

KRISTEL KIVARI

Dowsing as a link between
natural and supernatural.
Folkloristic reflections on water veins,
Earth radiation and dowsing practice



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Earth radiation and dowsing practice



Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Institute of Cultural Research and Arts, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu, Estonia

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Supervisor: Ülo Valk

Opponents: Dr. Mare Kalda (Estonian Literary Museum)
Dr. James Alexander Kapaló (University College Cork)

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The path is the destination, although this may sound a bit hypocritical when completing a work. However, thinking about the years of my studies in the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, this statement encompasses the gratitude and happiness that were my partners, personified as the people I met during that time. I happened to choose a topic that guided me to the most surprising environments, the existence of which I was hardly aware. Therefore, it has been a real exploration as well as a spiritual journey. I thank the people who spent their time opening their lives and stories to me; stories that often involved the most serious crises that life can bring. I am happy and honoured that I had the chance to participate in the work of the Estonian Geopathic Association, which taught me so much about the concepts that I consider central to my inquiry. The work of the society has humbled me, and inspired me to make claims about a reality that seems so wide, incomprehensible and alive.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS IN THE DISSERTATION

1. Kivari, Kristel 2012. Energy as the Mediator between Natural and Supernatural Realms. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 2012, Volume 6, Number 2, 49–68.
2. Kivari, Kristel 2013. Veesooned, energiasambad ja tervis: argiusund töövõtetest tevishoiuni. [Water Veins, Energy Columns and Health Issues: Expressions of Vernacular Religion.] – Marko Uibu (ed.) *Mitut usku Eesti* III. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 107–138.
3. Kivari, Kristel 2013. Esoteeriline pärimus Kirnas ja maagial põhinevad mõistmisviisid. [Esoteric Lore in Kirna Manor and Magical Mentality.] *Mäetagused*, 54, 185–212.
4. Kivari, Kristel 2015. The Theory of the Earth Energy: Academia and the Vernacular in Search of the Supernatural. *Implicit Religion*, Volume 18, Number 3, 399–422.
5. Kivari, Kristel. Webs of Lines and Webs of Stories in the Making of Supernatural Places. Daniel Sävborg, Ülo Valk (eds.) *Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (forthcoming).

1. INTRODUCTION

The first two chapters of this work give an introduction to the material under study and the dowsing tradition in general. In the first chapter the premises and framework of the research are explained and the process of fieldwork described. The following sections, and the second chapter, are dedicated to historical and archival material, which provides a background for the contemporary practice and research material collected through fieldwork between 2010 and 2014 in Estonia.

1.1. The structure and objectives of the research. The plan of the dissertation

Dowsing as a practice has proven to be a successful link between different categories. It enables the practitioners to experience the supernatural, with its endless way of contemplating the nature of reality. Mental and social engagements, such as believing, perceiving, experiencing and communicating involve links between different domains, whether those domains are communal, cultural or natural.

As a folkloristic study the current research has not been guided by pre-formulated hypotheses or questions that exist independently of the material I was approaching. My view has been influenced by two currents, dominant in folklore research: one is the focus on narrative and performance that is guided by the generic composition of the particular communicative act; the other focus lies in the broad field of vernacular religion, as stated by Leonard Norman Primiano (1995, 2012), which does not look for doctrinal religiosity, but “understands religion as the continuous art of individual interpretation and negotiation of any number of influential sources. All religion is both subtly and vibrantly marked by continuous interpretation even after it has been reified in expressive or structured forms” (Primiano 2012: 384). Thus the religion here is analysed inside out by looking at the way how people search for the mighty force that may influence both the physical as well as the mental aspects of life. These aspects enable people to locate themselves in some kind of cosmological order, despite this order not being perceived as religious. Still, most importantly this study is about the dowsing tradition and how the concept of earth radiation is perceived, used and communicated in the second decade of 21st century in Estonia.

As a living and changing vernacular concept, the expressions of dowsing lore is hard to fix as a reliable and exhaustive research material. Comparable with the field data, in which a short utterance can refer to large concepts and philosophies, my analysis includes only examples of a continuous flow of vernacular thinking. Doing so, I position myself among contemporary scholarship which, in the words of Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk, instead of pro-

ducing authoritarian theoretical statements rather observes and captures the flow of vernacular thinking (Bowman, Valk 2012: 2). An overview of my fieldwork process is given in chapter 1.3. “The material of the study”.

As a textually oriented work, my research focuses on verbal expressions, mainly gained through interviews and public discussion. Examples from historical materials are used to give background to the contemporary practice. Part of the introduction as well as parts of articles 2, 4 and 5, give examples from the history of mining and dowsing for wells that show the continuity and traditionality of dowsing, both according to function and the social controversy the practice generates.

In the introductory part I have summarised the main theoretical focuses that I have reflected upon in the research material in the articles. On the one hand, these theories have been developed independently of the current material, while on the other the particular theoretical points have appeared relevant when setting the material into the context of folklore research or within the broader history of ideas. In the framework of vernacular religion, in the introductory part, I look at the term religion, which I feel needs some more discussion in the context of dowsing because nature, the human body and spiritual experience serve as the sources of this particular tradition. Experience and discussion of the supernatural arises through dowsing and with the help of different concepts of energies and fields. Dowsing as a link between different visions, theories, practices and teachings that support the power of individual experience and vernacular authority is discussed in the third chapter of this work. An introduction to the theory will be followed by a description of the articles and a conclusion.

I am well aware of the contradictory viewpoints and problems that the current dissertation raises, as it operates in the open field of public opinion in relation to the details of dowsing. The position of academic work gives me unequal advance and the possibility to be mistaken in a sensitive translation process both at the level of concepts and of material, and also between the oral and written word (see Valk 2015a, 2015b: 158). In addition, those people from the academic side of dowsing would raise questions about this work, asking why this side gets little representation in this work. The answer would lie in the data that this work is based on; it would also lie on the methods used herein, which, according to the words of Henry Bauer, attempt not to explain but to understand, admitting that, methodologically, between materialism and transcendent belief there is no stable ground (Bauer 2001: 12). Despite this, I have referred to some lines of thought from these schools in the Literature about Dowsing section.

In the current work, positioning myself as a folklorist, my mission is also to introduce the questions asked by the other side, the tradition bearers, which address the institutional structures that create legitimate knowledge. Despite this, there are research ethics concerns with supporting one of two sides, a conflict that I have no good solution for other than to carefully investigate peoples’ stories, experiences and motivations. Bearing the responsibility as the leader of the Geopathic Association 2013-2016, I have had both, the luck and

burden to get to know, and live, the rich field of conflict in my research. Apart from making interviews for my research this has involved organising of and participating in lectures, seminars and discussions, examining sites of supernatural encounters or geopathic zones, and experiencing sympathy and conflicts inside the group.

The aspect that is most difficult to write about is to face the dowsing itself, whether by relying on methods introduced by people I have met during the course of this work, or coming to understand the position through my own experience. Are there any undescribed forces in nature that would be apprehendable by the human body? What is the nature of sacred places and are there any external, transcendent agents involved in producing feelings of sacredness or otherness? Is there any special link between the human body and the environment or between people that would explain visions, or accounts associated with clairvoyance? Do we know all the senses, and do we use them all equally? Even more, in this light the continuous thinking, how the word becomes flesh would open new intertextual and interconceptual horizons for observation. There is no excuse for avoiding such questions as they are related directly to the various activities of dowsers. My answer is based on my experience: indeed the rods do move in peoples' hands independently of their will or movement, and the practice of dowsing enables us to recognise and explore nature from an unusual angle, one that can be linked with other mysteries and gain an intimate, personal and delicate relationship with particular spots. Dowsing and otherwise using the concept of energy also illustrates the patterns that appear in how people generally make sense of their surroundings. Thus, I point to the range of problems that put contemporary spirituality in its social, intellectual and political context.

1.2. Introduction to the practice of dowsing

Dowsing is a wide subject. Its most important two elements are the tool and the user: the twig, metal rods or pendulum that reveal the concealed or subtle nature of the cultural or natural environment, and the medium who uses these tools. It is interesting to note that the tool cannot operate without a person, whereas a dowser can dowse without a tool, interpreting his or her reaction, feelings and visions.

There are several different schools of dowsing, addressing the dowser differently according to their approach. The main difference is in the explanation for what lies behind dowsing as it relates to the signal in the environment (the impulse that deflects the twig or moves the pendulum) as well as the source of this signal (whether it emanates from the ground or reveals the hidden powers of the human body). One school of dowsing sees some people as the crucial and talented element. They are called operators (*operaatorid*), psychics (people with heightened sensory abilities, *sensitiivid*) or dowsers (men or women who practice with dowsing rods or pendulums, *vitsamehed*, *pendlimehed*). Their abilities

have evolved throughout their lives, although usually the beginning of their interest comes after contact with dowsing practitioners or enthusiasts. The ability has also been reported as being 'inductive' (*induktiivne*), i.e. transmitted by touch. Each and every step into the interest is unique, and it was usual in my interviews that people spoke about events that had happened 10, 20, or more years ago. As a rule people cannot explain their uniqueness, except in some cases in which they have turned to doctors for a physical examination to find if their bodies have some extraordinary quality.

The other school of dowsing practice focuses on the tool, in this case most often the pendulum or L-shaped metal rod, and claims that it moves in anyone's hands. The technique involves the use of pendulum charts on which possible answers or the percentage of probability is depicted. The use of the tool and charts requires that the dowser asks and contemplates simple questions. This method uses the practitioner's intuition or subconscious to reveal answers, with the questions rather oriented to the individual dowser (for example, is this place, food, path, etc., good for me?) in order to help decision making. This approach is usually taught on pendulum courses as a method of everyday divination. However, the division between the two approaches is not strict. Many practitioners use both techniques, in addition to which concepts such as networks of radiations and networks of lines are common to both schools.

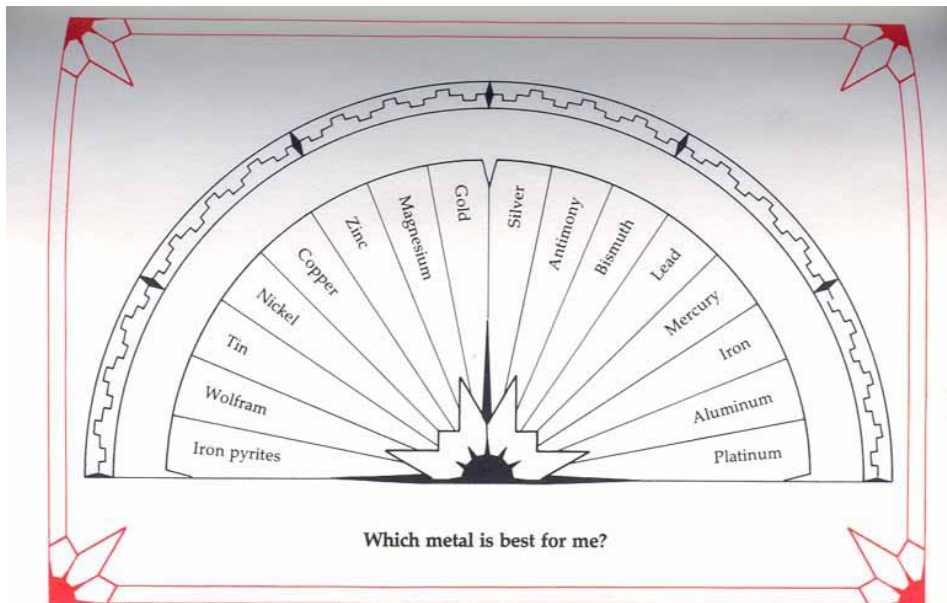


Image: The example of pendulum charts (source: www.crystalinks.com)

The list of the signal sources is long and the interpretations make up an essential part of dowsing lore, which is discussed in the articles of the current dissertation. Similar to distinction mentioned above, only conditional rule can be generalised: 1) the source reveals the signal coming from the external environment, or 2) in addition to, and partly mixing with this principal, the purpose of the practice is to measure the connection itself, to reveal the supernatural threads in the everyday environment, whereas the centre and source of the connections is the human body.

Dowsing is rooted in early studies of geology, geomagnetism and related subjects. Simple and complex at the same time, the method lies in distinctive point between subjectivity and objectivity in contemporary, modern culture, and touches the basic issues of sense and decision-making in peoples' everyday lives as well as their overall understanding about the nature of reality.

1.3. The material of the study: reflections on the dowsing scene in Estonia 2010–2014

I came to the theme of the current dissertation in writing my Master's thesis: "Underground Beings in Estonian Folk Belief: Borders between Nature and the Human Body". The thesis was based on materials from the Estonian Folklore Archives and analysed the complex illness that hit people who sat carelessly in certain places. The relationship between the human body and the sphere of the underground provides rich material for comparative mythology (*maan-nenä* in Finnish folklore (Stark 2002: 102)). Different folk belief motifs relating to illness caused by underground beings and energies seem in some way to be similar to beliefs about dowsing, although in fact they are too far from each other both temporally and culturally to have a direct relationship. Of course, this does not negate the question of why certain similar motifs occur in places that are distant in time and space. The current work uses contemporary material gathered between 2010 and 2014 in Estonia and focuses on dowsing and the concept of earth energies.

While the pendulum is a major divination technique in the alternative scene, where the metaphysical 'other' in the human body answers, my focus is on situations in which the 'other' is depicted as in the environment in veins of water, networks of energy, anomalous zones, or pillars of energy. Despite locating the source of the signal outside the human body, it is the medium that reveals the subtle character of reality. I am aware that by putting these phenomena under the umbrella of dowsing, I simplify them within the limits of tradition, depending on the situation. Despite this, the dominant idea that the material reflects is that the human body possesses some quality that means it is able to reveal the supernatural signal in the environment.

I began to search for material for my study in 2010, taking the easiest path. That summer I focused my attention on Kirna manor, a healing centre in central Estonia. I made contact with the mistress of the manor, Helle Anniko, and with

her kind permission I switched on my recorder while talking with her during the summer mornings when she was waiting for guests and patients to arrive at the manor house. I also took part in the excursions and training sessions that Helle held together with Henn Hunt, who had been Helle's patient but was now her assistant and colleague. Although I knew much more was going on at the manor at that time, I was too inexperienced to get any further inside the circle. Despite this, Helle introduced me to her patients, so I held interviews with five families, members of which had been healed in the energy spots of the manor's park. As with the excursions, it was difficult to establish contact with visitors to the manor in order to collect research material in the form of interviews.

In 2011 I took part in excursions titled Discover Energetic Estonia, organised by a couple of entrepreneurs Siret and Janno Seeder. Their personal engagement and enthusiasm in dowsing and *feng shui* had started from the seminal courses of Rein Weber, a popular trainer who introduced and educated a whole generation of pendulum users. He had got his ideas and experiences while living in France; his courses were extremely popular between approximately 2000 and 2008. Along with the inspiration they got from their mentor, Siret and Janno developed their personal interest into a profession, now (2016) providing training in the use of pendulums, as well as design along the principles of *feng-shui* and spiritual development for individuals and organisations. Siret and Janno Seeder began their activity in 2010 organising excursions in Estonia, and since then this activity has developed into providing spiritual tourism to their great land of inspiration, China¹. In 2010 the excursions provided me a perfect introduction not only to the use of the pendulums but to energetic geography, a new layer of place-lore. I was also afforded the chance to see how the personal relationship is established between the people and the places using the ideas of healing and spiritual development.

Together with Siret and Janno Seeder I introduced myself to the Energo club, another result of the fruitful activity of Rein Weber. Founded by his followers in 2004, by the time of my visit the club had lost much of its enthusiasm for systematic work, although the leaders of the club organised similar excursions to different places to "perceive and get to know the healing energies of the nature". In 2016 the club is organising and promoting the monthly lectures of esoteric leaders as well as smaller seminars and excursions². These two initiatives provided me the chances for participant observation as well as contacts for further interviews. Despite the varied experience in the excursions, the format did not work out as a scene of fruitful in-depth fieldwork, except of the good contact with the leaders of the trips who interpreted the locations along their ideas and technique. The reason why it was hard to get into contact with the participants was the format of the excursion, which guided the participants towards inner reflection and meditation. Altogether eight excursions were recorded in field notes and photographs, although later only four contacts were

¹ See <http://www.seeder.ee/>

² See <http://klubi.energo.ee/>

turned into interviews, and this was with the people whom I also met at other dowsing events.

Another public debate which was going on for a while already touched on dowsing and earth energies: the intrigue about planning of limestone mines in the region of Tuhala, which could have a possible negative effect on the peculiar natural phenomenon of the *Nõiakae* (Witch's Well). As of 2016 the public uproar is been calmed as the area has been taken under official protection. Both the mining companies on one side (together with their organisation *Eesti Mäetööstuse Ettevõtete Liit* (Union of Enterprises of Estonian Mining Industry)), and the leader of *Tuhala Maastikukaitseala* (Tuhala Landscape Reserve) Ants Talioja (together with the activists from neighbouring parishes) on the opposite side, have publicised their positions for and against mining. Although two of my trips in September 2011 were not particularly connected with the struggle, Ants Talioja saw me as a means of access to the resources of the Estonian Folklore Archives, as well as assuming my possible support for traditional and environmentalist values. My interest began with his promotion of the energy columns beside this famous well, which attracted people during the dry season (the site is flooded in heavy rain and during the melting of the snow). Talioja's enthusiasm for these energy columns had begun under Rein Weber and his personal victory over health problems. Examples of and connections between almost all motifs within the dowsing tradition – underground water, subterranean rivers, networks of energy, planning houses and the locations of plants, issues of health and healing, in addition to the layer of the sacrality associated with the energies found at the sites of sacred groves and cultic stones – were all present in the stories he told while we walked along the hiking trail that passed the area's natural monuments. Although rich and complex and inviting folkloristic analysis, I have used the material only a little because of the need for further and wider fieldwork in this geographical area.

In autumn 2011 I completed a training course run by Kalju Paldis, a student of Rein Weber, in use of the divining rods. Kalju later introduced me to the Estonian Geopathic Association, which is a hub both for the collecting of the material and participating in the various activities of the organisation. By becoming acquainted with the Association I have got information about the research into the natural phenomena that received some support for a short time during the years of political change between 1988 and the 1990s. Although now the Geopathic Association provides a social space for diverse interests, its motives are generally investigative. As the Association does not promote one school or principle of dowsing, its meetings are lively events of storytelling and information exchange that reveal the connections between dowsing lore and other aspects of the supernatural such as the geography of the sacred, UFOs and psychics. My position as a folklorist, recorder and analyser from the *etic* point of view, has become more and more complicated because of the knowledge that the stories are not just the stories but touch the peoples' lives profoundly. However, the research material increased with the publication of the Society's periodical conference papers, transcriptions of meetings, events and excursions,

and in-depth interviews. The Society's monthly meetings usually consist of a presentation and a discussion with an open forum for news and reports of interesting experiences. In the summer, field trips have been organised to investigate the sites of supernatural encounters (dowsing and measuring with other types of equipment) and cultural or natural monuments (sacred groves, springs, craters).

Igor Volke played an influential role in leading the work of the society as well as guiding my interest in metaphysical and paranormal themes. He has improved the knowledge of the links between dowsing zones, geology and UFO activity, in addition to introducing me to rich sources of reports from witnesses to UFO sightings and other paranormal events.

Thus, the material introduced and analysed in the articles in the dissertation come from different sources. Interviews from two fieldwork sites, Kirna and Tuhala, focus on particular places, whereas participation in the courses, lectures and fieldwork has given me access to living belief through multi-layered vernacular interest in dowsing and the energies in a particular place. Despite the varied material and the possibility this gives to express different insights, my focus is on how people have translated their experiences through verbal expression of the tradition of dowsing. My interest is in how the elusive 'belief' manifests itself in the relationship between the physical, bodily and social realities.

1.4. Literature on dowsing

Dowsing has not only been a popular vernacular practice, its controversial position within Christian magic, demonology, astrology, geology, medicine and other applied techniques has created an abundant bibliography that consists of references to religion, folklore, science and technology. In this section I will briefly analyse overviews of the history and nature of the dowsing and water witching phenomena.

A comprehensive list of early sources has been compiled by Arthur C. Ellis in *The Divining Rod: A History of Water Witching*, compiled on the request of the United States Geological Survey (Ellis 1917). The first entry in the bibliography is the undated 16th century publication by Philippe Melancton *Discours sur la sympathie* (Discourse on Sympathy), following R.P. Bernhardus' *Vera atque brevis description virgulae mercurialis, etc.* (A True Yet Brief Description of the Wand of Mercury), 1553, and ending with an article from 1916 by J. T. Smith, "The Divining Rod as an Oil Finder" in the magazine *Petroleum World* (vol. 13, no. 191) consisting of articles on superstitions and beliefs, prospecting for buried treasure, mineral, coal, gas and water deposits, so called occult physiology, electricity and medicine, etc. However, most of the overviews of that period also show the ambivalent position of the writer, or the author's authority. Although during this early period the subject area was well formed as an independent area of research, I consider these publications and publications related to them a part of dowsing lore academically equal to later

publications (for example the proceedings of conferences of Estonian Geopathic Association 1991–2012 and many similar organisations around the world). Since the recognition of dowsing a subject of scientific investigation it has joined similar controversies in medicine, where the use of animal magnetism and ether also appears in the literature (Sutton 1981, Darnton 1968). Since then a literature on esoteric matters at the edge of science has grown out of the psychological research and has, in contemporary times, been transformed into the concepts of biomagnetism and bioenergy with their attendant schools and literatures. German physician Ernst Hartmann (1915–1992) summarised the ideas from his earlier publications into the treatise *Krankheit als Standortproblem*, 1964; one of the working tools of contemporary dowsers, the Hartmann net, is traced to him.

