one factor in the diversification of the Finnish religious landscape. In 2011 Finland had a Muslim population of approximately 50 000 – 60 000 people (Martikainen and Sakaranaho 2011: 103).

Membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has remained high. At the end of 2015, about 73 percent of the Finnish population belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Although membership rates have remained relatively high in comparison to other European countries, the Finnish Lutheran Church has witnessed slow but progressive decline during the past couple of decades. In 2001 Church membership still amounted to 85 percent of the population (Kirkkohallitus 2016: 12). The decline in membership can be explained by several interlinked factors. Among the respondents in the *Gallup Ecclesiastica* survey of 2011, there were over one thousand respondents who had cancelled their membership in the Church. The main reasons for leaving the church were that the respondents considered the church as an institution that had nothing to offer them. Nor did they believe in the teachings of the Church. Another, interlinked reason, was that the respondents did not want pay tax to the Church (Palmu et al. 2012: 86–87).

A large portion of those who remain members of the Church do so because they value the Church as an institution that stands for humanitarian values. According to *Gallup Ecclesiastica* 2011, four out of five Church members state that one important reason for belonging to the Church is that the Church cares for the elderly, sick, and people in need. Other commonly expressed reasons for belonging to the Church can be described as ritualistic or ceremonial. One of five church members considered Church services such as baptism, funerals, and weddings important reasons for retaining membership (Palmu et al. 2012: 77–78).

The so-called counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s popularized an interest in alternative ways of living and alternative forms of religion and spirituality. The counterculture arose in the United States among hippies and student activists at North American universities in the mid 1960s. Some core ideas of the counterculture included the abandoning of

conventional work- and family roles, finding new ways of relating to one and other, and building alternative forms of communities. The counterculture embraced immediate personal experiences which were sought after through practices like meditation and experimentation with psychedelic drugs (Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2003: 54–57). Countercultural currents arrived in Finland in the early 1970s. According to Kääriäinen, Niemelä and Ketola, the establishment of *Oraansuojelijat* (The Sprout Guardians) and *Rajatiedon yhteistyöryhmä* (The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Group) constitute two clear examples of the arrival of countercultural trends in Finland. The Sprout Guardians was an ideological association founded in 1973 to support the establishment of a vegetarian restaurant that opened in Helsinki in 1974. Many of the active members of the association were introduced to a vegetarian diet while interailing in Europe. In 1972, some of them had also come into contact with the Hindu-movement Ananda Marga in Copenhagen and wanted to establish a Finnish section. The poet Leif Färding (1951–1984) was one of the most important ideologists within *Oraansuojelijat*. Färding criticized Western societies as hedonistic and selfish cultures that exploited other nations. The foundation for a richer and more fulfilling life would, according to Färding, be based on simplicity, inner contemplation, the appreciation of traditional craftsmanship, and decentralization of power (Kääriäinen, Niemelä and Ketola 2003: 58).

Linked to countercultural trends of the 1960s and 1970s was an increased interest in flying saucers and ufology. The first Finnish books that treated UFO phenomena had already been published in the 1950s (Närvä 2003: 196). These, however, interpreted flying saucers within a Christian framework. For example, Ensio Lehtonen, who was a Pentecostal preacher and founder of the Christian publishing house *Kuva ja Sana* (Image and Word), published a book in 1957 named *Ajan Kello* (The Clock of the Era). Among many signs of the second coming of Christ, Lehtonen pointed to the phenomenon of flying saucers. According to Jaakko Närvä, Christian interpretations of the UFO phenomena diminished as paranormal and theosophically inspired explanations became more widespread (Närvä 2003: 196).

During the early 1960s, people interested in UFOs also organized themselves into associations. A local UFO club was founded in the city of Porvoo in 1960. The first Finnish national UFO association *Interplanetistit* (The Interplanetists) was founded by forty members in 1962. The

association stated that it was religiously neutral with an aim to advance the scientific study of the UFO phenomenon. Joel Rehnström, who functioned as secretary of the association started a publishing company *Kustannus Oy Vimana* that published Finnish translations of books like *The Flying Saucers Have Landed* by Desmond Leslie and George Adamski. The priest Arvi Merikallio, who was selected chairperson of the association in 1962, left the association in 1965 feeling that activities and beliefs within the association had turned against the spirit of the Bible. Merikallio had disputes with the theosophically inspired ballet dancer Margit Lilius-Mustapa (1899-1991). During a visit to the United States, where she was going to study under Jiddu Khrisnamurti, she had also become introduced to the Urantia book. Lilius-Mustapa presented the Urantia book to the members of the association and many received it with much enthusiasm. Lilius-Mustapa was also the first Finn to write and publish a book on the UFO phenomena. In *Ihminen ja avaruuden avautuminen* (Man and the Opening of Space, 1967) Lilius-Mustapa talks about her telepathic contacts with an alien in the United States who drove a cream colored Cadillac, and how she establishes a link to an extraterrestrial teacher from the "Brotherhood of Venus" (Närvä 2003: 197–199). It is worth mentioning that the book was published by *Suomen spiritualistinen seura* (Finnish Spiritualist Association). This is an indicator of how Finnish Spiritualism seems to have been rather non-dogmatic as it chose to publish a UFO book by a person who was theosophically oriented.

Later developments in Finnish ufology include the arrival of the ancient alien hypothesis in Finland and an increased interest in UFOs in the 1990s. Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* (1968) was published in Finnish in 1969. It was reprinted many times and attracted much public attention. Däniken's ideas received both praise and critique in the media. The socialist newspaper *Kansan Uutiset* condemned Däniken's book *Gods from Outer Space* (1969, Finnish translation 1970) as propaganda intended to distract the working class. (Närvä 2003: 202). The most visible personas in Finnish ufology during the 1990s were Rauni Leena Luukanen Kilde and the filmmaker Juhan af Grann. af Grann's documentary *Vieraita taivaalta* (Visitors from Space) aired numerous times on Finnish television and brought ufology into the living room. (Närvä 2003: 2010).

Alternative spirituality based on Eastern religious teachings entered the Finnish religious landscape in the 1960s. At that time, yoga started gaining a wider popular interest. Movements centering on the practice of



mediation have increased steadily since the 1970s (Sohlberg & Ketola 2015: 131). In the mid-1970s, Transcendental Meditation became popular. The association *TM-liitto ry* (TM Union) became a registered association in 1977. Today there are local TM sections in several Finnish cities, for example in Helsinki, Tampere, Rauma, Pori, and Kouvola (uskonnot.fi: b).

Interest in movements with a clear set of teachings and a clear organizational structure (e.g. ISKCON, Unification Church) has remained low. The Unification Church (*Maailman kristinuskon yhdistämisseura*, later renamed *Perheiden Maailmanrauhanjärjestö*) established itself in Finland in 1973. The number of members is unknown, but it is unlikely to be more than a handful of people (uskonnot.fi: c). The Church of Scientology started missionary activity in Finland in 1978. The Finnish Scientology Association (*Suomen Scientologia-yhdistys*) was established in 1980 and registered as an association in 1983. There are active Dianetics centers in the cities of Helsinki and Lahti. In 2009, membership amounted to 120 people (uskonnot.fi d). As these examples show, people actively involved in new religious movements has remained low. The more internationally known religious movements seem to have stagnated in terms of supporters, social visibility and influence (Broo, Moberg, Utrianen & Ramstedt 2015: 143).

The most significant movement with its roots in Hinduism is the so-called Amma movement. The movement is centered on the teachings of the Indian guru Mother Amma (Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, b. 1953). The Finnish Amma Center was established in 1998. From that year onward, the Indian guru has visited Finland almost every year. Her visits have been very popular and the events have gathered up to 8 000 people (Sohlberg & Ketola 2015: 132). ISKCON, popularly known as The Hare Krishna Movement, arrived in Finland in 1979 due to the missionary activity of members from Sweden. Three centers were established, but the only remaining center is the one located in Helsinki, established in 1993. In 2014, the movement had 82 registered members (uskonnot.fi: e).

Although Neopaganism in Finland is still a rather marginal phenomenon, it has managed to attract attention in the media. The largest neopagan associations are *Lehto –Suomen Luonnonuskontojen yhdistys r.y.* (Grove – Association for Finland's Nature Religions, founded 1998) and *Pakanaverkko* (Pagan Network, founded 1999). Together these associations have almost 500 members (uskonnot.fi l; m). The Wiccan organization

*Wicca ry* (founded in 2000) was covered in the news when it sought to register itself as a religious organization in 2001. Their application for registration was denied. Applications for registration of religious organizations are reviewed by the Ministry of Education, which decides if the organization fills the criteria for religious organizations. The criteria include that a religious organization must have a coherent set of beliefs and a shared religious creed. The panel from the Ministry of Education decided that since Wicca allows for numerous interpretations concerning authoritative religious texts, rituals, and central beliefs, the organization did not fit the criteria for a religious organizations (Sjöblom 2005: 133–149).

In 2013, the neopagan group *Karhun Kansa* (People of the Bear) was granted status as a religious organization. The positive verdict and the organization received substantial media attention. *Karhun Kansa* considers the collection *Suomen kansan vanhat runot* (The ancient poems of the Finnish people) a sacred text. The collection of poems and spells was published in 33 volumes by the Finnish literature society between 1908–1948, with 34th volume added in 1997. Concerning membership, *Karhun Kansa* is still a small religious organization. In 2017, it had 52 members (uskonnot.fi: n). The reason why *Karhun Kansa* sought status as a religious organization was mainly symbolical; they saw it as official recognition. One person from the organization has received from the Finnish magistrate's office the right to officiate at marriages. *Karhun Kansa* will also marry same sex couples (Jämsen & Tebest 2014).

Female dominated eclectic or new age spirituality focusing on angels and angels practices has increased in popularity and visibility in Finland in the twenty-first century (Utriainen 2015: 159). The angel phenomenon has been studied in the Finnish context extensively by Terhi Utriainen (e.g. Utriainen 2014; 2015; 2017). The contemporary belief in angels can be described as a hybrid of Christianity, folk belief, and new age thought. Perhaps the most internationally well-known author and lecturer on angel spirituality is the Irish author Lorna Byrne, author of the international bestseller *Angels in My Hair* (2008). Utriainen's investigations into the angel phenomena include ethnographical fieldwork on angel workshops and courses, studies of articles in women's magazines, and interviews with angel-believers and practitioners. Utriainen conducted a survey at one of Byrne's lectures in Helsinki, Finland in 2011. Of an audience of over 1 000 people, 263 filled in the questionnaire. The data gathered shows that interest in angels is extremely female-dominated as 94 percent of the

respondents were female. Another result from the survey showed that the vast majority (74,5 percent) were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Regarding religious self-identification, 59 percent identified with the description “spiritual person,” while the next popular identification, 21 percent, was “Christian” (Utriainen & Ramstedt 2016: 220). While belief in angels is in the Finnish context historically rooted in Christianity, the contemporary angel belief is an example of how angels can be interpreted and imaginatively combined in different ways and in relation to a number of spiritual traditions and practices (Utriainen 2015: 159). The angel phenomenon is highly non-dogmatic and the language of contemporary angel-literature has an therapeutic style. Angel spirituality emphasizes the practical side of spirituality. Practices linked to it include healing, meditation, stress-relief, and so on (Utriainen 2015: 162–165).

### **Alternative religious organizations in the larger context**

During 2007–2010, the Church Research Institute conducted an extensive mapping of the religious landscape of the Helsinki metropolitan area. The project was motivated by the notion that larger cities are sites where religious change tend to be the most rapid and from where it often tends to spread to smaller cities and more rural areas. Almost all religious groups active in the country are also represented in the capital or its immediate vicinity. About 11 percent of the population in this region participates actively in some form of religious organization. The highest amount of religious participation is found in free church Christian congregations (e.g. Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations) and revivalist movements within the Lutheran Church. In comparison with a similar type of study led by Harri Heino in 1984, the number of religious organizations in the Helsinki metropolitan area had almost doubled during the previous 25 years. If religious groups outside Christian, Muslim, or Jewish organizations are classified as a form of “alternative spirituality,” 1.5 percent of the population were active in some type of alternative spiritual group or association (Ketola & Sohlberg 2011: 208–213).

The situation in the Helsinki metropolitan area bears resemblance to some of the findings of the Kendal Project that mapped the religious landscape of the Northern British town of Kendal. Conducted from Lancaster University, the Kendal project revealed that 1.6 percent of the town’s population were active in what was dubbed the “holistic milieu” (Heelas & Woodhead et al. 2005: 45). Although the percentage of people active in

the holistic milieu in Kendal correspond well to the number of people active in the alternative spiritual milieu in Helsinki, Finnish scholar of religion Kimmo Ketola is skeptical towards the claim that a “spiritual revolution” is under way in the West, at least when considering the situation in Finland. In his article “Spiritual Revolution in Finland? Evidence from Surveys and the Rates of Emergence of New Religious and Spiritual Organizations” (2007), Ketola uses the extensive quantitative material gathered by the Church Research Institute to show how the Finnish religious landscape has changed since the 1970s. New religious movements and currents have grown significantly during the past 40 years, but concomitantly with these developments charismatic and evangelical denominations have witnessed growth that is even more striking. According to Ketola, it is thus premature to talk about a “spiritual revolution,” at least concerning the situation in Finland. He argues instead that one can see a shift from more authoritarian, “non-democratic” forms of religion to more “democratic” and individual-focused types of religiosity (Ketola 2007: 38).

The mapping of the Helsinki region indicates that 1.5 percent are active in some type of alternative spiritual organization. As proposed by Ketola and Sohlberg, the major cities are the regions where supply of, and activity in, alternative spiritual organizations should be the most prominent. This implies that there is less supply and activity in rural parts of the country. However, according to the *Gallup Ecclesiastica* survey of 2015, belief in various alternative spiritual concepts, such as reincarnation or channeling, is much more common than participation in different alternative spiritual organizations. For example, a third of the respondents in the survey agreed fully or partly with the statement that there exists invisible worlds or beings that are active in our world. 11 percent agreed fully or partly with the statement that spirit mediums or channelers can convey information from the invisible world. Under 10 percent believed in the healing powers of rocks and crystals (Ketola 2016: 71–72).

This sub-chapter has provided a brief overview of the religious landscape of Finland. One of the most visible changes during the last fifteen years has been the number of people leaving the Evangelical Lutheran Church. However, people do not seem to join other religious organizations in any high numbers. During the 1960s and 1970s, various alternative spiritual and countercultural ideas became visible in Finland. The founding of organizations like The Sprout Guardians and The Fringe-Knowledge

Cooperation Group in the 1970s are examples of alternative spiritual movements that stressed immediate personal experience, and that the individual could choose from different religious beliefs, traditions and alternative sciences. Membership in more internationally known new religious movements, such as ISCKON, Scientology, and the Unification Church, has remained low. Overall, membership and participation in alternative religious organizations is low in the country. However, although membership and participation is low, there is much more widespread belief in various alternative spiritual beliefs and ideas, such as reincarnation, belief in UFOs, ghosts etc.

### **3.3 Beliefs, practices and values among the readers of *Ultra***

The Church Research Institute in Finland has contributed extensively with quantitative data about the changes in religious life among the Finnish population. The *Gallup Ecclesiastica* is a series of surveys conducted by the Church Research Institute every four years. The purpose of the survey is to gather quantitative information about religious beliefs, values, the relationship to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and participation in church activity. As many of the questions in the *Gallup Ecclesiastica* have remained the same throughout the years, it is possible to compare changes in religiosity and attitudes over time.

In 2011, The Church Research Institute conducted a quantitative study about alternative spirituality in Finland (FSD2837). The questionnaire was placed in the 2011 June-July double issue of *Ultra* (*Ultra* 7-8/2011). It was also distributed at the Ultra Days 2011. Some of the survey questions are the same as the questions in the *Gallup Ecclesiastica*. This enables for comparisons between beliefs among the readers of *Ultra* and the general population. Altogether, 556 people responded to the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents were women (76 percent) and 66 percent of all the people who responded were over 55 years of age. According to the survey, people active in the alternative spiritual milieu seem to be more highly educated than the general population. 36 percent of the respondents had a degree from university or college while the figure on a national level is around 27 percent. Only 1 percent of the respondents were between 18 and 24 years old (Ketola & Sohlberg 2012: 10). Concerning gender, age and education, the people who answered the questionnaire

remind strongly of the kind of demographic that is most likely to visit art exhibitions or take part in cultural events.

During my fieldwork at various Fringe-Knowledge events I have noted that the visitors in general seem to correspond to this demographic. As I attended lectures at the Ultra Days, the UFO and 2012 Conference, and at the Mother Earth Fair I found myself surrounded mostly by women in their middle to late middle age. Although I was usually among the youngest participants at the events, many people seemed happy and enthusiastic about my presence. At luncheons and dinners at the Winterly Star Days and at the Ultra Days I have numerous times dined with people who were quite interested in why I was at the event. Some of them commented on the fact that I was young. They were delighted that a person of my age was interested in “spirituality” and “knowledge” and not just “violent video games, rock music, and alcohol.” As I was checking my recording equipment for my interview with Luukanen-Kilde, she commented that it was nice that a “young person” as myself was interested in Fringe-Knowledge.

The issue 5-6/2008 of *Ultra* includes an article by Jaana Bentaala, who at the time was a 29-year-old author and stylist. The article focuses on Bentaala’s own life, her paranormal experiences, and her interest in Fringe-Knowledge issues. In the article, she expresses her disappointment about the lack of younger people in Fringe-Knowledge associations. The article, titled *Rajatiedon tulevaisuus nuorten käsiin!* (The Future of Fringe-Knowledge in the Hands of the Young!), implies that people who are under thirty represent a minority within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene (Bentaala 2008: 14–17).

As I interviewed Marko Kananen, he expressed his opinions about the demographics of the readership of *Ultra* (IF mgt 2013/015). He commented on the fact that the readership was “fairly old.”<sup>6</sup> However, he did not believe that young people in general are uninterested in the kind of material that is found in the magazine. Instead he talked about how younger generations lack the same “operational models and way of

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<sup>6</sup> Finnish original: kohtuullisen iäkästä.

operating”<sup>7</sup> and that they do not have “the same kind of culture of subscribing to magazines as the older generations.”<sup>8</sup>

Concerning age and gender, the results of the survey in *Ultra*, as well as the internal scenic construction of Bentaala in *Ultra*, correspond well with my own observations at various events and gatherings. Although women in their middle age dominate the demographic, there are some differences between different types of Fringe-Knowledge events. At the events hosted by Jukka Nieminen in Tampere, the audience has usually consisted roughly of an equal number of men and women. At the Ancient Day, there were men and women in equal numbers, while the Earth Radiation Day was slightly more male dominated. I presume that the program at these events, consisting of lectures on ley-lines, alternative archaeology and history, ghosts and ghost hunting, might be more attractive to men in general than lectures on personal development or connecting with oneself. At these events, the audience has been younger than at the Ultra Days or the Mother Earth Fair.

The event Uforock, organized in Tampere since 2002, is also an exception to the generally female dominated events. At the 2012 Uforock, there was roughly an equal amount of men and women. The program in the daytime consisted of lectures on UFOs and nuclear weapons, mainstream media as a means of control, the year 2012 and the Mayan calendar, and “Cosmic Consciousness.” The evening program had an entrance fee of 8 euros. The show consisted of live rock music and surrealistic films. The audience consisted mainly of people in their 20s and 30s. At this event, there were only a few explicit links to Fringe-Knowledge related ideas, and it seemed that most people were there mainly to see the bands. Displayed on one table was, however, *Ultra* magazines and books on UFOs, spirituality and the occult (Ramstedt, field notes). The lectures throughout the years at Uforock have not been limited to UFOs and alien contacts but have dealt with a broad spectrum of Fringe-knowledge and also countercultural ideas. One example is Uforock 2011, where the Finnish amateur archaeologist Keijo Parkkunen (b. 1927) was invited to give a talk about his theory, which refutes the Ice Age (Parkkunen’s theory will be discussed in chapter 5.1.5). Another example is Uforock 2008, where the

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<sup>7</sup> Finnish original: toimintamalleja ja toimintatapaa

<sup>8</sup> Finnish original: lehden tilaamisen kulttuuria samalla tavalla kuin vanhemmissa polvissa.

famous Finnish eco-anarchist Pentti Linkola (b. 1932) was invited (www.arzrecords.com b). Linkola has, among other things, advocated for radical means in order to decimate the world population. According to Linkola, we should abandon much of our modern technology and go back to a simpler way of living. He has also suggested for a way to solve the problem of overpopulation; an international agency like the UN should strike major cities with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons (Linkola 2009: 137; 192).

The reason why young people are in minority at different Fringe-Knowledge events cannot be explained simply by the fact that some of them, like The Winterly Star Days, can be relatively expensive. If money was the issue, then one would expect that elderly people would dominate music festivals and many other events in Finland. A weekend ticket to the music festival Provinssirock in Seinäjoki 2011 was 112 euros, a sum that did not include transportation, accommodation, food or beverages. Likewise, a three-day ticket to the Ruisrock festival in Turku amounted to 110 euros in 2011.

### **The Spiritual identity**

Kimmo Ketola and Jussi Sohlberg of the Church Research Institute published some results of the survey on spirituality in *Ultra* 7-8/2012. The readers of *Ultra* predominantly identify with the description "Spiritual person" (62 %). The second most popular description is "Christian" (13 %). Only 1 percent identify themselves as "non-religious" and 1 percent of the readers identify as pagans or shamans (Ketola & Sohlberg 2012: 10–13; FSD2837).

Ketola and Sohlberg note that most respondents have a positive attitude towards many Christian beliefs. Regarding the statement "The teachings of Jesus are suitable life advice for our time,"<sup>9</sup> up to 91 percent answered that either believed in it firmly or found it likely (Ketola & Sohlberg 2012: 12). In comparison, 58 percent among the general population believed firmly or considered the statement probable in the year 2011 (Palmu et al. 2012: 45). Although 91 percent of the respondents to the *Ultra* survey considered the teachings of Jesus relevant, membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was below the national average. About 58

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<sup>9</sup> Finnish original: Jeesuksen opetukset ja elämänohjeet soveltuvat oman aikamme elämänohjeiksi.



percent were members, and roughly 37 percent did not belong to any religious organizations. In 2011, the national average of membership in the Church was 77 percent. Ketola and Sohlberg conclude that while the readers of *Ultra* do not have any problems incorporating Christian beliefs into their worldview, they remain critical of the Church as an institution (Ketola & Sohlberg 2012: 13).

Both the general population and the readers of *Ultra* seem to find it easier to believe in Heaven than in the existence of Hell. About 20 percent of the readers consider the existence of Hell probable, while among the general population the amount is 28 percent. But regarding the existence of Heaven, *Ultra's* readers are far more optimistic than the population in general: 48 percent firmly believe in the existence of Heaven. An additional 25 percent find it likely. Among the general population in 2011, belief in heaven (both they who believed firmly or thought it likely) was about 42 percent (Ketola & Sohlberg 2012: 12).

Regarding their spiritual and religious views, the respondents are highly individualistic. About 88 percent saw that personal and immediate experiences of the divine are more important than religions and sacred texts. The respondents displayed a strong perennial understanding of religion: almost 90 percent agreed partly or totally with the statement that "All religions originate from the same inner and spiritual experience."<sup>10</sup> The vast majority of respondents entertain worldviews that acknowledge invisible and hidden forces. Slightly under 80 percent agreed fully or partly with the statement that one could seek guidance from invisible entities like angels, spirit guides, nature spirits or ancestors. About 86 percent agreed partly or fully with the statement that crystals, rocks, and minerals contain energies that can be tapped into. Almost 90 percent agreed that the root cause for physical ailments lies on the spiritual level. As the study was made in 2011, it contained a question about the coming year 2012. Roughly 61 percent agreed partly or fully with the statement that the year 2012 would bring some radical transformation for humanity. The number would obviously be much lower if the survey was conducted today, as the year 2012 did not bring with it any drastic changes (FSD2837). The year 2012 marks the end of the Mayan calendar and was linked to various millenarian beliefs.

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<sup>10</sup> Finnish original: Kaikkien uskontojen alkuperä on samassa sisäisessä ja henkisessä Kokemuksessa.

The most common practice among the respondents was meditation. Only about 10 percent had never tried it. About 40 percent meditated regularly and about 30 percent practiced meditation several times during the last five years. About 80 percent had tried healing. Out of these, approximately 20 percent either practiced or received healing on a regular basis. The high numbers concerning meditation and healing show that Fringe-Knowledge is not only an intellectual endeavor; the majority of *Ultra*'s readers engage in, or have at least tried, some form spiritual practice. (FSD2837)

Approximately 10 percent answered that they had "Participated in a Fringe-Knowledge lecture"<sup>11</sup> on a regular basis. Most respondents (about 57 percent) had visited lectures one or several times during the previous five years. Roughly 19 percent had been to lectures over five years ago. A small group of respondents (about 13 percent) had never participated. As these numbers indicate, there is a strong correlation between reading *Ultra* and visiting Fringe-Knowledge events. It shows that most readers do not simply read *Ultra* but also find it worthwhile to participate in lectures about Fringe-Knowledge in the company of other likeminded individuals. (FSD2837).

The values among the readers of *Ultra* seem to correspond well with what Gordon Lynch calls "progressive spirituality." This type of spirituality embraces values, ideas and practices that are attractive to people who hold the core values and ideals of liberal democracies, for example equality and tolerance. Progressive spirituality also seeks to develop spiritual worldviews and practices which are liberating for women. The two other characteristics of progressive spirituality is the attempt to consolidate science and religion and to take an interest in nature and ecology (Lynch 2007: 10). In the *Ultra* survey, 98 percent considered that people should care about nature. The statements in the survey that the respondents found least attractive had to do with gaining money and social status (FSD2837).

This section has provided a macro perspective on the demographics among the readers of *Ultra*. Concerning age and gender, the majority of the readers are female and over 56 years of age. They identify most commonly with the description "spiritual person." Only 1 percent identify

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<sup>11</sup> Finnish original: Osallistunut rajatiedon luennolle.

as being a pagan or shaman, and this can be explained with that Neopagans have their own networks and publications. In other words, one could say that Neopaganism constitutes a different scene within the alternative spiritual landscape of Finland. The Ultra survey shows that while the readers of the magazine are positively inclined towards many Christian teachings, they are skeptical towards the church as an institution. The values that are most dominant among the readers have to do with self-expression and ecology, while things like monetary gain or gaining a higher societal status seem less important. The readers of Ultra are likely to meditate or be involved in other spiritual practices.

## 4 Scenic structure

The Finnish word *rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge) is most commonly used to couple together a variety of “traditional” fringe sciences such as ufology, parapsychology, alternative history and archaeology, as well as clusters of themes and ideas derived from belief systems such as Theosophy, Spiritualism, and different currents of Western esotericism. The term Fringe-Knowledge became established in the late 1970s, as a group of people who were actively involved in the broader Finnish alternative spiritual milieu decided to create an umbrella association for smaller already existing associations that were focused on exploring “different sciences and worldviews that deal with so-called extrasensory phenomena”<sup>12</sup> (Ollila, Palojärvi & Kananen 2012: 3). Although the German term *Grenzwissenschaft*, a direct Finnish translation of which would have been *rajatiede*, i.e. “fringe-science,” was considered, the group did not deem the word “science” suitable for all the beliefs and ideas they wanted to include and so they instead coined the word *rajatieto* – fringe-knowledge – as they founded *Rajatiedon yhteistyöryhmä* (Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Group) in 1977.

### 4.1 Scenic infrastructure

For various scenes to be sustained and reproduced, a *scenic infrastructure* must exist. An examination of the infrastructure of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene entails looking at how its infrastructure was developed, how it has changed, and how it is currently sustained. A scenic infrastructure consists of various *scenic institutions* such as organizations, publishing houses, scenic media, and different scenic events. Looking at scenic infrastructure is important for several reasons. Without any type of infrastructure, a scene would be unable to function or exist. Events and meetings, magazines, and websites create spaces where people involved and interested in the scene may come together, share ideas and develop new ones, and recruit new members. As scenic institutions are necessary for a scene to exist, the discontinuation of magazines or termination of events may lead to a scene dying out. In the following, I account for the infrastructure of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, detailing its most central associations and organizations, media channels, and events.

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<sup>12</sup> Finnish original: ns. yliaistisia ilmiöitä koskevia tutkimusaloja ja maailmankatsomuksia.

## Scenic associations and organizations

Fringe-Knowledge scenic associations and organizations have been created for the purpose of upholding and supporting various forms of Fringe-Knowledge activities. Different scenic associations are crucial for the reproduction of the scene, as they are responsible for organizing different events, publishing magazines or other types of Fringe-Knowledge literature. Beyond organizing and creating various physical and digital spaces (e.g. a fair or an online discussion forum), scenic organizations can be crucial in deciding which types of ideas are considered as Fringe-Knowledge and which are not.

*Rajatiedon yhteistyö r.y.* (The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association) is an umbrella association for people and groups interested in various forms of Fringe-Knowledge. The goal of the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association is in, its own words, to “Map the spaces outside the boundaries of human knowledge and to map national and foreign associations and researchers who work in these fields”<sup>13</sup> (Ollila 2012: 3). The association has done this by organizing the largest alternative annual spiritual fair in Finland, *Hengen ja Tiedon messut* (The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge) since 1983, by handing out grants for research in the field of Fringe-Knowledge, and by providing a free telephone service, *Rajatiedon auttava puhelin* (The Fringe-Knowledge help line). The group started out in 1977 under the name *Rajatiedon yhteistyöryhmä* (Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Group). In connection with becoming an officially registered association in 1990, the group changed its name to *Rajatiedon yhteistyö r.y.* (Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association). By registering an association at the Patent and Registration Office an association becomes a legal entity under Finnish law and may, for example, own property and sign legal contracts. In 2017, there were 104 478 registered associations in Finland the majority of which were various cultural and sports and hobby associations. Registered associations have to work according to democratic principles and members have the right to vote who sits on the board (Patentti ja rekisterihallitus 2017; *Demokraatti*: 2017). The board of the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association consists of a president, vice president, secretary, and ten other board members ([rajatieto.fi](http://rajatieto.fi)). The association as a whole has around 50 members ([uskonnot.fi](http://uskonnot.fi)).

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<sup>13</sup> Finnish original: Kartoittaa inhimillisen tiedon raja-alueita ja niiden piirissä toimivia tutkijoita.

Since 1993, the association has handed out annual grants of a sum of approximately 1700 euros. Individuals or groups who conduct research in some area of Fringe-Knowledge can apply for the stipends. There is considerable diversity in the themes of the projects that have received grants: ufological research, Kirlian photography, and the production of an esoteric dictionary. Worth noting is also the large number of academic works that have received grants from the association. Several M.A. theses in religious studies dealing with supernatural experiences have been granted the annual grant (rajatieto.fi a).

*Rajatiedon auttava puhelin* (The Fringe-Knowledge Help Line) began its activity in the 1990s. The help line is a free telephone service for people who feel either frightened or confused by paranormal phenomena, or who have trouble finding information about some areas of Fringe-Knowledge. Volunteers who have compiled a manual called *Näkökulmia rajatiedon asioihin* (Perspectives on Fringe-Knowledge issues) maintain the help line. The ethical guidelines of the help-line state that the volunteers will treat callers in a respectful manner and take eventual paranormal experiences seriously (rajatieto.fi b).

*Kustannus Oy Rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge Publishing Ltd.) is a publishing house whose main activity is to publish *Ultra* magazine. Except for the publishing of *Ultra*, the publishing house also publishes some books in the field of Fringe-Knowledge. *Kustannus Oy Rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge Publishing Ltd.) was founded in 1975 as a joint-stock company with the shareholders being readers of the magazine. The staff of *Ultra* also organizes *Ultrapäivät* (Ultra Days), which is the largest summer event in the field of Fringe-Knowledge (Kananen 2016: 4).

While *Rajatiedon yhteistyö r.y.* (The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association) is the most well-known association, there are several smaller Fringe-Knowledge associations that usually center on a more limited or specific set of ideas. With regard to smaller associations, their activities are generally more locally focused. Events organized by smaller associations are usually visited by people who live in the near locality of where the event is organized. In contrast, events such as *Ultrapäivät* (Ultra Days) attract people from various parts of the country. In the following, I briefly account for a few of the smaller associations.

*Turun Henkinen Keskus* (Turku Spiritual Center) is a local association that organizes lectures and other events in the city of Turku. Founded in 1982, the center's purpose is to bring together people interested in spiritual development. The association organizes gatherings at *Konsan Kartano* (Konsa Manor) once a month. Konsa Manor is a large house built in the 1880s in the wooden house area of Turku called Raunistula. These monthly meetings involve various workshops, meditation, or lectures held by spiritual authors ([konsankartano.fi](http://konsankartano.fi)). The program organized by *Turun Henkinen Keskus* is quite broad in scope and includes, among other things, shamanic practices, mindfulness, mediumistic healing, and workshops on spiritual art.

*Tähtitieto r.y.* (Star Wisdom) is a small association that centers on the teachings of UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen. The majority of the events organized by *Tähtitieto r.y.* are best understood in relation to Riikonen's worldview that includes the belief that some humans are, in fact, aliens or other supranormal entities incarnated in human bodies. These people are believed to have a central role in healing or saving the planet. Many of the events organized by *Tähtitieto r.y.* are held at the home of Kalevi and Eija Riikonen in the municipality of Mäntsälä in southern Finland ([tahtitieto.fi](http://tahtitieto.fi)).

*The Finnish Urantia Association* (Suomen Urantia-seura ry) was founded in 1989, and became a registered association in 1990. The association centers on the study of *The Urantia Book*. The text was channeled in the United States during the first part of the 20th century and is ascribed extraterrestrial origin. *The Urantia Book* is a dense volume that deals with, among other things, cosmology and the history of the universe, spiritual evolution, the esoteric side of Christianity, alien and celestial beings, and humanity's place in the cosmos. The Finnish association had 84 members in 2011 ([uskonnot.fi](http://uskonnot.fi)). The association organizes study groups in several locations throughout the country and publishes the Finnish journal *Heijaste* (Reflection) four times a year. It also used to publish a Finnish translation of the journal *Urantia Association International*. This, however, was discontinued in 2014 due to lack of resources ([urantia.fi](http://urantia.fi)).

*Esko Jalkanen – Luonnonvoimat Yhdistys ry* (Esko Jalkanen – Nature's Powers Trust) is an association dedicated to spreading the life work and ideas of Finnish mystical author, forester, and gardener Esko Jalkanen (1921–2007). The association was founded in 1996 and became a registered association

in 1997 (uskonnot.fi g). After a mystical experience during the Second World War, Jalkanen became assured of the existence of God and started seeing nature spirits in plants and trees. In his books, Jalkanen covers topics such as elves, trolls, bio-energy, dowsing, aliens, curses, healing, and ancient Atlantis (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015: 176–179). The association organizes courses, lectures, and discussion groups based on Jalkanen’s teachings (eskojalkanen.net).

Finland has two UFO associations: *Suomen ufotutkijat ry* (Finnish UFO Researchers Association) and *UFO-Finland ry*. The first association was born out of the massive interest in UFOs during the latter part of the 1960s. Tapani Kuningas, former editor in chief of *Ultra*, was one of the founding members and the first president of the association when it became a registered association in 1973 (uskonnot.fi h). The goal of the association is to collect and spread information about UFO phenomena, and to educate UFO investigators. The association is active on a national level and maintains an archive in the city of Tampere. According to the association’s website, it has 250 members out of whom 59 are active UFO investigators. The Finnish UFO Research Association has no fixed opinion concerning UFO phenomena, but is open towards different explanations (suomenufotutkijat.fi).

UFO-Finland ry was founded in 1999. The goal of the association is to aid the scientific study UFO phenomena: “In all our activities UFO-Finland strives to conduct itself in a manner that would allow for the best possible cooperation between the scientific community and UFO researchers”<sup>14</sup> (ufofinland.org). When during my fieldwork at Uforock, the Winterly Star Days and at the Ultra Days I have talked to people interested in UFOs and aliens, I have experienced that people within UFO-Finland are highly skeptical, if not right out dismissive, towards more fringe concepts linked to the UFO phenomenon, such as flying saucers from the Hollow Earth, reptilians, and aliens incarnated upon earth. People who link various spiritual and paranormal aspects to UFOs have used the phrase *rauta-ufo ihmiset* (iron ufo people) in a derogatory way when referring to ufologists who are only interested the physical aspects of possible UFOs (landing sites, pieces from alien craft, radar observations).

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<sup>14</sup> Finnish original. Kaikessa toiminnassaan UFO-Finland ry pyrkii toimimaan siten, että tiedeyhteisön ja ufotutkijoiden yhteistyölle voisi syntyä parhaat mahdolliset edellytykset.



## Scenic media

Scenic media specializing in various forms of Fringe-Knowledge constitute a central part of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. Scenic media consist of magazines, websites, books, artwork, DVDs, and music recordings. In the following, I present the most important Fringe-Knowledge media.

*Ultra* is the oldest, still running Fringe-Knowledge magazine in Finland. It is advertised as being the most versatile publication dealing with Fringe-Knowledge. The magazine started in 1972 under the name *Ufoaika* (The UFO Age) and used to have a strong focus on UFOs and extraterrestrial contacts. In 1976, it broadened its scope to include a wider range of phenomena and changed its name to *Ultra*. According to Jussi Sohlberg the magazine had an edition of approximately 5 000 copies per issue in 2008 (Sohlberg 2008: 214). When I inquired about the print in an e-mail 2018, the editor answered that due to competitive reasons he did want to disclose the exact amount of copies. He wrote me that the majority of several thousands of magazines are disseminated to people who have ongoing subscriptions. As with most print media in general, I assume that print of *Ultra* has been in some decline for several years.

On its website, the magazine is described in the following way:

Ultra is a magazine that deals open-mindedly with Fringe-Knowledge matters and research. Twelve issues appear annually, out of which two are double issues. Ultra offers, impartially and without prejudice, fact and fiction in the field of so-called Fringe-Knowledge: the most central areas of interest and of life.<sup>15</sup> (ultra-lehti.com)

The magazine offers to provide the reader with deeply meaningful material. "...the most central interests and of life" indicates that the magazine will provide the reader with important insights into the human condition, viewpoints to the most basic and crucial questions of human life. Using the word "impartially" followed by the words "without prejudice" highlights that *Ultra* is a neutral magazine that includes all sorts of opinions and ideas. Interesting in this description are the words

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<sup>15</sup> Finnish original: Ultra on avoimesti rajatiedon kysymyksiä ja tutkimusta käsittelevä aikakauslehti. Vuodessa ilmestyy 12 numeroa, joista kaksi kaksoisnumeroa. Ultra tarjoaa puolueettomasti ja ennakkoluulottomasti faktaa ja fiktiota rajatiedoksi nimetyiltä, mitä keskeisimmiltä elämän ja mielenkiinnon alueilta.

“fact” and “fiction.” It implies that the magazine does not simply deliver facts, but that the reader may treat and interpret the content in whatever way he or she likes. *Ultra* has a permanent staff of three people who earn their living from the magazine. Their work consists of editing the magazine, practical issues such as taking care of subscriptions, editing books that are sold via magazines, and organizing the Ultra Days (IF mgt 2013/015).

*Tähteläiset* (Star People) is a small magazine founded at the end of 2012. It is published four times per year. *Star People* caters to people who consider themselves aliens reincarnated on earth in human form. It is a small magazine and has an edition of around 200 printed copies per issue. On its website, the magazine is described in the following way:

Star People is a magazine that among other things deals with the lives of star people on earth and the coming times of change that begin 21.12.2012. Have You had weird sensations, do You long to the stars, or would it be more normal for You to live in a different kind of world? Do you feel that life here is far from your ideals. Then you may be a Star Being and then this magazine is for You. In the first issue, we present the most common characteristics of Star People.<sup>16</sup> (tahtelaiset.com)

*Tähteläiset* is clearly first and foremost a magazine directed towards a more limited and exclusive part of the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The description emphasizes that Star People are humans who feel uncomfortable or not at home on this planet and in our current society.

*Hermeetikko* (The Hermetic) was founded in 2006 and suspended in 2011 due to low circulation. The editor in chief, Jukka Nieminen, then started publishing a short-lived magazine called *Sinikivi* (Bluestone). The first issue was published in December 2011, but the magazine was suspended in 2013 due to low circulation. Both *Hermeetikko* and *Sinikivi* shared the same focus on ancient mysteries, the occult, and conspiracy theories. In an

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<sup>16</sup> Finnish original: Tähteläiset on lehti, joka kertoo muun muassa tähteläisten elämästä maaplaneetalla sekä tulevasta 21.12.2012 alkavista muutoksen ajoista. Oletko tuntenut outoja tuntemuksia ja kaipaatko tähtiin vai olisiko Sinulle luonnollista ja normaalimpaa asua toisenlaisessa maailmassa? Tunnetko tämän elämän täällä olevan kaukana ihanteistasi. Silloin saatat olla Tähteläinen ja tämä lehti on juuri Sinulle. Ensimmäisessä lehdessä esittelemme Tähteläisten varhimmat tunnusmerkit.

interview with himself on the website for *Hermeetikko*, Jukka Nieminen describes the magazine in the following way:

Many seem to be irritated that the magazine can't be categorized in any way. It has been marketed loosely as a Fringe-Knowledge magazine, but now and then I get the response that in fact it is not a Fringe-Knowledge magazine...It offers alternative interpretations on history, science and almost whatever. Some may think that it is some kind of pseudo-historical publication, but the stories are real genuine stuff. They are usually quite extraordinary stories. I would dare to compare it with a magazine like "Science" [Finnish magazine] and see which one is really up to the task. Some Bonnier Publications [Nordic publishing house] it beats in quality in a heartbeat. *The Hermetic* runs stories that mainstream commercial magazines could not publish because of their own made-up criteria or standpoint.<sup>17</sup> (Nieminen b)

I would assume that the confusion some people might have had about *Hermeetikko* being a Fringe-Knowledge magazine or not mostly had to do with the fact that the magazine did not cover phenomena such as alien abduction or channeling, issues that are frequently covered in for example *Ultra*. Neither were meditation or alternative diets covered. In the description quoted above, there is an emphasis on *Hermeetikko* offering scientific content, "...real genuine stuff." It is stressed that the magazine provides an alternative to larger commercial magazines, which are made out to be publications that cannot really offer any new discoveries.

At the end of 2014, *Rajatiedon yhteistyö ry* (Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association) started publishing a new Fringe-Knowledge magazine called *Ääretön* (Limitless). The magazine, which comes out four times a year, is available both as an online publication and in printed form. The online publication works with an open access principle and is free to download or read online. The printed magazine can be ordered for a subscription fee.

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<sup>17</sup> Finnish original: Monia tuntuu jopa kiusaavan ettei sitä voi kategorisoida mitenkään. Sitä on markkinoitu väljästi rajatiedon lehtenä mutta aina väliin saa palautetta että eihän tämä mikään rajatiedonlehti olekaan...Se tarjoaa vaihtoehtoisia tulkintoja historialle, tieteelle ja lähes kaikelle. Joku ehkä ajattelee nyt että se on joku pseudo-tieteellinen julkaisu, mutta kyllä ne jutut ihan oikeaa tavaraa on. Ne on yleensä vaan varsin erikoisia juttuja. Kyllä minä uskallan sen lyödä samaan tiskiinkin jonkun Tiede-lehden rinnalle ja katsoa kummalla rahkeet riittää. Jonkun Bonniers-julkaisut se hakkaa laadussa mennän tullen. Hermeetikko vaan pyörittää juttuja joita tavalliset kaupalliset lehdet ei voisi julkaista niiden omintakeisen juttulaadun kuin näkökulmansa takia.

The issues have diverse content, such as ancient mysteries, spirituality, wellbeing, and alternative diets (rajatieto.fi c).

A few other alternative spiritual magazines also, at times, deal with Fringe-Knowledge-related content, but do not specialize in it. Although sometimes covering issues such as alien abduction or ancient mysteries, the magazines *Minä Olen* (I Am) and *Voi Hyvin* (Be Well) mainly focus on various wellbeing practices. For example, the January issue of *Minä Olen* (I Am) 2016 has articles about how to dye your hair with plants. The beauty column, in turn, focuses on how cleanliness is a major part of any beauty treatment. In the 2015 April issue of *Minä Olen* (I Am), the magazine offers articles about how to make herbal tea for soothing the stomach and how women who have problems controlling their bladder can train their lower body muscles. *Voi Hyvin* (Be Well) almost exclusively focuses on wellbeing practices, relationships and ecological living.

### **Websites and the impact of the Internet**

The internet brought new opportunities for small and marginal groups to spread their messages and to recruit members. Utilizing the internet for communicating, marketing, or broadcasting information is a rather cost-effective way compared to traditional print-based media. Concerning grassroots environmental groups, Laurie A. Kutner noted over fifteen years ago that “For activist organizations with limited resources, Internet-based technologies are providing fast, easy, and cost-effective means through which to access, use, create, and disseminate information.” (Kutner 2000: 3). When it comes to small religious and spiritual movements, Lorne L. Dawson and Jenna Hennebry highlight that utilizing the internet as a medium for distributing religious ideas is much more economical than traditional forms of media such as books, videotapes, radio and television (Dawson & Hennebry 2004: 152). However, concerning the internet and new religious movements, there is little evidence to suggest that having an online presence is an effective form of recruitment (Dawson & Hennebry 2004: 161).

