

Dissertation

‘Kundalini Yoga in Berlin: Teaching Consumerism.’

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades PhD

im Fach Soziologie

eingereicht am 13.10.2017, verteidigt 07.02.2018

an der Kultur-, Sozial- und Bildungswissenschaftlichen Fakultät

der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Boike Rehbein for the continuous support of my PhD study and research, for his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Rehbein for the opportunity to teach at the university. His guidance helped me during the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my PhD study.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank my co-supervisor: Prof. Dr. V. Sujatha, for her encouragement, insightful comments, and hard questions.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family, friends and yoga teachers for supporting me throughout the journey of my Ph.D. A special thanks goes out to my wife who never failed to motivate me to keep going.

ABSTRACT

It is in Berlin that many long-time practitioners wonder what happened to yogic values such as modesty and ego lessness in an ever-commercialized yogic industry, and it is here that one can wonder if yoga is still yoga when taught in fitness studios and/or practices in such wide varieties such as cycling, yoga and Acro yoga.¹ It seems yoga has become a secret weapon for success for the elite, who, consequently can also pay for the often-expensive classes.² This same question triggered me into researching the yoga community I am part of; the Kundalini Yoga teacher community in Berlin. I was wondering if living in a consumerist society would shape the way that Kundalini Yoga is practiced and taught.

Although we know little about the roots of yoga, nor if there ever was any ‘ original’ yoga, the early references of yoga are dated back to around 2500 BCE in the Indus Valley, India, where proof has been found of yogic practices: statues of the God in a yogic (meditative) position.³ The first textual appearance of the word ‘yoga’, is found in the Upanishads⁴, around the third century BCE, in which a form of breath control is described. Singleton outlines a more elaborate practice described in Maitri Upanishad, involving 6 stages: 1) breath control (Pranayama), 2) withdrawal of the senses (pratyahara), 3) meditation (Dhyana) 4) directing the focused mind (Dharana), 5) inquiry into the philosophy (Tarka), and 6) absorption (Samadhi)⁵. The Bhagavad Gita also mentions yoga, namely that there are three paths of yoga: 1) yoga through devotion (Bhakti), 2) yoga through action (Karma), and 3) yoga through knowledge of the self and the universe (Jhana).⁶ Also, the Bhagavad Gita goes on to describe rituals (sadhana) for clearing the mind to enter samadhi and breathing exercises. And then there is the scripture of Patanjali, dating back to the same time, of which the so-called Yoga Sutras are a part. The Yoga Sutras mix Buddhist elements, elements of Samkhya

¹Strohmaier, Brenda. “Herzlich willkommen in der Yoga-Republik!” 18 August 2015, Welt/N24, <https://www.welt.de/icon/article145311247/Herzlich-willkommen-in-der-Yoga-Republik.html>

² Strohmaier, Idem.

³ Singleton, Mark and Goldberg, Ellen. *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010. P 25

⁴ Singleton, Idem, P 26

⁵ Singleton, Ibid.

⁶ Singleton, Ibid.

philosophy, and elements of ascetic traditions.⁷ This text in particular has been deemed –the- classical text on yoga by scholars as well as yoga teachers, yet it is only one text of many and may very well not be the text that holds most authority on the subject.⁸ Other texts, such as texts on tantra practices, too, there are references to yoga practices, all aimed at a union with the divine. In none of these texts there is a focus on asana (posture), and if a posture is described, it is often a meditative seating posture.⁹ Therefore, statements that modern posture yoga has its direct origin in a dominant posture yoga tradition in India should be handled with care.

As the West encountered yoga through colonization, it altered the way yoga was taught. It was adapted for a western outlook and often used as a form of protest against the oppressor, to rid the West of materialist thinking for example. In this context yoga was already a cultural hybrid by the time it was actively taught in classes in the West. Furthermore, at the root of many forms of yoga was/is usually one teacher, or Guru, that influenced the style of that particular stream of yoga, for example B.K.S. Iyengar (Iyengar yoga), K. Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga yoga) and Yogi Bhajan (Kundalini yoga). These styles of yoga further developed within the local communities in which they were taught, under the influence of the changing times, globalization and consumerism. This last aspect of commercialization has had a profound influence on the way yoga is being taught and even steps away from even the way Gurus have taught their styles of yoga. In this research, I will look at the manner in which Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin create a new form of yoga by giving it a new meaning in the context of consumerism and commercialization. In this context, I will use data that shows how rituals and teachings are, to a certain extent, placed within a new context, removed from their original context. Acts of removing non-local elements, such as the translation of Gurmukhi mantras into German and demystification, for example in the form of focusing on health-aspects, takes away the traditional meaning of Kundalini Yoga. Acts of adding and/or re-interpreting rituals and elements, such as introducing popular (western) music and using yoga for individual expansion (growth thinking) give a new meaning to yoga, reproducing the dominant western culture, in which it is taught.

Yoga in general has found great resonance with western practitioners, albeit with different intentions than what yoga was originally designed for. Here in the West yoga has been

⁷Bronkhorst, Johannes. 'Yoga and Sesvara Samkhya.' *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, issue 9, 1981, P 309

⁸ Singleton, P 27

⁹ Singleton, Idem, P 27-28

adapted for modern society and consumer culture. Yoga is generally altered to play into the image of a practice that ensures a fit and healthy body and personal success.¹⁰ This is a form of deterritorialization, in that it takes away the original meaning of yoga and then reterritorializes it by giving it the meaning of achieving and maintaining bodily health. Therefore, it should be no surprise that yoga in the West is largely posture-based. This in itself is a new approach to yoga, as in India, yoga was never focused on asanas only. Rather, it featured as a practice to integrate the eight arms of Patanjali into the practitioners' lives.¹¹ And yet, the reality is more complex. Not only is the history of yoga, and how it travelled to the West under colonization, more complex; the actual experience of yoga teachers and practitioners is more complex than doing a physical practice, as the results of my research will show. Every form of yoga is based on a deep collaboration between the East and the West. For starters, there is the history of yoga, where we find examples of Gurus that have shaped the way yoga has developed.¹² Reasons for intentionally redefining yoga have been manifold and the influence of Vivekananda, will be described in the Literature Review. Recently yoga has undergone a popularization, commercialization and medicalization. Yoga has become subject to medical test trials in order to establish its healthy effects. And within several streams of yoga, the practice has been made to fit the consumerist body culture and has been firmly established as a way to maintain a fit body.¹³ This focus on body culture takes out the spiritual elements as introduced by Viveknanda and the teacher-student relationship, as introduced by Sivananda. Instead, the focus has been redirected toward an end result of the consumption of yoga; a healthy, aesthetically beautiful looking body. The focus on consumerism is also present in the way the product of yoga is sold; the focus is not so much on overcoming the ego, but rather on the right clothing, the rights words to draw in a crowd (including hashtags on social media) and the right (expensive, experienced) teachers in order for the consumer to feel part of an exclusive club.¹⁴ Yoga has become a lifestyle, that includes not only yoga itself, but a whole range of other products to be consumed, such as tea, shampoo, food, workshops, seminars and much more. In this way yoga, that once stood for

¹⁰ Jain, Andrea. *Selling Yoga. Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015. P 62

¹¹ Singleton, Idem, P 4/5.

¹² Newcombe, Suzanne. "The Development of Modern Yoga: A Survey of the Field." *Religion Compass*, issue 3. 2009 P 986-1002.

¹³ Jain, Idem, P 6

¹⁴ Williams, Holly. "The Great Hippie Hijack: 2015 was the Year that Consumerism finally devoured the Counterculture Dream." 29 November 2015, *The Independent*: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/the-great-hippie-hijack-2015-was-the-year-that-consumerism-finally-devoured-the-counterculture-dream-a6751911.html>

letting go of materialism, seems to preach the opposite: yoga is about the right tea, the right leggings, the right mat, the right bag etc.¹⁵ The Dutch Yoga Magazine held a survey among its readers, with 311 respondents in total, supporting the above and showing that over half of the respondents felt it was very important to look good during a yoga class.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, this culture has bred a new trend of *Instagram Yogis*; people who practice yoga to show off poses on social media.¹⁷ People are happy to show the world they are doing yoga, it is good for the personal image and personal brand.¹⁸ It seems to be the paradox of yoga; practitioners who pay high amounts of money to join retreats, take special courses, find the right products to support their lifestyle, surround themselves with all the luxury they are supposed to let go of the ego. Another paradox is that teachers are branding themselves, and are encouraged to do so, in order to sell their product.¹⁹ Finally, yoga has been branded as a therapeutic space to be sold as a product of healing – Rishikesh for example has been deemed the grocery store of yoga and is a place that few teachers actually visit.²⁰ Germany is no exception when it comes to consuming yoga and Berlin is German's yoga-capital when it comes to the number of practitioners and profits for selling yoga products.²¹ So, while yoga keeps on growing and taking up an ever more central role in different communities worldwide, consumerist values creep in and change the nature of the practice and traditions behind it.²²

So, yoga in the West is not as pure and traditional as we may perceive it to be, or as it is being presented. On the other hand, yoga has traditionally always been a mix of spiritual and cultural backgrounds. It is known, for example, that yoga was practiced by (i.e.) Buddhists, Janaists and Sikhs alongside their religion.²³ Moreover, many Gurus adapted yoga, according to factors such as the level of the students and/or different cultural contexts.²⁴ Stemming from Indian culture, yoga has also often been associated with Ayurveda, which in turn has seen

¹⁵ Smithuijsen, Doortje. "Hoe zen ben je in een yoga-outfit van driehonderd euro?" 4 November, 2016, NRC: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/11/04/leuke-legging-mooie-mat-5136313-a1530022>

¹⁶ Smithuijsen, Idem.

¹⁷ Smithuijsen, Idem.

¹⁸ Mardesich, Jodi. "12 Strategies for a Booming Yoga Retail Business." 8 October 2008, *yoga Journal*: <https://www.yogajournal.com/teach/yoga-retail-101>

¹⁹ Mardesich, Idem.

²⁰ Hoyez, Anne-Cécile. "The 'world of yoga': The Production and Reproduction of Therapeutic Landscapes", *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 65, Issue 1, July 2007, P 112-124.

²¹ Strohmaier, Idem.

²² Edited by Berila, Beth, Klein, Melanie and Jackson Roberts, Chelsea. *Yoga, the Body, and Embodied Social Change. An Intersectional Feminist Analysis*. Lanham, Lexington Books, 2016, P 321

²³ Newcombe, Idem.

²⁴ Singleton, Idem.

many adaptations as well, under the influence of colonialism, modernization and trans-nationalization.²⁵ Last but not least, the many streams of yoga in the West each emphasize different aspects and values and some of these actively include religious ideals.²⁶

With this in mind we can begin to understand the background of Kundalini Yoga, Yogi Bhajan (Harbhajan Singh) brought to the West. Yogi Bhajan practiced under a number of different teachers and although he was from a traditional Sikh family, he readily used and adapted Sikh elements to target ‘white, middle class counter-culture minded’ groups.²⁷

Kundalini Yoga as Yogi Bhajan brought it to the West can be said to be based upon three elements: Kundalini Yoga, Sikhism and Tantric Yoga, that all originated in Northern-India, the region Yogi Bhajan was from.²⁸ Included in this yoga stream is the yogic lifestyle advice offered by Yogi Bhajan’s organization 3HO, which includes Ayurveda. In this sense, it can be argued that Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan is in itself a blend of different cultural and spiritual elements and thus could be called a cultural hybrid.

This thesis seeks to address what happens when people living in the dominant consumer culture that is Berlin practice and teach Kundalini yoga, which contains different cultural elements. It seeks to understand what the outcome of the meeting of these cultural elements is and to what extent it leads to a new, hybrid, culture. The thesis will look at the existing literature around cultural hybridity, yoga and consumerism and uses the documentary method to analyze the case study of the Kundalini Yoga teacher community in Berlin through the theoretical lens of the cultural hybridity as formulated by Jan Nederveen Pieterse. I will argue that even though different cultural elements meet and mix in the urban setting of Berlin, it is the dominant culture of consumerism that comes out as the victor. This result, however, is unrelated to the benefits teachers and practitioners gain from the practice and in that sense, we should be careful to overlook their experience.

²⁵ Wujastyk, Dagmar. *Modern and Global Ayurveda: Pluralism and Paradigms*. New York, State University of New York (SUNY) Press, 2008, P22, P227.

²⁶ DeMichelis, Elizabeth. *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*. London, Continuum Press, 2004.

²⁷ Jakobsh, Doris. “3HO/Sikh Dharma of the Western Hemisphere: The ‘Forgotten’ New Religious Movement?” *Religion Compass*, volume 2, Issue 3, May 2008, P 385–408.

²⁸ Glock, Charles, Y. *The New Religious Consciousness*. Los Angeles, University of California Press Ltd, 1976, P 6-7.

Research Question & Objective

In this research, I will take the Kundalini Yoga teacher community in Berlin as my case study in order to investigate the extent to which cultural hybridity is present in this yoga stream. I will discuss how the community in question incorporates Sikh elements in their classes, while also catering to their western audience by adapting Kundalini Yoga to fit the local context. Also, I will look at the role consumerism plays in shaping a community culture that consists of a mix of eastern and western elements. The question I explore is: How do Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin use commercial messages in order to gain students and, ultimately, keep Kundalini Yoga alive? And from that my **research question** stems: *How does Kundalini Yoga in Berlin (or rather its teachers) create a hybrid culture where yoga is appropriated to a practice that is acceptable in the dominant capitalist culture in Berlin (e.g. reducing yoga to a fitness and stress-reduction practice), while also inserting into that dominant culture new elements and meanings, contributing to the formation of a local Kundalini Yoga culture, propelled by the workings of consumerism?*

The **objective** of this research is to contribute to the body of research on (cultural) hybridization in the face of globalization. Furthermore, my work will contribute to the body of research on yoga and my work will re-conceptualize hybridization by looking at the role consumerism plays in the hybridization of local cultures.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

Much has been written about yoga from the perspective of how it has changed over time and has become part of the western culture. There is a great body of literature about the changes the practices and traditions of yoga went through before it ever spread beyond India and how these changes were partly due to the contact between East and West. The role Gurus, or charismatic leaders, have played in adapting yoga to their audience, is also described in literature. The effects of yoga on culture, and vice versa, has been researched to a lesser extent. This also goes for research that focuses on the relation between yoga, spirituality and consumerism. In literature concerning this interplay, we find claims that yoga may always have been a cultural hybrid in itself^{29 30 31}, yet has been much affected by current consumer culture. On the other hand, the phenomenon of yoga is not simply lost altogether, just because it has adapted to popular culture. If we look at Kundalini Yoga specifically, the body of literature grows much smaller. The available literature mainly describes the role of Yogi Bhajan and the question in how far his Kundalini Yoga is a New Religious Movement. We find some clues to a broader context when we have a look at the literature around Sikhism in the West. Finally, there is some literature on Kundalini Yoga in Germany, especially research from the perspective of religious studies and on Yogi Bhajan's organization 3HO. For Berlin specifically there is no literature on the development of yoga in the city, nor on the development of Kundalini Yoga.

1.1 YOGA, TRADITION AND THE WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

Yoga has changed over time and under many influences. Before yoga came to the West, it had already changed in form and practice from what it had been in its country of origin, India. Reasons for internationally redefining way were manifold, but largely had to do with colonial and post-colonial history. Vivekananda, for example, demystified yoga and created a form of

²⁹ Hauser, Beatrix. "Introduction: Transcultural Yoga(s). Analyzing a Traveling Subject.", in *Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context*, Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013

³⁰ Gokcen, Coskuner-Balli and Burcak, Ertimur, "Creating Hybridity: the Case of American Yoga", 2015 in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 43, eds. Kristin Diehl and Carolyn Yoon, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, P 494-497.

³¹ Bird, Lauren. "Ancient Wisdom, Modern Bodies: Hybrid Authenticity in the Space of Modern Yoga." 2014, *Master's thesis*, Concordia University, <https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/978469/>

yoga that was presented as the authority on omnipresent consciousness, something the whole world could easily consume. This was, however, a form of spiritual nationalism with the intention of unifying India and a protest against Western Imperialism.³² Vivekananda also thought out a yoga system consisting of three types of yoga: karma yoga (action) Bhakti Yoga (devotion), Rajah Yoga (control of the mind) and Gnana Yoga (knowledge). His texts on yoga were reprinted in England, and thus transferred to the west, in British colonial India around the fin du siècle.³³ Another well-known yogi, Sivananda, firmly established the concept of a Guru, or teacher in the West; for instance, he urged people to send him questions they had by mail³⁴. But even the creation of what was later referred to as ‘Anglophone yoga’ (adapted for the English) did not at first contain posture practice in the way that we currently find it nowadays in yoga classes. This was the case because Vivekananda considered posture practice unintelligent and incompatible with the modern scientific age, in addition to which it represented religious wrongs, as at the time it was mostly associated with Hatha-yogis; street performers and magicians.³⁵ The inclusion of posture-based yoga started to find its way in the 1920s as DeMichelis (2004) and Alter (2004) have shown. Well-known teachers Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois introduced a form of yoga that combined Hatha yoga with modern gymnastics and calisthenics³⁶ – which became the basis for modern posture yoga.

With posture yoga, the wisdom of the original Yoga Sutras by Patanjali (a body of collected texts on yoga from older traditions by the sage from 400 CE³⁷) Patanjali are reduced to a mere emphasis on the physical aspects of yoga, namely asanas (postures) and pranayama (breath manipulation). In addition, modern yoga seems to have interpreted yoga in a very constricted manner, namely that of a mere ‘individual self-realization,’³⁸ instead of a practice searching the freedom of the constructed mind-self. Where Patanjali writes about eight limbs of yoga, concentrating on mental focus and intention, modern yoga seems to have conveniently left this out to make room for a mainly physical practice.³⁹ This can partly be explained by the

³² Veer, Peter van der, in Csorday, Thomas J, *Transnational Transcendence. Essays on Religion and Globalization*. Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2009, P 263-274.

³³ Newcombe, Idem.

³⁴ Newcombe, Idem.

³⁵ Singleton, Mark and Goldberg, Ellen. *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010. P 4.

³⁶ Sarbacker, Stuart Ray. “Reclaiming the Spirit through the Body: The Nascent Spirituality of Modern Postural Yoga,” in *Entangled Religions*, Issue 1, 2014, P 95-114.

³⁷ Wujastyk, Dominik, “The Path to Liberation through Yogic Mindfulness in Early Ayurveda.” In: David Gordon White (ed.), *“Yoga in practice”*, Princeton University Press, 2011 P 38.

³⁸ DeMichelis, Idem.

³⁹ DeMichelis, Idem.

conditions in which yoga reached the West, mainly through the publication of Vivekananda's 'Raja Yoga' in 1896, at a time when there was a rapid succession of technical and societal developments. Due to the pace of these developments had gone, even spiritual practices were expected to bring quick, practical results.⁴⁰ Vivekananda knew his western audience well and therefore focused more on this practical side of yoga. After Vivekananda, lay the basis for all modern yoga in the West⁴¹ it was Sivananda who lay the foundations for a so-called 'Modern Psychosomatic Yoga'⁴² where yoga was considered both a practice and a (private) religion. Out of this form came 'Modern Postural Yoga' and 'Modern Meditation Yoga'⁴³ emerged, focused on the physical and mental practice respectively. A third form with similar origins is known as 'Modern Denominational Yoga'⁴⁴ which focuses on the individual teachings of modern Gurus, making the spiritual leader the determining factor for the yoga style. As will be evident from my findings, Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan, from my point of view, can certainly be placed in this last category.

Many texts traveling across India and to the West have suffered from translations that altered the way in which yoga was understood and practiced.⁴⁵ Scientists have played a crucial role in the way in which yoga was received in the West by assigning a status of importance to some texts over others and of course by asserting a preference for one translation of certain texts over others. Power imbalances also played a prominent role, as both Indian and western scholars explored the subject, but the balance often tipped in favor of the western scholar's influence.⁴⁶

Of course, influence was also a factor used by local Gurus in teaching yoga. Throughout history, we find examples of Gurus that have shaped the way yoga has developed. Gurus have chosen a certain array of exercises over others and came up with certain adaptations of yoga practices, in order to tailor for their audience and the level of their students.⁴⁷ Throughout its early history, yoga was not only practiced by Hindu practitioners, but rather by practitioners from many spiritual and cultural backgrounds. For instance, yoga was practiced by (i.e.)

⁴⁰ DeMichelis, Idem.

⁴¹ DeMichelis, Idem. P 188

⁴² DeMichelis, Idem.

⁴³ DeMichelis, Idem.

⁴⁴ DeMichelis, Idem.

⁴⁵ Alter, Joseph S. *Yoga in Modern India. The Body between Science and Philosophy*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014, P 13, P 28.

⁴⁶ Graham, Laura Christine. "Ancient, Spiritual and Indian: exploring Narratives of Authenticity in Modern Yoga." Cobb, Russell. *The Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World*. New York, Palgrave McMillan, 2014. P 89/90

⁴⁷ Newcombe, Idem, P 986, P 1002.

Buddhists, Janaists and Sikhs alongside their religion.⁴⁸

It is therefore clear that from the onset, even before yoga was `exported`, yoga in itself had already undergone so many adaptations that what it had become was already based upon an intercultural exchange. So, when yoga came to the West, teachers from Indian descent had to adapt their teachings yet again to tailor to a western audience, as teachers such as B.K.S. Iyengar (Iyengar yoga), K. Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga yoga) and Yogi Bhajan (Kundalini yoga) did.