There are two main lines of inquiry in the literature on dowsing, summarised by George P. Hansen (Hansen 1982), although they are hardly separable in practical terms. These two lines involve the environment, and human body, which meet to produce a new focus: the relationship, influence and effect of environments on the human body, and vice versa. This focus is more shifted when the interest is put on natural anomalies or the inquiry is turned towards deviations in the ordinary sensorium.

Dowsing has also provoked discussion on several physical problems. There is abundant literature associated with geology, emanations and radiations of the fissures on the ground, tectonics and piezoelectricity. The interdisciplinary field of biophysics offers material for theorising on, and testing, the hypothesis that some humans are able to detect low levels of known types of radiation in a little understood manner. Humans, as other biological organisms, are subject to the influence of physical fields and waves. According to the principles of biophysics, this can be explained through fluctuations in geomagnetism. Russian biophysicist Aleksandr Dubrov, who represents the wider Russian (Soviet) school of dowsers, has developed a holistic theory of geomagnetobiology with which he describes the biological effects of geomagnetic fields. He also espouses the theory of the ‘ecology’ of the living sphere which entails taking into account the possible influence of natural and artificial magnetic fields (Dubrov 1978, 1995). Mineralogist Nikolay Sochevanov used dowsing, what he called the biophysical method, when prospecting for mineral deposits in various areas in the Soviet Union during the second half of the 20th century. Both these Russian authors have been members of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The work of Ernst Hartmann is similar, although Hartmann’s work stresses the adverse effect that remaining in dowsing zones (for example crossings of the lines of energy) for long periods has on human health, what he described as the magnetic-like net stretched on the surface. Other authors have associated the movement of dowsing rods with radiofrequency (Huttunen 2012: 107).

Dowsing as a physiological problem or question has long history. Examining the abilities of famous dowsers to perceive subtle signals has been the subject of research since the 16th century. The physiology of the dowser has been explained in terms of the ideomotor effect, the uncontrolled movement of

muscles as they react to various stimuli. (The discussion on physiology and (para)psychology has been summarised in Knoblauch 1991:155–161, and Hansen 1982: 352–355.) The individual's ability to dowse has been associated with the electro-conductivity of the skin, while different vital signs (such as blood pressure, heart rate) have been measured during the dowsing practice, showing an increase in effort, although the concrete stimulus that causes those physiological reactions, can hardly be isolated from the rest of the sensorium. Hansen also refers to tests on people while dowsing using electroencephalographic measurement in which both the setting of the experiment and the result showed no appreciable result.

A huge amount of literature has been written on the theme of dowsing due to the activities of societies of psychical research and dowsing which, like the Estonian Geopathic Association, regularly publish journals and reports. Despite this, the research has remained marginal in academic physics and medicine. I assume that the literature has a discursive effect but little direct influence on the living tradition. Initially this kind of public activity in the form of controlled experiments, articles, literature, social meetings, seminars and conferences enabled amateur researchers to be connected, and to be socially and intellectually supported. Concepts have been developed and changed through natural sciences research. However, despite of scientific vocabulary, vernacular use of dowsing is intellectually open in the sense that people know the possible reason for different natural anomalies, and use these anomalies as a dynamic illustration and support for the understanding of complexity of the human–environment relationship.

An introduction to the authors and comments on their positions

The literature on dowsing does not enable the researcher to draw a clear line between academic and applied, learned and amateur; rather, the line runs between *emic* and *etic*. These two positions can have manifold expressions in personal attitudes, writing styles, etc., and even between the foreword and the text itself. Despite this not being the focus of the current dissertation, one aspect that sticks out from the writing on this subject is the position of the authors as expressed in the forewords or afterwords of the publications. Some authors address their writing to the general public, addressing for example inquiries that the specialists working in mining, prospecting or engineering affairs have got; others talk about 'popular superstition', referring, again, to dowsing as the socially compelling idea. In the publications from the end of the 19th century the influence of the increasingly popular learned societies of antiquities, local history, agriculture and engineering can be found. In addition, the semi-professional work of societies of psychic research, dowsing and parapsychology add to the literature³.

³ Toomas Abiline (Abiline 2012) has written about the work of the Estonian Metapsychic Society [*Eesti Metapsüühiline Selts*] (1932-1940), where he also mentions experiments with dowsing rods. However little research has been carried out on esoteric matters in early Estonian literature.

Civil engineer Charles Latimer presented an overview of his brief research on the historical use of dowsing rods at a meeting of the Civil Engineers' Club in Chicago in 1875 and his work was later published as the pamphlet "The Divining Rod: *Virgula Divina, Baculus Divinatorius*." The pamphlet uses a variety of sources: popular articles, encyclopaedia entries and personal expertise. Therefore, it can be said that Latimer bases his comments on the polemics of subjective and objective truth, and calls for social legitimation and further research, using gentle irony against scientific 'imprisonment':

I have no apology to make for presenting this subject in a serious light. I regard it as one strictly in the domain of science, and, therefore, worthy of the consideration of scientific men. I have no fear of ridicule, knowing for myself and "not for another," that what is here presented is the truth. To those who seek absolute truth, I need not recommend a reading of these pages. To those who merely live by science, drawing their sustenance from it as from the "convenient cow," as Goethe says, I will simply say, imprison yourselves, gentlemen, in your shell; the world will move quite as well without you. (Latimer 1876)

Contemporary to Latimer, a distinguished polymath and mining engineer Rossiter Raymond answered public demand with an essay in a lengthy volume of *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, giving an elaborate history of the use of divining rod and water witching practices. While admitting that dowsing exists on the crossroads of folklore, religion, demonology, alchemy and mining, its only worth is as the "amusement of antiquarians" because "in one department after another it has been found useless" (Raymond 1883: 445). In his eloquent essay Raymond considers the practice to be of interest to students of psychology and biology, rather than geology and hydroscopy.

A publication by the United States Geological Survey, written by Arthur J. Ellis and accompanied by a foreword by the director of the agency, Georg Otis Smith, addresses the same public interest. While the author refers to dowsing as a superstitious art, and to its findings as "speculative", the director is more outspokenly sceptical in his words:

The outline of the history of the subject presented in the following pages will probably enable most honest inquirers to appreciate the practical uselessness of "water witching" and other applications of the divining rod, but those who wish to delve further into the mysteries of the subject are referred to the literature cited in the bibliography, in which they will find reports in painful detail of exhaustive investigations and pseudoinvestigations of every phase of the subject and every imaginable explanation of the supposed phenomena. (Ellis, Meinzer 1917: 5)

Despite of these harsh-sounding opinions, these texts provide a rich source of dowsing literature, whereas the position of the writers is not so clear-cut. An outstanding author in this field is Sir William F. Barrett (1844–1925), who,

apart from his career in physics, dedicated much effort to researching psychic phenomena (he was one of those who, at the time, were founding societies for psychic research in the UK, America and Ireland), dowsing in particular. Together with Theodore Besterman, Barrett published *The Divining Rod: An Experimental and Psychological Investigation* (Barrett, Besterman 1926), in which the authors paid much attention to Central European and Scandinavian folklore. Despite their main focus being dowsing, the overview of history and folklore relating to divining rods recognises the cultural significance of the practice. Since 1926, in the English-speaking world, the most comprehensive research on popular dowsing practices was carried out by Evon Vogt and Ray Hyman, from the Department of Psychology and the Laboratory of Social Relations respectively, at Harvard University. Using questionnaires they interviewed 500 agricultural agents in sample counties to find out about actual practice and vocabulary, and about water diviners working in those areas, the outcome of which was *Water Witching: USA*, 1959 (with the later reprints in 1979 and 2000). Vogt and Hyman's work was a sociological one based on detailed original research; it included the history and folklore of related practices, argumentation and scientific controversy. Despite this, the outcomes seem to disappoint the two scientists, as is apparent from the foreword to the second reprint: "We might expect or at least hope for corresponding increase in scientific literacy and general rationality in the general populace /---/ If anything, the reverse has taken place" (Vogt, Hyman 2000: XVII). They introduce various tests that were conducted at the end of the 20th century, criticise results that give credit to dowsing methods and stress that "when put to the test, dowsing does no better than chance" (*ibid.*). Despite this they also find that the psychology of the individual within the technological world is complex, and that this might support the popularity of dowsing, as they have expressed in another article:

Our hypothesis is that divining may be a way of denying that science can provide all the answers, and of affirming a place for individualism and eccentricity, for mystery and miracles, for romance and magic; that through the practice of divining, some diviners are symbolically saying, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy'. (Vogt, Golde 1958: 529)

German sociologist Hubert Knoblauch has written a systematic monograph entitled *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger und Pendler* (1991), which is based on contemporary ethnographic material. Although he is personally present in some reflections on the fieldwork situation in his work, his position is that of the sociologist and so he approached dowsing from the point of view of subjective, social, truth, and its conflict with the ideal of scientific objectivity as reflected in dowsing. (Knoblauch 1991: 15) Knoblauch admits that dowsing challenges the sociological concepts that have been associated with it, such as New Age, the cultic milieu, and even post-modernism, and finally describes

dowsing using the concept of magic. (*ibid*: 20) Most importantly, his book is based on empirical ethnographic material and he gives a good overview of the dowsing scene in the contemporary German-speaking world including both amateur organisations, professional trainers and volunteers, who make up the cultic milieu of the practice. Hubert Knoblauch's analysis is similar to what Vogt and Hyman have done, and with some reservation is also similar to Warren Dym's writing (although on the basis of Early-Modern material from Saxony, Germany), i.e. an ethnography of the practice that is not based on the question "does it work?", or "how does it work?", but rather on asking "how does it work in society?" Aforementioned analytical studies are in principle different from those overviews that warn readers not to spend money on dowsing rods, etc., because those questions are not asked by dowsers themselves. The literature that can be associated with contemporary inquiry into dowsing consists of research on tectonics, the biological and medical aspects of electromagnetism, natural fields and atmospheric physics, all of which might be in some way linked to natural features, to which dowsing lore points.

2. DOWSING PRACTICE AS RECORDED IN THE HISTORY OF MINING AND IN THE ESTONIAN FOLKLORE ARCHIVES

2.1. Dowsing and the history of mining

Many books that talk about dowsing say that dowsing has been known for a long time in history (Bächtold-Stäubli 1987: 823). Making decisions with the help of divining tools, finding lost objects with rods, etc., is as old as a traditional method can be. However it is not wise to talk about the age of the practice, since the scarce documentation from the mining authorities are equivocal and could be used to argue the case from either side. Stories that circulate today, both in books and the Internet, are part of wider dowsing lore to which folklore adds supporting evidence for the existence of the phenomenon. In this dissertation the historical background of dowsing is cited to give a broad general context to the contemporary practice, rather than to give any comprehensive analysis of dowsing in any period or place. For this context, I use secondary sources to which the collections of German legends, as well as the writings of Theodore Besterman and William Barrett (Barrett, Besterman 1926), Arthur J. Ellis (Ellis 1917), Georgius Agricola (together with comments by translators Herbert Henry Hoover and Lou Henry Hoover) (Agricola 1912 [1556]) and historian Warren Dym (Dym 2006, 2011) are central.

The rich collection of German legends relating to the magical use of divining rods can be found in the *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (Bächtold-Stäubli, Hoffmann-Krayer, 1987: 823–841), where a special entry, *Wünschelrute*, refers to the folklore of mining districts as well as to various divination magic. As a rule, in the collections of German tales and legends the *Wünschelrute* appears in the context of treasure hunting, incantations or generally wishing for luck.

The *Glücksruthe* [divining rod], that we will speak of here, brings luck only on its owner's command, whether they are near or far; it moves with a threshing motion without the intervention of the human hand. To get such a stick you must go on holy Christmas night to the woods and at twelve o'clock cut a young oak, saying certain words. Going there and coming back should be done in silence, otherwise the stick does not work or brings bad luck... (Herrlein 1851: 65–66)

In *Meckelnburgische Jahrbücher* 1840, several tales are reprinted from the collection of early German folklorist Johann Karl August Musäus (1735–1787). In this collection the use of *Wünschelrute* appears in the elaborate magical lore of treasure hunting, including reference to the 16th century society of treasure hunters (*Gesellschaft Schatzgräber*). Musäus gives detailed descriptions of magical treatises on finding and cutting divining rods, which appear in his case to be of hazel and put to work with the help of prayers and incantations in

chapel. (Musäus, 1840: 109–118). The use of hazel also appears in Estonian variants in many ways: besides in the form of the magical rod, it appears as a place-name in the legends on buried treasures. However, it is rather a rare plot element and can be considered a German loan.

A place must be found in the woods where a hazel bush grows into two branches. On midsummer night, at twelve o'clock, a man must go to the woods and a twig must be cut reverse way [*viitsa peab tagurpidi lõikama*]; it has to be done so that nobody hears or sees. The twig must be taken to a church where a child is being baptised and must be hidden under the cover of the altar. The twig must then be given to the child, who will become very pretty with the help of this twig. And if money or other precious goods are hidden, it must be done so that going out in young moon the twig must be pulled along the ground [*Siiis minna noore kuu valgega ja vedada harki taga*]. If the place is found, the treasure will be dinging inside the ground.

ERA II 244, 575/6 (5) < Vastseliina, Noodasküla village (1939)

Interestingly, references to finding a treasure with the help of a pendulum have not disappeared from some contemporary dowsers' practice. As then, so now references to hunting for treasure are often given with the moralistic purpose of mocking greed or the hope to get rich easily.

Theodore Besterman (1904–1976), stands out in the current selection as an example of a researcher into psychic phenomena who has integrated dowsing legends into his publications. Antiquarian, bibliographer and translator by profession Besterman's interest in esotericism is reflected in various publications, of which *The Divining Rod: An Experimental and Psychological Investigation* (1926, co-authored with Sir William Barrett) and *Water Divining* (1938) are of current interest. In 1926 he published an article in the journal *Folklore* on the divining rod in European folklore. In the examples he collected from numerous European folklore publications a willow or hazel twig is predominantly used. The twig is cut at the magical time (usually on the Saint John's eve or on Good Friday) and blessed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This twig then helps to cure illness, to find hidden treasures, or lift up the treasure that has sunk. In the examples Besterman gives, the rod itself has to be grown and cut in a magical way (the divining rod, the *Wünschelrute*, grows only every seven years and has to be cut before or after sunrise) (Besterman 1926: 117–119). Despite the fact that using divining rods to help find mineral ores appears among other examples, he does not stress the use of the rod to be connected only with mining districts, rather it belongs to the wider medieval divination magic of the European mainland. However, in the cooperative book (authored with physicist and psychic researcher Sir William Barrett) Besterman and Barrett made a distinction between the medieval and modern use of the divining rod as practiced from the late fifteenth century onwards, practice that later spread from the mining districts of Germany to the rest of Europe and beyond.

In this light the short comments by Georgius Agricola (1494–1555) about dowsing practices among Saxon miners of his time are significant. Georgius Agricola held various intellectual positions in the fields of medicine, physics and local politics in the mining district of Saxony, East Germany. Despite writing on other themes he is best known for his accomplished mining book *De Re Metallica*, which was printed only after his death in 1556. Working as a physician in the mining towns of Joachimstahl and Chemnitz, he gained knowledge of mining technology and problems. (Dym 2011: 66–69, Ong 2003) *De Re Metallica* consists of a thorough overview of mining knowledge at this time, for example the nature of minerals and ore bodies, and a detailed overview of prospecting, mining, assaying and smelting techniques and equipment. In the first two chapters of the first book the personal and professional standards of the miner are discussed, along with Agricola’s reflections on miners and mining from the point of view of theology, humanistic intellectual knowledge and local folk belief. In the second book, Agricola briefly introduces dowsing methods, making sharp distinction between magic (which he rejects) and the acceptable practice of the diligent local miner, who uses the special ‘feel’ of the terrain. The experienced sensitive eye of the local miner should include intimate knowledge of the local landscape, the seasons and weather. (Agricola 1912 [1556]: 38)

In this context, Agricola mentions dowsing as a traditional and acceptable practice within ore prospecting that is based on some inherent qualities either of the ore bodies or the dowser⁴. The book’s overall orientation, with a practical and rational approach, reflects Renaissance natural philosophy and incorporates what was later categorised as esotericism. (Abrams 1971: 170, Hanegraaff 1996: 392) At that time, however, it was impossible to make a distinction between natural science and vernacular magical knowledge, as the intellectual heritage outside of church was dominated by alchemy and astrology.

Again, the purpose of this glimpse into history, with the help of Agricola’s book, is to draw parallels between the early Modern period and contemporary spiritual thinking, which finds its actualisations in various practices and interests.

The natural signs. Apart from the variety of legends that tell of striking mineral by chance, the main skill possessed by early miners was to examine natural signs in the landscape and dig the longest trenches they could, in as many places and as they could, until they came across a mineral vein. Warren Dym summarises the surveying of prospective mines in the writings of lesser-known authors: “*Bergwissenschaft* was a more synthetic body of theory and practice, and included tales of discovery, biblical stories, alchemical and

⁴ The term *quality* in the context of Renaissance natural philosophy should be noted. The theme is introduced and discussed in my article “The Theory of the Earth Energy: Academia and the Vernacular in Search of the Supernatural”. The discussion on this quality is based on the Keith Hutchinson’s article “What Happened to Occult Qualities in the Scientific Revolution?” (Hutchinson 1982)

astrological theories, dowsing theory, as well as knowledge of the mining compass (*Grubenkompass*), the mathematics of mine surveying (*Marckscheidkunde*), and the craft of mine construction” (Dym 2011: 85).

But by skill we can also investigate hidden and concealed veins, by observing in the first place the bubbling waters of springs, which cannot be very far distant from the veins because the source of the water is from them; secondly, by examining the fragments of the veins which the torrents break off from the earth, for after a long time some of these fragments are again buried in the ground.” (Agricola, Hoover 1556 [1912]: 37)

Agricola describes various natural signs that a skilled mine surveyor should take notice of. In what follows I will focus on some of these signs, which accord to the contemporary practice of dowsing for the water and for various concealed natural forces.

Further, we search for the veins by observing the hoar-frosts, which whiten all herbage except that growing over the veins, because the veins emit a warm and dry exhalation which hinders the freezing of the moisture, for which reason such plants appear rather wet than whitened by the frost. (Agricola, 1556 [1912]: 37)

These phenomena are caused by the intensely hot and dry exhalations which do not spare even the roots, but scorching them, render the trees sickly; wherefore the wind will more frequently uproot trees of this kind than any others. Verily the veins do emit this exhalation. Therefore, in a place where there is a multitude of trees, if a long row of them at an unusual time lose their verdure and become black or discoloured, and frequently fall by the violence of the wind, beneath this spot there is a vein. Likewise along a course where a vein extends, there grows a certain herb or fungus which is absent from the adjacent space, or sometimes even from the neighbourhood of the veins. By these signs of Nature a vein can be discovered. (*Ibid.*: 38)

Seeking natural signs that would reveal the consistency and colour of the soil, and any distinctive plants, evidently involves finding a logical explanation. The temperature, which gives away the location in frost, is seen as a quality of subterranean processes that occur in the mineral veins. However, both emanation and temperature are at the border of the manifest and occult qualities. (Hutchinson 1982: 234) The division between them lies in human senses: it is possible to apprehend all of them (exhalation, smell, fume or temperature) in principle. Despite this, the cases mentioned above involve the ground in between: they are interpretations of the particularities of nature.

The reason for this parallel lies in contemporary dowsing lore, which also involves careful observation of nature and the ‘sensing’ of the environment. Plants that favour wet soil can reveal the locations of possible water supply, whereas differences in vegetation can indicate the presence of unknown emanations or unknown activity underground. The interpretation of nature and

careful observation of human interaction (feelings of exaltation or depression, for example) with nature in these special locations creates a web of discussion and stories the foundation of which, the distinction between nature and culture, references the early Modern period.