According to a report made by Statistics Finland, the organization that produces the majority of Finland’s official statistics, internet use is extensive in the country (Tilastokeskus: 2014). The report made in 2014 states that nine out of ten people between the ages 16 and 34 are online several times a day. Up to 92 percent of people between ages 16 and 74 had been online during the past three months. Computers and fast and

cheap internet connections are widespread and essentially part of every Finnish household, so at least there should be no problem in accessing information about marginal groups and ideas. However, the mere access to websites and forums with Fringe-Knowledge content does not mean that people in general would become interested in these matters. In the following, I account for how people and institutions within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene present themselves online.

Each of the three Fringe-Knowledge magazines that I focus on in this study, *Ultra*, *Tähteläiset* (Star People), and *Sinikivi* (Bluestone) have their own websites. The websites of *Ultra* and *Tähteläiset* complement the printed magazines in that they offer the visitor additional information about subjects discussed in the printed magazine. For example, the homepage of *Ultra* offers several extensive databases for the Fringe-Knowledge aficionado ([ultra-lehti.com](http://ultra-lehti.com)). A database on the homepage allows visitors to search for famous people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene (e.g. Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde, Veli-Martin Keitel, Pekka Ervast, Erich von Däniken). The database shows in which issues of *Ultra* these persons have either written articles themselves, or where their ideas or work have been discussed by other authors. Another database offers information on obituaries in *Ultra*, and a third database offers information on which issues of *Ultra* that contain articles covering certain Fringe-Knowledge themes or topics (e.g. alien abduction, The Kalevala, Atlantis). The homepage also offers a complete index list of the contents of all issues of the magazine all the way back to 1972 when it was still called *UFO-aika* (The UFO Age). The *Ultra* website offers the visitor the opportunity to make a new subscription, buy old issues of *Ultra*, as well as numerous books in the area of Fringe-Knowledge. Fringe-Knowledge practitioners and entrepreneurs may also advertise on the website for a fee. One can also buy tickets to the Ultra Days and book accommodation at the site.

When writing about online communities, Heidi A. Campbell cites Howard Rheingold (1993) who states that virtual communities emerge "...when enough people carry on public discussions long enough to, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Campbell 2013: 59). Campbell also discusses Allucquere Rosanne Stone's (1991) definition that emphasizes how virtual communities constitute environments where physically separated people interact (Campbell 2013: 59). As the *Ultra* website does not offer possibilities for interaction, for example via chat-forums, discussion boards, or personal blogs, it cannot

according to these definitions be considered an online community. The websites for *Tähteläiset* (Star People) and *Sinikivi* (Bluestone) can, however, be considered as online communities as they offer possibilities for social interaction.

The homepage of the magazine *Tähteläiset* (Star People) offers a number of services and resources for people who identify themselves as being of alien origin. ([www.lehti.tahtelauset.com](http://www.lehti.tahtelauset.com): a). On the website one can make a subscription for the magazine or advertise in it. The magazine website also links to *Tähteläiset yhteisö* (Star People Community), which is a free social networking platform ([yhteiso.tahtelauset.com](http://yhteiso.tahtelauset.com): a). In order to join the community one has to register a profile and answer a number of questions concerning personal interests and tastes. For this study, I myself registered a username in 2013 in order to be able to gain access to the online community.

Overall, the Star People online community resembles a dating website. The introduction page displays a picture of a blond woman in a pink blazer and a man with a short haircut. Both are Caucasian, young looking, and are kissing each other under a street light. In this respect, the page does not differ much from many popular dating websites. There is nothing in the imagery that suggests that this is a place to meet people who consider themselves aliens. In order to register a profile one answers a number of questions concerning gender and personal interests. Some of the questions are compulsory while others are optional. The compulsory questions include what sort of contacts one is interested in making. The options are "Woman," "Man," "Couple," "Group," or one can tick a box to choose all options. One other compulsory question is about what kind of relationship one is looking for. The alternatives consists of "Ystävyys" (Friendship), "Kirjeystävä" (Pen-pal), "Avoliito" (Marriage), "Harrastusten jako" (Sharing hobbies), Yhden yön suhde (One night stand), "Ajan vietto" (Spending time), and "Rakkaus" (Love). One can also tick a box that selects all options.

Some of the optional questions include questions about one's physical appearance, such as height, body type, and hair color. One can answer questions about one's level of income, smoking and drinking habits. The members of *Tähteläiset yhteisö* (Star People Community) do not, however, seem to be very active in the community. According to the website on 6 May 2016, most of the slightly under one hundred registered profiles had

not been active in over a year. There were also rather few posts in the different groups. There are thematic groups for people interested in meditation, tantra, and angels. If one feels that one is an alien, but unsure of one's exact origin, one can become a member of the group called "Tähteläiset" (Star People). There are also groups for people whose home planet is Sirius, and groups for those who identify with being from the star systems Pleiades and Arcturus.

In the case of *Sinikivi*, its website provides a vibrant environment for the communication and discussion of Fringe-Knowledge related matters. Although the printed magazine *Sinikivi* no longer exists, the website [sinikivi.com](http://sinikivi.com), created in 2007, and maintained by Jukka Nieminen, offers visitors an environment where they can interact with other people on an online discussions forum, read about Fringe-Knowledge related issues, or buy Nieminen's books. Under the section "Editorials," one can find Nieminen's regularly updated editorials, as well as both shorter and longer articles about various Fringe-Knowledge subjects. The themes include, among other things, alternative theories on archaeology, ghosts and ghost hunting, the mystery of Jack the Ripper, and speculations on the link between psychiatric drugs and school shootings. Some of these editorials advertise Nieminen's new books, or events that he is involved in organizing.

The discussion forum found on the website includes nine different thematic categories: "Hermeetti" (Hermeticism), "Päivänkohtaiset" (Current Affairs), "Pseudoilu" (Pseudo-stuff), "Historia" (History), "Arkeologit" (Archeologists), "Konspiraatio" (Conspiracy), "Populaari" (Popular [culture]), "Sekalaista" (Miscellaneous), and a category called "Testirata" (Test Track). The last one is mainly used for questions and answers regarding practical matters about the website. It is possible to register a username on the forum, but this is not required in order to be able to read the various posts or comment on them anonymously ([www.sinikivi.com](http://www.sinikivi.com): a). According to statistics found on the website on 29 June 2016, the forum had 476 registered users. All in all these users have made 31 326 entries on the discussion forum. Out of these entries slightly over a fifth (7 292 entries) were written by Jukka Nieminen himself.

People and associations in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene tend to have a presence on the web, either with their own websites or through profiles on mainstream social networking platforms such as Facebook.

Both Veli-Martin Keitel and Timo Teide have their own websites (martinkeitel.net, teidegalleria.com) through which they present and promote themselves. Martin Keitel offers lectures in spiritual growth for associations, companies, and groups. Timo Teide presents his artwork and publishes texts and essays on the spiritual meaning of art. The association *Tähtitieto* (Star Wisdom) has its own website as well as the music festival *Uforock*. At the website for Star Wisdom one can become a member of the association, read about upcoming events, and buy books by Kalevi Riikonen. Membership of *Tähtitieto*, which costs 30 euros a year, entitles the person to discounts on courses and products. Every member also gets a numbered membership card (tahtitieto.fi). The website for *Uforock* advertises the music festival. On the site, one can read about the history of the festivals, view images of artists and previous posters for the event. One can also pre-order tickets for the upcoming festivals (arzrecords.com).

Facebook seems to be quite popular among Fringe-Knowledge personas and different Fringe-Knowledge associations. The obvious reason for this is that Facebook is easy and free to use. According to Statistics Finland, Facebook was the most popular social media service among Finns in general in 2014 (Tilastokeskus 2014).

Many of the people in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene that I have interviewed (e.g. Jukka Nieminen, Veli-Martin Keitel, Timo Teide, and Asko Nummela) have their own Facebook-pages. On their personal Facebook-pages, these people share pictures from Fringe-Knowledge events and advertise their books and artwork. Although not having a personal Facebook-page, Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde has a presence on Facebook. According to Facebook, the page of Luukanen-Kilde is “automatically generated based on what Facebook users are interested in, and not affiliated with or endorsed by anyone associated with the topic” (facebook.com a). The presentation of Luukanen-Kilde on the Facebook page is taken from the English version of *Wikipedia*, where there are articles about her in seven different languages. The case of Luukanen-Kilde shows how a person with considerable scenic capital, and who is also known beyond the scene, can have an online presence without necessarily being able to control the content herself. Other online Finnish Fringe-Knowledge content can be found on the video sharing website *YouTube* where interviews with Luukanen-Kilde and Kalevi Riikonen are uploaded.



The magazines *Ultra* and *Tähteläiset* (Star People) have their own profile pages on Facebook (facebook.com b; c). These pages are in general updated a few times per month, the main updates being pictures of the cover page of the newest magazine. The Facebook page of *Ultra* also has updates that link to articles in mainstream newspapers. Examples of these include an article from *Ilta-Sanomat* about “Finland’s Loch Ness Monster,” that lives in the lake of Loukusanjärvi, and an article from *The Guardian* on the newest discoveries made with the Hubble space telescope.

People and scenic institutions in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene utilize the internet to express and market themselves and to communicate with each other. People and institutions within the scene have their own webpages and are present on social media such as Facebook. Overall, this comes as no surprise considering the context of Finland where internet use is widespread. The webpage for *Ultra* magazine functions mainly as a means to market the magazine and sell products, primarily books. The *Tähteläiset* website offers visitors an online community where one can interact with likeminded people. Regarding the inactivity of members on the social media platform, the *Tähteläiset* community has not evolved into any significant meeting place for people interested in extraterrestrials and paranormal phenomena. Concerning *Sinikivi*, the internet website enabled Jukka Nieminen to continue reaching out to people although the printed magazine was discontinued.

### **Scenic events**

*Ultrapäivät* (The Ultra Days) is a Fringe-Knowledge focused event surrounding the *Ultra*-magazine. The event was established in 1976 under the name *Rajatiedon seminaari* (Fringe-Knowledge Seminar) and later evolved into an annual four-day event. Tapani Kuningas functioned as the host for the event. The Ultra Days were organized at different locations in southern Finland until 1985, after which it has been organized at a sports resort near the city of Seinäjoki located in the Western part of middle Finland. One main reason for the choice of this location was that it was located in the “middle of Finland,” thus making it more accessible for people living in different parts of the country. The Ultra Days consists of lectures, workshops, and discussion groups and provides an opportunity for likeminded people to meet each other. Approximately a thousand people visit the event during its four days (Kuningas & Nikula 2010: II–IV).

*Hengen ja Tiedon Messut* (The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge) is the largest spiritual fair in Finland. It is organized by *Rajatiedon yhteistyö r.y.* (The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association). The annual fair is held at the school *Helsingin Suomalainen Yhteiskoulu* in Haaga in Helsinki and has around 3000-5000 visitors. The atmosphere at the event is rather hectic. The corridors of the school where it is held are filled with the buzz of voices, the clicking of heels, and other noises that arise when people explore the different stands and engage in consumerism. People browse through books they consider buying, try on clothes or jewelry, take selfies, and chat with friends, and vendors who sell various products or services. In comparison to smaller events, where the program and the amount of products and services that can be purchased is much more limited, The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge lacks the intimate feeling that usually characterizes smaller events.

Jukka Nieminen is the main organizer of the so called *Sinikiopäivät* (Blue Stone days). These one-day lecture-events have been held at the old library in Tampere and at the *Haihara*-mansion outside the city center. The events have been organized in cooperation with the association Tampere UFO association (Tampereen UFO r.y.). The events have had different themes, for example ghosts and ghost hunting, ley lines, the theories and inventions of Nikola Tesla, and Nazi mysticism. The events are not held regularly, but one or several events are usually held in the early spring or in the fall. The first event of this type was held in 2011 and was called *Hermeetikko-tapahtuma* (Hermetic-event).

The event *Uforock* is held annually in Tampere, usually in the month of April. Held at the restaurant and cultural center *Telakka* the event consists of lectures on ufological and esoteric topics and rock bands playing in the evening. The actor and musician Markku Peltola (1956–2007) was in charge of creating and organizing events at *Telakka* and was active in the foundation of *Uforock*. ([www.arzrecords.com](http://www.arzrecords.com) a).

*Talviset Tähtipäivät/Kesäpäivät* (Winterly Star Days /Summerly Star Days) are organized by the UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen and his wife Eija Riikonen. The weekend-long event is held at *Päivölän Kansanopisto*, a folk high school outside the city of Toijala. The event has been organized since the 1990s.

The events mentioned have become institutionalized. They have become parts of an important tradition within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. There are several other events that are organized throughout the country but which have not become institutionalized in the same way, either due to lack of participants or active organizers. For example *Rajatiedon yhteistyö r.y.* (The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association) organized a smaller *Hengen ja Tiedon Messut* (The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge) in the city of Imatra in eastern Finland between the years 2002–2011. *Äitimaamessut* (The Mother Earth Fair) was an annual fair organized in Tampere by the association *Äitimaakeskus* (Mother Earth Center). The fairs were organized between 2011 and 2015. Neither the fair nor organization no longer exist. The event had around 300–400 participants. *Kosmiset Parapäivät* (The Cosmic Para Days) were a series of lectures held in different Finnish cities in 2012 and 2013. The event was held in seven cities, including Turku, Kuopio, Oulu, Tampere, Helsinki, Jyväskylä, and Lahti.

Other fairs that to a certain extent cover Fringe-Knowledge include the *Minä Olen Messut* (I Am fair) in the Helsinki region organized by *Minä Olen yhdistys* (I Am organization). The association was founded in 1996 and has since then organized the annual fair that has around 3000 participants. Although this fair focuses on wellbeing and spiritual growth, it is also common for groups that represent more fringe and marginal ideas and practices to rent exhibition booths where they can display themselves. For example, the *Ultra* magazine has annually an exhibition booth where one can buy both new and old issues of the magazines, participate in a lottery, buy books and tarot cards.

## 4.2 Scenic capital

Scenic capital refers to the merit and importance attributed to certain people within a scene. As discussed in chapter 2.3, one can make a general distinction between mundane and ideological scenic capital. Mundane capital refers to the merit which is credited to people who are in charge of the everyday maintenance of the scene, e.g. organizers of fairs or others scenic events. Ideological capital is primarily gained by people who are actively involved in the internal discursive construction of the scene. These are people who discursively construct what the scene is about and who can be said to embody it. People who possess ideological capital include, for example, authors and lecturers. Especially within smaller

scenes, it is not unusual that people possess both mundane and ideological capital. A person who is a popular lecturer might also be heavily involved with the practical arrangements of scenic events.

All of the persons interviewed for this study are individuals who possess considerable capital within the scene. As mentioned in the description of them in section 1.2.1, many of them received stipends from the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association. These people are regular faces at various Fringe-Knowledge events, have regularly published articles in scenic magazines, and books on Fringe-Knowledge topics. Members in the scene invest time and money in order to take part of what these people have to say. The interview material will be analyzed in chapter 5.

Becoming a person with mundane or ideological capital within the scene demands that the person is willing to invest a considerable amount of their own time in building up their scenic persona. The breakthrough for Rauni Luukanen-Kilde and the brothers Virolainen was the publication of books on mainstream publishing houses. After this, they started lecturing on Fringe-Knowledge events. Writing a book that becomes widely known is one way of gaining ideological capital within the scene. This is also a way to start lecturing at different events. The path to becoming a scenic persona is usually, however, a process that takes several years. Veli Martin Keitel's career as a Fringe-Knowledge persona began in the latter part of the 1990s: "Well, this kind of public persona that I have there on the alternative side, that is based on my lecturing, so in 1997 when my interest in this field began with crop circles..."<sup>18</sup> (IF mgt 2014/015). Keitel's has built his career by lecturing and writing extensively to *Ultra* over a period of twenty years. Tuula Pelttari has become well-known person in the scene through her vast amount of book reviews. The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association rewarded her for this by giving her a stipend in 2016 ([www.rajatieto.fi](http://www.rajatieto.fi) a). Jukka Nieminen's career as Fringe-Knowledge persona is also long and includes editing a magazine, writing books, lecturing, maintaining an internet-forum, and starting a collaboration with *Ultra*.

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<sup>18</sup> Finnish Original Joo, no siis mun tää tämmöinen tietynlainen julkisuushahmo mikä mulla on tuolla vaihtoehtopuolella, niin sehän perustuu pitkälti justin tähän mun luennointiin, eli mähän -97 kun mulla alkoi tän alueen harrastus justin näist peltokuvioista.

People who choose to become scenic personas do so because they feel that it is a rewarding activity, but not in financial terms. Making a living of Fringe-Knowledge is extremely hard, and almost all people have regular jobs, which form the basis for their income. My anonymous female interviewee describes it in the following way:

Anonymous 1: ...For ten years there has been trouble with money...All the time I have had to be like very strict...And there has been tight, very tight times.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Anonymous 1: One could perhaps say it that way, that for people who are active in this field it is more of a lifestyle...

Ramstedt: Yeah, yeah.

Anonymous 1: ...than a job, if one thinks about it in that sense. But, it, well, it still has to give an income. And, and, I have also sold my apartment and all sorts of stuff...so, so, indeed to operate in this field...One has to be a bit crazy (laughter). Or, well, let's say positively brave.<sup>19</sup>(IF mgt 2012/024)

The woman had a business that focused on self-development. Regarding the income from her lectures on ufology, the Mayan calendar and so on, her earnings were minimal. As the excerpt from the interview shows, trying to support herself with some type of Fringe-Knowledge is extremely difficult in a country like Finland. Editor Kananen, who practically knows every major persona within the scene, also elaborated on the economic dimensions of the scene:

Kananen: So in a way, in a way the choice you make, that when you go earning your living from these things, at the same time you make the choice that you at the same time leave the pursuit of like physical,

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<sup>19</sup> Finnish original: Anonymous 1: Ei missään tapauksessa, voin itse sanoa. Et kymmenen vuotta ollu niin kyllä se rahan kanssa pula.. Et koko ajan on joutunu niinku tosi tarkkaan.. Ja on ollu tiukkoja, tosi tiukkoja aikoja.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Anonymous 1: Et ehkä sitä voi enemmän sanoo sillai et et, tällä alueella toimiville ihmisille se on enemmän ollu niinku elämäntapa...

Ramstedt: Joo, joo.

Anonymous 1: ...kuin työ, siinä mielessä että jos aattelee. Mut se että tota noin, siitä täytyy kuitenkin tulla toimeentulo. Et et, kyllähän mullakin on niinku se että mä oon myyny oman asuntoni ja kaikkee muuta tämmöstä...Et et, kyllähän tällä alueella toimiminen.. Kyllä tässä vähän hullu täytyy olla. (nauraa) Tai no sanotaan positiivisesti rohkea.

material, like abundance, behind. So, yes, it is like...this is such small scale activity

Ramstedt: Mm.Mm

Kananen: So, well, it is really difficult to become, so to say, rich. I cannot at least immediately think of any person who could become rich on Fringe-Knowledge.<sup>20</sup> (IF mgt 2013/15)

Becoming famous in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is something that mainly has intrinsic value for the people involved. Keitel told me that sometimes he receives some compensation for his lectures, other times he has lectured pro bono. His basic principle is that he does not have to pay himself for travel costs or accommodation (IF mgt 2014/015).

There are, however, some people within the scene who would like to become celebrated scenic personas, but who fail to do so. As my focus is on people who have gained capital within the scene, rather than people who lack it, this shall only be a very brief note and I shall treat them anonymously. During my visits to some events, I have encountered people who may hand out their own publications. Usually these consist of small pamphlets that have been duplicated by Xerox-machine. One pamphlet I received was a collection of articles and diary entries that the person had been unsuccessful publishing in other forums. I have also been present at an event where a person was very eager to hold a presentation or lecture at an upcoming event. As this individual talked to a man who was in charge of practical arrangements, they were politely, but strictly, denied the opportunity. Instead, the organizer said that this individual could perhaps present their ideas in a smaller discussion group. At another event, a person constantly interrupted a lecturer. The organizers finally asked this person to shut up. I later heard that this individual apparently was infamous for interrupting people, and talking about their own paranormal experiences. I was told that this person had a strong wish to themselves become a famous Fringe-Knowledge author and persona.

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<sup>20</sup> Finnish original: Kananen: Siis tavallaan, tavallaan niinkun se valinta että, että lähtee niinkun sitä elantoa näistä asioista hakemaan niin samalla tekee sen valinnan että jättää sitten semmosen niinkun fyysisen, materiaallisen niinkun yltäkylläisyyden tavoittelun samalla taakseen. Eli kyllä se niinkun.. Tää on niin pienimuotosta toimintaa..

Ramstedt: Mm. Mm.

Kananen: Että että tuota tällä on todella vaikee niin sanotusti rikastua. Ei mulla tuu ainakaan yhtään ihmistä äkkiseltään mieleen joka rajatiedolla Suomessa pystys rikastumaan.

These examples show how the will to become a scenic persona is not enough within the scene. In order to gain ideological capital a person has to be an interesting author or lecturer. Some people, unfortunately, lack these abilities. Becoming a popular lecturer requires that a person focuses on interesting ideas and has an entrancing stage presence.

### **Obituaries in *Ultra***

The Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is quite small and intimate. People who are a part of a certain community or scene tend to leave an empty space after they pass away. Not all deaths are of course equal. Especially people who have been very prominent and active and have possessed some form of scenic capital are likely to be remembered and celebrated within the scene.

Obituaries in *Ultra* are dedicated to national as well as international authors, lecturers and other prominent personalities in the field of Fringe-Knowledge. The international personas who are remembered in *Ultra* tend to be people who are widely known within alternative spirituality throughout the Western world. These include, for example, British journalist Paul Brunton (1898–1980) who travelled extensively and wrote about mystics and yogis of the east, and Jiddu Khrisnamurti (1895–1986) who became a spiritual teacher in California, after he had resigned from the position of World Teacher in the Theosophical Society (*Ultra* 10/1981; 4/1986).

When it comes to obituaries dedicated to Finnish people within the Fringe-Knowledge scene it is not always necessary for them to be extremely active or prominent to get an obituary devoted to them. The Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is rather small and intimate. In order to receive an obituary it may be enough that you over the years have been a frequent visitor at different Fringe-Knowledge events. According to the database on the webpage of *Ultra* there were 147 obituaries published in the magazine between the years 1973 and 2013 ([ultra-lehti.com](http://ultra-lehti.com) b).

The most elaborate obituaries in *Ultra* are, however, dedicated to people who have been active in shaping the scene for a longer time. People who have been remembered in the pages of *Ultra* include, for example, Aino Ivanoff (1927–2006) who was one of Finland's most famous UFO

contactees, and Finnish artist, gardener, and Fringe-Knowledge author Esko Jalkanen (1921–2007) (*Ultra* 5-6/06; *Ultra* 10/97).

Especially the deaths of two people within the Fringe-Knowledge scene received much coverage in *Ultra*. They have also been remembered in speeches at various Fringe-Knowledge events. Both of these personas had a large amount of ideological and/or mundane capital within the scene. These are the former editor in chief of the magazine, Tapani Kuningas, and the late author on ufology and the paranormal, Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde.

As Tapani Kuningas, died in December of 2009, the 2010 March issue of *Ultra* is quite different from other issues. The cover page itself lets the reader know that something special has happened in the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The cover pages of *Ultra* may differ quite much. They may include images of aliens, images of nature such as forests or waterfalls, pictures of people who are interviewed in the issue, images from exotic locations such as Egypt or Tibet, or unearthly and supernatural imagery such as orbs, people who send out “vibrations,” or ghostly apparitions. Most usually, however, there are headlines advertising the content of the magazine. For example, a quite regular cover page can have the following headlines:

What was found in the Baltic Sea? Hurtak: 2012 and the future of humanity. The Curse of Kytäjä. Cosmic Mythologist Laura Eisenhower. Hope from the Angels. *Ultra* met with Steven Halper! Saturn in Astrology. The Ashram of Hearts at the *Ultra* Days.<sup>21</sup> (*Ultra* 9/2012)

The cover of *Ultra* 2/2010 simply carries the name of the magazine, a small text which says “AN ALTERNATIVE FOR THE SEEKER” (VAIHTOEHTO ETSIJÄLLE), and “TAPANI KUNINGAS 1945–2009.” The rest of the cover is taken up by an image of the former editor sitting thoughtfully at a typewriter (See figures X and X). This is very unusual as the cover is commonly used to promote and advertise the content of the magazine. One can say that the ‘regular’ cover of *Ultra* has quite similar stylistic characteristics as the front pages of lifestyle magazines in general. Magazines like *Elle*, *Mens Health*, *PC Gamer* or *Survivalist Magazine*

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<sup>21</sup> Finnish original: Mitä Itämerestä löytyy? Hurtak: 2012 ja ihmiskunnan tulevaisuus. Kytäjän kirus. Kosminen mytologi Laura Eisenhower. Toivoa enkeleiltä. *Ultra* tapasi Steven Halpernin! Astrologian Saturnus. Sydänten Ashram Ultrapäivillä.



predominantly advertise and promote various articles of the magazine. The lack of advertisements for articles on the cover of the March issue of *Ultra* 2010 can be seen as a statement regarding the importance of the late editor. The back cover of the magazine is also unusual. It is normally used for advertisements for events, books, or courses. The back cover is also the most expensive page for advertisements. The cost of a whole page advert amounts to 800 euros. The back cover of *Ultra* 2/2010 is entirely dedicated to a picture of Kuningas standing by some statue at the waterfront in what looks like a rather cold climate. A caption lets the reader understand that the location is Iceland where Kuningas went on his last vacation.

The issue of the magazine, spanning 48 pages, has 15 pages devoted to the memory of the late editor. Excluding the eleven pages of the magazine that consists of advertisements for various events, books, products, and therapies, approximately one third of the magazine is dedicated to remembering the legacy of Kuningas. While conducting my fieldwork, I participated in two events where the organizers held speeches and moments of silence in honor of the former editor. At the *UFO conference. Cosmic Consciousness and the changes of 2012* and at the Ultra Days in 2011 the organizers lit candles and asked the audience for some minutes of silence during which we were asked to “send light” to Tapani Kuningas, wherever he might be.

It is clear that Kuningas possessed an enormous amount of scenic capital. That a third of the magazine dedicated to his memory also tells us something about the magazine and its readership (or at least how the editorial board views it). It is an indication that the Fringe-Knowledge environment can be considered as a *scene*. As Kahn-Harris points out, the concept of scene usually used to describe environments that have some degree of self-consciousness (Kahn-Harris 2007: 101). Editor Kuningas was not just an editor of the magazine. Kuningas is presented as a pioneer who was essential in the creation and development of the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The editorial choices behind the content of *Ultra* 2/2010 are clearly based on the assumption that readers want to read about how Kuningas played an important role in creating the term *rajatieto*, how *Kustannus Oy Rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge Publishing Ltd.) was founded, and how he was active in creating events and forums where Fringe-Knowledge could be discussed.

The death of medical doctor Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde in February 2015 was noted in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene as well as in mainstream media. In the 2015 March issue of *Ultra*, Marko Kananen devotes the editorial to commemorate the late ufologist and discussing her legacy. The editorial starts:

In the production of magazines there every now and then come situations when one, so to speak, has to change the headline. The morning of the ninth of February was exactly a situation like that, as I received news that Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde had passed away the previous day.<sup>22</sup> (Kananen 2015: 4)

The editorial continues by providing an account of her life and discussing her accomplishments as a medical doctor working on international assignments, as well as her endeavors in the field of Fringe-Knowledge. Luukanen-Kilde's relationship to *Ultra* is highlighted. According to the editorial, she appeared on the cover of the magazine five times, which is more than any other person. She used *Ultra* as a forum to reach out to people. The editorial further mentions the *Ultra* website where one can find a database that tells which magazines contain articles about, or written by, Luukanen-Kilde. It is interesting how the editorial is quite neutral towards the conspiracy theories that Luukanen-Kilde started presenting during the last 10–20 years of her life:

But few are prophets in their hometown, and Rauni-Lena's ideas stirred confusion and even resistance also in Fringe-Knowledge circles. Some of her statements are undoubtedly hard to accept as true, or at least we do not want to believe in them –so bleak was the picture she painted of the reality of our world. But, for example, WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden's NSA-revelations and the disclosure of the gross misconducts of medical companies show that she was in many cases on the right track<sup>23</sup>. (Kananen 2015: 5)

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<sup>22</sup> Finnish original: Silloin tällöin aikakauslehden teossa tulee tilanteita, joissa menee niin sanotusti otsikko uusiksi. Aamulla 9.2. tullut tieto Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilden kuolemasta edellisenä päivänä oli juuri tällainen.

<sup>23</sup> Finnish original: Harva on kuitenkin profeetta omalla maallan, ja Rauni-Leenan ajatukset herättivät hämmennystä ja jopa vastustusta myös rajatietopiireissä. Osa hänen väittämistään on kieltämättä vaikeita hyväksyä todeksi, tai ainakaan emme halua uskoa niihin –sen verran synkän kuvan maailmamme todellisuudesta hän maalasi. Mutta esimerkiksi Wikileaks ja Edward Snowdenin NSA-paljastukset sekä lääkefirmojen härskien menettelytapojen julkitulo osoittavat, että hän oli monessa asiassa oikealla jäljillä.

As the editorial is a commemoration of a person who has just passed away it is of course understandable that Kananen writes about her in a rather neutral way. It is generally considered to write ill about the dead. By writing in this fashion, he shows consideration and compassion towards the late medical doctor. However, the neutral style of the editorial should also be seen as a continuation of *Ultra's* long-lasting policy regarding Fringe-Knowledge. Although some of her ideas were considered as too outlandish even within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, Kananen writes that "she was in many cases on the right track." Kananen does not write that her ideas were wrong, nor that she was misleading people, rather that "Some of her statements are undoubtedly hard to accept as true, or at least we do not want to believe in them..." He stays neutral and does not judge her. As Kananen told me in my interview with him, the policy of *Ultra* is to be neutral and to include every form of Fringe-Knowledge.

The next issue of magazine (*Ultra* 4/2015) contains two obituaries, one page each, honoring the legacy of the late ufologist. One is written by Tuula Pelttari, *Ultra's* conscientious book reviewer. Maarit M. Hanssen has written the other obituary in behalf of Luukanen-Kilde's Norwegian friends. Both obituaries highlight how important Luukanen-Kilde was in spreading information about paranormal phenomena and government conspiracies (Pelttari 2015: 32; Hanssen 2015: 33).

In her obituary, Pelttari focuses mostly on her personal contact with Luukanen-Kilde. She mentions how they would have coffee and talk at the *Ultra* Days (Pelttari 2015: 32). In the obituary written by Hanssen, she recounts what Luukanen-Kilde was up to during the last time of her life. She mentions that the late medical doctor had participated in a conference in Brussels, Belgium organized by an organization called European Coalition Against Covert Harassment (EUCASH) and that she was working on a book titled "Bright Light on Black Shadows." EUCASH and a Swedish conspiracy theorist by the name of Magnus Bill Olsson<sup>24</sup> are now trying to get the book published. Luukanen-Kilde had said that no matter what happens to her, the book must be published. According to Hansen, Luukanen-Kilde had told her that the book contains extraordinary revelations that will spark a revolution in the world (Hanssen 2015: 33).

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<sup>24</sup> Olsson upholds a website dedicated to mind control and government conspiracies, [mindcontrol.se](http://mindcontrol.se).

Like Pelttari, Hanssen also writes about her personal contacts with Luukanen-Kilde; Hanssen would often visit her and talk about ufology and paranormal things. The scene is in this ways constructed as intimate and friendly. Interest in Fringe-Knowledge becomes a uniting force.

The pages of *Ultra* saw even more discussion about Luukanen-Kilde's life and legacy as Finnish architect and ufologist Tapani Koivula wrote a 5-page long article about her (*Ultra* 7–8/2015). In the article, Koivula recalls his personal contact with Luukanen-Kilde and discusses her life work (Koivula 2015: 30–34). Koivula had known her since the 1980s and in 1996 they organized the first international UFO conference in Finland. Sometime after this their friendship ended as Luukanen-Kilde became extremely paranoid: "In those times one could start noticing some changes in Rauni-Leena's behavior, which eventually led to the end of our friendship.." <sup>25</sup> (Koivula 2015:32). Koivula appreciates Luukanen-Kilde's efforts in spreading information about paranormal phenomena, but thinks her beliefs in all sorts of dark conspiracy theories was a sign of mental illness or disorder. Koivula states in the article, that although he and Luukanen-Kilde were not on speaking terms with each other for the last decade, she has contacted him from beyond the grave and that they have now forgiven each other.

Obituaries dedicated to Fringe-Knowledge personas has been a lasting feature of *Ultra* magazine since the 1970s. For example, Aino Kassinen (1900–1977), who was widely known for being a psychic and fortuneteller, received an obituary dedicated to her in *Ultra* 9/1977. However, the death of her infamous student, Pekka Siitoin (1944–2003) went unmentioned. The case of Siitoin is rather unique within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, as it constitutes an example of how a scene that celebrates individualism and is open for alternative worldviews, still has its own boundaries. In the early days of Siitoin's occult career, he wrote articles to and advertised his books in the magazine *Ufoaika* (The UFO Age). He would, however, later become excluded from the Fringe-Knowledge scene. As this case is rather unique within the scene, I shall summarize the main points of Siitoin's life and occult activities.

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<sup>25</sup> Finnish original: Noihin aikoihin Rauni-Leenassa alkoi näkyä muutoksia, jotka lopulta johtivat ystävyysytemme katkeamiseen...

### **Exclusion in the Fringe-Knowledge Scene: The Case of Pekka Siitoin**

Pekka Siitoin was born in 1944 into a high-income family. As a child, he had many expensive hobbies such as photography and film. At the age of 15 Siitoin's parents divorced and he moved with his mother to Turku. Siitoin studied at the business school in Turku and later at the Theatre Academy in Helsinki. In the mid-1960s, Siitoin founded his own business in Turku, called Siitoin-film (Siitoin-filmi), which specialized in photography, film and advertising. At the age of 22 he married a woman who was eight years his senior and they had four children. Siitoin was also politically active and joined several parties, for example *Suomen Maanseudun Puolue* (The Finnish Rural Party), but had very limited political success (Granholm: 2009: 257–258).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Siitoin became interested in UFOs, antroposophy, and spiritual growth. He wrote articles about these phenomena to local newspapers (*Turun Sanomat*, *Turkulainen*) and to the magazine *Ufoaika*, which specialized in this field. Around 1970, Siitoin befriended Finland's most famous psychic, Aino Kassinen. The same year Kassinen and Siitoin posed together in an interview for the magazine *Kotiposti*. In the interview Kassinen called Siitoin her most talented student (Kalliala 2005: 58). Siitoin told the magazine that he had lived 16 previous lives, one of them 49 000 years ago as a temple servant on the lost continent of Atlantis (wordpress.com).

In 1971, Siitoin founded the organization *Turun Hengentieteen Seura* (The Society for Spirit-Knowledge). Its main activities included the publication of books on topics such as occultism, magic, and UFOs, organizing lectures, and answering letters from people who wanted to explore and develop their paranormal abilities. Siitoin published his books under various pen-names such as Jonathan Shedd, Peter Siitoin, Hesiodos Foinix, Edgar Bock and Peter von Weltheim (Granholm 2009: 262–264).

After 1972, Siitoin's metaphysical and political ideas started to develop in a more radical fashion. He now started mixing his spiritual teachings with political right-wing propaganda. The magazine *Ufoaika* published several letters by readers who were critical of Siitoin's ideas. In one letter the writer accused *The Society for Spirit-Knowledge* for being like a factory assembly line, which at rapid speed, produced confusing books of low quality (Ufoaika 1975: 34–35). In 1974 alone, Siitoin wrote four books under different pseudonyms. Worth mentioning is the book *Black Magic I*

(*Musta Magia I*) which concentrates on black magic and devil worship. In the book, Siitoin explains how to become wealthy by contacting the devil himself. It also includes descriptions of bizarre rituals, such as boiling cats alive, and instructions on how to turn into a blood-sucking vampire after death (Granholm 2009: 271).

Equally disturbing as his ideas about devil worship and black magic were his political views and the style in which he presented them. At the end of 1975, Siitoin started to wear black shirts and blue ties in his public appearances; a style of clothing borrowed from 1930s Finnish fascist organizations. He also grew a Adolf Hitler-styled moustache. Siitoin was opposed to the Soviet Union and communism that he considered a Jewish-conspiracy. Siitoin organized a number of small but very showing spectacles, such as parades and marches that attracted much media attention. Although Siitoin's followers were few, and the events sometimes only had a handful of participants, the Nazi-uniforms and the waving of flags with swastikas received much attention. Leftist newspapers portrayed Siitoin and his band of followers as the tip of the iceberg of a much larger fascist conspiracy (Kalliala 2005: 63; 68–69).

The result of the radical turn of Siitoin was that he lost contact with most of his former friends. The national psychic Aino Kassinen, who once had called Siitoin her finest student, distanced herself from him and wrote to several newspapers and magazines urging people to stay away from Siitoin and not to read his books. Finally, also the magazine *Ufoaika* stopped publishing Siitoin's works. Nor was he allowed to participate or sell his books at the annual fair *Hengen ja Tiedon Messut* (The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge). According to Mari Kalliala, Siitoin had been fairly popular in the Finnish cultic milieu of the 1970s and many people had contacted him seeking spiritual guidance (Kalliala 1999: 92, quoted in Granholm 2009: 262–263). This, however, stopped when Siitoin became a public Nazi and practitioner of the black arts. The case of Siitoin is quite unique within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. It is an example of how the scene, although accepting a wide range of spiritual ideas, still has its own boundaries.

## **5 Scenic construction**

This chapter focuses on how the phenomenon of Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed among members of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. Discourses, as discussed in chapter 2.2, are ways of representing and ascribing meaning to certain aspects of the world through language and other symbolic representations. Internal discursive construction refers to how people involved in the scene construct and communicate their beliefs and practices as meaningful, mainly through language and text. Looking at internal discursive construction principally entails looking at how people talk about Fringe-Knowledge during interviews, what lecturers focus on during their lectures at different Fringe-Knowledge events, and how Fringe-Knowledge is represented in various Fringe-Knowledge magazines.

### **5.1 Internal discursive construction**

The internal discursive construction of the scene (discourses about Fringe-Knowledge created by members of the scene) is related to the external discursive construction of the scene (discourses about Fringe-Knowledge created by people or institutions outside the scene, e.g. mainstream media). For the sake of clarity, I will primarily deal with the internal discursive construction and the external discursive construction in separate chapters. However, in some instances when a topic raised by one of my interviewees is directly related to a certain news article about Fringe-Knowledge in mainstream media, I shall briefly explain that instance of external discursive construction in the same chapter. The coming sections are thematically structured. I begin in section 5.1.1, by showing how the concept of Fringe-Knowledge is conceptualized. Thereafter, in section 5.2.2., I analyze what role Fringe-Knowledge plays in the personal lives of my interviewees and how Fringe-Knowledge is linked to their personal identity. In section 5.1.3., I explore how the collective identity of the Fringe-Knowledge scene is discursively constructed. Section 5.1.4 focuses on discord within the scene. 5.1.5 is dedicated to analyzing the relationship between science and Fringe-Knowledge, and how interviewees view themselves in relation to the scientific community. Section 5.1.6 explores what role popular culture plays in the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The last section, 5.1.7, deals with millennialistic ideas within the scene.

### 5.1.1 Conceptualizing Fringe-Knowledge

In this section, I will discuss how the concept of Fringe-Knowledge is viewed by people and institutions within the scene. I will show how Fringe-Knowledge is conceptualized, what meanings is ascribed to it, and what other words my informants use to describe their beliefs and ideas.

The word *rajatieto* can be found in many Finnish dictionaries. One dictionary definition of *rajatieto* reads “parapsychological or other theories dealing with supernatural matters”<sup>26</sup> (suomisanakirja.fi). In the Finnish Public Libraries Classification System (PLC), *rajatieto* is part of a main category which also includes the fields philosophy and psychology (kirjastot.fi a). The English translation of *rajatieto*, according to the PLC, is “Paranormal Phenomena.” This category, in turn, contains the subcategories “Parapsychology,” “UFOs,” “Occultism/Spiritualism/The Spiritual World,” “Astrology,” “Dream books,” and “Divination” (kirjastot.fi b). The PLC website offers no English description of the category *rajatieto*, but translated from Finnish *rajatieto* includes “...works that deal with supernatural phenomena or events unknown to science.”<sup>27</sup> (kirjastot.fi c). In an e-mail correspondence with the Finnish Library Services I was told that the category “*rajatieto*” was introduced into their classification guide in 1991. Between 1975–1991 the category was called “Parapsychology. Unexplained phenomena”. Before this, libraries used a classification guide from 1966, according to which the category was simply called “parapsychology”. The librarian who answered my e-mail did not have access to older classification guides.

As I interviewed Marko Kananen, he was proud of how *Ultra* had played a key factor in making the word *rajatieto* part of the Finnish vocabulary: “What we have accomplished is one of *Ultra*’s lasting historical achievements, we introduced this commonly used term into the Finnish language.”<sup>28</sup> (IF mgt 2013/015). Although the word *rajatieto* is commonly used in Finland, the term is not easily defined, even among those who are deeply engaged in the scene. Kananen explains how Fringe-Knowledge is a constantly changing and expanding field as it is situated in the gray zone

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<sup>26</sup> Finnish original: parapsykologisia tms. yliluonnollisia asioita koskevista teorioista.

<sup>27</sup> Finnish original: ...teokset, jotka koskevat tieteelle selittämättömiä yliluonnollisia ilmiöitä tai tapahtumia.

<sup>28</sup> Finnish original: Se on yksi näistä Ultran tämmösistä kestävistä historiallista saavutuksista, mitä me ollaan saatu aikaan, ollaan tuotu tällainen yleiskäytössä oleva termi suomenkieleen aikanaan.



between the known and the unknown. He offers the metaphor of a balloon to understand the expansion of Fringe-Knowledge. As our understanding of the world expands, so also do the areas we do not yet know about. This balloon metaphor was already used by Kananen's predecessor Tapani Kuningas (IF mgt 2013/015).

One of my interviewees, who has chosen to remain anonymous, also praises the word *Rajatieto*, considering it a unique word that lacks equivalents in other languages:

Does not the word [Fringe-Knowledge] in itself define it, that it is all that lies on the fringes of knowledge, on the fringes of knowledge, fringes of knowing, I think it is a really good term. I think it is a fine term. It is like better than, for example, something like parapsychology or...in Finland it is great...I believe it is thanks to Tapani Kuningas that this term was introduced in Finland. Fringe-Knowledge has become an essential part of the Finnish language. At least they don't have that kind of word in English. It is just paranormal or something. It [Fringe-Knowledge] is better because there is nothing normal in itself, and also nothing that goes beyond the normal, in that sense Fringe-Knowledge is better.<sup>29</sup> (IF mgt 2014/015)

According to him, the word "paranormal" is misleading because it implies that there exists something beyond the normal. Fringe-Knowledge, however, refers to knowledge that is not yet "known," but that lies on the boundary of the known and the unknown. The fact that the interviewee knows about Tapani Kuningas, and the historical origins of the word *rajatieto*, is an indication of a sense of self-consciousness within the scene. Harri Virolainen, however, said that he prefers the term *yliluonnollinen* (supernatural) because it is a more common term than Fringe-Knowledge. Virolainen stressed, that although he uses the word supernatural, phenomena like telepathy or reincarnation are actually "natural" in themselves. He told me that the graphic designer responsible for the book

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<sup>29</sup> Finnish original: Eiks se sana jo määrittele sen että se on kaikki mikä liikkuu tiedon rajalla, tiedon rajalla, ja tietämyksen rajalla, minusta se on oikein hyvä termi. Minust se on hieno termi. Että niinkuin se on parempi kuin mikään esimerkiksi paranormaali tai.. Suomessa on hieno.. se on kai Tapani Kuninkaan ansiota että termi on suomeen lanseerattu. Siitä on tullut ihan oleellinen osa suomen siis kieltä, rajatieto. Ei sellaista ainakaan englannissakaan oo. Se on vaan paranormal, tai näin. Toi on parempi koska ei oo mitään normaalia sinänsä, eikä myöskään sitten normaalia ylittävää, siinä mielessä rajatieto on parempi.

cover of the *Encyclopedia of Supernatural Phenomena* did excellent work. On the cover, the part *yli* in the word *yliluonnollisten* has been faded, so that *luonnollisten* becomes accentuated. In this way, the “natural” in “supernatural” is highlighted. Virolainen explained it to me: “...it like reflects me and my brother’s idea, that when we learn to know ourselves, and are aware of our capabilities, of that which we are, they [the phenomena] do not feel supernatural”<sup>30</sup> (IF mgt 2014/ 016).

The concept of Fringe-Knowledge might seem slightly confusing as it seems to encapsulate almost everything that is “unknown.” Jarkko Kari (b. 1970), who in 2001 received his doctorate in information science from the university of Tampere, discusses the concept of Fringe-Knowledge from the perspective of information sciences in an article from 1997. While Kari’s scholarly work utilizes methods and theories from information science, he has personally spoken about his own experiences with the paranormal. At the end of the 1990s, he was a founding member of the organization “ParaNet Finland.” The purpose of his interdisciplinary organization was to study paranormal and “semi normal” phenomena. However, the organization was dissolved due to internal arguments and lack of active members. The last official meetings of the organization were held in 2007 (wikia.com).