1.2 YOGA AND GLOBALIZATION

Yoga took off when industrialization and globalization came into full swing. It is said that the visit of Vivekananda in 1897 at the World Parliament of Religions, held in the USA kicked off the real globalization of yoga.⁴⁹ Yet, there is a consensus that the aforementioned colonial past and spread of English texts has had the biggest influence on yoga spreading across the globe.⁵⁰ Through capitalist values, where yoga has been marketed and made into a product to be consumed, and it has even reached India anew, namely as a product for the Indian Middle Classes.⁵¹ And in another respect, it is now seen as an alternative to western medicine, now making the circle complete. Whereas yoga practices were demystified and presented in scientific terms, western medicine has demonstrated that it does not have all the answers, due to which yoga practices are considered equal to some western medical practices.⁵² This also goes for yoga as a form of therapy.⁵³

Since the 1990s yoga practice has spread more rapidly throughout the West and on a more transnational scale. And since the beginning of the new century the amount of people that intend to try yoga has grown exponentially. Around 2004, already half the population of America had practiced some form of yoga.⁵⁴ In 2005, it was measured that in the USA 13 million people were actively practicing yoga in the USA, and for Germany this was estimated

⁴⁸ Newcombe, Idem.

⁴⁹ Chirico, JoAnn. *Globalization. Prospects and Problems*. Los Angeles, Pennsylvania State University, SAGE Publications, 2014. P 307.

⁵⁰ Csordas, Thomas J. *Transnational Transcendence. Essays on Religion and Globalization*. London, University of California Press, 2009. P 275-280.

⁵¹ Csordas, Ibid.

⁵² Csordas, Ibid.

⁵³ Hoyez, Idem.

⁵⁴ Arnold, K. `We`re Listening. ` *Yoga Journal*, issue 174 (May/June), 2013, P 10.

at 4 million.⁵⁵

And yoga continues to be developed and/or altered around the globe to this day. This shows the interest in yoga is very much alive and not only to the communities and individuals taking up the practice; for example, the medicalization of yoga, whereby medical tests have been proving the effects of yoga⁵⁶ show that yoga is growing an ever-larger base in western society.

1.3 YOGA AND COMMERCIALIZATION

The idea that yoga has become part of a modern-day culture is not new. The way in which yoga is practiced nowadays, is completely different from the way it was practiced in India during the times of Patanjali or even Vivekananda. Some scientists have even claimed that examining (posture) yoga in the West further perpetuates the degradation of what yoga was originally about by demystifying yoga even more and thus making it accessible to a transnational public⁵⁷. Yoga in its original form was not concerned with creating a beautiful body, nor was it practiced without spirituality.⁵⁸

Furthermore, the notion that yoga has nowadays become a commercial product is not a new idea either. It is fairly commonplace that (postural) yoga in the West is often sold to people on the 'spiritual marketplace', where teachers are eager to make money. Spirituality in the West has been subject to a commercialization that sells religion as a brand.⁵⁹ This view is supported by the fact that in the West there have been legal stand-offs concerning the ownership of postures, yoga sets and even the stream of yoga.⁶⁰ However, it seems to work the other way around too; in India teachers also seem to be tapping into the demand for yoga training, yoga teacher training and yoga retreats. Or so it may seem.⁶¹ There is a tendency to turn yoga into a capitalist system, where the participant is rendered currency. Moreover, the joining of a particular course at a studio or a retreat becomes an exchange of social, body and

⁵⁵ Csordas, Idem.

⁵⁶ Alter, Idem.

⁵⁷ Singleton, Mark. *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*. New York, Routledge, 2008, P 174.

⁵⁸ Feuerstein, Georg. *Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*. Prescott, Hohm Press, 2003.

⁵⁹ Carrette, Jeremy R. and King, Richard. *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*. London, Routledge, 2005, P 5, P 126-128,

⁶⁰ Singleton and Goldberg. Idem, P 3.

⁶¹ Jain, Idem, P 8.

human capital.⁶² India is recreated by practitioners and the aforementioned 'yogentrepreneurs' into the best and most authentic place to practice yoga.⁶³

Claiming that yoga and spirituality are merely viewed as consumer products in the Western world, however, paints too narrow and too flat a picture. The experience and reality of practitioners and teachers is a reality that is influenced by many factors and gives a meaning to their daily lives that transcends the consumer reality.⁶⁴ Yoga has been given a function different from the original path towards enlightenment in our society; it provides an environment to which people can retreat to, away from daily obligations. It provides people with the space to work on spiritual development and take time for themselves. In this way, it fulfills the modern-day demands for self-development, yet gets a new meaning that ties into the consumerist need for personal growth and fulfillment.⁶⁵

What's more, we have to take into account that nowadays transnational processes of cultural globalization affect the whole world on a larger scale. Due to this globalization, participants of yoga all over the world are subject to very similar cultural processes.⁶⁶ To a large extent, the influence of capitalism comes in, on a global scale. And here it is important to note here that spirituality and yoga often focus on the individual and its need to buy the product of well-being, in a consumerist society a 'normative obligation...sought after by individual agents'⁶⁷ as Eeva Sointu puts it. This reaffirms capitalist and consumerist values of self-development. Also, in her research, Hauser claims that modern yoga creates an image of the 'ideal other associated with Indian-ness'⁶⁸. This too takes the focus off the actual practice and onto projections of the individual mind about what can be accomplished. If spirituality, in whatever form, is taught as a means of self-development, it can actually undermine social justice.⁶⁹ If we assume that yoga is at least based on the 8 limbs of yoga and not just postural yoga, it is actually meant to change communities and societies by changing the self. The modern approach may lead to a form focused on personal gain instead.

On the other hand, people in the West do practice yoga/ spirituality in order to create change.

⁶² Koch, Anne. "Yoga as a Production Site of Social and Human Capital: Transcultural Flows from a Cultural Economic Perspective." in Edited by Hauser, Beatrix. *Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective*. Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013, P 7, P 230, P 245, P231.

⁶³ Nichter, Mimi. "The Social Life of Yoga; Exploring Transcultural Flows in India." in Edited by Hauser, Beatrix. *Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective*. Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013, P 222.

⁶⁴ Alter, Idem, P 227.

⁶⁵ Jain, Idem, P 5-7.

⁶⁶ Jain. Idem P 8.

⁶⁷ Sointu, Eeva. "The Rise of an Ideal: Tracing Changing Discourses of Wellbeing." *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 53, Issue 2, May 2005, P 255-274.

⁶⁸ Hauser, Idem, P 5.

⁶⁹ King, Idem, P 84.

For instance, it can be said that our current globalized society sets the scene for wanting to affect collective change, due to the urgency of global challenges and a sense of being part of a larger social community. We can see this mirrored, for example, in the way in which environmental social movements use yoga as their spiritual basis.⁷⁰ Because it is only then that social change can happen; when there is a personal affinity with spirituality and in society there are available means to take action in society.⁷¹ Furthermore, it can be argued that this would answer today's need for health and fitness to an even greater extent. That is, if we understand that the health of the individual is bound to the way in which the society as a whole contains the possibilities for social justice.⁷² Thus, spiritual practice, if it wants to be more than just a coping mechanism in a challenging world, should always aim at justice for all instead of mere personal gain.

Personal gain may present itself in many ways when it comes to consumer culture. When inviting modern-day consumers to take part in yoga, the discourse of western body culture may be applied, promising participants optimal fitness and health. Or the belief system of the dominant society may be addressed; promising participants self-realization and/or stress relief. But in some cases, yoga even goes a step further and does not so much address a materialist (body) aspect of yoga, but rather the consumer's need for a certain identity. A case study in Finland, for example, revealed that the yoga community addressed participants not only in terms of the beauty and fitness aspects mentioned above, but also by creating an identity linked to spiritual beliefs.⁷³ In other words consumers were addressed in a way that allowed them to identify with certain spiritual values. At the same time participants drawn to anti-consumerist ideas are also appealed to and find their way into yoga studios.⁷⁴ This already demonstrates how commercialization and yoga merge and become a mix of consumerist and yoga elements. Of course, such an intersection provides the benefits of a pick and mix culture, in which consumers can choose which beliefs and practices they want to combine in what way, so that it fits their lifestyle.⁷⁵ And all of this in line with the dominant western culture obsessed with health, youth, beauty and fitness.

⁷⁰ Straus, Sarah and Mandelbaum, Laura. 'Consuming Yoga, Conserving the Environment; Transcultural Discourses on Sustainable Living.' in Edited by Hauser, Beatrix. *Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective*. Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013, P 194-197.

⁷¹ Stanczak, Gregory C. *Engaged Spirituality: Social Change and American Religion*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2006, P 20.

⁷² Jain, Idem, P 85.

⁷³ Puustinen, Liina and Rautaniemi, Matti. "Wellbeing for Sale: Representations of Yoga in Commercial Media." *Tenemos, Nordic Journal for Comparative religion*, Vol 51, No 2, 2015. P 45-47.

⁷⁴ Puustinen, Liina and Rautaniemi, Matti, Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jain, Idem, P 81, P 42, P 44.

Another thing we have to consider when looking at yoga and commercialization is that the larger part of yoga participants in the West are female, white, living in the city and higher educated.⁷⁶ In practice this means that: a) it can be considered problematic that during and after colonization Indian communities may have been denied the opportunity to practice that which originated in their own country, and b) even to this day it's not just people of color that represent a minority in yoga classes, but any other non-hegemonic group minority is underrepresented, including disabled and queer people. Also, it is problematic that white teachers in the West will present themselves as being highly knowledgeable about yoga, even though what they are actually doing can often be classified as cultural appropriation as they usually hardly have any knowledge of the cultural environment and historical framework in which yoga came into being.⁷⁷ These are important aspects to consider when we look at the way in which yoga is advertised and sold. Not only because of the studios and teachers selling it, but also due to the audience the sales messages are addressed at. If teachers use cultural appropriation to attract an audience, can it be helped that this audience will further continue this cultural appropriation without asking questions? Some initiatives have tried to address this fact and have advocated to making yoga more diverse, for example by Be Scofield and her initiative Decolonizing Yoga⁷⁸, but judging from the reactions of the majority of white yoga practitioners⁷⁹ there is still a long way to go.

1.4 YOGA AS SOCIAL CULTURE

Yoga is not only being used for personal gain. If anything, yoga has seen an adaptation of religion and spirituality to consumer culture.⁸⁰ In other words; consumerism is the dominant culture in the West and everything that comes in touch with it, adapts. Even the notion of personal growth and achievement is linked to the economic idea of growth and profit.⁸¹ However, this is not the whole story. Whether it be consuming yoga for one's own profit and

⁷⁶ Berila, Beth. *Integrating Mindfulness into Anti-Oppression Pedagogy. Social Justice in Higher Education*. New York, Routledge, 2016. P 149.

⁷⁷ Edited by Berila, Beth, Klein, Melanie and Jackson Roberts, Chelsea. *Yoga, the Body, and Embodied Social Change. An Intersectional Feminist Analysis*. Lanham, Lexington Books, 2016, P 150

⁷⁸ Scofield, Be. About. 2016, <http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/about-2/>

⁷⁹ Lee Hanson, Krista. 'When People of Color Say They Want Their Own Yoga, White People Should Listen.' 21-10-2015, <http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/when-people-of-color-say-they-want-their-own-yoga-white-people-should-listen/>

⁸⁰ Jain, Idem.

⁸¹ Jain, Idem.

gain or to actually being interested in making a change. Yoga cannot merely be seen as a way to combat the negative effects of globalization, nor just an exoticized/orientalist new age product, but rather is a ‘social product’ that has its roots in India and has since gone through many developments in different places around the globe.⁸² The getting-away-from-everyday-life has become a social ritual, where people take out-time out on a regular basis. This community-minded social basis, community basis can serve as a means of overcoming an individual-centered spirituality and aiming for a greater good.⁸³ Given all the possibilities of a globalizing world the chances of forming glocal communities, through worldwide communication and exchange, that work for the greater good are even greater and thus the scope of impact could potentially be wider.

In addition, Dawson has called for looking at the consumption of spirituality as neither being mindless consumerism, nor as separate from consumerist culture, seeing as consumers rather ‘prosume’ yoga and remain individual agents.⁸⁴

1.5 THE YOGA AUDIENCE: WHITE, FEMALE, MIDDLE- TO UPPER CLASS

The fact that yoga was initially taught to men from the highest classes in India, tells us that yoga was not accessible for the lower classes.⁸⁵ In that sense one might say that nowadays yoga is accessible to a wider audience. But is that really the case? The worldwide practitioners of yoga as we know it tends to be higher educated, middle class people.⁸⁶ Most practitioners are white women. It has been argued that white women feel especially attracted to yoga, as they are the ones that benefit most from presenting the healthy, stress-free bodies yoga promises. A large part of women works in the service segment of the economy, where success depends very much on how one shows oneself to the world, including welcoming smiles.⁸⁷

Many yoga studios charge high fees nowadays and this impacts the people who (can afford to)

⁸² Alter, Idem.

⁸³ Jain, Idem, P 85

⁸⁴ Dawson, Andrew. “Entangled Modernity and Commodified Religion: Alternative Spirituality and the New Middle Class.” In Martikainen, Tuomas (editor). *Religion in Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers and Markets*. Surrey, Ashgate Publishing, 2013, P 127-142.

⁸⁵ Strauss, S. (2002). “Adapt, Adjust, Accommodate”: the Production of Yoga in a Transnational World. *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 13, Issue 3, 2002.

⁸⁶ Schnabele, Verena. “The Useful Body: The Yogic Answer to Appearance Management in the Post-Fordist Workplace.” in Edited by Hauser, Beatrix. *Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective*. Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013, P 140.

⁸⁷ Schnabele, Idem, P 144.

come to yoga classes. In many cases prices for yoga classes run up so high that it is not affordable for people with low income. Implicitly these high prices cause yoga to be accessible for rather white audiences.⁸⁸ To be more specific, the biggest share of the yoga audience is taken up white women who have the money to spend on yoga. In this capacity, white women with a greater income have a big impact upon yoga.⁸⁹ As yoga has become a product to be bought and sold, more on this in the next chapter, one can imagine that the power of the money of these white females dictates to a large extent *how* yoga is sold and what elements in the rituals of yoga will receive attention. Furthermore, as yoga attracts a mainly white female audience, it is actually this same female white bodies that get marketed to gain more participants. I will discuss this later on.

Last but not least, there is the language and imagery with which yoga is often presented to be the counterpart of what endurance/ weight-lifting sports are to men. In this way yoga spaces often explicitly invite a more female audience.

1.6 YOGA IN GERMANY

In Germany Christian Fuchs identified four phases:

1. the “consolidation” of dispersed individuals interested in yoga from 1945 to 1955;
2. the “institutionalization” of yoga instruction between 1956 and 1966;
3. the emergence and “organization” of a yoga movement between 1967 and 1979; and
4. the “professionalization” of teacher training and quality management between 1980 and 1990.⁹⁰

Yoga underwent a number of adaptations. It developed into a personal plan to relieve oneself of the pressures of a ‘post-Fordist society’.⁹¹ Due to Germany’s particular history, yoga classes had to be presented in a way that avoided any suspicion of being a religious cult.⁹² And so, yoga was not initially welcomed in German society. From the 1970s, yoga was

⁸⁸ Berila, Beth, Klein Melanie, Jackson, Chelsea. *Yoga, the Body, and Embodied Social Change: An Intersectional Feminist Analysis*. Lanham, Rowman&Littlefield, 2016, P 57.

⁸⁹ Berila, Beth. Idem, P 56.

⁹⁰ Fuchs, Christian. *Yoga in Deutschland: Rezeption—Organisation—Typologie*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1990.

⁹¹ Schnabele, Verena. ‘The Useful Body: The Yogic Answer to Appearance Management in the Post-Fordist Workplace.’ in Edited by Hauser, Beatrix. *Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective*. Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013, P 21, P 141.

⁹² Augenstein, Suzanne. ‘The Introduction of Yoga in German Schools: A Case Study.’ Edited by Hauser, Beatrix. *Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective*. Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013, P 6, P30.

growing in Germany, mainly among women, who made up 80% of the total number of practitioners in Germany at the time.⁹³ Furthermore, back in the day the advertising lay a great focus on dietary and beauty-norms which attracted a more female crowd. Hauser believes the rhetoric of yoga being more of a soft art of exercise still prevails today.⁹⁴

Schnabele sees current German practitioners as both using yoga to optimize personal productivity, and ‘micro political subversive strategies’ to rebel against a stressful society.⁹⁵ When the German government began to pay for individual measures reducing chances of health degradation in 2003, yoga became an ‘indicator for politically desired health-conscious behavior.’⁹⁶

We can see that yoga may have had a rocky start in Germany, it developed into a socially and politically acceptable form of movement. It became legitimized by recognizing the health benefits officially. This made yoga palatable for the society, reterritorializing its meaning and demystifying (deterritorializing) the practice.

1.7 KUNDALINI YOGA

Where Kundalini Yoga fits in, is up for discussion. Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhanan and his organization 3HO (Happy, Healthy, Holy) has been deemed a New Religious Movement.⁹⁷ The interesting thing about the new religious movements is that they may not be as large as other movements, but they seem to have a great significance when regarded through the lens of culture and social implications.⁹⁸ In other words the general social and cultural impact of these movements is significant. Also, to be considered is the fact that most of the new religious movements were founded after the Second World War, which means by now its members are second and third generation practitioners.⁹⁹ Therefore, the time that has passed since the original movements were formed and the new generations have resulted in adaptations within the movements, due to the influence of time and new generations. I

⁹³ Hauser, Ibid. P 182.

⁹⁴ Hauser Ibid., P 126.

⁹⁵ Schnäbele, Ibid., P 30.

⁹⁶ Hauser, Ibid., P 30.

⁹⁷ Bromley, David G and Chryssides, George D. & Zeller, Benjamin E. *The Bloomsbury Companion to New Religious Movements*. London, Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014, P 11, P 113, P 159, P 359.

⁹⁸ Cresswell, Jamie and Wilson, Bryan. *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*. London, Routledge, 1999. P 13

⁹⁹ Cresswell, ibid.

provide a more comprehensive definition of New Religious Movements in the theoretical framework chapter of this thesis.

Where it concerns Kundalini Yoga, Yogi Bhanan and his organization, 3HO, the body of literature is not so vast. The literature discussed provides a good understanding of the background of yoga and how it is connected to the West. I have also briefly touched on the influence of the Guru, or leader, plays a role in the transmission of yoga. As for Yogi Bhanan, we have to take into account his religious background as a Sikh. Yogi Bhanan is considered to be the first Sikh leader who actively aimed to spread Sikhism in the West, in contrast to most other Sikh leaders in India who did not consider this important to bring Sikhism to non-Punjabis.¹⁰⁰

Yogi Bhanan, or Harbhajan Singh by birth, came to America at the end of the sixties. At first his plan was to contribute to the new chair of yoga studies at the University of Toronto, Canada. When that did not work out, he focused his attention on teaching yoga. In the very beginning his following mainly consisted of hippies.¹⁰¹ Perhaps they were drawn to the communal lifestyle in ashrams that the movement promotes.¹⁰² Although Yogi Bhanan started off only teaching Kundalini Yoga techniques, his followers started to be intrigued by his Sikh background. This led Yogi Bhanan to start implementing increasingly more Sikh elements into his teachings, eventually making a Sikh organization out of 3HO¹⁰³, even though the organization was originally meant to support a yogic lifestyle. In practice this meant that Yogi Bhanan went from just teaching Tantric Yoga, Laya yoga and meditation practices, to adding religious elements. An example of this is the recital of the Ardas after Sadhana (early morning yoga). The Ardas is a Sikh prayer, commemorating the martyrs of Sikhism.¹⁰⁴ Other examples are the introduction of mantras stemming from Sikh texts, (yet not actually existing in that form within Sikhism), encouraging followers to stop cutting their hair, encouraging followers to wear white turbans, and reciting the prayer Jap-Ji. As mentioned before, Kundalini Yoga in itself is already a mix of Hindu, Tantric and Sikh culture, but Yogi Bhanan was in turn influenced by New Age beliefs, for example the 'coming of the Aquarian Age'.¹⁰⁵ With so many influences at play, it is not hard to imagine that participants/ students might well have

¹⁰⁰ Bromley, David G. *The Future of New Religious Movements*. Georgia, Mercer University Press, 1987, P 53.

¹⁰¹ Bromley, David G, idem. And Chryssides, George D. & Zeller, Benjamin E, Idem, P 161.

¹⁰² Tobey, Alan. 'The Summer Solstice of the Happy Healthy Holy Organization. 'In: Glock, Charles Y. *The New Religious Consciousness*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, P 8, P 19, P 28.

¹⁰³ Lewis, James R. "Autobiography of a Schism." In *Marburg Journal of Religion*: Vol. 15, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis, Idem.

¹⁰⁵ Edited by Nault, Derrick M. Dawei, Evangelos Voulgarakis, Rab Paterson, Cesar Andres-Miguel Suva. *Experiencing Globalization. Religion in Contemporary Contexts*. New York, Anthem Press, 2014. P 118.

very different commitments and reasons for practicing.

The effects of Yogi Bhajan's efforts mainly amounted to the people seeing this 'movement' (to be discussed in the theoretical framework) as 'peculiar'.