The truth is, they assert, the movement of the twig is caused by the power of the veins, and sometimes this is so great that the branches of trees growing near a vein are deflected toward it. On the other hand, those who say that the twig is of no use to good and serious men, also deny that the motion is due to the power of the veins, because the twigs will not move for everybody, but only for those who employ incantations and craft. Moreover, they deny the power of a vein to draw to itself the branches of trees, but they say that the warm and dry exhalations cause these contortions. Those who advocate the use of the twig make this reply to these objections: when one of the miners or some other person holds the twig in his hands, and it is not turned by the force of a vein, this is due to some peculiarity of the individual, which hinders and impedes the power of the vein, for since the power of the vein in turning and twisting the twig may be not unlike that of a magnet attracting and drawing iron toward itself, this hidden quality of a man weakens and breaks the force, just the same as garlic weakens and overcomes the strength of a magnet. (*Ibid.*: 39)

In this passage, Agricola mentions the discussions that take place about various dowsing techniques: the possible forces in nature and the possible peculiarity of some peoples' bodies. As the rod moving is independent of human intention, it shows that the source of the signal is either the environment (the ground), or the human body. In later discussions the ability to dowse (in a similar way to clairvoyant ability) was described as an illness or seizure (Kölbl-Ebert 2009, Lynn 2001).

Thus, the observation of natural signs when prospecting mine locations employs a number of motifs that are similar to those of contemporary dowsing lore. I admit the shortage of this work does not include an analysis of changes in prospecting techniques, although there is good reason to assume that like dowsing for wells, dowsing in geology has been in continuous practice, though unofficial, up to contemporary times.

Correspondences and astrology. The astrological interweaving of the universe was one of the dominant ideas of Renaissance natural philosophy, one that found its actualisations through the systems of correspondence. Thus it is no wonder that Agricola mentions philosophy, medicine and astronomy, among others, as the prerequisite subjects for working in mines. "Thirdly follows Astronomy, that he may know the divisions of the heavens and from them judge the direction of the veins." (Agricola 1912 [1556]: 3)

Some of those who manipulate and use the twig, first cut a fork from a hazel bush with a knife, for this bush they consider more efficacious than any other for revealing the veins, especially if the hazel bush grows above a vein. Others use a different kind of twig for each metal, when they are seeking to discover the veins,

for they employ hazel twigs for veins of silver; ash twigs for copper; pitch pine for lead and especially tin, and rods made of iron and steel for gold. (*Ibid.*: 38–39)

Despite the fact that Agricola does not discuss alchemical correspondences, they appear in the writings of other authors in the early days of geology (Kölbl-Ebert 2009). The hazel bush, the most common tree in treasure legends, has its correspondence in the form of a relationship with the place where it grew. Coming to contemporary Estonian material, the most common tree for dowsing is a willow twig. One explanation I have encountered relates how there must be something in the timber of a willow bush that has grown on humid soil that attracts water. Although astrology today does not have the same sense it did during the 16th century, some thinking proposes that emanations from fissures are reflections of cosmic rays⁵ from the universe. The basis for making the association between the underground and the cosmos lies in the basic principles of geophysics, according to which processes in space have an impact on the chemical and physical composition of the Earth's atmosphere.

Dowers in *De Re Metallica*, the moral and theological aspects. Although Agricola remained sceptical about the use of the rod, his importance in introducing the theme lies in the balanced approach that he takes to the various positions that exist among the miners. In doing so, he makes a distinction between the use of the divining rod in medieval magic and its use as an appropriate technique in mining, ultimately rejecting the practice because of its association with socially stigmatised magic.

Nevertheless, these things give rise to the faith among common miners that veins are discovered by the use of twigs, because whilst using these they do accidentally discover some; but it more often happens that they lose their labour, and although they might discover a vein, they become none the less exhausted in digging useless trenches than do the miners who prospect in an unfortunate locality. Therefore a miner, since we think he ought to be a good and serious man, should not make use of an enchanted twig, because if he is prudent and skilled in the natural signs, he understands that a forked stick is of no use to him, for as I have said before, there are the natural indications of the veins which he can see for himself without the help of twigs. (*Ibid.*: 41)

In this current thesis, which looks at dowsing from the perspective of contemporary practice, Agricola's significance is also in his call for further research. He admits that the rod provokes controversy and dispute over Christian

⁵ Cosmic rays are high-energy particles bombarding Earth's atmosphere causing changes in the function of microelectronics (particularly the equipment of the spacecrafts and other orbital facilities), fluctuations in the Earth's magnetic field as well as changes in the chemical composition of the atmosphere. There are several institutions, monitors and satellites detecting cosmic rays. Apart from research in astrophysics the initiatives take interest in possible extra-terrestrial life in the universe. (Project Spaceship Earth, IZMIRAN: Pushkov Institute of Terrestrial Magnetism, Ionosphere, and the Radio Wave Propagation in Russian Academy of Sciences.)

morality. While some of his contemporaries considered it to be a traditional skill of an experienced miner, some associated it with the work of the Devil⁶. Agricola's concern stemmed from a larger professional ethic that addresses more closely the social status of the 'proud miners'. It must be remembered that, in addition to the reformation, the second half of the 16th century saw the silver rush, during which significant social and economic change took place in land use and demographic distribution (Karant-Nunn 1989).

Since this matter remains in dispute and causes much dissention amongst miners, I consider it ought to be examined on its own merits. The wizards, who also make use of rings, mirrors and crystals, seek for veins with a divining rod shaped like a fork; but its shape makes no difference in the matter,—it might be straight or of some other form—for it is not the form of the twig that matters, but the wizard's incantations which it would not become me to repeat, neither do I wish to do so. The Ancients, by means of the divining rod, not only procured those things necessary for a livelihood or for luxury, but they were also able to alter the forms of things by it. (Agricola 1556 [1912]: 40)

I am looking at Agricola's *De Re Metallica* closely here because of its thorough account of the position of dowsing among 16th century miners. Agricola described and, indeed, influenced the use of the rod as part of legitimate natural magic. Despite the medieval magic and stories of finding treasures and ore bodies by divining rod or other magical means that echo in his discussions, he makes a distinction based on what he thinks belongs among the qualities of nature (the inherent power of the vein). In addition, as promoter of the proper ethics of the professional miner, he stood at the widening path of social and epistemological conflict, although he managed to save some practices as freed from association with the supernatural (Fara 2008: 487–489). The knowledge of the miners was added to mining handbooks, and later to the curriculum of the mining academy, where, according to Warren Dym, the major learned debate over dowsing of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries was no longer whether the rod worked by diabolical or natural means, but whether it was cutting-edge science (*Wissenschaft*) or popular superstition (*Aberglaube*), a distinction that had social, epistemological, and even gendered meaning to those who used it (Dym 2011: 138).

Thus, dowsing has been the needle on the scale of high and low, real and pseudo. Together with the development of knowledge about electricity and magnetism, dowsing was incorporated into romantic science. Knowledge of the

⁶ Warren Alexander Dym has written about Johann Mathesius (1504–1565), Lutheran pastor of the mining town Joachimstahl, who dedicated 16 sermons to the questions of theology and mining. The sermons were published in 1562 with the title *Sarepta, oder Bergpostilla* ('Sarepta, or Postil on the Mount'). Discussing aspects of mining, his main concerns were to draw lines between legitimate and illegitimate practices according to Christian faith. Dowsing, contrary to underground spirits, transmutation and astrology, found a place in legitimate natural magic in his writings, although Martin Luther, his close friend and the son of a miner, considered it the work of Devil. (See Dym 2006, 2008, 2011: 68–69)

world, according to romantic scientists, meant also discovering the position of man through the concept of animal magnetism, galvanic excitement and electrical medicine (Benz 2009). Dowsing and electricity found interesting cultural currents, especially in France where applying the dowsers' skills were accompanied by their public tests as well as a broad scope of commerce and adventurers.⁷ According to Warren Dym, "The professionalization of earth science marked the birth of amateur science, as the transformation of discourses in science and divining, respectively, paralleled and reflected each other" (Dym 2011: 200).

The blending and changing of ideas encouraged a new view on the position of individual within existence as bound together with a fundamental secret life force, with inevitable moral implications. However, the life of these ideas and philosophies away from the bookshelves occurs as a continuous vernacular debate complete with practices and stories of verification and rejection.

2.2. Dowsing for water

Although one of the contemporary purposes of dowsing is to find underground water, the early geologists did not make this connection in their writings. The presence of water in the mines was an inevitable side-effect not just of the mining itself, but also, according to the theories of the day, in the generation of ore bodies (water as a medium and agent in underground processes), as an important indicator when prospecting (smell, colour and taste).

Both groups of authors, the translators of Agricola's *De Re Metallica* Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover⁸, and William Barrett and Theodore Besterman, state that finding water with the help of dowsing rods before early Modern era was not common practice. Agricola himself sought to find the origins of the rod "among the Ancients", although he concluded that "the divining rod passed to the mines from its impure origin with the magicians" (Agricola, Hoover 1912 [1556]: 41). Agricola also stressed the use of the rod to "alter the forms of things" (*ibid.*: 40). As the Hoovers say: "Despite the use of the name *virgula divina*, divining rod, by Romans give detailed directions for finding water, although none mention anything akin to the divining rod of the Middle Ages. It is also worth noting that the Monk Theophilus in the 12th century also gives a detailed description of how to find water, but makes no mention of the rod" (Agricola, Hoover 1912 [1556]: 38).

Although water has been found as a by-product of mining, the earliest evidence of the search for potable water using dowsing comes in two pamphlets written by the female mining specialist Martine de Berterau, Baroness de

⁷ See Darnton 1968, Sutton 1981, Benz 2009, Lynn 2001, Goodrick-Clarke 2004.

⁸ Henry Clark Hoover was a mining engineer (and president of America 1929–1933); his wife Lou Henry Hoover was a geologist and latinist. Their translation is accompanied by abundant comments which make references both to the history of mining and mining terminology.

Beausoleil, in 1632 and 1640 (Lynn 2001, Kölbl-Ebert 2009). These publications, partly petitions, partly business reports (written against accusations of witchcraft) reflect the problematics of finding the water required for mining. Aside from natural markers and a careful inspection of the land, *verge de Mercure* or *verge de Lunaire* were used (Kölbl-Ebert 2009: 211–212). The Baroness' other methods, according to what Martina Kölbl-Ebert has found, seem to be directly borrowed from the first century BC Roman writer, architect and engineer, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (*De Architectura*, Book VIII). The book was available to European intellectuals in the original Latin, and in French and German translations (*ibid.*: 213).

The spread of dowsing has been associated with the mobility of mining specialists. German miners were imported to England during the 16th century, and thereafter the practice was spread by exploration and colonisation in America and Australia. (Ellis 1917: 12)

Michael Lynn has studied the popular literature of 17th and 18th century France, where several dowsers, and their defenders and critics, caused public uproar. The famous dowsers Jacques Aymar and Barthelemy Bleton were both said to be able to solve crimes as well as find underground water. Apart from using of their skills (in remarkably high courts: Barthelemy Bleton was responsible for finding the springs of Versailles with the support of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette (Lynn 2001: 45)) public tests as well as scientific study of their abilities took place. Dowsing was incorporated into the discussions of magnetism and electricity, notably by those who advocated and practiced manipulations using vital fluid, which was associated with the two phenomena (Franz Anton Mesmer, Pierre Thouvenel). Michael Lynn concludes his treatise on French public opinion on dowsing by saying that in the context of the Enlightenment, the discussion involved defining the categories of reason. “For some, ‘reasonable’ meant ‘theoretically justifiable’, and although they recognized the importance of utility it could never prevail over a sound scientific explanation. For others – that is, for those who appropriated the Enlightenment at a more popular level – reason and rationality had a different status. They understood the terminology but chose to judge reasonableness according to visual criteria or utility.” (Lynn 2001: 54) Despite this, the overall organisation of society into the elite and the laymen involved the struggle of the individual to gain a workable perspective on the world.

2.2.1. Dowsing for water in the Estonian Folklore Archives

Looking at the issue of finding underground water with the Y or L shaped dowsing rod from the contemporary perspective, a distinction must be made between two sides of the tradition. Both sides – finding a place for a well, and setting out and organising a household in relation to groundwater – are based on

the idea that water flows underground in a comparable way to that in which blood flows in the veins in the human body.⁹

Although I have not compiled an overview of all material in the Estonian Folklore Archives, and have no summary of information regarding the siting of wells before the mechanisation and complete professionalization of the field, the accessible material gives a picture of well siting as a living vernacular practice in which specialist authority covered several different areas. Estonian ethnologist Ants Viires (1918–2015) has published an article about dowsing for well sites (Viires 1986), while Matthias Johann Eisen (1857–1934) has an entry called *Nõiavits* (the divining rod) in his overview of Estonian mythology (Eisen 1926: 302). Gustav Ränk (1902 – 1998) has published an overview of the technology and building of wells, based on his 1934 questionnaire about wells (Ränk 1937). Ränk has also published a comparative article about dowsing motifs in Swedish folk belief (Ränk 1965).

I have translated the vernacular terms for dowsers in older Estonian material as ‘wellcatcher’ (*kaevumõistja*, *soonevõtja*, *kaevukatsuja*) (see also Viires 1986: 294), which must be understood in a broad sense as a person who can apprehend or ‘see’ where and how to build a good well. In contemporary times the dowser has been referred to as a “man of the rod” (*vitsamees*, *Rutengängar*), whereas the practice has no specific name that would have been widely known. The Estonian Geopathic Association has suggested the word *pildar* to be the direct translation for the term dowser as ‘*pilda*’ is linked to the dowsing rod. Despite the term being generally unknown there are historical uses. In the richest collection of Estonian from the 19th century, the *Ehstnisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, by Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann, 1869, contains the word *pilda*, translated as *wünschelrute* and giving the pastor and antiquarian August Wilhelm Hupel (1737–1819) as the source of the word. (Wiedemann 1869: 421) Eisen admits that at the beginning of the 20th century, the knowledge of the word is very rare. (Eisen 1926: 303)

The term *bielokatsioon* (biolocation), a loan from Russian, is known in the broader sphere of dowsing and alternative spirituality. For comparison, Evon Vogt and Peggy Golde write that the term water witching is the American version of the term (obviously because of dowsing’s association with witchcraft or which hazel), whereas the term dowsing itself comes from Cornish, meaning divination (Vogt, Golde 1958: 522)

The methods of prospecting a place to site a well, as recorded in the Estonian Folklore Archives, are similar to Martina de Bertereau’s methods. Although the purpose of writing about building wells was not primarily to record thoughts about the underground sphere and the groundwater in it, the key phrase ‘water vein’ reveals some ideas about the underground world. The most common method of well siting was to see natural signs like plants, the temperature, and humidity at the surface.

⁹ I have discussed this theme in my article “Water Veins, Energy Columns and Health Issues: Expressions of Vernacular Religion”.

A test using a pot and a wool fleece appears both in the archive manuscript and in printed sources, which also published such popular knowledge.

How to find a water vein.

A sheep's skin, fleece upwards should be placed upon even ground where the grass has been cut. In the middle of the skin an egg should be placed which will be covered with a new clay pot. It should be done in the evening, when the ground and the weather is still dry. In the morning the pot will be taken away and if the fleece and the egg are covered with dew, there is a vein or underground spring nearby. If the egg is dry and the fleece is moist, the vein is deeper in the ground. If the both are dry, there is no water. (Isamaa kalender 1891: 188)

A place for a well is decided by the lines in the morning dew, as though a mouse or a mole had run through it. There are veins of water that show themselves off like this ERA II 166, 61 (47) < Jöhvi, Tarakuse (1937)

The founding of the wells was thus a semi-professional job that consisted of the various feelings of the locations accompanied by the lore known to professionals along with their skills and practices. In several accounts hearing water is mentioned, and fine hearing was among the skills of the good wellcatcher. Although the use of the rod appears alongside other methods, the expertise of the wellcatcher seemed to lie in several bodily senses, which links vernacular thinking with several themes relating to underground water and other European parallels (Lynn 2001). Refined senses were partly innate or were discovered by chance (Barthelemy Bleton, in Michael Lynn's article, tells of how several dowsers began dowsing like this). The sensing of the spot is described as not occurring through the usual senses, but as a special feeling, often as an illness-like pressure or pricking in certain parts of the body. Sensing water place while asleep appears in the records of well planning, but moreover in the modern lore about the influence of water veins on human wellbeing.

In the older times, there were special people, the wellcatchers, who explored the land by smelling and listening to it (putting their ear against the ground) to identify where and how deep good water lay.
ERA II 139, 308 (22) < Hanila, Kuke (1937)

If a well was going to be planned, there were special people who knew the signs in the sky, where water was near. He laid on the sledge and looked up; the others were pulling the sledge. If there were signs in the sky, he let the sledge stop and dug the well – the water supposed to be near then. Sometimes he was saying that there were two stones on the well, one you can get out, the other not; and so it happened. Nowadays wells are done without [this method], the water comes out indeed. Some also observed herbs, where water herbs grow.

H II 74, 826 (12) < Torma, Avinurme (1906)

There were wellcatchers who were hearing like this, and did their tricks lying on the ground and praying. There are green spots in the grass, during the time of drought, and under this there must be a water vein. One man stood up, jumping: here you cannot sleep, it will drown the land [*see uputab maa ära*]. They have the great ability to hear.

ERA II 62, 82/3 (98) < Lääne-Nigula, Oru < Martna (1933)

There are also records from the 1930s that describe the contradicting viewpoints to the ‘wellcatching’ practices. Usually there are no references to wells that remain dry, rather the reservation is about the esoteric methods or possible fraud of the specialists.

Few conclusions can be drawn from the analysed material. While the Archives have collected records since the end of the 1880s (Jakob Hurt’s collection – H), there are some changes notable in ideas about the presence and influence of underground water. As the perspective of my interest is set by contemporary concepts, I have also looked at the practices of choosing the right place for a house and organising the household in general.

In older texts, the proximity of the living house to water (and a water vein) brought bad luck and poor health like ‘water illness’, boils and abrasions; whereas siting wells was done using herbs, listening and looking for signs in the sky. Particular senses that relate to the inner connection between the human body and an underground water vein, or any reference to sleeping, are absent.

Locating and building a new house was accomplished using various marks like the movement of animals and insects, as well as relief, and the compass. The main risk for the buildings was fire, and to a lesser extent humidity. The influence of underground water on general living conditions comes from the second half of the 20th century. However, the records are random and further analysis of various material, both printed and manuscript, would be necessary to get a deeper understanding of the various methods of building a well or planning a household in relation to underground water. The changes, however, reflect the dissemination of esoteric practices of water witching during the 20th century, whereas the link between underground water, health and wellbeing would be considered a modern idea. Despite this, the idea of this magical connection is reflected in traditional practices, not just those of the Estonian tradition but also those from Western culture and beyond (the theory of *feng shui* as a Western teaching is also popularised in dowsing circles).

3. SOME IMPLICIT TRAJECTORIES WITHIN THE VERNACULAR DISCUSSION OF DOWSING

3.1. *Etic* and *emic* perspectives: the division of the discursive field and how it reflects on the study material

Throughout the last generation of scholarship in folklore, religion, spirituality and associated fields of study, the broad field of discussion in culture has been labelled 'folk', 'vernacular', 'implicit', 'lived' forms of belief and religiosity. As James Kapaló notes (Kapaló 2011: 17), these terms have two implicit assumptions. Firstly, they involve the popular/elite dichotomy, and secondly, at the core of these categories lies a distinction between the *etic* and the *emic*.

Etic, the outsiders perspective, enables us to extract information from the flow of life in order to compare and analyse dowsing with the tools prescribed by the observer, research field or paradigm. (*ibid.*: 17) The *etic* perspective involves any view of the generalised other and it is also employed by dowsing enthusiasts to make claims about scientists. The current research comes from within the perspective of folklore studies, which looks at dowsing to find patterns of expression, genres, and the group and individual motivations behind certain practices and expressions.

The meaning of *folklore* in dowsing circles is manifold. Place legends, which people do not see themselves as directly as part of, are addressed as evidence in order to describe the quality of the place. These legends are taken as reports of supernatural encounters, which today are associated with special energies. Thus, the continuation and use of these legends give the chance to step inside the multi-layered realm of traditional expression to test and challenge folkloristic categories.

The limits of the perspective are indisputable, there is a fair possibility to expand the current work with knowledge from the natural sciences, or at least to categorise a lot of examples as unsolved mysteries. But approaching dowsing as folklore brings forth discursive boundaries. The category of folklore as a temporarily changing social and communicative construct (with an additional meaning that refers to stories that are not true) points to the essential line of division between the perspectives. Instead of addressing the questions of dowsing, the focus of inquiry of the folklorist lies on the people and on social meanings.

The contrary, *emic* perspective starts from insider's perspective with the aim of revealing the individual and situational context of a particular action or expression. However, the analytic categories of *emic* and *etic*, also religion or tradition, do not appear in real-life situations. *Emic* study should start with a description of different lines and fields of unknown power in nature and the practices of making them visible. It must also concentrate on the phenomena of dowsing itself: the human ability to perceive signals of unknown origin and unclear meaning. *Emic* study needs to be aware of different dowsing 'schools' and of more or less academic research on dowsing phenomena. As much of

dowsing language is based on bodily and sensory interpretations and involves using dowsing equipment, it is a rather transitory experience and eludes interpretation, seldom submitting to robust intellectual description or logical analysis.