Kari points out the conceptual vagueness of the term *rajatieto*. The term, according to Kari, is even contradictory. He refers to the definitions put forth in the 1980s by Tapani Kuningas and Rita Castrén. Castrén was active in the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association and contributed to *Ultra*. Castrén defines Fringe-Knowledge as “...the area of knowledge which is outside the realm of known knowledge or at the edges of some scientific discipline, and which cannot be proven by current scientific methods”<sup>31</sup> (Castrén 1986: 6, quoted in Kari 1997: 6). Kuningas defines Fringe-Knowledge simply as “knowledge situated outside the realm of scientific knowledge”<sup>32</sup> (Kuningas 1981: 3, quoted in Kari 1997: 6). Firstly, according to Kari, if one defines knowledge as something that is known to

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<sup>30</sup> Finnish original: ...se kuvastaa niinku mun ja veljeni niinku ajatusta, kun me opitaan tuntemaan itsemme, ollaan tietoisia kyvyistä, siitä mitä me ollaan, niin ne ei tunnukaan yliluonnollisilta.

<sup>31</sup> Finnish original: ...se tiedon alue, joka on tunnetun tiedon ulkopuolella tai jonkin tieteenhaaran rajoilla ja jota ei voida nykytieteen menetelmillä todistaa.

<sup>32</sup> Finnish original: tieteellisen tiedon ulkopuolella ..olevaksi tiedoksi.

us, and Fringe-Knowledge as knowledge that is situated beyond the realm of the known, then by definition Fringe-Knowledge cannot be knowledge. Secondly, according to Kari, the fuzzy boundary between Fringe-Knowledge and established knowledge makes the concept even more problematic. As Fringe-Knowledge may be knowledge located on the edges or at the borders between the known and the unknown, it can consist of both established knowledge and something unknown. However, it remains unclear how Fringe-Knowledge and established knowledge are related and exactly where between them the boundary lies (Kari 1997: 6).

Kari also finds the Fringe-Knowledge balloon metaphor problematic. Kari explains the problem with this model by illustrating how future developments in science could possibly change the field of Fringe-Knowledge. If the existence of some paranormal phenomena, for example telepathy, could be verified by scientific methods, it would no longer be considered Fringe-Knowledge. In this instance, the field of Fringe-Knowledge – the balloon – would shrink rather than expand, as this type of paranormal phenomenon would become part of the established scientific worldview. However, if a scientific discipline, theory, or medical practice came to be considered unscientific and unreliable, it would possibly become part of Fringe-Knowledge. Many of the ideas and practices considered Fringe-Knowledge within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, such as astrology or alchemy, once held the status of established science. (Kari 1997: 7–8).

Although Kari offers insights into how and why the category of Fringe-Knowledge is problematic from the perspective of information sciences, the focus in this study is on how people within the scene discursively construct *rajatieto* as meaningful, and not if the term is useful as a piece of scientific terminology. The balloon metaphor posits that Fringe-Knowledge always keeps one step ahead of the established scientific worldview. According to the metaphor, people within the Fringe-Knowledge scene possess a type of knowledge and understanding that is more comprehensive than what the majority of society currently has access to. Although advocates of Fringe-Knowledge see themselves as outsiders who are not accepted by mainstream society and scientific institutions, they nevertheless enjoy the privilege of seeing the world in a clearer way.

One example of how Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed as being one step ahead of established science can be found in an interview with Tuula Pelttari in *Ultra* 9/2016. Pelttari recounts how the spirit of a Mayan high priest visited her one night in 1982. After this, she wrote 25 pages of a novel set in the ancient Mayan culture. The novel, purportedly inspired by an unearthly entity, reveals information about the bloody rituals practiced by the Mayans: "It was previously believed that the Mayans were very peaceful, but now we have come to the conclusion that their practices were rather savage."<sup>33</sup> (Kanto I. 2016: 15). Pelttari goes on to mention that she uncovered that the Egyptian Pharaoh Echnaton had six daughters, an issue still debated among historians. In these instances, Fringe-Knowledge, i.e. the knowledge that Pelttari received through unconventional methods, is constructed as being one step ahead of mainstream history and archaeology. Mainstream science, according to her, validates knowledge she already received through paranormal means.

Although Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed as being one step ahead of mainstream science, and although some Fringe-Knowledge claims theoretically could someday be validated by the scientific community, the balloon-metaphor actually serves to define Fringe-Knowledge in such a way that it will never be fully accepted by the mainstream. As the balloon metaphor proposes, the area of Fringe-Knowledge expands concomitantly with the evolution of science. Although it would be theoretically possible that telepathy or some other phenomena would become part of the established scientific worldview, advocates of Fringe-Knowledge would then, at least according to the balloon metaphor, shift their interest to some other phenomena that mainstream science does not yet recognize. Fringe-Knowledge is thus defined in way that it will always be deviant and its advocates always outsiders.

When I asked Kananen if there are subjects that fall outside the scope of Fringe-Knowledge, and that are not suitable for *Ultra*, he spent some time explaining the policy of the publication:

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<sup>33</sup> Finnish original: Aikaisemmin luultiin, että mayat ovat hyvinkin rauhanomaisia, mutta nyt on tultu siihen tulokseen, että touhu oli aika raakaa.

Kananen: ...We have aimed at keeping a certain distance towards political issues and religious issues, they are covered all the time but...one has to have the right kind of angle, and of course, we do not go offending anyone's religious beliefs.

Ramstedt: Yeah, yeah...

Kananen: But then as you mentioned, that is a whole separate question concerning black magic and the sector of devil worship, they don't belong in *Ultra* either...

Ramstedt: Yeah...

Kananen: So in Fringe-Knowledge circles we have made this policy, that we don't give space to the Left-Hand path...

Ramstedt: Yeah, yeah...

Kananen: This is of course complicated...on the one hand, of course, from the viewpoint of freedom of speech, and then on the other hand they are interesting in their own way, in a sort of perverse way also fascinating, fascinating questions, probably there is a certain interest in them...one could of course peek into that world also, but we have had our policy and we have stood by it.

Ramstedt: Mmm. Mmm. Has it ever happened that you have received articles on some topics and you have said "No, this does not suit [the magazine].

Kananen: Yes...

Ramstedt: Or that someone would have come to the Ultra Days and presented...?

Kananen: Well yes, we have things like this...the topic...if we talk about...mainly concerning the magazine, otherwise I can't really recall any. But yes, in the magazine, yes the magazine gets offered material that for one reason or another does not end up in the magazine, there can be many reasons.

Ramstedt: Mm. Mm.

Kananen: But yes, this also is a reason.

Ramstedt: Yeah.

Kananen: Well, it has this, how should I put it, either it is politically or religiously in the wrong way, or in a way...well let's use the term wrong way. Or then dealing with this darker side is questionable, in my opinion we should of course be able to talk about bad things also. Of course we have articles and stories, but we do not go, for example, glamorizing something, let's put it like that.<sup>34</sup> (IF mgt 2013/015)

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<sup>34</sup> Finnish Original: Kananen:... Me ollaan pyritty, pyritty pitämään tuota tietty etäisyys tämmöseen niinkun poliittisiin aiheisiin ja sitten tuota uskonnollisissa aiheissa niitä käsitellään koko ajan mutta niissä...

Ramstedt: Mm. Mm.

This excerpt from the interview with Kananen shows the general policy with regard to what is considered suitable for *Ultra*, and thus what lies beyond the scope of Fringe-Knowledge. As the magazine strives to cover all fields of Fringe-Knowledge, and its policy is to include everyone, rejecting some types of material may become problematic for the editor. The interview clearly shows that Kananen and the staff of *Ultra* have considered and thought through the question of what is acceptable in the magazine. The general line is that black magic, devil worship, or esoteric subjects linked to the so-called Left-Hand path do not belong in *Ultra*. Concerning material that represents certain political ideologies or

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Kananen: niissä täytyy olla tietty semmonen niinkun oikea lähestymiskulma, että, että tuota... Ja sitten tietenkin se että ei kenenkään uskonnollisia näkemyksiä lähetä loukkamaan.

Ramstedt: Joo, joo.

Kananen: Mut sitten niinkun sanoit että toi on se vielä oma kysymyksensä sitten tää musta magia ja saatananpalvonta sektori, niin ei nekaan *Ultraan* kuulu, että...

Ramstedt: Joo.

Kananen: Että, että tuota, kyllä tässä rajatiedon piirissä on niinkun aikanaan tehty tämmöstä linjanvetoa, että vasemman käden tietä ei lähetä niinkun lähetä antamaan sille tilaa.

Ramstedt: Joo, joo.

Kananen: Että nää on tietysti hankalia... Toisaalta ois tietysti niinkun sananvapaus ois, puoltas niinkun toisenkinlaista näkökulmaa, ja sitten toisaalta, toisaalta tuota onhan ne sillai omalla tavallaan niinkun jollakin perverssillä tavalla myöskin kiehtovia, kiehtovia kysymyksiä, että kyllähän niihin semmonen tietty kiinnostus varmaan... Vois niinkun tirkistellä siihenkin maailmaan, mutta kyllä tämmönen, kuitenkin tämmönen linjaus on ollu ja siitä on pidetty kiinni.

Ramstedt: Mm. Mm. Onko tapahtunu jotakin semmosta että ootte saanu artikkeleita jostakin aiheesta ja te ootte sanonu että "Ei, tää ei sovi"?

Kananen: Kyllä...

Ramstedt: Tai että vaikka *Ultra*-päiville on tullu esittelemään?

Kananen: Siis kyllä tämmösiä tuota...aihe...oli nyt kyseessä sitten.. No ehkä nyt enemmän kuitenkin lehden kautta, ei noita oikein muuten tuu mieleen. Mutta lehdessä kyllä, kyllä lehteen tarjotaan aineistoo joka ei syystä tai toisesta koskaan lehteen päädy, että siis syitä voi olla monia.

Ramstedt: Mm. Mm.

Kananen: Mutta kyllä myöskin tää, tää on yks peruste.

Ramstedt: Joo.

Kananen: Että, että tuota siinä on tää, miten mä nyt sanosin, joko poliittisuus tai uskonnollisuus väärällä tavalla, tai semmosella niinkun tai sanotaan nyt.. no käytetään termiä väärä tapa. Tai sitten että siinä on niinkun tää pimeän puolen niinkun käsittely on tota kyseenalaista, siis tuota, siis kyllähän tietenkin siis mun mielestä pahoistakin asioista tottakai meillä on artikkeleita ja juttuja, mutta sitten että ei lähetä ihannoimaan jotain esimerkiksi, sanotaan nyt vaikka esimerkkinä näin.

particular religious viewpoints, the matter becomes somewhat fuzzier. As Kananen says: "We have aimed at keeping a certain distance to political issues and religious issues, they are covered all the time but... one has to have the right kind of angle, and of course we do not go offending anyone's religious beliefs." If something seems blatantly offensive toward a religion, it does not fit the magazine. At the same time, he says, both political and religious matters "... are covered all the time." It is therefore up to Kananen and the staff to decide what is offensive or unsuitable to print in the magazine. The editorial board thus functions as gatekeepers who decide the boundaries of the scenic publication.

The website of the Fringe Knowledge Cooperation Association states that it is politically, religiously, and ideologically impartial (rajatiето.fi: d). One of the objectives of the association is to "Support and assist the impartial study of various areas of Fringe-Knowledge by handing out research grants."<sup>35</sup> On the website, Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed into something that strongly resembles a scientific field. Especially within the hard sciences, such as chemistry or physics, impartiality and objectivity are regarded as essential criteria for conducting research.

Editor Asko Nummela is not fond of the word Fringe-Knowledge: "I think that 'paranormal' and 'Fringe-Knowledge,' are quite bad words since they include, for example, all sorts of poltergeists and bad stuff and people might easily get frightened by these things."<sup>36</sup> Nummela prefers something like the term "spirituality," although he acknowledges that it can be misunderstood and linked to some Christian group such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Laestadian movement. He sees a slight problem in that there does not exist any obvious words for describing what, for example, *Star People* magazine is about (IF mgt 2013/016). Author and lecturer Veli-Martin Keitel does not usually use the term Fringe-Knowledge. He considers the term a bit labelling and feels that people have prejudices against Fringe-Knowledge. He does not identify himself as a person who is a representative of Fringe-Knowledge, although he

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<sup>35</sup> Tukea ja edistää rajatiedon alueiden puolueetonta tutkimusta myöntämällä julkisesti haettavia tutkimusstipendejä.

<sup>36</sup> Finnish original: Et mun mielestä just nää paranormaali ja rajatiето, ne on vähän semmosia huonoja nimiä mun mielestä kun ne... Niihin liittyy niinku semmoset.. Paranormaali... esimerkiksi liittyy tämmöset kaikki poltergeistit ja semmoset vähän huonot asiat ja ihmiset ehkä helposti saattaa pelästyä näitä sanoja...

takes part in various Fringe-Knowledge related events. Keitel sees the term Fringe-Knowledge as limiting:

Well, I do not mean that I in general do not like the word [Fringe-Knowledge], but I do not use it myself, because it is labeling and carries preconceptions, on the other hand, it is limiting and I do not consider myself to be a representative of Fringe-Knowledge, although I have been to Fringe-Knowledge events. Fringe-Knowledge refers to knowledge that is situated on the border of the known and the unknown, and I on the other hand want to deal with matters without these boundaries, so that these fringe-areas are accepted, but to not simply stay there.<sup>37</sup> (IF mgt 2014/015)

Keitel seems to want to go beyond the boundaries of the term and to even incorporate more subjects into it. In the same way as Nummela, Keitel does not have any clear terminology or label to describe his beliefs and practices.

When publication of Jukka Nieminen's magazine *Sinikivi* (Bluestone) was suspended due to the small amount of subscribers, Nieminen started collaborating with *Ultra*. Subscribers cut short of their *Sinikivi* issues were offered a printed poster as compensation: a map based on Nieminen's own research, depicting a hidden geometrical pattern between churches in southwestern Finland. In a letter accompanying the poster, Nieminen wrote that he had been able to make a deal with *Ultra* ensuring that *Sinikivi* subscribers would get a reduced price on a subscription of *Ultra*.

*Ultra* is, of course, a magazine with a much broader scope than Nieminen's previous magazines *Hermeetikko* and *Sinikivi*. While *Ultra* also contains articles about healing, angels, inner peace, meditation, crystals and other perhaps more "softer" topics, *Hermeetikko* and *Sinikivi* did not really address these types of issues. An article about the possible esoteric practices of Finnish national author Zacharias Topelius (Lehtonen

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<sup>37</sup> Finnish original: No en mä nyt tarkoittanu et mä en pitäis siitä yleensä mutta mä en itse käytä sitä, koska se on vähä semmoinen leimaa antava, johon liittyy ennakkoluuloja, ja toisaalta se niin kuin rajaava, että en itse katso olevani rajatiedon edustaja vaikka mä oon rajatiedon tapahtumissa liikunut. Rajatieto tarkoittaa semmoista tietoa joka liikkuu niinkuin tunnetun ja tuntemattoman rajalla, ja mä taas haluan niin kuin käsitellä ilman tämmöisiä rajoja (naurua), asioita, että nämä raja-alueetkin hyväksytään, mutta ei pelkästään olla siellä.



2011:12–13), or speculations about whether the Disney character Donald Duck actually was invented in Finland (Lehtonen 2012: 6–9), differ considerably from articles in *Ultra* dealing with personal growth. *Sinikivi* articles primarily present the reader with some type of mystery to ponder. However, such articles do not usually provide solutions to questions about personal wellbeing, or how to cope with stress or relationships.

In the letter sent by Nieminen to the subscribers of *Bluestone*, he commented on the difference between his old publication and *Ultra*:

I would also like to state that all of us have some sort of general picture of these *Ultras* and especially the *I Am* (Minä Olen) types of magazines, that they nowadays almost exclusively contain flim-flam, angels and cosmic vibrations and so on, which the real old school Fringe-Knowledger considers to be nothing else than a deluded stream of consciousness. On the other hand, I have understood that magazines in this country have to operate on the conditions of its readership and if the angel-people as a crowd are ready to pay for the magazine, then magazines will be full of angels. But if one can find a public willing to pay, who wants ancient mysteries and old time Fringe-Knowledge, anomalies and other things which I myself represent, then the course of the magazine will change in that direction. Everybody can vote about the content of the magazine with their wallet. That is why my *Ultra* thing is an experiment, and if it is not answered, the whole story will end as a passing project.<sup>38</sup>(Letter)

Nieminen also published the same information on the website *Sinikivi* (Nieminen b). Nieminen does not make a distinction between “Fringe-Knowledge” and “Fringe-Science,” but uses the words interchangeably. Nieminen has a slightly nostalgic view of Finland in the 1970s and 1980s – a time when there still existed “Old School Fringe-Knowledge” (Wanhan

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<sup>38</sup> Finnish Original: Tahdon sanoa senkin että meillä kaikilla on jokin yleiskuva näistä Ultrista ja erityisesti Minä Olen –tyyppisistä lehdistä, että ne sisältää nykyisin lähes yksinomaan hömppää, enkeleitä ja kosmista värähtelyä jne jota kunnan vanhan kaartin rajatieteilijä ei pidä muuna kuin tajunnanvirtaisena puutaheinänä. Toisaalta olen käsittänyt että lehti kuin lehti tässä maassa joutuu toimimaan lukijoidensa ehdoilla ja jos kerran enkeli-tyypit joukolla on valmiit maksamaan lehdestä, niin sitten lehdet on täynnä enkeleitä. Jos löytyy maksavaa yleisöä joka haluaa muinaistelua tai wanhan ajan rajatieteilijä, anomaliaita ym eli kaikkea sitä mitä itse edustan, niin sitten lehden kurssi muuttuu siihen suuntaan. Kukin saa lompakollaan äänestää lehden sisällöstä. Sen takia tämä mun Ultra-juttuni onkin kokeilu, jos siihen ei vastata, niin sitten tarina jää kokeilevaksi ohimeneväksi projektiksi.

Ajan Rajatietoa). According to Nieminen, the more widespread “new age culture” of today has almost nothing to do with the older Fringe-Knowledge. The new age milieu is highly commercial, it centers around the individual, and people involved in it know very little about people like Helena Petrovna Blavatsky or magazines like *Ultra* (Nieminen c). Although the “new age culture” mentioned by Nieminen seems to be more popular than Fringe-Knowledge, these milieus or scenes are linked to each other. Nieminen highlights that this type of broader milieu is quite extraordinary in many ways, especially when it comes to its open atmosphere:

And Fringe-Science in itself is this kind of nice cultural arena, or one talks about this sort of new age culture, that it is extremely accepting, and in it all sorts of butterflies are allowed to flap around and it is in my opinion the only cultural phenomenon in Finland where everyone has the opportunity to be heard and represent the worldview that they represent.<sup>39</sup> (IF mgt 2013/014)

Marko Kananen also highlights the diversity of the Fringe-Knowledge scene, which becomes apparent in the variety of articles in *Ultra*. Kananen explains that diversity is linked to the values of the magazine and what it stands for: “...we are proud that we in one magazine may have two articles that refute each other...Having different views and even contradictory views in every issue has in fact, frankly speaking, an intrinsic value for us.”<sup>40</sup>(IF mgt 2013/015). Kananen says that the same principle applies to the Ultra Days, At this event, which he describes as a “Woodstock of thoughts,” one may listen to two talks after each other in which the lecturers make contradictory claims.

Although Luukanen-Kilde lectured ten times at the Ultra Days, and an editorial referred to her as “The Grand Old Lady of Finnish Fringe-

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<sup>39</sup> Finnish original: Ja rajatiedehän on sinänsä mukava tämmönen kulttuuripiiri, tai puhutaan tämmöisestä new age kulttuurista, että sehän on äärimmäisen tämmönen suvaitsevainen, ja siellä saa monenlaiset perhoset lepattaa ja sen on mun mielestä Suomessa kenties ainoa semmoinen kulttuuri-ilmio jossa niin kuin jokaisella on niin kuin mahdollisuus tulla kuulluksi ja edustaa sitä maailmakuvaansa mitä edustaa.

<sup>40</sup> Finnish original: ...me ollaan ylpeitä että meillä voi olla lehdessä vaikka kaks artikkelia peräkkäin jotka kumoo toisensa. Meille tää että tuota jokaisessa lehdessä on erilaisia näkemyksiä ja keskenään jopa ristiriitaisia näkemyksiä, niin se on meille ihan niin kuin itseisarvo suoraan sanottuna.

Knowledge”<sup>41</sup> (Kananen 2015: 3), Luukanen-Kilde herself did not share the enthusiasm about the Finnish term Fringe-Knowledge. She even thought it slightly confusing:

Ramstedt: Yeah. Well, then, this term Fringe-Knowledge, do you use it yourself?

Luukanen-Kilde: Never. Never. In my opinion, the international “parapsychology” is all right, although it refers to psychology, but it is still according to me a more, within quotation marks, a slightly more scientific term.

Ramstedt: Yeah. Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Like Fringe-Knowledge, it isn’t...ask a person in the street what Fringe-Knowledge is, they won’t know anything, but the word parapsychology they might have heard somewhere, or that they know that it has something to do with paranormal phenomena, the research of them is what it is.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: But Finnish is Finnish [laughter].<sup>42</sup> (IF mgt 2014/025)

As we see in this quote, Luukanen-Kilde was not especially fond of the term. However, to my knowledge, this never became an issue within the scene. Luukanen-Kilde was fluent in several languages, used them in her profession as a medical doctor, and later as an outspoken advocate for paranormal phenomena and conspiracy theories. To her, *rajatieto* seems to have been a Finnish term that was hard to communicate internationally, as it lacked equivalents in other languages. Instead of praising the term, like Kananen does, she concluded that “Finnish is Finnish”; she saw no intrinsic value with a unique Finnish term. To her *rajatieto* was just a term that happened to be used in the Finnish language. She saw

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<sup>41</sup> Finnish original: suomalaisen rajatiedon Grand Old Lady

<sup>42</sup> Finnish original: Ramstedt: Joo. No sitte tää termi rajatieto, käytätsä sitä ite?

Luukanen-Kilde: En koskaan. En koskaan. Mun mielestä kansainvälinen “parapsykologia” on ihan oikein, vaikka se viittaa psykologiaan mutta silti niin musta se on lainausmerkeissä vähän tieteellisempi termi.

Ramstedt: Juu. Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Et rajatieto, ni eihän.. kysy tuolta joltain kadunmieheltä et mikä on rajatieto, niin ei se tiedä yhtään, mutta parapsykologia-nimen se on ehkä jossakin kuullu tai että noin, että tietää et sil on jotakin paranormaaleitten ilmiöitten kanssa tekemistä, siis niitten tutkimistahan se on.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Mutta suomenkieli on suomenkieli [naurahtaan]

parapsychology as a much better term as it was clearer and better known to the public.

### **Fringe-Knowledge as Ultimate Knowledge**

Although some Fringe-Knowledge claims could one day be validated by mainstream science (for example, historians could come to the conclusion that Echnaton in fact had six daughters), Fringe-Knowledge is often discursively constructed as constituting a *different kind* of knowledge than the scientific community is interested in or is able to produce. Fringe-Knowledge is alleged to provide answers to questions about the meaning of life, good and evil, if there is life after death, etc. Basically, these are questions that the scientific community has little to say about. In the following, I illustrate this with two examples.

Luukanen-Kildes bestseller *Kuolemaa ei ole* (There is no death), originally published in 1982, consists of two parts. The first part works as an introduction to various kinds of paranormal phenomena; the reader is presented with a rather conventional list, which covers telekinesis, telepathy, levitation, healing, etc. The chapter on precognition (Luukanen-Kilde 1992: 73–78) includes testimonies of Finnish soldiers who during World War II were spared from death due to premonitions. The chapter on levitation mentions research and experiments conducted in the United States and in the Soviet Union. (Luukanen-Kilde 1992: 69–72). Levitation, precognition, or telepathy are, however, phenomena that, apart for being fantastic and remarkable in themselves, actually have little or nothing to tell us about existential and spiritual questions, such as the meaning of life, good and evil, or the existence of a higher cosmic order. If the scientific community would come to discover that people can float around by themselves, move objects with the power of their minds, or foretell the future, would this indicate anything more than discovery of previously unknown capacities of the human psyche?

Throughout the book, Luukanen-Kilde refers to various scientific institutions, research projects and people with academic titles, thus striving to paint a picture of scientific progress in the field of parapsychology. However, as I shall shortly explain, the purpose of the second part of the book is to situate paranormal phenomena into a larger context and to provide answers to existential questions.

Authority for the arguments on the existence of paranormal phenomena presented in the book are grounded in the experiences of ordinary people, and through references to various experts who have academic degrees. Much of the language in the first part of the book resembles something from a popular science magazine. For example:

Already 13 million Americans have experienced near-death-experiences and 43 % of them have told in interviews...<sup>43</sup> (Luukanen-Kilde 1992: 11)

Professor Stevenson has already for 35 years searched for people in different countries who claim to have experiences of reincarnation or childhood memories of previous incarnations. Based on years of research involving thousands of people he has in 2200 cases come to believe...<sup>44</sup>(Luukanen-Kilde 1992: 114)

Luukanen-Kilde argues for the case of reincarnation and life after death by referring to quantitative studies. The research she mentions does not simply consist of a handful of case studies but “years of research involving thousands of people.” The research is not conducted by some nonprofessional, but by the Canadian-born professor of psychiatry Ian Stevenson. The language and argumentation in the first part of the book emphasizes the importance of rational scientific investigation. Massive case studies and academic expertise are presented as authoritative.

The language in the second part of the book, however, has a quite different tone compared to the first part. While the first part relies on rational arguments for the case of life after death, the second part resembles a spiritualistic or theosophical lecture or the text produced by alleged spirits during a séance. Consider the following excerpt from the second half of the book, which according to Luukanen-Kilde is the voice of her dead grandmother:

Life is an eternal cycle and eternal growth. God has created everything and expresses himself in every human being as a spark that strives towards goodness, beauty, righteousness, and above all, towards

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<sup>43</sup> Finnish original: Jo 13 miljoonaa amerikkalaista on kokenut kuolemanraajakokemuksen ja 43% heistä on haastatteluissa kertonut...

<sup>44</sup> Finnish original: Professori Stevenson on jo 35 vuoden ajan etsinyt eri maista ihmisiä, jotka väittävät itsellään olleen jälleensyntymiskokemuksia tai lapsuusvuosilta muistikuvia aikaisemmista olomuodoista. Tuhansia ihmisiä käsittävien vuosikausia jatkuneiden tutkimusten pohjalta hän on jo 2200 tapauksessa päätenyt uskomaan...

universal LOVE that encompasses all of creation.<sup>45</sup> (Luukanen-Kilde 1992: 201–202)

The scientific tone in the first part of the book has given way to charismatic language. I use the word “charismatic” here in a broad sense as referring to language that is believed to emanate or to be inspired by God or other celestial entities. Authority lies now with the dead grandmother rather than with scientists. While the first part of the book deals with different paranormal phenomena, the second part gives the phenomena a deeper meaning, situating reincarnation, psychometry, telepathy etc. in a cosmic context. Here, the existence of paranormal phenomena is constructed as signs that point to a higher divine order. The importance of paranormal phenomena lies in that they are evidence of “goodness,” “beauty,” and “universal LOVE” in the world. These types of metaphysical questions are seldom dealt with in science, or at least the answers to them are unsatisfying. As Jarkko Kari writes, quoting Heikki Kannisto who holds a PhD in theoretical philosophy:

Supernatural information does not carry the burden of everydayness nor the greyness of life with it (as normal information often does), but instead it seems to emanate from another plane of existence and thus to allow us to catch a glimpse of the “true” meaning of life. (Kannisto 1978, quoted in Kari 2001: 30)

Similar to Luukanen-Kilde’s view of a deeper meaning behind paranormal phenomena, Harri Virolainen also emphasized the spiritual significance of the supernatural:

Virolainen: ...and the phenomena we have described in the book, they are interesting in themselves, but one shouldn’t become hooked on them, they are manifestations of life, in that way I experience it nowadays.

Ramstedt: Yeah. That these phenomena have some greater meaning, or?

Virolainen: Yes, they have in that way, for example some energy, if an individual has physical ailments and becomes better, it can also open

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<sup>45</sup> Finnish original: Elämä on ikuista kiertokulkua ja ikuista kehittymistä. Jumala on kaiken luonut ja ilmentää itseään jokaisessa ihmisessä kipinäinä, joka pyrkii kohti hyvyttä, kauneutta, oikeudenmukaisuutta ja ennen kaikkea kohti kaikkiallista, kaiken luodun käsittävää RAKKAUTTA

up spiritual capacities, that the individual becomes more conscious of him or herself...<sup>46</sup> (IF mgt 2014/016)

Virolainen stresses that the “supernatural” not only consists of a cluster of exciting unknown phenomena, but in fact serves to open up new vistas of reality. To come into contact with the “energy” in the example he described functions not only as a means to cure illness, but can also have a profound spiritual significance for the individual concerned. He came back to this question at the end of the interview:

Virolainen: Perhaps now at the end of the interview we arrived precisely at these issues I myself see as important, waking up, enlightenment, unconditional love and these sorts of things. They are all connected with each other. These are these sorts of deeper questions, if one uses a term like that.<sup>47</sup> (IF mgt 2014/016)

The various supernatural phenomena are not actually seen as that important in themselves. Instead, their significance lie in that they hint at some cosmic underlying order or purpose. If one could prove the existence of paranormal abilities and then be able to harness them there would, for example, be obvious monetary gain to be had for the people involved in the endeavor. It could revolutionize information technology, transportation, or have military applications. One could easily imagine these types of findings leading to massive economic and social changes. However, these types of possible practical applications are hardly ever underlined within the scene. The only practical applications concern personal health and wellbeing. The discourses on paranormal phenomena center on them providing proof of an underlying cosmic order, not

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<sup>46</sup> Finnish original Virolainen: Ja tota.. Kyllä siinä niinku mielenkiintoisia asioita tapahtui, mutta tosiaan niin kuin sanoin, ne ei oo niinku mun mielestä tollaiset.. niinku tässä mitä ilmiöitä ollaan kuvattu tos kirjassa, niin ne ilmiöt sinänsä on mielenkiintoisia mutta niihin ei tule silleen niinku, että mä jäisin kiinni, ne on niinku elämän ilmentymiä, näin mä koen sen nykyään.

Ramstedt: Joo. Että onko näillä ilmiöillä joku suurempi tarkoitus, tai?

Virolainen: On ne niinku silleen.. Vaikka joku energia, niin jos yksilöllä on fyysisiä vaivoja niin voi parantuu, mutta sit se voi myös avata niinku sellaista henkistä kapasiteettia, että yksilö tulee tietoisemmaksi itsestään.

<sup>47</sup> Finnish original: Virolainen: Mutta ehkä nyt täs haastattelun loppupuolella päästiin just näihin mihin itse näkee tärkeinä tää, herääminen, valaistuminen, ehdoton rakkaus ja tällainen. Ne on niinku sit kaikki yhteydessä toisiinsa. Et ne on ehkä vähän näit syvällisempii, jos sitä termii käyttää.

because paranormal abilities would be practical, useful or important in themselves.

Conceptualizing Fringe-Knowledge is clearly not a straightforward endeavor, even for leading personas in the field. As noted, the people behind the magazine *Ultra* are proud of the role that they have played in establishing the word Fringe-Knowledge in the Finnish language. Some people, such as Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde and Veli-Martin Keitel, have their reservations concerning the label. Nonetheless, they have been active in participating in events and collaborating with magazines that go under the marker Fringe-Knowledge. For example, Keitel has been published over thirty times in *Ultra*. Luukanen-Kilde was even titled the “Grand old Lady” of Finnish Fringe-Knowledge. The fact that the term Fringe-Knowledge is not easily defined can be seen as an indication of the ways in which people involved in this scenes do not seem have a strong need for strictly defined labels.

### ***Huuhaa* and Self-Reflexivity**

The Finnish word *huuhaa* is commonly used to refer to ideas and beliefs that are not grounded in scientific facts or common sense. The word has negative connotations and is used as a dismissive and slightly humorous term to point out that some ideas or beliefs are unreasonable and should therefore not be taken seriously. For example, the Finnish Skeptical Association, *Skepsis ry.*, has an annual award for the most outlandish ideas and practices called the *Huuhaa*-award. An English translation of *huuhaa* is “woo-woo”. Robert T. Carroll, an American professor of philosophy who maintains the website *The Sceptic’s Dictionary*, defines woo-woo as: “Woo-woo (or just plain *woo*) refers to ideas considered irrational or based on extremely flimsy evidence or that appeal to mysterious occult forces or powers” (Carroll 2016).

People within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene are quite self-reflexive about their ideas and practices. A self-ironic disposition is not uncommon. As we were having lunch at the Winterly Star Days-event in 2011, a lady in her 60s burst out happily: “It is so fun to be here and be able to go a bit woo woo.”<sup>48</sup> She talked about how she enjoyed the kind of setting where one could express ideas and talk about experiences which are often frowned upon in mainstream society.

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<sup>48</sup> Finnish original: On niin ihanaa olla täällä kun saa vähän huuhailla! Ramstedt field notes



A clear indicator of relativistic and reflexive attitudes within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is that the Finnish Skeptical Association, *Skepsis r.y.* (founded in 1987) has also for decades been welcome at the Fair for Spirit and Knowledge. The organization has its own display-table, and members of the association often debate people at the fair ([skepsis.fi](http://skepsis.fi) a). The fair of 2005, was covered in the magazine *Skeptikko* (The Skeptic), published by the association. According to the skeptic Risto K. Järvinen, several people at the fair were keen on debating the existence of paranormal forces and energies. Only a few dared to taste the association's homeopathic "alcoholic" brew, which consisted of alcohol diluted with water so many times that it no longer contained a single molecule of ethanol (Järvinen 2005).

The association has an annual award called "Huuhaa-Palkinto" (The Woo-Woo Award). It is awarded to individuals, groups or organizations that *Skepsis r.y.* consider to have been active in supporting, spreading, and normalizing pseudoscientific thinking. The first award of this kind was given to one of the largest publishing houses in Finland, *Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö* (WSOY) in 1989. The motivation for giving WSOY the award was that it, according to *Skepsis*, had a long tradition of publishing pseudoscientific literature about topics such as astrology and numerology. Others who have received the award include the Scientologists, the newspaper *Aamulehti*, and the alternative spiritual magazine *Minä Olen* (I Am) ([skepsis.fi](http://skepsis.fi) b). What is interesting concerning *Skepsis r.y.*'s presence at the Fair for Spirit and Knowledge is that their ideas and activity could be seen as counterproductive for almost all the other groups, individuals and associations present at the fair.

Between 1999 and 2004, *Ultra* featured a column called *Heikki Huuhaa*, which was about the adventures of the alter ego of T. Mika Tuomola. The character *Heikki Huuhaa* goes around to different fictional alternative spiritual fairs, tries out weird therapies, and listens to eccentric lecturers. A few of the columns were considered too absurd to be published by *Ultra*-magazine. However, the editorial staff of *Ultra* helped Tuomola to create a website where he could re-publish the columns that were originally published in *Ultra*, as well as material that was not featured in the magazine. The columns rejected by *Ultra* contain things like a story of a curse of a mummy, and a fictional story about a crazy fortune teller who blesses the Klu Klux Klan (Huuhaa a; b). In a column titled "Star-Traveler

Heikki Huuhaa,” published on the website and in *Ultra* 2/2000, Tuomola creates a character that is inspired by ufologist Luukanen-Kilde. In the column, Heikki Huuhaa takes part in a lecture titled “Paranoia for the Disadvantaged”<sup>49</sup> by the celebrated contactee “Luukato-Hilse” (*Luukato* means osteoporosis and *Hilse* means dandruff in Finnish). The character of Luukato-Hilse explains to the audience how the moon consists of cheese and that there are thousands of workers in its cheese-mines. She also warns the audience about canary birds that the intelligence service has implanted with microchips. When the microchips are activated, the pets will attack their owners and eat their brains (Huuhaa c).

As Luukanen-Kilde is known for her statements about secret alien technology, secret bases on the moon, and clandestine microchipping of people, the similarities with her and the fictive “Luukato-Hilse” are obvious. The columns of Heikki Huuhaa are an example of self-reflexivity within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. The columns present, in a humorous tone, the reader with the question of where the boundaries of the Fringe-Knowledge scene lie. What type of Fringe-Knowledge claims should be taken seriously, and what is deluded paranoia? The columns suggest that not all Fringe-Knowledge claims should be taken at face value.

### 5.1.2 Constructing personal identity

This subchapter focuses on the discursive construction of personal identity within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. It explores how and why people become interested in Fringe-Knowledge, and why they are involved in the scene. This entails looking at how Fringe-Knowledge is discursively constructed by the scene members and what functions Fringe-Knowledge fills in the context of their personal lives.

#### Early childhood and adolescence

All of my interviewees described their personal interest in Fringe-Knowledge-related matters as dating back to their early childhood years. Artist Timo Teide explained that he has always been interested in all sorts of Fringe-Knowledge related-ideas. Already during his first year in school, he and a classmate subscribed to the magazine *The UFO Age*, later re-launched as *Ultra* (IF mgt 2014/014). As already noted, the magazine *Ultra*

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<sup>49</sup> Finnish original: vainoharhoja vähäosaisille

constitutes an important and indeed central channel for the dissemination of information about Fringe-Knowledge. All except one of my interviewees have collaborated with the magazine and published articles or book reviews in it. All of my interviewees knew about the magazine and almost all subscribed to it at some point in their lives.

My interviewees can be divided into two main categories, based on their personal relationship to Fringe-Knowledge. The first category of interviewees highlighted their own personal experiences of a supernatural character to a great extent and spent much time talking about their own lives during the interview. The other category of interviewees spent little time talking about themselves and did not claim to have had any supernatural experiences in their lives. To take an example from the second group, when asked about possible personal experiences of a supernatural character, Marko Kananen said that he has had three weird experiences during his lifetime that could be considered in terms of UFO encounters. However, these experiences later proved to have rather mundane explanations, but if he had not analyzed them further they would have remained unexplained (IF mgt 2013/015). When asked about paranormal experiences, Jukka Nieminen said that he did not exclude the paranormal, but lacked personal experiences. He said he believed that the soul might go on after the death of the physical body. He had never seen a ghost, but admitted that he had had some strange sensations a number of times during his lifetime. He remained open-minded towards different explanations regarding these weird sensations and was interested in various parapsychological explanations. Instead of highlighting Fringe-Knowledge as something that would change his outlook on life or his core values, Nieminen emphasized that he is a quite regular guy:

I am in fact this normal guy, a normal Finnish guy. Nothing unusual, my private life I have kept for myself mainly because there is really not much to say about it. I am married and I have children and we live together and we have a crappy car and those sorts of usual things, we

live a normal ordinary life: We go to *Prisma* [hypermarket], to the gas station, and that sort of stuff.<sup>50</sup> (IF mgt 2013/014)

For this category of interviewees, engagement with Fringe-Knowledge-related ideas is mainly an intellectual endeavor rather than a quest for answers to existential and spiritual questions on a personal level. Although Kananen and Nieminen are very active in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, none of them described Fringe-Knowledge as important in terms of something that provides them with answers to existential or spiritual questions. It seems that it is rather an openness towards various forms of Fringe-Knowledge and the pondering of these questions that they find meaningful, not finding any absolute answers.

The other category of interviewees spent much time during the interview situation talking about how different Fringe-Knowledge ideas and concepts related directly to their own personal lives. It was not unusual for interviewees in this category to become serious and emotional during the interviews. Interviewees in this category described different personal crises and stressful life situations as times when Fringe-Knowledge-related ideas became increasingly and especially important for them. These traumatic episodes include such things as disease and illness, unemployment, and divorce. Trying to understand and cope with the hardships of life had led them to consume Fringe-Knowledge-related material and to try out different practices, such as meditation or healing. There were also situations where my interviewees had personal experiences of a supernatural or otherworldly character.

The common denominator for both groups of interviewees is, however, that interest in Fringe-Knowledge dated back to their childhood or adolescence. As a teenager, Marko Kananen and a friend came into contact with *Ultra*. They considered it to be a quite peculiar magazine, which they both actually found slightly silly. Already in elementary school, Kananen went through all the UFO and science fiction books at the local library in

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<sup>50</sup> Finnish original: Mä oon oikeestaan tämmönen ihan tavallinen mies, tavallinen suomalainen mies. Ei musta kai oikeestaan mitään sen kummempaa että siviiliminäni oon varjellu ihan sen takia että siitä ei oo oikein mitään sanottavaa kellekkään että...Mä oon naimisissa ja mulla on lapsia ja asutaan aviossa toki ja on autoräppänä alla ja sen semmosta tavallista, niinku tavallista arkista elämää vietetään: käydään Prismassa ja huoltoasemalla ja sensellasta.

Orivesi. Following what he called a “kind of latent phase”<sup>51</sup> he became interested in UFOs again in the 1990s, when he wrote his MA thesis in history about how ancient astronaut theories were received in Finland (IF mgt 2013/015). Tuula Pelttari told me during the interview that she already felt “special” in early childhood: “As soon as I could hold on to a pen I started drawing landscapes of planets for example, and then already at the age of four or five Ancient Egypt, then there was China and Japan”<sup>52</sup> (IF mgt 2014/013).

Within the history of esotericism, it is not uncommon that people recount having strange or supernatural experiences in early childhood. For example, theosophical literature is filled with stories about people who engaged with spiritual forces during their early years. Both Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Pekka Ervast as had a range of paranormal experiences as children (Ahlbäck 1995: 85; Goodrick-Clarke 2008: 212). At an early age Rudolf Steiner, founder of Anthroposophy, had experiences of the dead, as well as the “etheric” forces of plant life (McDermott 2005: 8738). In his early teens, the Russian mystic G.I. Gurdjieff became convinced that there existed a perennial wisdom that could provide answers to life’s ultimate questions (Saltzman 2005: 3710). Although not as famous as these esoteric personas, core members of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene often tell similar stories about their childhoods.

In my interview with Veli Martin Keitel, who recounted having a number of supernatural encounters during childhood, he stressed that these experiences are not always pleasant. As a child, Keitel had several imaginary friends. When he was in the woods, he communicated with nature spirits. At a very young age, he used to astonish his relatives by telling long stories about magic and witchcraft. Around when he started elementary school, however, he began to experience frightening nightly episodes, which later in life he would come to interpret as UFO abductions. At night, he would suffer from cramps during which his eyes and mouth would be wide open. When in these states, he had terrifying experiences of being taken to “some very dark and scary place.”<sup>53</sup> During these episodes, his mother was unable to make any contact with him. He

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<sup>51</sup> Finnish original: semmonen latentti vaihe

<sup>52</sup> Finnish original: Heti kun kynä pysyi kädessä niin mä aloin piirtää esimerkiksi planeettojen maisemia, sitten tuli jo, jo neljän viiden vanhana tämä muinainen Egypti, sitten oli Kiina ja Japani.

<sup>53</sup> Finnish original: johonkin hyvin pimeään ja pelottavaan paikkaan.

was taken to hospital, but the doctors found nothing wrong with him. Keitel later became aware of the phenomenon of sleep paralysis, but did not consider that it could fully account for his horrifying experiences (IF mgt 2014/015).

Similar to Keitel, Tuula Pelttari recalls a childhood filled with mystical experiences. Above the bed in her room hung a painting she had made which depicted Pharaoh Echnaton, his family and court. As she was reading a children's book, she suddenly realized that the room was filled with people who had come out from the painting. As she told her mother about it, her mother became upset. Pelttari was taken to the hospital by her parents, but the medical doctor who examined her found nothing out of the ordinary. In Pelttari's case, the main negative consequence of having paranormal experiences was that people around her did not understand her (IF mgt 2014/013).

When artist Timo Teide was six or seven years old, he witnessed a ball of light that bounced over the bay at the family's summer house. He also experienced unusual trance states when taking naps after coming home from school (IF mgt 2014/014). One of my anonymous interviewees talked about a phase during her late teens when she had vivid dreams:

Anonymous 1: Well, then I had really strong lucid dreams

Ramstedt: Mm.

Anonymous 1: Flying dreams, and then one, what one nowadays, or typically, calls an abduction experience.

Ramstedt: Yeah.

Anonymous 1: So I wake up in the morning completely paralyzed, I can't move, and then on top of that on my left, no right thigh, appears a sort of hole.<sup>54</sup> (IF mgt 2013/013)

She interpreted the mark that appeared on her thigh as a sign of a possible alien encounter or abduction. Asko Nummela also talked about alien

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<sup>54</sup> Finnish original: Anonymous 1: Et mul on ollu sillon tosi voimakkaita näitä selkounia...

Ramstedt: Mm.

Anonymous 1: Lentounia, ja sit tota noin niin yks semmonen mitä niinku nykyään tai klassisesti kai sanotaan abduktiokokemukseksi.

Ramstedt: Joo.