This brings the advantage that Yogi Bhajan and Kundalini Yoga could go a long way, as they have the 'optimal tension' with society, namely being not too intrusive to dominating values of a society and therefore no need to adapt and be too secular.¹⁰⁶ Having said that, it is interesting that many followers of Yogi Bhajan and Kundalini Yoga have not only adopted yoga practices, but also many of the Sikh values, with some even converting and taking on the title of Khalsa (converted Sikh). This brings with it the implication that they share the legacy of the militant tradition that Sikhism brings with it.¹⁰⁷ The appeal of this may be less surprising when seen in the light of the fact that many participants in the movement around Yogi Bhajan were interested in foreign religious practices and had already been participating in forms of activism (counterculture).¹⁰⁸

The Kundalini Yoga movement believes that it promotes a lifestyle that benefits the coming of the new age: the Aquarian Age.¹⁰⁹ It is widely recognized that Yogi Bhajan's Kundalini Yoga presents a mixture of cultures, as it teaches a traditional form of Sikhism and Sikh values, in addition to practices that come from Tantric Hinduism.¹¹⁰ Within this traditional context, it should not be surprising that the female members of the 3HO organization (founded by Yogi Bhajan) in particular have been looking for ways to reinterpret and adapt the central belief system.¹¹¹ It can be said that Yogi Bhajan placed great emphasis on women being in the traditional role of the mother and as a support to men.¹¹² It seems logical that Yogi Bhajan taught yoga in this way, as he came from a highly traditional and conservative Indian background. It must have already been quite a leap for him to teach yoga to women at all, as yoga used to mainly be practiced in small groups, predominantly consisting of young men.¹¹³ In our modern day and age, where traditional gender roles have blurred and become

¹⁰⁶ Stark and Bryan Wilson quoted in edited Bromley, David G. and Hammond Philipp E. *The Future of New Religious Movements*. Macon, Mercer University Press, 1987, P 111-114.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, James R. *Violence and New Religious Movements*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. P 325.

¹⁰⁸ Lewis, Idem, P 326.

¹⁰⁹ Tobey, Alan. 'The Summer Solstice of the Happy Healthy Holy Organization. 'In: Glock, Charles Y. *The New Religious Consciousness*. Berkely, University of California Press, 1976, P 5.

¹¹⁰ Saliba, John A. *Understanding New Religious Movements*. Alta Mira Press, Oxford, 2003.

¹¹¹ Elsberg, Constance Waeber. *Graceful Women: Gender and Identity in an American Sikh Community*. Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 2003. P 194.

¹¹² Elsberg, Idem.

¹¹³ Edited by Hauser, Beatrix. *Bodily Practice in Transcultural Perspective*. Klagenfurt, Springer, 2013, P 5

largely obsolete, one is able to imagine many reasons why perhaps female teachers in particular would want to provide practitioners with an updated perspective.

The activist, counter culturalist followers Yogi Bhajan attracted¹¹⁴, established an environment which was centered on what he was teaching. The yogic lifestyle was, following the orthodox Sikh tradition, disciplined and full of the spiritual promise for a better life.¹¹⁵ All of these elements function as building blocks to create a solid life under the guidance of the teacher. For all of this 3HO has come a long way in advocating Sikh concerns to the western political bodies. 3HO has been a consultative member NGO of the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1997.¹¹⁶

Yogi Bhajan envisaged Kundalini Yoga should be taught in the West in a specific manner, Sikhism ideally forming part of the training.¹¹⁷ Even though he proclaimed to be Sikh, his mix of tantric yoga practices with Sikhism is considered heresy by most traditional Sikhs.¹¹⁸ In fact, there a distinction is made in general between Punjabi Sikhs and those who have gotten to know Sikhism through Kundalini Yoga (Yogi Bhajan and 3HO): the so-called Gora (white) Sikhs¹¹⁹. Interestingly enough due to the way the religion has evolved, it isn't just that these 'Gora/3HO' Sikhs were influenced by Sikhism, but Sikhism has also been influenced by Gora Sikhs.¹²⁰ We know from early accounts of interactions between the two groups of Sikhs that Punjabi Sikhs did not acknowledge Yogi Bhajan as a religious authority as he was deemed to be controlling of his followers.¹²¹

However, Sikhism was initially not even part of yoga that Yogi Bhajan was taught. In fact, he had only indirectly touched on Sikhism and it was not until the seventies that he started incorporating Sikhism into his teachings to his more devoted students.¹²² For this he was recognized as doing important missionary work for Sikhism¹²³. He granted himself the title of Siri Singh Sahib, which means so much as Head Sikh representative in the West, and also got

¹¹⁴ Edited by Miller, Timothy. *America's Alternative Religions*. New York, State of New York University Press, 1995, P 364.

¹¹⁵ Lewis, idem, P 313.

¹¹⁶ 3HOHealthy Happy Holy Organisation, last updated 2017: <https://www.3ho.org/donation/give>

¹¹⁷ Laue, Thorsten. *Tantra im Westen*. Berlin, Lit Verlag, 211, P 41.

¹¹⁸ Laue, Idem, P 157, P 158.

¹¹⁹ Enach, Idem. P 473.

¹²⁰ Enach, Louis E. and Singh, Pashaura. *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014. P 561.

¹²¹ Enach, Idem, P 564.

¹²² Enach, Idem, P 561.

¹²³ Cowley, Susan Cheever; Kasindorf, Martin; Lisle, Laurie (21 April 1975). "Sikhdom, U.S.A." *Newsweek*, P 65.

the Sikh Dharma Brotherhood recognized as a religious organization in the US.¹²⁴ With these developments Yogi Bhajan consciously shifted his attention slightly away from the yogic aspects and more towards a Sikh themed way of teaching. In response, members from 3HO went along with the changes and took them to heart to such an extent that they happily switched to Sikhism.¹²⁵ Yogi Bhajan's charisma had a lot to do with the conversion of so many Americans to Sikhism.¹²⁶ Punjabi Sikhs have resisted these conversions on the basis of the fact that Sikhism is Punjabi.¹²⁷ To this day, non-Punjabi Sikhs still have not quite been accepted by Punjabi Sikhs. The two streams of Sikhism practiced separate from each other, mainly due to the fact that Punjabi Sikhs associate yoga too much with the Hindu religious practices.¹²⁸ However, there was also a newfound respect for non-Punjabi Sikhs, as they turned out to take Sikhism more seriously than traditional Sikhs expected.¹²⁹ Some Punjabi-Sikhs admit they admire Gora Sikh discipline.¹³⁰ And in terms of the spread of Sikhism, it is undeniable that the conversion of the white Sikhs has played an important part in the spread of Sikhism. The practice of non-Punjabi Sikhs to a lifestyle of no alcohol, no drugs, and no meat has also been influential: among Punjabi Sikhs the traditional long beards and even the turban are returning.¹³¹

Kundalini Yoga is presented as ancient wisdom that is passed on through Yogi Bhajan¹³², leading followers to believe the myth of authentic forms of yoga (and in this case Kundalini Yoga); 'monolithic, ancient, linear and spiritual practice produced in the East'.¹³³

Conveniently in Kundalini Yoga, it is said that the techniques particular to it were always kept secret until Yogi Bhajan decided to teach them in the West.¹³⁴ This makes it difficult to actually trace yoga's origins and indeed discourages practitioners from even trying.

¹²⁴ Enach Idem P 565.

¹²⁵ Enach, Idem.

¹²⁶ Cole, Owen W. and Singh Sambi, Piara. *The Sikhs. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. Sussex, Sussex, Academic Press, Sussex, 1998. P 186.

¹²⁷ Enach, Idem. P 561.

¹²⁸ Nayer, Elizabeth Kamala. *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver*. Toronto, Toronto University Press, 2004. P 127-128.

¹²⁹ Cole, Idem, P 186.

¹³⁰ Enach, Idem, P 562.

¹³¹ Bains, Singh Tara and Johnston, Hugh. *The Four Quarters of the Night*. Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995. P 154.

¹³² 3HO Healthy Happy Holy Organisation, last updated 2017: <https://www.3ho.org/kundalini-yoga>

¹³³ Graham, Laura Christine. "Ancient, Spiritual and Indian: exploring Narratives of Authenticity in Modern Yoga." In: Cobb, Russell. *The Paradox of Authenticity in a Globalized World*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2014. P 91.

¹³⁴ 3HO Healthy Happy Holy Organisation, last updated 2017: <https://www.3ho.org/kundalini-yoga>

1.8 KUNDALINI YOGA IN GERMANY

The German member base of Yogi Bajan's 3HO is large. After the United States, it is the 2nd biggest country in terms of the number of 3HO offices and number of members of 3HO.

Within Europe Germany hosts two thirds of all 3HO offices. In addition, there are numerous modern Sikhs- those who are not only practicing yoga but have also converted to Sikhism.¹³⁵

The catalyst for distributing Kundalini Yoga, increasing members for 3HO and spreading Sikhism, is provided by the teacher training that is offered.¹³⁶ And 3HO is not the only organization that offers these teacher trainings all over the world and in Germany. The organizations of the Karam Kriya school and Amrit Nam Sarovar, that both offer teacher training in Europe and more specifically in Berlin.

In Germany 3HO Deutschland proclaims that Sikhism is not part of the organization, nor of the teacher training.¹³⁷ However, in reality a quick look at the German 3HO website will give one the impression that it may all still be about Sikhism. Not only because of the pictures of teachers in turbans, as it is debatable whether this practice is yogic or Sikh, but also because the teacher guidelines make strong references to Sikhism.¹³⁸

Kundalini Yoga in Berlin

Currently, there are four organizations/initiatives that offer a Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training: one through 3HO, one through Amrit Nam Sarovar and two through the Karam Kriya School. Not every student that finishes the teacher training actually starts teaching. This may partly be due to competition and the difficulty of getting full classes, and part of it may also be due to personal motivation. The Kundalini Yoga Teacher community in Berlin is quite close-knit and the most active teachers can be found on this website:

<http://kundaliniyoga.berlin/>.

Looking at all the information available, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that yoga is and has always been subject to change. I have pointed out that at the starting point of yoga in India it changed in itself under the influence of society and the Guru's adaptation to his

¹³⁵ Laue, Torsten. *Kundalini Yoga, Yogi Tee und das Wassermannzeitalter*. Berlin, Lit Verlag, 2007, P 26.

¹³⁶ Laue, Ibid.

¹³⁷ Laue, Idem, P 45.

¹³⁸ 3H Organisation Deutschland e.V. 'Für Yogalehrende.' <http://www.3ho.de/web/fuer-yogalehrende/ethische-richtlinien.html>

audience. I have demonstrated that when yoga came into contact with the West, it was adapted on the one hand to fit a western way of thinking, but on the other hand to reinforce Indian values. The Guru's that travelled to the West to teach there have also brought their own influence on the practice of yoga, for example the element of Sikhism in the case of Yogi Bhajan. Moreover, commercialization and the structure of western society have also had their influence on yoga. This means that yoga has always been a transnational phenomenon, a hybrid of cultures (for a further elaboration on the subject of cultural hybridization please refer to the theoretical framework chapter) and creating creolization (also to be further elaborated on in the theoretical framework chapter) on a local level, due to its social and cultural significance to western practitioners. I have also reviewed the phenomenon of the commercialization and popularization of yoga and have also been researched and have shown that it is naïve to think modern yoga is much different from pre-modern yoga even in this sense, as yoga has always been dependent on and influenced by its social environment. In the modern-day West this environment happens to be that of consumer culture.¹³⁹

As mentioned above, consumer culture is currently the dominant culture here in the West, which means that all aspects of daily life actually fall under its principles. Even the idea of personal achievement and growth stems from a consumerist perspective. Naturally, Kundalini Yoga has brought in many cultural elements from Hinduism and Sikhism to the West, but vice versa consumer culture has introduced its own elements into the practice of Kundalini Yoga. Both teachers and practitioners have become commodities to be sold and bought. This thesis looks at the Kundalini Yoga teacher community in Berlin and contributes to the body of research on the practice of yoga outside its original context. Furthermore, this work describes how the commercialization of this particular form of yoga actually helps this yoga style to survive in the urban environment of Berlin. The way in which commercialization of Kundalini Yoga is used as a means to mix and unify concepts, philosophies and practices from Sikhism and yoga with the present-day beliefs around i.e. stress-relief, healthy living and mindfulness makes for a unique and new subculture. A subculture that values community and therefore creates a significant impact on the lives of those involved.

¹³⁹ Jain, Idem.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When researching any phenomenon on a global scale, it is important to define the premise on which to base the study. Therefore, this section will outline the theoretical framework used for this research and provide definitions for the key notions that are crucial to my argument.

These days, globalization is a buzzword that is used to describe a wide range of processes and realities relating to internationalization. Globalization connects the regional to the global and is mostly driven by technological advancement.¹⁴⁰ The consequences of globalization involve e.g. changes in governance structures¹⁴¹ and a blending of different cultural elements, as well as growing economic and social unevenness.¹⁴² It is important to note that this blending of cultures in some countries is viewed as being a western-driven process that seeks to advance only its own interests. Of course, it also means that non-western elements are consequently blended into western culture.

Many countries outside of Northern Europe and North America regard globalization as a means of advancing capitalism for the West and as instigating the loss of their cultural and tangible freedom.¹⁴³ It is also understood as spreading a Western consumer oriented mindset¹⁴⁴ resulting in the loss of power of political institutions (a loss of democratization) and allowing for aristocratic rule.¹⁴⁵

In this post-industrial context current social movements are fighting to sustain a standard of living that is not determined by economic and industrial guidelines.¹⁴⁶ In doing so, social movements seek to unite in real debate and interaction to constitute normative consensus.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. "Globalization as Hybridization." *International Sociology*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 1994, P 8.

¹⁴¹ Ohmae, Kenichi. *The End of the Nation State. The Rise of Regional Economies*. New York, Free Press, 1995

¹⁴² Nederveen Pieterse Idem, P 12.

¹⁴³ Kirmani, Nida. "The Relationship between Social Movements and Religion in Processes of Social Change: A Preliminary Literature Review." *Working Paper 23 in the Religions and Development Research Programme*, University of Birmingham, 2008.

¹⁴⁴ Robins, Kevin. Webster, Frank. *Times of the Technoculture*. London, Routledge, 1999.

¹⁴⁵ Castells, Manuel. *The Power of Identity*. Malden, Blackwell Publishers, 1997, P 68 - 69.

¹⁴⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1981.

Habermas, Jürgen. "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies." Translated by Phillip Jacobs in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*. Issue 11, 1986, P 1-18.

¹⁴⁷ Staggenborg, Suzanne. *Social Movements*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, P 22.

Given this, it is likely that the most successful social movements that fight the negative impact of globalization will focus not so much on political, material and economic motives, but rather on identities (religion, ethnicity, gender, etc.) that transcend economic and political borders. Khudori says spirituality-based movements are independent of governmental institutions and capitalist reasoning.¹⁴⁸

2.1 THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE

For the purpose of this thesis, 'culture' is defined as follows; the physical culture, meaning the material side of culture which encompasses e.g. the physical space, goods and products and resources people use to define their culture and the non-physical culture, which consists of the ideas people have around their culture, including e.g. beliefs and norms. Moreover, in the non-physical part of culture, it is symbols, language, values and norms that determine how members of a particular culture shape their ideas, thoughts and beliefs around that culture.¹⁴⁹ In my research, I will look at how both the non-physical and the physical side of culture are involved in creolization, hybridization and consumerism in general and the Kundalini Yoga Teacher community in Berlin in particular.

2.2. NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ...NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The rapid globalization and transnationalism in the 20th century have led to enormous political, economic and social changes in societies all over the world. It has therefore been argued that there is a link between the fairly recent rise of spirituality-based social movements and global change.¹⁵⁰ However, because in society there is always an interplay between secular and non-secular cultures the 'new' lies in this interplay; where spirituality intermixes with the dominant culture and the symbolism and messages are modernized for pragmatic reasons.¹⁵¹ Eileen Barker defines New Religious Movements as such when they preoccupy

¹⁴⁸ Khudori, Darwis. "Spiritually-based Social Movements facing Globalization in Asia and Europe: State of Knowledge and Prospect." Paper presented at the 3d International Conference of Gross Happiness, Bangkok, 2007, University of Le Havre, 2007, P 1.

¹⁴⁹ Barkan, Steven E. *Sociology, Understanding and Changing the Social World*. Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

¹⁵⁰ Beckford, James A. *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*. London, Sage Publications, 1986. P XV.

¹⁵¹ Beckford, Idem, P 43.

themselves with questions around personal identity, direction in life and God and have been present in this form since after the Second World War.¹⁵²

According to this very definition, Kundalini Yoga can be seen as a New Religious Movement: it is based on a mix of different spiritualities, as mentioned in the background and literature review including Hindu practices of Yoga, Tantric Meditation, Sikh values and new age beliefs. In its current form, it only came to the West after WW2, when Yogi Bhajan decided to teach Kundalini Yoga in America. For the purpose of this thesis, I will consider Kundalini Yoga to be a New Religious Movement.

New Social Movement theory may also apply to the spread of Kundalini Yoga. New Social Movement theory claims (some) social movements that came into being after WW2 departed significantly from the previous social movement paradigm when they started focusing on human rights and developing counter-cultural tendencies calling for changes in lifestyle. More specifically for the urban environments, “new social movements arise that try to establish the command of experience over production and power¹⁵³”, as Castells puts it. This rings very true for Kundalini Yoga, especially in the setting of a city like Berlin, as I will describe later on. Of course, the paradox here may be that even though experience is the core of yoga practice, when moving into the paradigm of consumer culture, relations of power may be redefined but not evened out.

As mentioned before, when Yogi Bhajan came to the West to teach Kundalini Yoga, his followers consisted for a large part of people with new age and counter cultural beliefs. Furthermore, Yogi Bhajan and his 3HO organization have always called for a change in lifestyle promoting a yogic regimen. With its focus on community, it can be said that Kundalini Yoga changes cultural premises as well.

2.3 GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE: HYBRIDIZATION

For my research, I have used Nederveen Pieterse's theory of Cultural Hybridization as the main premise. Nederveen Pieterse provides us with the three paradigms in the current discussion about globalization and culture, namely; 1) the view that the main cultural differences in a globalized world are identity-based, rather than country-based (lasting

¹⁵² Barker, Eileen. 'New Religious Movements. Their incidence and Significance. 'in Wilson, Bryan and Cresswell, Jamie. *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*. Routledge, London, 1999, pp 16.

¹⁵³ Castells, Manuel. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1983, P 309.

cultural difference); 2) the viewpoints that either cultures are competing with one another or that cultures are heading towards a standardization of consumerist culture (sameness of culture); and 3) the view that an interweaving of cultures is occurring beyond identity and place is taking place (ongoing mixing of culture).¹⁵⁴

The view that is most widely spread tells us that globalization flows from the West to the rest of the world and globalization is linked in with modernism. Nederveen Pieterse argues that such interpretations are limited, and that cultural hybridization is rather an ongoing process that creates a global mixture of cultures.¹⁵⁵

The idea of globalization as a one-way stream from the West to the rest of the world, fails to recognize that globalization cannot be seen as one process or movement in one direction. Rather, there are and have been multiple processes of globalization going on and have been going on simultaneously. This is demonstrated by the highly diverse emphases of different scientific disciplines in studying globalization.¹⁵⁶ As processes of globalization have been going on for a long time, for example with international trade, it is clear that it is by no means a one-way process and that there is always change (diversity) rather than uniformity.

Pieterse points out that even though theories of modernity are no longer in favor in the social sciences, globalization theories often start from the same premises. Often globalization theories are Westernization theories, as they start with the coming into existence of the West and not with world history. Moreover, globalization theories generally start from the assumption that modernity first needed to be established, before globalization could take place, but it may very well be the other way around. Finally, power relations and imperialism often remained unquestioned if not omitted altogether.¹⁵⁷

Rather than basing himself on these assumptions, Pieterse starts from the premise that globalization is a two-way stream that simultaneously increases local and global identities into a blend (glocalization). This means that different types of organizations, and forms of collaboration, with a hybrid, intermixed, character have emerged, leading to diversification.

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When we consider culture alone, it is clear that there has not simply been some sort of global cultural synchronization occurring.¹⁵⁹ Rather, it is important to include here the effect that

¹⁵⁴ Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 41-42.

¹⁵⁵ Nederveen Pieterse, idem, P 59.

¹⁵⁶ Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 60.

¹⁵⁷ Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 62.

¹⁵⁸ Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 65-68.

¹⁵⁹ Schiller, Herbert. *Culture Inc. The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.

non- western cultures have had on the West and the way in which elements of western culture have been transformed (rather than blindly taken over) by local communities. We also need to consider the possibility that rather one of these cultures being dominant over the other, new cultures were created that contain elements of both.¹⁶⁰ Rather than the West dominating the cultural sphere in a globalizing world, this view stipulates that it is part of a global cultural sphere that consists of various elements.

Hybridity in itself functions to challenge hierarchical structures and builds a bridge for the interplay between center and periphery.¹⁶¹ When it comes to cultural hybridity this means an interplay between cultural elements, where certain aspects are changed, challenged and transformed. In the case of the Kundalini Yoga teacher subculture in Berlin, for example, we can see that elements of traditional Sikhism are adopted, but only to the extent that they fit the dominant cultural values in Europe. This means, for example, that whereas in traditional Sikhism women have way less liberty, in the Berliner Kundalini Yoga Sanghat women have the same liberty Western enjoyed by their fellow western women. Pieterse refers to two types of hybridizations: those that destabilize the existing set of rules and hybridizations that affirm them.¹⁶²

With the concept of cultural hybridization Pieterse steps away from the view that the mixing of cultural elements in the processes of internationalization leads to a uniformity of culture, while still recognizing that mutual and similar elements of each culture are reaffirmed in this process.¹⁶³ The notion of cultural hybridization operates from the assumption that the different cultures permeate each other and lead to the emergence of new cultures. In my research, I will argue exactly this; rather than Kundalini Yoga bringing a one-way stream of 'foreign' cultural elements to teachers in Berlin, it is a two-way stream occurs in which the interplay of consumerism, Western beliefs and yogic elements flow together into a new culture, creating its own community.