Because I share a cultural background with most of the people who have contributed to this research, and because most of the interviewees and authors of the material I have used have at least higher education, and are both female and male, the emic/etic distinction blurs into a larger cultural system woven together by competing political, social/temporal (Soviet and/or post-Soviet) and gendered standpoints that all involve deep cultural interdependence.

Following on from this, the ethical requirements for the researcher are usually expressed using an axis that has dominance and submission, or moral respect and moral disrespect, at opposite ends. In this discussion I want to include the thoughts of Nick Jardine, who ties both positions into valid ethnographic analysis. He points to the various modes of narration, saying that they “simply fail to get closely to grips with the skills, perceptions and beliefs” of the subject researched. Apart from the lack of respect inherent in applying theoretical and analytical frameworks, he points out that there is an ethical issue when “explanatory theory delivers verdicts on agent’s action and beliefs at odds with the agents’ self interpretation” (Jardine 2004: 273–274).

In the case of dowsing, these thoughts are applicable only with reservations, despite comprising a standard for balanced ethnographic analysis. That is because of the discussion, embedded in the vernacular, of themes that unite material and immaterial substance. The burden of reflexivity is contentious and even more complex when “one’s own discourse and disciplinary frameworks are included as part of the analysis” (Hess 1993: 146). This is because of the symbolic position of academia, which plays an influential legitimising role in contributing to the formation of knowledge and controlling the paradigm. As the discussion of possible unknown (or unorthodox) natural forces is situated at the fringes of the natural sciences, economy and medicine, the dowsing also touches the relationship between consumer and supplier. In the case of professional dowsers, the influential ‘other’ lies in the legitimising structures of contemporary society. Far from being homogeneous within itself, the paranormal scene (i.e. people interested in alternative information,¹⁰ web discussion groups, clubs and circles, internet materials, information from the training and lecture materials of different authorities) cuts its teeth on contact with the ideological

¹⁰ I have discussed the vernacular notion of ‘these things’ in my article “The Search for the Web of Lines”. ‘These things’ are often also labelled ‘alternative’, and refer to the broad array of popular themes: history, archaeology, aspects of natural science, technology, economy, psychology, medicine, etc. These interests create various activities around central popular plots, such as using technology for free energy, the cosmic origin of life, conspiracy theories for various lines of power and finance, etc. The themes exist because they provide different angles from which to view common reality by challenging the validity of information and education. The view of information as a tool for manipulation stresses the question of power within such vernacular debates.

‘other’, such as representatives of science or the entrepreneurs¹¹. The debate over the paranormal is described as “ideological arena, social drama” (Hess 1993) and a “negative dialogue” (Northcote 2007: 9) in which opponents debate without fair hearing principles and understandings that are often very similar (Uibu 2012: 354). James Kapaló draws attention to the dialogical relationship that exists between *etic* categories determined by various scholarly, ideological or ecclesial agendas, and the *emic* categories that distress them and ultimately render them unfit for purpose (Kapaló 2011: 19). The position of social science in such a conflict can be likened to a position that deviates from the main line of inquiry (and conflict) and, because of its heretical nature, is seen as having a questionable moral position (Bauer 2001: 5, 147). With its multi-paradigmatic nature, and thus unclear purpose, social sciences create confusion among the representatives of the *emic* community.

The dichotomy appears in politically charged situations, most obviously in the presence of the imagined other: at the borders of a discursive field that involves some kind of group representation. These conflicting positions do not describe all aspects of the practice (the psychological aspects, individual religious concerns regards the mighty force that influences all aspects of life), but the basic expressions of belief, such as the performance, and linguistic practices, involve and are often guided by the inner dialogue between the discursive positions. This kind of inner dialogue permeates a specific genre of legend, which I will discuss further. Thus the *emic/etic* division has its background in European intellectual and social history, its presence in the form of social power which structures the religious practice through various other binary subdivisions (Kapaló 2011: 26), including the situation of the observer.

The use of pendulums and rods, interpretations of signals in the landscape, or interpretations over the maps and pendulum charts, involves a whole array of psychological states. Trusting the nonhuman ‘other’ or some form of ‘other’ that operates within the individual – the subconscious or higher self – can reveal the subtle constitution of the environment. In both cases the human body is the

¹¹ Examples are not hard to find. In spring 2014 the NGO Sceptical Estonia, which manages the popular website skeptik.ee, nominated the manager of Tuhala Natural Centre Ants Talioja for its satirical Umbluu prize for “finding underground rivers with the help of dowzers; the consistent use of the media to plant the findings in the consciousness of the public /---/ so that the story of underground rivers would live on; for leading the public against miners and scientists, which resulted tens of thousands of signatures to save the Tuhala Nõiakaev (Witch’s Well) (<http://skeptik.ee/2014/05/31/umbluu-preemia-2014-ants-talioja-ja-tuhala-nabala-maa-aluste-jogede-afaar/> accessed 17.10.2014). The conflict of the Tuhala well refers to the dispute over the planning of limestone mining in north Estonia in a geologically and hydrologically sensitive landscape. Following an initiative by the local people the area is going to be under official protection while the mining company claims are in court. As the landscape has limestone karst features, the debate also involved dispute over dowsing methods and possible underground rivers. The view of the location as unique from the dowsing viewpoint is promoted publicly by the signs and memorial stones placed at the initiation of Ants Talioja. I have touched on this theme in the article “Energy as the Mediator between Natural and Supernatural Realms”.

medium for the signal, the authority from which the decision is made and given to the body by specific feelings and cognition. In this, the status of measuring device is given to body, a role that is unusual to mainstream rationalistic culture but which is shared by various texts from the alternative tradition.

There is nothing specifically religious in attributing authority to a nonhuman other: taking into account the forces of nature is a continuous assessment of the consequences brought by them. However, the usual division between nature and culture is bridged by the use of the elusive 'energy', which could have an impact both on the physical, spiritual and mental states of being. Understanding health and healing at specific energy sites views the human as first a spiritual and emotional entity, and then as a possibly dysfunctional body. Thus, the information and authority given to humans, as well as the language to interpret and validate experience, is a continuous dialogue between influences, whereas trust is given to the concept that surpasses the everyday understandings of relationships between mind and matter, particular and universal, providing direct and individual sensory-based access to the sources of the transcendent, supernatural 'other' (networks of water or energy).

Thus the language that forms part of the dowsing tradition is from the very start influenced by the discursive force, which reveals itself with different intensity depending on the social situation. An individual dowser, seeking a place in his garden to plant an apple tree, faces a different situation to a professional dowser consulting his clients in home design or other problems. Despite this, both cases involve interpretations of personal experience in practice, along with the inner limits of the tradition, linking it with other areas of interest. James Kapaló concludes that "In this sense, folk religion can be characterised as a field of practice that is the site of linguistic struggle in the institution of religious facts and the formation of religious subjects" (*ibid.*: 45).

3.2. Vernacular religion, vernacular discussion and the role of legend in dowsing

Dowsing is rich and complex in all aspects that involve the level of practice, individual participation and personal experience, as well as social situations and the frameworks of communication. The complexity lies in the socially mediated relationship, which in some cases is reported as being part of the objective, independent natural realm, and in other cases a highly subjective connection between the human body and the environment. In both cases perception and practice are mediated by the language, concepts and stories that make up the dowsing tradition.

In analysing hybrid practice I maintain a silent conversation with two imaginary partners. I have constructed them in my mind based on discussions I have had in real life. One asks, how is belief or religion involved in searching for a location to plant an apple tree? And what is the difference between this and taking into account natural peculiarities (such as the physical constituents of

the Earth's surface) or earth energy, for example when planning a house? The answer lies in each and every situation in which the borders of religion are conditional, depending on the meaning and other applications that the individual gives to them.

Practitioners of dowsing rarely think of their practice as a religious act, although it is sometimes humorously referred to in group gatherings (*viirusekandjad* (bearers of the virus), *usulahk* (sect), or faith of the pendulum (*pendliusk*)). People are interested in 'these things' or 'alternative information, approaches' (*need asjad*), which is the general denomination to the various plots and themes at the side of information opposing or arguing with the legitimate, politically, economically or scientifically valid positions. Thus, I argue that at the individual level dowsing is perceived as a tool with which to make decisions (divination), or with which to make sense of the broader constitution of the world and one's personal situation in it (research into the paranormal, circulating stories, social communication), which can also be a definition of religious activity.

3.2.1. Vernacular religion

In the context of folklore studies some assumptions are more self-evident than in the context of religion scholarship, while stress on different categories of meaning in religion sheds light on the social dynamics of certain activities. The category of religion when applied to describe dowsing can easily lead to misunderstandings when not discussed. In the widest sense, the current work starts from stress on the vernacular, i.e. means religion "as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (Primiano 1995: 44). Practice plays a crucial role in dowsing, including in the formation of narratives; however the part of 'religion' still needs some clarification in the context of dowsing. To initiate the discussion I use Clifford Geertz's classical definition of religion:

Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz 2004 [1966]: 4)

One problematic aspect is the "system of symbols", which, according to Geertz, would "synthesize the people's ethos – the tone, character and quality of their lives, its moral and aesthetic style and mood /---/ and their most comprehensive ideas of order" (*ibid.*). According to Geertz these symbols make up of cultural models which operate in the formation of a cultural pattern, at the same time functioning both ways, i.e. by symbolising something they provide models for the formation of symbols. With 'symbols' Geertz refers to the pattern according to which physical relationships are organised, be these patterns rites, theories,

doctrines or melodies. However, these symbols do not operate only as models, they also give meaning to other social and psychological realities (Geertz 2004 [1966]: 7–8). Geertz says that symbols and cultural patterns give assistance to Man's creatural viability; without them, individual would be functionally incomplete (*ibid.*: 13). However, the definition applies to culture in the wide sense.

Later in his essay Geertz makes distinctions between different cultural systems, such as aesthetics, scientific systems, the common sense perspective, etc., all of which construe the world's symbolic meanings. What is distinctive to religion is that "it moves beyond the realities of everyday life to wider ones which correct and complete them" (Geertz 2004 [1966]: 27). With his rhetorical stress on the 'really real', Geertz highlights the "persuasive authority, which from an analytic point of view, is the essence of religious action" (*ibid.*: 28). Despite not using the term in his general definition of religion, Geertz feels that "it is in ritual – i.e. consecrated behaviour – that this conviction that religious conceptions are veridical and that religious directives are sound is somehow generated" (*ibid.*).

Although an influential essay, it has been criticised by many because of its implicit bias towards the understanding of culture and religion as a constitutively intellectual mode of existence. Talal Asad supplements the approach by reducing the implicit confusion in Geertz's approach between cognitive and communicative aspects of religious activity, and the dichotomy between a 'cultural system' and 'social reality' (Asad 1983: 252). It seems that the problem lies in discursive category-making where "historically specific forms of 'religion', have come to be presented, mistakenly, as having a paradigmatic status" (Asad 1983: 237). As Talal Asad continues, religion as distanced, intellectual "added extra" to life itself closes off the possibility of examining how 'knowledge' and 'attitudes' are related to material conditions and social activities, and also precludes examination of to what extent they are formed by them (*ibid.*: 240). As an influential contributor to theorising the processes of secularisation, Asad proposes moving away from the dualistic model and focuses on power, production, authorisation and the accumulation of knowledge as keywords when approaching religion. Later scholarship has moved on to addressing the same intellectualist/dualist division by saying that "those dualisms are endlessly problematic even where they arose, as the effort to enact or enliven them in reality conflicts with our inescapable embodiment, emplacement and relationality" (Harvey 2013: 71). Therefore, the concept of religion must involve relationships that "constitute, form and enliven people in everyday activities" (*ibid.*). Therefore, despite being trapped in modernistic categories and scholarly concepts, I have to be honest and say that the perceived common-sense reality of dowsing rejects the concept of religion. Despite agreeing with the criticism, and the demand to "start elsewhere, and notice that religion in the real world requires scholars and scholarship in the real world" (*ibid.* 98), I cannot abandon the categories fully, as they are often shared by people whose stories I have used in my study. For ease of accessibility I have

used the more social forms of dowsing practice, and spoken mainly to those people who already had an interest in sharing their opinions and experiences, thus, as with the case of individual dowzers, cultural borders are addressed more openly.

Sacrality is a unifying concept that is both used and problematised at the same time. Different expressions of sacrality grow out from the central interest of many dowzers, however it is addressed and perceived as an independent complex of meanings that differ from the Christian and pagan contexts. Cult places like the fronts of altars, sacred groves and cultic stones are interpreted as places of earth radiation, which connects them with other supernatural places. The dowser's activity in the landscape is seeking special place that may sometimes be approached with awe or a feeling of unspecified danger. A characteristic trait of vernacular religion is the ability of the individual to gain direct and personal access to supernatural, transcendent forces. The supernatural becomes physically manifest, and communicates, through zones or energy; in parallel, and reciprocally, this means that human experience also manifests through lines of power and cultic places (Knoblauch 1991: 62, 118). The vernacular term *aktiivsed kohad* [active places]¹² refers to the transformative quality of places that stand out from the rest of the landscape. Sacrality provides access to the godly, the supernatural, another reality. The dowsing tradition, merged with New Age theories, has found its place inside Christian cultic space. Churches have been re-organised to include the bodily senses when making worship more meaningful and inclusive. And New Age theories have employed Christian sacred sites as means of gaining contact with transcendent forces through energies. (Sepp 2014, Weibel 2012) As a practice within the wider lore of the contemporary supernatural, dowzers do not have a fixed set of principles that relate to sacrality. Although the category does not form a distinctive area or attitude within the tradition, it is addressed from various angles, both as a personal attitude as well as a spatial category.

Thus sacrality functions in three ways in the dowsing tradition:

- locations related to cults provide sources of inquiry (for example, are church altars set in the right places in relation to the energies? What kind of role do churches, cultic stones and sacred groves play in the wider patterns of the landscape, and what are the conditions of development of such patterns?);
- sacrality within the tradition: the practice, ethics relating to, and possible fear of, approaching places of supernatural influence (am I ready or able to dowse? Is it safe to approach the particular spot because of unknown forces?);
- sacrality as a sense of awe, belonging and healing. (Places and trees of belonging, recreation and identity.) A sense that is difficult to describe and refers to something missing from the rationalist-secularist approach. Awe

¹² The terms 'anomaly' and 'information' are also used in this sense. I have discussed the vocabulary in my article "The Theory of Earth Energy: Academia and the Vernacular in Search of the Supernatural".

can be thought of as the 'sensual' dimension of the tradition and stems from the different structure of authority that defines the understanding of reality. There are people who actively participate in dowsing circles who do not dowse themselves. The reason, among others, is as the lack of confidence in their personal dowsing abilities, or they feel that they do not have a way to address this other reality, so they do not make this contact through the practice, although, in doing this they participate very much in tradition. Although a very personal decision, refusing to use the practice brings criticism and even irreverent attitudes within the broader field of dowsing that reveal the conflict in sacredness. In the vernacular field, where the canon and creed is each and every time negotiated with wider knowledge and authorities, sacrality (be it in the environment or in the body) is a field of contestation in which different realities (which is the meaning of the concept of *parallel-worlds*) give their testimony. This contestation blurs the boundaries between issues of this world and different aspects of the other side (the variety of 'fields' for example, and locations named as the 'portals' or 'holes in time and space'). David Chidester and Edward Linenthal note that "against all the efforts of religious actors, sacred space is inevitably entangled with the entrepreneurial, the social, the political, and other 'profane' forces"¹³ (Chidester, Linenthal 1995: 17), interests that also ground the competing aspects of authority. This competitive nature of sacred space also raises another essential trait that is involved in James Kapaló's definition of folk religion, which is that "'folk religion', even in the classic usage of the term, has been deployed by various actors to refer to aspects of religious life where communication with the divine or metaphysical is contested and where access to spiritual and practical resources for the resolution of this-worldly troubles and the assurance of other-worldly futures is disputed" (Kapaló 2013: 4).

Dowsing boldly confirms why the concept of the sacred is so central in contemporary spirituality. It is because "the very idea of the 'sacred' as fundamental to religion is a typical expression of secular religion: individually accessible, experiential, non-institutional, and concentrating on the imagination¹⁴ (rather than discursive creeds) as a means of meditating between the everyday world and a meta-empirical reality beyond all human expression" (Hanegraaff 1999: 374). But practitioners of dowsing use the category in its distinctive way, which refers to the larger source of ultimate authority. There are many ways to approach the enchanted and multi-layered reality.

Thus religion is not an "added extra", rather, as Marion Bowman notes, "it is perfectly natural (many believers would say, necessary) for religion to permeate

¹³ During the fieldwork process I was told about the conflicting definitions of sacred places because of the wish to gain official status for the place in order to add it to the relevant database and gain the necessary legal protection.

¹⁴ The word 'imagination', as a way into the liveliest discussions of enlightened ideals (see Daston 2005, Kirmayer 2006), touches contemporary spirituality at its core. Imagination as a re-distribution of institutional or religious authority is a field of contestation between visions, ideas and practices.

every aspect of an individual's life. Religion provides a worldview, a way of seeing the world and interacting with it" (Bowman 2003: 286). Even more, in the dominant-alternative model, culture provides unity and the scientific-secular-sceptic-materialist creed is naturally part of the religious, and vice versa. Graham Harvey's call to observe how different realms and species are linked and related to one another (Harvey 2013: 123–125) is especially relevant in the context of energies, as the concept itself embodies this link both in the literal and figurative sense.

As with all the analytical terms (religion, magic, sacrality), dowsing as an act is never perceived as a ritual, although it functions as a way of communicating the meta-empirical reality, or verifying the existence of the all-pervasive force. In this the dowser, in particular his or her extra-sensitive body, is the medium that reveals the true, although concealed, nature¹⁵ of reality, while dowser in some cases can within his or her lifetime explore and develop his or her sensitive abilities, which may be the result of crises or influential turns. Dowsers can develop individual personal approaches that include supernatural intervention or turns in existential understandings, while at the same time stressing that dowsing provides easily accessible benefits for all.

3.2.2. The origins of the dowsing tradition: nature and the human body

Dowsing is an art very much based on the practitioners' feelings and sensorium. Together with experience stories dowsing creates an elaborately linked theory of perception in which the body sometimes functions as the medium and sometimes as the message itself depending on which school of dowsing you favour, as discussed below. The other element in the discussion is the environment, be it natural or architectural. Radiation, field, and energy give access to the concealed patterns of reality, which are hinted at by the interpretations of natural, or bodily, signs. Within the same tradition, the body as well as nature can function in a particular subjective sense and in a more metaphorical general sense, for example in teachings nature acts as a partner, as a supreme environment in which the subject has to find its place and method of communication. In addition, the body and its perceptive functions differ in the subject-object line in the uses of the terms like bodily consciousness [*kehateadvus*], or subconscious [*alateadvus*]), where body and subconsciousness is addressed as having an independent subjectivity (see Uibu 2015).

In the writing on Western intellectual history, dowsing has received less attention than astrology and alchemy, although it has been very much part of

¹⁵ Antoine Faivre writes that one of the defining traits of the esoteric way of thinking is the principle of concealed truth, which reveals itself in the pattern of correspondence: "The entire universe is a huge theatre of mirrors, an ensemble of hieroglyphs to be decoded. Everything is a sign; everything conceals and exudes mystery; every object hides a secret" (Faivre 1994: 10).

both. From the historical perspective (which is imbued in the uses of the terminology religion-magic-science (see Hanegraaff 2012: 168)) dowsing has been part of *magia naturalis* as an alternative to demonic magic and can therefore be thought of as central to the development of medieval science. (*ibid.*: 170, 171) Although Wouter Hanegraaff draws the church as the ultimate other in order to remove mystical and occult thinking from the intellectual field (*ibid.*: 178), in the question of dowsing, the ‘other’ has been the scientific and technological development of Earth science (with the rush of the mining industry) during the Enlightenment period. However, the different approaches within the natural philosophy made the sides of complementing and competing pair (Dym 2006, 2011; Kölbl-Ebert 2006). The two sides approaching nature have been summarised by Antoine Faivre:

In the West, ‘natural philosophy’ and ‘philosophy of nature’ have developed side by side and at times been confused because of an ever-present ambiguity. They differ, in principle, however: the first has been defined by Galileo, Comte and Darwin as the pursuit of a total but essentially objective knowledge of phenomena, whereas the second has been oriented such thinkers as Leibniz, Hegel and Bergson towards an intuitive approach that nevertheless strives to be rigorous regarding the reality that underlies data derived in observation. (Faivre 1987b: 328)

Nature in the dowsing tradition provides a source of communicating the meta-empirical reality whereas the connection, the practice with dowsing rods or human body, is accompanied by variety of natural signs that reveal the presence of anomalous places. Also the presence of boulders, geological aspects (relief, the material of the surface: sand, limestone, cracks and karst features) and meteorological peculiarities (if the place attracts lightning, movement of air: sudden cold or warmth) are paid special attention. Veikko Anttonen’s idea that “features such as holes and openings in the ground, cracks between rocks and caves, are documented in ethnographic accounts as ritualized spaces which, for instance, shamans employ to exit and then re-enter the world in ordinary reality” (Anttonen 2003: 297) takes on a double meaning within dowsing similarly to the other remarks of folklore where evidences are found from the places and also stories about the places.