Anonymous 1: Eli mä herään aamulla täysin halvaantuneena sängystäni, mä en pysty liikkuu, pakokauhuun, ja sitten tota noin sen lisäksi mulle ilmesty vasempaan, eiku oikeeseen reiteen semmonen reikä.

Ramstedt: Joo.

encounters in childhood. In this excerpt from my interview, he describes how the practice of Transcendental Meditation made him recover forgotten childhood memories:

Nummela: ...Then in connection with the TM-meditation, old things that had happened to me opened up.

Ramstedt: Yeah, Yeah.

Nummela: So, as I was meditating, it was like I suddenly experienced that I am lying in bed, I am a young child, and I am in a vertical position lifted up to a craft, I lie there and I am raised to the craft by this sort of beam. And there I'm still thinking... I'm not afraid.

Ramstedt: Mm...

Nummela: And then we went to a big blue ball [planet] and came home. Then I remember when I in the morning went to the kitchen and shouted to Dad and Mom, that last night we went to a blue ball [planet] far away.

Ramstedt: Yeah.

Nummela: And these [experiences], started opening up to me. They did not open up in one single meditation, and something did not come during every meditation, but every now and then something came, taps opened, experiences that happened in childhood, but which were then wiped away.

Ramstedt: Yeah, yeah.

Nummela: And my father told about these other...my dad is sensitive, and my mother is also sensitive, but my father is more sensitive in that way...He told me moreover that I had come from the shore of the river, which was about half a kilometer away, where we always went fishing or swimming or something. I had come from there and then said that in the field there were some men with antennas on their heads.

Ramstedt: Mm...

Nummela: And...Dad and Mom had seen that I had a sort of shoe-shaped mark burned on my skin here, and they wondered if they should take me to see the doctor, but as their boy looked so healthy and was happy and so on, they thought nothing more of it.<sup>55</sup> (IF mgt 2013/016)

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<sup>55</sup> Finnish original: Nummela: ...Sit sen TM-meditaation myötä mulla aukes niitä vanhoja asioita mitä mulle oli tapahtunu.

Ramstedt: Joo, joo.

Nummela: Eli sitten kun mä meditoin niin se oli, mä yht'äkkii koin semmosen et nyt mä oon sāngyssā makaa, mä oon nuori lapsi, ja mut nostetaan alukseen niinku pituussuunnassa, mä makaaan siinā ja mä nousen alukseen semmosella sāteellā. Ja mä ajattelin siinā vielākān vaan... en mā pelkää.

Ramstedt: Mm...

The “men with antennas” on their heads refer to extraterrestrial beings. This excerpt shows how Nummela talks about alien contacts as something that was part of his life already in childhood. He both met aliens and was taken to another planet. The memories were “wiped away,” only to be accessed at a later stage in his life when he was ready for them. Nummela, the two anonymous interviewees, Teide, Pelttari, and Keitel talk about their childhood encounters with the paranormal in terms of something that happened to them. It is not something they themselves consciously or actively sought out or wished for. Although my informants describe their interest in and experiences of Fringe-Knowledge-related matters as going back to their childhood years, a deeper interest is often also connected with some kind of existential or spiritual crisis.

### **Spiritual Crisis**

In my interview with Asko Nummela, he shared the story of how he was helped by supernatural forces during an extremely stressful situation in his life. He is unsure whether it was extraterrestrials, angels, or his “own higher wisdom”<sup>56</sup> that helped him turn his life around. By the end of the 1980s, he had gone through a divorce, his work as a printer was stressful, and he suffered from constant economic difficulties. He describes his life as being caught in a treadmill with no possibility of escape. In this

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Nummela: Ja sitten käytiin semmosella isolla sinisellä pallolla ja tultiin, tultiin kotiin. Sit mä muistan kun mä meen keittiöön ja huudan aamulla isälle ja äidille että käytiin tuolla kaukana sinisellä pallolla viime yönä.

Ramstedt: Joo.

Nummela: Ja, näitä mulla alko aukeea sit erilaisia. Ei ne nyt auennu yhdessä meditaatiossa eikä, eikä niinku joka kerta meditaatiossa tullu mitään vaan aina sillan tällön jotain tuli, tuli näitä.. aukes hanoja, kokemuksia mitkä on lapsena tapahtunu mitkä on sitten pyyhitty pois.

Ramstedt: Joo, joo.

Nummela: Ja isä kerto mulle sitten myös näitä mutta.. Mun isä on herkkä myös, ja miks ei äitikin herkkä oo, mutta isä enemmän on semmonen herkempi siinä asiassa.. Hän mulle kerto lisää myös sitä että olin sieltä jokirannasta tullu kun siinä oli joku puol kilometri tai oisko sitä sen verran ollu jokirantaan matkaa, mis käytiin aina ongella tai uimassa tai jossain. Mä olin tullu sieltä sitten ja sanonu että oli sellasia antennipäisiä miehiä tuolla pellolla...

Ramstedt: Mm...

Nummela: Ja... Isä ja äiti oli sit kattonu kun mulla oli sellanen niinku kengän kuva palanu tähän ihoon ja ne oli sit miettiny että pitäsköhän toi käydä lääkäriissä näyttää mut sit ne katto että poika näyttää niin terveeltä ja leikkii ja ilonen ja muuta että ei kai toi nyt mittään sitten ollu.

<sup>56</sup> Finnish original: oma korkeempi viisaus



situation, he became ill and developed severe sinusitis. He visited the Turku University Hospital several times, but neither various medications, nor having his sinus punctured, seemed to help (IF mgt 2013/016).

At this time, Nummela had met a new girlfriend who offered to try a form of healing on him. At the library, a book had literally fallen into her hands and she took it home with her. He recounted that: "...she rolled her hands and had instructed me that, according to the book, if one believes in a higher force or something like that one can ask help from it. And I said it does not seem hard and I asked for help. This was followed by a great cracking sound from the nasal area."<sup>57</sup> Nummela's sinusitis was cured. After this incident, he became deeply interested in spiritual matters. He later signed up for a course in Transcendental Meditation (IF mgt 2013/016).

In a similar fashion as Nummela, one of my anonymous interviewees told me that Fringe-Knowledge-related ideas became increasingly important to her in a situation in her life when she felt everything was falling apart. Her marriage had ended in divorce and she became unemployed. Soon one other important relationship also ended. As some project-based work she had been employed with was finished, she was offered to re-locate to another city to work with another project. She decided to decline the offer, as that would have meant moving her and her young children away from her parents and other social networks. In the interview, she commented on the situation in the following way:

But this is quite typical for people from the perspective of what we can call the soul-agreement, that there comes a massive situation where you have to re-evaluate your life over again.<sup>58</sup> (IF mgt 2013/013)

A "soul-agreement," an expression that Keitel also uses, refers to a form of pact that one has made with a higher divine force in a previous life. This basically means that although a person might not be conscious of it, he or

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<sup>57</sup> Finnish original: ...hän pyöritteli käsiä ja hän oli antanu mulle ohjeeks että kirjas sanotaan että jos uskoo johonkin korkeempaan voimaan tai muuta niin voi pyytää siltä apua tai ajatella että se auttas tai muuta. Ja mä sanoin ettei oo vaikeeta sitten et mä kans siinä sit pyysin sitä apua ja samalla kuulu valtava rusahdus täältä mun nenärustoista.

<sup>58</sup> Finnish original: Muttä tää on hyvin tyypillistä et ihmisille niinku sanotaan nyt sielunsopimuksen näkökulmasta niin tulee tämmönen massiivinen tilanne, jossa pitää niinku koko elämä arvioida uudestaan.

she has already chosen to have some experiences during his or her lifetime. This might also include bad or tough ones (IF mgt 2014/015). In the case of the woman who experienced a possible abduction encounter, her spiritual crisis was linked to a time in her life that she referred to as her “hermit-phase,” a time of self-exploration. She went to the library and borrowed books from the Fringe-Knowledge section as well as books on developmental psychology. She read a large amount of the books during a period of almost two years. During this process, she realized that she had to change the direction of her life. She started studying astrology and later became involved in organizing a number of Fringe-Knowledge events and activities (IF mgt 2013/013).

In these cases, the spiritual crisis is related to immediate personal distress: in the case of the lady just mentioned her marriage and employment ended. Nummela had serious sinusitis which caused him pain. In times when the future seemed uncertain, Fringe-Knowledge related questions became more important for them.

When Tero Säilä, President of the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association (*Rajatiedon Yhteistyö r.y.*), was in his late twenties, he experienced what he calls a “crisis of worldview.” Many beliefs he once had held true were shattered. He had been raised in a family that held strong communist views and was himself a sworn communist. Although he still has many leftist sympathies, he is skeptical towards the idea that one can make the world a better place simply through political activism. In his late twenties, he went to Estonia, which at that time was part of the Soviet Union, to work. Working abroad, he experienced the Soviet system to be something else than he had expected. Instead of an ideal society, Säilä saw poverty and suppression. After this he started reading books about eastern religions (IF mgt 2012/026).

If one defines religious or spiritual identity as consisting of beliefs and worldviews which encompass supernatural components, and which play a central role for how people understand themselves in relation to the world, Fringe-Knowledge can be said to have a religious or spiritual significance. Central scenic personas describe Fringe-Knowledge as playing an important role in their personal lives.

The authority of experience does often not differ much from various forms of divine revelation found in many religions. For example, the Judeo-

Christian traditions are filled with stories of how angels have visited mortals. In the Old Testament, Lot is visited by two angels in his home and in the New Testament the angel Gabriel tells the virgin Mary that she is to become the mother of God's son. Tuula Pelttari talked about several paranormal experiences she has had during her lifetime. Among them was a meeting with a dark-skinned extraterrestrial who looked like the actor Charles Bronson (IF mgt 2014/013). The esoteric and ufological traditions are full of meetings and visitations of extraterrestrials and supernatural beings. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky met the Hidden Master Morya in London in 1851, (Goodrick-Clarke 2004: 23) and Pekka Ervast thought that he saw a Hidden Master in the streets of Helsinki in 1885 (Ahlbäck 1995: 90). Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde claimed that during the car accident which led to her retirement extraterrestrials saved her from certain death (Varjus 2015; Luukanen also mentioned this in her lecture at the Ultra Days in 2014). In my interview with Veli-Martin Keitel, he told me about sinister experiences when extraterrestrials dragged him off to some "dark place" (IF mgt 2014/025).

However, engagement with Fringe-Knowledge is not always linked to a search for answers to existential questions, or finding resources to deal with spiritual crises. The interview material shows that there are several ways to engage with Fringe-Knowledge on a personal level. For all of my informants, interest in Fringe-Knowledge goes back to early childhood. For half of my informants, their engagement with Fringe-Knowledge has, at different times in their lives, offered answers to deeper existential questions. For Martin Keitel, many hardships of life became more understandable when he understood them in the framework of a metaphysical arrangement or contract that he had made before he was born. Fringe-Knowledge-related ideas became important for both Tero Säilä, Asko Nummela, and, Anonymous 1 in periods of their life when they experienced some type of personal life crisis.

People in the Fringe-Knowledge scene seem to be quite well aware that many of the ideas and beliefs they hold are considered, if not unreasonable, at least peculiar by mainstream society. The interview material indicates that people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene negotiate, or have had to negotiate, different worldviews on a personal level. Veli Martin Keitel knows that his own interpretation of events is not the only one. For example, he is well aware that his UFO abduction experiences could be explained by psycho-physiological theories, such as sleep

paralysis (IF mgt 2014-015). In her late teens Anonymous 1 experienced intense lucid dreams as well as "...what one nowadays, or in classical terms call an abduction experience" (IF mgt 2013/013). She is not quite certain how she should explain her experiences. Self-reflexivity is thus an important feature of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene.

### **5.1.3 Construction of Group Identity**

As was discussed in the chapter 3.1, an ethos of individualism may be said to permeate contemporary Western culture. Nevertheless, although there is a demand for us to be "ourselves" and to express our individuality, there is also at the same time a need for validation by, and interaction with, likeminded people. As Anthony Giddens has noted, a feature of late modernity is that it both fragments and unifies. There are various forms of societal fragmentation as well as new forms of unification (Giddens 1991: 189). A person may feel more at home in some geographically dispersed subculture than in his or her hometown.

Although the Fringe-Knowledge scene in general highlights individualism and the individual as the highest authority on what is the right type of spirituality and worldview for him or her at any certain time, there is a clear idea that people who are interested in Fringe-Knowledge are a part of a larger milieu or scene that consists of likeminded people. As chapter 5.1 showed, the word "Fringe-Knowledge" is not used by everyone who I have linked to the scene. Some people prefer to use terms like "paranormal," or "spirituality" instead. There is, however, a clear discourse within the scene that people within it have certain characteristics and values. This is perhaps most prominent among UFO contactees and people who consider themselves to be aliens incarnated in human bodies, but this type of discourse is also very prominent within the Fringe-Knowledge scene in general. Various lecturers at different events often express this idea and this type of discourse is also found in magazines like *Ultra* or *Tähteläiset*.

In an article in the double issue of *Ultra* 7-8/2012 researchers Kimmo Ketola and Jussi Sohlberg from the Church Research Institute summarized the major findings of the survey (FSD2837) on alternative spirituality which the institute had distributed via the magazine in *Ultra* and at the 2011 *Ultra* Days (Ketola & Sohlberg 2012: 10–13). In the editorial of that same issue, Marko Kananen commented on the results of the survey:

The readers of *Ultra* managed to surprise in many ways. In so many ways that one cannot draw a picture of the “average reader.” The readers of *Ultra* simply refuse to submit to be cramped into one mold. We are united by a will and capability for independent thinking and to our own way, which makes us not only different in comparison with the average citizen, but also different in relation to each other. Independent –and critical –thinking unites us, but it also makes us all unique individuals.<sup>59</sup>(Kananen 2012: 3)

According to Kananen, although the readers of *Ultra* are different from each other, there is an even greater difference to be observed between persons interested in Fringe-Knowledge and the “average citizen.” The “average citizen” can be seen as a symbol for a non-spiritual, materialistic society. Moreover, Kananen highlights that the readers of *Ultra* master the art of “independent and critical thinking,” which in turn implies that the “average citizen” generally lacks these traits. As David J. Hess stresses, a central aspect concerning the concept of identity is not as much constituted by any “essential characteristics” but “by a set of relationships to the Other, or whatever is *not* the Self.” (Hess 1993: 43). Kananen discursively constructs a distinction between the “independent” people of the Fringe-Knowledge scene by contrasting them with the “ordinary” citizens of mainstream society.

### **Constructing Group Identity in *Ultra* and at the *Ultra* Days**

In an editorial about the founding of *Kustannus Oy Rajatieto* (Fringe-Knowledge Publishing Ltd.), Kananen highlights the uniqueness of the publishing house in Finnish press history. In 1975 the publishing house

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<sup>59</sup> Finnish original: *Ultran lukijat onnistuivat yllättämään monella tavalla. Niin monella, että kuvaa ”keskivertolukijasta” ei voi, eikä kannata yrittää piirtää. Ultran lukijat eivät kerta kaikkiaan suostu alistumaan yhteen muottiin. Meitä yhdistää halu ja kyky itsenäiseen ajatteluun ja omaan linjaan, joka tekee meistä erilaisia paitsi keskivertokansalaisiin verrattuna, myös erilaisia toisiimme verrattuna. Oma - ja kriittinen - ajattelu yhdistää meitä, mutta se tekee meistä kaikista myös toisistamme poikkeavia yksilöitä.*

*Kustannus Oy Williams* (Williams Publishing Ltd), which had published *Ultra's* predecessor *Ufoaika* (The UFO Age), decided to suspend the publication of the magazine. In the words of Kananen "...Finnish Fringe-Knowledge enthusiasts were faced with a difficult situation"<sup>60</sup> (Kananen 2016: 4). The readers of *Ufoaika* decided to create their own publishing house that would guarantee the continuation of the magazine. The publishing house was founded as a limited company in 1976. Around four hundred shareholders, consisting of readers of the magazine, bought its thousand shares. Kananen's editorial emphasizes that Fringe-Knowledge Publishing Ltd. and the magazine are much more than merely commercial endeavors. *Ultra* is a magazine owned and produced by Fringe-Knowledge enthusiasts and supporters (Kananen 2016: 4).

The different Fringe-Knowledge fairs and events are places where people active in the scene attend lectures and meet likeminded people. At the 35th anniversary of the Ultra Days, a publication covering the history of the event was distributed at the event. The publication describes the Ultra Days as an established tradition, which for many participants makes up the highlight of the summer. It is a time to meet up with friends and the Ultra Days are "...a place to recharge ones batteries."<sup>61</sup> The event is not only a meeting place for the "Ultra-veterans"<sup>62</sup> but has also "attracted new people who are interested in Fringe-Knowledge."<sup>63</sup> What makes the Ultra Days special is "a unified and positive attitude which gives the event a unique frequency."<sup>64</sup> The Ultra Days is an event where people may even hook up and form lasting relationships, even of a romantic nature. According to the publication, there are "numerous Ultra-couples."<sup>65</sup> The social dimensions of the event are highlighted. Especially the words "Ultra-veterans" and "Ultra-couples," as well as the emphasis on the Ultra Days being a "tradition" serve to discursively construct the event as constituting an important institution within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene (Kuningas & Nikula 2010: VI).

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<sup>60</sup> Finnish original: ...suomalaiset rajatiedon ystävät olivat totisen paikan edessä.

<sup>61</sup> Finnish original: akkujen lataamisen paikka.

<sup>62</sup> Finnish original: ultra-veteraanien.

<sup>63</sup> Finnish original: ...tuonut tullessaan myös paljon uusia rajatiedosta kiinnostuneita...

<sup>64</sup> Finnish original: ...yhtenevä ja positiivinen henki luo aivan oman taajuuden tapahtumalle.

<sup>65</sup> Finnish original: Kuortaneen ja päivien tunnelmasta kertoo osansa se, kuinka monta tuttavuuksia siellä on solmittu. Jo pelkästään "Ultrapäivä-pareja" on lukuisia. Vanhojen "ultra-veteraanien" lisäksi Ultrapäivät on tuonut tullessaan myös paljon uusia rajatiedosta kiinnostuneita, jotka ovat välttämättömiä tapahtuman jatkumisen kannalta.

The discourse of the Ultra Days being an event that is visited by a special kind of spiritual people is something that I have also encountered at the fair itself. People I talked to quite often expressed their joy over being there. As I was sunbathing at the beach at *Kuortane Sport Resort*, where the Ultra Days were held in 2014, I had a conversation with a man in his mid-forties who had visited the event numerous times (Ramstedt, field notes). Although he did not like all the lectures and the ideas presented in them, one important reason for him to visit the fair was that people there were open minded about the possibility of paranormal phenomena. According to him, one could also find countercultural elements at the fair. By this, he meant people who were critical of contemporary society. He considered mainstream society stressful, shallow, and focused on consumerism. As Luukanen-Kilde was one of the main lecturers at the event, I asked the man if he had come to the Ultra Days to hear her talk, and what he thought about her ideas. He did not fully sympathize with all of her ideas, such as some of her conspiracy theories about vaccines containing microchips. Still, he said, her book *There is no Death* (1982) was an eye-opener and a classic and she had done much for raising awareness about paranormal phenomena.

In a similar fashion as the man just mentioned, one of my interviewees who has wished to stay anonymous, appreciates the atmosphere of openness at the Ultra Days:

Ramstedt: So how about the Ultra Days, what are the best experiences...or most memorable?

Anonymous 2: I don't really want to go rating the performers here, what was best here already from the beginning when I came here for the first time with my wife was that I suddenly realized that we were among people with whom one could talk about anything and nobody thought you were crazy...

Ramstedt: Yeah.

Anonymous 2:...because if you go talking about some Fringe-Knowledge issue with some stranger in some café they will call the cops [both laugh], but I think that the best moments are for example here in the restaurant. We [me and my wife] do not always hang out with people we know but go talk with complete strangers and they have all sorts of

stories relating to Fringe-Knowledge and that makes the Ultra Days quite unique.<sup>66</sup> (IF mgt 2014/024)

As there is great variation in the program at the Ultra Days it is quite obvious that few participants will consider each and every performance equally important, interesting, or even relevant. For example, the 2011 Ultra Days included a diverse set of lecturers and programs. Among them were the UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen who held a lecture about aliens and a workshop in “cosmic dancing,” Jukka Nieminen who talked about the hidden history of Finland, rejected by dry academics and mainstream historians, the Indian guru Sudesh Didi who lectured on meditation and how to live a more spiritual life, and the Finnish psychic lecturer Seija Nurmi who held a talk about how the energies of ancient Atlantis continue to affect the planet. My interviewee did not want to start rating lecturers. His statement, however, implies that the lecturers and performers are not equally good. Instead, when asked about his best experiences at the Ultra Days, he emphasized how the whole event is characterized by an openness towards various knowledge claims that are in general rejected in mainstream society. He made a distinction between the Ultra Days and everyday society. According to him, if person in an ordinary daily contexts “...go talking about some Fringe-Knowledge issue with some stranger in some café they will call the cops.” It is, however, perfectly normal to do a thing like that at the Ultra Days: “...I suddenly realized that we were among people with whom one could talk about anything and nobody thought you were crazy...” Although saying it in a slightly humorous tone, this exaggeration discursively constructs the Ultra Days as a safe haven

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<sup>66</sup> Ramstedt: Entä sitten Ultra-päivillä niin tota mitkä on parhaimmat kokemukset täältä...tai mieleenpainuvin?

Anonymous 2 : Emmä oikeestaan menis siihen että mä arvostelin täällä esiintyjiä, se mikä täällä on hienointa ja mikä oli silloin ihan alkuunsa kun ensimmäistä kertaa vaimoni kanssa tulimme tänne oli se että mä yhtäkkiä tajusin että olimme täällä ihmisten kanssa joiden kanssa voi puhua mistä tahansa eikä pidä kahelina...

Ramstedt: Joo

Anonymous 2:...koska jos sä menet rajatiedon asiasta puhumaan johonkin jossain kahvilassa vieraan ihmisen kanssa niin nehän soittaa poliisit [båda skrattar] mutta tota siis täällä siis mun mielestä täällä on siis parhaita hetkiä esimerkiksi tuolla ravintolassa me aina ei tarkoituksella mennä niiden ihmisten seuraan jotka me tunnetaan vaan mennään ihan vieraiden ihmisten seuraan ja jutellaan heidän kanssaan ja heillä on vaikka minkälaisia tarinoita omia rajatietoon liittyviä tarinoita ja tota se tekee tästä hyvin uniikin tästä koko Ultrapäivistä.



for people interested in Fringe-Knowledge, as nobody there will “call the cops.”

The article “First Time at the Ultra Days”<sup>67</sup> in *Ultra* 9/2013 consists of a personal account of Tapio Kolmonen’s first visit to the event in 2013. He stayed the whole duration of the Ultra Days. Most of this one page long account consists of praise of the camaraderie at the Ultra Days, which takes cosmic and spiritual dimensions:

The delightful company of hundreds of people interested in spiritual matters until the 7th of July left a peaceful, long-lasting feeling of happiness...Meeting my old and even older acquaintances was perhaps the best with the days. Some old friends wondered, how this could be only my first time at the Ultra Days. Indeed. It is hard to determine how old friends some acquaintances might actually be. According to my understanding a small circle hang around from one lifetime to the next. At the Ultra Days I met souls again that I had not previously encountered during this lifetime. Meeting three ladies from the Kemi-Rovaniemi region and a gentleman from Kemi was a joyful reunion. I have been in the north as much as possible, so I can only wonder why I could not meet these important people before the Ultra Days. The Ultra Days wonderfully gather together likeminded people and I feel that it is an excellent opportunity to meet old and even older friends.<sup>68</sup> (Kolmonen 2013: 11)

Central in Kolmonen’s appreciation of the Ultra Days is the sense of being among people who are like himself and share the same interests and values. To be surrounded by these people left a “long-lasting feeling of happiness.” Collective identity is constituted by a sense of belonging to a

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<sup>67</sup> Finnish original: Ultrapäivillä ensimmäistä kertaa.

<sup>68</sup> Finnish original: Miellyttävä yhdessäolo satojen henkisistä asioista kiinnostuneitten kera 7.7. saakka tuotti rauhallisen, pitkään onnelisena jatkuvan olotilan...Vanhojen ja vieläkin vanhempien tuttavieni tapaamiset ehkä päivien kaikkein parasta antia. Muutamat vanhat tuttavat ihmettelivät, kuinka voinkaan olla vasta ensimmäistä kertaa Ultrapäivillä. Niinpä. On vaikea määrittää, kuinka pitkäaikaisia tuttuja vanhat läheiset tuttavat loppujen lopuksi ovatkaan. Käsitykseni mukaan pieni piiri pyörii elämästä toiseen. Ultrapäivillä jälleentapasin, tässä elämässä aiemmin tapaamattomia, sieluja. Kolmen leidin Kemi-Rovaniemi alueelta ja kemiläisen herrasmiehen tapaaminen olivat jälleennäkemisen riemua. Pohjoisessa olen niin paljon kuin mahdollista, tähän perustuen voi ihmetellä, että eikö näitä tärkeitä voinut tavata jo ennen Ultrapäiviä. Ultrapäivät kokoavat kiitettävästi samanhenkisiä ja koen, että siellä tarjoutuu loistava mahdollisuus tavata vanhoja ja vieläkin vanhempia tuttaviani.

group of people who have something in common. As David Snow (2001) points out, an essential characteristic of collective identity consists of a “sense of ‘one-ness’ or ‘we-ness’ anchored in real or imagined experiences among those who comprise the collectivity.” For Kolmonen, this “sense of one-ness or we-ness” includes a cosmic dimension as he identifies “the three ladies” and “the gentleman from Kemi” as friends he had known in a previous existence. The Ultra Days is an opportunity for him to meet these “important people” that he had not yet met during this particular lifetime.

When I asked Luukanen-Kilde about the Ultra Days, where she has lectured ten times, she highlighted the openness towards the paranormal as one of the best things about the event:

Ramstedt: Well, what do you think about the Ultra Days? What are good about them and what draws you here?

Luukanen-Kilde: Well, the weather here is for some strange reason always, always beautiful. No matter if it’s rainy or cold elsewhere, at the Ultra Days the weather is always warm and beautiful. And here I think there is this sort of positive energy. Here are people who have themselves had experiences or are interested in issues in the fields of the paranormal and ufology. In other words, one does not have to be afraid when one talks, it’s just like what kind of experience did you have –and oh – you had that kind of experience. Meeting, so to speak, likeminded people once a year, so I think it is very positive that this is organized...

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: ...That is the way the word spreads. Those who are skeptics and who have a mocking attitude towards everything else than this three-dimensional world, they won’t come here.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Because here you could like by accident even learn something (laughter), or something like that. No, they, they, they...total dismissal. Here there is a casual atmosphere and one can talk with whomever.<sup>69</sup> (IF mgt 2014/025)

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<sup>69</sup>Finnish original: Ramstedt: Juu. No mitä sä pidät Ultra-päivistä? Mikä tääl on hyvää ja vetää tänne?

During the event, she explains that the surroundings seem affected by people's "positive energy" and the weather is always nice though it may be bad elsewhere. Although the secret power elite may through the use of electromagnetic weapons change weather patterns and create tornados, droughts, or rainstorms<sup>70</sup>, the Ultra Days are safe from this type of attack. Luukanen-Kilde emphasizes meetings between likeminded people, and the dissemination of information about the reality of paranormal phenomena as the most important functions of the Ultra Days. The people who visit the event are interested in the paranormal and are, according to Luukanen-Kilde, essentially different from the skeptics who do not realize that there lies something beyond "this three dimensional world." As mentioned in the section on identity, both personal identity and group identity have a relational character. Collective identity is constituted of a sense of oneness that is created in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of "others" (Snow 2001). In everyday society, one might have to be cautious when talking about paranormal phenomena, but at the Ultra Days "one does not have to be afraid." At the Ultra Days, one is among people who understand and accept you. Moreover, Luukanen-Kilde discursively constructs the identity of the people who visit the Ultra Days in contrast to the skeptics "who won't come here." The Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is constructed as consisting of a certain group of people. The polar opposite of these people are the skeptics who totally

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Luukanen-Kilde: No tääl on aina, aina kaunis ilma, jostain kummallisesta syystä. Oli muualla mitä tahansa, sateista tai kylmää, niin Ultra-päivillä on kaunis ilma ja lämmintä. Ja tääl on semmonen positiivinen energia mun mielestä. Tääl on ihmisiä joilla on ollu itsellä kokemuksia tai ovat itse kiinnostuneita asioista, jotka on niinku paranormologian, ufologian alalla. Elikä toisin sanoen ei tarte pelätä puhuessaan, vaan kaikki on et mikä on sun kokemus ja et ai sul oli tämmönen. Siis se on samanhenkisten, lainausmerkeissä, ihmisten kohtaaminen ja kun se on kerran vuodessa niin musta se on erittäin positiivista et tätä järjestetään.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Koska sana leviää sitte. Eihän ne jotka on skeptikkoja ja tuota suhtautuu ivallisesti kaikkeen muuhun paitsi tähän kolmedimensionaaliseen maailmaan, niin eihän ne tule tänne.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Koska täällä vois niinku vahingossa oppia jotain, taikka jotakin muuta [naurahten]. Ei ne, ne ne.. Täysin torjuntaa. Tääl on rentoa meininkiä ja voi jutella kenen kans tahansa.

<sup>70</sup> Luukanen-Kilde has several times mentioned this in her lectures. For example during lectures that I attended at the Cosmic Para Days in Turku 2013 and at the Ultra Days in 2014.

dismiss the paranormal. The only thing the skeptics can offer is their “mocking attitude.”

### **Practices and bodily dimensions of the scene**

Within the Fringe-Knowledge scene the discourse of unity is not merely constructed through language. The most common commodities at different alternative spiritual fairs are books of different sorts. One could thus talk about a form of armchair religiosity, where the main activity consists of reading different books about Fringe-Knowledge phenomena. Although reading is probably one of the most central activities in the Fringe-Knowledge scene in general, the discourse of unity and togetherness is also created and expressed in other ways. Different physical activities and bodily dimensions of the scene should not be underestimated.

At different events, people turn up and sit together in the same room listening to the same lecturer. The body is sharing the same space with other bodies. Everybody in the audience is sitting down and listening to a lecturer talk about aliens, past lives or invisible energies. The room where the lecture is held is an enclosed space in which fringe ideas are listened to, if not seriously, at least respectfully. Often people take notes in order to be sure that they remember the content of the lecture. In this setting no one is laughing, and only very rarely does someone criticize the lecturer for his or her ideas. When mainstream media report on some Fringe-Knowledge related issue, for example UFOs or paranormal phenomena, the narrative is usually mocking or skeptical and debunking. The nature of the typical Fringe-Knowledge event is, however, different. In this setting there is a shared attitude and approach towards Fringe-Knowledge related issues; they should be taken seriously. People have usually paid some amount of money, ranging from anything between ten to several hundred of euros to participate in the event.

At some events, like the 2012 and UFO Conference (2011) and the Ultra Days (2014) some lecturers asked the audience to stand up and that people should look deep into the eyes of the person who one sat next to. At the 2012 and UFO Conference, the host Ari Kero asked the participants to hug the person that they were sitting next to. I heard some nervous laughter in the room and had the impression that most people, however, seemed to find the situation a bit awkward.

Some events may also include some type of physical exercise or meditation. At *Talviset Tähtipäivät* (The Winterly Star Days) in 2011 a group meditation was held on the last evening of the event. The mediation was called *Perinteinen Kosmisen Rauhan ja Maan Palvelus* (Traditional Service for Earth and Cosmic Peace). The participants gathered in a large room where chairs were placed alongside the walls, forming a big circle. At one end of the room, candles were burning in a large pyramid shaped candleholder made out of dark metal. UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen, who together with his wife is the chief organizer of the event, explained that we should meditate and open up ourselves for cosmic contacts. Then his wife Eija Riikonen read "The Mythical Call," which is a story or statement about certain beings from other star systems having been incarnated upon earth and having an important mission in saving or healing the planet. This was followed by a silent meditation during which we all sat silently on our chairs with closed eyes for about 45 minutes. After the mediation, Riikonen explained that as we had meditated together, our combined spiritual energy had attracted different extraterrestrial beings. Riikonen told us that he had with his "inner eye" (*sisäisellä silmälläni*) seen various extraterrestrial beings enter the room. After this, he asked the other participants to recount what they had experienced during the mediation. At the beginning, only a few people said something, mainly about aliens and angels being in the room. One participant had experienced a bright light lighting up the room. Riikonen commented on each testimony, validating that extraterrestrials may take different forms. In some instances, the stories became interlinked as several persons participated in the discussion and commented on somebody else's story. Riikonen even had to ask the participants to take turns talking as they started talking on top of each other. The testimonies became more elaborate and fantastic as the discussion progressed. One man told us that three angels of light had come down and danced in the middle of the room, another participant told about a flying saucer landing, and so on (Ramstedt, field notes).

After the meditation and discussion, it was time for *Perinteiset Kosmiset Tanssit* (The Traditional Cosmic Dances). I had expected this to be some sort of spontaneous dancing, but it turned out to be ballroom dancing, such as tango, waltz, and foxtrot. Before the dance, Riikonen explained how ballroom dancing can be utilized as a means for spiritual growth. Riikonen and his wife went through various dance steps, showing in practice how each step conducted, and describing how each move and pirouette stimulates various chakras or energy centers in the body. Music

was put on and the Riikonen's waltzed around the room. After this the music continued to play, tea and snacks were served, and people mingled casually, talked and danced (Ramstedt, field notes).

The meditation and the dance at Talviset Tähtipäivät (The Winterly Star Days) provides an example of how meaning is constructed through both physical practices and language. The room where it takes place is an enclosed space and the participants are people who have spent a fair amount of time and money to take part in the event. "The Mythical Call" discursively constructs the purpose of the people being present; they are part of an elite supra-human group that holds the fate of the planet in their hands. The meditation and dance constitute activities that strengthen group identity (Ramstedt, field notes).

However, the activities *in and of themselves* are in no way unique in Finnish society. Meditation of various forms have become rather mainstream society as meditation and mindfulness are endorsed in mainstream lifestyle magazines, by celebrities, are practiced at kindergartens, universities and businesses. Concerning dancing, the annual music festival *Tangomarkkinat* focusing on Tango-music organized in the city of Seinäjoki, is one of the largest festivals in Finland. What is, however, distinctive for The Winterly Star Days is the discursive construction, which provides the particular interpretative framework for how these activities should be understood. The meditation is a way to open up for cosmic contacts and to heal the planet. Dancing is endorsed, not only because of its supposed health benefits, its social aspects, or it being fun. Dancing, as discursively constructed by Riikonen, serves a higher purpose, namely spiritual development.

At night at the Ultra Days participants may take part of different mediation practices, workshops, and discussion events. When I visited the Ultra Days in 2011 and 2014, I participated in the so-called "Midnight Meditation." (See figure 8). On the grounds of the Kuortane Sports Resort Center a *kota* (a type of tent or hut used by many northern indigenous peoples) was raised. Outside it were benches, some tables, and a grill on which sausages were grilled. After about half past ten or so people started gathering at the spot, chatting with each other, buying grilled sausages, coffee, and pastries. The official program started at twenty past eleven. Ari Kero, who organized the event *UFO conference. Cosmic Counciousness and the Changes of 2012*, explained that we should meditate in order to calm

ourselves down, and help to heal Mother Nature. By meditating collectively, we could also have an impact on many world problems. We could stop wars, hunger and so on. Kero explained that we during the meditation could sit in whatever position that was comfortable for us. Some people sat normally on benches, others on the ground, some sat in a Lotus-position. A man in his late thirties started playing on a Tibetan singing bowl that produced an eerie sound. Afterwards people gave applause and mingled casually.

In 2007 Juha Tulkki, a Finnish homeopath and sexual advisor, led a meditation in the morning at the Ultra Days. On the *Ultra* website an invitation to the meditation event was published:

Be a part in the healing-work, the waters need our love and attention really much and together we are able to achieve great results! Now it is time to work for the good of nature, so that we leave our children with clean waters. Healing of the water is done at the same time all around Finland. All waters are connected to each other and they share information among themselves.<sup>71</sup> (ultra-lehti.com c)

The idea to have this mediation was influenced by people in an online discussion group on *Yahoo!* called "Sister and Brotherhood of The Holy Earth" (SBTHE), in which people could write in either Finnish or English. In the invitation, people were also recommended to read the New York Times bestseller *The Hidden Messages in Water* by Japanese author Masaru Emoto (1943–2014) (translated to Finnish in 2005) (ultra-lehti.com c). A person who goes under the name "Tara" covered the healing event in Ultra 9/2007. According to the article, over a hundred visitors joined the healing event at the Ultra Days. A picture depicts a large amount of people standing at the Kuortane-lake holding out their hands with the caption: "We did something amazingly great!"<sup>72</sup> In total, six hundred people in Finland and abroad had helped to heal the water. One of the participants received this information by using a pendulum. The article also tells readers that they can continue in the healing work by using a homeopathic

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<sup>71</sup> Finnish original: Ole yhtenä mukana parantamistyössä, vesistöt kaipaavat rakkauttamme ja huomiointiamme todella paljon ja me pystymme yhdessä saamaan suuria tuloksia aikaan! Nyt on aika toimia luonnon hyväksi, jotta lapsemme saavat jälkeemme puhtaat vesistöt! Veden parantamista tehdään samana hetkenä ympäri Suomea. Kaikki vesi on yhteydessä toisiinsa ja ne vaihtavat informaatioita keskenään.

<sup>72</sup> Finnish original: Teimme jotain valtavan suurta!

brew: “sea and lake-drops” could be attained from Juha Tulkki for a voluntary fee. The article informs that one may put up to three drops in a lake or other body of water at a time (Tara 2007: 14).

The bodily dimensions of the scene; gathering together in order to listen to lecturers, the midnight meditations at the Ultra Days, the meditation for cosmic peace at the Winterly Star Days, followed by the cosmic dance, or walking around in the park near the old library in Tampere with divining rods on *Maasäteilypäivä* (Earth Radiation Day), are all what Norman Fairclough (2003) would refer to as enactments of certain types of discourses (See figure 9 for dowsing). The enactment of discourse takes place when “imagined activities, subjects, social relations etc...become real activities, subjects, social relations etc.” (Fairclough 2003: 207). The above-mentioned activities are all examples of how discourses on Fringe-Knowledge are played out physically and bodily. That people gather to walk around in the park with metal rods in their hands is the outcome of discourses on the existence of ley-lines, suppressed knowledge of 16<sup>th</sup> century occultism and folk-wisdom, and the usefulness of dowsing in everyday life. Likewise, that about one hundred people stand in a lake with water up to their waistlines holding hands is only understandable to the people involved and to outsiders if one acknowledges the interlinked discourses involved in this type of behavior; discourses on healing, discourses on ecology, and discourses of invisible energies.

What do these enactments of discourses mean concerning the collective identity of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene? One can look at these activities as contributing in creating and strengthening the collective identity of the scene. The activities are, on one hand, the product of certain discourses. In other words, these activities would not exist if there were no underlying discourses that would underpin and encourage their enactment. On the other hand, the activities are also in themselves discursive. They who join the “Cosmic Dance” or engage in collective meditation do so because they think that they are special people who have the capacity to heal or save the planet.

#### **5.1.4 The (relative) Lack of Discord**

As the Fringe-Knowledge scene is filled with ideas and worldviews that do not seem to be compatible, or even seem to stand in direct opposition to each other, one could expect that there would be much more discord in



the scene than there actually is. People seldom criticize each other or point out that some ideas are quite incompatible. If there are angels, aliens and nature spirits, how do these relate to the mysteries in the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982)? If one can become healthy through the power of the mind alone, why should we drink fruit smoothies or go on some alternative diet?

At the conference 2012 Now. A New Age — A New Human Being, that was held in Tampere in 2010, a lecturer told the audience that every one of us had lived on the continent of Atlantis in a previous incarnation. The lecture was followed by a question and answer period. The UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen was very skeptical towards the statement and asked if he had understood it correctly. According to his worldview, there are myriads of habited planets across the universe and all sorts of beings are incarnated upon earth. Therefore, the claim that we have all at some point lived on Atlantis is not compatible with his own worldview, according to which many people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene originate from other star systems. However, the lecturer explained that according to the linear sense of time that we have in our three dimensional world, it is of course not correct to make such a statement. But, the lecturer continued, if we look at it from a five or six dimensional space-time continuum, people who might not have existed on Atlantis will live there at some point in the future. Riikonen seemed quite happy with this explanation (Ramstedt, field notes). This exemplifies how people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene seem to find ways to negotiate and combine worldviews when confronted with statements and ideas that seem incompatible.

The general lack of discord within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene cannot simply be explained by the creative combination of different worldviews. Imagination and combination of different ideas is certainly characteristic for the scene, but the relative lack of disharmony and conflict may be better understood if we also look at three other interlinked ideas that permeate the scene: individualism, perennialism, and the idea of the world as an illusion.

As the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene highlights the authority of the individual, it would be considered wrong or at least rude to interfere with someone else's spiritual development. As mentioned earlier, the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association, The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge, *Ultra* and the Ultra Days, aspire to openness and inclusiveness in almost

every form of Fringe-Knowledge and epistemology. The authority on what is useful knowledge lies with the individual.

Another rather widespread idea in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is the idea of perennialism, i.e. the belief that the core of all religious traditions actually is grounded in a common universal truth. In this kind of thought, religions are considered to contain an exoteric and an esoteric side. The exoteric part varies with the multitude of gods, rituals and codes of behavior in different religions. According to perennialist thinking, however, religions also contain a deeper esoteric side. This essence or core of different faiths is considered the same, as all religions address notions of good and evil and the meaning of life. Perennialist thought is found in different forms in Theosophy, the writings of Aldous Huxley, in Jungian psychology, and within much of Western esotericism in general (Duggan 2014: 99)

During my interview with lecturer Veli-Martin Keitel, he explained how the same types of concepts and ideas are found in mythologies all across the globe. In the following excerpt, he explains how he protected himself when he was being harassed by aliens:

Keitel: ...at that point I had learned the concept of Christ Light, and for me this Christ energy represents a state beyond good and evil, a kind of original light, the light of love that the duality of good and evil does not reach, so that when you have these, so to speak, dark forces and surround yourself with Christ light they can't get through...I played around with the idea that when one in these typical vampire-movies protects oneself from vampires with a crucifix, it is not in itself a meaningful object but it represents the Christ light, so you can do that with whatever sign that represents that to you. I don't either myself use a cross, but if they don't come [dark forces] it is not because of Christian symbolism, but the meaning of the cross is that it is like a sword....

Ramstedt: Mm...

Keitel: ...in that case it is this sort of protecting sword of Christ consciousness, and in my case it links to the Celtic Arthurian legend where the sword is Excalibur, and in a way I feel closer to the Arthurian version of the Christ myth than to the Middle Eastern version.

Ramstedt: Mm...

Keitel: It is quite much the same type of content although it is set in a different cultural environment and in a later time period.<sup>73</sup> (IF mgt2014/015)

For Keitel, the Arthurian legend is basically the same as the Christian legend. The symbols may differ, but for him the underlying meaning and message is the same. The “Christ Myth” is one version, the “Arthurian legend” another. According to this thinking, it does not matter which mythology appeals to you, because all mythologies contain the same stories and archetypes. Nor does Keitel consider it awkward that he found inspiration for his use of the cross/sword symbol in vampire fiction. The archetypes and stories in different mythologies are the same and can also be found in popular culture.

A third common concept in the Fringe-Knowledge scene is that of our world as a dream or an illusion. The idea of the world being in a state of constant change stems from the Hindu and Buddhist concepts of *Maya*. The idea of the world as a place of an ever-changing and illusory quality was introduced in the West by theosophists, and later picked up and modified by various New Age authors (Hanegraaff 1998: 115; 259–260).

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<sup>73</sup> Finnish original: Keitel: ...siihen mennessä mä olin oppinut tämän niin sanotun Kristusvalo käsitteen, ja tota se on niinkun tää Kristusenergia mulle edustaa niinku tällaista tilaa hyvän ja pahan niinku pääsemättömissä joka on tämmöinen niinku alkuperäinen valo, rakkauden valo johon niinku tämmöinen hyvän ja pahan kaksinaisuus ei niinku ulotu, eli silloin jos on tämmöisiä niin sanottuja niinku pimeitä tahoja ja Kristusvalo otat ympärillesi ne ei pääse siitä läpi koska se en semmoista niinkun, visualisoit sen ja pyydät sen itseesi, niin se niinku tulee ja sun ei tarvi tavallaan itse edes tietää mitä se on koska siihen tuntuu riittävän vaan se niinku tahto, että mä haluan sen itseni suojaksi ja tästähän tuli sitten myöhemmin, mä vähän hulin vuoksi leikittelin vähän sillä ajatuksella että kun näissä tyypillisissä vampyyrielokuvissahan tota noin suojaudutaan vampyyreistä ottamalla krusifiksi ja se ei oo niinkään merkityksellinen objekti siinä vaan että se symbolisoi sitä Kristusvaloa, että eli sen voi tehdä ihan millä hyvänsä merkillä joka sulle edustaa sitä, että en mä itekkään käytä mitään ristiä siinä mutta, jos ei niinku tule se ei oo siinä kristillisessä merkityksessä vaan se ristin merkitys on se että se on niinku miekka...