Of course, we have to take into account that 'hybridity' itself has been criticized as a theory, for operating from the assumption that there is such a thing as one 'pure' culture meeting the other and then mixing. It has also been argued that hybridity takes a too superficial stance when it comes to multiculturalism.¹⁶⁴ Here we have to consider that there is hybridity in the

¹⁶⁰ Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 69-70.

¹⁶¹ Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 72.

¹⁶² Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 73.

¹⁶³ Nederveen Pieterse, Idem, P 77.

¹⁶⁴ Young, 1995, quoted in Edited by Dimova-Cookson, Maria and Stirk, Peter. *Multiculturalism and the Moral Conflict*. New York, Routledge, 2010, P 65.

form of history and the more fast-paced interweaving of cultures that is taking place right now. Naturally, cultures have been mixing since the beginning of time due to contact, conquests, trade, etc. In that sense, there is no single 'pure' culture to be found. We have to distinguish, however, between this historical context and the relatively new situation in which intermixing takes place in a high paced environment, facilitated by technological developments. Moreover, the range of intermixing has been widened, namely to a global scale. This makes hybridity relevant in the context of a world that is undergoing globalization at an ever-greater speed.

Another important aspect for using the theory of cultural hybridity is that it questions boundaries and 'transcending binary categories'.¹⁶⁵ The significance of transcending these categories is that it goes beyond traditional understandings of boundaries and discourses about culture and race. Whereas originally the term 'hybrid' referred to a racist context of people intermixing during colonial times¹⁶⁶, and the negative connotation that this intermixing of supposedly previously unmixed races would lead to a degradation of these allegedly 'pure' races.¹⁶⁷ Nederveen Pieterse takes this notion to another level and argues that within the context of nationalism nation-states have negotiated culture based upon national boundaries, often equating belonging to a culture with belonging to a certain race.¹⁶⁸ Pieterse argues, however, that culture knows no boundaries based upon region or history, when looking at culture from the viewpoint of a set of learned and shared behaviors and beliefs. He argues that the notion of hybridity moves beyond the idea of politics based upon identity, because hybridity is based upon the notion that borders are arbitrary. Furthermore, he argues that hybridity removes the notion that culture is a solid entity, bound to a specific region, because it focuses on those experiences that are subversive to these notions. The relevance of using Nederveen Pieterse's theory is that he adds the dimension of capitalism and consumerism. Rather than departing from the notion that commodification and consumerism lead to a (consumer) culture of sameness across the globe, he rather argues that there are multiple capitalisms that are diverse due to their different cultural crossroads.¹⁶⁹ For my thesis, this implies that the specific mix of cultural crossroads in Berlin, Germany, will provide insight

¹⁶⁵ Nederveen Pieterse, "Hybridity, So What? : The Anti-Hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition." edited by Lash, Scott and Featherstone, Mike: *Recognition and Difference*. Sage Publications, 2012, P 238.

¹⁶⁶ Young, Robert, *Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. Routledge, 1995, P 6.

¹⁶⁷ Brun, Marilyne, Conference paper, "Transgressive Hybridity? The Historical Association of Hybridity and Transgression", Work in Progress Days, 30-31 Oct. 2007, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne, Australia.

¹⁶⁸ Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, P 49.

¹⁶⁹ Nederveen, Pieterse, Idem, P 60.

into the type of consumerism that is present within the society. It also implies that the unique background of each capitalism will have a different effect upon the cultural elements that are chosen to be integrated into the culture and those are left out. Nederveen Pieterse has looked at the distinction of families of capitalisms and distinguished a difference between Liberal Market Economies (rooted in an Anglo-American tradition) and so-called Coordinated Market Economies, which would apply to Germany, encouraging private actors to cooperate with state governance.¹⁷⁰ Pieterse does lack an in-depth analysis of his categorizations of capitalisms and fails to provide a theory that clearly distinguishes one from another.

Furthermore, he has argued that especially the middle classes are affected by the processes of globalization and it is within this class that social and cultural practices are changing, along with it these classes self-identify with chosen hybrid identities.¹⁷¹ This is relevant for my thesis, as we shall see that the main target group for Kundalini Yoga in Berlin seems to be the middle classes. This would mean that especially this group is sensitive to establishing and choosing a hybrid identity, influenced by what is on offer through processes of cultural globalization.

Nederveen Pieterse argues that hybridity allows for less strict borders between what is alien and what is not. Here he draws upon the 3d space theory of Homi Bhabha, which posits that in the interaction between the colonized and the colonizer both are influenced by one another, taking away the element of inequality and of cultural hierarchy.¹⁷² On the other hand, he has acknowledged that although globalization makes for many new hybrid forms of culture, it is also true that there is 'unevenness, asymmetry and inequality' that are interwoven into these hybrid forms¹⁷³. He also insists that some hybrid cultures are of an assimilative nature, where they reproduce the dominant culture¹⁷⁴.

The use of hybridity has, nonetheless, been criticized for neglecting the material boundaries of ethnicity, class and gender. This, as argued by Acheraiou, has contributed to the fact that hybridity does not better the position of the other.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. 'Rethinking Modernity and Capitalism.' Sociopedia, 2014.

¹⁷¹ Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2009, P 97.

¹⁷² Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, Helen. *Post-Colonial Studies The Key Concepts*. Second edition, London, Routledge 2007, P 118.

¹⁷³ Moghadam, M. Valentine. *Globalizing Women. Transnational Feminist Networks*. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2005, P 26.

¹⁷⁴ Ampuja, Marko. *Theorizing Globalization. A Critique of the Mediatization of Social Theory*. Leiden, Koninklijke Brill, 2012, P 273.

¹⁷⁵ Acheraiou, Amar. *Questioning Hybridization, Postcolonialism and Globalization*. Basingstroke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, P 223.

Another critique of hybridity is that it is only valid if one assumes there is such a thing as purity.¹⁷⁶ Pieterse states that there are two hybridities: there is new hybridity which is a process that can be observed and seems to be experienced in daily life more and there is old hybridity which constitutes a viewpoint and discourse.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the conscious *undergoing* and *doing* of this old and new hybridity at the same time makes for a new process, facilitated by the rapid pace of globalization.

Tomlinson has voiced other critiques of hybridization; for one he argues that because the mixing of cultures has always existed, as mentioned above, hybridization becomes 'uninformative'.¹⁷⁸ He also argues that it is difficult to compare processes of deterritorialization and hybridization because of the power dynamics that govern interactions between regions.¹⁷⁹ One process of deterritorialization is not the same as the other, depending on the place and context. Nederveen Pieterse partly addresses this issue by pointing out the unevenness of globalization. Tomlinson states that class also needs to be added to the mix. He points to the fact that to be able to consume different cultural elements/ expressions is possible for those who have the luxury (time, money, privilege) to do so. In this way, hybridization becomes culture commodified.¹⁸⁰ And, in a free market, cultural hybridization is encouraged as it offers consumers a wide array of choices, to keep them fulfilled and the companies profitable¹⁸¹. Partly, by using the imagery to create a life world where the consumer is led to believe to have access to all cultures, partly by using the rhetoric of *choice* and *individualism*.

Another point for critique has been offered by Laplantine and Nouss, stating that terms such as hybridity refers to the breakup of certain cultural elements in favor of a homogenous entirety.¹⁸² It is true that Nederveen-Pieterse has stated that seemingly different cultures are only different on the surface¹⁸³ and deems the similarities of cultures more important, he also states that global homogenization is too narrow a few of hybridization.

In spite of this critique, the use of hybridization is useful for my thesis. Hybridization can be

¹⁷⁶ Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. 'Hybridity, So What? *Theory, Culture and Society*. 2001, Pp 221.

¹⁷⁷ Pascal-Yan Sayegh. "Cultural Hybridity and Modern Binaries: Overcoming the Opposition Between Identity and Otherness." Draft paper.

"Cultures in Transit" conference Liverpool, 2008

¹⁷⁸ Ampuja, Marko, Ibid, P 276.

¹⁷⁹ Idem

¹⁸⁰ Idem, P 278.

¹⁸¹ Kraidy, M. Marwan. *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*. Delhi, Temple University Press, 2005, P 95.

¹⁸² Laplantine, Félix and Alexis Nouss, *Métissages*, Paris: Pauvert, 2001, P 7.

¹⁸³ Nederveen-Pieterse, Idem, P 54.

viewed as being a defining factor in consumerism,¹⁸⁴ influencing decision-making processes of individuals. Which makes it essential to my thesis, in which I argue the other side; consumerism is also responsible for deepening, perhaps an assimilative, hybridization. Furthermore, it has become clear that individuals, or rather the construction of individual identity, lies at the heart of hybridization; the individual gets a wide variety of choices, ultimately giving individuals a feeling of agency.

2.4 CULTURAL HYBRIDITY AS THE PRODUCT OF MARKET GLOBALIZATION

The reason for using Nederveen Pieterse's theory of hybridity instead of other theories that are aimed at explaining the interaction and adaptation of cultural elements, is that Nederveen Pieterse sees cultural hybridity as a consequence of market globalization.¹⁸⁵ Nederveen-Pieterse claims that globalization is a direct consequence of the development of capitalism.¹⁸⁶ Global capital is rooted in local money flows and these are rooted in local culture. Globally interacting markets bring forth a mixing of cultures. Addressing cultural hybridity, therefore, is impossible without addressing the reality of material power imbalances that have come into existence as a consequence of and continuation of historical imperialism. The strength of hybridity lies, according to Nederveen Pieterse, in the fact that it can, as mentioned before, question such power-imbalances. By applying this *critical hybridity*, it should be possible to look at how groups of people come together and what role inequality plays.¹⁸⁷ Together with hybridity's ability to address historical boundaries, and with that the question of what is original, the theory is helpful in explaining why cultural elements from a country far from Germany have managed to penetrate into local communities in Berlin.

¹⁸⁴ Thygesen, Niels. *The Illusion of Management Control. A Systems Theoretical Approach to Managerial Technologies*. Chippenham, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, P 88.

¹⁸⁵ Kuortti, Joele and Nyman, Jopi. *Reconstructing Hybridity. Post-Colonial studies in Transition*. London, Brill Publishers, 2007, P 102.

¹⁸⁶ Idem.

¹⁸⁷ Kuortti, Idem, P 12.

2.5 THE CITY OF BERLIN

As hybridity, then, is the consequence of market globalization, it makes sense to look at interacting cultural elements within societies (also) through the lens of how markets interact on a local level. In the case of Berlin, we are looking at a capitalist, consumerist market. Furthermore, market globalization in the form of (among others) free-market capitalism, pushed for a concentration of labor and capital, resulting in growing urbanization¹⁸⁸. Cities play a twofold part in the capitalist system; it reproduces the social norms of economic capitalism and it is the place where the correlation between the social and the economic is magnified by the said reproduction and the pressure of the economy for cities to remain economic centers¹⁸⁹. Within that space, the city, meaning is ascribed to experience by the usage of symbols and narratives that are imagined to be part of the urban community¹⁹⁰. This may allow all voices, including those of the marginalized, to be heard-. Cities also offer an intense space for many nationalities to construct narratives, often giving value to particular identities, depending on the context¹⁹¹. Ulf Hannerz suggested that in a setting where free-market capitalism rules, ‘people relate to each other as buyer and seller and meaning and meaningful form have been commodified.’¹⁹² This is true for Berlin and yoga too; most practitioners buy yoga based on several premises (e.g. open to all), and yoga teachers create the desire to buy their yoga. This in itself (re)produces culture, that is part of selling and buying.¹⁹³

DeMichelis stresses that urban settings put more stress upon individuals,¹⁹⁴ which is why yoga, with its promise of stress-relief, may be so popular especially in these urban spaces. Looking at the marketing materials of Berliner Kundalini Yoga teachers, it can be said that they cater very well to the white, middle- and upper-class market that is Berlin. Although, one could make an argument that yoga in the West is primarily a female, white, upper/middle class past-time experience, as mentioned before, it may also be true that Berlin may offer a

¹⁸⁸ Scott, Allen J. *Social Economy of the Metropolis: Cognitive-Cultural Capitalism and the Global Resurgence of Cities*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, P 1.

¹⁸⁹ Scott, *idem*.

¹⁹⁰ King, Anthony, D. “Re-presenting world cities: cultural theory/social practice.” In Knox, Paul L. and Taylor, Peter J. *World cities in a world system*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, P 217

¹⁹¹ King, P 222.

¹⁹² King, *Idem*, P 227.

¹⁹³ Jain, *Ibid*, P 45.

¹⁹⁴ De Michaelis, *Idem*, P 249.

space for (white) women to experience a different way of exploring womanhood.¹⁹⁵ In this different vision of womanhood, somewhat more away from the traditional roles women have held in the past, women may very well find freedom in inner growth through, among others, yoga practices in Berlin.

2.6 CREOLIZATION

In the light of this global cultural mixture, another theory was very important for my research, namely the theory that views cultural globalization processes as a form of creolization. In light of this theory, as presented by Ulf Hannerz, it is said that the West itself is a creolization, a mixture of cultures.¹⁹⁶ In creolization individuals select certain elements from the cultures they adopt or the cultures they come into contact with. These elements are then bestowed upon with new meanings that are different from their original significance in the original culture. The merging of elements that takes place creates completely new cultural elements that replace the old ones. Such elements underline a common identity within the community they are used in. Nederveen-Pieterse has criticized this theory for being too much linked to “post 16th century Americas.”¹⁹⁷ I believe, though, that the bestowing of new meaning unto existing cultural elements is a vital part of Hannerz theory and complements Nederveen-Pieterse’s theory in the sense that it seeks to look into the terms under which cultural elements are adopted and given a new meaning.

In my research, it will become clear that the Berliner Kundalini Yoga Teacher Community has taken cultural elements that were non-native to them and have given them a new meaning, thereby creating a sense of common identity.

¹⁹⁵ Stratigakos, Despina. “Urban Journey: A Woman’s Guidebook to Self-Discovery in Berlin.” in *Constructions of Self and Others in Yoga, Travel, and Tourism*, Springer, P 55-63.

¹⁹⁶ Hannerz, Ulf. “The World Creolisation.” *Africa*, Volume 57, Issue 4 (Sierra Leone, 1787-1987) October 1987, P 546-559.

¹⁹⁷ Pieterse, Ibid, P. 54.

2.7 GURUS, CHARISMA AND WEBER'S DISENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD

One more theory to address is Max Weber's theory on the Charismatic authority and the West's disenchantment of the world.

Obviously, yoga clearly comes with a situation in which there is a teacher who transmits knowledge to her/his students. Some teachers attract more students than others and oftentimes this will have less to do with the skill of a certain teacher, and more with the way they express themselves; their charisma. Weber sums up Charisma as follows: ``a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers of qualities. These as such are not accessible to the ordinary person but are regarded as divine and exemplary.¹⁹⁸ This type of power will inevitably, according to Weber, lead to rationalization and/traditionalization.¹⁹⁹

Here it is evident how in Kundalini Yoga, from its very beginnings, the teacher has always had a special role within the community. Yogi Bhajan was called charismatic by his students and some students actually believed and still believe he was in some ways divine. He came to teach yoga in the West, but ended up creating a new religious movement, including a tradition with many rituals. In order to sell this to the public, Yogi Bhajan used rationalization in the form of scientific explanations for yoga asanas, meditation and mantra chanting. The students still regard Yogi Bhajan as the greatest teacher of Kundalini Yoga, but within the Berliner Kundalini Yoga scene teachers have a certain status in comparison with non-teachers. Not everyone is gifted with the same level of charisma, but those who are said to have charisma often tell extraordinary stories. There is, for example, the teacher who has survived the Tsunami in Thailand in 2004 by, allegedly, using her abilities acquired through yoga, the teacher who claims to have the power to allow you to find the meaning of life and the teacher that blatantly states she is enlightened.

Weber goes on to discuss the notion of pure charisma; this is when the individual feels it is her/his purpose in life to fulfill a spiritual duty. In the event of actual pure charisma this would lead to a situation without economic exploitation²⁰⁰, but Weber argues that this is hardly ever the actual situation. In a way, though, individuals that sense this spiritual calling as their life's mission, are encouraged to do things differently than the societal standard. In

¹⁹⁸ Hansen, George, P. *The Trickster and the Paranormal*. Philadelphia, Xlibris, 2001, Chapter 8, P 103 – 109.

¹⁹⁹ Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. California, University of California Press, 1978, P 246.

²⁰⁰ Weber, Ibid, P 1113.

order to demonstrate this type of charisma to the followers, the individuals have to keep practicing and demonstrating they actually still possess the power. Altered states of consciousness and 'miracles' can be part of the proof. Pure charisma is anti-structure and creates something new.

There is a difference, according to Weber, between this Pure, emphatic, charisma and other types of charisma he identifies: pseudo-charisma, lineage-charisma, charisma of office and manufactured charisma.

When we look at the disenchantment of the world, Weber points out that rationalization of systems and societies involves a 'systematization of ideas'²⁰¹ When applied to communities, this means structure, rules and a denser social complexity. This process comes with a demystification of the world.²⁰²

And yet, it seems that Weber's theory, although explaining much, also implies that rationality has its boundaries. Thus, it may very well be that some things simply cannot be explained, and it is certainly plausible that we are governed by forces that are beyond our rationality. In this light the Berliner Kundalini Yoga teacher sangha may, to a certain extent, lie beyond rational explanation as a sociological phenomenon.

2.8 CONSUMERISM

A consumerist society describes a society where the majority of people connect part of their goals to buying and displaying goods and services. They become enmeshed in buying and derive identity-values from new items that they acquire and display. In this society, companies, institutions, service providers e.g. try stimulating (the desire to) buying ever more, partly in order to keep their own business viable.²⁰³ This means those that are selling try to both make the product on sale look appealing, and try to stimulate consumers' desires to buy more. As the Fordist society guaranteed a steady production of goods and all products had become available at cheaper prices, people gained access not only to what they needed to have, but also what they wished to have. The excess money left to spend on such items diversified available goods. As these goods became accessible to larger audiences, goods became another way to set yourself apart, another way to create your identity. The figurative

²⁰¹ Weber quoted in George P. Hansen, P 105.

²⁰² Hanssen, Ibid.

²⁰³ Stearns, Peter N. *Consumerism in World History. The Global Transformation of Desire*. New York, Routledge, 2001, P 8.

meaning of belongings now gained a tangible social meaning affecting our relationships, identities and gatherings.²⁰⁴ In this way consumerism could infiltrate all areas of life, extending far beyond buying and consuming. Nowadays still, consumerism has taken up a large part of what used to be the private sphere; a lot of our daily activities, including religion, have become centered around the way we consume. The interaction with the world is highly targeted towards a transactional nature with `consumer goods`, which includes religious practices and services.²⁰⁵ To understand this assumption, we must widen our definition of consumption beyond the more traditional viewpoint that consumption is limited to buying things. Instead, I would agree with McCracken, who understands consumption as a cultural occurrence and argues that:

*“...Western developed society culture is profoundly connected to and dependent upon consumption. Without consumer goods, modern developed societies would lose key instruments for the reproduction, representation and manipulation of their culture...The meaning of consumer goods and the meaning creation accomplished by consumer processes are an important part of the scaffolding of our present realities. Without consumer goods, certain acts of self-definition in this culture would be impossible.”*²⁰⁶

With this definition, McCracken shows us how intertwined our realities are with consumerist values, as we use consumption to define who we are within society. Now if we go beyond the act of buying and consuming and consider that consumption defines a large part of our realities, then *consumerism* can be said to address the reason behind being occupied with consumption, which is not necessarily a bad thing, and the manifestation of consumption within culture.²⁰⁷ This entails how people give meaning to the prevalence of consumerist lifestyles and reconstruct it. I will use this as a lens through which to look at how Kundalini Yoga is consumed in Berlin; as based upon a transactional nature, which is determined by the way in which teachers and practitioners use consumption to define themselves.

If we look at consumerism as a cultural ideology, the following definition of Sklair notifies us how consumer behavior not only changed, but how the media has played a vital role in spreading consumerist values. This is not only a way of dispersing consumerist ideas, but also serves as a medium to increase consumerist behavior.

“First, capitalism entered a qualitatively new globalizing phase in the 1950s. As the electronic revolution got underway, significant changes began to occur in the productivity of

²⁰⁴ Miles, Steven. *Consumerism as a Way of Life*. London, SAGE Publications Ltd. 1998, P 7.

²⁰⁵ Miles, Idem, P 1.

²⁰⁶ McCracken, Grant. “Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods.” *The Journal of Consumer Research*. Vol. 13, No. 1, June, 1986, P 71-84.

²⁰⁷ Miles, Idem, P 4.

*capitalist factories, systems of extraction and processing of raw materials, product design, marketing and distribution of goods and services. [...] Second, the technical and social relations that structured the mass media all over the world made it very easy for new consumerist lifestyles to become the dominant motif for these media, which became in time extraordinarily efficient vehicles for the broadcasting of the culture-ideology of consumerism globally.*²⁰⁸

In this viewpoint, it becomes clear that the media has an important role to play in dispersing an occupation with consumption and consumerist values. It would follow that if anyone who is serious about spreading a 'new consumerist lifestyle' will probably make use of the media to convey reasons for buying goods and services.

If we look at services and products, as mentioned before, commercialization is used to sell and so making products becomes a rationalized economic policy.²⁰⁹ This implies that traditional values may be diminished to increase the rational element of sales. When we look again at Weber, we can see that this is particularly true for rationalized societies, where the world has seen 'disenchantment', an example of which are religious holidays. These used to celebrate metaphysical phenomena, but these elements have been rationalized to fit commercial purposes.²¹⁰ We can think of the selling of chocolate Easter eggs around Easter for example. And the same can be said for elements that are taken up into the consumerist culture; for example, yoga, as we have seen, has undergone the same 'disenchantment' to fit commercial purposes.