The folklore surrounding dowsing has a place in the more mystical wing of the tradition in which ‘special’ places provide access to visions perceived as lights and energies, and to different mythological characters from Estonian traditional folklore, such as monks [*mungad*], giants [*hiid*] and spiritual keepers in various forms. If the monks have been half-demonised characters in traditional manor legends, then spiritual keepers have the role of spiritual masters or overseers of a particular place (Kivari 2013). The visionary side, greatly influenced by New Age practices, requires a community based on sympathy and shared vocabulary. Although some people may tend to follow either the more mystical or more rational side of the tradition, these two

orientations provide equal sources from which to distinguish a certain place, object or area as giving access to metaphysical reality. As such, natural places provide sites of congruence or different, often competing authorities. At the same time the creative ability of living tradition provides inspiration and enthusiasm for the community of sympathisers to interpret the wider meaning of the places (see Kivari 2015).

Apart from the rich variety of stories that are shared within the dowsing tradition, as a divination technique it has two distinct orientations that separate dowsing into two different ‘schools’:

1. Places are good and bad, positive and negative. They are good/bad for certain plants, for particular people, or for relaxation or concentration. The qualifier lies in the subject or its original and subjective connection with a particular place. What is good for one is not necessarily good for the other.
2. The quality lies outside the subject, in nature or in the environment, forming objective frameworks in nature which people can discover and benefit from by using knowledge acquired from the dowsing tradition (such as water veins, networks of radiation and energy)¹⁶.

The first school can be considered a later development in Estonia, popularised mainly through the courses given by Rein Weber during the first decade of this century.¹⁷ The dynamics of authority also challenges the principle that has been regarded as the defining trait in New Age thinking – the individual as the source of transcendence (Hammer 2004: 362). There are many experience stories in which the border between inside and outside, and the body and spirit/nature dualism, does not exist. In these stories the body and nature do not operate in the everyday sense as biological entities, rather they are perceived through the lens of tradition.

The way in which the body is perceived reflects both the cosmological and social order, essentially pointing to ways in which identities are interrelated to their environments (Descola 2011: 14). As an alternative to the mainstream view of the body as discrete from the environment, the “energetic” view sees the human position tied to and defined by dynamic forces. Laura Stark talks about dynamic “embodied motivation”, saying that “the notion of embodied motivation regards the body not as a bounded, discrete entity separate from its surroundings, but as a field of energy emanating from the corporeal centre” (Stark 2006: 256). When describing the border between the body and society, Chris Shilling has used the term attachment: “The social meanings which are attached to particular bodily forms and performances tend to become internalized and exert a powerful influence on an individual’s sense of self” (Shilling 2003: 73). Thus, the message and the medium are often united in

¹⁶ Discussed in the article “Webs of Lines and Webs of Stories in the Making of Supernatural Places”.

¹⁷ I have discussed his influence on the dowsing scene in the articles “Webs of Lines and Webs of Stories in the Making of Supernatural Places” and “Energy as the Mediator of Natural and Supernatural Realms”.

bodily signals that manifest as a variety of feelings in the hands or feet, or a feeling of stress. In addition to these there are also more psychological phenomena, such as the feeling as being watched, feeling joy or lust, or the feeling of being pushed away. The broad terms ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ embody personal attachment to the place.

The dowsing tradition provides a more detailed picture of the environment within the general healing discourse that is part of the New Age scene. In the latter, nature provides sites for healing at which a connection between the body (“humankind”) and nature (the “environment”) provides an “idealised picture of self” (McGuire 1988: 251–252). In such circumstances the connection between nature and the body serve as a source for enchanted identity. Legends as the sustaining instruments for the “culture of fear” (Dégh 2001: 5) in the case of earth energies, reflect the idea that places and nature can also have a negative influence. Places can suck the energy out of you, provide stress, terminal illnesses even, and natural sign can alert a person to disturbances in what would otherwise be natural, healthy growth. Controversy and opposition towards unanimity on the healing ability of nature opens the door for discussion, research and debate about how to read natural signs, and how to best use the authority of the body when navigating in the realm of experience stories about the supernatural.

Different orientations within dowsing are united by the concept of energy, which operates as a “conceptual glue” (Ivakhiv 2007: 277) between the creative sources of the tradition. The term ‘energy’ plays a crucial role in contemporary spirituality, where it marks not only a principle that organises the world outside, but also the relationship between the individual (body) and that world. Depending on the approach, the energy will also affect the decision about whether a particular spot is harmful or beneficial. Energy also makes it difficult to determine the borders of the dowsing tradition as its position is central to revealing this spiritual principle. Although as a practice, as a “technical action”, disciplining the body and speech are also used to *produce* religion in its variety (Asad 1983: 251), this discipline is also a generative mechanism for the web that stretches between different supernatural themes. As a metaphorical glue it links the supernatural (identity) with tradition-bound rationalising principles that generate, but also control, the tradition.

As a creative concept – simultaneously the message and the medium – energy provides the foundation for navigation between two orientations within meaning-making processes that have become the basis of the theory of magic in the works of several authors (Tambiah 1990, Hanegraaff 1996, 2003, Greenwood 2009). Most importantly this approach has helped to overcome evolutionary dichotomies such as primitive/educated, irrational/rational, in which the former indicated the indigenous and magical mode of thinking, and the latter the civilised and disenchanting way of seeing the world. This approach also challenges Geertz’s definition of religion as a system of symbols and presents two spontaneous tendencies of ordering material and cultural reality.

These two tendencies, or philosophical orientations, which also link to Faivre's distinction between *natural philosophy* and the *philosophy of nature*, are causality and participation. Causality describes events happening in the objective and independent realm of logical reason, which, as Wouter Hanegraaff points out, is neither a theory nor an ideology (although it has been developed into such in various ways that now dominate contemporary society) (Hanegraaff 2003: 375) but a basic orientation towards the world. Participation, which certainly does not oppose or exclude the former, is based on identity and relationships. "The essence of mystical mentality is participation, for one thing to participate in something else. Mystical thought connects one thing with another in a pattern of ideas and behaviours, and participation is the key." (Greenwood 2009: 25) Although the two orientations can create different ideologies and independent systems of symbols, they are both "projected on the experiential and symbolizing capacities of the *same* sensory modalities of man – the modalities of touch, taste, hearing, seeing" (original italics, Tambiah 1990: 108).

Although dowsing as a practice is a technical process that reveals different ideologies within the tradition, the two orientations are highlighted and combined differently. While "energy" as the participative bond between the human body and nature may have mutual effect, the principle of causality orders experiences within the creative logic and authorities of tradition. The participative reciprocal bond is seen in situations where people report that they can change the identity or character of a place, as in cases of the erosion of the sacrality of a place, or when people load places with their own energy. This bond is also seen when places affect and heal people, which is fundamental to the concept of the networks of energies. Thus, the individual's relationship with the environment is dominated by mystical participation, with the tradition making it available and providing the necessary order, validity and authority. Alternativity is formulated in the distribution of authority within the sources of the tradition, i.e. nature and the human body as they are expressed and made meaningful in dowsing tradition.

3.2.3. Research into the paranormal: The problem of disenchantment

A great part of the current study involves an area that can be labelled as research into the paranormal or the anomalous. However, the area of paranormal is wide – it is woven together of various interests in parapsychology, ufology, biorhythms, near-death experiences, etc. Many, although not all, of these sub-themes are connected through a shared discursive position that discusses the supernatural within contemporary scientific culture. One of these connections is the environment and the anomalous events associated with it. Anomalistics is an interdisciplinary form of research, whereas the sub-themes involve wide and fundamental themes of existence. Historian of science Henry

Bauer has compared the natural sciences, social sciences and anomalistics. The table below shows some of his comparative notes (Bauer 2001: 22):

Natural Science	Social Science (and Humanities)	Anomalistics
Anomalies are ignored (until the next scientific revolution)	(Social science does not use the concept of anomaly)	Anomalies are the real stuff
Progress is steady with occasional leaps forward	(The sense of progress is not present in social science as it is in natural science)	Progress is all or nothing
'Proven' means no exceptions	'Proven' means convincing, but there may be opposing schools of thought	There is no accepted standard of proof. The ambition is to have the (natural) sciences accept the anomalous claim
Practitioners exceed some minimal level of competence		Anyone can play; there is a wide range of competence
Research focuses are on unknown within the limits of known		Research focuses are on unknown within the limits of unknown

The Estonian Geopathic Association was formed at the end of the 1980s with the ambition of systematically collecting empirical data on dowsing and related phenomena, and possibly finding a model of explanation for anomalies in measurement data found in zones of dowsing signal. The interest of the Association extended to possible interaction between the human body and the environment in terms of fields and other measurable parameters. Despite the shared enthusiasm between scholars from different fields of natural science, the alternative research remained separated from their daily work, although the results were published in the collections of articles from the Baltic Dowsters' Association annual conferences. Together with the similar group *Anomaalsete keskkonnanahtuste registreerimise ja analüüsi komisjon (AKRAK)* [The Commission for Registration and Analysis of Anomalous Phenomena in Nature] its goal was to collect any possible data for the inexplicable experiences referring to seeing of the lights, UFOs or other unusual somatic impulses. Reacting to the wave of UFO-reports in Estonia between 1980s and 1990s, the opening of the ideological and political sphere, the aim of these societies was besides of getting to know these phenomenas, to expand the intellectual paradigm in order to broaden the scale of legitimate senses and experiences.

Research into alternative theories blurs the boundaries both of the modernism/anti-modernism debate and of research/folklore. As I have noted previously, folklore, particularly traditional place legends about the supernatural (ghosts and apparitions, underground beings, flashing lights or voices), serves as a complementary source for new research into places that may have some

disturbing qualities for the human condition. While experimental research is a rare field of activity in contemporary times, as it requires the meeting of an interested scholar (who will take the chance of being ridiculed or repudiated) and the relevant infrastructure; as the main sources at hand are reports of personal experiences. Together with the practical difficulties, individual investigation into this interest is diminishing and being replaced by the professionalised interest of the dowsing authorities, who give advice about earth energies and sometimes also work as exorcists. For several parallel reasons the Geopathic Association has lost most of its investigative interest in terms of the natural sciences, although this interest remains inside the flexible framework of the dowsing tradition.

One aspect that has usually not been regarded as part of the religious sphere are the questions that are raised by different traditions (be they traditions of academic research, confessional soul care or narrative traditions). Anomalistics works as a tool with which to challenge legitimate knowledge and create an environment for experience stories, thus forming a generative milieu for the tradition. Despite the fact that the methods resemble folkloristic fieldwork, the ideological focus lies elsewhere. In addition, by referring to the experiences of so many, anomalistics relies on the real power of the folk in opposing academia (see Howard 2013). Posing questions related to different epistemological directions sheds light on different webs of knowledge in which “science/non-science boundary usually becomes equated with the distinction between Self and the Other” (Hess 1993: 146).

Its way of posing questions, making associations and navigating the discursive field is guided by an inner web of *para-science* which highlights the methodological gaps between the legitimate frameworks of knowledge-making. Here the border between legends and reports is especially thin, as the function of legends is also to challenge the established worldview, while fieldwork can easily be associated with the function of ostension or legend tripping (Dégh 2001: 422). The labelling of paranormal investigation with the title legend or research shows the political networks of culture, especially when we think that besides dealing with particular problems or information, labels are powerful tools in the political field of knowledge making.

One way or another, folklore studies do not discuss the truthfulness or nature of the phenomena, rather it seeks a humanistic, social, subjective or otherwise secular truth. The contradictory frameworks of different truths raise hard questions for the fieldworker in a double position such as me, which will be discussed in chapter 3.3.2.

Egil Asprem has studied the history of parapsychology, psychic research and the esoteric fringes of the natural sciences to shed light on the disenchantment thesis. His central methodology is not to describe the socio-historical process of ‘the disenchantment of the world’, but to reconceptualise it as a specific intellectual and cultural problem faced by historical actors. The ‘problem’, though, as Egil Asprem states, is not an *emic* concept encountered as such in historical sources, but a construct invented by the historian for the sake of

problematizing the sources (Asprey 2013: 3). In saying this, Asprey prioritises the role of individuals within historical and ideological projects such as the Enlightenment or Modernism, analysing the problematic border between natural and supernatural. Along with numerous little histories of ‘pseudoscientific’ communities of the first half of the 20th century, Asprey analyses the illegitimate cultural margin somewhere between science and religion. “The magical practices were playing the contested borderland both from the side of religion and science using illegitimate and undesired or foreign forms of religion and undesired forms of natural philosophy.” (Asprey 2013: 26) The reason for highlighting Asprey’s work here is because of the material he uses, and because of the methodology that his collection of sources reveals in recent European intellectual history. Research into the paranormal falls into one of the intellectual gaps between culture and nature, religion and science, where neither has a proper explanation of the other. Kenneth M. Morrison has written of the same “Cartesian blind spot” in anthropology, where the inherent dualism of Western categories overlooks the characteristic relationality of human existence and labels expressions of this reflexivity superstitious or irrational (Morrison 2013: 41). In my view, Morrison here refers to the exclusion of important aspects of human existence by both sides, and how these form the attitudes towards, and conditions for, knowledge: how reality becomes questioned and made the subject of inquiry, and how borders between subjective and objective (and also between animate and inanimate) are drawn.

Research into the paranormal links interesting historical and geographical areas of concealed research (conducted, for example, in the military network in USSR), providing the authority for those who have knowledge or experience of this field of activity. For the current time, where such investigative, systematic or experimental interest has been replaced by New Age theories and practices (which I have referred to as the ‘healing’ wing of the tradition of earth energies), the research poses discursive questions about how to accommodate immediate and highly subjective experience into materialist frameworks. (Questions that could also be rephrased as “what to do with folklore?”) Research into the paranormal as a highly complex phenomenon involves individual spiritual paths as well as subject for organisational work.

3.3. The role of legends in the dowsing tradition

Observing the way dowsing is practiced shows how stories or verbal communication accompany that practice, and how practice is made meaningful and valid by communication. Within wider dowsing lore the circulation and use of experience stories should be included when talking about communication.

3.3.1. Meaning: practice, experience, legend

Borrowing Linda Dégh's model (Dégh 2001: 200) for comparison, "the narrated, printed or aired story presents only a tip from the iceberg", thus it can reveal a multitude of meanings in any group or society. In folklore studies such a cultural flow is characterised by a genre of legend in which each story is part of a greater whole where the plots of these legends merge in one another. These legends often do not have a distinct storyteller, nor are they rarely stories at all. Although my study mainly involves dowsing communities or clusters of interested people, my experience confirms that the practice is in use much more widely by people who do not talk about it, or discuss the working principles of it. Despite the fact that there is rare verbal expression, these people are carriers of the same tradition. Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk have summarised this generic trait of belief legend by saying that "each belief is a synecdochic expression of discourse, tradition, textual realm – *pars pro toto*, as the whole can only be imagined and never completely textualized" (Bowman, Valk 2012: 10). Therefore dowers, who complete the theory (the legend) in their teaching, courses or books, meet with the conflicting opinions of the tradition bearers, as dowers tend to close the open vernacular realm with their authority. In another, open, situation their authority can contribute to a living story that has inner, constitutive rules. Therefore I see legends more as a cultural pattern, a network of stories that are tied and mutually nurtured by those umbilical cords. That is why talking about dowsing practice alone is so complicated.

People participate in cultural and environmental reciprocity: they are protagonist and audience at the same time. Each participant has a line of legends behind him or her, be it healing or research into paranormal subjects influenced by personal, political or local meaning. Legends are, according to Terry Gunnell, "a map of behaviour underlining moral and social values and offering examples to follow or avoid" (Gunnell 2008: 15). Ülo Valk and Marion Bowman have stated that "many narratives about supernatural experience are so strongly interwoven with the physical and social surroundings that it is easy to forget that they belong to the textual world" (Bowman, Valk 2012: 8). During the course of this study I have seen that texts, indeed, have a crucial role to play in social communication and the maintenance of tradition. At the same time this statement would be misleading in situations that strongly focus on body-related feelings and one's physical surroundings. In the case of a practice that is built on experience (despite being shaped by tradition), text has to be meant in the larger sense: text exerts its boundaries and makes the environment meaningful in various practical and physical ways.

Thus, according to the nature of genres, they function, as John Frow puts it, as a "set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning" (Frow 2015: 10). Frow says that the structuring effects of genre are productive of meaning, that genre provides the basic condition for meaning to take place (*ibid.*). In this light texts that are woven between human body, environment and tradition create, through their generic nature an

environment for the circulation of legends – in doing so these legends have been considered ‘real folklore’. Real in as much as they belong to the older set of traditional legends, stories of the bygone agrarian Estonian society (for example places with a misleading or infecting quality and various reflections from the past that are explained with the term *infofields*, that refers to certain quality of the places to record the events occurred at that particular surrounding). Therefore, it is not wise to pick individual units out of this whole, nor to classify any particular story as a legend or not, rather, it would be better to discover the centres and peripheries of the gravitational field of wider legendry, or the nexus of interrelationships that are in the process of shaping cultural meanings. (Briggs, Bauman 1992: 138, Siikala 2000: 218). The concept of energy gives a meaningful validation to the experience of the supernatural, as much of the activity of dowzers or researchers into the paranormal is guided by the opinion that what folklorists call legends is simply artefacts from a different system and reality, or from forces or relationships other than those presented in mainstream society or everyday ordinary realm. Thus, legends that have been considered ‘empty’ are given full meaning in the context of dowsing (Honko 1984). The monitor of the social order and hierarchy of meaning reveals itself in the folklore genres as they “set the limits to the interpretation of individual text” (Frow 2015: 10).

It could be said that there is no dowsing practice as such (which is incorrect, as the rods do move in peoples’ hands), but that the practice is always in the service of something; it is practiced in the relation to something else. Thus, the web of energy lines functions as well as the web of associations and intertexts because the dowser holds the clue to interpretation. However, as described in the articles of the current dissertation, the dowsing scene includes many sub-genres that distribute authority within the tradition. This gravity towards a main idea is characteristic of the legend genre. The main debate, problem and internal tension of the tradition lies in the question of subjectivity and objectivity – proving the existence of supernatural forces and in some way legitimising the subjective individual-centred worldview. At the same time the dualism of these concepts involves the inconclusiveness of the basic understanding of reality. Legend particularly opens up the closed authoritative voice and also offers a route into the discussion on immediate and familiar ground. In the genre of legend inconclusiveness is related to the feeling of the process, the future and the change to touch it, to participate in it.

One reason for the popularity of dowsing could be its ability to experience the supernatural, and to make various experiences communicative on both sides: within a community of people, and towards the transcendent force or signal itself. Through its disturbing but transcendent character legends “make people honest and humble, and express their true feelings, concerns, fears, weaknesses and failures” (Dégh 2001: 313). Dowsing as a practice of making sense of nature or the landscape is a bit more optimistic as it builds up a new, subjective truth in which experience leads to authority among people who share equal

positions. However subjective, perceived truth binds people who share particular stories or carry out fieldwork examining the supernatural.

3.3.2. Tradition, vernacular authority and the performance of truth

During recent decades of folklore scholarship the term ‘folk’ has often been replaced by the term ‘vernacular’. In the study of religion, the same trend has given rise to ‘implicit’ or ‘lived’ forms of religiosity, which do not focus on any national or particular religious forms, rather these terms highlights practices and modalities of expression of faith in the numinous or sacred. Despite this, the centre of the formation of folklore studies has always been occupied by the acknowledgement of the social stratification of culture. Stratification in which often the “defining focus of attention has [been] directed to that stratum variously termed folk, common, popular or vernacular” (Bauman 2008: 32). Richard Bauman has defined the ‘vernacular’ as follows:

The *vernacular* is a communicative modality characterized by: (1) communicative resources and practices that are acquired informally, in communities of practice, rather than by formal instruction; (2) communicative relations that are immediate, grounded in the interaction order and lifeworld; and (3) horizons of distribution and circulation that are spatially bounded, by locality or region. The vernacular, furthermore, can only be understood in dynamic relation to the cosmopolitan; they are opposing vectors in a larger communicative field. If the vernacular pulls toward informal, immediate, locally-grounded, proximal side of the field, the cosmopolitan pulls toward the rationalized, standardized, mediated, wide-reaching, distal side. (*Ibid.*: 32–33)

Along the same theoretical lines, Robert Glenn Howard has conceptualised tradition on the one hand, as something that has been handed down, “while on the other hand it can refer to a noninstitutional or vernacular authorizing force perceived by those participating in an act” (Howard 2013: 73). Thus, Howard has approached *vernacular* as being one side of the field of social power where certain clusters serve the legitimate institutional authority, whereas the *vernacular* is emerging from the different type of trust which does not consciously rely on any of those institutions. (Howard 2013: 81) Referring to Erika Brady’s work (Brady 2001), Howard’s approach points to giving different levels of trust to institutional credentials on one side, while allowing for “relational authority” from the vernacular side, where dowsing and different stories and experiences build up the community. “These expressive forms derive strength not only from the ways in which they fulfil the immediate needs of community members, but also from the ways in which they embody larger patterns of shared beliefs and values” (Brady 2001: 7). Sources of authority link the individual into the several epistemological systems where the different decisions can simultaneously be laid on different grounds. The vernacular positions are mixed with those bearing

institutional or scientific authority. Diane Goldstein has considered it to be characteristic of the contemporary world: “Between the narrative turn and the local knowledge movement, an epistemological revolution has been playing out that celebrates (and of course, also appropriates, manipulates, misunderstands, misuses and misrepresents) the vernacular” (Goldstein 2015: 129).