Ramstedt: Mm.....

Keitel: ...eli silloin se on tämmöinen suojeleva Kristustotuuden miekka ja sitten se kytkeytyy tähän niinkun mun kohdalla sitten tähän kelttiläiseen Arthurmytologiaan jossa tää miekka on excalibur ja se tavallaan tää Arthuriaaninen versio tästä Kristusmyytistä on mulle läheisempi kuin sitten tämä Lähi-idän versio.

Ramstedt: Mm. Mm.

Keitel: Että sehän on hyvin pitkälti niinku samantyyppistä sisältöä siellä vaikka se sijoittuu toisenlaiseen kulttuuriympäristöön ja vähän myöhempään aikaan.

Timo Teide recalls a sort of spiritual revelation that came to him in his late teens:

Teide: It was a phase in my youth, at first I did not have that remarkable experiences, but then I started having experiences which told me that some things are real, although they in this world seem like dreams. And as my understanding has expanded this situation has turned upside down, that it is actually so that what one experiences, where we are living now, this is not real, but what we actually are, our inner spiritual selves are real and permanent. All that is limited to time and space is temporary and essentially unreal. But still we live in this world as if it was real, but there is a great difference if you live thinking this world is real, or if you live as if this world is real, but that you realize and know that is like a temporary dream...

Ramstedt: Mm...

Teide: ...that people call life.<sup>74</sup> (IF mgt 2014/014)

A book that had a great impact on Teide was *I am that* by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (first published in 1973). The work is a collection of texts on *Shiva Advaita*, or nondualistic Hindu philosophy. A main theme in this philosophy is that the way to spiritual self-realization lies in giving up one's identification with the physical body and the physical world. The book has been a great success in the West and has received praise from authors like Deepak Chopra and Eckhart Tolle. In contrast to referring to religious tradition or lineage, which is common in many Hindu traditions, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj instead stresses his own experiences. The authority of the individual, in contrast to tradition, is one of the characteristic elements in the Fringe-Knowledge scene and in New Age

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<sup>74</sup>Finnish original: Teide: Se oli sellaista nuoruusvaihetta, että ei ollut mitään ihmeellisempiä kokemuksia, mut sit alkoi tosiaan tulla semmoisia kokemuksia jotka niinku iteselle, ja niinku kertoi siitä että tietyt asiat ovat totta vaikka ne tässä maailmassa vaikuttavat unelta ja loppujen lopuksi tää tilannehan on niinku oman ymmärtämisen laajentumisen myötä kääntynyt ihan päälaelleen, että tosiasiaassa niin, se mitä itse tällä hetkellä kokee sisimmissään on se että tämä missä me elämme on, tämä ei ole totta, vaan tota se mitä me todella olemme on sisäisesti se henkinen minä, niin se on totta ja pysyvä. Että kaikki mikä rajoittuu niinku aikaan ja paikkaan, on ei-pysyvää, ja epätodellista perimmiltään. Mutta, silti tätä maailmaa toki eletään tässä ja ikään kuin se olisi totta, mutta ero on valtavan suuri, että elääkö tätä maailmaa luullen sen olevan totta, vai elääkö tätä maailmaa kuin se olisi totta, mutta silti sisimmissään tunnistaa ja tietää sen, että tää on vaan ikään kuin hetkellinen uni...

Ramstedt: Mm...

Teide: jota ihmiset nimittää elämäksi.

spirituality in general. Timo Teide highlights his own experiences as central in leading him to question the nature of reality.

There are many interlinked reasons to the relative scarcity of discord within the scene. The reasons stated here include the strong emphasis on individualism and the individual's right to choose his or her own worldview, an idea of perennialism, and the view of life as essentially a dreamlike state, with the purpose of teaching individuals unique lessons. Even so, there still occur instances when opinions differ, worldviews clash, and discord arises.

Luukanen-Kilde considered the Ultra Days an important channel for spreading information and gaining new important knowledge not discussed in the mainstream media. In my interview with her, she highlighted the open and accepting atmosphere of the event. At the Ultra Days, she said, people are able to talk freely about their own experiences with likeminded individuals (IF mgt 2014/025). As I had noted that people within the scene may hold and present views that stand in stark contrast to one another, or even seem to refute one another, I asked her how people get along with each other. She recounted occasions when she had been criticized and discussed the possible motivations of the people attacking her:

Ramstedt: Well, in this field of Fringe-Knowledge, there are many opinions and strong opinions, then do people always get along with each other, or...?

Luukanen-Kilde: That is a really good question. I do not know how people get along, but at least I know that one famous ufologist has ruthlessly been attacking me for at least twenty years, and has publicly claimed that I am mentally ill and a schizophrenic, and that my lectures should literally be cancelled. And once when I was on my way on a flight from Norway to an event where it was agreed I would lecture, I suddenly received a notification that the event was cancelled, the building could not be rented. Somebody went and checked and at the school there was only a piece of paper stating that Luukanen's lecture is cancelled. It was an empty school and empty classroom. It was deliberately that this person had stopped this lecture. So I can only ask what was the motive for this? Envy is one motive, no doubt about that. In Finland we are extremely envious. And another motive is that among ufologists, parapsychologists, and other people connected to these fields, there are unfortunately always people who are recruits of

intelligence services. They are everywhere, even here. SUPO [The Finnish Security Intelligence Service] is surely at every Ultra Days-event and the CIA might also be. And they listen to everything, and if something comes up [too sensitive information], they attack. They have not taken anything from me now, but almost every previous time when I have been at that cottage [where she was living at the Ultra Days]. That is why I keep my bag with me, because if I leave something behind it might disappear. Not only because some SUPO agent might go inside the cottage, but because my things might dematerialize<sup>75</sup> (IF mgt 2014/025)

According to Luukanen-Kilde, normal human envy might be a reason for discord. As she is a bestselling author and popular lecturer, it is obvious that other people might be envious of her status within the scene. When talking about discord, she elaborated on how most of the conflicts seem to stem from the interference of the secret power elite she believes controls the world. Various intelligence agencies recruit ufologists and paranormal investigators to work as spies and to cause confusion and conflict within the scene. In the same interview, she also mentioned an English researcher who was offered money to spread disinformation about crop circles:

Luukanen-Kilde: But they have such shocking amounts of money, for example, I know an English researcher, I don't care to say the name, he

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<sup>75</sup>Finnish original: Ramstedt: No sitte tällä rajatiedon alueella, niin on monta mielipidettä ja vahvoja mielipiteitä, että tuleeko ihmiset toimeen aina toistensa kanssa tai..?

Luukanen-Kilde: Toi on kyllä hyvä kysymys. Mä en tiedä tuleeko toimeen, mutta mä tiedän ainakin että eräs tunnettu ufologi niin tuota on hyökänny mua, jo ainakin kohta kaksikymmentä vuotta, voimakkaasti mua vastaan ja julkisesti väittänyt että mä oon mielisairas ja skitsofreeni ja tuota mun luennot pitää kirjallisesti tuo.. ömm... esittänyt että pitää lopettaa Ja kerran on, kun olin menossa, kun oli sovittu että lennän Norjasta niin tuota, oli sovittu missä mä luennoin, niin yhtäkkiä tuli ilmoitus että on peruutus, että sitä taloa ei saada. Ja siellä joku meni sitten tsekkaamaan, niin siel oli koululla vaan lappu et Luukasen luento on peruutettu, ja se oli tyhjä koulu ja tyhjä luokkahuone. Eli se oli tahallisesti, tämä henkilö, oli sen estäny kun se pysty estämään. Niin mä voin kysyy vaan että mikä on tällaisen motiivi? Kateus on yks motiivi, ilman muuta, Suomessa ollaan hirveen kateellisia. Ja toinen motiivi on se että valitettavasti niin ufotutkijoiden, parapsykologien ja muitten alaan liittyvien ihmisten joukossa on aina tiedustelupalveluitten rekryytit, ne on aina. Ne on joka paikassa, ne on täälläkin. SUPO on varmasti joka ikisessä Ultrapäivässä ja voi olla CIA:kin. Ja ne kuuntelee kaikki, ja sitten jos, jos tulee jotain niin ne hyökkää. Mul on esimerkiksi, toistaseks ei oo viel viety mitään, mut melkein joka kerta, kun mä oon ollu tuolla [paikan nimi?, 23:05] aikaisemmin, siks mä kannan aina kassia mukana, koska tuota en mä voi jättää mitään, ne häipy. Ne häipy, mutta se ei oo vaan että joku supolainen ehkä menee sisälle ja vie, vaan ne myöskin dematerialisoituu.

has moved to America, well he himself told me that he was promised a million dollars for one appearance on television in which he would have given wrongful information about these crop circles. A million dollars for a television appearance! What would you do, if you were offered a million for writing some trash? <sup>76</sup> (IF mgt 2014/025)

The main reason for discord within the scene, according to Luukanen-Kilde, is due to the involvement of various agents of the intelligence agencies. They are funded with “shocking amounts of money” and have access to technology that is more advanced than anything we currently think possible. The Finnish Security Intelligence Service, and perhaps even the CIA, monitor every Ultra Days event. These clandestine forces stalk and harass people interested in Fringe-Knowledge. According to her, being an advocate of Fringe-Knowledge can even be lethal. Covering the ufological *X-Conference* in the USA for Ultra in 2008, Luukanen-Kilde wrote about how the late ufologist John Mack (1929–2004) died under mysterious circumstances (Luukanen-Kilde 2008: 12).

The secret power elite does not only employ clandestine agents to do their evil bidding; with the help of advanced technology they are able to “dematerialize” objects. Because of this, Luukanen-Kilde told me, she always carries her handbag with her. This was not the first time she had mentioned dematerialization; she had previously brought up the subject in a lecture at the 2013 *Cosmic Para Days* in Turku. She told the audience that the World Trade Center buildings did not collapse after the airplanes had crashed into them, but were actually dematerialized and then transported into another dimension. Several people in the audience clearly seemed confused by this statement. When a member of the audience asked what had happened to all the rubble, Luukanen-Kilde replied that there never was any rubble; all the news footage of the towers collapsing had been faked. Although the Fringe-Knowledge scene is riddled with rather peculiar and fantastic ideas, Luukanen-Kilde’s claim concerning the interdimensional transportation of the Twin Towers (which would also demand fakery of all the footage showing the planes crashing, the buildings burning, the collapse of the towers, as well as placing phony

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<sup>76</sup> Finnish original: Mutta niil on hirmu suuret rahat, esimerkiks mä tiedän erään englantilaisen tutkijan, en viitti sanoo nimee, se on muuttanu Amerikkaan, niin ite se kertoi mulle että hänelle luvattiin miljoona dollaria yhdestä TV-esiintymisestä jossa hän ois antanu näistä cropcircleistä virheellistä tietoo. Miljoona dollaria yhestä tv:stä! Mitäs tekisit, jos sulle tarjotaan et nyt kirjotat vähän soopaa kun saat miljoonan?

rubble at Ground Zero) seemed to test the limits of plausibility of an audience that is no stranger to unconventional and unorthodox thinking.

At the same event another participant asked Luukanen-Kilde about the existence of “reptilians,” a race of malign reptile-like extraterrestrial beings popularized by British conspiracy theorist David Icke. There was laughter from the audience, indicating that they thought the idea of shape-shifting reptilians rather silly. David Icke and his reptilian hypothesis has been covered a number of times in *Ultra*: 11/1997, 01/2001, 7-8/2006, 10/2009 (ultra-lehti.com: d) and should thus be known to readers of the magazine. In her answer, Luukanen-Kilde distanced herself from Icke, claiming that there is no such thing as a race of reptilians, although some government agencies may try to trick people into believing such things through hypnosis or mind control. Luukanen-Kilde outright dismissed the British conspiracy theorist by refuting a component central to his worldview. By taking a clear position against Icke’s ideas, she might possibly have caused resentment among Icke-sympathizers in the audience and in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene.

Harassment is a recurring element in In Luukanen-Kilde’s writings and statements. That people who investigate UFOs and talk openly about paranormal phenomena are harassed serves to construct ufology and parapsychology as serious and groundbreaking sciences; why would intelligence agencies otherwise spend time and money on surveillance and harassment? When mainstream media does not cover parapsychology, it can be seen as part of the conspiracy. By portraying her critics as agents for clandestine forces, Luukanen-Kilde frees herself from all types of critique. In her mind, criticism towards her is not based on reasonable arguments but stems from a motive to shut her down. For her critique becomes additional proof that she is right.

### **Discord, gender and sexuality**

Within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, there are divided opinions on how sexuality, gender, and spirituality interlink. Luukanen-Kilde and UFO contactee Riikonen have different views on how the human soul is constituted. Riikonen argues that men and women are essentially different, because their bodies are dominated by different forms of karmic energies. A woman who acts in a too dominating way is not karmically balanced, neither is an overly submissive man. Every female soul has a male soulmate, and vice versa. When both of these souls become



spiritually evolved, they fuse into a single higher being (Riikonen 2010: 145–146). In contrast, Luukanen-Kilde makes no such distinctions. The soul, according to her, is androgynous.

At his lectures at the Winterly Star Days and at The Cosmic Para Days, Riikonen explained the difference of male and female brains (See figure 10). The left part of the male brain is usually more dominant, while the female brain is dominated by its right side. This results in men being prone to logic and reason, women to emotion and intuition. This rather stereotypical view of the nature of the sexes also supports his explanation as to why ballroom dancing, for example tango, waltz or foxtrot, can be utilized as an important spiritual practice. When a man and woman dance together, the male and female energies harmonize each other. In addition, the dance movements themselves activate female and male energies in different ways. While dancing waltz and doing a clockwise turn, or a “feminine energy spiral,” female energies are activated and reinforced, while a counter-clockwise turn stimulates male energies. According to Riikonen, *devas*, a type of nature spirits, usually incarnate in female bodies while extraterrestrials tend to choose a male form (Ramstedt, field notes).

In contrast to Riikonen, Luukanen-Kilde makes no distinction between male and female brains. Luukanen-Kilde lectured for the tenth time at the Ultra Days in the summer of 2014. At that time LGBTQ issues were being discussed and debated in Finnish media and Pride Festivals were organized in many cities around the country. In her talks uploaded on the video sharing site YouTube, Luukanen-Kilde has several times commented on current events, such as the Finnish school shootings in 2007 and 2008, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and the 2011 terror attacks in Norway. When I interviewed her at the Ultra Days, she offered her own explanations for homosexuality and transsexuality:

Luukanen-Kilde: I think it is an important finding concerning out-of-body experiences, that the energy body does not have sexual organs or inner organs. And the lack of organs is not that big of a matter, it is vibrating energy, but the lack of sexual organs means that we are all neutral, androgynous, and physically we are then either male or female because we have to be because of reproduction. It explains a whole lot of different sexual experiences, it explains transsexuality, it explains homosexuality. It is totally clear that you fall in love with a person, not their genitals. And then especially if you have known the person in your

previous life, and if it has been some family relative or loved one, then of course the energy is still there.<sup>77</sup> (IF mgt 2014/025)

Luukanen-Kilde also highlighted LGBTQ-issues in her lecture at the event. She mentioned that she had sent a letter to another medical doctor, politician Päivi Räsänen, who at that time was the Minister of the Interior in the Finnish government. Räsänen, who was also the chairwoman of the Finnish Christian Democratic Party between 2004 and 2015, had been an outspoken critic of same-sex marriage, same-sex couple adoption rights, and the use of fertility treatments by single women and lesbian couples. In her lecture, Luukanen-Kilde mentioned that Räsänen quoted Genesis 1:27 in her speeches: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Luukanen-Kilde said that her letter to Räsänen was meant to educate the Minister about what actually was meant by the Old Testament verse. She argued that the Bible was correct in the matter, but that Räsänen had missed the point. God created human beings as *both* male and female. Our inner core, the “energy body,” is androgynous (Ramstedt, field notes).

While masculine and feminine energies must work in harmony, Kalevi Riikonen holds the view that sexual acts hinder us on our spiritual path. In his book *Universal Teachings from the Cosmos*, Kalevi Riikonen explains that “the more often we have sexual intercourse the more we draw down our consciousness to the lowest energy center”<sup>78</sup> (Riikonen 2010:154). Spiritual seekers should master their sexual impulses; failure leads to “...a waste of higher, subtle life energies”<sup>79</sup> (Riikonen 2010: 154). Due to excessive activity in the lowest energy centers, all kinds of violent and erotic films flourish and humanity obsesses about money and material

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<sup>77</sup> Finnish original: Luukanen-Kilde: Se on musta tärkeä löydös tässä ruumiistapoistumisilmiössä, että tässä energiaruumiissa ei ole seksuaalielimiä eikä sisäelimiä. Ja musta sisäelinten puuttuminen ei nyt oo niin iso asia, sehän on energiaa, värähtelevää, mutta se että jos ei oo seksuaalielimiä, niin sehän tarkoittaa että me ollaan kaikki neutraaleja, androgynejä, ja fyysisesti me ollaan sitten mies tai nainen, koska lisääntymistä varten täytyy olla. Se selittää hirveen paljon ihmisten erilaisia seksuaalisia kokemuksia ja muuta, se selittää transseksuaalisuuden, se selittää homoseksuaalisuuden. Siis se on ihan selvää, sä rakastut siihen ihmiseen, etkä sä sen sukupuolielimiin rakastu, siis periaatteessa. Ja sitten varsinkin jos sä oot tuntenu sen sun aikaisemmassa elämässä, ja se on ollu joku perheenjäsen tai rakastettu, niin tottakai, se energia on siellä tallella.

<sup>78</sup> Swedish original: ...men ju oftare vi har sexuellt umgänge desto mer drar vi ner vårt medvetande mot det lägsta energicentret.

<sup>79</sup> Swedish original: ...ett onödigt slöseri av högre subtila livsenergier.

wealth (Riikonen 2010: 272). As couples may occupy different levels of spiritual growth, Riikonen acknowledges this possibly leading to relational problems. If a person is on a lower level and craves more sex than his or her more enlightened partner, the couple can attempt to dampen the sexual impulse, steering the sexual energy in a more spiritual direction by engaging in various forms of energy channeling exercises. Riikonen's book contains a chapter called "Exercise in Controlling the Sexual Energy"<sup>80</sup>, that is intended to help people who have a strong sexual appetite (Riikonen 2010: 271–273).

Although Riikonen holds the view that the sexual drive is a lower, animalistic impulse that can hinder us on our spiritual path, he is a frequent contributor to *Star People* magazine. In stark contrast to Riikonen, Asko Nummela, editor in chief of the magazine, is an advocate of tantric practices. In my interview with Nummela, he describes himself as a person with a strong libido, a "free spirited man even oriented towards polyamory"<sup>81</sup> (IF mgt 2013/016). Instead of suppressing sexual desires one can, according to Nummela, practice Tantra in order to attain a higher state of consciousness. Except editing the magazine *Star People*, Nummela also maintains his own blog on the website *The World of Tantra* (Nummela 2014). When I interviewed him, he was quite open about his tantric practices. In his blog, he writes about Tantra and comments on various news articles about sexuality and relationships. For example, he wrote a blog entry about his views on an article in the Finnish tabloid newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat*. The article is about "Paula," a woman in her forties, whose husband no longer seems to want to have sex with her. Nummela feels sorry for Paula: "No one could presume that having sex two times a year is enough in a relationship"<sup>82</sup> (Nummela 2014). He ponders different possibilities about what Paula could do, as talking and expressing her feelings to her husband does not seem to help. Among the solutions could be finding a man for simply sexual encounters or then she and her husband could have some kind of polyamorous relationship.

Nummela's comments on sexuality make it clear that he views sex as an important part of a relationship and of human wellbeing in general.

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<sup>80</sup> Swedish original: Sexualenergins kontrollövning

<sup>81</sup> Finnish original: ...tämmöinen vapaamielinen, polyamoriaankin suuntautuva mies.

<sup>82</sup> Finnish original: Eihän kukaan voi olettaa että 2 kertaa vuodessa seksiä on suhteessa riittävästi.

Although Nummela and Riikonen differ in their views on the intersection between sexuality and spirituality, the two remain friends and Riikonen is a frequent contributor to *Tähteläiset*. This is an example of how members of the Fringe-Knowledge scene can collaborate and respect each other although they have rather differing opinions about certain issues.

### 5.1.5 Science and Fringe-Knowledge

There is an ambivalent relationship between established science and Fringe-Knowledge. Within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, our current scientific worldview is considered narrow and limited, as it fails to recognize spiritual and paranormal phenomena. However, in a cultural context dominated by scientific and rational discourse, it is not unusual for advocates of Fringe-Knowledge to claim a rational and scientific basis for their worldview.

As Olav Hammer notes in *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (2001), one of the most striking characteristics of esotericism and alternative spirituality has been the use of contemporary science, or at least scientific language and terminology, as a source of legitimacy. This was the case already with 19th century esoteric authors such as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the trend has been continued by various contemporary New Age authors (Hammer 2001: 203–204). Hammer has identified four different discursive strategies commonly employed by esotericists and New Age personas in their efforts to defend or reconcile the position of metaphysical claims in a world dominated by scientific discourse. The so-called “God of the gaps” arguments try to locate metaphysical truth claims outside the realm of established science. These types of truth claims may designate divine or supranormal agency to processes beyond our current scientific understanding, such as the transition from inorganic matter to life or the reasons behind the Big Bang. This position, as Hammer notes, may be an increasingly defensive position as science may progress and close certain gaps. Another type of strategy, described by Hammer, is based on conflict as it declares that science and reason are simply subordinate to revelation, which provides a truer form of knowledge. The third discursive strategy sees the realm of religion and spirituality and the realm of science as dealing with different types of questions. According to this type of argument, there are questions that science will never be able to answer, such as the meaning of life. The fourth type of discursive approach views

science and religion as compatible. The reason why science may not yet accept certain metaphysical truth claims, according to this approach, is because the scientific community has not yet advanced enough to prove them right (Hammer 2001: 203).

In my interviews with leading figures within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, all four discursive approaches to science are present. The most common position is that our current scientific understanding of the world is limited, and has not yet developed to recognize the reality of for example paranormal phenomena. These four approaches may also interlink and complement each other. For example, a person may stress the authority of personal experiences of supranormal character (a form of revelation) and also hold the view that science will in time prove the existence of paranormal phenomena (religion and science are compatible). An example of a combination of approaches is the book *Kuolemaa ei ole*, in which Luukanen-Kilde refers to alternative science claims while also claiming to have channeled her dead grandmother.

In section 5.1.2, I gave examples of how my interviewees had personal experiences of visitations by extraterrestrial forces. Among them was Pelttari's meeting with the alien Charles Bronson look-alike (IF mgt 2014/013) and Luukanen-Kilde's experience of extraterrestrial intervention during a car accident. These types of experiences are common elements in many religions and mythologies. For example, the Judeo-Christian traditions contain many stories about divine entities showing themselves for humans and intervening in order to save their lives. In the cases of Pelttari and Luukanen-Kilde, the authority of their claims are based on personal experience. These are claims that can be neither proven or disproven.

As science evolves and new scientific discoveries are made, there is hope that the scientific community will in time prove various Fringe-Knowledge-related claims to be factual. In this way, the Fringe-Knowledge scene is considered to consist of people who possess groundbreaking knowledge that will become tomorrow's science. As noted earlier, Marko Kananen explained that Fringe-Knowledge is a field that is constantly changing and expanding as it is situated in the gray area between the known and the unknown. He offers the metaphor of a balloon to understand the expansion of Fringe-Knowledge. As our understanding

of the world expands, so do the areas we do not know about (IF mgt 2013/015).

One interviewee presents the analogy of how people in the 19th century considered heavier-than-air flight impossible (IF mgt 2014/ 016). As another of my informants, a woman in her fifties interested in aliens and angels expresses it:

...at this point, if we think of what astronomy has brought us, what astrophysics has brought us, what quantum physics has brought to our attention, and all other different sciences, it is starting in an amazing way, at least in my view, to intersect with these spiritual traditions and worldviews...<sup>83</sup> (IF mgt 2013/013)

According to my interviewee, the scientific community is in fact making discoveries that actually prove the existence of paranormal phenomena and supranormal realities. The problem seems to lie in that scientists do not understand how their discoveries relate to Fringe-Knowledge ideas:

...if I look at mainstream science and the attitude prevailing there, they in a way reject our essence, our entirety, a completely amazingly awesome and broad chance, that is what bugs me sometimes.<sup>84</sup> (IF mgt 2013/013)

As I discussed in chapter 5.1.3, "Construction of Group Identity," the Fringe-Knowledge scene is discursively constructed by its adherents as a milieu whose members are all united by their shared interest in paranormal and spiritual matters. In the excerpt above, my informant discursively constructs the Fringe-Knowledge scene in terms of a unified community that is rejected by the mainstream scientific community. According to her, the scientific community is missing a remarkable opportunity in rejecting Fringe-Knowledge.

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<sup>83</sup>Finnish original: ...ja tällä hetkellä kun ajattelee mitä niin kuin astronomia on tuonu meille, mitä astrofysiikka on tuonu meille, mitä niin kuin kvanttifysiikka on tuonut meidän tietoisuuteen ja kaikki nää muut, niin alkaa niin upeesti jopa jo, ainakin mun näkemyksen mukaan limittäytyä näihin henkisiin traditioihin ja niihin näkemyksiin...

<sup>84</sup>Finnish original: ...sillä jos mä katon sitä tieteen valtavirtaa ja sitä asennetta mikä siellä on niin nehen tavallaan hylkää meidän olemuksesta, meidän kokonaisuudesta ne niin kuin täysin uskomattoman upeen laajan mahdollisuuden, niin se on se mikä minua nyt pielee joskus välillä.

This attitude towards science corresponds with what Hammer calls a “scientistic” approach (Hammer 2001: 203). This form of discursive approach views science and religion as compatible. According to my informant, the scientific community has already made discoveries that, to the adherents of Fringe-Knowledge, validate the existence of the paranormal. These discoveries “...intersect with these spiritual traditions and worldviews.” What irritates her is the stubbornness or stupidity of the mainstream scientific community when it fails to realize how Fringe-Knowledge relates to science and how Fringe-Knowledge could revolutionize current scientific paradigms.

Luukanen-Kilde also views the scientific community as slow to react and unwilling to change its dogmas and paradigms. The main reason why science and academia are so close minded is that the small power elite that governs the world in secrecy systematically represses knowledge about out-of-body experiences, technology, aliens, and alternative forms of healing and medicine. In her book *Salatut maailmamme* (*Our Secret Worlds* 2007), she depicts this secret elite in the following way:

The goal of the organization is money and absolute power. Its aim is actually communist — power and wealth to the poor, inheritance of capital is not allowed for anyone except the elite. The slave-military-agents are promised a house and wealth, a good living. But, first they have to earn it by killing the rightful owner of the house. The secret elite on the top of the pyramid invisibly controls the activity.<sup>85</sup> (Luukanen-Kilde 2007: 176)

According to this quote, the secret elite has sown division in the world population while its representatives themselves live a life of luxury. Luukanen-Kilde claims that the hidden power elite has developed science and technology that is fifty years ahead of what is currently generated at universities and scientific institutions. If the secret scientific discoveries about the universe would be revealed, they would, according to Luukanen-Kilde, have profound impacts on four major areas of our culture and way of life. These include our scientific institutions, religion,

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<sup>85</sup> Finnish original: Organisaation päämäärä on raha ja täysi valta. Tarkoitus on itse asiassa kommunistinen –köyhälistölle valta ja omaisuus, perittyä omaisuutta ei sallita kenellekään eliittiä lukuun ottamatta. Orjasotilasagenteille luvataan talo ja omaisuutta, hyvä toimeentulo. Ensin heidän on kuitenkin ansaittava se tuhoamalla talon oikea omistaja. Pyramidin huipulla oleva eliitti johtaa toimintaa näkymättömänä.

our economic system, and our view of humanity (Luukanen-Kilde 2007: 82–83; Luukanen-Kilde 1993: 19–21).<sup>86</sup> We would have to acknowledge that our current scientific worldview is fundamentally flawed and that the laws of physics would have to be rewritten. When knowledge of devices and technologies that create free energy is no longer suppressed, the stock market will crash. The economy would have to be fundamentally reorganized. The realization that there are other planets inhabited by other creatures much more advanced than us would present a challenge for theologians in the three Abrahamic religions. Lastly, when confronted by the fact that humankind is only one among many intelligent life forms in the universe, and a rather underdeveloped one, the ego of humankind would shatter.

As I pointed out at the beginning of this section, the relation between established science and Fringe-Knowledge is an ambivalent one. On the one hand, academia is seen as a moldy institution, unwilling to change. On the other hand, people with academic titles are often considered to have authority, and if an advocate of Fringe-Knowledge-related ideas happens to have an academic title, it affords that person increased credibility and trustworthiness. It is common for people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene to highlight that they have degrees in fields like nutrition sciences, pedagogics, or economics. This is an international trend and many spiritual authors are eager to present their background in academia to gain respectability.

At times academic expertise is exaggerated. In some cases, titles even turn out to be obtained through diploma mills, as in the case of American ufologist J.J. Hurtak, who presents himself as having two PhDs. The founder of scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, made several claims of both having received both esoteric knowledge in the East and having conducted groundbreaking research in nuclear physics in the West. His Doctor of Philosophy degree is, however, the product of a sham diploma mill called Sequia University. Critics point out that Hubbard's biography is largely fictional (Urban 2013: 66–67).

The clearest indications of the ways in which scientific expertise and degrees from established universities or centers of learning work to bolster

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<sup>86</sup> In her lecture at the UFO conference. Cosmic Consciousness and the Changes of 2012 in Tampere she mentioned all four reasons for secrecy about UFOs.



the authority of figures within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene can be seen in the popularity of two books dealing with paranormal phenomena. Luukanen-Kilde's *Kuolemaa ei ole* (There is no Death, 1982) and *Yliluonnollisten ilmiöiden ensyklopedia* (The Encyclopedia of Supernatural Phenomena, 2013) by Harri and Ilkka Virolainen. Arguably, one reason behind the popularity and success of both Luukanen-Kilde and the brothers Virolainen within the Fringe-Knowledge scene is that they are all able to claim academic expertise. Luukanen-Kilde was a certified medical doctor with a degree from the University of Turku and had worked as the chief medical officer of Finnish Lapland. The brothers Virolainen have PhDs in economics. In the introduction to an article in *Tähteläiset* written by Harri Virolainen, the author and article are introduced in the following way:

Doctor Harri Virolainen tells about his supernatural experiences, and about the content of the book "Encyclopedia of Supernatural Phenomena" authored with his brother. The amount of scientific data is enormous and the human potential is amazing – read and be amazed!<sup>87</sup> (Nummela 2014: 5)

The introduction mentions Virolainen by his academic title, telling the reader that the article is written by a highly educated person with direct ties to the scientific community. Another reference to science is made by highlighting the enormous "amount of scientific data" that the book builds on. In the introduction, there are two interlinked arguments for the existence of the paranormal. Both scientific data and Virolainen's own paranormal experiences are seen as authoritative.

An interview with Luukanen-Kilde in *Tähteläiset* begins with her presenting her impressive career achievements and national and international assignments. The following long quote illustrates how Luukanen-Kilde's authority as an intelligent, trustworthy, and stable person is discursively constructed by listing her professional achievements:

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<sup>87</sup> Finnish original: Tohtori Harri Virolainen kertoo yliluonnollisista kokemuksistaan, sekä veljensä kanssa kirjoittamasta "Yliluonnollisten ilmiöiden ensyklopedia"-kirjan sisällöstä. Tieteellisten aineiston määrä on valtava ja ihmisen potentiaali on uskomaton – lue ja hämmästy!

I am a soon 74-year-old physician-author living in Norway. I have lived in 10 countries and I speak six languages. Already in my teenage years I went to school in five different countries where my father who was a councilor of commerce sent me to learn other cultures and languages, so internationalism came early into my life. I started studying medicine in the first class at Oulu University and was the first of my class to graduate from the University of Turku in 1967. Through examination, I received a specialization in general medicine in Finland, I received qualifications in administration and tropical diseases from Karolinska institutet [Stockholm, Sweden], and passed the courses in social medicine at the Nordic School of Public Health in Göteborg. Among other things, I have worked as the Municipal Physician of Pelkosniemi and Savukoski, the Acting Chief Physician of Salo Regional Hospital, the Chief Municipal Physician of Lapland, the acting head of the division of the National Medical Board, during which I also temporarily acted as its director. I was also the director of the board of the Nursing School of Lapland, and the secretary of the Lapland branch of the National Defense Training Association. I was the first woman to receive the medal with a golden buckle from the National Defense University, after being a student and educator in national defense courses for over 6 months. I have been the Finnish representative at the WHO, medical advisor for the Red Cross in Malaysia and Indonesia, and directly after graduation...<sup>88</sup>(Tähteläiset 3/2013: 20)

The length of the quote is significant considering that it is taken from a magazine article. In comparison to books, the amount of words and pages that may comprise a magazine article is significantly limited. Rather than simply stating that Luukanen-Kilde is a medical doctor, the article goes on

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<sup>88</sup> Finnish original: Olen pian 74-vuotias Etelä-Norjassa asuva lääkäri-kirjailija. Olen asunut tai ollut töissä 10 maassa ja puhun kuutta kieltä. Jo teini-iässä kävin koulua viidessä maassa, jonne kauppaneuvoisäni minut lähetti oppimaan muita kulttuureja ja kieliä, joten kansainvälisyys tuli elämäni jo varhain. Aloitin lääketieteen opinnot Oulun yliopiston ensimmäisellä lääkärikurssilla ja valmistuin Turun yliopistosta v. 1967 ensimmäisenä kurssistani. Sain yleislääketieteen spesialiteetin Suomessa tentin kautta ja minulla on myös hallinnon pätevyys ja trooppisten tautien diplomi Karolinska Instituutista ja kävin sosiaalilääketieteen kurssit Nordiska hälsovårdskolanissa Göteborgissa. Olen toiminut mm. Pelkosniemen ja Savukosken kunnanlääkärinä, Salon Aluesairaалassa vt. Ylilääkärinä, Lapin lääninlääkärinä, Lääkintöhallituksen vt. toimisto ja osastopäällikkönä, jolloin toimin lyhyesti pääjohtajan sijaisena. Olin myös Lapin-Sairaanhoito-oppilaitoksen johtokunnan puheenjohtaja ja Lapin maanpuolustusyhdistyksen sihteerinä. Olen saanut Sotakorkeakoulun maanpuolustuskurssien ensimmäisenä naisena maanpuolustusmitalin kultaisella soljella, oltuani oppilaana ja kouluttajana maanpuolustuskursseilla yli 6 kk. Olen ollut Suomen edustajana WHO:ssa, Kansainvälisen Punaisen Ristin lääketieteellisenä neuvonantajana Malesiassa ja Indonesiassa ja heti valmisumiseni jälkeen...

presenting a great number of her assignments and merits, such as her position as the Chief Municipal Doctor of Lapland, medical advisor for the Red Cross, representative at the WHO, and so on. The fact that such a significant portion of the article is devoted to listing her merits clearly illustrates how these types of achievements are considered as important and relevant within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. These types of merits are highly valued in mainstream society in general. Listing them serves the purpose of discursively constructing the persona of Luukanen-Kilde as a highly educated, respectable, and trustworthy individual. If she has been able to act in these acclaimed positions and international assignments, then by implication she has to be a person of integrity and high stature.

The weight of higher education, when presenting paranormal claims, goes beyond the Fringe-Knowledge scene as both Luukanen-Kilde and the brothers Virolainen have also received much attention in mainstream media. Ilkka and Harri Virolainen have been covered in large Finnish newspapers, such as *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Aamulehti*, and have appeared on Finnish talk shows such as *Sarasvuo*. When Luukanen-Kilde achieved fame in the 1980s, she received much media attention because she was a medical doctor. Maarit Huovinen, who worked for the publishing house *Weilin + Göös* that published *Kuolemaa ei ole* commented on the success of the book in an article covering Luukanen-Kilde's life in the tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* in 2015: "If one considers that an academically educated, sophisticated person talks about those kinds of things, it will get people's attention..."<sup>89</sup> (Varjus 2015). According to Huovinen, the fact that Luukanen-Kilde was a medical doctor was the reason behind her literary success.

Although the dominant discourse within academia towards Fringe-Knowledge is to reject paranormal truth claims, my informants are convinced that many people working in the scientific community actually have quite positive attitudes towards Fringe-Knowledge. In my interview with Harri Virolainen, he said that after he and his brother became known for their book about paranormal phenomena, many colleagues and people in academia told them in private about their own experiences (IF mgt 2014/016). Finnish author Jukka Nieminen, who upholds the internet forum *Sinikivi*, assumes that especially many younger researchers and

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<sup>89</sup> Finnish original: Jos ajattelee, että akateemisesti koulutettu, sivistynyt ihminen puhuu tuollaisista asioista, niin herättäähän se ihmisten huomion,...

people at universities are frightened to talk openly about Fringe-Knowledge-related issues because it might harm their academic reputation:

Among younger researchers and these kinds of university dudes, they talk about their academic reputation that they guard. But, well...I have to say that in the long run, in the really long run, the people who...I have done this for 10–15 years...the people who primarily talk about their academic reputation and that they currently can't be stigmatized, they for some reason have not even later turned in to anything, perhaps they only become *leipätutkijoita* [bread-researchers] who no one hears about<sup>90</sup> (IF mgt 2013/014)

The Finnish slang word *leipätutkija* refers to a researcher who only does research in order to make a living. It is a derivation of the pejorative term *leipäpappi* (bread priest), which refers to a person who lacks religious and spiritual commitment and takes up priesthood solely for monetary reasons, i.e. to earn his or her bread. As an institution, Nieminen sees academia as a dogmatic and closed environment where it is difficult or even impossible to conduct groundbreaking research. People who play it safe, who do not make controversial scientific claims, fall into academic oblivion to never be heard from in public. In the quote above, one can also identify an idealized view of what science and academia actually should be like. Science should be bold and revolutionary and researchers should be daring and willing enough to put their academic reputations on the line. According to Nieminen, people in academia are holding back and are afraid (or incapable) of developing new ideas.

In his own literary production, Nieminen strives to change the current scientific paradigms. In the foreword to *The Lost Kingdom of the Ancient Finns* (2010) he makes it clear that the book is revolutionary: "Let's say it at once: this book – or rather the information in it – is the most important work on Finnish pre-history that has ever been written anywhere" (Nieminen 2010: i). After making this grand claim, Nieminen explains why the book is written in a style that diverges greatly from the manner of an

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<sup>90</sup>Finnish original: Nuorten tutkijoiden ja tämmösten yliopistohebojen maailmassa nää puhuu tämmösestä akateemisesta maineesta jota he varjelee. Mut, tota...mun täytyy sanoa pitkässä juoksussa, siis oikein pitkässä juoksussa, että ihmiset jotka... mä oon tehny tätä 10-15 vuotta... niin ihmiset jotka puhuu ensimmäisenä akateemisesta maineestaan ja ettei he voi leimautua nyt, niin ei niistä jostain syystä oo kyllä myöhemminkään tullu yhtään mitään, ehkä niistä tulee vain leipätutkijoita joista ei kuule.

academic thesis. He is an artist by heart and wants to produce witty texts with a good flow (Nieminen 2010: ii). This, in turn:

...means that I would never be up to writing anything that even resembles a thesis, where every sentence has to be documented and forced to rest on some earlier source. And frankly I can't understand the philosophical side to it; what sense is there in repeating sentences from the era of your grandfather and constructing a compilation of them, when after all searching and finding something new is the goal?<sup>91</sup> (Nieminen 2010: ii)

In the foreword, Nieminen does two things. First, he explains that he does not write in an academic style, excusing himself by saying that he is an artist. An artist is a visionary who cannot be bothered by such things as footnotes or references. Artists are not bound by the same rules as academics. Secondly, he attacks academia by painting a picture of it as a pedantic institution where no new knowledge can be generated. Academics usually enter into dialogue with previous research, but this is expressed pejoratively by Nieminen: "...every sentence is forced to rest on some earlier source." Scholars are seen as either lacking any proper agency of their own or the freedom to be innovative. That earlier sources stem from the era of our grandfathers is a statement about academia being caught up in hopelessly outdated paradigms.

When it comes to scientific claims, Nieminen has great respect for the common, self-taught person who dares to challenge dominant scientific discourses. Rather than referring to university researchers as scholars or academics, he refers to them as "university dudes" (yliopistoheebo). Overall, in his way of expressing himself, in text as well as when speaking, Nieminen prefers a folksy tone filled with slang expressions. This stands in stark contrast to the rather dry tone that academics are prone to use. In my interview with him, he celebrated the Finnish amateur archaeologist Keijo Parkkunen (b.1927), who claims that the ice age did not occur. In his book, *Sadan vuoden harha-askel. Jätjän väitöskirja jääkauden olemattomuudesta*

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<sup>91</sup> Finnish original: Se tarkoittaa että minusta ei koskaan olisi kirjoittaa mitään väitöskirjan näköistäkään, jossa joka lause pitäisi dokumentoida ja pakottaa se nojaamaan johonkin varhaisempaan lähteeseen. Enkä suoraan sanoen tajua asian filosofistakaan puolta; mitä ihmeen järkeä on toistella isoisän aikaisia lauseita ja muodostaa niistä kooste, kun uuden etsiminen ja löytäminen on kuitenkin se juttu?

(A Misstep of a Hundred Years. A Dude's Thesis about the Non-Existence of the Ice Age, 1984), Parkkunen sets forth the idea that geological formations in the Finnish landscape, such as Giant's Kettles and raised shorelines, which mainstream geology interprets as evidence of an ice age, are actually the result of a major cosmic catastrophe in ancient times.

According to Parkkunen, before a great flood in ancient times, Earth was surrounded by gigantic masses of water. The planet was like a greenhouse with a constant temperature of 27 degrees centigrade. This explains why animal and plant life grew enormous during the Jurassic period. As the masses of water in space also functioned as a shield against cosmic radiation, human beings could live to a very old age, as is told in the stories of the Old Testament. When the heavens fell, or rather the masses of water from space fell to earth, there was a great cosmic cataclysm. As the cold water from space plummeted to the surface, parts of Earth froze instantly. This explains findings of woolly mammoths that seem to have been deep-frozen while standing. The water, due to its electrical charge, created pillars of electric plasma that dug deep holes in the rock, which are now called Giant's Kettles. The catastrophe destroyed almost all life on earth, as animals and plants that were not instantly frozen were squashed by the cosmic waves and turned into coal and oil. (Parkkunen: 1984)

In a way that is reflective of the general cultural fascination with the little guy who is fighting impossible odds, Parkkunen seems to embody a romantic idea of the common man, the rogue archaeologists who dares to stand up to the scientific community. He embodies the notion of the underdog who comes from a disadvantaged position and who dares to challenge a stronger and better-equipped enemy; a story familiar from the worlds of myth and popular culture alike.

Overall, an ambivalent attitude towards science prevails within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. Some of the people I have interviewed state that science will in time accept various Fringe-Knowledge phenomena. Jukka Nieminen is an example of a person within the scene who has a rather bleak view of academia as a dogmatic institution. When it comes to the brothers Virolainen and Luukanen-Kilde, it is clear that their authority derives from them holding academic degrees. Still, both the brothers Virolainen and Luukanen-Kilde are celebrated because they speak of phenomena that are not recognized by the scientific community. The view within the scene seems to be that science and academia are

currently on the wrong track because of the inability to accept the important insights that circulate in the field of Fringe-Knowledge.

### 5.1.6 Fringe-Knowledge and Popular Culture

After a brief discussion of what significance scholars have attributed to popular culture and its impact on our worldviews, this chapter will proceed to show how popular culture is discussed in the context of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene.

In chapter 2.4, I discussed the concept of occulture coined by Christopher Partridge (Partridge 2004; 2005; 2014). Occulture, in the words of Partridge:

...refers to the environment within which, and the social processes by which particular meanings relating, typically, to spiritual, esoteric, paranormal and conspiratorial ideas emerge, are disseminated, and become influential in societies and in the lives of individuals. Central to these processes is popular culture, in that it disseminates and remixes occultural ideas, thereby incubating new spores of occultural thought. (Partridge 2014: 116)

A vast number of bestselling books, blockbuster movies, and popular television series contain or focus on occultural themes and topics, such as aliens, magic, witchcraft, hauntings, and the paranormal. These popular cultural products include works like the New York Times bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), the film *Avatar* (2009), and the television series *The X-Files* (1993–2002 and 2016). As this “popular occulture” (Partridge 2004: 124) is widespread and indeed global it should not come as a surprise that members of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene consume it, as do vast numbers of people in Finland and in most parts of the world. What needs to be explored, however, is how individuals who hold worldviews that acknowledge paranormal and occult phenomena as integral parts of everyday life interpret occultural popular culture.

Popular culture can be seen as constitutive in that it is both an expression of the cultural milieu in which it is generated and in that it plays a role in shaping that same cultural context. In other words, popular culture is both expressive and formative of the cultural context from which it arises (Partridge 2004: 123). Early commentators on popular culture within the

so-called Frankfurt School, which among others included scholars such as Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) argued that “mass culture” or “popular culture” performed an important role in upholding the status quo of society and could be used to exercise domination and oppression. Scholars within the Frankfurt school expressed fears that mass culture, such as popular movies, played a part in creating and upholding a false consciousness (Corradetti 2011). This interpretation of popular culture entails the view that popular cultural products will inevitably affect the masses in particular ways.

