

## Contagion, conspiracy and co-regulation: alternative health under lockdown

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In the past 3 years, many ethnographers of ecologically-inflected wellness movements have seen an unprecedented rise in what Ward and Voas (2011) first termed 'conspirituality'. Conspirituality is both coherent with and a departure from the history of esotericism in combining fears of a corrupted social present, and a firm belief in the inevitability of forthcoming ecological and social revolution. Existing academic literature mostly focuses on the psychological aspects of conspiracy culture, but it is joined by important work by religious studies scholars concerning the epistemic power relations that designate marginalised knowledge as 'conspiracy' (Robertson 2022).

Missing from this picture so far is the felt religiosity of discomfort and regulation at the heart of body-based practices, often expressed as contagion, disharmony, coherence and resolution. The exercise of meaning-making involved in the practice of both seekership and conspirituality can be understood as the search for an ontology that recognises and soothes somatic discomfort. At times of stress, this search for self-regulation can lead already somatically-anxious individuals to reify physical intimacy at the expense of the sociopolitical good of public health interventions.

This paper is a first attempt to complete the interdisciplinary links between Douglas (2003) and Bubandt and Willerslev (2015), between Durkheim (Lindholm 2012), Barkun (2015) and Porges (2007). In other words, by employing the epistemic capital of recent insights in neuroscience and religious studies, might we be able to co-construct a framework capable of understanding, and even predicting, socially-contagious responses to the apparently unending waves of global ecological stress?

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