Despite the fact that folk belief also serves as a kind of battlefield where ideal or tradition-bound communities are hardly recognisable, the immediate location of legend telling, and the moments when the dowsing twigs twitch, allow us to recognise how relationships are built between witnesses to the aforementioned situation. This is why analysis that employs different systems of thought does not apply as a criticism of such situations. People within the community who share the same struggle usually gravitate together and adopt similar systems of ideas. Thus the sceptic’s words hit the wrong target, as, in addition to social fabric, the principles of weaving together the source, meaning and effect of are built in discursive and generic relationships.

As I noted previously, the practice or tradition of dowsing can hardly be described or analysed fully, as it does not have any distinctive form or fixed content. The reason for this what Elliott Oring (Oring 2012: 237) describes as “the problem of tradition”. He calls on researchers not to think about tradition, but think with it. In doing this he suggests finding answers to the following questions: “How are the beliefs and practices taught and learned; what is the source of authority of tradition and how does its force make itself felt; how do past practices continue to operate in the present, and how and why do new practices come to destroy or marginalize the old?” (*Ibid.*: 238) In the light of these questions, dowsing seems to be a handy tool with which to observe the distribution of authority, not only in the vernacular sphere but also in culture in general, which involves different strata of trust and relationships. Dowsing involves a system of thought that is expressed in numerous ways.

Intimate knowledge of culture gets its full meaning and social value within the concept of earth energies, which I propose to be the reason for the revival of traditional legends. Legends create a language for a tradition through their generic functions. As several researchers have pointed out, the function of a legend is to challenge truthfulness (Oring 2008) or *entertain* the truth of the account (Oring 2012: 92). Doubts and disagreements are inherent in such vernacular debates (Dégh 1996: 39). Therefore I agree with and underline Elliott Oring’s shift “in the assessment of legend from matters of belief to performance of truth” (Oring 2008: 160), although the word *performance* does sound good in the context of *truth*. Despite this, Oring’s position, as supported by Frow, highlights the performative (persuasive) power of a genre: “Far from being only ‘stylistic’ devices, genres create effects of reality and truth which are central to the different ways the world is understood” (Frow 2012: 19).

Dowsing as practice completes and also opens the different realms of legendry: in the realm of supernatural experiences dowsing confirms the presence of the supernatural, while at the same time revealing concealed levels of reality that may subvert or disturb everyday order. This disturbance causes

people to doubt what they previously took for granted, something that involves all aspects at emotional, communication and physical levels. I have experienced many cases of people recalling supernatural events that they encountered years ago. After they have talked about these events on tape, they feel uneasy, have trouble sleeping or even fall ill. People who witness supernatural events or even hear other people's later memories of them, feel a peculiar bond with each other, something that is quite out of the everyday order of things – just as legends are. In this way legends should be seen as a serious matter in peoples' lives that require delicate, and often tradition-wise, handling.

4. DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLES

I will now give an overview of the five articles that constitute the core of the dissertation. Two of them are originally written in Estonian, three in English. All of them have been published in peer-reviewed journals and books, with the last still in the process of publication. With reference to those articles a few comments must be made about the sources. As with the introductory chapter, I have found secondary sources that analyse the history of dowsing in the context of European or Estonian folklore. I have also found esoteric practices especially illuminating because they are analytically broaden the first-hand material usable for this study. The existence of historical material on dowsing was new to me, and the issues this material touched on was much more important in European intellectual history than I thought. The aim of the additional historical material is not to give a comprehensive overview of the dowsing tradition in early Modern, or any other period, rather it is to show the continuation and change of the practice, initially within the mining lore and also as a wider divination technique that reflects changes in economic and intellectual conditions. Much more interesting work could also be done, particularly in finding and analysing the ‘sensuous’ turn in the Estonian material, be it on the theme of folk healers or on evaluating the quality of the living environment.

Drawing parallels between European intellectual history, the history of ideas as introduced in the works of Antoine Faivre, Wouter Hanegraaff, Warren Dym and Egil Asprem, and the practices described in these narratives, has been appealing and interesting to me. Often these practices are labelled ‘esoteric’ or part of New Age culture. Although in my writing I have avoided these labels, inter-disciplinary study has entered the terms into my research. Dowsing for mines or wells is part of natural magic, although complementary use as a wider divination technique is always at hand (dowsing for lost objects or for traces of crime). The general reason for not using ‘esoteric’ or New Age as terms is in my methods, which avoid categorising the people and stories used in this research. Rather, New Age and esoteric practices formulate the language that people use when speaking about the supernatural, although they might not be followers of these trends in other areas of their lives. Dowsing in this respect also works as a language that mediates the older layer of traditional legends and the New Age way of healing and developing one’s various intellectual, physical and emotional skills. New Age and esoteric as *etic* labels are inevitable when speaking of the lived practices of contemporary spirituality, and so the meaning of these terms must be constantly evaluated. With this dissertation I wish to make a modest contribution to this debate.

4.1. Article 1

Kivari, Kristel 2012. Energy as the Mediator Between Natural and Supernatural Realms. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*. Vol. 6 (2) pp. 49–68.

In this article I start the discussion by outlining the research material as it relates to contested terms such as ‘belief’ and ‘rationality’, which cause tension for esotericism and have delineated the border the mainstream and the alternative in various ways since the early modern period. As I have previously mentioned, it is difficult to determine the boundaries of dowsing practice. I have defined dowsing as a vernacular dispute about the basic rules and operating principles of reality, in which each expression speaks *about* something, but also *for* something in the contest of worldviews. Seppo Knuuttila raises such a problem (2012: 370) when he speaks about the logic of analysis of folklore material.

The supernatural can, however, be understood in at least two different ways: usually it is considered to be an aspect of religion, whereas references to supernatural in the sense of the inexplicable can be interpreted as intellectual contemplation without the framework of belief. Naturally it is not necessary, or wise, to deny the mental category of belief as such, but it can be bracketed when the question asked is not if people in times past used to, for example, believe in guardian spirits. Belief stories can thus be used to exemplify the vernacular interest in knowledge and epistemology. (*Ibid.*: 371)

This principle reckons with the Elliott Oring’s notion of the “performance of truth” (Oring 2008: 160), which is reflected in later articles.

Another theoretical hub for the first article is the tension between religion and rationality: religious aspects of rationalising principles in the description of reality, and vice versa, the rational and intellectual that create religious bonds in the understanding of the lifeworld. Historically certain activities have been considered to belong to the sphere of religion, whereas knowledge and information have been the epitome of the rational (non religious) world. In the history of ideas, *Gnosticism*, as a search for divine and revelatory knowledge, originating from the divine self, has stood somewhere in between. Knowledge as an esoteric, spiritual experience is present both in academia, and in the vernacular sphere, which draws its information from various sources. In early stages of the physical sciences, theosophical thought reflected in *physica sacra* carried similar value as the enquiry into dowsing today. Which is to say that it was an attempt, using experimental methods, to reflect on cultural texts, to challenge the border between nature and culture and thus to find and describe the source of sacrality. Many scholars of Renaissance magic, esotericism and contemporary spirituality see magic and belief as being in intense dialogue with rationality, and with empirical and causal reasoning (Tambiah 1990; Luhrmann 1991; Hammer 2007). These same scholars see magic as a highly adaptive form of involvement in the world. In this scenario the purpose and instruments of certain magical practice and the type of ordering of the cosmos in relation to the subject is under scrutiny, rather than content. This conclusion rests upon Lévy-

Bruhl's distinction between the participative and causal reasoning principles of everyday experience, which have taken the form of political ideology within scientific and religious rhetoric, although they operate simultaneously in ordering human knowledge of the world.

From this theoretical ground I introduce three sites of Earth energies, which have also been the sites of my fieldwork: the column of energy by the *Nõiakaev* [Witch's Well] in Tuhala, healing energies at Kirna Manor, and the Estonian Geopathic Association. The cultural identity of Tuhala village, situated about 40 km south of Tallinn, comes from the density of archaeological monuments (cup-marked stones) and the peculiar nature of the porous limestone surface, which forms holes, cracks and caves at the edges of the limestone layers. The well, popularised publicly since the 1980s under the name *Nõiakaev*, is famous for its ability to 'boil' during the high water season when the water gushes out of the ground. In 2001 a column of energy was discovered next to the well, and since then an oak pillar marks the location of what is the strongest emanation of energy in Estonia. When presenting the local countryside, hiking trails and sights the owner of the well and local forespeaker Ants Taliuja introduces the energetic nature of the place (and, in doing so, often re-conceptualises traditional place legends). Sensing the particular spots, trees and cultic stones he binds the theories of underground rivers and lines of energy with his personal recovery from chronic pain. At the same time he plays an active public role fighting against plans to start limestone mining in the area. Here, the energies link the distant and the immediate, the personal and the universal, something that supports the active place-making process in a situation where different interests in the planning of limestone mining clash.

Kirna Manor, in the centre of Estonia, works as a spiritual and healing centre. At the time of my fieldwork in 2010 the founder of the centre, Helle Anniko, was still actively involved in the work of the manor. The basis of the healing effect is the special energy here that affects certain parts of the body, which patients take advantage of by sitting in a place of particular energy so that that place works with the patient's problem. Helle and the visitors to the Manor have created a web of teachings, a network of experience stories, traditional legends, visions and sense perception. Together with the topography and the old park setting a magical environment is created here that is different from the everyday order outside the Manor. The bodily nature of experiences in Kirna, as it relates to illness and different sensations receives a unifying explanation that not only pays attention to feelings and connects those experiences to the wider existential story of recovery and spiritual development.

The third of my fieldwork sites, the Estonian Geopathic Association, was initiated by a group of scholars to collect and analyse relevant data that could explain subtle energies, fields and interactions. It has once been part of the Institute of Geology and a sub-section of the Estonian Naturalists' Society, registered as independent organisation on 2003. In addition to monthly meetings the Society organises a series of conferences called The Earth's Fields and Their Influence on Organisms. Collections of abstracts and articles from these

conferences make up a body of detailed statements, discussions and examples of the geopathic view of the environment, of locating and constructing buildings and issues related to health and vegetation. In the article I introduce articles from the Estonian Naturalists' Society's proceedings that elaborate on the theme of interaction between the human body and the environment. Examples from the texts that use traditional place legends are also given. As a result, I use the term 'information' as an illuminating and empowering knowledge about the dowsing.

In this article I have introduced a contemporary plot according to which reality is shaped by the elusive energies that represent different applications of the idea of reality. The desire to create a bridge between the natural and supernatural is an empowering tool for the local activist to help them fight against ecological threats (and gain certain symbolic power). Healers use the well-known concept of natural energies in wakening other supernatural arguments and visions (and apply them in their work). A group of enthusiasts and specialists in dowsing mix the methods of magic and science in order to find proper and legitimate knowledge of the supernatural in life.

4.2. Article 2

Kivari, Kristel 2013. Veesooned, energiasambad ja tervis: argiusund töövõtetest teavikhoiuni. [Water Weins, Energy Columns and Health Issues: Expressions of Vernacular Religion.] Uibu, M. (Ed) *Mitut usku Eesti III*. Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus: Tartu, pp. 107–138

In generally comparative article I introduce how the living world is connected to surface through basic traits of dowsing lore: surface and cosmos, human body and groundwater (water witching), choosing the place for houses regarding the groundwater and additional natural markers. As a comparison I have used secondary sources from the history of mining and dowsing debates (Barrett, Bersterman 1926, Agricola (Hoover) 1912 [1556], Lynn 2001, Dym 2011), the records of Estonian Folklore Archives and my fieldwork material, which is accompanied with the printed materials regarding the same topics.

In 16th century miners' lore from Germany (as well as in the theories of generation of metals) dowsing twig connects legends of buried treasure and astrology, which both have been part of the wider divination tradition of medieval Central Europe. There are few examples of the divination twig in Estonian treasure legends too. This parallel draws a historical line of the practice: the stars and planets, which have been considered influencing the location of the bodies of mineral ore, are nowadays in some records seen as the rays of cosmic radiation which reflect back from the bottom of the ground and as such influence the living.

Another pair of the parallels in dowsing tradition concerns about the water witching traditions based on the sensory interpretations. I bring examples from Estonian Folklore Archives which show that the special wellcatchers, who

worked on the basis of their sensuous reflections, were known at least at the beginning of 20th century, whereas other international methods for estimating the groundwater are known also (the method with the fleece and the pot, also estimation by the plants and vegetation).

The third aspect of the historical parallels concerns of the groundwater in respect of the general living conditions. Contemporary principle, that sleeping or staying long at the water veins brings illnesses is compared to the older records in choosing of the good place to build a living house both for people and cattle. Here, an interesting discontinuities occur: in older records, the proximity of the water to the living house was told to bring the water illnesses: boils and sorrow, whereas knowledge of the water below the ground, can be considered as newer knowledge belonging to the different layer of vernacular knowledge, disseminated together with the concept of radiation.

In the second part of the article I introduce the site of my fieldwork, Kirna manor, which uses all of the mentioned traits of dowsing lore. In the complex teachings of the healer and mentor of the manor, Helle Anniko, the peculiarities of the geological surface, radiation and energies give the way to the different visions, supernatural company (monks) and healing effects.

The sensory base of dowsing lore comprises the language of vernacular religion, which serves as a clue to different plots, interaction and personal touch. Healing in this process does not mean only bodily rehabilitation, but also spiritual attachment to the universal principles of the universe, which are available for the spiritually evolved persons.

The article shows how the dowsing practice is a key to the vernacular debate on different themes, but which all point to some kind of alternative constitution of the world. Dominant authorities in science, medicine or the stream of contemporary spirituality form the source of inspiration as well the target of contrast.

4.3. Article 3

Kristel Kivari 2013. Esoteeriline pärimus Kirnas ja maagial põhinevad mõistmisviisid. [Esoteric Lore in Kirna Manor and Magical Epistemologies.] *Mäetagused*, Vol. 54, pp. 185–212.

The article discusses field material recorded in 2010 and 2011 with the two healers in Kirna Manor: Helle Anniko and Henn Hunt and the interviews with the regular patients of the manor. Kirna represents a quintessentially *cultic milieu* by its spiritual and physical constitution: the park of the manor house, the forms of the landscape are steeped with esoteric theories and bound with the physical impulses and energies that people are able to perceive in the course of their spiritual development and physical healing.

I have used the term “epistemology” to designate the creative, careful and tradition-wise meaning-making process, which is built upon the magical relationship between environment, human spiritual identity and the tradition and provides the alternative to the term “belief” or “religion”. The particular tradi-

tion, as alternative to the mainstream understanding of nature and human body, relies on relationships that build enchanted identity based on specific communion (instead of the principle of critical separatedness, described in the categories of natural science) (Greenwood 2009: 99; Latour 1993: 10; Tambiah 1990: 86). Therefore, *cultic milieu* is generated on the basis on the striving for *gnosis*, which is designated in using of the terms *mōistmine* [understanding, appreciation] as an illuminating knowledge, which binds the worldview together, so that in every action reflects the universal order of the cosmos. It also refers to the active use of knowledge about concepts of energies and different practices.

In this article I refer four definitive and two optional traits in esoteric way of thought that after the works of Antoine Faivre (Faivre 1994: 10–14) have been considered to be the uniting principles of various forms of esoteric activity and literature. These are:

1. **Correspondences:** the reality is seen as a text to be deciphered full of mystery and important signs. The correspondences occur in nature (planets and metals, planets and body) as well between nature and culture (investigating nature one can get knowledge also about history or sacred texts)
2. **Living nature** that is bound together with circulating fire and seen operating through aforementioned correspondences. Together with magical practices the passion for knowledge highlights the illuminating sense of *gnosis*.
3. **Imagination and meditations.** Imagination as not mere fantasy refers to the attribute of the soul in the status of meditation that allows to put two previous principles into action and while doing this to use the spiritual intermediaries such as angels but also the teachers and gurus.
4. **Experience of transmutation** refers to the spiritual path or the alchemical metamorphosis from the lower to the higher.

The additional two often appear together with the previous are the **praxis of concordance** which seeks and finds the universal in different cultures and traditions. The final component concerns the **transmission**, which includes the path of initiation, the second birth, but also the way how the teachings are transmitted from teacher to disciple (Faivre 1994: 10–14).

The holistic ideology, that is put into action through various esoteric or New Age practices, is based on this active and participative way of interaction between nature and human body. Theory about magical epistemologies, developed in the works of Nurit Bird-David (Bird-David 1999), Susan Greenwood (Greenwood 2009), Graham Harvey (Harvey 2012) and Stanley J. Tambiah (Tambiah 1990) are built on the notion of participative and causal orientation towards the world which presents the reality operating as a continuum together with the individual. The individual self is thus built up on active process of association, reflection and imagination within the particular environment or tradition.

From this theoretical approach I describe the Kirna healing centre as cultic milieu which is weaved together from the physical appearance (the relief, pathways, stones, high trees, benches), the visions and teachings of healer Helle

Anniko (knowledge of particular lines, channels and spots of special energies, also the monks as *genii loci* and supernatural partners in healing process) and the stories of the visitors which in turn, put all the stories into perspective of initiation, existential turn in the crisis and second birth of enlightened personality. The healers of the manor organise the park on the model of regular hospital: there are the departments of blood circulation, nervous system, bones and joints, for gynaecological and urological problems besides the places to reconcile curses, to enhance the incomes and problems followed along the family lines.

Within these circles noteworthy traits of contemporary spirituality arise, which stress the role of (bodily) experience as spiritual turn, and also the twist that unites physical and spiritual spheres of life. Another influential trait of new spirituality associate with the bodily experiences. The focus of the values of new spirituality lies in the „experience“ as the generative unit in different practices. The experience as the major aspect in religious conversion of contemporary religion (Lofland, Skonov 1981: 375, Rambo 1993: 15) involves active exploration of religious options. People try it as a possibility among many others and are eager to weight it on their personal scales. Therefore, experience has to be read as a story, as an unit or motif, which defines the persons' relationship with the tradition and which ultimately shapes the tradition's inner dynamics.

Thus the dynamic circle of stories which involve the principles of esoteric lore described by Antoine Faivre are weaved together by two significant lines: this is how different actors (monks, cosmic company, Earth energies and channels of energies) address the intimate social level of the person. Doing this the intention is to create inseparable unity of body, spirit and environment, that would not destroy the rationalism but separately support the authority that relies on personal and intuitive decisions as the source of enlightened identity. While building up this particular awareness of the self, the ability of interpretation, the individual participates in the circle of stories as well as on the experiences provided by the environment and energies of the manor. These non-verbal impulses enable to understand the multi-layered nature of *impression* and *sentiment*, which provide equally important source of creativity along the particular tradition.

4.4. Article 4

Kristel Kivari 2015. The Theory of the Earth Energy: Academia and the Vernacular in Search of the Supernatural. *Implicit Religion* Vol 18 (3) pp 399–422.

The article is published in journal which is dedicated to the research of the lived forms of religiosity emerging in various commitments, whether religious or secular. Therefore in the introduction of the article I have opened the kindred nature between concepts such as implicit religion and vernacular religion

referring to classical work of Leonard Primiano (Primiano 1995). Keeping in mind the material of my study, I have stressed that the field of vernacular thinking is very conditional flow of practice, dialogue, inquiry and contestation, where the encounters and negotiations with the forces beyond or the universal rules of existence let to consider the feature to have the religious character. At the same time the presence of disbelief (Oring 2008, Dégh 1996) make this form of practice and thought especially polemic between the mainstream and alternative discourses shaped by personal and political motivations.

As in article 2 and 5 I have started to address my material with the help of history of geology, where local miner's knowledge about the use of dowsing twig in prospecting the ore bodies, was re-positioned in social sphere during the modernisation of the mining technology in the period of silver rush in 1490–1540 in Germany, centered in Saxony. In this overview of the position of dowsing practice I rely on the writings of historians of science such as Warren Dym (2006, 2011), Sophie Karant-Nunn (1989), Keith Hutchinson (1982) and John Norris (2006, 2007). In addition to them I have used Lou and Henry Hoover's referential translation (1912) of the Georgius Agricola's *De Re Metallica* (1556) both as a source of material and analysis.