A popular cultural product, such as a film, is usually created with the intention of conveying certain messages. The genre, narrative, dialogue, music, the acting, and the ordering of scenes suggest particular ways of interpretation (Partridge 2004: 124). One can thus say that a popular cultural product is encoded with certain messages. How popular culture is received and the interpretations and associations people make are, however, by no means obvious. People will interpret, or decode, a popular cultural product based on their beliefs, experiences, education, age, gender, cultural background and so on (Partridge 2004: 125). This is to say that people may interpret the same movie or book differently and that their interpretations may differ from what the producers of the popular cultural product intended, if there was indeed a clear intention. A film like Oliver Stone’s thriller *JFK* (1991) may be interpreted as simply a piece of exciting fiction or it may be seen as an accurate account of a conspiracy behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In the academic study of popular culture, there are several, and sometimes conflicting, views on how popular culture functions and affects society. Popular culture can be seen as either upholding *or* challenging (certain parts) of the status quo. Popular cultural products like television series or movies may be fictional accounts with fictional characters, but the ways in which they may shape public opinion and social attitudes should not be underestimated. Popular culture should not be dismissed as “just popular culture.” For example, the Swedish scholar of religion, Mattias Gardell, has argued that the television series *24* probably exerted a significant influence on the public debate on torture that took place during the Bush administration, making a case for the “ticking bomb argument” (Gardell 2008: 145). In the series, which takes place in real time, the main character Jack Bauer, played by Kiefer Sutherland, is often seen torturing his



suspects in order to extract information vital for stopping imminent terrorist attacks.

In March 2015, President Barack Obama interviewed David Simon, creator of the popular television-series *The Wire* (2002–2008). The filmed interview, in which President Obama calls *The Wire* one of the greatest “pieces of art in the last couple of decades” spread rapidly on the internet and was also discussed in major American Newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. The series takes place in Baltimore and centers on the different ways in which institutions like the school system, media, and law enforcement deal with illegal drug trade. According to Obama, the show is a revelation that will hopefully make people think about how policies on drug trade affects people in the inner cities. Both President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden see popular cultural products as important factors in changing public opinion. In 2012, Biden had praised the show *Will and Grace* (1998–2006) for educating the public on LGBTQ-issues. (Schwarz 2015)

When it comes to the impact of popular culture on religion, or more specifically how popular culture with occult and alternative spiritual themes may affect the belief systems of its consumers, scholars have presented contradictory viewpoints. Christopher Partridge (2004) goes in dialogue with sociologist Marcello Truzzi concerning the meaning and impact of occult popular culture. For Truzzi (1972), the occult revival of the 1960s and 1970s, along with increased interest in paranormal phenomena, astrology, eastern religions, and use of occult themes in popular movies like *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), represented a shallow and playful attitude towards the supernatural and should be interpreted as a sign of accelerating secularization:

I further would argue that the current mass interest in occultism represents, in fact, a kind of victory over the supernatural. What we are seeing is largely a demystification-process of what were once fearful and threatening cultural elements. Most significant is the very playfulness in the attitudes of most of the people involved in the occult revival...It is precisely because we no longer believe in the fearsome aspects of the occult that we are willing to experiment with them (Truzzi 1972: 29).

Partridge argues that what Truzzi viewed as an emergence of a diluted “pop religion” did not necessarily suggest secularization. A playful attitude towards occult ideas does mean that people lack commitment or can in fact utilize them as important building blocks for their worldviews. Regarding popular culture, Partridge makes the argument that in the same way as some films may raise or shape public awareness of political or social issues (like the Chinese occupation of Tibet or environmental issues), popular culture can also have an impact on plausibility structures regarding spiritual and religious matters (Partridge 2004: 124). In the following, I continue to show how people active in the Fringe-Knowledge scene discuss popular cultural products.

### Understanding Popular Culture in the Fringe-Knowledge Scene

An exciting thing, I have noticed that there are other film freaks especially who are active in this field, and even globally, in fact all of my best friends were film freaks even before I knew them... <sup>92</sup> (IF mgt 2014/014).

The quote is from my interview with Finnish author and artist Timo Teide, who has several times appeared in *Ultra* magazine, once even posing for a picture in a *Star Trek* uniform (Lassila 1998: 12). Like Marko Kananen, Teide prefers *Star Trek* to *Star Wars*. According to Teide and Kananen, especially the older *Star Trek* series explored deep philosophical questions, while *Star Wars* seems to concentrate on action and people running around with light sabers (IF mgt 2014/014; IF mgt 2013/015). Kananen explained to me that he had always been interested in science fiction. In 2016, he dedicated an editorial of *Ultra* to discuss the new six-part miniseries of *The X-files* (Kananen 2016: 4). In the editorial, he writes how he looks forward to the series and remembers how he and his friends used to watch and discuss *The X-files* back in the late 1990s and early 2000s. After each episode aired on Finnish television, Kananen would take out his books on UFOs and the paranormal in an effort to find correlations between the storylines and the literature.

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<sup>92</sup> Finnish original: Mä...jännä juttu, mä oon huomannu että on muitakin elokuvafriikkejä erityisestikin niinkuin tällä alueella jotka ovat aktiivisesti niin kuin, siis ihan maailmanlaajuisesti, että itse asiassa kaikki mun parhaat ystäväni esimerkiksi on niinkuin ennen tuntemistakaan, tai ollaan toisemme tunnettu ollut elokuvafriikkejä...

At *Uforock* in Tampere in 2012, Finnish lecturer Riitta-Marja Gauffin held a lecture with the title “2012 – Cosmic Consciousness and New Dimensions of the Creative Force”<sup>93</sup> (See figure 11). The lecture centered on how humanity is currently undergoing a spiritual transformation. According to Gauffin, information about spiritual questions concerning the nature of reality and our own origins can be found in the non-fiction television series *Ancient Aliens* (2009–) as well as in the fictive series *Stargate* (1997–2007), starring Richard Dean Anderson. Gauffin encouraged people to watch *Stargate* as it shows how the ancient Egyptian civilization was in contact with extraterrestrials. The series takes place one year after the events of the 1994 film with the same name, in which the US military discover how to use a device called the “Stargate.” The device allows people to travel another planet and discover aliens who had visited earth in the distant past. These aliens posed as gods in ancient Egypt in order to enslave the population. The series expands on the *Stargate* mythology and introduces new alien races, both benevolent and malevolent, who inhabit different star systems.

The inspiration for the *Stargate* franchise can be traced back to the so-called ancient astronaut theory or hypothesis according to which ancient human civilizations were shaped by extraterrestrial beings. Although UFO author Desmond Leslie and contactee George Adamski had put forward the idea of ancient alien contacts already in the 1950s, the ancient astronaut theory became widespread due to the success of the books by Swiss author Erich von Däniken published in the late 1960s (Partridge 2005: 187).

That a lecturer at a Finnish Fringe-Knowledge event endorses a series like *Stargate* is an example of how popular fiction may become a form of religious text. According to Gauffin, one should not watch the show simply because of its entertainment value. Rather, one should take part of it because, although fictional, *Stargate* reveals the true origins of the human species. If one defines religious questions as questions concerning ultimate meaning, including the origins of the human species, one may say that *Stargate* becomes a religious text within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene.

In 2003, the publication of Dan Brown’s thriller *The Da Vinci Code* stirred much interest in the origins of Christianity, secret societies, and the

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<sup>93</sup> Finnish original: 2012 - Kosminen tietoisuus ja luomisvoiman uudet ulottuvuudet.

possible marriage and bloodline of Jesus. The novel presents an alternative history that revolves around the uncovering of a secret bloodline stemming from Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. According to the novel, the patriarchal Catholic Church suppressed this sacred knowledge, renouncing Mary Magdalene as the equal partner of Jesus and depicting her as a prostitute. Although the Church throughout history has tried to suppress the truth, a secret society called the Priory of Sion has preserved this knowledge throughout the ages. Groups like the Freemasons and the Knights Templar, and famous people throughout history, like Leonardo Da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton and Jean Cocteau, have hidden away clues about the existence of the bloodline in famous paintings and church architecture. Throughout the novel protagonist Robert Langdon, an American professor of religious symbology, uncovers the secret history and discovers that the lineage of Jesus and Mary is still alive.

Taking the novel as an example, Jennie S. Knight notes that many readers consider popular cultural products profound as "...they allow readers to engage imaginatively with particular manifestations of the divine as feminine." (Knight 2005: 60). Knight recounts how one of the women in her Baptist Church, after reading *The Da Vinci Code*, proposed that they start an adult Sunday Class about the divine feminine (Knight 2005: 60–61).

The hugely successful novel was translated to Finnish and published by the large publishing house WSOY in 2004. *The Da Vinci Code* presents in fictional form claims and ideas previously put forth in pseudohistorical books like *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982) by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, and *The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ* (1997) by Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince. Due to the huge success of *The Da Vinci Code*, the publishing house *Bazar Kustannus* published a Finnish translation of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (*Pyhä very, pyhä Graal*) in 2005. Co-author Michael Baigent visited Finland in order to participate in the release event of the Finnish translation. The book release was covered in *Ultra* (Hiltunen 2005: 12–19). The same issue of *Ultra* has an advertisement for buying the book via the magazine. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* is sold side by side with *The Da Vinci Code*, and Finnish translations of the *Kryon* book series by the American channeler Lee Carroll. Works of fiction, books that are claimed to be based on historiographical research, and books stated to originate from entities like "Kryon" are sold alongside each other. In this chapter, we shall return to how knowledge-claims from

works of fiction and nonfiction may blend and mix within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, and what status information from supposedly historical sources have in relation to knowledge attained by methods such as channeling.

*The Da Vinci Code* provides a striking example of how popular cultural products can fuel a deeper interest in esoteric ideas. The huge success of the novel was followed by a number of fictional books that dealt with the same kind of themes as *The Da Vinci Code*. Often derided as “Da Vinci Clones,” examples include *The Last Templar* (2005) by Raymond Khoury and *The Gaudi Key* (2008) by Esteban Martin, Andreau Carranza Font, and Lisa Dillman. Publishers also realized that the novel had awakened a curiosity about the historical accuracy of the claims made in the book. The 2005 book *Secrets of the Code* by Dan Burstein, which also became a New York Times bestseller, is one of several guides or companions that provide deeper insights and discussion concerning ideas put forth in the novel.

In Finland, *Bazar Kustannus* took the opportunity to publish a Finnish translation of *Secrets of the Code* after *The Da Vinci Code* had fueled an interest in ideas about sacred bloodlines, religious symbols, and alternative history. Jyri Komulainen stated that the popularity of *The Da Vinci Code* apparently seemed to influence public perception of the history of Christianity. In a telephone survey made in 2007, around 27 percent of the Finnish population agreed with the statement that the church had deliberately concealed information about the life of Jesus (Komulainen 2010: 101). Considering the result of the survey, it is interesting to keep in mind Partridge’s argument about how popular culture may shape the opinions and plausibility structures of the public mind (Partridge 2004: 124).

*The Da Vinci Code* started a craze within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene that lasted for over a year. The themes in the book were widely discussed, analyzed, and debated. Many personas in the scene had their own opinions about it and presented them on the pages of *Ultra*. The novel received no less than three reviews in the magazine. The first is written by Tuula Peltari, one of *Ultra*’s frequent book reviewers, the second is by artist Timo Teide, and the third and most elaborate is by Veli-Martin Keitel. These reviews are quite interesting in that none of them follow the usual form of a book review. Peltari’s review consists of an excited outburst about how mind-blowing the book is. From the text it is hard to

get a clear picture of what the book is actually about, except that it contains "...immeasurable amounts of knowledge in between two covers"<sup>94</sup> (Pelttari 2004: 40). Throughout the review, Pelttari picks out different details from the book:

I was unaware that the French President Mitterand, or the Sphinx, was in love with ancient Egypt, I did not know about the symbol of the rose in combination with maps and in guiding souls in the right direction, nor did I know about the secrets of Greenwich, what was before Greenwich time. I did not fully remember the secret of *The Vitruvian Man* by Leonardo, the golden ratio or the secret of pi. The secret of the painting of *The Last Supper* by Leonardo, a tribute to the sacred feminine, coherent symbol series, that is how everything was connected...What more could the reader demand!<sup>95</sup> (Pelttari 2004: 40)

This excerpt lets the reader know that the book is filled with knowledge. According to Pelttari, the book is educational in an esoteric sense in that it teaches the reader secret knowledge: "the secrets of Greenwich," "the secret of the Vitruvian Man," "the secret of Pi," and "...how everything is connected." Rather than discussing the story or the characters are, the focus of the review is on what information about Fringe-Knowledge related matters the book can offer.

According to Timo Teide, *The Da Vinci Code* is so much more than simply an entertaining detective story. The book seems to offer loads of esoteric and suppressed knowledge. Much of the review focuses on how the book will influence the world:

Has a Fringe-Knowledge book of any kind sold as much as this, in such a short timespan? Has there ever been made a large budget Hollywood film on a Fringe-Knowledge book on such a tight schedule? How much will the thoughts awakened by this book increase the interest in the

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<sup>94</sup> Finnish original: "...mittaamattomasti tietoa yksissä kansissa."

<sup>95</sup> Finnish original: En tiennyt, että Ranskan presidentti Mitterand eli Sfinksi oli muinaiseen Egyptiin rakastunut, en tiennyt ruusun symbolista yhdistettynä karttoihin ja sielujen ohjaamisessa oikeaan suuntaan, tai tiennyt Greenwichin salaisuuksista, sitä mitä oli ennen Greenwichin aikaa. En muistanut täysin Leonardon Vitruviuksen miehen salaisuutta, Kulusta leikkausta ja Fiin salaisuutta. Leonardon Ehtoollistaulun salaisuus, kunnianosoitus pyhälle naiseudelle, koherentteja symbolisarjoja eli sitä, miten kaikki liityi erottamattomasti yhteen....Mitä lukija enää voisi vaatia!

whole field of Fringe-Knowledge? And what about the impact of the book on our values and collective energy?<sup>96</sup> (Teide 2004: 20)

Regarding Pelttari's and Teide's reviews it is quite clear that, for them, the book is so much more than a just a work of fiction. Teide attributes the book some cosmic significance, as it will change our values and our view of the world.

Lecturer Veli-Martin Keitel's longer review appeared in the March issue of *Ultra* 2005. Called "The Da Vinci Code Shakes the Foundations of the Church,"<sup>97</sup> the text is an elaborate review of the book filled with speculation about who Dan Brown actually is. In a similar fashion as Timo Teide, Keitel also speculates about how the book will affect religion and spirituality in the Western world:

What was Dan Brown's intention when he decided to start writing novels about these topics? Was it a calculated endeavor to become rich by capitalizing on the interest of the public in these themes (which in itself is already a very remarkable phenomenon)? Or was the intention to utilize the means of popular literature to spread important information effectively and quickly? Was it Brown's own idea, or was the matter planned in collaboration with researchers, and perhaps with the real members of the secret societies mentioned in the book? What is Dan Brown's relation to these secret societies, and is he perhaps himself a member of some society?<sup>98</sup> (Keitel 2005: 9)

Central in these reviews is the idea that the novel, although a piece of fiction, is filled with important information. It is not simply an ordinary

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<sup>96</sup> Finnish original: Onko koskaan aikaisemmin rajatiedon kirjaa missään muodossa myyty näin paljon, näin lyhyessä ajassa? Onko koskaan rajatiedon kirjasta tehty suuren budjetin elokuva Hollywood-elokuvaa näin nopealla aikataululla? Kuinka paljon tämän teoksen herättämät ajatukset lisäävät kiinnostusta koko rajatiedon alueelle? Entä millainen on kirjan vaikutus arvoihin ja kollektiiviseen energiaan?

<sup>97</sup> Finnish original: DaVinci-koodi horjuttaa kirkon kulmakiviä.

<sup>98</sup> Finnish original: Mikä oli Dan Brownin tarkoitus, kun hän päätti alkaa kirjoittamaan romaaneja näistä aiheista? Oliko kyseessä laskelmoitu pyrkimys rikastua hyödyntämällä yleisön kiinnostusta tällaisia teemoja kohtaan (mikä sinänsä on jo hyvin merkittävä ilmiö)? Vai oliko tarkoituksena hyödyntää viihdekirjallisuuden keinoja tärkeiden tietojen levittämiseen tehokkaasti ja nopeasti? Oliko ajatus Brownin oma, vai suunniteltiinko asiaa yhdessä tutkijoiden ja mahdollisesti kirjassa mainittujen salaseurojen todellisten jäsenten kanssa? Mikä on Dan Brownin yhteys näihin seuroihin, onko hän kenties itse jonkin seuran jäsen?

thriller, but introduces the reader to esoteric information about the true teachings of Jesus Christ. The book will possibly have a great influence on the world, and as Timo Teide writes, will have a profound impact on “our values and collective energy.” Within the Fringe-Knowledge scene the novel becomes a source for esoteric and suppressed information concerning a number of topics, such as the secret bloodline of Christ, Freemasonry, and as Tuula Pelttari writes “... how everything was connected.”

At the time of the publication of *The Da Vinci Code* in Finnish, “Peace Priestess” Margie Kivelä started to channel the spirit of Mary Magdalene. In the double issue of *Ultra* 7–8/2005 Kivelä wrote an article titled “An interview with Mary Magdalene”<sup>99</sup>. The interview, however, turns out to be a dialogue between the two, in which Kivelä herself does most of the talking. She tells about how she some 30 years earlier came into contact with esoteric literature and became a “Rosicrucian Theosophist”<sup>100</sup> and a Freemason (Kivelä 2005: 14). She tells the spirit of Mary Magdalene how she met her 33 years older husband, that she is currently enrolled in the “Peace Minister” training at the “Beloved Community” founded by James Twyman, and about the literature they are supposed to read. It was also through her training that she came into contact with *The Da Vinci Code*. Although Dan Brown’s novel is a work of fiction, in Kivelä’s view (and according to the spirit of Mary Magdalene) it conveys a truthful description of the marriage and bloodline of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. That the novel was published and became popular was no coincidence but is part of a greater cosmic plan: “– The time is right for certain things to become public. Everything always happens at the right time, you have heard this expression, haven’t you.”<sup>101</sup> (Kivelä 2005: 14). In the end of the article, there is an advertisement for Kivelä’s lecture on Mary Magdalene at the 2005 Ultra Days. The lecture was part of a seminar on *The Da Vinci Code*, the other lecturers being Veli-Martin Keitel and Juha Hiltunen.

Juha Hiltunen, who has been a frequent contributor to *Ultra* for over 15 years, wrote a two-piece article about the historiographical critique against *The Da Vinci Code*. Hiltunen has a background in academia. He is

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<sup>99</sup>Finnish original: Haastattelu Maria Magdaleenan kanssa.

<sup>100</sup> Finnish original: ruusuristiläinen teosofi.

<sup>101</sup> Finnish original: –Aika on kypsä määrättyjen asioiden tulla julkiseksi. Kaikki tapahtuu aina oikeaan aikaan, olethan kuullut tämän lauseen.



a cultural anthropologist specializing in indigenous American cultures, historical forgeries, and ideological propaganda. He wrote his doctoral thesis in 1999 on the historical accuracy of the chronicles about Peruvian kings written by the Spanish historian Fernando de Montesinos (oulu.fi). In his two-piece article, "The Da Vinci Code and Historiographical Criticism – Decoding the Facts"<sup>102</sup> (*Ultra* 5–6/2005 & *Ultra* 11/2005), Hiltunen points out the many historical inaccuracies in the book. He makes clear that the historical narrative of *The Da Vinci Code* is grossly simplified, distorted, and lacking basis in accepted scholarship:

And for the readers of *The Da Vinci Code* I can only wish an exciting and entertaining reading experience. One should relate to it like a good detective story, an exciting panorama into mysterious history or just like a fascinating story in the spirit of *The Lord of the Rings*. Because it is only a novel, seasoned with quasi-scientific fiction.<sup>103</sup> (Hiltunen 2005: 33)

Veli Martin Keitel reacted to Hiltunen's historiographical criticism and defended his own views in *Ultra* 1/2006. As Keitel previously took the historical narrative of the book at face value, he now defended his position:

I believe that it is the case among many friends of Fringe-Knowledge, that the book feeds the desire for knowledge and curiosity, which has been woken by previous ponderings about Christian mythology. I know that many of "our kind" have, while reading the book stated "Wow, that was nicely presented," "of course it is that way," or at least "well, sure it could also be like that." In this kind of process the reader evaluates the authenticity of "facts" through his own experience and also *intuition*.<sup>104</sup> (Keitel 2006: 31)

In the article, Keitel shifts between positions. On the one hand, archeological or historical evidence does not seem important at all, and if

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<sup>102</sup> Finnish original: Da Vinci koodi ja histografinen kritiikki - faktojen dekooodaus.

<sup>103</sup> Finnish original: Ja Da Vinci –koodin lukijoille voin vain toivottaa jännittäviä ja viihteellisiä lukuhetkiä. Siihen kannatta suhtautua hyvänä dekkarina, jännittävänä panoraamana salaperäiseen historiaan tai vain kiehtovana tarinana Taru sormusten Herrasta - hengessä. Sillä se on vain romaani ja kvasitieteellisyydellä höystettyä fiktiota.

<sup>104</sup> Finnish original: Uskoisin, että monen rajatiedon ystävän kohdalla kirja ruokkii sitä tiedonjanoa ja uteliaisuutta, jonka aikaisemmat ajatelmat kristillisestä mytologiasta ovat herättäneet. Tiedän, että moni "meikäläinen" on kirjaa lukiessaan todennut "Vau, olipa hienosti esitetty," "noinhan se tietysti on," tai ainakin "nojaa, voisihan se varmaan noinkin mennä". Tällaisessa prosessissa lukija arvioi oman kokemuksensa ja myös *intuitionsa* avulla esitettyjen "faktojen" aitoutta.

all evidence of a sexual union between Jesus and Mary Magdalene is forged, it does not disprove the possibility of such a relation. As he states, “facts” must be decoded and analyzed through intuition, giving the reader the authority to decide what is true and what is not. On the other hand, Keitel refers to historical evidence in support of some claims made in the novel. For example, he notes that it is a known fact that Christianity contains many pagan elements and influences from Pre-Christian Hellenistic religions.

Keitel also refers to authors not accepted within mainstream academia. Among these are British conspiracy theorist David Icke (b. 1952), infamous for his theories claiming that world leaders, businessmen, and entertainers are shape shifting reptilian aliens, and Laurence Gardner (1943-2010), a British stockbroker turned author, the self-proclaimed “Presidential Attaché to the European Council of Princes.” Another authority mentioned by Keitel is Anna Berg, a Finnish author of books about the life of Jesus. While Icke and Gardner claim to build their views on historical sources, Berg has received her information through channeling Jesus (Keitel 2006: 31). Supposed historical sources seem to have the same currency as channeled information.

The main argument seems to be that knowledge that comes to the person through intuition is a higher and truer form of understanding. In the quote cited earlier Keitel uses the term “our kind,” referring to people who are interested in Fringe-Knowledge. The people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene seem to be, according to him, more receptive and able to attain such knowledge than dry academics. This is form of internal scenic construction in which members of the Fringe-Knowledge scene are discursively constructed as more insightful, at least when compared to people in mainstream academia.

As in the case of *The Da Vinci Code*, it seems like popular cultural products can fuel a deeper interest in some types of Fringe-Knowledge. Concerning ufology and conspiracy theories in the Fringe-Knowledge scene, Luukanen-Kilde has at many occasions talked about how important movies are, not simply because they explore important philosophical questions in a playful manner, but also because they actually show the truth about what is going on in the world. According to Luukanen-Kilde, a clandestine elite is governing the world and is secretly manipulating directors in Hollywood to make certain movies so that people will not take

certain issues, like mind-control, seriously but laugh them off as fiction. For example, according to Luukanen-Kilde, the thriller *Control Factor* (2003) is a movie that shows the truth about how mind control actually works. By watching *Control Factor* one can, she argues, understand how the secret elite made Anders Behring Breivik into a mass murderer or the true reasons behind the Finnish school shootings of 2007 and 2008 (YouTube: 2012).

The significance that Luukanen-Kilde attributes to certain thriller and sci-fi movies can be described in terms of a process of “fact-fiction reversal.” The concept “fact-fiction reversal,” coined by Michael Barkun (2013), refers to the process whereby an artifact intended as fiction becomes, within a particular milieu, decoded as fact. A piece of fiction thus becomes a source that is more reliable than mainstream journalism or academic expertise. In my interview with Luukanen-Kilde at the 2014 Ultra Days I asked her about her videos on *YouTube* where she mentions popular movies. She elaborated on the theme:

Luukanen-Kilde: Hollywood is used deliberately to give people information, also in a positive way. For example, the Spielberg movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Spielberg received two million dollars from NASA to make it.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: And also in a positive way, *E.T.* is a very cute film. And then I heard that they regretted afterwards that they had made such a good film when it was so positive. And then *Independence Day*, which is negative. And they are used deliberately so that people will watch them and go like “Ooh, it is just a movie.”

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: These types of mind control-films, I have published the titles of them, they are very much based on fact. But people come out of the theater, and say it was just a movie, how exciting...Like in *The Matrix*-movies, they show how they attach some machine to your neck which then controls you and this kind of thing, and then people say it was only a film.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: But when things are made public, and they will become public, they surely will be made public in the future, and are already now starting to become public, when we ask them why they have not told us they can say: well we have told you all the time, Hollywood has shown you everything but you have not understood, it is your fault when you have not understood.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: It is systematic.<sup>105</sup> (IF mgt 2014/025)

According to Luukanen-Kilde, the power-elite uses a form of double bluff to deceive people through Hollywood movies. Through popular movies, they deliberately show people what is going behind the scenes. The reason behind showing the truth through fiction is to make sure that no one will take claims about mind-control or aliens seriously.

Lecturer Veli-Martin Keitel also sees popular culture as an important source for what is going on in the world and views sci-fi-thrillers as predictions of what may come. At a lecture at Konsa Manor in Turku in 2013, Keitel talked about a dream he had which took place in the Finnish city of Jyväskylä in a not so distant future (Ramstedt, field notes). He explained this dream to be a prediction of a possible future that would manifest itself if humanity continues on its current technological and materialistic path, ignoring spirituality. In his dream, Jyväskylä had been transformed into a technological dystopia.

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<sup>105</sup>Finnish original: Luukanen-Kilde: Hollywoodia käytetään nimenomaan ihan tieteen tahtoen antamaan ihmisille informaatiota, myöskin positiivisesti niinkuin [*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Spielbergin filmi, ja Spielberghän sai kaks miljoonaa dollaria NASA:lta tehdäkseen filmin.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Ja voidaan niinku positiivisesti pistää.. *E.T.*:hän oli hyvin semmonen söötti filmi. Ja sit mä kuulin et niit kadutti jälkeenpäin kun ne oli niin hyvän filmin tehny kun se oli niin positiivinen [naurahtaen]. Ja sit *Independence Day* joka on negatiivinen. Ja tuota, ja sitä käytetään nimenomaan, ja sitte ihmiset kattoo että jaha tommosta, no sehän oli vaan filmi.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Nää tämmöset mindcontrol filmit, niin ne on.. mä oon kyllä julkaissu niitten nimiä ja näin, mutta tuota niin ne on, ne on erittäin todellisuuteen perustuvia. Mutta ihmiset tulee pois ja sanoo, että olipas filmi, olipas jännittävä. Nehän näyttää siel.. Niinku *Matrixit* ja kaikki, niin nehän näyttää, että panee niskaan jonku laitteen...

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde:...joka sitte kontrolloi ja muuta tämmöstä, ja sit ihmiset sanoo et no se oli vaan filmi. Mut et sit kun ne asiat tulee, ja ne tulee julki, ne varmasti tulee julki, niinku tulevaisuudessa, ja nythän ne on jo alkanut tulla paljon julkisuuteen, ni sit voidaan sanoo, ku ollaan et miks te ette oo kertonu, no mehän ollaan kerrottu koko aika, Hollywood on näyttänyt teille kaikki mut kun ette te oo ymmärtänyt, se on oma vika kun et ymmärrä.

Ramstedt: Mm.

Luukanen-Kilde: Se on ihan systemaattista.

The city had expanded vertically and was filled with skyscrapers of dazzling height. People did not need to drive, since automated cars did the work for them. The cars of the future were shaped like water drops "like in the movie *Minority Report*." Keitel added that Steven Spielberg has probably received his ideas from dreams and contacts with other realities.

The parks of the city had been transformed into concentration camps housing criminals and political dissidents. These installations needed no guards since prisoners were implanted with microchips that restricted their movement. If a prisoner was to leave the restricted area the microchip would be activated to cause the inmate severe and unbearable pain. The once green parks were polluted, full of industrial and household waste. Food was scarce and consisted of mutated fish, berries, mushrooms and murky water. Because of the polluted environment and the poor diet, the people had degenerated into cannibals.

Keitel wanted to talk to those in power who were responsible for how the city was run. In his dream, he visited the leadership who lived in luxurious apartment buildings. He soon realized that everyone in leading positions were total imbeciles, unable of critical thinking or of taking action. As the whole infrastructure of Jyväskylä was highly automatized and took care of itself, the people in power had degenerated into mindless individuals who only sought pleasurable experiences. For entertainment, people would visit certain shops with backrooms leading to secret underground facilities filled with machines allowing a person to experience virtual reality. The use of these machines, which were "exactly like those in *Matrix*," was officially illegal but engaging in virtual realities of an extreme perverted sexual and violent nature was widespread throughout the city and these shops were often visited by famous people and politicians.

Keitel's take on science fiction films is another example of Barkun's (2013) process of "fact-fiction reversal." He discursively constructs his own prophetic dreams of the future dystopian Jyväskylä as more reliable by referring to science fiction films which contain some of the same themes as in his dreams. Science fiction films become prophetic texts that hint at the possible future of the world. In Keitel's worldview, Stephen Spielberg and other directors become unwilling and unconscious prophets and seers who channel supranormal realities.

### **“Fringe-Knowledge from Hollywood”**

Since the mid-1990s, *Ultra* has published a recurring series of articles called “Fringe-Knowledge from Hollywood.”<sup>106</sup> The articles are written by Erkki and Elina Kanto, two of *Ultra*’s long lasting contributors, who live in Los Angeles. Apart from being a frequent contributor to *Ultra*, Kanto has also hosted the Ultra Days (See figure 12). The articles center on popular movies with Fringe-Knowledge content and the series also features interviews with famous actors and directors. Films that have been reviewed by the Kanto’s include, for example, *Avatar* (2009) and *Life of Pi* (2012) (Kanto E. 2010/2: 24–27, Kanto E. 2013: 32). The Kanto’s interview actors like Tom Hanks, who starred in *The Da Vinci Code* (2006) (Kanto, I. 2005: 21–21).

*Ultra* 9/2005 features an interview with actress Patricia Arquette. The article focuses on the influences behind the television series *Medium* and how Arquette herself feels about supernatural phenomena. The character Allison Dubois, played by Arquette, is based on a real person who worked as a medium and consulted the Arizona police department. The article mentions Arquette’s own experiments with the Ouija board. She admits she tried it at a friend’s house, but would not like to try it in her own home. The article also states that Los Angeles is quite an open place when it comes to various forms of supernatural phenomena: “Patricia Arquette is by no means the only Hollywood actress who is acquainted with Fringe-Knowledge. Many movie stars visit mediums. Among others, Jane Fonda has admitted that she every now and then goes to seek advice”<sup>107</sup> (Kanto E. 2005: 11).

The article “The Spiritual Thoughts of Hollywood Actors” in *Ultra* 9/2015 makes it clear that many actors are into spirituality and Fringe-Knowledge phenomena. The article mentions actors George Clooney, Russel Crowe, Mark Wahlberg, and Rebecca Ferguson. Clooney is, according to the article, fascinated with Nikola Tesla, and Crowe’s father practiced dowsing. Ferguson believes in “energy” and “Mark Wahlberg looks like a muscle-hero, who loves fighting scenes in his movies...but on the inside

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<sup>106</sup> Finnish original: Rajatietoa Hollywoodista

<sup>107</sup> Finnish original: Patricia Arquette ei suinkaan ole ainoa Hollywoodin näyttelijä, jolle rajatieto on tuttua. Monet filmitähdet käyvät selvännäkijällä. Muun muassa Jane Fonda on myöntänyt käyvänsä sillon tällöin kysymässä neuvoa.

he is different. The man goes to church every day!”<sup>108</sup> (Kanto I. and Kanto E. 2015: 34).

The preoccupation with the lives and relationships of actors and other famous people is, of course, not a thing that is unique for the Fringe-Knowledge scene. Rather, one can argue that fixation with celebrities is common feature in the West in general. Christopher Lasch sees the cult of celebrity as something that does intensify “...narcissistic dreams of fame and glory, encourage the common man to identify himself with the stars and to hate the ‘herd’, and make it more and more difficult for him to accept the banality of everyday existence.” (Lasch 1980: 21). Whether one agrees with Lasch’s rather pessimistic view of the function of our preoccupation with celebrities or not, one can acknowledge that the “cult of celebrity,” or preoccupation of celebrities, has for a long time been a prominent feature of Western culture. Within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, this preoccupation with celebrities takes on certain distinctive features. While an American celebrity magazine such as *People* might cover the love affairs or the weight losses or -gains of celebrities, *Ultra* focuses on the Fringe-Knowledge related subjects among celebrities. While a magazine like *Muscle and Fitness* may cover the exercise habits of actors, *Ultra* emphasizes various Fringe-Knowledge beliefs among the Hollywood stars.

By pointing out that actors and famous people are interested in Fringe-Knowledge related subjects, *Ultra* highlights that Fringe-Knowledge is something that is widespread among people who are rich and adored. Celebrities are not seen as ordinary people, they are not part of the “herd,” as Lasch puts it (Lasch 1980: 21).

In my interview with Asko Nummela, he told me that Steve Jobs and George W. Bush are aliens in human form. According to Nummela, Jobs seems to be one of the good aliens, while President Bush is evil. I inquired further if there are more famous people who are aliens and Nummela answered that there are plenty of them. He and some readers of *Star People* magazine have discussed the matter in an online chat forum:

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<sup>108</sup> Finnish original: Mark Wahlberg näyttää muskelisankarilta, joka rakastaa tappelukohtauksia elokuvissaan...mutta sisältä löytyy aivan muuta. Mies menee kirkkoon joka päivä.

There they talk about these Hollywood actors and famous people, say that they are from other planets and all sorts of things. And Fringe-Knowledge in general...and in Finland Katri Helena has revealed those types of things, and I will publish in *Star People* magazine an exclusive article in which a singer talks about these spiritual experiences.<sup>109</sup> (IF mgt 2013/016)

Katri Helena Kalaoja (b. 1945), known by her stage name Katri Helena, is one of Finland's most famous schlager music entertainers. In an interview in the Finnish tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* in 2012, she has among others things stated that she received a letter from her dead son through automatic writing (Majamaa 2012). According to Nummela there is a clear connection between Fringe-Knowledge, aliens, and celebrities. Not only do famous people and adherents of Fringe-Knowledge constitute a small percentage of the population, but a large number of aliens incarnated on earth and people interested in Fringe-Knowledge seem to have special talents or sets of skills that allow them to become famous. By pointing out that celebrities, who are people who are looked up to in society and considered beautiful and successful individuals, also are interested in Fringe-Knowledge phenomena, Fringe-Knowledge receives an added aura of fame and glory.

In this subchapter I have discussed what role popular culture has within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The interviews show that people within the scene have a great interest in popular culture, especially films and novels. Moreover, it stimulates a deeper interest in Fringe-Knowledge matters. One of the best examples of this is the novel *The Da Vinci Code* that was covered several times in *Ultra*. In some cases popular cultural products can be said to become a form religious text, as they are believed to basically provide factual accounts of alien contacts, the life of Jesus, or what will happen in the future. The process of "fact-fiction reversal" occurs when popular culture is decoded as fact. Luukanen-Kilde decodes thriller- and science-fiction movies in terms of a sophisticated plot by the power-elite to discredit the belief in aliens or mind-control.

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<sup>109</sup> Finnish original: Tuolla puhutaan, ja millon näistä Hollywoodin näyttelijöistä tai julkiksista kans sanoo että on jostain toiselta planeetalta ja kaikkien näköstä tämmöstä. Ja yleensäkin jo rajatietoon.. Ja Katri Helenahan on paljastanu Suomessa, Suomessa tota noin juttuja, ja mulla tulee lehteen nyt kanssa yksinoikeudella nyt just juttu minkä mä oon saanu jo, missä yks laulaja kertoo myös näistä henkisistä kokemuksistaan.



Science fiction films and television series are popular cultural products enjoyed by enormous worldwide audiences. What differentiates some people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene from the majority of consumers is the interpretations of these popular cultural products. Sci-fi movies are not in themselves what Barkun would refer to as “stigmatized knowledge”. Rather the interpretative framework that these movies may have in the Fringe-Knowledge scene is a form of stigmatized interpretation, which differs from mainstream interpretations.

### **5.1.7 Millennialism**

The focus of this sub-chapter is on the millennialistic ideas found in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. After a discussion of the millennialism found in the so called New Age movement that sprung up in the Anglo-American world in the 1960s and 1970s, I proceed on to show how millennial ideas are expressed and what form they take in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene.

The concept of a New Age can be traced to the so-called New Age movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The concept of a coming new age of spirituality was a central component for many Anglo-American spiritual seekers in the 1960s and 1970s who eclectically combined such things as eastern religious teachings, Jungian psychology, theosophical lore, and various wellbeing practices (Melton 2001: 373–375). The concept of a New Age became used as an umbrella term for various kinds of eclectic spirituality and was used both as an emic term by bookstores and magazines specializing on spirituality and as an etic term by journalists and scholars.

A critique against using “New Age” as a scholarly term stems from the notion that one of the central beliefs, the concept of a coming age, seems to have greatly diminished from this kind of spirituality (Chryssides 2007: 12–13). Steven Sutcliffe notes that a number of spiritual seekers in Great Britain in the 1950s and 1960s used the term “New Age” as an apocalyptic emblem. Some great cataclysm, a social or economic collapse –or even a nuclear holocaust, would wipe out the majority of the world population. From the ashes would rise a new world and a new spiritual order, created by the few who had survived. This apocalypticism, central to earlier New Age, gave way to a spirituality that centered more on individual

development and wellbeing. New Agers no longer seemed to expect a dawning Age of Aquarius. Although having its roots in the older New Age idiom, post-1970s “New Age” focused on “mind, body and spirit” (Sutcliffe 2003: 3). Whereas the older New Age tended to be other-worldly, in that it saw mainstream society as corrupt and unclean, the later “new age” embraced the world.

Although the concept of a new age might not be as pronounced as it perhaps previously was, a number of internationally acclaimed spiritual authors still frequently write about the concept of a dawning new age, stating that we are currently living in a time of great spiritual significance. The main difference compared to the older apocalyptic visions is that these authors expect a shift to a more spiritual world to occur gradually, rather than seeing it as a rapid process that involves nuclear war or social collapse.

In *Birth of a New Civilization* (2013), British author Diana Cooper attributes spiritual significance to the year 2032, when humanity is going to move fully into the “fifth-dimensional frequency.” The time leading up to this cosmic event will, according to Cooper, be marked by profound changes of political, economic, and climatic nature (Cooper 2013). American bestselling author Neale Donald Walsch, widely known for his book series *Conversations with God* (1996–2006), deals not only with individual spiritual transformation in his books, but has God tell the reader that a change of the whole world into a more peaceful, harmonious and spiritual place is not only possible but may occur quite rapidly. New York Times bestselling author, “Peace Troubadour” James Twyman, is another example of a spiritual author who develops the idea of humanity currently living in a spiritually significant era. In *Emmisary of Light* (1997 & 2007) he writes about how he, while travelling in war torn Bosnia in the 1990s, came into contact with an ancient mystical brotherhood. This mystical society, which bears some resemblance to the so called Hidden Masters in Theosophical lore, reveal to Twyman that humanity is now ready to create a new world with new ideals of peace and spirituality.

All of the authors mentioned above are also well known in the Finnish alternative spiritual milieu and translations of their works in Finnish can be bought at different spiritual fairs and events or through magazines like *Ultra*. As I have studied the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene in Finland I have discovered that the notion of a dawning New Age seems to be quite

widespread as many authors and lectures develop this theme in different ways. A Finnish author and healer who goes under the name Cosmic Johanna writes that humanity is now in a critical phase of change:

The feminine energy is getting stronger in all of us as we are moving towards a new age. This means that our life values – and choices – are rising from within ourselves, from the depths of our own silence.<sup>110</sup> (Cosmic Johanna 2013:16)

Another Finnish spiritual lecturer and author who links a coming golden age to the so called "sacred feminine" is "Peace-Priestess" Marketta "Margie" Kivelä. She became known in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene through her book *Nainen joka ei antanut leikata rintaansa*, 2001 (The Woman Who Refused to Cut Her Breast). The book tells the story of how she overcame breast cancer with the help of natural food products, sauna, Essiac-tea of the Canadian Indians, eteric oils, and intuitive healing. According to Kivelä, she has since about 2005 channeled Mary Magdalene, whose marriage to Jesus Kivelä believes was covered up by the Catholic Church. In 2011, Kivelä wrote, under the name Marketta Mylläri, to the newspaper *Lapin Kansa* (People of Lapland) that Mary Magdalene wishes presidential candidate Paavo Väyrynen from the Center Party to win the presidential election of 2012, since he was a person that understood spiritual progress to be more important than economic growth (Mylläri 2011). During the second round of the election, as presidential candidates Pekka Haavisto and Sauli Niinistö stood against each other, Kivelä wrote favorably about Haavisto on her website. She called Haavisto a "pretty boy" (hymypoika) who had already charmed a large portion of the population, "a man who is bursting with female energy" and a peacemaker in who "Mary Magdalene lives strongly." According to Kivelä, Haavisto's popularity was a sign of a larger worldwide change, of female energy conquering the planet<sup>111</sup>(margie.fi). It seems like Kivelä's attribution of "female energy" to Haavisto had to do with that he was the first openly homosexual Finnish presidential candidate.

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<sup>110</sup> Finnish original: Feminiinen energia on vahvistumassa meissä kaikissa, kun olemme matkalla uuteen aikaan. Se merkitsee sitä, että elämänarvomme ja -valintamme nousevat sisältämme, oman hiljaisuutemme syvyyksistä.

<sup>111</sup> Finnish original: Kun katson Pekkaa, näen hänessä naisenergiaa pursuavan miehen. Se että hän on rauhansovittelija, sopii erinomaisesti kuvaan ihmisestä, jossa Äiti Maria elää voimallisesti. Myös se sopii kuvaan, että hänestä säteilevä energia valloittaa ihmiset. Näin juuri on tapahtumassa kaikkialla maapallolla.

Writing about the New Age in the Anglo-American world, Michael York notes that the term “New Age” is often rejected by many people who sociologists would identify as “New Agers” (York: 2001: 364). York summarizes the New Age as a blend of pagan religions, Eastern philosophies, and occult-psychic phenomena (York 2001: 363). In the survey that the Church Research Institute distributed through *Ultra* in 2011 very few people self-identified themselves as a “Advocates of New Age” (New Ajen kannattaja). Only 3 percent of the respondents identified themselves as New Agers. About 62 percent found the label “Spiritual Person” (Henkinen ihminen) to be the most adequate description among the ten alternatives offered in the survey.<sup>112</sup> Clearly, the label “New Age” is a description that only a few feel comfortable with. Nevertheless, what is fascinating is the large amount of people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene who identify with one of the main beliefs from which the New Age derived its name. Up to 80 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that “The world is currently shifting towards a New Age, The Age of Aquarius”<sup>113</sup> (FSD2837).

An example of the idea of a coming shift in consciousness was examined in the section on popular culture within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The popularity of the novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) was interpreted as having spiritual significance. Timo Teide presented hopes that it would change our collective energy.

The concept of a coming age of spirituality is also prominent among people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene who are interested in extraterrestrials and UFOs. In the editorial of the first issue of *Tähteläiset* (Star People), Asko Nummela writes that the world is currently at the brink of a new age (Nummela 2012 a: 7). The same issue also contains an interview with spiritual lecturer Päivi Kaskimäki. In the interview, Kaskimäki talks about the meaning of the ending of the Mayan calendar in 2012. According to her, the planet is now undergoing profound changes, as can be evidenced by different natural catastrophes. All of this, Kaskimäki argues, will lead to a higher spiritual awareness and evolution

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<sup>112</sup> The different alternatives and their exact percent: Spiritual Person 61,6 , Christian 13, 3, Religious Person 5,8 , Other 4,1 , Advocate of New Age 3,3, Esotericist 3,3, Mystic 2,7, Humanist 2,9, Non-religious 2,1, Pagan/ Shaman 0,8.

<sup>113</sup> Finnish original: Maailma on parhaillaan siirtymässä Uuteen Aikakauteen, Vesimiehen Aikakauteen.

as there are signs that many beings from different star systems are now incarnated upon earth and born as human children (Nummela 2012 b: 10–11).