It also means that symbolism is replaced by objective values (often monetary value). Where gifts in the past may have contained the symbolism of energy exchange (as Yogi Bhanjan taught), nowadays a Kundalini Yoga Teacher in Berlin is not so much interested in the value of energy exchange, as she/he is in receiving the monetary value of between 11-25 euro per Kundalini Yoga class.

Consumerism in itself is seen as a phenomenon displaying different power relations with others and with institutions. It has also been named a Western ideology that is re-colonizing the world.²¹¹ The idea behind this is not that mass media spread the consumerist lifestyle on a broad scale as mentioned above, but also the idea that Western consumerist values get projected onto rituals and practices that are not Western, to submit these to the local dominant

²⁰⁸ Sklair, L. "Iconic architecture and the culture-ideology of consumerism." *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 27, Issue 5, 2012, P 135-159.

²⁰⁹ Featherstone, Mike. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London, SAGE publications, 2007, P 8-10.

²¹⁰ Schmidt, Lee Eric. *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, P 7.

²¹¹ Tomlinson, John. *Cultural Imperialism. A Critical Introduction*. London, Continuum Press, 1991.

culture.²¹²

The definition and context of consumerism I will use for my thesis are defined by Steven Miles, who opts for using a definition that accentuates the interactive quality of the consumerism-experience. Miles states that consumerism:

*...can be defined as a psycho-social expression of the intersection between the structural and the individual within the realm of consumption. The consuming experience is psycho-social in the sense that it represents a bridge that links the individual and society.*²¹³

Miles adds that consumption plays a notable part in how we act socially and on an individual level in everyday life. He feels that consumerism plays into a personal appeal of fulfillment, while at the same time functions as a mechanism to control everyday life.²¹⁴ Regarding life in the (post-industrial) city, Miles goes on to say that especially the city provides a commodified experience and there are a myriad of physical demonstrations of how this commodification finds its way into our everyday life. Local singularities are secondary to the general normalization of this commodification and consumers are interacting less with each other than with the image of the entrepreneurial city²¹⁵. This makes for the fact that consumption largely defines the city landscape.

C. Ali Khan adds an important notion, namely that consumerism professes a bigger-better-faster-more-mentality.²¹⁶ All these attributes contribute to how we think we are adding value to ourselves, to our houses, our career etc. It is a mental model for looking at the world in terms of adding value.

The spirit of consumerism is, furthermore, linked to pleasure and the satisfaction of selfish desires, encouraged by induced want, creating a highly unequal consumption monopolized by the richest.²¹⁷ In this arena, the consumer society, symbolism takes on the meaning of social currency and experiences that which isn't local as somehow familiar.²¹⁸ This creates a demand for an imaginary experience that is created against payment. In the end this experience can

²¹² Tomlinson, Idem.

²¹³ Miles, Steven. *Consumerism: As a Way of Life*. London, Sage Publications, 2004, P 5.

²¹⁴ Miles, Idem, P 5-6.

²¹⁵ Miles, Steven. *Spaces for Consumption*. London, Sage Publications, 2010, P 58, 54.

²¹⁶ Ali Khan, Carolyn. "Go Play in Traffic. Skating, Gender, and Urban Context." *Sage Journals*. Vol 15, Issue 6, 2009.

²¹⁷ Migone, Andrea. "Hedonistic Consumerism: Patterns of Consumption in Contemporary Capitalism." *Sage Journals*, Vol 39, Issue 2, June 2007.

²¹⁸ Miles, Idem, P 27.

never be satisfying, as reality always proves to be less attractive than what was promised, but satisfies a need to consume fiction and artificiality.²¹⁹ A last important aspect of consumerism that I want to mention for my thesis is that consumers become, as Miles points out, complicit in expanding capitalism: while there appears to be the freedom to choose within the consumer market, consumers act accordingly to the capitalist laws of mass production by only being given the choice out of that which is easy to duplicate.²²⁰ This furthers the interests of the corporate marketplace, rather than societal, social or individual interests.

If consumerism is used as a means to choose an identity, it is likely that consumers take elements from here and there to renew themselves continuously, promoted by induced wants. If consumerism encourages us to fulfill our *individual* (selfish) desires, it is likely that even the body itself will be used to satisfy such desires as the tangible (material) form over non-material forms such as enlightenment. Emotions, too, are commodified in this way – what we are presented with by the media, advertising and in our cultural constructions are ways to feel happy and have fun. Emotion, understood as a way of building identity²²¹, is used in this way to build a consumer identity.

In a city, such as Berlin, it will be likely that the middle classes will be sensitive to buying into an imaginary otherness to build an identity that can at the same time be experienced as well as consumed. Motivated to satisfy the desires of the individual body, yoga will most likely play the role of an exotified otherness that promises the attainment of happiness. As it is the individual wishes that are satisfied in this, it is also likely that the yoga community will forfeit experiences that are less tangible (or mystical) to satisfy such desires. With Kundalini Yoga teachers, may seem to offer an alternative to other popular yoga's, yet Kundalini Yoga teachers may depend on the reproducibility of yoga to keep and gain practitioners. In this yoga teachers will be likely to reproduce consumerist and capitalist values by responding to the demand for an experience that is easily reproducible. The type of experience that is on offer will depend on the identity the teacher has chosen; a stronger focus on an exotifying experience will most likely be connected to a teacher that adopts elements that are deemed more exotic to her/his identity. A stronger focus on an individual experience of the body and fitness may very well result in teachers that are first and foremost adopting the physical practice as part of their identity.

²¹⁹ Miles, Idem, P 67-68.

²²⁰ Miles, Idem, P 105.

²²¹ Illouz, Eva. *'Emotions, Imagination and Consumption A new research agenda.'* Sage journals, Vol 9, Issue 3, 2009.

The very physical dimension of capitalism and the consumerist identity is found in capitalism's:

"...triumph of individualistic consumerism, and its crowning social achievement, the creation of a socially guaranteed personal space in which individual consumers can produce their own identities".²²²

Such identities are linked to '*the power to appropriate one's own body to produce the identity, social persona, or the lifestyle one chooses.*'²²³

This leads to bodily focus and characteristics that include fitness, and slimness to be used to create, or produce, one's identity. Such traits become an aspect of creating value based upon status and class. And this is where yoga comes in. In a consumerist society, it is likely that bodily practices will be used to create an identity and to up one's *value*. In practice, the body tends to be sensed as an individualistic property, stripped away from its meaning as (among others) socially and culturally constructed phenomena. With this individualistic approach, the body is at the heart of 'the control of the social relations of personal production.'²²⁴ This implies that the body can also be the stage of establishing and producing social inequality. With this, the body represents a powerful production of power relationships. For my research, it implies that in Kundalini Yoga, a focus on the body may be used as a way to produce an identity, an utterance of an individualistic social philosophy, especially among the middle classes. This process may also create socially excluding spaces by overlooking the body as a social actor. Practicing Kundalini Yoga may, then, become an expression of consumerist values.

The focus on bodily wellbeing, including fitness and stress reduction, is also recognized as adding value to a consumerist and capitalist society in the way that it adds to productivity.²²⁵

In order to maintain a productive body, outside of work hours, and show one's value of contributing to keeping up their productivity, people need time and money. It will come as no surprise, then, that especially the middle classes, more likely to see the body as a product of individual effort, are more likely to have the time and money to do well-being for maintaining the body. Consequently, it shows their economic status; namely that of being affluent enough

²²² Turner, Terence. 'Bodies and Antibodies: Flesh and Fetish in Contemporary Social Theory.' In: Scordas, Thomas J. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, P 27.

²²³ Turner, Idem, P 28.

²²⁴ Turner, Idem, P 28

²²⁵ Carlie Charlene Stokes, Healthiest Ideologies: *The Case of Lululemon*, MA Thesis, School of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Queen's University: 2008.

to be able to afford leisure activities.²²⁶ This privilege is actually carefully promoted in order to make the distinction between those who can afford certain activities and those who can't.²²⁷ A space is created that excludes those who can't afford and strengthens the identity of like-mindedness, both in morals and in class. Kundalini Yoga in Berlin often reflects this, as mentioned before, by taking a private practice into a shared space and by the amount of money charged for classes.

Last, but not least, we have to keep in mind that consumerism aims to create a desire within consumers to add value to themselves by consuming.²²⁸ In order to do this, people's minds are manipulated to desire goods and services. Seeing as capitalism was created with the aim of creating a stable society based upon 'ideas of democracy and capitalism'²²⁹, we can already see how manipulating people's minds has most likely been used to internalize these values. This implies that people who produce and reproduce consumerist values are not consciously doing so, but are, rather, manipulated in doing so. This also implies that within the Kundalini Yoga community in Berlin, consumerist values may be (re)produced in spite of intentions. And it may imply that the Kundalini Yoga community partly uses 'manipulation' (in terms of marketing) to activate consumers' desires to buy into it. Marketing in itself may be a very conscious effort to create desire for a product, yet the fact that people living in a consumerist society have internalized consumerist and capitalist values may cause people to believe they are not actually trying to create a desire to buy. The unconscious (re-)production of consumerist values in teaching and practicing Kundalini Yoga does not account for *experience*. Yoga in general is often experienced as a way to get closer to a state of being that is more reflective and providing a calmer mind.²³⁰ This is part of what the participants are searching for in yoga, separate from fulfilling (unconscious) desires around adding value in terms of increasing productivity and displaying economic class.

²²⁶ Idem, P 28.

²²⁷ Lupton, Deborah . *The Imperative of Health: Public Health and the Regulated Body*, London: Sage Publications, 1995, P 158.

²²⁸ Stearns, Peter N. Idem.

²²⁹ Caramia, Nicole, 'Consumerism: consumer behaviour and the manipulation of the human mind.' 2014, Academia, http://www.academia.edu/6479218/Consumerism_consumer_behaviour_and_the_manipulation_of_the_human_mind

²³⁰ Geoffrey Samuel, Endpiece, *Asian Medicine, Tradition and Modernity (Special Yoga Issue)* 3 (2007): 178 quoted in Singleton and Byrne, "Introduction", P 6.

2.9 YOGA AND CONSUMERISM

Enoch H. Page has argued that the fact that yoga currently is dominated by white women and aimed to further white women, yoga is stuck in being equal to being marketable and aimed at profit.²³¹ This is because by passing on yoga, what is passed on is ‘commercial baggage and colonial fears,’ through the fact that yoga (as we know it) came into existence under colonization, which entails (apart from colonial *rule*) a capitalist effort.²³² This leads to the inevitable legacy of capitalist efforts, by the use of the benefits of yoga, to gain customers. The yoga audience, the white well-to-do audience, has been a great audience for the message about the benefits of yoga. This audience has had to live up to ever higher expectations around personal performance (work as an expression of individual potential), blurring the boundaries between work and past time resulting in higher levels of stress.²³³ In this capacity, the self becomes valuable only in its relevance for the economy.

It has been pointed out that yoga is, therefore, important for a flawless body and to sharpen the mind, both in the service of the economy.²³⁴ As mentioned before, it is the pressure of presenting (the perfect body and well-being) well to the outside world that dictates individual success. It is here that the body becomes, as Featherstone calls it, a place of consumption.²³⁵ The body is determined by what it consumes, among which are social constructs and corporal practices. The body becomes the consumer, as well as the marketing projection space. This is then used to position oneself socially in one’s personal space, as well as in the public space. Furthermore, Barbalet and Lyon claim that: “With the domination of mental over manual labor the phenomenal experience of the body and its ideological and common-sense representation is consumerist.”²³⁶ This means that participants of yoga classes in our consumerist society can’t help but bring their consumerist views to yoga. Furthermore, teachers can’t help but bring these same views to the way they embody and teach yoga. Social media and advertising further promote the hypothetical perfect body. Dr. Diane York Blaine has argued that living in a capitalist society has created a focus on being fit and materialistic and within this context, yoga is primarily seen as physical exercise and is sold as such. She goes on to argue that even though the main part of participants is female, it is the

²³¹ Page, Enoch H. The Gender, Race, and Class Barriers. ‘Enclosing Yoga as White Public Space.’ In: Berila, Beth, Klein Melanie, Jackson, Chelsea. *Yoga, the Body, and Embodied Social Change: An Intersectional Feminist Analysis*. Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, P 57.

²³² Page, Enoch H., Idem, P 41.

²³³ Schnabele, Idem, P 141.

²³⁴ Singleton, Idem, P 11, P 104.

²³⁵ Featherstone, Mike. 1982. ‘The body in consumer culture.’ *Theory, Culture and Society*, 1982, P 18–33.

²³⁶ Schnabele, Idem, P 145.

female body that is objectified in the marketing of yoga.²³⁷ Also, the possible transformative experience of yoga is used to get more participants. In practice, this is found in the language used for marketing yoga. Words like *detoxify*, *stress-relief*, *fitness* and even *gain-more-focus* are continually used in yoga marketing materials, often combined with pictures of allegedly perfect bodies that are able to hold certain poses. The Kundalini Yoga community in Berlin forms no exception.

Besides the fitness factor, the increased productivity and the exoticism, of which I will speak later, there is the element of the consumption of religion. As Altglas has suggested, “religions have become objects of consumption chosen by empowered consumers.”²³⁸ Altglas explains that buying yoga experience allows consumers to feel empowered to take steps towards the (economic discourse of) responsibility to be able to manage the outcome of their work themselves (instead of demanding the state to take care of its citizens). The choice to choose your own individual style of living becomes the work and becomes your potential and it is stimulated you capitalize on this.²³⁹ In this light yoga becomes a tool to self-actualize the needed skills of the post-Fordist service society that requires a positive attitude and management of negative emotions. On a related note, the empowerment of individuals also takes place through the locus of authority on religion shifting to the individual.²⁴⁰

Having said that, this does not account for the *experience* participants and teachers have with yoga. The psychological effects of yoga and yoga as an experience of the divine are considered authentic experiences by practitioners and teachers and I believe they should be respected as such.

2.10 CONSUMERISM AND BERLIN: EAST AND WEST

In Germany there is the unique situation that East and West Germany have been divided after the Second World War and reunited only in 1989. This means that West Germany was already fully engaged in consumerism by the time it rejoined East Germany. The effect of consumerism sweeping into the East after 1989 has been that East Germans have tried to rise

²³⁷ Klein, Melanie. ‘The Intersection of Yoga, Body Image and Standards of Beauty.’ In: Berila, Beth, Klein Melanie, Jackson, Chelsea. *Yoga, the Body, and Embodied Social Change: An Intersectional Feminist Analysis*. Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, P 126.

²³⁸ Altglas, Veronique. *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, P 5.

²³⁹ Altglas, P 276.

²⁴⁰ Singleton, Idem, P 24.

up to the level of consumption of their Western counterparts. Also, the East Germans consuming came to carry a political load by buying certain products, such localism (regional identity and nostalgia) and resistance against this new Western lifestyle.²⁴¹ Another important aspect of the East German experience was the experience of having little control over one's own body and happiness.²⁴² This was due to the fact that physical fitness was seen as the potential for military purposes and the body belonging to the state rather than to oneself.²⁴³ Also, the fit body was seen as representing the perfect body of the socialist citizen in Eastern Europe.²⁴⁴ East Germany had the unique situation that Eastern citizens, even in the Soviet Union, measured their level of success by the capitalist standard of personal consumption.²⁴⁵ In this way, the freedom to consume became mixed with the sense of political freedom.²⁴⁶ So even though socialist values were promoted by the government, individual citizens were partly looking to West Germany for measuring their standard of living and their values. In this way a consumerism of sorts came to the East, albeit one of scarcity under socialist rule. The situation in West Germany was, obviously, quite the opposite. Here the government did not promote socialist values, but rather actively promoted consumerism. Advertising actively developed consumerism in West Germany during the Cold War.²⁴⁷ Consumption could boom quickly in post-war West Germany as the larger part of the population consisted of a middle class that was able to spend more money on goods and services.²⁴⁸ Next to this, the number of jobs was booming. Last but not least, propaganda on individual consumption provided the United States with a unique opportunity to 'domesticate' the Cold War, by actively stimulating consumerism in West Germany.²⁴⁹ When things looked a bit gloomier in the 80s, and unemployment rose, media critics blamed advertising for the push for consumption. Even the government put restrictions on advertising on television.²⁵⁰

²⁴¹ Staab, Andreas. 'Testing the west: Consumerism and national identity in eastern Germany.' In *German Politics*, Volume 6, Issue 2, 1997.

²⁴² Funk, Nanette, Mueller, Magda. *Gender Politics and Post-Communism. Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. London, Routledge, 1993, P 20.

²⁴³ Wilkinson Johnsen, Molly. *Training Socialist Citizens: Sports and the State in East Germany*. Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2008, P 71.

²⁴⁴ Wilkinson et al, Idem, P 66.

²⁴⁵ Edited by Georgy, Peteri, *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press, 2010, P 192.

²⁴⁶ Peteri, Idem, P 174.

²⁴⁷ Hachtmann, Frauke. "Promoting Consumerism in West Germany During the Cold War: An Agency Perspective." Faculty Publications, College of Journalism & Mass Communications, 2016, Pp 3.

²⁴⁸ Hachtmann, Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Castillo, Greg. 'Domesticating the Cold War: Household Consumption as Propaganda in Marshall Plan Germany.' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40, Issue 2, 2005.

²⁵⁰ Hachtmann, Ibid.

And what is happening in contemporary Germany? A study from 2010 found that among East Germans anti-consumption was an important sentiment, as well as the resistance to Western brands. The reason for this sentiment seems to be that the East Germans interviewed feel consumerism creates gaps between rich and poor, making communities less socially stable.²⁵¹ A study of 2002 found that West Germans seem to have a large interest in consuming *culture* as a way of relaying social and class positions.²⁵²

From these histories we can deduct that yoga may be welcomed by Germans from East and West when it is marketed. Some East Germans may historically feel that yoga gives them agency over themselves and over their bodies, as wasn't possible during the Cold War for them or another generation. As consumerism may still be the measure of living standards, yoga marketing may appeal to the sentiment of freedom of choice and individualism. Furthermore, with a possible resistance to hyper consumerism, East Germans may be drawn to the practice of yoga in its promise to go back to the 'roots'. On the other hand, yoga may also be considered more of a 'foreign' (non-regional) influence that should not be marketed extensively.

Some West Germans may very well equate marketed yoga with regeneration (post-war possibilities of consumerism) and with consuming an exotic culture that will somehow change their social positioning. Here too, extensive marketing may be a no-go.

Berlin contains traces of both East and West Germany in its history. Furthermore, one tactic of winning over Germans and Berliners for the American consumerist lifestyle during the Cold War was part of the Marshall Plan; where lavish consumer good exhibitions was one of the tactics used as a means to get people to increase their household consumption.²⁵³ And this has paid off; although Germans in general are not taking many risks when it comes for example to investments, and they usually save money instead of spending it, private consumption is the main driver of growth for the German market.²⁵⁴

Adding to that, Berlin thrives through to the influx of 'foreign elements': tourism is the main

²⁵¹ Albinsson, Pia A., Wolf, Marco, Kopf, Dennis A.

Volume 9, Issue 6, Special Issue: *Sustainability Through Anti-Consumption*, November/December 2010, P 412-425.

²⁵² Katz-Gerro, Tally. 'Highbrow Cultural Consumption and Class Distinction in Italy, Israel, West Germany, Sweden, and the United States.' *Social Forces*, Volume 81, Issue 1, 2002, P 207-229

²⁵³ Castillo, Greg. "Domesticating the Cold War: Household Consumption as Propaganda in Marshall Plan Germany." in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 40, Issue. 2, 2005, P. 261-288.

²⁵⁴ Scheven, Franziska, and Roscher, Franziska, Handelsblatt, 02/06/2015, <https://www.handelsblatt.com/today/finance/german-consumerism-learning-to-live-large/23500656.html?ticket=ST-87210-avWeKdabobuHshmuwy2o-ap5>

driver of the city's economy²⁵⁵, where there is barely any other industry left. And it has attracted the visitors on purpose; among others with the 'campaign' of using the phrase that Berlin is "*arm aber sexy*" - attracting hedonists from all over the world to come and party in the capital.²⁵⁶ The city attracts tourists and caters to their wishes by the variety of attractions, restaurants and places to stay. Add to that the high influx of expatriates. Some say Berlin is extremely adaptable to these influxes; in fact, Berlin may offer a place for *alternative* cultures, including marginal cultures that resist the establishment²⁵⁷ (such as movements against rising rents), but even just the transnational cultural flows through the city enable local cultures to develop differently.²⁵⁸

From this we may conclude that Berlin would be an ideal breeding ground for synergies of cultures to develop. It is in this light that it is likely that Berliners are a) more open to (adaptable) to incoming cultural influences and b) are more likely to adapt any practice to the demand.

2.11 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION

Deterritorialization and reterritorialization go hand in hand as the result of an ever-growing cultural transnationalization.²⁵⁹ Deterritorialization points to both the physicality of changing relation between cultures and cultural elements from the place where they originated to locations all over the world²⁶⁰, as well as its manifestations: cultural homogenization and hybridity.²⁶¹ Though termed in this way, deterritorialization is defined as a mere

²⁵⁵ Bundesministeriums für Wirtschaft und Energie, November 2017, P 11.

https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/wirtschaftsfaktor-tourismus-in-deutschland-lang.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

²⁵⁶ Pidd, Helen. The Guardian, 9th of May 2011.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/may/09/berliners-angry-over-tourists>

²⁵⁷ Shaw, Kate. "The Place of Alternative Culture and the Politics of its Protection in Berlin, Amsterdam and Melbourne." in: *Planning Theory and Practice*, Volume 6, 2005, Issue 2, P 149-169

²⁵⁸ Soysal, Levent. "Diversity of Experience, Experience of Diversity: Turkish Migrant Youth Culture in Berlin." in: *Cultural Dynamics*, part of *Sage Journals*, Volume 13, Issue 1, March 2001.