Thus, paradoxically, the emergence of "Earth science" as a theoretical background incorporated and legitimated the practice in many aspects, and contested it at the level of emerging scientific truth which was part of the overall modernisation rhetoric.

The second part of the article analyses the articles in the collections of Baltic Dowsers' Association periodical conferences "Earth's Fields and Their Influence on Organisms" which are published between 1988–2012. The organisation forms an umbrella to Estonian Geopathic Association, although the cooperative ties have loosened. The formation of the Baltic Association is closely tied to the academic cooperation between geologists interested in dowsing phenomena in the Baltic and Russian academies during the 1980s. It also illustrates the openness and enthusiasm of the academia of this region towards metaphysical hypotheses that were formerly underground, or regulated by the classified research institutes of the Cold War.

My principle in bringing out certain examples from the collections was to show the links between the spheres of spirituality, culture and the material environment, which present the central concerns of dowsing inquiry. In this the authors of the articles, interested in research of dowsing phenomena address the place-lore as the source for a wider theory of the principles working in nature.

The overall framework that forms the core of dowsing practice involves ideas of regularity and a system of location that cause reactions in the dowser's body. These responses are thought to be caused by underground water (instead of mineral ores), and the lines of Hartmann and Curry's networks, or "anomalous zones" which refer to the presence of unusual or supernatural phenomena. Generally, referring to the German physician Ernst Hartmann's (1915–1992) work *Krankheit als Standortproblem* (1964), these lines form a regular grid around the Earth along latitudinal and longitudinal compass lines at a dis-

tance of approximately 2 metres. The lines are seen as the reason for higher rates of mortality, because of the negative influence they exert on the living. In addition to this, any remarkable feature in the nature can possibly reveal the presence of the web or other “anomalous zone”.

As the common interest of the Association and the conferences is to make practical and analytical investigative work in different premises, the dowzers also acknowledge the lack of unified methodology, the shortage of data, and, most importantly, the unique individuality of the dowser. Despite of that the shared ethics point to the investigation as the contribution to the fundamental understanding of the fabric of existence, both culture and nature.

In the final part of the article I have analysed two central terms in the vocabulary of the authors in the collections: “anomaly” and “information”. The term “anomaly” is one of the key metaphors forming a bridge between the discourses. In geology, the term is understood as a deviance in measurement data, which often coincides with the anomalous zones detected with the dowsing means. Anomaly in vernacular explanations designates a supernatural of some sort: the places of getting lost, a section of road where accidents happen, and the places of different encounters with the supernatural. Association with places exemplifies the use of place legends as the source of the data. This builds up a unity of cultural and material reality as the lines of the Earth energies would explain the encounters with the supernatural, sacred sites from different ages, remarkable births or unexpected deaths.

The bridge between material and cultural reality is reflected in plots that explain the location of sacred places. In this context, the term “information” links science and wider knowledge, but it also functions as a link between vernacular science and vernacular religion, indicating the presence of elusive reciprocal bond between the dowser and particular spot or object. Information as a signal between sender and receiver has the connotative meaning of knowledge, recognition or understanding. The term has a threefold function in these reports.

- Firstly, it refers to a signal that causes the movements of dowsing rods, or the responses of other kinds of equipment used to receive any kind of impulse in the range of these explanations.
- Secondly, information as a knowledge of the supernatural is described in connection with cult places, cup-marked stones, or churches. In this context information is regarded as access to sacrality, or as the possibility of approaching the unknown.
- Thirdly, as it is closely connected with the personality of the dowser, as well as the mythic initiator of the place, information works as a desired property that builds up the authority of the dowser.

All these motives, grounded in a generalised knowledge of history, folklore, geology, physics, build up a general knowledge of the vernacular theory of earth energies. In this process the folkloric plots, historic monuments, and particular nature get its full meaning in the context of dowsing and in the task of explorers of dowsing phenomenon. In this article I have looked at the ways how

dowsing practice has been explained in the context of early modern understanding of geologic processes and lately, how research project on dowsing phenomena contributes to the advanced and enchanted understanding of reality.

4.5. Article 5

Kivari, Kristel. Webs of Lines and Webs of Stories in the Making of Supernatural Places. – Daniel Sävborg, Ülo Valk (eds.) *Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (forthcoming).

The article will be published in the collection that is the result of the Nordic-Celtic-Baltic folklore Symposium “Supernatural Places” that was held in June 2012 in Tartu. The title “super-natural” fits extraordinarily well in the context of dowsing, both in literal and figurative sense, as the practice, individual and collective activities are dedicated to find the grounding quality to various reports that disturb the regular understanding of reality. However, supernatural in the current theme is problematic to define as a distinct category, as it involves the border between material and cultural reality. Particularly, the vernacular discussion emerges from the split between these two.

As with the articles 2 and 4 I have used the glimpse into early modern period with the help of the authors already introduced in the previous articles, Warren Dym and Georgius Agricola. The problem with dowsing has emerged together with scientific and capitalist entrepreneurship, which values ambition for universalist rules with professional guarantees instead of local and subjective knowledge. Dowsing, as part of divination magic, appears in the writings on early Earth science for two reasons. As Martin Rudwick (2005: 32) notes, writing on the history of geology: “Local experts were of particular importance in the sciences of the Earth, for the reason just mentioned: the phenomena and physical features of scientific interest were intrinsically local in character, and those living in a particular region could often acquire an intimate knowledge of them.” Besides the nascent science of Earth, the mining knowledge circulated in a variety of texts, manuals and glossaries. If considered as legends about finding a treasure or mineral vein (silver, for example) these stories circulated in the professional tradition of miners, popular books, calendars and aforementioned variety of literature on mining (Besterman 1926, Dym 2011: 90). The explanation for moving the rods was in accordance with the various theories about generation of mineral ores. According to these theories, the rod is supposed to react either to the mineral fumes or to fissures in the ground. Thus, direct observations of nature can reveal the existence of mineral veins. In addition, the theories incorporated the influence of stars to the subterranean processes and various meteorological phenomena which are also observed carefully in contemporary inquiry on alternative knowledge of the natural processes. Despite being bound in local legends and practices, the art of dowsing during the early

modern period reveals the core ideas of the practice today. As then, so today the practice exists side-by-side with wider divination magic.

The part two of the article is dedicated to the illuminating aspect that Egil Asprem has raised with his doctoral thesis “The Problem of Disenchantment. Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900–1939” (2013). The term “disenchantment” [*Enzauberung*], attributed to Max Weber, has been used to describe the process of Enlightenment, and denotes the split between sources of authority, stating „that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted“ (Weber 1946: 139). Egil Asprem, in the context of so-called fringe sciences reconceptualised Weber’s postulate not as a socio-historical process, but as a problem faced by the historical actors (Asprem 2013: 555). He summarised (2013: 32) the principal questions of the problem of disenchantment that not only resulted in Max Weber’s phrase, but which also had a history before him: are there incalculable forces in nature? How far do the boundaries of our knowledge extend? Is there or can there be any basis for morality, value, and meaning in nature? The questions are generalisations of the intellectual sacrifices both from the side of natural science and official religion whereas the source of the questions lies in human experience and existence, although in the context of dowsing they are sometimes phrased surprisingly similarly.

From this introductory part I move to my research material which focuses on the discussions over the invisible web of lines which connect the important locations and explain several supernatural phenomena. These discussions have been recorded mostly at the meetings of Estonian Geopathic Association. Together with the similar groups such as Society for Research into Ancient Knowledge [*Eesti Muinasteaduste Selts*] and Energo-club [*Energo Klubi*], these clubs carry on the esoteric line of thought reflecting upon literature, web-materials, experiences, as well as organising the trainings, excursions and practices. Two of them, Geopathic Association and Energo Club start their inquiry from the concept of Earth fields and radiation, how it affects human health, living environment and cognition.

Generally, along the dowsing tradition, the movements of dowsing rods, twigs or pendulums have been associated with surface geology, meaning that the power that deflects the rods and twists the twig is reasoned to be an emanation (in the form of some kind of radiation) from the geological forms of the ground. In line with the continuous dematerialisation of understanding of nature, physics and physical fields, the explanations have been changed from magnetism, standing waves or just radiation to subtle energy, fields of information or accumulations of vital force. Two concepts of uniting network dominate the interpretations of geography: Hartmann net and ley-lines. German physician Ernst Hartmann (1915–1992) developed the idea of the network of invisible lines or walls in the environment in his interest in radiesthesia. Apart from initiating a research group for geobiology, he spread his ideas in various publications in the 1950s and 1960s, of which *Krankheit als Standortproblem*

(1964) has been central. According to his theory these magnetic-like lines form a regular grid around the Earth along compass lines at a distance of approximately 2 metres; the negative effect they exert on living in a particular place is the reason for a higher rate of mortality in that place, weak or dead trees in hedges, and cracks in the asphalt and in buildings. These harmful influences are concentrated in a Hartmann's knot, where two lines of radiation are said to cross. According to various printed and oral material, sleeping or working at a Hartmann's' knot causing problems with health and technology and could even lead to fatal results. Although the network is often referred to as a theoretical concept, it is used as a dynamic reference for various vernacular interpretations.

Leylines, as a relatively new concept in Estonia, integrate the boundaries of the material and immaterial realms through the idea that the living world is influenced by the imperceptible flow of life-giving energy, which is in a dynamic relationship with material and social reality. The idea is reflected in the overall position that the history of a place is recorded at an imperceptible level. The history is mainly constituted of intense human emotions like joy, suffering, devotion, etc. Although the places under interpretation exist separately and each in its original history and particular physical form, the concept of the lines gives them a full spiritual meaning as being in relation with other such places, the cosmos and people who are mediums.

In the final part I have given the word to the speakers in the Geopathic Association. In these thoughts the supernatural emerges with the help of concept of radiation but is described in a variety of motives.

- The supernatural as moral condition which addresses mainly the border of knowledge: the moral intentions of pursuing of knowledge, in making the research or investigation.
- The supernatural as regards the lines on the landscape while planning of residential areas or building a household. The idea of "power" involves the possible harm for the health but also excessive pressure on intellectual or emotional exaltation of the humans. It is connected with the idea, that the "power" is in relation to religious devotion and ability to deepen into the intellectual sphere.
- Along the ideas about concentration, the crossings of the lines are associated with the supernatural visions: the mediums see the pictures of remote past, where the issue of sacrality plays a central role: the visions carry the pictures of religious feasts, the mediums meet the lords of the places. The speaker refers to the popular idea that the continuation of sacred places from pre-Christian to contemporary times is the result of their location at special energy points. The division between negative and positive radiation explains the situation of the ultimate presence of sacrality in front of the altar or entrance to the building. The continuation of ownership: the masters of the farms, villages or sacred groves often appear in such visions.
- The leylines provide the flow of general life-giving force which organise the pattern of geography, both in physical as well as social: the water supplies, environmental processes, as well as political conflicts and their solutions.

Throughout the history of the concept, the lines provide the source of secret but influential agent in forming the physical and cultural geography.

The concept of networks of energies accommodate various associations with supernatural. It supports the understanding of larger metaphysical pattern which mixes the boundaries between physical, cultural and spiritual realities. Such concepts as energo-information, fields of information, biocommunication, etc., have broadened the interpretations within dowsing so that it has changed from a miners' lore to a wider investigation of the supernatural. Adrian Ivakhiv (2007: 277) has used the term "conceptual glue" for the notion of energies as the bonding agent between different sources, ages and places. Applying the concept of uniting lines of subterranean water or the network of energy flows the dowser creates sacral meaning in particular places through connections. By doing so these places become evidence of a supernatural reality whereas the source of this quality is somewhat larger and drives the inquiry of enthusiasts towards various notions. The interconnectedness of the plots is what makes difficult to separate one idea, practice or story from the generic web of vernacular religion.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

‘Dowsing lore’ is only a conditional label for part of the contemporary discussion on the supernatural, that has possible connections with many ideas, most importantly issues connected with human health, vitality, and various interpretations of cognition and impression. The latter refers to the broad area of expressions and interpretations, modes and modalities of being in the world, of relationships and locations. However, the dissertation discusses dowsing lore with the focus on Earth energy which is connected with the nature, and surface. It is similar to its material: lived, recorded and transcribed expressions have been included in the material of the study and the work gives one sketch of the vernacular flow of thought, of the associations and functions of certain terms and plots. The dissertation is part of living culture, therefore it is also conditioned by disciplinary, temporal and personal choices and approach.

Performing research in contemporary spirituality, one can hardly escape the term ‘energy’. As with the Holy Spirit in Christian doctrine, energy refers to the supreme agent and to man’s relationship with it. And so it is with dowsing enthusiasts: when approaching locations, emanations, or the concealed pattern of reality, the supernatural relationship is manifested in the medium (rods) or in the dowser. Thus, supernatural as an abstract category gets objectified through the concept of energy related to either material or cultural and social environment (for example natural places, buildings, walls, graves or feasts, wars, cultic activity). Therefore the category of supernatural has a wide range of meanings. Although in dowsing tradition it is a central issue, it is never mentioned as such by practitioners. Rather, it is phrased by various decisions, experience stories, and questions, and by the set of plots associated with it. Energy makes the supernatural apprehendable and also operates as a linking concept between different categories.

Firstly, these links are the lines and knots of energy, i.e. anomalous or active places (*anomaalsed, aktiivsed kohad*), as they work as uniting and separating turns between naturalist/supernaturalist discourse, and between the different domains of authority. The experiential and performative quality of dowsing practice enables the practitioners to touch, feel, see and imagine the realm beyond. Therefore, although dowsing is mainly known as the search for the underground deposits (water, mineral veins, tubes and wires), the broad concept of dowsing zones (water veins, energy lines, anomalous zones) evokes supernatural experiences and concentrates on the active reflection of the sensual dimension of the environment. These process works in bidirectional ways: extraordinary encounters, together with older folklore stories are evoked, but also filled with relevant meaning and explanation.

Dowsing practice highlights the importance of locations. There are some fixed places such as Kirna and Tuhala that could be considered the carriers of this distinctive place lore, in addition to which dowsing is used to reveal the potential of place-lore. Despite this, it is often admitted that this kind of place

can be found everywhere, and the practice refers rather to the principle, the presence and reality of unknown forces. Therefore, dowsing links discreet places into the wider web of principles and meanings. Indeed, some places can have more than one meaning, for example sacred groves are often associated with the energies, as the concept of sacrality is bound up with this energy.

Secondly, the possible emanations of geological phenomena such as subterranean waters, relief, fissures and mineral materials, as well as the activity of so called pseudoscientific communities, prompts us to ask what nature is and where the borders of the natural and the supernatural lie. The term ‘anomalous’ employs the middle ground, or the Cartesian blind spot, admitting that there might be unknown dynamic agents in action forming our lives and perceptions of reality. Egil Asprem has used the term “open-ended naturalism” (Asprem 2013: 68) to describe this particular cultural area. While dowsing practice and concepts naturalise the extraordinary and enchant the ordinary, it opens up the closed understanding of reality, provoking discussion of basic existential principles. Dowsing practice provides the possibility to verify and experience supernatural functions as the key to the shift between the domains of natural and supernatural, religious and secular.

Seeking the special energies inside the churches and abbeys are often the side of contemporary pilgrimage, and a verifying argument for dowsing enthusiasts. Sacrality in the form of a tangible, measurable frequency or radiation addresses the institutional concept of sacrality, objectifying and naturalising, not definitely erasing it. Sacrality within the dowsing realm involves the feeling of intimacy and connection, also recreation, invigoration and healing.

Thirdly, observing the social circles of dowsing enthusiasts, the genre of legend appears in its intertextual potential involving the functions of opening up the realm of interpretation where the different roles of authority can act out or contest. The value of discovery, learning and evolving in the form of participation in the courses, communities and visiting certain authorities, as well as the development of individual abilities to dowse, is a constant process of reflection and creativity. The characteristic openness of legend often involves spiritual openness, even fragility, which I consider to be the sensitive and demanding aspect of doing folkloristic research. At the same time those experience stories express the ‘vernacular authority’, the real power of the folk, who often contest and oppose the official and legitimate ‘other’, mainly in academia and medicine, in the case of dowsing.

Dowsing operates in a hybrid field of discourses, which, according to Kennet Granholm and many other scholars of esotericism, is the definitive trait of esotericism: “Most current scholarly accounts regard the esoteric not as a ‘tradition’ consisting of distinct doctrines and practices and situated in clearly outlined institutions, but as specific approaches to knowledge that transgress the borders of the religious and the secular” (Granholm 2012: 49). Despite the fact that the term ‘tradition’ appears seldom in the studies of esotericism, it does not mean that the traditions do not exist. The research material of current dissertation confirms that dowsing, although regarded as an example of the

aforementioned esoteric way of thinking, is a distinctive tradition that has a history stretching back to the debates of the mining specialists in Central Europe; at times the echoes of medieval local practices are still audible. Dowsing lore guides to think about the relationships between the human body and nature within its traditional plots and ways of thought, maintaining its open and creative nature. Traditional motifs provide the frame of reference for interpreting personal experiences, localities and identity. These aspects are bound together because they are perceived as extraordinary or unusual within the regular orders of life.

Although dowsing is a living example of vernacular religion, the eloquent debates about it in the context of social authority, mirrors the main power lines inside the society. The position of scientific accuracy, and the authority of science and related institutions, is expressed not only in questions about the nature of energies, but also in the authority attributed to science and institutions in forming borders, for example related to the natural, historical sacred sites. Dowsing lore gives ways to explore different approaches to the human individual, as seen in the dynamic relationship between the natural and social environments. Energies as a working concept within New Age practice enable to observe the changes and adaptations within the tradition of dowsing which would give fresh insights into the changing tradition.

Research into dowsing shows a hierarchy, or authority, in various ways, the most obvious of which relates to decisions over immediate living or working environments. Often, when people are buying a property they talk of the need for 'good energy'. This is not necessarily a reference to dowsing, rather to the ever-present need that people have, through language, to express the multi-layered relationship that humans have with the environment.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Nõiavits loomuliku ja üleloomuliku vahel: veesooned ja maakiirgus folkloristika uurimisainena

Vitsa või pendli kasutamine on lihtne praktika, mille jaoks on vaja abivahendit ja inimest, kes seda peos hoiab. Nõiavitsa asemel kasutatakse enamasti nimetust *vardad, raamid, vits*. See kujutab endast L-kujulist metallvarrast või painduvast materjalist, nagu puuoks, metalltraat või kaabel valmistatud Y-kujulist abivahendit, lisaks kasutatakse ka niidi otsas rippuvat raskust, pendlit. Ehkki abivahend ei saa liikuda ilma inimeseta, võib vastavate oskustega inimene maapinnas või keskkonnas peituvat tavapärastele meelele kättesaamatut infot tõlgendada ka üksnes lähtuvalt oma tunnetusest. Vitsa kasutamine on väga lai teema, mis puudutab kaevude, majade ja eluruumide planeerimist, taimekasvu, looduslike vormide ning tervisega seotud küsimusi, samuti nii praktilise elukorralduse, kultuurigeograafia kui laiema loodusliku ja kosmoloogilise korrastatuse üle mõtisklemist. Neid teemasid ühendab veendumus, et maas peituvad veesooned, geoloogilise aluspõhja iseärasused või looduses peituv tundmatu kiirgus või energia mõjutab elutegevust olulisel viisil, ent mida füüsika, inseneriteadus ja meditsiin märkide ja argumentidena arvesse ega tõsiselt ei võta.

Töös kasutatav materjal pärineb erinevatest allikatest. Oluline roll on nõiavitsa kasutamise ajalool kaevandustehnika arengu ja valgustusaegsete ideaalide leviku kontekstis. Töös kasutatud kaasaegne materjal põhineb intervjuudel ning maaenergiatega seotud ühiskondliku tegevuse jälgimisel ning selles osalemisel (Kirna mõis, Geopaatia Selts).

Nii nagu 17.–18. sajandil Saksamaal ja Prantsusmaal avaldatud ülevaated ja raportid, kajastavad ka 20. sajandi alguses Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi talletatud viited kaevuotsijate tegevuse ja võtete kohta selle meetodi sotsiaalset vastuolulisust. Ajaloolised vaated kinnitavad eristuva vitsatraditsiooni olemasolu, selle analüüs näitab traditsiooni sõltuvust majanduslikest, poliitilistest ja eriti teaduspoliitilistest mõjudest. Kontrollitud katsed, et selgitada, mil määral vitsameetod töötab, on vaid üks osa fenomeni uurimisest. Samavõrra puudutab teemat see, kuidas füüsikaliste ja matemaatiliste kirjelduste kaudu või ka rahvapäraste teooriate järgi avastada indiviidi (sh eripäraste füüsiliste võimetega inimeste, *sensitiivide, operaatorite*) ja keskkonna dünaamilist ja muutuvat suhet ning sellega seostuvaid teemasid. Sealjuures sobib vitsameetod modernismiaja ratsionalistliku ideaali (*disenchantment, Enzauberung*) poolt tekitatud probleemide kirjeldamiseks, kus nii subjektiivse kui objektiivse, religioosse ja teadusliku, materiaalse ja transtsedentse vahele jääb kategooriate eikellegimaa.