For Kalevi Riikonen, who is a frequent contributor to *Star People*, the current era is the most exciting time to be living in and certain people have a great responsibility in their mission to save the planet. At the end of Riikonen's book "Universal Teachings from the Cosmos" (1996 & 2010) there is a text titled "The Mythical Call" which is read by Eija Riikonen at a gathering at The Winterly Star Days and at various events where Kalevi Riikonen lectures.<sup>114</sup> This text is directed towards people who feel that they are some forms of extraterrestrial or supernatural beings incarnated upon earth in human form. People who experience being of suprahuman origin are invited to join "The Reserve Troops of Destiny" (Kohtalon Varajoukot). On the website "Tähtitieto" (Star Knowledge) run by Kalevi and Eija Riikonen there is also a plea from the extraterrestrial "Older Brother Xenox" ([www.tahtitieto.fi](http://www.tahtitieto.fi): B). The message of the alien is that planet earth is now in a state of transition and that people must actively help the earth to heal itself. On the website, people are invited to take part in the different courses that Kalevi and Eija Riikonen organize. One can, for example, participate in the "Planet Energizing Group" (Planeettaenergisoitiryhmä) that gathers at Mäntsälä, Finland, or one can from one's home take part in a "Meditation for Planetaric Peace, Balance, Harmony and Unity." The idea of the second group is that as many people as possible, regardless of personal beliefs, should meditate for peace. The information about the meditation is given in several languages in addition to Finnish, such as Swedish, English, German and Spanish.

The idea that the collective meditation will make the world a better place is central theme in the teachings of Transcendental Meditation, created by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in North America in the late 1960s. Transcendental Meditation first arrived in Finland in the 1970s and courses are organized throughout the country ([uskonnot.fi](http://uskonnot.fi): b). In my interview with Nummela he explained that participating in courses in Transcendental Meditation in the late 1970s opened up his consciousness and spiritual awareness. Although Nummela still sometimes uses a mantra he learned at courses in Transcendental Meditation, he has tried out various different forms of spiritual practices (IF mgt 2013/016).

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<sup>114</sup> Ramstedt, fieldnotes. Talviset Tähtipäivät, Toijala. Parapäivät, Jyväskylä,.

Maharishi and his teachings have been dealt with several times in *Ultra* and Transcendental Meditation has been presented as a technique that suits everyone, regardless of spiritual, religious or political convictions. (e.g. *Ultra* 2/1978; 9/1983; 12/1983; 2/1984). Transcendental Meditation is thus discursively constructed as a method which can be combined with all types of Fringe-Knowledge.

### **The Coming Age as Social Critique**

Writing about prophecy in Judeo-Christian traditions, Gerald T. Shephard and William E. Herbrechtsmeier state that it is hard a task to define what various prophets have had in common. Although the messages and activities of prophets may have varied greatly depending on the social and cultural contexts in which they were active, Shephard and Herbrechtsmeier have identified five features that were shared by prophets throughout Judeo-Christian traditions. One important common denominator among prophets such as Daniel, Jesus, the Persian prophet Zarathustra of the second millennium B.C., is that they have all been social critics of their own time (Shephard & Herbrechtsmeier 2005: 7425)

In the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, the notion of humanity being at the brink of a new age of spiritual enlightenment is often combined with social criticism. Our current models of living are seen as corrupt, hindering our spiritual progress and personal happiness. The discourses of a coming spiritual transformation and change in consciousness that will impact society and enable a shift towards a more loving and harmonious world can be defined as *millenarian*.

The words millenarian and millenarianism stems from the term *millennium*, meaning one thousand. In the *Book of Revelation* found in the New Testament the millennium refers to a thousand years of peace before a great final conflict. This text describes in a highly symbolic fashion a battle between the forces of darkness and light, culminating in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and a creation of new earth (Schwartz 1987: 6028). As a scholarly term, millenarianism may also be used to refer to beliefs outside Christian or Abrahamitic traditions. The term has been used to describe anticipation of a golden age in Eastern religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism as well as Melanesian “cargo” cults (Schwartz 1987: 6029–6030; 6034). Millenarian beliefs can also be found in UFO cults and other new religious movements. The New Age movement has also been called millenarian by scholars of new religious

movements as some of New Age spokespersons and advocates emphasized the coming of a broader cultural transformation that would occur with the astrological transition into the Aquarian Age (e.g. Melton 2001: 374–375).

Although the shapes millenarianism may take in different traditions and sociocultural contexts may vary to a great deal, the characteristic element in millenarian thought is the expectation of a coming utopian world. A millenarian worldview can be distinguished from modern pessimism, which may merely view the world as a dangerous place where our way of life is threatened by nuclear annihilation, the depletion of oil reserves, outbreaks of Ebola, or ecological catastrophes. Although these visions of gloom and destruction may, and often do, constitute important parts of millenarian beliefs, a millenarian worldview offers more than simply a promise of death and devastation. The millenarian worldview entails hope and a promise of not only a better world, but usually the best of all worlds (Schwartz 1987: 6030). Hopes for a better world are obviously linked to some type of *unbehagen*, or discontent, with the current state of the world. If all would be perfect then there would be no reason to hope for a better future. In the case of Luukanen-Kilde, her reasons for discontent are quite clear; the world is dominated by an evil power-elite who is responsible for awful things like school-shootings, earthquakes, wars, and so on. In my sheet with questions that I prepared for the interview, I ended with the questions “D1. What do you think about today’s society and the world?”. To this question I received a number of answer concerning what my interviews saw as problems in the world. Asko Nummela referred to Luukanen-Kilde’s ideas surrounding the secret elites plan to eliminate a large part of the population covertly by harmful vaccines. He also talked about how the world is “...caught up in such negative energies”<sup>115</sup>(IF mgt 2013/016). Nummela linked negative energies to the food that we eat; eating white flour and fast food makes people sick and tired.

Harri Virolainen did not share the idea of a powerful secret elite, but saw that our consumption of fast food, tobacco and cigarettes are linked to spiritual decay. On a grander scale, Virolainen explained, that we already “..could end world hunger whenever we want.”<sup>116</sup> (IF mgt 2014/016).

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<sup>115</sup> Finnish original ...maailma on kiinni niin negatiivisissa energioissa.

<sup>116</sup> Finnish original: ...voitais poistaa nälänhätä koska tahansa.

Virolainen saw that many world problems, wars, hunger, and greed were basically spiritual problems: “And then if a human grows spiritually, she would realize that she does no longer want to hurt others.”<sup>117</sup>(IF mgt 2014/016).

When it comes to economic dimensions, millenarian movements are rarely found at the extremes of the economic spectrum. Millenarian movements do not seem to find devotees among those who enjoy privileged existences and have complete freedom of mobility, nor among those who are absolutely inhibited and live in constrained realities. Millenarian thinking does not tend to find root among the severely restricted (e.g. inmates of concentration camps, victims of severe economic oppression) or the most privileged elites (e.g. people with secure, comfortable positions). Millenarian thinking generally takes hold where movement is possible (Schwartz 1987: 6035). As such, millenarian thinking can be said to be a middle class phenomenon.

A basic typology of millenarianism developed by Catherine Wessinger divides millennial thinking into *catastrophic* and *progressive* millenarianism (Wessinger 2000: 16–17). Catastrophic millennialism entails a deeply negative view of the human condition. The world may be seen as such a bad place and humanity as so corrupt that the world needs to be entirely devastated and then be created anew. According to this type of millennialism, a total destruction is needed in order to bring forth the divine order. Progressive millennialism on the other hand, has more positive outlook on humanity. The utopian world, or Kingdom of Heaven, is often seen to arrive through changes made by the community of believers, e.g. through missionary work. Within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, the discourses of the coming utopian age fall mostly into this second category. There is a strong emphasis on that great cultural changes will come through a change in the spiritual mindset. These spiritual changes start among spiritual seekers, and then and spread throughout society.

Some of my interviewees paint bleak visions of how society will turn out if we neglect our true spiritual selves. One of them is Veli-Martin Keitel. Drawing upon his dreams and his conviction that some dystopian sci-fi thrillers are, although the directors are not themselves aware of it, inspired

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<sup>117</sup> Finnish original: Ja nyt sit jos ihminen kasvaisi henkisesti, se oivaltais, niin ei se halua enää vahingoittaa toista.



by otherworldly forces, Keitel has lectured about what a dystopian world would look like. In my interview with Keitel, he said that societal and spiritual change is inevitable, it is coming whether we want it or not. People will either adjust and have an easier time through the transformation or they will remain closed to spiritual truths and suffer and possibly die (IF mgt 2014/015).

According to Luukanen-Kilde, there is currently an ongoing war between good and evil in the world. In the interview, she talked about how we might even experience a third world war before things become better. However, she saw that we may collectively change the outcome of world events:

Luukanen-Kilde: If all seven billion people on the planet would start to focus their thoughts daily for one minute on that there cannot be war, we want positivity, we want love for all, there cannot be war, then the energy would be so powerful, that their guns will not, no, no, they will not work, they will not simply work. So it depends on all of us, but how do we get everybody on board? Number one is awareness, awareness, they first have to know about this situation, otherwise they cannot do anything.<sup>118</sup> (IF mgt 2014/025).

An aspect of millenarian thought, that is often found in millenarian Christianity, is the concept of messianism. Wessinger uses the concept of messianism to refer to the idea that an individual empowered by God, or some other supernatural agents such as aliens, will arrive and create the millennial utopia. Although there within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene exist widespread beliefs in different types of supernatural entities and forces, such as Aliens, God, nature spirits and ghosts of deceased relatives, the concept of messianism seems to be absent. If a millenarian utopia arrives, it will arrive due to “planetary changes,” “shifts in energy” or a “shift in consciousness.”

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<sup>118</sup> Finnish original: Siis jos koko maapallon seittemän miljardia ihmistä rupeis vaikka minuutin päivässä ajattelemaan että ei saa tulla sotaa, me halutaan positiivisuutta, me halutaan rakkautta kaikille, ei saa tulla sotaa, niin se ois niin voimakas se energia, et niitten pyssyt ei voi, ei, ei, ne ei toimi, ne ei yksinkertaisesti toimi. Eli se riippuu meistä ihan jokaikisestä, mut miten sä saat jokaikisen mukaan? Ja numero yks on awareness, awareness, niitten pitää tietää tää tilanne ensin, eihän ne muuten voi.

## 5.2 External discursive construction

In this chapter, I shall discuss the external discursive construction of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. External discursive construction refers to how people outside the scene conceptualize and understand the scene (Kahn-Harris 2007: 100). External discursive construction also affects and shapes how people within the scene view themselves. In the following, I shall focus on how Finnish Fringe-Knowledge has been externally discursively constructed by using examples from mainstream newspapers and television talk shows. I also show how mainstream archaeologists received Niemen's alternative historical views.

There is a strong emphasis within the Fringe-Knowledge scene that its members are part of an exclusive minority. They are more spiritually evolved and are able to view the world in a much more nuanced or deeper way than "mainstream" people who are materialistic and have a limited sense of reality. In her lecture at the Ultra Days in 2014, Luukanen-Kilde told the audience that they are part of a special elite. According to Luukanen-Kilde, the things that are talked about at different Fringe-Knowledge events are seldom discussed in mainstream media, and if then, they are usually discussed in a quite demeaning manner.

The internal discursive construction of the scene is influenced by external discursive construction. In general, people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene share a sense of being ridiculed and mocked by mainstream society. This is of course quite understandable, as external discursive construction tends to make fun of Fringe-Knowledge. Although external discursive construction in mainstream media can be quite neutral, it nevertheless usually has a tendency to portray Fringe-Knowledge as something rather silly.

For example, in 2009 the tabloid newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat* noted that a video with Luukanen-Kilde posted on *YouTube* had received over two million views. The short article with the headline "Finnish UFO doctor Spreads Conspiracy Theories about Swine flu on the Web"<sup>119</sup> (*Ilta-Sanomat* 11.11.2009) summarizes the claims put forth in the video by Luukanen-Kilde; the swine flu-vaccine is a plot by the secret elite to kill large numbers of the world population, while also capitalizing on the sale of the vaccine.

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<sup>119</sup> Finnish original: Suomalainen ufolääkäri levittää netissä salaliittoteorioita sikainfluenssasta.

The article mentions that she in the video is wrongly titled the Finnish Minister of Health, and points out that she actually used to work as the provincial medical officer of Lapland. It also mentions Luukanen-Kilde's beliefs about the US government harboring bodies of aliens at secret military installations.

From an intertextual perspective, it is interesting to note that the short piece mentions Luukanen-Kilde's UFO beliefs. Although the existence of extraterrestrial life is not the topic of the popular video, she is titled "UFO Doctor" in the headline and the article mentions her claims about dead aliens at American army bases. This is of course not surprising considering that Luukanen-Kilde became widely known for her UFO theories already in the 1990s. In mainstream thought, believing in aliens and UFOs is, however, often linked to superstition, gullibility, a general unstable character, or even mental illness. Presenting her in the headline as "UFO Doctor" instead of "former medical doctor," or "former provincial medical officer," signifies to the reader that this is a person who should not be taken seriously. The trustworthiness of her claims is further reduced by the headline stating that she "Spreads Conspiracy Theories." She does not thus inform people, she is spreading delusions. According to Fairclough, discourses are representations as well as forms of social practices (Fairclough 2006: 63). These two aspects of discourse are of course interlinked. By representing an issue in certain way, it can either be depicted as credible or lacking credibility. One of the main ways in which the article aims to underline that the ideas of Luukanen-Kilde should not be taken seriously is that the article is very short. If there would be some substance to her extraordinary claims, they would demand analysis and more explanation. Instead, the text just briefly states what she is talking about in the popular video. As her claims are delusions, they do not need or deserve more commentary. The article delivers a picture of a deranged "UFO Doctor" who is spreading rumors.

In the Turku university student newspaper *Tykkäri*, 2 October 2013, there is an article by Petri Rautanen covering the Cosmic Para Days that had been organized in the city some weeks prior. The article starts out with a short statement on how the journalist experienced the event: "The investigative journalist from *Tykkäri* visited The Cosmic Para Days in

September. It left a shitty taste.”<sup>120</sup>(Rautiainen 2013). The article summarizes the event, pointing out how ridiculous and absurd the different lecturers were. UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen is portrayed as a rather silly old man who claims to be in contact with extraterrestrials. The writer singles out Riikonen’s somewhat ridiculous overhead presentation with drawings of aliens. By contrast, ufologist Luukanen-Kilde is depicted as a charismatic speaker who made the whole audience listen attentively throughout her lecture. In contrast to Riikonen’s talk that is portrayed as quite silly, Luukanen-Kilde’s presentation about the clandestine power elite who controls the world in secrecy is made out to be potentially harmful: “Maybe because of this someone might not take a vaccine or seek the psychiatric care controlled by the elite. I am not laughing.”<sup>121</sup>. The Paraday-experience is described by Rautiainen in terms of him having entered a scene that is foreign to him. He cannot understand how people can take the lecturers seriously:

As I walk out down the stairs, I feel numb. I do not understand the audience receptive to these things. I do not understand why the performers do not follow the same safe reason as I and most others do. I am speechless. I need someone to talk too, perhaps a beer.<sup>122</sup>

The event is described as weird and absurd, possibly even harmful for someone who takes it seriously. The author of the article describes the people drawn to these types of events and who endorse Fringe-Knowledge ideas, as people who do not accept logic and reason, as a group of freaks or misfits.

As noted earlier, having or claiming to have a higher academic degree is something that is likely to increase the credibility of an author or lecturer within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. Luukanen-Kilde, MD, and the brothers Virolainen, each holding a PhD in business management are examples of this. Being an advocate of Fringe-Knowledge ideas, while also having a higher education from a respected center of learning, is

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<sup>120</sup> Finnish original: Tylkkärin tutkiva journalisti vieraili syyskuussa Kosmisilla Parapäivillä. Kakka makuhan siitä jäi.

<sup>121</sup>Finnish original: Ehkä tämän takia joku jättää ottamatta rokotteen tai hakeutumatta eliitin hallitsemaan psyykehoitoon. Ei naurata.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Portaita ulos kävellessä olo on turta. En tajua näille asioille herkistynyttä yleisöä. En ymmärrä, mikseivät esiintyjät noudata samaa turvallista järkeä kuin minä ja suurin osa muista. Olen sanaton. Tarvitsen juttuseuraa, ehkä olen.

something that mainstream media tends to find fascinating and worth commenting on. The brothers Harri and Ilkka Virolainen received a fair amount of coverage in mainstream media due their book *Encyclopedia of Supernatural Phenomena*. Because of the attention in various newspapers like *Aamulehti* and *Ilta-Sanomat* (Vaalisto 2014, Virkkula 2014), they were also invited to participate in the television talk show *Sarasvuo*. The host of the program, Jari Sarasvuo (b. 1965), is a Finnish media persona who has written a number of books on business management and leadership and set up a number of companies specializing in business management. He was also the host for the Finnish reality show *Diili*, based on the same format as the American show *The Apprentice*.

In my interview with Harri Virolainen, he told me that the event was a disappointment for the twins. He described the event in negative terms:

Honestly, it left a bad feeling. As we were backstage before the interview, Jari came there and we introduced ourselves, made some small talk and the atmosphere was quite relaxed and comfortable...then when we came on stage it was kind of Jari's own monologue, references and like, some strange examination... <sup>123</sup> (IF mgt 2014/016)

The educational background of the brothers was clearly highlighted during the interview. The interview started by Sarasvuo asking the brothers to cite all of their academic degrees, which was followed of a row of applause from the audience. To attain higher academic degrees is commonly considered an achievement. In the beginning of the interview, Sarasvuo himself admitted that he is a dropout who never finished his own studies in economics. Throughout the interview, Sarasvuo was very critical of the book. In the following transcription, taken from the beginning of the interview, Sarasvuo describes the book in a rather peculiar way:

Sarasvuo: This book is a spectacle, because everyone in our team who have dealt with it, they have started to read it with a kind of pornographic glow in their eyes.

Ilkka Virolainen: Nice to hear that the book has raised interest.

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<sup>123</sup> Finnish original: Siitä tuli huono fiilis, jos rehellisiä ollaan. Me oltiin ennen sitä haastattelua siinä takahuoneessa, Jari tuli sinne, esittäydettiin ja vaihdettiin muutama sana, ja ihan rentoisa, leppoisa fiilis...sit kun me mentiin sinne haastatteluun niin se olikin sellaista niinku Jarin yksin puheluu, lähdeluettelo, niinku ihme tenttaamista...

Sarasvuo: You have made paranormal phenomena into pornography.  
Ilkka Virolainen: Well, I don't think it is pornography, rather I would call it, that we have made them [paranormal phenomena] into natural phenomena <sup>124</sup> (Sarasvuo. Aired 20.2.2014)

As Moberg writes, discourses “underpin and “hook” into normative ideas and commonsense notions; thereby creating “‘shortcut paths’ into dominant notions about good and bad, right and wrong, normal and abnormal etc.” (Moberg: 2013: 10, referring to Carabine 2001: 269). Since pornography is generally considered something sleazy, and those who make pornography are not considered as artists or intellectuals, saying that the brothers have “paranormal phenomena into pornography” is, through association, a negative value statement about them and their book. Furthermore, if one takes into account that one of the purposes of the book is to highlight that there exists a fair amount of scientific research to back up the existence of paranormal phenomena, the pornography analogy becomes even more patronizing. As the brothers are established academics, and Sarasvuo being a motivational speaker and entertainer, he tries to increase his authority by pointing out that the pornography analogy is not only his own, but he has a whole “team” behind him. The pornography analogy is quite confusing as it is hard to imagine that someone would be aroused or turned on by a book on parapsychology.

Throughout the interview, Sarasvuo is on the offense and points out how ridiculous and outlandish the book is. At one point during the interview, Sarasvuo asks his guests if there exists Trolls (Peikkoja), since one of the persons interviewed in the book claims to have been in contact with nature spirits. He asks if a case of levitation mentioned in the book could actually be the case of someone simply feeling dizzy. When Ilkka Virolainen points out that Jesus is said to have levitated, Sarasvuo simply says “that is true...” (se on totta), and changes subject. If Sarasvuo had discussed religious miracles further, he would either have to say that they are also false, or then admit that some supernatural phenomena are in fact real.

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<sup>124</sup> Sarasvuo: Tämä kirja on spektaakkeli, koska jokainen joka on päässyt tätä kirjaa tässä meidän tiimissä käsittelemään, niin ne on alkanu lukemaan tätä semmoinen pornografinen kiilto silmissä.

Ilkka Virolainen: Hieno kuulla, että on kiinnostusta herättänyt.

Sarasvuo: Te olette tehneet paranormaaleista ilmiöistä pornografiaa

Ilkka Virolainen: No en tiedä pornografiaa, enemmän kutsuisin sitä, että ollan tehty niistä luonnollisia ilmiöitä

That Sarasvuo did not want to discuss religious miracles can best be understood if one looks at his own involvement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In 2013 Sarasvuo re-joined the church, which he had left 25 years prior. Some months before the interview, Sarasvuo had been invited by the vicar of Kallio Church in Helsinki to hold a sermon, an invitation that Sarasvuo accepted. The event was a success, gathering around 1500 people in the church (Kortelainen 2013, Saarela 2013).

The interview on Sarasvuo, raises questions about authority. One of the main reasons why the book is interesting is because of the brothers' academic background. During the interview, Sarasvuo admits three times that he himself lacks a higher academic degree. In his critique against the brothers' book, he argues that the supposed supernatural phenomena can be explained by conventional explanations. On the other hand, Sarasvuo is quick to change subject when religious miracles are mentioned.

Jukka Nieminen's book *The Lost Kingdom of the Ancient Finns* (Muinaissuomalaisten kadonnut kuningaskunta, 2010) received much attention in the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association granted him one of their annual stipends in 2011 for further research into the topic of the book (rajatietio.fi a). Nieminen also sent his book to the Archaeological Society of Finland. They reviewed it and published a rather extensive, but thoroughly negative, review in their journal *Muinaistutkija*.

Janne Ikäheimo and Wesa Perttola, who wrote the review, view the book and Nieminen's arguments as typical for the style or genre of pseudo-archeology. The review focuses on criticizing the main argument of the book, namely that there is a hidden geometrical pattern in the Finnish landscape connecting churches. According to Ikäheimo and Perttola, the claim that churches were intentionally built in a pattern where the church buildings lie approximately 33,3 kilometers from each other simply does not add up. The decisions for the locations where churches were built depended on many factors such as proximity to population centers, roads, waterways and other communications, topography and even soil texture, but not on the basis of any notion that the distance of 33,3 kilometers was somehow important. The authors point out that it is not in any way remarkable that a number of churches have approximately this distance

between them. Ikäheimo and Perttola make their own experiment to illustrate how easy it is to find different geometrical shapes and patterns that will at a first glance seem to be meaningful. Using the GPS coordinates of gas stations in Finland Ikäheimo and Perttola show that one can find geometrical patterns almost wherever one looks (Ikäheimo & Perttola 2010: 23, 29–31. According to them, proponents of pseudo-archeological views are unreasonable people. It is frustrating to go into dialogue with them as they refuse to accept reason. Ikäheimo and Perttola equate having a dialogue with pseudo-archeologists to be as frustrating as having a dialogue about evolution with creationists:

In the end, trying to have a dialogue based on reason with proponents of alternative archeological views, let us here call them pseudo-archaeologists, is like an experience similar to trying to have a conversation about evolution with creationists. This has been described as frustrating as trying to play chess with a dove: it tips the pieces over, shits on the board and flies away to its flock claiming to have won the game.<sup>125</sup> (Ikäheimo & Perttola 2010: 32)

The fact that Fringe-Knowledge scene personas such as Luukanen-Kilde, the brothers Virolainen, or Keijo Parkkunen, are criticized or neglected by established academic institutions, only seems to add to their popularity within the scene rather than diminish their respectability. After having received a crushing review in *Muinaistutkija* Jukka Nieminen defended himself in the preface to his next book *Tavastia. Muinais-Hämeen kuningaskunta* (Tavastia. The Kingdom of Ancient Häme, 2013), which he describes as a sequel to his previous book. When he read the review in *Muinaistutkija* he "...understood that I seem to have received the perhaps most gross and insulting review that has ever been written in Finland."<sup>126</sup>(Nieminen 2013: 6). According to Nieminen the review in *Muinaistutkija* is outrageous and unfair:

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<sup>125</sup> Finnish original: Loppujen lopuksi järkipäisen dialogin synnyttäminen vaihtoehtoisen arkeologian tulkinnan kannattajien, nimitettäköön heitä tässä sitten kertaalleen näennäisarkeologeiksi, kanssa rinnastuu kokemuksena keskusteluyritykseen evoluutiosta kreationistien seurassa. Sitä on kuvattu yhtä turhauttavaksi kuin yrittää pelata pulun kanssa shakkia: se kaataa nappulat, paskoo laudalle ja lentää parvensa luo väittämään voittaneensa pelin.

<sup>126</sup> Finnish original:...ymmärsin että olen tainnut saada osakseni kenties tämän maan törkeimmän ja solvaavimman kirja-arvostelun, jota kuunaan on kirjoitettu.



The magazine had sacrificed up to eight pages on the review. A few pages were spent on critique of my book, and the remaining five pages were used to slander me personally. Little was said about the book and its contents, and as one of the reviewers told me in a private conversation, he had not even seen the book as the review was being written. They probably had fun coming up with insults. I got to read that in my megalomania I have lost all sense of reality, that I don't care about facts but replace them with fiction...in short the reviewers consider me totally insane. Because I am crazy as a cuckoo clock, why would they even glance at the actual book and its contents.<sup>127</sup> (Nieminen 2013: 5–6)

As we see with the example of Nieminen and the magazine *Muinaistutkija*, the interaction between advocates of Fringe-Knowledge and people and institutions that represent conventional or mainstream historical and archaeological understandings tend to be ridden with conflict. In *The Lost Kingdom of the Ancient Finns* (2010), Nieminen rewrites the whole of Finnish history, as he uses theories about Ley-lines, relies on old Nordic sagas as factual historical information about ancient Finnish kings, and discovers previously unknown secret patterns between churches in Finland. In the preface to the book, he states that it is not written in an academic style because academia seldom comes up with anything new (Nieminen 2010: II). Nieminen attempts to free himself from the conventions of academia and historiography in order to make his own criteria of what historical research should be.

The journal *Muinaistutkija* represents conventional archaeological and historical knowledge. The reviewers Janne Ikäheimo and Wesa Perttola are both lecturers in archaeology. In the field of conventional archaeology and history concept like Ley-lines are viewed as pseudoscience. They are a form of rejected or stigmatized knowledge that has no currency. As the

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<sup>127</sup> Finnish original: Lehti olikin uhrannut arvostelulle peräti kahdeksan sivua. Muutama sivu oli uhrattu kirjani vastakritiikille, ja loput viisi ja puoli sivua oli uhrattu allekirjoittaneen henkilökohtaiseen herjaamiseen. Itse kirjasta ja sen sisällöstä ei oltu mainittu juurikaan mitään, ja kuten toinen arvostelijoista minulle myöhemmin yksityiskeskustelussa kertoi, hän ei ollut edes nähnytäkään silloin kuin arvostelua kirjoitettiin. Hauskaa heillä oli varmasti ollut solvauksia miettiessään. Sain lukea olevani täysin vailla todellisuudentajua suuruudenhulluine näkemyksineni, joka viis veisaa mistään faktasta vaan korvaa ne fantasioillaan...Lyhyesti sanoen olen arvostelijoiden mielestä umpihullu. Ei sitä suoremmin olisi kai voinut sanoakaan. Koska olen hullu kuin käkikello, mitä sitä itse kirjaa ja sen tietoja silloin silmäilekään.

review in *Muinaistutkija* is thoroughly negative, and with Nieminen defending his ideas and criticizing mainstream academia in *Tavastia. Muinais-Hämeen kuningaskunta* (Tavastia. The Kingdom of Ancient Häme, 2013), the interaction with Fringe-Knowledge and conventional historical knowledge has come full circle. The most noteworthy outcome of this interaction is that the position of Fringe-Knowledge arguments are, within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, usually strengthened rather than weakened in this process.

Regarding the relation between established science and Fringe-Knowledge, the program *Eldsjäl* (Fire soul), produced by the Finnish Public Broadcasting Company for their Swedish language channel YLE FST in 1995, had a rather interesting setup of invited guests. The program had six episodes in which different paranormal and fringe phenomena were discussed by a panel. The episodes focused on topics like ancient Mayan and Incan mysteries, extraterrestrials and UFOs, near death experiences and reincarnation, clairvoyance, and art and intuition. The program was hosted by the Finnish media persona Melita Tulikoura. As the 1990s witnessed an increased interest in UFO phenomena, with Finnish filmmaker Juhan af Grann making the UFO documentary *Vieraita taivaalta* (Visitors from Space) in 1992, and Luukanen-Kilde publishing the UFO books *Tähtien lähettiläs*, (Envoy from the Stars, 1991) and *Kukä hän on?* (Who is S/He, 1993), it perhaps comes as no surprise that two of the episodes focused on UFOs and extraterrestrials.

In the second episode about UFOs the panel consisted of eight invited guests. These included medical doctor Rauni-Leena Luukanen, UFO contactee Kalevi Riikonen, the Finnish ufologist Tapani Kuningas, the Swedish UFO contactee Sten Lindgren, Russian ufologist Valery Ouharov, physicist Johan Silén, and the Brazilian engineers and UFO researchers Cesar Soos and Alexandre Frascari. The conversation was held in Swedish, Finnish, and English. The participants had earphones through which they could listen to translations of what the other participants said.

In this group, Johan Silén was the only person who is skeptical toward UFOs. Choosing to have seven UFO advocates contra one skeptic is a rather unusual setup. As the ratio between UFO researchers and contactees, and skeptics is 7:1, the program is dominated by discourses on UFO phenomena having unearthly explanations. When the host Tulikoura asked why aliens and UFOs do not show themselves to everybody both

Riikonen and Luukanen explained that humans need to be on a certain frequency to be able to see them. As Luukanen talked about “energy,” “frequency,” and “vibrations,” Tulikoura asked Silén about what is meant by these terms. He answered rather dryly how these terms are used within physics and added that he did not really understand what Luukanen was talking about:

Tulikoura: But do then different people have different frequencies?

Silén: This concept that a human would have a certain frequency, that is as far as I know, for example within biology, one can not say that, a human is such a complex system, so you can not say that a human has a certain frequency. But what I do know is that within psychology one uses (the concept) that one must have a matching-pacing mechanism, that is that you have to match the frequency of the partner in a conversation in order to be able to get your message through. So if I now start talking in too scientific, complicated phrases....

Tulikoura: Then you know I will not understand....

Silén:...then the message does not go through. And it is this mechanism, which I could imagine perhaps corresponds to this idea about frequency.

Luukanen: Johan, I would just want to comment, when you did not know, as you are not a medical doctor...that a human actually has a frequency, it has a tone in the universe and you can prove that by, for example, looking at the moment of conception, when the sperm enters the egg, then you can see that it vibrates, you can see that the whole area vibrates, it was astonishing when I saw it the first time, the cells vibrating. And we believe this is solid, it is not, we vibrate, so there absolutely exists a frequency, which is different in different people.

Silén: Yes, I am aware that there are electrical, different, in the nervous system, that type of frequencies and that they change in different meditative states and that sort of thing. But is it this that is this energy or is it something else that is this level of frequency....

Luukanen: Now you are speaking like a skeptic.<sup>128</sup> (Eldsjäl, 1995)

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<sup>128</sup> Swedish original: Tulikoura: Men har då olika människor olika frekvenser?

Silén: Det här begreppet att människan skulle ha en viss frekvens så det är så vitt jag känner till, alltså till exempel inom biologin kan inte säga det, människan är ett så komplext system, så man kan inte säga det att människan har en viss frekvens. Det som jag däremot känner till är att det inom psykologin använder man sig av det att man måste ha en matching pacing-mekanism, alltså man måste helt enkelt matcha med den andra samtalspartnerns våglängd för att få ditt budskap att gå fram. Att om jag börjar prata i alltför vetenskapliga, komplicerade fraser här....

Tulikoura: Så vet du att jag inte förstår....

As the excerpt from the program shows, Luukanen and Silén used the terms “frequency” in different ways. To Luukanen, there are certain frequencies that allow people to see UFOs and to communicate with extraterrestrials. Silén, on the other hand, says that biology does not recognize any individual frequencies in humans. He adds that it can be used metaphorically within psychology. Luukanen refers to her authority as a physician and states that since Silén is not a medical doctor, he is unaware of the frequencies of humans. Luukanen uses the expression that a human being has a “tone in the universe.” When Silén says that he is aware of electrical impulses in the body, and asks for what is actually meant by frequencies and energies, Luukanen says that Silén is talking like a skeptic. The term “skeptic” is used pejoratively by Luukanen. Skeptics seem to lack the ability of seeing UFOs and communicating with aliens since they are not tuned in on the right frequency.

The Finnish Skeptical organization, *Skepsis r.y.* condemned the program and gave it their “Woo-Woo Award” (Huuhaa-palkinto) the same year. The award was given with the motivation that *Fire soul* was a program that uncritically presented non-scientific statements. Skepsis described the program in the following sarcastic tone: “The Fire soul-series became a real New Age crusade against dry science and troublesome rational thought”<sup>129</sup> (skepsis.fi: b). According to Skepsis, the program presented Fringe-Knowledge ideas and science as simply different opinions. YLE FST received a diploma and a homeopathic beverage called “Hallelujah-liquor” from *Skepsis r.y.* Moreover, *Skepsis* was critical of that the fact that

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Silén Så går budskapet inte fram. Och det här är väl den mekanism som jag kan tänka mig kanske motsvarar bäst det här våglängdstänkandet.

Luukanen: Johan, jag skulle bara vilja kommentera, att när du icke visste, du är ju icke läkare...att en människa faktiskt har en frekvens, den har en klang i universumet och du kan bevisa det på det sättet till exempel att du tittar på, i elektronmikroskopet på befruktning av människan, alltså när sperma går in i ägget, du kan se då det vibrerar hela området, det var helt förbausande (sic) till mig, när jag såg de för första gången, cellerna runt, alltså dom vibrerade, och vi tror att detta är solidt, det är det icke, vi vibrerar, så det finns en frekvens, absolut, som är olika i olika människor. Och jag tycker det är ganska intressant.

Silén: Ja, det känner jag till att det finns elektriska, olika, i hela nervsystemet, den typen av frekvenser och att de ändrar vid olika meditativa tillstånd och sånt där. Men är det det som är den här energin eller är det nåt annat som är den här vibrationsnivån...

Luukanen: Nu talar du som en skeptiker.

<sup>129</sup> Finnish original: Tulisielu-sarjasta muodostui aito new age -ristiretki kuivaa tiedettä ja vaivalloista rationaalista ajattelua vastaan.

the contact information for Ultra-magazine was shown in the end of the show. According to *Skepsis*, it was suspicious that a program sent on a public service channel practically advertised a magazine owned by a private company (skepsis.fi: b).

External scenic construction of the Fringe-Knowledge scene is usually rather negative. Especially when it comes to cases when people affiliated with scientific institutions comment on the accuracy of Fringe-Knowledge claims the comments are highly critical. Juha Hiltunen's article on *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), which depicted the novel as simply an exciting thriller incorporating pseudohistorical claims, was very different from the ideas of Tuula Pelttari, Timo Teide and Veli-Martin Keitel who saw the book as revolutionary. While Hiltunen viewed it as simply a piece of fiction, proponents of Fringe-Knowledge made it out to be novel containing rejected knowledge, and something that would possibly profoundly affect us on a spiritual level. The review of *The Lost Kingdom of the Ancient Finns* (2010) in *Muinaistutkija* refuted the claims made in the book.

When media covers Fringe-Knowledge related matters the attitude can be quite mocking. The brothers Virolainen were criticized on *Sarasvuo* and Luukanen-Kilde has been depicted as a crazed woman who spreads conspiracy theories. As pointed out earlier, the internal scenic construction is affected by the external scenic construction. As the external scenic construction tends to depict Fringe-Knowledge as absurd and deviant, the reaction within the Fringe-Knowledge scene is to make a distinction between them and what they see as mainstream society. The pressure from the outside has a unifying effect and strengthens the group identity within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene.

## 6 Conclusions and discussion

This study of the Fringe-Knowledge scene in Finland has provided three main contributions. Firstly, it has explored a particular alternative religious environment in Finland. Secondly, this has been done by developing and utilizing a novel way of grasping loosely organized religious spaces, namely the scene framework. Thirdly, by focusing on the interlinked questions of identity, authority, and knowledge among proponents of Fringe-Knowledge, the study provides an understanding of how leading persons within the scene discursively construct their identity in relation to Fringe-Knowledge ideas.

The Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is a loosely organized environment that requires no official membership. People may thus engage and participate at whatever level they choose. The term Fringe-Knowledge, as defined by leading people and institutions within the scene, is both broad and vague; it may include almost anything that lies at the boundaries of our current scientific understanding, and, indeed, of science itself. Some leading members of the scene prefer other terms, such as “spirituality,” “parapsychology” or “mysticism,” or use them interchangeably with the term Fringe-Knowledge. Scholars of religion may be eager to create clear labels and classifications in order to categorize different forms of religious or spiritual phenomena. However, this need for labels is less relevant for the adherents of various sorts of alternative religious scenes or formations. Although some persons in the scene view the term itself, and its introduction into Finnish, as a great historical achievement, others do not share this enthusiasm, though they share the same scene.

Although the definition of Fringe-Knowledge at first glance seems almost implausibly broad, Fringe-Knowledge magazines and personas deal with certain *types* or *fields* of knowledge. Technically, there may exist a vast amount of knowledge that is currently beyond our current scientific understanding. However, within the scene the areas of interests tend to focus on phenomena such as parapsychology, channeled information, ley lines, conspiracy theories, cosmic consciousness, prophecy, and UFOs. What they have in common is that they are based on knowledge claims rejected by the scientific community.

Many dominating discourses in the Fringe-Knowledge scene center on the conviction that members of the scene possess some type of knowledge, understanding or approach that differs profoundly from what is generally considered knowledge in mainstream society. As has been shown through excerpts from the interviews and Fringe-Knowledge magazines, both personal identity and group identity are discursively constructed within the Fringe-Knowledge scene in opposition to something else. According to David J. Hess, identity "...is constituted not by essential characteristics but instead by a set of relationships to the Other, or whatever is not the Self" (Hess 1993: 43). Within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, this construction of self-identity can be seen in discourses of opposition against mainstream society and established science. Fringe-Knowledge is seen to constitute a *different kind* of knowledge than current conventional science is able to provide. The members of the Fringe-Knowledge scene are seen as having different attributes from ordinary people in mainstream society; the members are discursively constructed as a *different type* of people.

The importance of developing and utilizing the scene framework can best be illuminated if we enter into dialogue with already existing concepts and look closer at what insights can be derived from them, and what their limits are. Both Colin Campbell and James Webb argued for the existence of a "cultic milieu" (Campbell 1972) or "occult underground" (Webb 1974). What unifies members of the cultic milieu is a sense of togetherness, stemming from a feeling of being outside mainstream society (Campbell 1972: 14–15). Within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene the idea of being an outsider is expressed already in the very definition of Fringe-Knowledge, i.e. that it is knowledge not accepted by the mainstream.

Writing about conspiracy theories, Michael Barkun maintains that in order for individuals to be able to develop their own "improvisational millenarian style" – a worldview that draws upon and mixes different types of stigmatized knowledge claims – two conditions must be present. Firstly, there must exist accessible material such as literature or websites from which one can draw inspiration. Secondly, the "authority structure" of the society must be relatively weak. This refers to a condition in which religious, governmental, and scientific institutions are not taken for granted (Barkun 2013: 19–20). In Western societies, which emphasize individualism, freedom of speech, and a reflexive stance towards knowledge, various stigmatized knowledge claims may thrive and spread much more easily and faster than in societies where, for example, the state

or other institutions exert stricter control over what is considered valid knowledge. For example, in China in 2012, the state considered people who openly endorsed ideas of a world-ending cataclysm at the completion of the Mayan calendar potentially harmful to the stability of Chinese society. According to *The Guardian*, Chinese authorities detained over 400 members of the new religious movement The Church of Almighty God / Eastern Lightning and confiscated over 5 000 items, such as books, DVDs, and computers belonging to the group (Kaiman 2012). Although arrests and detainme

Although sometimes criticized and made fun of by the media, or by people and institutions that represent conventional rational and scientific thinking, people in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene are free to create and spread their ideas, register associations, publish books and magazines, and hold gatherings and other events. Some books in the field of Fringe-Knowledge are even published by the largest Finnish publishing houses such as WSOY and Tammi (e.g. Luukanen 1992; Virolainen & Virolainen 2014). Regarding Barkun's two criteria, the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene has developed and is reproduced in a society that has both a relatively weak authority structure and where material on rejected knowledge is easily available.

Colin Campbell emphasizes that despite its diversity the cultic milieu can be considered to be a "single entity" and a "constant feature of society" (Campbell 1972: 14). Although the cultic milieu may be extremely vital and show resilience by the way rejected knowledge claims have been able to survive and mutate throughout centuries, the cultic milieu must always exist at a certain time and in a certain cultural context. The cultic milieu in the United Kingdom may be different and dominated by other types of rejected knowledge than the cultic milieu of Japan or India. The cultic milieu in Finland is certainly different from the cultic milieu of China and some types of rejected knowledge claims found in the Finnish cultic milieu may be absent in the cultic milieu of Turkey. Regarding any environment where rejected knowledge claims are found, few people endorse all rejected knowledge claims or incorporate all of them in their belief system. Some stigmatized ideas and beliefs may even be shunned by people and groups who are proponents of other types of stigmatized knowledge. Barkun, however, notes that this milieu has a predisposition not to overtly criticize any type of stigmatized knowledge claims:



For were the stigmatized-knowledge community itself to “exile” some claims, it would be practicing precisely the censorship function it rejects in academia, government, and other sectors. As a result, fringe ideas persist for decades, indeed sometimes for centuries, as in the case of Atlantis, as part of the stigmatized knowledge milieu (Barkun 2013: 216).

Barkun offers important insights into the inner workings and logic of the stigmatized knowledge milieu. However, although there is a general reluctance within the stigmatized knowledge environment to critique other stigmatized knowledge claims, there must arguably be some claims that are too extreme, implausible, or distasteful to the majority in the stigmatized-knowledge community. To the best of my knowledge, UFO groups and people interested in UFOs and aliens distance themselves from the beliefs and actions of the group Heaven’s Gate. After the group committed collective suicide in 1997, the American radio personality Art Bell (1945–2018) publicly denounced theories about a spaceship behind the Hale-Bopp comet. Prior to the suicide, he had discussed the spaceship hypothesis with a guest on the late-night radio show *Coast to Coast Am*, which focuses on paranormal phenomena and conspiracy theories (Genoni Jr. 1997). The Heaven’s Gate mass-suicide was also noticed in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. *Ultra* 5/1997 contains a summary of the tragic events in San Diego. The summary mentions such points as the central beliefs of the movement, the number of deaths, and the videotapes that the group made prior to the suicide (Äyräväinen 1997: 31). The summary is followed by a statement from *Suomen Ufotutkijat ry* (Finnish UFO Research Association) in which the suicides are strongly condemned. The readers are encouraged to be highly critical towards various self-proclaimed prophets, and apocalyptic ideologies that may arise at the arrival of the new millennium:

Take your own life in your own hands, don’t trust that love-declaring brothers will come from somewhere above, and who will take humanity into their loving embrace. No human on earth can – especially concerning UFOs – possibly say: I know, this is how it is. There has not anywhere on earth been presented any conclusive evidence for [the

existence of] UFOs – but neither against them. Be open towards new knowledge, but do not be blind.<sup>130</sup> (Suomen Ufotutkijat ry. 1997: 32)

The best example of exclusion from the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene is the case of the occultist Pekka Siitoin who was ostracized after he started writing about black magic and became an open Nazi-sympathizer. In the last years of Dr. Luukanen-Kilde's life, she seemed to stray a bit farther away from to what is reasonable even within a scene that welcomes the most fringe ideas. Her talks about objects "dematerializing" and disappearing into other dimensions at least seemed to confuse some of the audience at the Cosmic Para Days in Turku in 2013. The ufologist Tapani Koivula had years prior started to consider Luukanen-Kilde unstable (Koivula 2015: 30-34). The editor of *Ultra* expressed that he is not interested in publishing articles that express radical political or religious viewpoints.

The scene framework aids to explore how alternative religious environments are actually constituted, what types of ideas actually circulate within a scene, and which do not. The survey in *Ultra* showed that only one percent of the readers identified with the label "Pagan." While *Ultra* might cover nature religions and nature spirits, Neopagans have their own networks, publications and websites. Concerning alternative spirituality with a focus on wellbeing, the organizers of *Viisas Elämä Messut* (Wise Life Fair, first organized 2012) deliberately did not want to focus on paranormal phenomena (Rautaniemi 2012: 41). People drawn to the Fringe-Knowledge scene are not interested only in wellbeing. There are many other magazines that focus on those topics. While a person who wants to read about wellbeing, alternative diets, or meditation would find numerous interesting articles in *Ultra*, she or he would probably consider much of the other content bizarre. Subscribing to a magazine which side by side with wellbeing covers UFO News, dowsing, and lost civilizations, entails that one finds stigmatized knowledge stimulating. The target group of *Tähteläiset* magazine is more precise; people who are interested in, or consider themselves to be aliens. *Hermeetikko* focused on alternative history, esoteric themes, and alternative science.