²⁵⁹ Robertson, R. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London. SAGE Publications, 1992, P 213-241.

²⁶⁰ Giddens, A. *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, P 142.

²⁶¹ Robertson, Idem, P 213-241.

metamorphosis into something new²⁶², there is something else to be considered, namely power relations. Therefore, a third connotation has to do with the questions that arise when cultures/cultural elements 'relocate'; who has the power to determine what elements of a tradition are kept and how rituals are performed and what elements are changed and/or abandoned.²⁶³ Here power struggles arise between the local and non-local culture, colonization practices from the past and modern (cultural) colonization practices, such as the spread of consumerism which is interpreted as such by many, play a part here. In the Western world, the non-local culture/cultural elements are often adapted according to the authority of Westerners (dominant culture); either they change elements or give them new meaning or (what are considered) immigrants may change elements to not evoke hostility.²⁶⁴ As we have seen, we can add to this that a 'disenchantment' of non-native cultural elements adds to this process and makes such elements ready to be sold within the consumerist culture. And with a spiritual interest on the rise²⁶⁵, the opposite also helps to integrate new cultural elements into consumer culture; the re-enchantment, or renewed interest in spirituality, of the West. Reterritorialization, as mentioned before, seems to always accompany deterritorialization in the form of "certain relative, partial territorial relocalizations of old and new symbolic productions."²⁶⁶ Reterritorialization means active blending of old and new cultural elements, based upon picking and choosing.²⁶⁷ Deterritorialization cannot be seen as a stand-alone, as it is about taking from other places, but with reterritorialization it is always re-taken somewhere else²⁶⁸. With this definition, we can deduct that reterritorialization includes both the adaptation of non-native cultural elements to match the existing (dominant) culture, and the inclusion of cultural elements as they were. The elements-as-they-were may, however, be given a new meaning in the different spatial and cultural context. The new blend of cultural elements is then given a new symbolic meaning within the existing culture. Here, too, the question of authority comes in; who determines which elements stay as they were and who decides what (new) meanings are given to each element, ritual, identity?

²⁶² Tomlinson, Idem.

²⁶³ Alsayyad, Nezar. *The End of Tradition?* London, Routledge, 2004, P 34.

²⁶⁴ Alsayyad, Idem, P 34-36.

²⁶⁵ Partridge, Christopher. *The Re-Enchantment of the West*. New York, T&T Clark International, 2004

²⁶⁶ García Canclini, N. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, Minnesota, Minnesota University Press, 2005, P 229.

²⁶⁷ Lull, James. *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, P 35.

268 Kaplan, Caren. *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2000, P 89.

The media nowadays plays a crucial role in processes of de-/re-territorialization as well. The mediatization of our everyday lives, and thus cultural encounters, is everywhere and so it has become a crucial factor in the de-/re-territorialization of cultures.²⁶⁹ This effect is magnified by the mass media, capable of reaching every corner of the world. Furthermore, global migration as well as global commodification have contributed to an amplification of deterritorialization²⁷⁰. One of the main reasons why deterritorialization has taken flight is due to contemporary culture being starkly influenced by the media, as mentioned before. One could argue that this mediatization lies at the foundation of cultural globalization, as local cultural aspects can now serve as a means of identification across the globe through media. As Hernandez has argued²⁷¹, mass media have introduced traditionally local cultural elements to the world, making it part of the global culture, and by doing so introduced foreign cultural elements to anyone living in a different context. And with the value accredited to traditional cultural elements worldwide, through mass media, anyone can include certain elements into their lives – making culture a product to be consumed. In consequence, to allow for traditional, local, cultural elements to become part of the global culture and institutionally defended in bodies such as UNESCO, often deletion or omission of certain elements is necessary, as well as a more exciting version of the culture²⁷². It seems certain that the version of any local culture reaching another region of the world through mass media, shows up as an uprooted version influenced by leaving elements out and with a dramatization of elements that help sell the culture (seem more exciting). The reterritorialization takes place at the same time – any individual can take up the watered-down cultural elements of a culture and integrate them into their own culture as they see fit, to make their own (experience of) culture more exciting and to consumer culture as a product.

²⁶⁹ Tomlinson, Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Hernandez, Gil-Manuel. “The Deterritorialization of Cultural Heritage.” *Journal of Contemporary Culture*, Issue 1, 2006.

²⁷¹ Hernandez, Ibid.

²⁷² Hernandez, Ibid.

2.12 THE RELATION BETWEEN HYBRIDIZATION, CREOLIZATION, DE-/RE-TERRITORIALIZATION AND CONSUMERISM

As mentioned before, hybridization can be viewed as being a defining factor in consumerism,²⁷³ influencing decision-making processes of individuals. Part of which is the fact that consumers are exposed to media and advertising on a larger than ever before scale, influencing their buying behavior. I will come back to this.

In general, cultural hybridization means that a new form of culture comes into existence out of the combination of two previously existing cultures, then the new form in itself can be called a creole form. In effect hybridization would be an example of creolization, as hybrid elements in culture/society represent the creolization of society and culture.²⁷⁴ But there is more to it.

Creolization has been referred to as the process of redefining ethnic identities to suit the local context.²⁷⁵ This implies a power imbalance.²⁷⁶ Therefore, creolization has been said to happen in a context where there is conflict and/or colonization, a context in which taking on and reiterating cultural elements is highly affected by the invading Other.²⁷⁷ When we revisit the concept of de-/re-territorialization, we can see that it is closely linked to the question authority as to who defines culture and identities and who gives meaning to symbols and rituals. The outcome of a blend of cultural elements in creolization seems uncertain; there is a power difference, but adaptation of cultural elements may very well be done by those that are considered the `other`.

(Cultural) hybridization, on the other hand, seems to mix cultures but replicates the dominant hegemonic structures and/or restores them.²⁷⁸ Here authority comes in too, but with a more distinctive taste; the new cultural elements are assimilated in such a way as to reproduce the dominant culture and power relations. Such synthesis seems, then, to be the prerogative of the dominant culture. Despite negative implications of creolization, the attitudes towards creolization are both positive *and* negative, depending on the viewpoint of the beholder. There

²⁷³ Thygesen, Niels. *The Illusion of Management Control. A Systems Theoretical Approach to Managerial Technologies*. Chippenham, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, P 88.

²⁷⁴ Knörr, Jacqueline. *Towards Conceptualizing Creolization and Creole-ness*. Working Paper. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers. Halle, 2008. P 1.

²⁷⁵ Knörr, Idem P 5.

²⁷⁶ Atalay, Zeynep. Ritzer, George. *Readings in Globalization: Key Concepts and Major Debates*. Maiden, USA, Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2010. P 325.

²⁷⁷ Knepper, Wendy. *Colonization, Creolization, and Globalization: The Art and Ruses of Bricolage*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2006.

²⁷⁸ Atalay and Ritzer, Idem, P 329.

are those that feel a culture is being made less by creolization with an unequal power balance –for example the Sikh community feels marginalized at times, when Kundalini Yogis represent their faith in a different context. Kundalini Yoga teachers, on the other hand, may feel a lot of reference for the new form of culture, because it has roots in a culture that is not theirs.

Consumer culture/consumerism reflects the influence of capitalism to shape the everyday lives of individuals; it reproduces certain values and means to gain status and thus a way of expressing identity, and yet this all takes place within the confinements of the limited to the economic system of capitalism. Still individuals assign meaning to the interaction of culture and the material and so it is not just about the consumption of products and/or the attainment of goods, but rather about the before mentioned values and the means of expressing individual identity. ²⁷⁹ According to Lash and Urry ²⁸⁰ consumerism creates a divide in society by creating a gap between those who can buy certain goods and the values they represent and those who can't buy these goods. Ritzer ²⁸¹ goes even further to say that creating a society that heralds a consumerist lifestyle of desire forces those who can't afford it into debt. Steven Miles ²⁸² lastly, concludes that those who can't partake in consumerism, because they can't afford it, will end with low self-esteem and the longing of a consumerist desire that can't be fulfilled but is constantly advocated by society. I mention these aspects of consumerism, because of the inherent power relations, that show that those in power determine what is desirable and what is not. Those in power get to determine which cultural elements of consumerism get what meaning.

In the interaction that happens with Creolization and Hybridization in relation to Consumerism, it is about how cultural elements are taken over and sometimes reiterated in contradictory ways, to fit the consumerist concepts around goods and meanings, to help people to negotiate their identities and consumption experiences. And it is about defining and perpetuating power relations, about the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of non-local cultural elements to fit the goals of consumerism.

²⁷⁹ Featherstone, Mike. "Perspectives on consumer culture." *Sociology*, Vol. 24. Issue 1, 2010, P 5–22.

²⁸⁰ Lash, Scott and Urry, John. *Economies of Signs and Space*. London, Sage Publications Ltd, 1994.

²⁸¹ Ritzer, George. *Expressing America: A Critique of the Global Credit Card Society*. Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press, Sage Publications, 1995.

²⁸² Miles, Idem.

2.13 DETERRITORIALIZATION, RE-TERRITORIALIZATION AND THE ENSUING HYBRIDITY

When we assume that deterritorialization involves taking cultural elements and applying them to a new context, as discussed before, and reterritorialization as the process in which the said cultural elements are turned into a local form, hybridity is the ensuing new form of culture that is created in the new context²⁸³. This ensuing hybridity is found in the way that people reposition themselves and reconstruct their identities based upon the contact with different cultures. In urban environments this becomes very tangible, as cities are often the place where people of different cultural backgrounds and from different geographical spaces meet and their identities can intersect²⁸⁴. This can lead to the forming of new cultural identities, where the periphery and center meet, yet we must be careful to assume that, as Nederveen Pieterse mentions, the periphery has more to say in this equation; in spite of globalization there is still identification with nation-states and though the borders between nation-states may feel less solid, racism and classism (and thus unequal power relations) are still an issue²⁸⁵. With (imagined) less solid geographical borders, social spaces are formed on a global scale. And in one local area, different social spaces can co-exist²⁸⁶. Consumerism plays an important part in creating these social spaces and creating hybridity. One example is how lifestyle choices are co-formed by advertising and branding²⁸⁷, another example is influencing of individual desires for commercial gain²⁸⁸. Another powerful player in bringing about deterritorialization and hybridity is the media. As Appadurai puts it; the (electronic) media has deterritorialized culture more than ever, by creating a subjective, hybrid, localism²⁸⁹. This process happens by the fact that there is now a global flow of (among others) ideas, pictures and means that the media helps transpire by putting producers of culture in contact with the public beyond borders²⁹⁰. Appadurai sees the nation-state as a social construct that inevitably leads to

²⁸³ Gokcen, Coskuner-Balli and Burcak, Ertimur, "Creating Hybridity: the Case of American Yoga", 2015 in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 43, eds. Kristin Diehl and Carolyn Yoon, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, P 494-497.

²⁸⁴ Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London, Routledge, 2003, P 7.

²⁸⁵ Bonnet, Alastair and Nayak, Anoop. 'Cultural Geographies - The Territory of Race.' In (edited by) Anderson, Kay, Domosh, Mona, Pile, Steve and Thrift, Nigel. *Handbook of Cultural Geography*. London, Sage Publications, 2003, P 307.

²⁸⁶ Edited by Pries, Ludger. *New Transnational Social Spaces. International Migration and Transnational Companies in the Early Twenty-first Century*. London, Routledge, 2001, P 50.

²⁸⁷ Clarke, David, B. *The Consumer Society and the Postmodern City*. London, Routledge, 2003, P 75.

²⁸⁸ Braidotti, Rosie. *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosie Braidotti*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, P 210.

²⁸⁹ Ampuja. *Idem*, P 302.

²⁹⁰ Ampuja, *Ibid*.

homogeneity within its borders, and hybridity as a way of re-imagining the global world order, thus creating new ways to imagine what it means to create a lifeworld. In this way Appadurai sees hybridity as a way to move beyond the nation-state²⁹¹. This leaves room for individuals to re-imagine their own lifeworld, which may contain different cultural elements. Furthermore, it seems that for both Nederveen Pieterse and Appadurai the media has a great role to play in deterritorialization and reterritorialization cultural elements, after which hybridity can ensue by having made a non-local culture one's own by assigning new meanings to these cultural elements. It is important for my thesis to think about this specific element of hybridization connected to the spread of cultural elements by media, as the informal communal spaces that play a great role in shaping hybridity and are formed by people of a diaspora, refugees and/or other minority groups, is not readily applicable to Kundalini Teachers in Berlin.

Spaces where yoga is practiced can be seen as Bhabha's in-between spaces, where: '*outside, or in-between traditional binary structures of cultural analysis... an attempt to assign spatial characteristics to the margins, those areas of irresolution between cultures, or inside them, where hybridization occurs.*'²⁹² As mentioned before, some elements are demystified and deterritorialized and other elements are given new meanings in order to better suit modern yoga practitioners. In practice the imagery, rituals and clothing may imitate a particular tradition, but are given a new meaning. In this way yoga teachers can promote an enlightened worldview but need the Western 'scientific' eye to validate this worldview. Berliner (Kundalini) Yoga studios represent this in part through their imagery, often a mixture of oriental elements and modern images as well as their urban setting.

By balancing Eastern and Western ideologies and spiritualities, yoga studios are themselves spaces of cultural hybridity. Even the fact that bodies meet in yoga spaces, makes for a place of exchange of global ideas and rituals. The creation of such a space also allows for people to have a 'hybrid' relation to yoga. The modernity of yoga studios allows for some practitioners to practice their yoga in a mundane way, while for others certain rituals or imagery allows for a chosen spiritual experience. The yoga canon has been affected by and re-imagined to suit the modern Westerner and has therefore been named "Neo-Hinduism,"²⁹³ As Wilhelm Halbfass put it: "The link with which the Neo-Hindus find their tradition is, one may say, an

²⁹¹ Ampuja, Idem, P 303

²⁹² Bhabha, Homi. "Third Space". In *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference*, edited by J. Rutherford, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, P 207–221.

²⁹³ DeMichelis, Elizabeth. *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism*. London, Continuum, 2008, P38.

afterthought; for they first adopt Western values and means of orientation and then attempt to find the foreign in the indigenous.”²⁹⁴ This forms the starting point for teaching Kundalini Yoga in the Western world: the first and foremost point of orientation are the Western values and as we have seen, these values have their roots in consumerism nowadays. ‘Finding the foreign’, is therefore used to support the original point of departure – consumerist values. In general, for yoga this often means that yoga studios focus on the material dimension of body regulation, also in order to facilitate the production of identity through the act of performing yoga. The production of identity by doing one type of yoga and not the other, helps tailor to a more individualistic expression of the body and thus the self. It may also help to create group-identity by excluding other forms of yoga.

Kundalini Yoga spaces in Berlin provide the same hybrid spaces, where the use of imagery from Sikhism and Kundalini Yoga Gurus and rituals collides with modernly furnished spaces, marketing around well-being and fitness and the interaction with non-yogic practices through the presence of other courses/course participants. Teachers come in with their own (partly unconscious) Western and consumerist norms and values and mix this with (as mentioned before) an imagined root of Kundalini Yoga and a projection of ‘traditional’ Sikh and Indian values, rituals and beliefs. Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin (partly unconsciously) respond to a need for spiritual imagery, by using a variety of spiritual images from varying traditions. They inspire the wish (create the desire to buy) to become better, more productive or simply to escape the stress of every-day life. In mixing these elements, new meanings are bestowed upon both the consumerist values. With globalization, it is inevitable that the effects of global cultural flows also have its effect upon the experiences, conduct and identities of consumers. As mentioned before, it is a two-way stream.

²⁹⁴ Halbfass, Wilhelm. *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*. New York, State University of New York Press, 1988, P 219-20.

2.14 THE CASE OF YOGA

In the transnational consumption landscape ideas, symbols, technology and capital are part of a multidimensional interaction between cultures.²⁹⁵ In America, for example, yoga has more often than not touched on this by taking the bodily positions, or asanas, from traditional Indian Hindu yoga aimed at reaching enlightenment by transcending the physical self and quieting the mind²⁹⁶ and combined this with Western body culture in the form of creating a fitness practice out of it that aims at getting away from everyday stress. Also, it has transferred English language texts into the practice and integrated Western popular music to allude to a Western audience. Yoga has been made into a product of experience, by offering classes on different levels and the creation of novel styles (such as Acro yoga).²⁹⁷

The process of deterritorialization has had its influence through favoring certain aspects of Hindi yoga and adopting those into the US practice. Little²⁹⁸ uses the example of the American Yoga Association that explicitly emphasized physical exercise and detached from Hindu spirituality, opening up yoga for all with a different spiritual background and making a clear-cut with how Vivekananda introduced yoga in the West. This opened up the way for taking out Sanskrit names and language and spirituality in favor of your own spirituality and a new language, such as new, American, names for postures and concepts.²⁹⁹ After deterritorialization yoga to strip it from certain elements, reterritorialization followed in the form of making yoga fit the local historical background and the relevant local discourse.³⁰⁰ This was expressed for example, by yoga teachers taking in their own experience into classes by sharing personal stories, which is fitting for the local cultural context. Using the individual experience was emphasized – to use yoga to deal with everyday stress in American society. Furthermore, reterritorialization takes place through marketing; actually, the communal events (such as festivals and gatherings) become places of branded communities centered on common ideas and experiences.³⁰¹ The branding that takes place is the fact that the spiritual,

²⁹⁵ Appadurai, Arjun. 'Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy', *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol 7, 2010, P 295-310.

²⁹⁶ DeMichelis, Idem.

²⁹⁷ Brown, David and Aspasia Leledaki. "Eastern Movement Forms as Body-self Transforming Cultural Practices in the West: Towards a Sociological Perspective." *Cultural Sociology* Vol. 4, Issue 1, 2010, P 123-154.

²⁹⁸ Little, Wes, "Fight Emerges Over Yoga's Religious Roots," January 25, 2011, CNN

²⁹⁹ Gokcen, Coskuner-Balli and Burcak, Ertimur, "Creating Hybridity: The Case of American Yoga", 2015 in NA - *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 43, eds. Kristin Diehl and Carolyn Yoon, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, P 494-497.

³⁰⁰ Gokcen and Burcak, Ibid.

³⁰¹ Gokcen and Burcak, Ibid.

or rather spiritual values, seems to be presented as a new cultural category³⁰² to which one can belong. In a consumerist society, this means spirituality is used to denote a quality that sets yoga apart from everything else and so create a consumer identity that is focused on perceived spiritual values.³⁰³ And such communities offer a collective experience and a certain status to its members. Eckel³⁰⁴ presents us with the example of how Kirtan singing in its original practice carried the meaning of devotional singing to the Gods, in its commodified form in America, it has turned into an exercise to get away from the stress of daily life and the rattling of the mind. What follows from this is that consumer culture helps shape the cultural expression of yoga and yoga teachers play an important part in creating a hybrid form of yoga. Furthermore, Verena Schnäbele has identified yoga as a management tool for people's own improvement in a post-Fordist marketplace in which stress-management and social adaptability are prerequisites for individuals to navigate their public relations, especially in the context of the workforce.³⁰⁵

For my research, I also considered that cultural hybridization and creolization are not a one-way stream. Surely consumerism has been seen as a tool for neocolonialism by spreading Western values throughout the world.³⁰⁶ And creolization heavily leans on the idea that there is a power imbalance, in which the dominant, Western, culture makes the local culture adjust to fit the 'right' context. And yet, creolization and cultural hybridization have also been used as a means to reclaim national identity, as is the case with yoga. Furthermore, it can be said that lending cultural elements may very well secure the continuation of a particular culture.³⁰⁷ For Kundalini Yoga this means that adaptation and reinterpretation of yoga may very well be the only way that this particular form of yoga can survive. This is supported by the idea that those forms of yoga that yield most to consumer culture are also the most successful.³⁰⁸ In fact, it is this yielding to consumer culture that has contributed to the establishment of yoga as it is today.³⁰⁹ Nonetheless, it also implies that those who practice yoga in Berlin, will probably do so through the lens of consumerism and therefore will reiterate symbols and rituals in a way

³⁰² Boaz Huss. Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Volume 29, 2014 - Issue 1, P 47 - 60.

³⁰³ Puustinen and Rautaniemi, Idem.

³⁰⁴ Eckel, Sarah, "Yoga Enthusiasts Hear the Call of Kirtan," *New York Times*, March 4, 2009, accessed January 28, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/05/fashion/05fitness-01.html?_r=1

³⁰⁵ Schnäbele, Idem, P 143.

³⁰⁶ Magu, Stephen. "Reconceptualizing Cultural Globalization: Connecting the "Cultural Global" and the "Cultural Local" *Social Sciences*, Issue 4, 2015, P 630–645.

³⁰⁷ Magu, Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Jain, Idem, P 71.

³⁰⁹ Jain, Idem, P 72.

that is in line with consumerist values.

In my research, I will consider the interplay of all these elements, as well as the fact that not only do the teachers play a part in creating hybrids, but also consumer culture accelerates and instigates this process. Furthermore, the hybrid form of Kundalini Yoga may very well be the only reason why it is gaining in popularity in Berlin. And most important; exactly how do Kundalini Yoga Teachers in Berlin appropriate the cultural elements and create hybridization through consumerism?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Denzin and Lincoln³¹⁰ state that a research methodology or strategy is determined by the nature of the research question and the subject that is being researched. Therefore, the research format used in an exploration is a tool to answer the research question. This thesis aimed at exploring and understanding the meanings constructed by the teachers of yoga within a particular cultural setting, where elements of another cultural heritage were coming in. The study did not aim to provide the ultimate truth about the research topic, but rather to investigate a particular way of looking at and deriving meaning from the phenomenon under investigation. This study was guided by the following research questions:

- How does the teachers' understanding of their cultural context influence the yoga they teach?
- How do teachers in Berlin give meaning to the foreign cultural elements that Kundalini Yoga brings?