Maaenergiate kontseptsioon on liitnud vitsameetodiga elukoha laiema planeerimise temaatika vastavalt veesoontele või energiajoontele. Selleni jõutakse tihti pärast kroonilisi haigusi või muid vaevusi (magamine veesoonte ristil võib põhjustada vähki või valusid; maja asetsemine ebasoodsa koha peal võib olla põhjuseks ehitiste lagunemisele ja perekondade õnnetule saatusele). Uusehitiste

puhul konsulteeritakse eelnevalt vitsameestega, sest lisaks tervisele ohtlikele kohtadele seostatakse positiivseid kohti ka vaimse ergastuse või turvatundega. Tundmatu kiirguse mõju on edasi arendatud kohtades, mida seostatakse ravimise või laiemalt vaimse-füüsilise transformatsiooniga, samuti erinevate üleloomulike kogemustega või nägemustega. Selles kerkib esile meediumite roll: mõnede inimeste võimekus liikuda erinevate reaalsuste vahel, mida seovad maakiirgus ning inimese sensitiivsed võimed.

Käesoleva töö raamistikuks on folkloristlik vaade, mis paigutab nähtuse rahvausundi valdkonda. Inglisekeelne termin *vernacular religion* suunab akadeemilist arutelu institutsionaalsest religioonikäsitlusest (religioon kui eraldi-seisev tähendusüsteem) selleni, kuidas inimesed oma usundilisi tõekspidamisi praktiseerivad ning elus rakendavad. Sealjuures järjest enam on tähelepanu suhtel (käesoleva teema puhul on oluline eelkõige suhe inimkeha ja keskkonna vahel) ning nähtuse määratlemine religioosse või mittereligioossena ei oma avavat analüütilist sisu. Ometigi ei ole neist terminitest iseenesest põhjust loobuda. Vitsameetodi vaatlus pakub häid võimalusi rahvausundi mõtestamiseks, kuna teaduslik-institutsionaalne religioossus ning ka rahvapärane teadususk mängib selles dialektilise partneri rolli. Selles dialektikas kujuneb nähtusele kultuurikriitiline hoiak, mida illustreerib paranormaalsete nähtuste uurimine. Nii sellega kui maaväljade ja -kiirguste uurimisega on seotud iseäralik diskursustevaheline konflikt, kus nii teaduse, religiooni, psühholoogia ja meditsiini meetodid ei tunnista kas tõendeid veenvaks või nähtusi uurimiskõlblikuks.

Energia kontseptsiooni lai kasutus ning tähenduste varieeruvus viitab sellele kui erinevate suhete tähistajale. Energia kaudu on inimkeha seotud keskkonnaga ning teise inimesega (hea, halb, resoneeruv energia). Erinevad energijooned ühendavad maastikul objekte omavahel (Ley-liinide kontseptsioon), kosmosest maalõhedesse kiirguv energia seob inimest dünaamilisse kosmoloogilisse pilti. Need ideed ei ole sealjuures abstraktsioonid või teoreetilised teadmised, vaid sageli aluseks erinevate otsuste tegemisel elus. Nii nagu energia seob erinevaid paiku ja nähtusi, seob see ka lugusid omavahel, seetõttu on muistendi termin selles kontekstis tinglik, tähistades pigem mingit keskset põhimõtet, mille suhtes praktilise tegevuse, kehalise kogemuse ja traditsiooni (lugude) tundmise kaudu oma seisukoht kujundatakse. Seega moodustab traditsioon lugude, praktilise tegevuse (mis hõlmab looduslikke keskkondi) ja kehalise kogemuse ühenduses, mis selle kaudu ühtlasi rahvapärast autoriteeti loob ja alal hoiab. Lugudel selles on muistendile omaselt tõeretooriline roll, millega kinnitatakse argimaailmast erineva reaalsuse olemasolu, sealjuures on rahvapärane erinevate kogemuste, autoriteetide ja huvide maailm seesmiselt võistlev ja pingestatud. Seega moodustub praktika ja kogemuse abil keskse idee ümber lugudest justkui gravitatsiooniväli, milles arutletakse loomuliku ja üleloomuliku maailma piiride, tervise, heaolutunde ja tasakaaluka eksistentsi üle, mis on samas kontseptuaalselt avatud ja rahvapäraselt loov (me ei tunne kõiki looduses toimivaid jõude ja elu määratlev printsiip on peidetud või valesti tõlgendatud).

Väitekirja esimeses, teoreetilises osas on tutvustan töö allikaid, välitöömaterjali ja kirjandust, mis puudutab vitsameetodi ajalugu ning kirjutajate positsioone

teema suhtes. Põgusalt tutvustan vesoonte otsimist ja elukoha planeerimist Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi allikatele tuginedes. Järgnevad peatükid analüüsivad rahvapärase arutelu põhijooni analüütiliste kategooriate valguses: religiooni ja rahvausundi mõtestamist, pühaduse rolli, keha ja looduse omavahelisi suhteid ning nende peegeldumist lugudes, mis folkloristliku kategooriana on kirjeldatavad muistendižanrina. Eraldi peatun paranormaalsete teemade uurimisega seonduvat. Kokkuvõtte keskendub pealkirjas viidatud loomuliku-üleloomuliku suhte välja toomisele eelnevast arutelust. Teoreetilisele osale järgnevad ülevaated viiest väitekirja osaks olevast artiklist, mida ka järgnevalt resümeerin.

I Kivari, Kristel 2012. Energy as the Mediator Between Natural and Supernatural Realms. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*. Vol. 6 (2) pp. 49–68. (“Energia kui loodusliku ja üleloomuliku maailma siduja.”)

Artikli esimeses osas arutlen terminite nagu religioon, uskumine ning teadmine üle maaväljade ja -kiirguse kontseptsiooni taustal. Maakiirguste ning ka paljude teiste alternatiivsete teooriate puhul tõuseb esile intellektuaalne osa, mis sisaldab vastavate tehnikate, kirjanduse ja allikatega kursis olemist. Alternatiivsed teooriad ja nendega kaasnev alternatiivne haritus on iseloomulik just esoteerilistele teadmistele, milles sisalduv gnostilise, peidetud, ent eksistentsi siduva ja mõtestava tõe otsing kirjeldab selle paiknemist teaduse ja religiooni vahel. Seda avab Lucien Lévy-Bruh, kes on sõnastatud kaks kognitiivset põhihoiakut inimliku tunnetuse tervikus: kausaalsus ehk põhjus-tagajärg suhe ja osalemine, mis otsib samasust ja osalustunnet. Ehkki samaaegselt esinevad inimliku tunnetuse omadused, on need valgustusajale iseloomuliku ratsionalismiideaali kaudu muutunud määratlevateks ideoloogiateks eraldi teaduses ja religioonis. Paljud esoteerika ajaloo uurijad näevad maagiast ja uskumist kui intensiivset dialoogi ratsionaalse, empiirilisel tõestatava ja põhjuslikel seostel rajaneva maailmaga. Energia, kui maailma tervikuks ja loodust inimesega siduv kontseptsioon annab võimalust jälgida eelmainitud kognitiivsete hoiakute väljendumist maaenergiate avastamisel ja erisugustel kasutusviisidel.

Artikli teine pool tutvustab kolme välitöökohta, mis kasutavad enda tutvustamisel ja identiteedi loomisel maakiirgusi ning energiasid. Tuhala maastiku kaitseala on geoloogiliselt eripärase pinnasega piirkond. Lisaks piirkonna vanaale asustusele, kultuskividele, hiie-liitelistele paiganditele leidub seal karstilehtreid ning maa-aluseid koopaid. Lisaks Nõiakaevule paikneb seal tugev energiasammas, mille asukoht on tähistatud viida ning jämeda puutüvega. Tuhala looduskeskuse juhataja Ants Talioja jutus kajastuvad vitsatraditsiooni erinevad tasandid: terviseprobleemide lahendamise alguse saanud huvi temaatika vastu, on tema nägemuses paiga identiteediga sidunud karstialal voolava maa-aluse vee ning energia. Ants Talioja, piirkonna eestkõneleja lubjakivikaevanduste rajamise vastu, rõhutab energiatega avastamise kaudu kodukandi ainulaadset olemust.

Kirna mõisas tegutsenud ravitseja Helle Anniko tutvustas seda kohta eriti tugevate ravitoimet omavate energiasammaste kaudu, ent sidus paiga erilisust ka keskajal seal elanud munkade ning teiste müstiliste kaaslaste ning abilistega.

Tema õpetused ning ravimeetodid soodustasid nägemuslike kogemuste esile kerkimist mõisa ravipinkidel istudes, mis sidusid maakiirgustest lähtuvalt endaga erinevatest traditsioonidest pärit motiive (mungad, inglid, tulnukad). Õpetuslikuks aluseks oli aga uue vaimsuse raamistik, mis suunas alateadvuse ja ego vahekordi teadvustades ravima end erinevaid elu küsimusi ning organismi osi esindavatel pinkidel.

Geopaatia Selts esindab maakiirguste suhtes intellektuaalsemat suunda, on oma eesmärgilt uuriv ning kujunemiselt seotud geoloogiateadusega. Siiski on suur osa seltsi tähelepanust pööratud loodusliku ja üleloomuliku suhetele, mis on väljendatud nii põhikirjas kui seltsi trükistena avaldatud artiklites. Vitsa kasutaja võime avada tee teistmoodi või peidetud maailmani on väljendatud nii termini (informatsioon) kui erinevate paikade tõlgendamise kaudu.

II Kivari, Kristel. Veesooned, energiasambad ja tervis: argiusund töövõtetest teavikhoiuni. – Uibu, M. (toim.) *Mitut usku Eesti* III. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 107–138.

Artikkel tutvustab erinevate allikate võrdlemise kaudu vitsatraditsiooni peamisi motiive. Nõiavitsa kasutus peegeldub Saksa ja Eesti peidetud varanduse muistendites, samuti kajastavad selle vastuolulist mainet 16.–18. sajandil Saksamaal ja Prantsusmaal avaldatud trükised. Varauusajal arvati, et planeedid ja tähed mõjutavad maapinna koostist, sarnaselt peegelduvad kosmose ja maapõue seosed ka kaasaegses maaenergia määratlustes. Ka kaevukohti on Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi allikate järgi määratud muuhulgas tähtede järgi.

Kui võrrelda erinevatest aegadest pärit seisukohti vee ja elumaja paiknemise asjus, kerkib esile erinevus: vesi elukoha lähedal (maja all, kõrval) on pigem halb, ent erinevatel põhjustel. Kaasajal seostub maa all voolav vesi kiirgusega, varasemalt põhjustas see kurbust, pisaraid ning paiseid (veehaigust). Kiirgus ja sellele sensitiivsed vitsamehed rakendavad oma teadmisi sageli elamupiirkondade plaanide ning majade ehitamise asjus soovitusi andes, kuna kiirgustega arvestav elukoha planeering tagab üleüldise heaolutunde. Seost maakiirguste, tervise ning vaimse arengu vahel kasutavad Kirna mõisas tegutsevad tervendajad. Tervendamine energia ning energiasammaste abil tähendab elu olulistes küsimustes läbi vaatamist ning pöördumist vaimsema ning nendest põhimõtetest lähtuvalt mõtestatud elu poole.

Energiasammastega seonduv puudutab kohapärimuse ja laiema rahvausundi omavahelisi suhteid. Selle usundi väljenduse moodustavad inimkehast ja konkreetsest kohast lähtuvad kogemused ja nende interpreteerimine. Vitsatraditsiooni kaudu esile kerkivaid looduslikke vorme nagu kivid, puud, paljandid ja maapinna reljeef paneb omakorda märkama ja mõtestama laiemad maakiirgustega seonduvad teadmised ja lood.

III Kivari, Kristel. Esoteeriline pärimus Kirnas ja maagial põhinevad mõistmisviisid. – *Müetagused*, 2013, 54, 185–212

Artiklis analüüsin maakiirguste ning uusvaimsete õpetuste kokkupuutepunkte Kirna mõisas jagatava õpetuse ning sealsete patsientide lugude näitel. Sealne õpetus rõhutab püüdlust tundlikkuse ja vaimse avanemise poole. Selle kaudu on patsient paremini kontaktis tema elu ja tervist määratleva nähtamatu tasandiga ja erinevate energiatega. Seega on Kirna mõisas rakendatavad ravitsemispraktikad osa inimese (uus)vaimsest arenguteest, kesksest kontseptsioonist, mille kaudu toimib elu kui protsessi ning üksikute suhete ja situatsioonide mõtestamine. Helle Anniko jagatud õpetuses ning tema müstilistes kogemuses on ära tuntavad Antoine Faivre poolt sõnastatud kuus esoteerilist mõttevoolu iseloomustavat joont, samal ajal kui energiatega ravitsemine, energiatega kogemine ning mitmekihiline tervenemisprotsess hõlmavad endas inimese jaoks teadlikult tavapärasele alternatiivseid maailmatajumise viise. Enese ravimine vaimse arenemise käigus tähendab üheltpoolt aktiivset eneserefleksiooni, samal ajal mõisa pakutud lugude ringis loovat osalemist. Mõlemal puhul on väga oluline roll seoste loomisel mõisa keskkonnaga, oma keha ning eluga laiemalt. Tulemuseks on mõisaga olemuslikult seotud uuenenud identiteet, mis sageli hõlmab ka füüsilist tervenemist.

Artikli teises osas tutvustan mõisa patsientide lugusid, mis kirjeldavad mõisa sattumist seoses elu või tervise kriisidega, ravikogemusi ning selles esile kerkinud müstilisi nägemusi. Tervenemine toimib takistuste eemaldamisel loomuliku energia vooluringist, mis ühtlasi tähendab ka takistuste eemaldamist vaimse enesetunnetuse teelt. Nii tähistab Kirna mõisa park ühtaegu piiritletud loodulikku maastikku, samal ajal kehastades ka teistsuguste seoste ning maailmataju ruumi.

IV Kivari, Kristel. The Theory of the Earth Energy: Academia and the Vernacular in Search of the Supernatural. – *Implicit Religion*, 2015, 18 (3), 399–422

Arikkel on avaldatud ajakirjas, mis on pühendatud religioossete ilmingute analüüsile sekulaarsetes kontekstides. Et ajakiri lähtub religiooni ja sekulaarsuse kontseptsioonidest, olen sissejuhatuses avanud folkloristikas kasutatavaid rahvausundi uurimise lähtekohti, mis keskenduvad suhtluses ning igapäevaelu otsustes ja võtetes esile tulevatele mitmesugustele väljendustele, sellele, kuidas inimesed oma tõekspidamisi mööda elavad ning neid väljendavad. Sellepärast on folkloristikas tähelepanu žanritel, mis laia kommunikatsioonivälja korrastavad ning suunavad, ent mis ei ole vaid väljendusvahendid, vaid mõjutavad ka seda, kuidas inimesed mingitel puhkudel infot vasu võtavad, seda korrastavad ning selle kaudu maailma tajuvad (vt Bowman, Valk 2012: 8). Tõestisündinud lugu kellegagi toimunud üleloomulikust juhtumist suunab juttu loo raamidest väljaspoole ning puudutab maailma üldist ülesehitust. Nõnda tekib muistendite „gravitatsiooniväli“, mis opereerib uskumise ja mitteuskumise pinges (Dégh 1996: 38, Oring 2008). Maakiirgustega seotud lood on näited sellisest muistendi-

väljast, kus iga üksik lugu on osa laiemast teemavõrgustikust, kus uskumisel ja kahtlemisel on oma roll.

Artikkel käsitleb vitsameetodi ja maakiirgustega seonduvate küsimuste käsitlemist akadeemilisele pürgivas käsitlusviisis. Esmalt annan ülevaate varauusaegsetest teooriatest maavarade tekke, maapinna koostise ning ehituse kohta. Selles esinevad paljud rahvapärased motiivid nagu kaevandusšahtides ning maapinnal esinevad tulukesed, metallisoonte auramine või magnetisarnane tõmbejõud, samuti tähtede ja planeetide mõju maapinna koostise kujunemisel. Vaatamata mitmesugusele maapinna tunnetusele, mis oli osa 15.–16. sajandi kaevuri ning kaevanduste planeerija kvalifikatsioonist, tõrjus institutsionaalselt kujunev mäeteadus rahvapärased võtted tagaplaanile.

1980ndate lõpus kujunenud Geopaatia Selts koosnes vitsameetodist innustunud akadeemilise taustaga uurijatest. Selle eesmärgiks oli koguda andmeid looduslike anomaalsete piirkondade (st maapinna) ning vitsaga töötava operaatore individuaalse võimekuse kohta. Seltsi ajaloo jooksul on toimunud 16 konverentsi, mille publitseeritud artiklid on käesoleva analüüsi allikaks. Selles tõusevad esile teooria põhilised elu kujunemist puudutavad printsiibid: maakiirgused on inimasustuse kujunemist mõjutav faktor, see on ka põhjuseks vaimsest normist kõrvalekalleteks (nii andekus kui ka vaimne ebastabiilsus võib olla põhjustatud maapinna energeetilisest aktiivsusest) ning mitmesuguse rahvapärismuse tekkeks jpm. Nende artiklite kaks keskset terminit „anomaalsus“ ning „informatsioon“, on sillaks erinevate diskursuste vahel, kandes geoloogias nii distsiplinaarset kui ka rahvapärast, loomuliku ja üleloomuliku piiri kompavat tähendust.

V Kivari, Kristel. Webs of Lines and Webs of Stories in the Making of Supernatural Places. Daniel Sävborg, Ülo Valk (toim.) *Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society (ilmumas).

Artikli sissejuhatuses refereerin varauusaegseid arutelusid vitsameetodi kasutamise moraalsete ning praktiliste küsimuste üle kaevandustes ja varases mäeteaduses, mis kerkisid üles nii valgustusaja teadusliku ideaali, aga ka mitmete halduslike ja organisatoorse muutuste ellu viimisel. Ehkki modernistlikku ratsionalismiideaali, “lummusest vabanemist” (*disenchantment, Enzauberung*) on vaadeldud kui protsessi, mille käigus on õpitud loodusjõudude tundma ning kasutama, on religiooniteadlane Egil Asprem analüüsinud seda kui modernismi-ajaga kaasnenud uut probleemi, mis eeldab intellektuaalsete ohvrite toomist nii teadusliku kui religioosse maailmakirjelduse poolt. Selle probleemi ületamisele on suunanud oma tegevuse mitmed alternatiivsete teooriate järgijad või nn. esoteeriline teadus. See lähenemine küsib, kas looduses esineb veel tundmatuid jõude, mis oleks aluseks moraalilise ja tähenduste kujunemisele? Kuidas on seotud moral ja teadmised ning kui kaugele võib teadmiste otsimisel minna? (Asprem 2013: 32)

Sarnastest alustest lähtuvad ka maakiirgustest huvitatud vitsaentusiastid, kelle arutlustes viitavad just erinevad üleloomulikud kogemused eelpool-

viidatud küsimustele. Maakiirguste abil mitte üksnes ei uurita mingit kindlat kohta ning selle energeetilist või peidetud olemust. Veesoonte, energiajoonte ja võrgustike kaudu tajutakse kohtade ning inimeste paiknemist laiemas võrgustikus, mis eksistentsi mõjutab. Maakiirgustega seotud kohtade kaudu tulevad esile ajaloosündmused, sõjad, küüditamine, pildid muinasaegsetest hiiekohtadest ning pidustustest. Nägemustega kokku puutumine, ent veelgi enam, nähtuse uurimine ning eksperimenteerimine puudutab teadmiste ning üleloomuliku maailma piiri, mis seab uurijale erilised moraalsed nõuded. Nii seovad energia- võrgustikud ka omavahel kokku kuuluvaid lugusid, moodustades laiema loomuliku ja üleloomuliku maailma piire tajuva ja mõtestava pärimuse.

PUBLICATIONES

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Kristel Kivari
Date of birth: November, 15, 1975
Citizenship: Estonian
E-mail: kristelkivari@hotmail.com

Education:

2009–2016 Doctoral studies, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Institute for Cultural Research and Fine Arts, University of Tartu,
2005–2008 MA, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Faculty of Philosophy
1994–1999 BA, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Faculty of Philosophy
1994 Tallinn Secondary School No 4.

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi: Kristel Kivari
Sünniaeg: November, 15, 1975
Kodakondsus: Estonian
E-mail: kristelkivari@hotmail.com

Haridus:

2009–2016 Doktoriõpe, Eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule osakond, kunstide ja kultuuriteaduste instituut, Tartu Ülikool
2005–2008 Magistrantuur, Eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule osakond, filosoofiateaduskond, Tartu Ülikool
1994–1999 Kõrgharidus, Eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule osakond, filosoofiateaduskond, Tartu Ülikool
1994 Tallinna 4. Keskkool

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