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<sup>130</sup> Finnish original: Ottakaa oma elämäenne omiin käsiinne, älkää luottako siihen, että jostain ylhäältä tulee rakkautta julistavia veljiä, jotka ottavat ihmiskunnan hellään huomaansa. Yhdelläkään ihmisellä maapallolla ei ole –etenkään ufoista –mahdollisuutta sanoa: minä tiedän, asia on näin. Yhtäkään sitovaa todiste ei ole esitetty ufojen puolesta missään maapallolla –mutta ei myöskään niitä vastaan. Olkaa avoimia uudelle tiedolle, mutta älkää olko sokeita.

Concepts such as the cultic milieu, while useful on a larger meta-theoretical level, do not help us grasp and locate alternative religious environments on a local level, nor are they intended to. Although the Fringe-Knowledge scene is a loosely organized environment, it can be considered a certain scene with its own structure and infrastructure. The Fringe-Knowledge scene has its own scenic institutions, such as the Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association, Fringe-Knowledge Publishing, *Ultra* Magazine, and the Ultra Days. The magazines *Tähteläiset* and *Sinikivi* interlink with *Ultra*. Jukka Nieminen began collaborating with *Ultra* after his own magazine was suspended. Nummela had written to *Ultra* in the 1990s about his own alien encounters. In 2012 he created his own specialized magazine. The people who appear in *Tähteläiset* have often appeared in *Ultra* e.g. Rauni-Leena Luukanen Kilde, Kalevi Riikonen, Riitta-Marja Gauffin, Harri Virolainen.

The internal discursive construction within the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene shows that leading institutions and people within the scene have a sense of being part of an exclusive group that differs from members of mainstream society. Kananen wrote that the independent thinking of *Ultra*'s readers made them different from the "average citizen" (Kananen 2012: 3). Nieminen described *Hermeetikko* as a magazine that runs articles on alternative science that mainstream magazines do not dare publish. *Tähteläiset* is discursively constructed as the magazine for people who do not feel at home in this world. Group identity is expressed by rejecting the 'mainstream'. The Ultra Days and *Ultra* are further internally discursively constructed as being a part of a long lasting legacy and tradition. The scene can be said to have a sense of itself.

The internal discursive construction is shaped in relation to the external discursive construction. The discursive constructions of Fringe-Knowledge found in newspapers and television programs, and sometimes in the writings of archaeologist and historians, tend to depict Fringe-Knowledge as something peculiar and odd. This in turn strengthens the sense of unity within the scene.

The scene is dominated by people who are fifty years of age or older. That this is the case strengthens the argument for that the Fringe-Knowledge environment is a certain distinct scene with identifiable characteristics. The question of age also suggests that there are other factors at play within

the formation and structure of the scene than mere interest in Fringe-Knowledge matters. The people who possess substantial scenic capital are generally born before 1970. The survey in *Ultra* and my own observations at various events show that people in their 20s are in a very small minority. That younger people do not subscribe to *Ultra*, and are not eager to visit Fringe-Knowledge events does not mean that the young are not interested in these matters. Many younger people most likely read about paranormal phenomena online, listen to podcasts about conspiracy theories and enjoy shows like *Ancient Aliens*, and further, discuss these matters with their friends. But, as all data indicates, younger people do not seem drawn to this scene.

People in their 50s often have more in common with each other than they do with people in their 20s. They share the same collective and cultural memories; the same “generational memory” (Hareven 1996: 242). They grew up and were young in an era when society in many respects differed from today in regard to technology, education, music, cinema, politics, and so on. They remember and were impacted by the same cultural, societal and political events; ranging from microwave ovens becoming popular household appliances, the assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986, the end of the cold war, to the economic recession in the 1990s. It seems quite natural that people who share the same cultural memories would enjoy the company of each other. The question of age among members of the scene is relevant for understanding why these people still subscribe to printed magazines, which younger people seem less inclined to do. If *Ultra* does not get new readers, it will obviously decline as the current readership becomes older and passes away. As with much print media, the popularity of *Ultra* has also diminished. It will be interesting to see how the Fringe-Knowledge scene will develop during the coming years.

As Terhi Utriainen’s studies show, contemporary spirituality that focuses on angels is predominantly a female genre. Her survey at Lorna Byrne’s angel lecture in Helsinki indicates that only about six percent of men are interested in angels. Also, almost all angel authors and practitioners are women (Utriainen and Ramstedt 2016: 220). Indeed, as Jukka Nieminen started collaborating with *Ultra*, he assured the readers of his former magazine that he was going to write about ‘real’ Fringe-Knowledge in contrast to the articles about angels and cosmic vibrations featured in *Ultra*. From a gender perspective, it would be interesting to know how an

interest in angels may intersect with ideas such as conspiracy theories, alternative history, and UFO abductions. Indeed, as Utriainen has noted, angel spirituality is very versatile and can be dynamically combined with different worldviews and traditions. One of my female interviewees, who talked about her possible UFO abduction, saw no problem in incorporating angels, the Mayan calendar, and the ancient alien hypothesis into her worldview (IF mgt 2012/024). Although men seem to avoid angels, women do not appear to shun aliens or parapsychology. As the readers of *Ultra* are predominantly women, it seems that women are more versatile and open minded in their combination of spiritual practices and stigmatized knowledge than men are.

The attitudes to knowledge within the scene can be described as postmodern or late modern. Late modernity is characterized by a reflexive attitude towards various truth claims. In a situation where the sciences are evolving rapidly, and where new scientific breakthroughs overthrow previous models of understanding, a reflexive attitude towards science and knowledge can even be seen as a rational outcome (Giddens 2000: 45–49). Another important aspect in understanding the attitudes towards knowledge is the ethos of individualism that permeates Western culture.

People within the scene claim authority for their knowledge claims in several different, often interlinked ways. These include the authority of their own experience, their own research, and referring to personas who possess scenic capital. The view of knowledge is based on the notion that there are superior ways of obtaining information (e.g. intuition, channeling), and the conviction that true knowledge must come from outside the establishment. This conviction includes ideas about academia being caught up in its own paradigms and that some institutions are deliberately hiding important information from the public (e.g. information about extraterrestrials or about the true origins of Christianity). What these strategies of claiming authority and knowledge have in common is their opposition to mainstream views of knowledge and how it can be obtained. This will be discussed in the following section through examples from the scene.

### **Creating identity and authority through rejection and opposition**

Jukka Nieminen and the person he admires most, amateur archaeologist Keijo Parkkunen, state that they have never been part of the established academic community. Nieminen sees that the outsider has a huge

advantage and a fresh perspective in researching subjects like Finnish pre-history. This is motivated by his view that academia is inherently dogmatic and that people within its institutions are afraid or incapable of conducting research that would be truly groundbreaking. Nieminen thus constructs his authority through being an outsider. However, knowing that he is an outsider, he still sent his book (2010) to the Archaeological Society of Finland. Whether Nieminen thought he would receive appraisal or criticism for his work is unclear, but sending the book was a brilliant move for him with regard to his authority as a Fringe-Knowledge author.

If the reviewers would have said at least something positive, he could have claimed that the academic community finally has come to accept some of his ideas. However, as he might have expected, he received a crushing review in which he was called a pseudo-archaeologist (Ikäheimo & Perttola 2010). This outcome was, however, positive for Nieminen's standing in the scene. Now he could state that his views of the simple-minded academic community were in fact true. And while the academic community rejected him, The Fringe-Knowledge Cooperation Association awarded him with a stipend. Far from being discouraged by the crushing review, Nieminen published a sequel to the book in 2013.

We can call this phenomenon receiving authority through rejection. As shown in this study, Luukanen-Kilde and the brothers Virolainen have also received much of their authority within the Fringe-Knowledge scene through a form of rejection. What makes them even more interesting is that before becoming well known Fringe-Knowledge personas all of them had received degrees from highly respected centers of learning.

The relation between science and Fringe-Knowledge might seem paradoxical when it comes to the popularity of people such as Luukanen-Kilde or Harri and Ilkka Virolainen. They have been celebrated within the Fringe-Knowledge scene and have also received a fair amount of attention in the mainstream media. On one hand, the authors endorse parapsychological claims – claims considered stigmatized knowledge by the scientific community. On the other hand, these people receive authority and credibility due to their medical and scientific backgrounds. Considering discourses within the Fringe-Knowledge scene on conventional science as insufficient and flawed, it at first glance seems curious that individuals with backgrounds in medicine or academia have come to be regarded as authorities within Finnish Fringe-Knowledge.

If Luukanen-Kilde's authority to a considerable degree is derived from her status as a medical doctor, one would presume that conventional medicine and medical doctors in general would enjoy the same respect within the scene. Conventional medicine does not, however, acknowledge the existence of an immortal soul, accept that alien autopsies have been conducted in underground facilities, or hold vaccines as potential carriers of microchips. If conventional medicine denies these ideas, then why does a person from this background gain respect talking about them?

The case of Luukanen-Kilde's popularity is an example of the highly eclectic and individualistic character of the Fringe-Knowledge scene. Although the majority of medical doctors disagree with Luukanen-Kilde, her views on parapsychology and ufology are considered to have currency. The opinions of a single medical doctor become, in this case, more valid than the opinions of the majority of medical doctors. However, Luukanen-Kilde's authority is also authority that comes through rejection. It is precisely because she discusses issues rejected by the medical community that she becomes an authority figure. As the Fringe-Knowledge identity at its core consist of opposition to science and academia, a person such as Luukanen-Kilde becomes a hero when presenting ideas that are in conflict with conventional scientific understandings. Luukanen-Kilde openly rejected the mainstream medical view of the body. She spoke of the human aura, the immortal soul, and paranormal abilities, and criticized the medical establishment for its unawareness of these. In the same way, when the Virolainen brothers wrote a book stating that a number of paranormal phenomena exist, they opposed the scientific establishment. Their popularity within the scene relies on the fact that they were willing to put their reputations on the line.

Interlinked with the questions of authority and knowledge is the question about the role of popular culture within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. It perhaps does not come as a surprise that people within the scene tend to like films that deal with aliens, conspiracies, or ghosts. Almost all of my interviewees were interested in movies and television series with Fringe-Knowledge content. Popular cultural products allow people to engage with various occultural ideas in a playful manner. Popular culture stimulated their interest in Fringe-Knowledge, and for several of my interviewees' popular culture had usually deeper meanings than simply being entertainment. Popular culture was in several cases interpreted as

factual and historically accurate, a process that Michael Barkun (2013) refers to as “fact-fiction reversal.” As such, popular culture in the scene not only stimulates interest in Fringe-Knowledge, but becomes *in itself* a source of knowledge. The idea that movies about aliens and conspiracies actually convey the truth about the world stands in opposition to mainstream notions of how fictional films should be interpreted.

Christopher Partridge has highlighted that “popular occulture,” such as films or popular music, constitute a central part in mixing and spreading occult and mystical beliefs and ideas. He suggests that popular occulture is beginning to change the plausibility structures of Western cultures. In contrast to Partridge, Marcello Truzzi held the view that the emergence of the occult revival and the use of occult themes in popular films was a sign of secularization. In Truzzi’s view, the occult could be played with precisely because it had become something childish that no one took seriously (Truzzi 1972: 29). How popular culture dealing with the occult and various types of stigmatized knowledge affect plausibility structures in Western societies in general will undoubtedly be debated for a long time. What this study has shown, however, is that in the context of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, popular culture plays an essential role in mixing and reshaping various stigmatized knowledge claims. Within a scene where the plausibility structures include a number of stigmatized knowledge claims, and where people are accustomed to supranormal and conspiratorial explanations, popular culture dealing with these matters is likely to be interpreted in a different way than among people who do not endorse these claims.

### **Broader implications and further research**

Further research and academic interest in the Fringe-Knowledge scene and the types of ideas that circulate within it will certainly be linked to various larger cultural and socio-political changes in society, both on a local and global level. Depending on how Fringe-Knowledge and its institutions are conceptualized by mainstream society, the Fringe-Knowledge scene may be seen as simply a harmless group of people with eccentric ideas, as spiritual innovators, or as a malignant group possibly harmful to society.

Early in the 2000s, scholars raised concerns over the prospect that the growth of online media would create “echo chambers” where citizens would be isolated from contrary perspectives. The concern shifted in



connection with the U.S. presidential election of 2016, as the term “fake news” was introduced to billions of people across the globe. One of the allegations in the aftermath of the election was that news stories that had been intentionally fabricated and spread on the web and on social media, may have played a crucial role in the election of U.S. President Donald Trump (Allcott & Gentzkow 2017: 201–213; 232).

Years before the election, various types of fake content disseminated online had impacted the stock market. Companies such as Avon Products, American Airlines, and Twitter have all been targets of fake news. In July 2015, after a fake news outlet was published on a website masquerading as the official site for Bloomberg L.P., Twitter shares increased by nearly eight percent in just under ten minutes. The fake news story said that Bloomberg L.P. had made a \$ 31 billion bid for Twitter. During the ten minutes following the publication of the fake news story, the fake news was even tweeted on about Twitter itself. Among the people who tweeted on the story was Carl Quintanilla from the CNBC (Brigida and Pratt 2017: 564–565). Fake news has been able to affect the stock market, and it has been suggested that fake news played a significant role in the U.S. election. The core argument in the discourses on the harmful impacts of fake news is based on the assumption that fake news reaches a broad impressionable audience, lacking the ability to distinguish fake content from content produced by respectable news sources (Nelson and Taneja 2018: 2). The fear is that fake news will cause a crisis of democracy by creating a misinformed citizenry, unable to make rational decisions (Jang and Kim 2018: 300).

Jacob L. Nelson and Harsh Taneja argue that the current fears surrounding fake news are exaggerated. The majority of people in the U.S. get their information from mainstream news sources. The major crisis is not, according to them, about the abundance of fake news, but rather about the diminished use of, and distrust towards, established news media. If the distrust in established media grows, and fake news becomes more widespread, a situation could arise in which fake news becomes a greater concern (Nelson and Taneja 2018: 2; 15). However, regardless of the possible impacts of fake news on the election, these events started discussions on both corporate and government levels to combat and limit the dissemination of fake news stories.

In November 2017, the European Commission announced that it was "...setting up a High Level Group (HLG) to advice on policy initiatives to counter fake news and the spread of disinformation online" (ec.europa.eu). This commission already has experts from several private online companies. A number of companies, such as Facebook and Google have already on their own initiative started taking measures in order to combat fake news. Depending on the definitions of what constitutes "fake news," some of the ideas circulating in the Fringe-Knowledge scene could possibly fall under this category.

Other institutions, such as the North American National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), have repeatedly denounced various stigmatized knowledge claims, such as the famous "Face on Mars" being a man-made structure or alien artifact (nasa.gov). Another question that NASA addressed several times were the alternative theories about the possible implications of the end of the Mayan calendar in the year 2012; ideas that were popularized and disseminated to a larger public through films such as Roland Emmerich's *2012* (2009). NASA was sufficiently bothered to create an anti-2012 website in order to debunk various disaster scenarios (Barkun 2013: 213). In Finland, the Finnish Medical Association has repeatedly taken a stance against the practice of alternative therapies in the treatment of disease and illness. Representatives of the association have also participated in discussions about these matters on a European level (Pälve 2017). As has been discussed in this study, there was an incident in 2009 when Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kildes's conspiracy theories about vaccines were not only spread on YouTube, but also picked up by the Tunisian newspaper *Assabah*. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not pleased by the false news disseminated by *Assabah*, as the newspaper wrongly assigned Luukanen-Kilde the title of Finnish Minister of Health.

As these examples show, governmental institutions, medical associations amongst others have previously taken a stance against what they consider to be rejected knowledge. The attitudes institutions have towards these claims, what types of legislature is passed and, above all, how various stigmatized knowledge claims are conceptualized in the media, will affect how Fringe-Knowledge is perceived in society. This will also have implications for how adherents of Fringe-Knowledge claims view themselves.

Ideas about conspiracies and vaccines containing microchips have been able to circulate quite freely online, in lectures within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, and its print media. If a new kind of censorship takes hold and there is some sort of crackdown on various forms of rejected or stigmatized knowledge claims there will undoubtedly be a heightened sense within the Fringe-Knowledge scene of oppression and persecution. Environments like the Fringe-Knowledge scene, however, in general thrive on the sense of being outsiders.

How the larger public interprets fake news is dependent on already existing plausibility structures. I assume that for fake news to be effective, and to be considered factual, it cannot diverge too far from people's pre-conceived ideas. Claims that Hillary Clinton suffers from a serious illness, or that she was involved in some dubious, or possibly even illegal weapons deals during her tenure as Secretary of State, are essentially very different from claims that she has visited Mars, or that she is actually an alien in disguise. For the latter type of claims to have currency, it demands that individuals already find ideas of an advanced secret space program or the existence of aliens plausible.

Many knowledge claims circulating in environments like the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene are for most people much less plausible than 'conventional' fake news. Thus, I consider it unlikely that belief in paranormal phenomena, alternative views on history, or claims of the existence of aliens, would suddenly become widespread due to the effects of social media.

A greater concern is how environments like the Fringe-Knowledge scene might be portrayed in the media. Regarding intentionally faked news, as well as news that is simply erroneous, there might be a risk of environments like the Fringe-Knowledge scene becoming the targets of false reporting. In an age when there is both the capacity and demand for news to spread with increasing speed, the most basic principles of journalism (e.g. fact checking) suffer. Environments where stigmatized knowledge claims are endorsed are already considered weird by the mainstream. Negative news reporting, factual or not, about a single individual who, for example, believes in UFOs may affect how the public views UFO believers in general. As professor Eileen Barker commented in an interview on *Gearty Grillings*, if a member of movement deemed to be a 'cult' commits suicide, it is far more visible, and may be interpreted

differently, than the suicide of an Anglican (Gearty Grillings 2014). In the first case, there is a tendency to rush to make a link with the religious worldview of the individual and the suicide, while in the latter case there is usually an openness to consider a larger number of explanations. Small groups of people who are already stigmatized may become easy victims of sensational reporting.

One example of a person who promotes stigmatized knowledge claims, and whose views on aliens seem to have been have distorted and misinterpreted, is the British author David Icke. In my opinion, Icke incorporates some of the most outlandish elements into conspiracy theories. In his books, he outlines comprehensively his views on an evil shape-shifting reptilian race with origins in the constellation Draco (Barkun 2013: 106). One of the reptilians, according to Icke, is musician and actor Kris Kristofferson (b. 1936). Not only is he of alien origin, but while in human form he apparently uses his long male organ to strangle people (Icke 1999: 336). The main controversy regarding Icke does not, however, surround the absurdity of his theories. Icke has been accused of anti-Semitism. One accusation for Icke being an anti-Semite revolve around the conviction that when Icke is talking about reptilians, he is actually referring to Jews. The assumption that Icke is an anti-Semite has led to cancellations of his lectures and book signings. There have been protests against him in the UK, Ireland, and Canada. In 2017, the Maritim hotel in Berlin cancelled a live event where he was going to speak. Icke has been very clear about the fact that when he is talking about reptilians he is not speaking in code. He is *actually* talking about satanic blood-drinking alien shape-shifting lizard-people from outer space (Knight 2017; Ronson: 2001). I see no reason to doubt his sincerity regarding this point. A possible explanation for believing reptilians is as a code word for Jews might be that people who do so cannot really grasp that someone might actually believe in space lizards. Anyone who has studied stigmatized knowledge claims, however, realizes that there indeed are environments where these types of ideas enjoy plausibility. According to coverage in *Ultra* 11/2018, the audience enjoyed Icke's four hour presentation during his first lecture in Helsinki in October 2018 (Annola 2018: 26–27).

There are several other fascinating questions surrounding the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene, other similar scenes internationally, and stigmatized knowledge claims in general that would be interesting to research further. One of these questions is to what extent various rejected

and stigmatized knowledge claims are to be found in so-called mainstream culture. Quantitative data gathered by the Church Research Institute seem to indicate that some stigmatized knowledge beliefs are rather widespread. Data from the *Gallup Ecclesiastica* survey in 2015 indicate that about 13 percent of the general population in Finland fully or partly agree with the statement that humankind is transitioning into a New Age. Around 11 percent agree fully or partly with the statement that mediums may convey information from invisible worlds. It would no doubt be fascinating to know how the general population feels about alternative views of Finnish history, conspiracies surrounding microchips and other more fringe subjects.

## Summary

This study of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene shows how a particular form of alternative religious expression is discursively constructed in a particular context. The Finnish term Fringe-Knowledge (*Rajatieto*) is an emic term, which refers to a broad spectrum of ideas and beliefs, such as parapsychology, ufology and various esoteric currents.

In Chapter 1, I present the research questions, and the material and sources that this study relies on. The research questions deal with what is considered as authoritative knowledge within the Fringe-Knowledge scene and how this knowledge can be obtained. The thesis explores how Fringe-Knowledge is conceptualized by its proponents, what role Fringe-Knowledge has in their personal lives, and how the Fringe-Knowledge milieu is constructed as a scene of likeminded individuals.

This study relies mainly on three types of material: interviews, Fringe-Knowledge magazines, and fieldwork in the form of participant observation. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with editors of magazines, authors and lecturers. All of these persons were chosen because they were leading people within the Fringe-Knowledge scene. The magazines consist of three magazines that focus on Fringe-Knowledge issues. Participant observation was conducted at Fringe-Knowledge events.

In chapter 2, I present the theoretical perspectives and the methods utilized in this study. This study employs discourse analysis as a method. Discourse analysis focuses on language use and how language is used to shape and form our understanding of the world. Discourse analysis is based on the notion of social constructionism. The basic assumption within social constructionism is that knowledge, or our understanding of the world, should be seen as the results of social interactions and processes rather than purely the product of impartial and objective observation.

The study of alternative and loosely organized forms of religion that differ from how traditional churches tend to organize themselves presents the researcher with certain challenges. As discussed in chapter 2.1, there have been several attempts to conceptualize alternative forms of religion. In this chapter the theoretical concepts of the “cultic milieu” (Campbell 1972), “occulture” (Partridge 2004 & 2005), and “stigmatized knowledge milieu”

(Barkun 2013) are discussed. The scene methodology developed and employed in this study offers a new way to conceptualize alternative religious spaces. The methodological framework is designed to explore how loosely organized religious spaces are formed, established, maintained, and reproduced in actual practice.

Chapter 3.1 presents the cultural condition and context of late modernity. The chapter discusses how sociologists such as Anthony Giddens have characterized Western post-war societies. Individualization, reflexivity, and relativism are all central for understanding the late-modern stance towards knowledge. In chapter 3.2, I provide an overview of the religious landscape of Finland. Focus in this subchapter is on the emergence of so-called alternative religious currents and movements in the country. Chapter 3.3 gives an overview of the beliefs, practices and values among the readers of *Ultra* magazine, which is the most central magazine within the scene.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. Chapter 4.1 presents the structure of the scene; the central institutions and media channels etc. Chapter 4.2 focuses on scenic capital within the Fringe-Knowledge scene.

Chapter 5 deals with the internal discursive construction in the Finnish Fringe-Knowledge scene. Internal discursive construction refers to how people within the scene construct what Fringe-Knowledge is about and why they engage with the scene. In chapter 5.1, I show how proponents of Fringe-Knowledge conceptualize Fringe-Knowledge as being an area or form of knowledge that is one step beyond conventional forms of knowledge. Fringe-Knowledge is by some leading proponents conceptualized as constituting a kind of knowledge that takes religious or spiritual dimensions.

Chapters 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 deal with how personal identity and group identity are discursively constructed within the scene. Approximately half of the informants had had experiences of a supernatural or paranormal nature that they described as profound. These interviewees described how some type of personal life-crisis, such as divorce, disease or unemployment, had led to a deeper interest in Fringe-Knowledge issues. Although people in the Fringe-Knowledge scene may be interested in different areas, such as ufology, parapsychology, channeling, or ancient

mysteries, there is a self-understanding within the scene that it consists of a group of likeminded individuals. Fringe-Knowledge events are described as safe havens where people can talk freely about Fringe-Knowledge phenomena. Group identity is often constructed in opposition to mainstream society, which is viewed as lacking understanding and appreciation of paranormal phenomena and alternative sciences. In chapter 5.1.4, I discuss how, although many Fringe-Knowledge claims do not seem compatible, people within the scene do not usually find it relevant to criticize and debate each other. Although discord may arise about certain issues, such as gender and sexuality, existence of certain types of aliens etc., lecturers and leading personas in the scene cooperate with each other and appear in the same magazines and at the same events. The internal discourses on the relation between established science and Fringe-Knowledge are analyzed in chapter 5.1.5. The relation between science and Fringe-Knowledge is ambivalent. On one hand, established science is seen within the scene as flawed, as it does not recognize paranormal phenomena. On the other hand, the authority of scenic personas such as Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde and Harri and Ilkka Virolainen stems from the fact that they can claim conventional scientific and academic expertise.

The internal discourses on the relation between Fringe-Knowledge and popular culture are analyzed in chapter 5.1.6. In Western societies, popular cultural products such as films and tv-series with paranormal themes, ufological content, and narratives based on alternative history are consumed on a grand scale. Within the Fringe-Knowledge scene, there is not only a great interest in this kind of occultural popular culture, but stimulates deeper interest in Fringe-Knowledge matters. In several cases, there occurs a process of what Michael Barkun refers to as “fact-fiction reversals”; fiction becomes interpreted as fact. Chapter 5.1.7 explores the millennialistic ideas that are linked to Fringe-Knowledge phenomena. The millennialistic hopes are expressed in discourses on how the eventual acceptance of the reality Fringe-Knowledge phenomena by the mainstream public will shift society in a more spiritual direction.

Chapter 5.2 explores the external discursive construction of the scene. External discursive construction refers to how the scene is viewed from the outside, e.g. how it is depicted in mainstream media. Mainstream media in general tend to depict Fringe-Knowledge as consisting of weird and unconventional ideas. Especially in cases when the representatives of



the established scientific community comment on truth claims put forward by proponents of Fringe-Knowledge, the comments tend to be critical. The external discursive construction may affect the internal discursive construction. The highly critical review of Jukka Nieminen's book *Muinaissuomalaisten kadonnut kuningaskunta* (The Lost Kingdom of the Ancient Finns, 2010) in the journal *Muinaistutkija* published by the Archaeological Society of Finland amplified Nieminen's view that Fringe-Knowledge ideas are not accepted by academia.

Chapter 6 presents the major findings of the study and provides a discussion on further research. Overall, Fringe-Knowledge is depicted as a certain form of knowledge that is possessed by a special kind of people. The identity of Fringe-Knowledge personas is often constructed in opposition to mainstream society.

## Svensk sammanfattning

Denna avhandling utgör en studie av den så kallade *Rajatieto*-scenen i Finland. Det finska ordet *rajatieto* myntades under 1970-talet när en grupp personer som var intresserade av ufologi, teosofi, spiritualism och diverse övriga andliga föreställningar skulle skapa en förening för att samla människor med liknande intressen. Ordet är inspirerat av tyskans *grenswissenschaft* (gränsvetenskap). En direkt översättning skulle ha varit *rajatiede*, men eftersom personerna inblandade i föreningen inte ansåg att "vetenskap" täckte alla de typer av idéer och föreställningar som de var intresserade av skapade de istället termen *rajatieto* (gränskunskap). Avhandlingen består av två delar.

### Del 1

I den första delen presenteras avhandlingens frågeställningar, material, teoretiska infallsvinklar samt metoder.

De huvudsakliga frågeställningarna i avhandlingen handlar om hur ledande personer inom *rajatieto*-scenen diskursivt konstruerar vad *rajatieto* handlar om, samt hur de konstruerar både sin personliga och kollektiva identitet i förhållande till olika föreställningar om gränskunskap. För att studera scenen används diskursanalys samt det sociologiska ramverket *scen*. Diskursanalys innebär en analys av hur språket används för att skapa mening. Som riktlinje för diskursanalys används en niostegsmodell först utvecklad av Ian Parker (1994). Materialet i avhandlingen består huvudsakligen av tre typer. Den första typen består av semistrukturerade intervjuer med ledande personer inom scenen, såsom chefredaktörer, författare och föreläsare. Den andra typen av material innefattar lösnummer av tre tidskrifter som fokuserar på olika typer av gränskunskap; *Ultra*, *Tähteläiset* och *Hermeetikko*. Den tredje typen av material består av deltagande observation på olika evenemang såsom *Ultra*-dagarna och *De Kosmiska Para*-dagarna.

Scen-ramverket inbegriper att man undersöker hur en scen är uppbyggd. Scen-ramverket har tidigare främst använts för att undersöka musikkulturer, en del av vilka innehåller religiösa inslag (Kahn-Harris 2007; Moberg 2009). Scen-ramverket används i första hand då en miljö har en viss medvetenhet om sig själv, det vill säga att den till en viss grad

betraktar sig som en distinkt scen. Ramverket används för att redogöra för hur en scen är konstruerad. Detta inbegriper undersökning av scenens infrastruktur, dvs scenens mest väsentliga mediakanaler, evenemang och föreningar. Vidare inkluderar scen-ramverket en undersökning av hur scenen är diskursivt konstruerad av människor inom den, samt hur personer utanför scenen (exempelvis mainstream-media) diskursivt konstruerar den. Därtill tillkommer hur scenen är estetiskt konstruerad, det vill säga vilken typ av kläder, konstverk etc. som föredras och används inom scenen.

Avhandlingens teoretiska infallsvinklar berör begreppen identitet och kunskap. Det centrala gällande identitet är tanken om indentitet som något som skapas i relation till andra personer och grupper, verkliga eller imaginära. David Snow (2001) framhåller att identitet i främsta hand handlar om ett avståndstagande till någon annan eller något annat. Vidare går avhandlingen i dialog med de teoretiska begreppen "cultic milieu" (Campbell 1972), "rejected knowledge" (Webb 1974) samt "stigmatized knowledge" (Barkun 2013). Dessa tre begrepp skapades för att beteckna olika typer av ockult eller alternativ kunskap samt de typer av miljöer där den här typen av kunskap florerar. Avhandlingens första del avslutas med en diskussion kring hur västerländska samhällen efter andra världskriget upplevt ett skifte mot en mer individualistisk och reflexiv syn på kunskap och med en översikt av det religiösa klimatet i Finland.

## Del 2

Avhandlingens andra del består av en analys av den finländska rajatietscenen. Scenens infrastruktur består av tidskrifter, evenemang och föreningar. Till dessa hör de redan nämnda tidskrifterna *Ultra*, *Tähteläiset* och *Hermeetikko*. Föreningen Rajatiedon Yhteistyö ry. organiserar den största mässan inom gränskunskap, ger årligen ut stipendier och upprätthåller en telefonservice för människor som behöver tala om gränskunskap. Förlaget Kustannus Oy Rajatieto som ger ut *Ultra* grundades år 1976 som ett aktiebolag av personer aktiva inom rajatietscenen; dess 400 aktier köptes av tidningens läsare. Evenemangen, såsom *Ultra-dagarna* och *Uforock* erbjuder deltagare en möjlighet att höra på föredrag om gränskunskap och möta likasinnade. Enligt Michael Barkun (2013) kan så kallad stigmatiserad kunskap florerar endast i en samhällelig kontext där två kriterier uppfylls. Det första kriteriet är att det finns tillgängligt material, såsom litteratur, webbsidor etc. för personer intresserade i dessa ämnen. Det andra är att samhället har en relativt svag

auktoritetsstruktur, vilket innebär att religiösa, politiska eller vetenskapliga instansers auktoritet inte tas för given. Den finska rajatieto-scenen existerar i en kontext där båda kraven uppfylls.

Den viktigaste formen av den sceniska konstruktionen är den interna diskursiva konstruktionen. Begreppen identitet och kunskap sammanlänkas inom scenen genom att personer inom den beskriver sig själva vara i besittning av kunskap som mainstreamsamhället varken accepterar eller uppskattar. Redan definitionen av ordet rajatieto, som hänvisar till kunskap vid gränsen mellan etablerad och icke-etablerad kunskap, inbegriper ett visst avståndstagande från etablerad vetenskaplig kunskap. Av de 11 personerna intervjuade för avhandlingen har 6 stycken ett djupt personligt förhållande till olika typer av gränskunskap. Under intervjuerna berättade de ingående om hur de redan i barndomen hade olika typer av övernaturliga upplevelser. De beskrev vidare hur olika typer av gränskunskap blev viktiga för dem i samband med någon personlig livskris såsom skilsmässa eller sjukdom. Den kollektiva identiteten uttrycks såväl i intervjuerna, i tidskrifter som *Ultra*, som av föreläsare på olika evenemang. Ultra-dagarna och liknande evenemang beskrivs som platser där människor "kan vara sig själva" och umgås med likasinnade.

Synen på kunskap inom rajatieto-scenen kan beskrivas som senmodern (Giddens 2000). Stor tyngdpunkt läggs på individens egna val och självbestämmande när det gäller kunskap överlag. Vanligt är att man anser att det finns olika alternativa sätt att få kunskap vilka är överlägsna metoderna inom den akademiska och vetenskapliga världen. Ett av resultaten av avhandlingen är att populärkulturella produkter, såsom fiktiva tv-serier och romaner spelar en stor andlig roll för personer inom scenen. I flera fall rörde det sig om vad Michael Barkun kallar för "fact-fiction reversals," det vill säga att en fiktiv populärkulturell produkt blir uppfattad som sannskyldig inom scenen. Speciellt romanen *Da Vinci-koden* (2003) debatterades i *Ultra* och tillskrevs andlig innebörd.

Inom rajatieto-scenen existerar en mängd olika föreställningar, såsom tron på utomjordingar, diverse konspirationsteorier, idéer om att Finland i en avlägsen forntid varit ett mäktigt kungadöme, tron på naturväsen och änglar etc. Trots att det inom scenen finns en mängd föreställningar som inte verkar kompatibla, eller till och med verkar motsäga varandra, uppkommer interna stridigheter mycket sällan. Den kollektiva identiteten

innefattar en känsla av att besitta kunskap som inte accepteras av samhället i stort och har en förenande effekt på invider inom scenen. Dock förekommer exempel på hur konflikter kan uppstå även i en scen som verkar vara tolerant gentemot de flesta typer av stigmatiserad kunskap. Det klaraste exemplet på uteslutning ur scenen är Pekka Siitoin. När han under senare hälften av 1970-talet började förespråka nazism och svart magi bröt tidskriften *Ufoaika* med honom.

Den externa diskursiva konstruktionen tenderar att beskriva olika föreställningar om gränskunskap som naiva eller märkliga. Både Lapplands före detta länsläkare Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde och ekonomie doktorerna Ilkka och Harri Virolainen har i media erhållit kritik för grund sina böcker om paranormala fenomen. Författaren Jukka Nieminen har i sin tur blivit hårt kritiserad för sina alternativa arkeologiska och historiska påståenden. Kritiken verkar dock ha en stärkande funktion på scenen. Personerna som får utstå kritik utifrån får ökad auktoritet inom scenen.

När det kommer till frågan om paranormala fenomen kan man se att dessa föreställningar oftast har en slags andlig eller religiös betydelse för personer inom scenen. Paranormala fenomen och undersökningen av dessa har ringa egenvärde för personer inom scenen, utan det är på grund av att de hänvisar till en slags högre kosmisk ordning som de blir viktiga. Man kan således säga att scenen innehåller religiösa inslag.

Genom undersökningen av den finländska rajatieto-scenen har avhandlingen bidragit till att ge ny och detaljerad kunskap om en del av det finländska religiösa klimatet. Genom att tillämpningen av scenramverket har avhandlingen utvecklat scen-metodologin för studiet av alternativt andliga eller religiösa miljöer. Emedan begrepp som "cultic milieu" (Campbell 1972) och "stigmatized knowledge milieu" (Barkun 2013) har mycket att bidra med gällande förståelsen av hur olika miljöer som fokuserar på alternativ och stigmatiserad kunskap fungerar, är de inte anpassade för att underlätta forskare att i praktiken greppa och studera dessa miljöer. I detta sammanhang utgör avhandlingen ett bidrag till den metodologiska diskussionen rörande studiet av alternativ andlighet. De sammanlänkade frågorna om identitet och kunskap belyser hur en viss grupp människor diskursivt konstruerar sin självförståelse i en senmodern kontext.

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## Interviews

**IF mgt 2013/015.** Marko Kananen

**IF mgt 2014/014.** Timo Teide

**IF mgt 2014/015.** Veli-Martin Keitel.

**IF mgt 2012/026.** Tero Säilä.

**IF mgt 2013/014.** Jukka Nieminen.

**IF mgt 2014/025.** Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde.

**IF mgt 2014/013.** Tuula Pelttari  
**IF mgt 2013/016.** Asko Nummela.  
**IF mgt 2014/016.** Harri Virolainen.  
**IF mgt 2012/024.** Anonymous 1. (female)  
**IF mgt 2013/013.** Anonymous 2. (male).

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Semi-structured interview**

### **A) Personal history and interest in Fringe-Knowledge**

- A1. Tell me a bit about yourself. Education and work, family, phase when you became interested in Fringe-Knowledge.
- A2. Possible so called supernatural experiences that have made an impact on you?
- A3. Books and/or movies which have made an impact on you?

### **B) Fringe-Knowledge. What is it/What is it not?**

- B1. What is Fringe-Knowledge or what should it be?
- B2. How is a typical person who is interested in Fringe-Knowledge?
- B3. What is not Fringe-Knowledge?
- B4. What types of Fringe-Knowledge are you interested in?
- B5. What types of Fringe-Knowledge are you not interested in?
- B6. What attitudes do people in general have regarding Fringe-Knowledge?

### **C) Fringe-Knowledge, production and media**

- C1. Fairs  
Do you go to Fringe-Knowledge events and do you help in organizing them?  
Good/bad experiences?
- C2. Courses  
Have you participated in any Fringe-Knowledge courses/organized them?  
Good/bad experiences?
- C3. Fringe-Knowledge associations  
Are you a member of any Fringe-Knowledge association?
- C4. Books  
What books do you read/are you an author yourself?
- C5. Magazines  
What [Fringe-Knowledge] magazines do you read?
- C6. Websites  
Do you run or are you active on internet websites?
- C7. Monetary matters  
Is it possible to make a living from Fringe-Knowledge?

### **D) World and worldview**

- D1. What do you think about today's society and the world?

### **E) Something to add?**

## **Semistrukturoitu haastattelu**

### **A) Henkilökohtainen historia ja mielenkiinto rajatietoon**

A1. Kerro lyhyesti itsestäsi. Koulutus ja työ, perhe, elämänvaihe jolloin kinnostuit rajatiedosta.

A2. Mahdolliset n.s. yliluonnolliset tapahtumat jotka ovat tehneet sinuun vaikutuksen?

A3. Kirjat ja/tai elokuvat jotka ovat tehneet sinuun vaikutuksen?

### **B) Rajatieto. Mitä rajatieto on/mitä rajatieto ei ole?**

B1. Mitä rajatieto on tai pitäisi olla?

B2. Millainen on tyypillinen rajatiedosta kiinnostunut ihminen?

B3. Mitä rajatieto ei ole?

B4. Mitkä rajatiedon alueet kiinnostavat sinua?

B5. Onko rajatiedon alueita joista et ole kiinnostunut?

B6. Miten ihmiset yleensä suhtautuvat rajatietoon?

### **C) Rajatieto, tuotanto ja media**

C1. Messut

Käytkö rajatiedon messuilla ja oletko mukana järjestämässä niitä? Hyviä/huonoja kokemuksia?)

C2. Kurssit

Oletko osallistunut rajatiedon kursseihin/järjestänyt niitä? Hyviä/huonoja kokemuksia?

C3. Rajatiedon yhteisöt

Oletko jäsen jossakin rajatiedon yhteisössä?

C3. Matkat

Oletko osallistunut rajatiedon matkoihin/järjestänyt niitä? Hyviä/huonoja kokemuksia?

C4. Kirjat

Mitä kirjoja luet/ oletko itse kirjailija?

C5. Lehdet

Mitä [rajatiedon] lehtiä luet? Kirjoitatko niihin itse?

C5. Internetsivustot

Ylläpidätkö tai oletko aktiivinen internetsivustoilla?

C6. Raha-asiat

Voiko rajatiedolla ansaita elantonsa?

### **D) Maailma ja maailmankuva**

D1. Mitä mieltä olet nykypäivän yhteiskunnasta ja maailman menosta?

### **E) Muuta?**





## Appendix B



Figure 1. Ultra 9/2012.



Figure 2. Ultra 2/2010.



Figure 3. Hermeetikko 12.

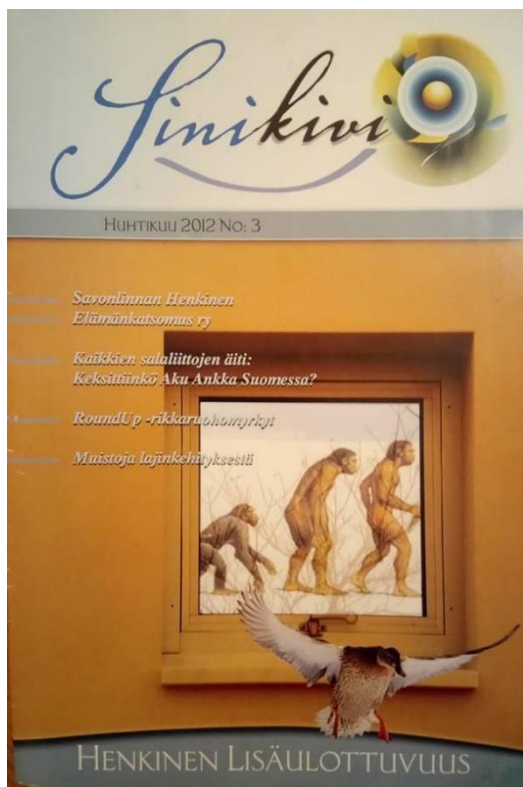


Figure 4. Sinikivi 3, April 2012.



Figure 5. *Tähteläiset* 1/2012.



Figure 6. The Fair for Spirit and Knowledge, Helsinki 2014.





Figure 7. Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde and Ari Kero at UFO conference, Tampere 2010.



Figure 8. Midnight Meditation at the Ultra Days, Kuortane 2014.



Figure 9. The author trying out dowsing at Earth Radiation Day, Tampere, 2013. Photo by Jukka Nieminen.

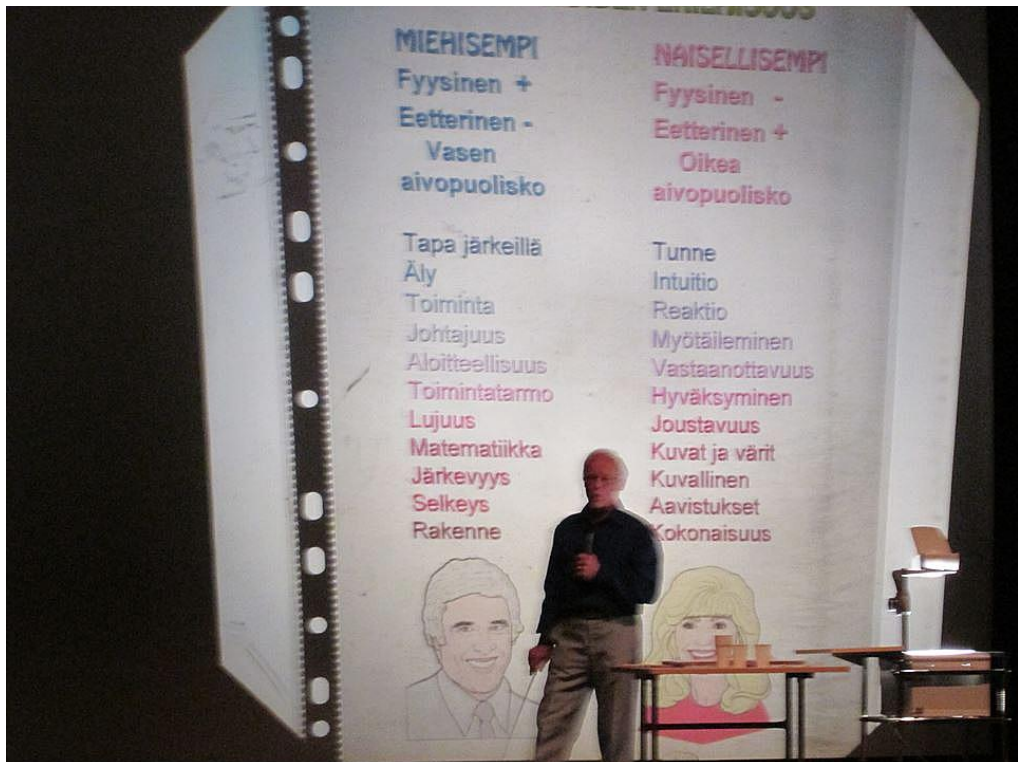


Figure 10. Contactee Kalevi Riikonen explaining differences between male and female brains. Cosmic Para Days, Turku 2013.





Figure 11. Riitta-Marja Gauffin talks about *Stargate* and *Ancient Aliens* at Uforock, Tampere 2012.



Figure 12. Erkki Kanto hosting the Ultra Days, Kuortane, 2014.