And, ultimately:

- How does Kundalini Yoga in Berlin (or rather its teachers) create a hybrid culture where yoga is appropriated to a practice that is acceptable in the dominant capitalist culture in Berlin (e.g. reducing yoga to a fitness and stress- reduction practice), while also inserting into that dominant culture new elements and meanings, contributing to the formation of a local Kundalini Yoga culture, propelled by the workings of consumerism.

A predominantly qualitative research approach was chosen as the methodology of choice because this approach reinforces an understanding and interpretation of meaning as well as intentions underlying human (inter)action. Also, Qualitative research is holistic; it looks at the larger picture and begins with a search for understanding of the whole and enables readers to understand the meaning attached to the experience, the distinct nature of the problem and the impact of the problem.³¹¹ This means that qualitative researchers study things in their naturalistic settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. In qualitative research, the researcher becomes an instrument in the investigation and so a part on the involvement of the researcher will follow in this chapter.

³¹⁰ Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. Eds. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005.

³¹¹ Meyer, Christine Benichte. "A Case in Case Study Methodology." *Sage Journals*, Vol 13, Issue 4, 2001.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, social media and marketing materials analysis, ethnographic observation and an online survey. The next paragraphs outline the process of the methodologies used and will give a detailed justification for selecting the specific approaches and methods.

3.1 GROUNDED THEORY

The initial stages of my research were performed using grounded theory methodology. “Grounded theory is a respected qualitative way of moving from individual knowledge to collective knowledge”.³¹² Grounded theory is “the discovery of theory from data.”³¹³ Glaser and Strauss created the methodology where theory could emerge by methodically coding interviews with terms that succinctly and conceptually summarize each phrase, line, or even word.

As I was starting out with my PhD and had determined what my field of research would be, I used this practical tool to establish a theory that would be consistent with the empirical evidence.³¹⁴

To generate a theory that would be applicable to the current Kundalini Yoga Teacher scene in Berlin, I started out with the iterative process of collecting data to shape the theory. In this process, I conducted initial interviews to research areas of interest and in line with Grounded Theory practices³¹⁵ iterate a theory that would explain the initial findings. As part of this process I interviewed 4 Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin, asking them the same set of questions, with which I lay the foundation for the principle of becoming aware of the interplay and context of the Kundalini Yoga Community in Berlin and gave me an idea about the theoretical approach for further research.³¹⁶ Following these basic principles of Grounded Theory, categorizing information³¹⁷, I established the focus on the Kundalini Yoga

³¹² Stake, Robert, E. *Qualitative Research. Studying How Things Work*. The Guilford Press, New York, 2010, P 17.

³¹³ Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm L. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. London, Routledge, 2017, P 1.

³¹⁴ Orlikowski, W.J. “CASE Tools as Organizational Change: Investigating Incremental and Radical Changes in Systems Development,” *MIS Quarterly* Vol. 17, Issue 3, September 1993, P 309-340.

³¹⁵ Bryant, Anthony and Charmaz, Kathy. *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*. Washington, Sage Publishers, 2007. P 1.

³¹⁶ Birks, Melanie. *Grounded Theory: A Theoretical Guide*. Los Angeles, Sage Publishers, 2015. P 15.

³¹⁷ Birks, Idem, P 17

Community of Teachers in Berlin and the interplay between local culture, foreign culture and consumerism. Based on my findings I could then set my theoretical framework, which is discussed in the theoretical framework chapter.

3.2 CASE STUDY

In the research, based upon the theory, the Kundalini Yoga Teacher community in Berlin served as a qualitative case study. This meant going into the field and talking to teachers.

The methods I used for gathering data were the following:

- Ethnographic observation of teacher-events in Berlin and in Kundalini Yoga classes,
- Semi-structured qualitative interviews with Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin,
- An online quantitative questionnaire with Kundalini Yoga teachers, that are an active part of the community and teach actively, in Berlin,
- Research of the available promotional materials, online and offline, of teachers in Berlin,
- Research of Social Media sources for the Berliner community,
- Literary research into Yoga in the West and Kundalini Yoga in particular.

3.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Denzin and Lincoln³¹⁸ argue that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to understand the complexity of the situation without imposing any prior categorization. This approach can be placed in the *phenomenological* and ethnographic research traditions. Phenomenology places the accent on investigating the very nature of a phenomenon by learning about the lived experiences of the participants in the research in relation to a certain phenomenon or concept.³¹⁹ This approach also lays bare a weakness with regard to neutrality: *“Indeed, no methodological approach to experience is neutral, it inevitably introduces an interpretative framework into its gathering of phenomenal data. To the extent that this is so, the hermeneutical dimension of the process is inescapable: every examination is an interpretation, and all interpretation reveals and hides away at the same time. But it does not*

³¹⁸ Denzin, Lincoln, Idem.

³¹⁹ Sayre, Shay. *Qualitative Methods for Marketplace Research*, London, Sage Publications, 2001.

*follow from this that a disciplined approach to experience creates nothing but artifacts, or a 'deformed' version of the way experience 'really' is.*³²⁰

In this way, the weakness of the approach is that the data cannot be generalized and does not carry statistical significance due to the subjectivity of the data. On the other hand, the results may help to re-interpret the lived experience of a phenomenon and it may challenge preconceived ideas and be a call to action.

In spite of the emphasis on the subjective experience as described above, phenomenology does aim to handle personal bias and assumptions. One of the methods used for this is Husserl's "bracketing" (the identification and temporal removal) of preconceived notions by means of deep questioning and reflection upon one's own prior experience.³²¹ Bracketing is seen as a means for researchers to have an intentional focus on the phenomenon at hand. Husserl implied that using bracketing, philosophers and social scientists would be able to directly describe the essence (or underlying structure) of the phenomenon. This *Eidetic variation* is understood as 'using our imagination to strip away the unessential properties of things'.³²² In order to do so, Zahavi (by means of real-life input through for example ethnology³²³) and Husserl³²⁴ both recognized it is important to deal with the intrinsic qualities of the rituals or habits surrounding the phenomenon (in my case: what is essential to the act of teaching Kundalini Yoga?), in order to discover its essential structure.

New interpretations of the phenomenology method have rather tried to include the role of the researcher as a research instrument. In this way the researcher should, preferably, already have a deep understanding of the phenomenon at hand, to gain better access to the subjects interviewed and to be able to talk about shared perspectives and contexts.³²⁵ The researcher's task is, then, to interpret the life-world of the subjects, which needs interpretational methodology of the data. I will address this later in this chapter.

In practice, I interviewed 15 Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin, of whom 10 were female and 5 were male. In addition, I interviewed 10 participants of Kundalini Yoga classes, 8 of whom

³²⁰ Shear, J and Varela J. Francisco. 'The View from Within: First-Person Approaches to the Study of Consciousness.' Imprint Academic, Western University Canada, 1999.

³²¹ Cerbone, D. R. *Understanding Phenomenology*. Buckingham, Acumen, 2006.

³²² Gallagher, S., & Zahavi, D. *The phenomenological mind: An introduction to the philosophy of mind and cognitive science* (2nd ed.). New York, 2008, Routledge, P 30.

³²³ Zahavi, D. *Subjectivity and selfhood: Investigating the first-person perspective*. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2005, P 141-142.

³²⁴ Cerbone, Ibid.

³²⁵ Charlick, Samantha, Pincombe, Jan, McKellar, Lois and Fielder, Andrea. 'Making Sense of Participant Experiences: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in Midwifery Research.' *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, Issue 11, 2016, P 205-216.

were female and 2 of whom were male.

3.4 SAMPLING

A phenomenological framework requires a relatively homogenous group of participants, as participants should have experience with the same phenomenon.³²⁶ Individuals selected to participate in the phenomenological study should have extensive and meaningful experiences of the phenomenon being investigated.³²⁷ Therefore, I used *purposeful sampling*, sampling based upon the characteristics of the population. According to Creswell purposeful sampling strategy involves the researcher selecting the participants purposively since they can understand the phenomenon; therefore, the researcher can decide whether participants share significant and meaningful experience concerning the phenomenon under investigation³²⁸. In my case I used the following criteria to select participants for my research: Kundalini Yoga teachers that had been teaching 1+ years in Berlin, of any gender, and of any age.

3.5 ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

Following my methodology of phenomenological interviewing and the idea to capture the essence of the phenomenon of Kundalini Yoga teaching in which different cultures meet, I added ethnographic observation to deepen the understanding of the rituals and context connected to the phenomenon at hand.

The term ‘ethnography’ often refers to both a method and the written product of research based on that method.³²⁹ In practical terms, ethnography contains the following: a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a particular social phenomenon, the tendency to work primarily with ‘unstructured’ data, the in-depth investigation of a small sample size, and analysis of data that

³²⁶ Creswell, J. W. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US, Sage Publications, Inc. 2007, P 104-105, P 290.

³²⁷ Creswell, Idem. And Moustakas, C. E. *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, Inc. 1994, among others P 73.

³²⁸ Creswell, Idem.

³²⁹ Agar, M.H. ‘Ethnography’. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2001, P 4857-4862.

involves explicit interpretation.³³⁰ Therefore, ethnography entails the unobtrusive study of the daily activities of the researched:

*The study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally.*³³¹

Ethnography implies more than observing people, but also refers to documents, and speech (these may be casual conversations), to provide a profound and thorough understanding of a (sub)culture and its participants. Of course, ethnographic observation also has its downside. For example, Bell³³² reminds us that ethnography is: 'an approach, which depends heavily upon observation and, in some cases, complete or partial integration into the society being studied'.

Whitehead on the other hand, claims that: '...ethnography is more than simply methods, but has ontological and epistemological properties'³³³. This does mean, of course, that the researcher should, as mentioned before, recognize her/his own position within the research. To understand one's ontological (the theory of being³³⁴) and epistemological (the theory of knowledge) stance, one should separate the 2, to see how one affects the other. The first affects, but does not determine the other.³³⁵ Ontology asks the question if there is a 'real' world that is independent of our knowledge of it.³³⁶ In my research I am taking the stance that it is the actors that attach meaning to their reality. This entails a *double hermeneutic*³³⁷ level, as referred to before there is the level at which participants interpret reality and the level at which the researcher interprets their interpretations. Because both the researcher and the participants live in the reality that is subject to social constructs, it also implies that the researcher can, in that sense, not be completely objective, as s/he is subject to interpreting through social constructs too. Epistemology is concerned with the understanding of a study. I have chosen the

³³⁰ Bell, C. and Roberts, H. (eds), *Social Researching: Politics, Problems and Practice*, Routledge, London, 1984, P 230.

³³¹ Brewer, John D. *Understanding Social Research*. Philadelphia, Open University Press, 2000.

³³² Bell, Idem, P 10.

³³³ Whitehead, L, Tony. "Basic Classical Ethnographic Research Methods." Ethnographically informed community and cultural assessment research systems (eicars) working paper series, July 2017.

³³⁴ Furlong, Paul and Marsh, David. 'A skin not a sweater: ontology and epistemology in political science.' In: Marsh, David and Stoker, Gerry eds. *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, P 17-41.

³³⁵ Furlong and Marsh, Ibid.

³³⁶ Furlong and Marsh, Idem, P 18.

³³⁷ Furlong and Marsh, Ibid.

interpretivist approach, as it aims to capture a subjective meaning, which allows for a good understanding of social processes and takes into account context and the complex nature of phenomena³³⁸.

The critique here is, again, that there is no basis on which to judge the validity of their knowledge claims.³³⁹ But, Bevir and Rhodes argue that ethnographers can generalize findings through the use of ethnographic techniques:

Ethnographic description has four main characteristics: it is an interpretive; it interprets the flow of social discourse; it inscribes that discourse by writing its own; and it is microscopic. It is a soft science. It guesses at meanings, assesses the guesses and draws explanatory conclusions from the better guesses. However, it is still possible to generalize... If experimental sciences are about description and explanation, then ethnography is about inscription (or 'thick descriptions') and specification (or clinical diagnosis). So, the task is to set down the meanings that particular actions have for social actors and then say what these thick descriptions tell us about the society in which they are found. And this analysis is always incomplete.

And,

The ethnographer will never get to the bottom of anything. So, ethnography is a science marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debates. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other'.³⁴⁰

Ethnographic fieldwork is defined by Walcott as something that 'requires a researcher to be immersed personally in the ongoing social activities of some individual or group carrying out the research.'³⁴¹ This allows the researcher to become part of ongoing activities and routines, to study them and witness them. Therefore, spending time at different yoga classes, yoga events such as White Tantra Berlin, community events and the Berliner Yoga Festival, allowed me to observe participants take part in these regular activities.

3.6 ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

I then proceeded to go through the main themes and trends and translated these into questions that could be asked a wider population in order to establish a level of representativeness. I followed the same constraints on the sampling for the online questionnaire: all had been teaching yoga in Berlin for 1+ years and I would include all ages and genders. In the end it

³³⁸ Bryman, A. *Social Research Methods*. 2nd Edition, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, P 592.

³³⁹ Bryman, Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Bevir, Mark and Rhodes R.A.W., *The State as a Cultural Practice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, P 10.

³⁴¹ Whitehead, L. Tony, Idem, P 3.

turned out my sampling was as follows: the total number of participants was 27, of which 8 were male teachers and 19 were female teachers. The age distribution was as follows: 1 teacher was between 19-28 years old, 13 teachers were between 29-38 years old, 9 teachers were between 39-48 years old and 4 teachers were between 49 and 58 years old.

So, in order to find out about the extent to which consumerist ideas have permeated the Berlin Kundalini Teacher community, I used an online questionnaire. I recruited participants through my network; via e-mail, in the Kundalini Yoga Teacher Group on Facebook and in person. To prevent preference, I used a randomizer for the answer options; every participant was shown a different order of answers options. The total number of participants of the online questionnaire was $n=27$. As the number of active registered Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin lies around $n=100$, the questionnaire can be said to be representative of the population.

The questions I used were themed around consumerist ideas, de- and re-territorialization and (charismatic) authority. Questions on consumerism were, among others, centered on the role of the teacher, the compensation for classes, the number of students in classes and the construction of classes (to what extent they adhere to consumer lifestyle). Questions on de- and re-territorialization focused, among others, on the way teachers view the Kundalini Yoga tradition and to what extent they reinterpret and reiterate this tradition, the rituals and the scriptures in connection to/influenced by consumerist values. Questions on (charismatic) authority, and the demystification (also deterritorializing) of yoga, focused on how teachers perceive their authority and how they view their profession.

As participants in the online questionnaire could tick more than one answer option for most questions, I have chosen to use the raw count of answer options rather than percentages to look at the results. Furthermore, at the time of this research the general Kundalini Yoga teacher population in Berlin was around 100, and so some numbers are put into context in light of this.

In interpreting the answers, I considered the qualitative comments that participants could leave behind, to give the outcome a context. To do so, I labeled the comments to gain insight into the general sentiments. Applying a correlation analysis proved to be difficult, as the answers per participant were too different.

3.7 INTERPRETING THE RESULTS: THE DOCUMENTARY METHOD

In finding a way that best suited my research project within the Kundalini Yoga community in Berlin, I used the documentary method. This methodology or methodological spectrum covers

discussion analysis and the interviewing process, analysis of interviews, participatory observation, and evaluation research, and even includes image and media analysis (including social media and marketing materials). The method aims to build an understanding of the common views of subjects within a social setting that is linked to a certain structure, or phenomenon. In this way, the method aims to bring to light a common base for the subjects' lived experience centered around such structures or phenomena. The common views of the subjects are based upon the common actions and rituals of subjects, which implies a large amount of tacit knowledge. Mannheim deemed this knowledge to be *a theoretical*³⁴². In this way the documentary method gives us access to conjunctive knowledge, in contrast to social phenomenology, as well as the theoretical reconstruction of knowledge³⁴³. Conjunctive knowledge starts from the premise that subjects sharing a common lived experience operate on the basis of implicit knowing, which allows them to perform actions correctly. This implicit knowing is unconscious and thus the performing subjects are not aware that influences their actions.³⁴⁴ In this way, the documentary method allows access to a construction of action, which can in turn reconstruct the viewpoint of the performers of the action. To gain an understanding of this tacit knowledge, a conceptualization of this theoretical knowledge needs to take place.³⁴⁵ The analysis is directed at explaining how the reality of the subjects that perform the actions in an embedded structure is constructed. With this, the method tries to reconstruct a cultural realm. In order to interpret the social reality of the subjects that are researched, it is important to keep in mind that Mannheim identified 3 levels of meaning to interpret action; immanent (objective: the meaning that can immediately be given), expressive (words and actions: needs an understanding of the performers of action) and documentary (practical action: needs an interpretation process and involves the stance of the one that is interpreting.)³⁴⁶ On the basis of this, the documentary method was updated and adapted to include the analysis of empirical data by Ralf Bohnsack. Bohnsack departed from the notion that, “instead of the reconstruction of the course of an action (objective or immanent level), we will analyze and reconstruct the meaning of this action in the social

³⁴² Meja, Volker and Kettler, David. *The Anthem Companion to Karl Mannheim*. Anthem Press, London, 2018, P 67.

³⁴³ Meja, Volker and Kettler, David, Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Straub, Jurgen, Wiedemann, Doris, Kolbl, Carlos and Zielke, Barbara. *Pursuit of Meaning: Advances in Cultural and Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Transaction Publishers, London, 1998, P 379.

³⁴⁵ Bohnsack, Ralf. *Rekonstruktive Sozialforschung: Einführung in qualitative Methoden*. Opladen, Leske & Budrich, 2003.

³⁴⁶ Weller, Wivian et al. (2002): Karl Mannheim e o método documentário de interpretação: Uma forma de análise das visões de mundo. In: Sociedade e Estado [Dossiê Temático: Inovações no Campo da Metodologia das Ciências Sociais], Brasília, 17(2): P 375-396.

context of which it is part (documentary level).”³⁴⁷ With this, the documentary method is a theoretical-methodological approach to analyze group discussions, narrative interviews, photographs, cartoons and films.

Bohnsack goes even further, by stating that the interpretation of action-regulative knowledge should stick to the description and explanation of these with regard to the group under study, without aiming to generate prescriptive outcomes that can be applied to a larger population.

³⁴⁸ Bohnsack makes this part of his analysis as he claims that there are different (expectations of) *normalities and rationalities*, in which the scientific ‘normality’ and ‘rationality’ don’t rank higher than any other normality of rationality.³⁴⁹ Thus, it is the task of the researcher to explore the way in which subjects create, transform or reproduce their realities.

Bohnsack developed methods of reconstructive analysis of social realities that I have used for my research. The first part of the method focuses on the formulation of an interpretation, based upon what is said. The second part includes reflective interpretation, looking at the themes that emerge and how they are presented. The general discourse is then divided by the researcher into whether something is a description, an argument or a narration and the way the subjects refer to one another. In order to do this, “the reconstruction and explication of the frame in which the theme is treated, in what manner, how, i.e. with reference to (...) which orientation framework, is essential.”³⁵⁰ Such orientation frameworks are best identified by looking at the narratives that often contain many analogies.³⁵¹ These analogies contain, in turn, the perceptions of subjects. In the reflective stage, cases are also compared to establish inter-subjectivity of the outcomes. Here the researcher will also look at their own assumptions. By looking at their own assumptions, as I did too, there is reflection upon what expectation of normality the researcher brings to the research. In this way, the method made sense as it is suited best for trying to avoid ethnocentrism in the interpretation of the data, and thus allows for an intercultural perspective to be grasped empirically.³⁵² The last point of analysis is summarization of the reconstruction and the presentation thereof to the audience, which Bohnsack has termed *case description*.³⁵³

³⁴⁷ Weller, Wivian. “A contribuição de Karl Mannheim para a pesquisa qualitativa: aspectos teóricos e metodológicos.” In: *Sociologias*, 2005, Porto Alegre, 13: 260-300. Disponível em: . Acesso em: 30/11/2009. Pp 168.

³⁴⁸ Straub, Idem, P 177.

³⁴⁹ Straus, Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Bohnsack, Idem.

³⁵¹ Schäffer, Burkhard. ‘Gruppendiskussion’. In Ralf Bohnsack, Wilfried Marotzki & Michael Meuser (Eds.), *Hauptbegriffe qualitativer Sozialforschung*, 2003, P.75-80. Opladen: Leske & Budrich. P 68.

³⁵² Bohnsack, Ibid.

³⁵³ Bohnsack, Idem, P 139.

3.8 INVOLVEMENT OF THE RESEARCHER

The way I have gotten access to the many teachers and finding their cooperation in my research, was through my own involvement in the Berlin Kundalini Yoga community. Being an actively teaching Kundalini Yoga teacher myself, I am regularly in contact with other teachers. Furthermore, I take part in events and still take regular classes myself. From this perspective, ethnographic research and action-based research made sense and therefore my involvement in the community was natural, but also a means to an end. Planning the research and thinking about the relationship I would have with regard to the community I was researching, as well as the level of exchange³⁵⁴ helped me determine how to approach the community and always ask about the use of interviews, observation and Facebook materials. Being an active part in this community, it made sense that the community helped shape the research in the form of Grounded Theory. In meaningful participatory research, it makes sense to work from this perspective³⁵⁵. Involving the community at other stages of my research was less theoretical, but more on the level of me explaining why I wanted to do an interview, make observations and use commercial material. Taking the comments into account, I could establish a context that is truly coming from the community.

During the research, I realized that my conclusions with regard to the theme of teaching Kundalini Yoga in Berlin also applied to me. I, too, have been raised in a society where capitalism is still largely the norm. In this way, my research has also been part of a journey of self-discovery in which I learned a great deal about myself.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

The ethical issues concerning this research would involve mainly the use of data collected from individuals. Therefore, my call for participants was an open call; participants in the online questionnaire, observations, the Facebook Group and the interviews were told about

³⁵⁴ Maxwell, J. A. *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 2005.

³⁵⁵ Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.

the scope of my research and, when applicable, the interview plan. Their participation was on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality was assured by removing any personal data from the research. The marketing material and websites of teachers that were used, are freely available and accessible to the public.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS - CASE DESCRIPTION

From observations, researching marketing materials, researching social media and interviews, the image emerges that Kundalini Yoga teachers actively cultural elements and symbols. It seems that most teachers are, however, doing so unwittingly and are often unaware of the very real consequence of power imbalance. Often, they also seem unaware of the fact that they themselves are situated in a particular culture and reproduce that culture in various ways. There are teachers who stick to a more ‘traditional’ approach of teaching Kundalini Yoga and teachers who subscribe to a more ‘modern form’ of Kundalini Yoga. Both groups of teachers may at the same time reproduce consumer culture and call for an abandonment of consumerist values.

4.1 SPACES, AFFECTIVE-IMAGERY AND CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

The interaction of different cultural elements can easily be seen as they happen in Berlin: it is seen in the way spaces are created and it is seen in the visual and material representation of the culture in (Kundalini) Yoga centers in Berlin. Hatha Yoga is taught in the same center as Kundalini Yoga, for example in Yoga Delta, a local yoga center, has the center creating spaces where cultural expressions of different traditions are put together in one room. In Yoga Delta’s Kundalini Yoga classes, for example, mantras derived from the Sikh religion are sung, while a Buddha sculpture is situated in the same space. In other studios where Kundalini Yoga is taught, for example Maigold, displays sculptures of Shiva and Buddha in the same space as where Sikh mantras are sung during Kundalini Yoga classes. At Kreuzberg Yoga the Sikh elements are more clearly displayed by the Kirpan (sword) in one corner, a photo of Guru Nanak placed at the center of the space during Kundalini Yoga classes, and a Buddha sculpture in the other corner. Jivamukti Yoga, not necessarily known for Kundalini Yoga, but offering Kundalini Yoga classes, places Buddha and Ganesha next to each other on the same shelf. O-Yoga places a painting of the Kundalini Yoga mantra Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō in Sanskrit next to a sculpture of Shiva, both in the same space when practicing Kundalini Yoga. Virtually all studios have a harmonium and/or a gong in sight. Sarbecker has pointed out that placing these elements and sculptures in the space reflect both the aspirations and the positioning of the practitioner; they strive to be closer to a romanticized version of a sacred world rooted in exoticism, and they wish to set themselves apart from what is outside this

aspiration to be different³⁵⁶. Practitioners of Kundalini Yoga in the studios mentioned above put it this way, they feel “The space is more connected to the spiritual roots of yoga that way“, “It makes you feel you like you enter a sacred space, where you step out of daily life” and “I’m very spiritual, I like having Shiva and Buddha in the space.” It seems that yoga spaces that place elements that represent different religious traditions are representative of a connection to an imagined spiritual tradition. Furthermore, certain imagery seems to reflect that the teacher knows what they are doing: “(Kundalini Yoga) ...comes from a long tradition, and she (the teacher) has been practicing this form of yoga for a long time, you can see that by the clothes she wears (white, including turban) and the way she has decorated the space, she really radiates the lineage and knowledge.” In this sense, the imagery projects a level of knowledge and authenticity that make the practitioner convinced that the experience comes from an authoritative source. In one studio in Berlin, where Kundalini classes are set in a space containing Hinduist sculptures and no references to Sikhism, the teacher himself becomes the object of authenticity and exoticism/othering: “He is Indian, so it is in his blood.” Kundalini Yoga teachers themselves may not always be aware of the full effect of placing imagery and sculptures in the studio/ space where they are teaching, yet they do want to create an effect. One teacher comments that: “I want my students to see this as a place where they can focus on their higher selves, the sculptures help students realize that they are not at work or at home, that we are to practice yoga.” A studio owner comments: “I want to set up the space in such a way that students feel welcome, a place where they can connect to the divine.” Finally, a teacher explains that imagery can indeed uphold the authority of the teacher: “I feel backed up by having references to Yogi Bhajan and the Gurus here – it is as if they support me in teaching.”

Sculptures and imagery are not the only way that yoga studios or yoga teachers choose to decorate the room or create an atmosphere. There are rituals, or ritualistic use of certain objects, that set the space up to project different surroundings than the outside. Most Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin will light candles and dim the lights at some point during their classes, “to make it easier to connect to innermost self.” Most teachers use incense in or right before their classes too, as one teacher put it: “cleanse the space”. The music used comes in a wide variety; there are teachers sticking strictly to Kundalini Yoga mantras by certain musicians (as prescribed by Yogi Bhajan) and strictly when it is prescribed in yoga sets. Perhaps this group of teachers could be called more ‘traditional.’ Their motivation can be

³⁵⁶ Sarbecker, Stuart Ray. “The Numinous and Cessative in Modern Yoga.” In *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*. Routledge, London, 2008, P 176.

summarized by, as one teacher stated: “I want to keep the tradition clean, Yogi Bhajan was very clear on which mantras to use.” Other teachers may use Kundalini Yoga mantras throughout the whole class and in many versions – including mantras translated into English and dance-versions of the mantras. These teachers see the music more as an integral part of Kundalini Yoga: “It is about the spirit of the mantras, that influences you even if you are not actively listening” Then there are teachers who will use music that is not particular for Kundalini Yoga but are representative of other spiritual traditions; e.g. Buddhist chants, Hinduist mantras, or songs of contemporary artists that are placed within the ‘spiritual music’ section. These teachers seem to have a different relationship with the music: “I want to create a safe space where my students feel carried- music helps set that scene.” Here the mantras/music can be in English. Yet another, much smaller, group of teachers uses modern pop music during their classes. Perhaps these teachers can be seen as the ones that try to break with at least some of the Kundalini Yoga traditions: “I don’t think we should be restricted by the (Kundalini Yoga) mantras; the music is a great help for people to stay focused, it doesn’t matter what type of music you play.” And a few teachers use no music at all during classes. Some of these teachers feel that: “Music is a distraction; it makes it hard to actually focus on what is going on inside and hard to focus on the here and now.” Other rituals are specifically aimed at creating community and a feeling of belonging; some of these rituals include drinking tea together, exchanging experiences during class (sometimes with time set apart after the class with the teacher), and getting up at 6 in the morning to practice Sadhana together. The sense of community also includes meeting each other at workshops, events and festivals, and being part of Facebook groups set up by teachers. Teachers often explicitly recommend community as this was part of Yogi Bhajan’s teachings, in order to keep up the spiritual practice. One teacher says: “The energy of practicing in a group is so much greater than practicing alone, that is why it is important to do at least some of your practice in a group.” Another teacher says: “I think students are drawn to Kundalini Yoga because of that sense of community.” This does not mean that all teachers feel the same about this sense of community: “There is much discord in the teacher community, which is mainly a divide between the more traditional and the more modern teachers.” Practitioners, too, name community as an important part of choosing to practice Kundalini Yoga: “Before I came here I was doing Jivamukti Yoga... people never really interacted with one another, they were only there to do exercises...here I have found some people I also meet outside of classes.” If we look at the structure and the way classes are built up by teachers, it may very well be that teachers take on an even more active role in establishing a community. Teachers are often

not just attributed knowledge of the 'tradition' but are actively attributed the role of teacher, or even guide in Kundalini Yoga. The concept of Guru (teacher), defined by Grimes as 'One who is the supreme consciousness, one whose mind is rooted in the highest reality; one who has a pure and tranquil mind.'³⁵⁷ With his definition of charisma Max Weber phrased it differently, but we can see many similarities: "Charisma is a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional qualities...that are regarded as of divine origin.'³⁵⁸ which in turn inspires an authority around the charismatic leader leading to the following: "[P]ower legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities or the demonstration of extraordinary insight and accomplishment, which inspire loyalty and obedience from followers.'³⁵⁹ This type of charisma may be projected onto Kundalini Yoga teachers, adding not only to their authority, but also creating a sense of bonding among followers. Teachers of Kundalini Yoga in Berlin may be establishing such an image by the stories they tell during class. One teacher told this story during class: "I had a very bad back for years, it used to get so bad that I couldn't get up in the morning because of the pain. When I discovered Kundalini Yoga, I started doing Sadhana (2.5-hour early morning practice consisting of praying, asana's and chanting) every day and I healed." Another teacher told her students during class: "I was at an ultimate low-point in life, I had lost my job, I was single and didn't know what to do. I started practicing Kundalini Yoga and the universe opened up to me and brought me all the insights I needed." These personal stories, that traditionally don't have a place in yoga teaching, seem to serve as legitimization of the position of power of the teacher, adding to their charisma. One teacher took it as far as telling her class about the time she survived the great Tsunami of 2004, by using Kundalini Yoga techniques. Almost supernatural. And students react to their charismatic teachers, in a setting (space) that is conducive of an enlivened 'spiritual energy'. One student recounts that she: "was never able to hold the wheel position, I can only do that when she is in the room, it's magic." Another student tells me she: "...had tried this set at home, but I didn't notice any effect. When I did the set in her class though, I felt a huge energy surge." Some students even attribute healing

³⁵⁷ Grimes, J. *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy*. New York, State University of New York Press, 1996, P 133.

³⁵⁸ Weber, Max. *On Charisma and Institution Building*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, P 6.

³⁵⁹ Kendall, Diana, Jane Lothian Murray, and Rick Linden. *Sociology in our Time*. Scarborough, On: Nelson, 2012, P 438-439.

powers to their teachers: “Nobody (but him) would have been able to help me get my life back on the road, he just has this power.”

4.2 ROMANTICIZATION OF INDIGENOUS CULTURE...BUT NOT TOO MUCH

The rituals and the way yoga spaces display certain imagery point to what Klas Nevrin coined as affective imagery; the discourse and visual representations of cultural elements induce knowledge of that culture³⁶⁰. This, in turn, lends authority to the teacher and the studio for being genuinely connected to that knowledge. This establishment of a seemingly genuine connection to, in this case Indian, cultural knowledge is part of the colonial past and serves to define what is traditionally Indian and what that Indian tradition should look like, ‘constructive Orientalism’ by Mark Singleton³⁶¹ called it. It is interlinked with the wrong assumptions about what yoga is, what is part of yoga (and what is not) and where it comes from, as discussed in the theoretical framework chapter.

Kundalini Yoga teachers would probably not classify themselves this way, even though there is often a lack of knowledge on the imagery and rituals. None of the teachers I interviewed were aware that the use of incense is more ritualistic in Hinduism, used as an offering to deities.³⁶² For these teachers, incense is to cleanse the space, as mentioned earlier, or to “make the room smell nice”, as another teacher told me. None of the teachers knew that the Harmonium (musical instrument from India) is used for accompanying Kirtan (devotional singing) mainly by Sikh communities (to recite from the Guru Grant Sahib) and a Hinduist stream devoted to the Hindu God Vishnu.³⁶³ Teachers liked having the Harmonium, because, as one teacher told me: “I like the instrument, it is easy to play and guides me and my students when singing mantras. That’s a much deeper experience than listening to a CD or having no music.” And the teachers who know about Kirtan, often mentioned something like this yoga teacher: “Kirtan is a form of holy chanting from India, that makes the soul vibrate at a higher

³⁶⁰ Nevrin, Klas. “Empowerment and Using the Body in Modern Postural Yoga,” in *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*, Routledge, London, 2008, P 121.

³⁶¹ Singleton, “The Classical Reveries of Modern Yoga”, in *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*, idem, P 90

³⁶² Blurtoon, Richard T. *Hindu Art*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993, P 56

³⁶³ Edited by Denise Cush, Catherine Robinson, Michael York. *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. New York, Routledge, 2008, P 421.

frequency.” Higher frequency or not, it implies that all Indian communities’ practice Kirtan singing, which is not the case. But it is often the image teachers carry around in their mind of ‘India’ and it is the image they will speak about in class. Flowers are another element of culture that is used in Indian Hinduist temples as an offering to the deities. In almost all Kundalini Yoga studios in Berlin you will find a reflection of this ritual; flowers are placed in front of a sculpture, often a Buddha sculpture. Again, teachers themselves are not always aware of this meaning and will rather declare that “the flowers make the room smell good” and “flowers bring in nature”, as two yoga teachers have said to me. The dress of Kundalini Yoga teachers becomes another symbol to adorn the space: most teachers dress in white, as advised by Yogi Bhajan. For the Sikhs, the color white represents both religious purity (having taken Amrit – the Khalsa vows³⁶⁴) and mourning.^{365, 366} Other elements of the dress of Kundalini Yoga teachers are worn include turbans and kirpan (a small symbolic sword); few teachers know, however, that the turban was traditionally only worn by men and it was done to protect and keep the hair that was left uncut³⁶⁷. Teachers remember the teachings: “The turban is there to keep my energy with me, I get a headache if I teach a class without a turban”, as a teacher of a bigger studio in Berlin told me, but they know hardly anything about the cultural context: “In India the Sikhs wear it for the same spiritual reasons.” When teachers in Berlin wear turbans, they mostly wear a cloth wrapped around their heads, sometimes in various colors. Yogi Bhajan taught that orange and blue colored turbans could be worn at home, claiming that white extends the aura.³⁶⁸ This is the reason many teachers choose to wear white cloths around their head when teaching. Some teachers choose to wear an orange, blue or pink headdress when teaching. When asked what these colors mean, one teacher answered: “Well...blue is actually also worn indoors, in the house, but I just feel this color suits me better.” Very few teachers can point to the fact that the color of the turban can actually indicate many things to Sikhs, for one thing the specific religious group Sikhs belong to, e.g. the Nihang, who wear only blue turbans, or that blue and orange turbans are mostly worn on days of religious observance³⁶⁹. Wearing a Kirpan or Kara (steel bracelet) are reminders to uphold justice and of the infinity of God³⁷⁰. Yogi Bhajan taught that the Kara

³⁶⁴ Nesbitt, Elisabeth. *Sikhism. A very short introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, P 46.

³⁶⁵ Takhar Kaur, Opinderjit. *Sikh Identity*. New York, Routledge, 2005.

³⁶⁶ Garces-Foley, Kathleen. *Death and Religion in a Changing World*. New York, Routledge, 2006, pp 191

³⁶⁷ Nesbitt, Idem, P 45.

³⁶⁸ Website 3HO: <https://www.3ho.org/3ho-lifestyle/yogi-bhajan-lecture-excerpts-wearing-white>, last edited 2019.

³⁶⁹ Nesbitt, Idem, P 45.

³⁷⁰ Nesbitt, Idem, P 50.

was a form of protection from the outside and the inside and reminded the wearer to do no evil, whereas the Kirpan shows commitment to your spiritual path³⁷¹. In practice, some teachers use the same way: “Whenever I use my right hand, and I am right-handed, I am reminded to think about the consequences of the action I am about to take,” is how one lead-trainer for the Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training in Berlin put it. It seems to switch the meaning of Kirpan and Kara, but the direction seems to be towards the original meaning. Some teachers who wear a Kirpan seem to mistake its meaning for *combaticiveness*: “Wearing the Kirpan means I am ready to fight for my beliefs,” one male teacher told me. Not all teachers wear these symbols, some teachers wear none of the aforementioned symbols. One teacher and studio owner at some point exclaimed, while wearing a completely black outfit, “I don’t believe in wearing white – maybe I’m a bit willful but I like black!”.

I am sure the teachers themselves would not look upon the use of their dress as perhaps being an expression of cultural appropriation, nor do I think that teachers purposefully erase these elements, if they don’t wear the foretold dress. It rather seems that few teachers actually know the wider cultural background of where the dress comes from, and it seems that if teachers decide to wear ‘traditional dress’ most of all it is an expression of how they live their spirituality. The clothing and accessories have taken on a different meaning for them. Teachers that don’t take on ‘traditional dress’ seem to place meaning on the fact that they are free from the constraints of this dress.

4.3 CONTENT IN CLASSES; CULTURAL APPROPRIATION OR HYBRIDIZATION?

When cultural elements are taken to mean authenticity, but the ones who are using those symbols are not familiar with their right usage (and so use it in a differently), mostly because they are not from the culture where these symbols were originally used, we speak of cultural appropriation.³⁷² Sometimes the usage even goes against the wishes of members where the cultural elements stem from. Academic scholar Greg Tate has, furthermore, argued that cultural appropriation serves to (further) exclude those that the cultural symbols originally belonged to.³⁷³ For the usage of symbols in Kundalini Yoga studios, or studios that offer Kundalini Yoga in Berlin, it is clear that those who decide what cultural symbols will adorn

³⁷¹ Idem, 3HO website

³⁷² Okafor, Udoka (2013-12-04). *Cultural Appropriation: The Act of Stealing and Corrupting*. Huffington Post. Retrieved 2018-07-18.

³⁷³ Wallace, Michele. *Black Popular Culture*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1992, P. 13–15.

the space, mostly do not know what these symbols represent. And it is also clear that at least part of the teachers use said symbols in a very different way than was intended in the original cultural setting. The next step is looking at how these symbols are then re-appropriated (re-territorialized) to mean something else. It is because there is no one fundamental yoga lineage, and as mentioned before, there certainly is no one root to Kundalini Yoga. This means that both teachers and practitioners will have to decide for themselves what is authentic about this form of yoga and what is not. A decision that is mostly based upon the cultural framework of the decider. This leads to:

*...self-produced standards are used reflexively to justify the very practices that led to the establishing of the standards... Instead of what is authentic offering some guidance about what one should accept, what one has accepted provides grounding that can authorize itself.*³⁷⁴

So, instead of having the authentic lead, as Liberman calls it, what is leading is those things that can be accepted given the cultural framework they are perceived in. And here we can begin to see how in Berlin Kundalini Yoga teachers teach the same yoga in so many ways, adopting the things they like and leaving out the rest. A teacher told me; “I am not having my students take part in Sadhana at 6 o’clock; I don’t believe in all this religion yourself.” Another teacher said: “The mantras can be sung in any language -actually I think it is. Even better to sing them in German, so you really understand what it means.” On the other side of the spectrum are the teachers who believe that keeping up the ‘traditional’ is the way, these teachers have a different approach: “Sadhana is part of the spiritual path – I try to motivate my students to try it. Of course, getting up this early every day is a challenge when you are working full-time, that’s why I tell them you can also shorten your sadhana.” And some teachers take sadhana to be the broader perspective: “Sadhana means any spiritual practice, so if students choose one meditation or kriya to practice over time, they are doing their sadhana, this doesn’t require getting up at 6.” Of course, the early morning practice comes from Sikhism, although there the actual advice is to awaken early in the day, wash yourself and to recite the Japji, the Jaap Sahib and the 10 Savayyas³⁷⁵. The Kundalini Yoga practice, by the teachings of Yogi Bhajan, is somewhat different: it does start with washing oneself, then chanting the Japji, but then takes a turn in chanting a tuning-in ‘mantra’ (this is not a mantra known in Sikhism), doing yoga, including an after yoga deep relaxation phase and concluded

³⁷⁴ Liberman, Kenneth. ‘The Reflexivity of the Authenticity of Haṭha Yoga,’ In Mark Singleton & Jean Byrne (eds.), *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*. London, Routledge, 2008, P. 7--100

³⁷⁵ Edited by McCleod, W.H. *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984, P 86.

by singing a number of ‘mantras.’³⁷⁶ None of the sung mantras are known mantras to the Sikh culture, in the sense that even though the words and phrases appear in the holy scripture, they are never sung out of context like in Kundalini yoga. Most teachers don’t know this: “The mantras are holy mantras in Sikhism, that is why singing them raises so much energy,” said one teacher. In general, the mantras sung during Kundalini yoga classes are constructed in this way; the language is Gurmukhi and some phrases used as mantras come from the holy books of the Sikhs, but many do not and none of them are sung by the traditional Sikh community. Furthermore, the Sikh community does not combine yoga (in any form has roots in the Hindu tradition) and devotional singing. Only two of the teachers I spoke to were actively learning to master Gurmukhi and thus get the pronunciation of the mantras right. The majority did not study the pronunciation. Some teachers did not want to sing mantras in Gurmukhi and felt, as a teacher confided in me: “...it is much better to sing the mantras in German, that way people know what they are singing, and it is just as powerful.”

Next to cultural appropriation, exoticism is also on display during Kundalini yoga classes. One teacher told a woman who grew up in the UK, but who had parents that were born in India, that yoga: “is in your blood.” The woman did not come from a Hinduist tradition, and she, too, had to study yoga to master it.

Other areas where the content of classes moves away from the ‘traditional’ yoga have to do with the often-personal nature of what teachers share during classes, the emotions they bring in, as well as teaching in and creating groups. As we have seen, it is the personal touch that has a great influence on whether the consumer will buy a product. I have observed Kundalini Yoga teachers speak about their deep personal struggles and how they have overcome those by using Kundalini Yoga. “I can only teach my experience, otherwise students can’t connect to me,” is how one teacher put it. The emotional content may make the teacher more relatable, as well as serve as a model that students can somehow consume or buy. On the other hand, teachers may well see it within their own framework: “Students have to get a taste of what it may look like to be a yogi themselves, and I am the example of that. It motivates students to keep going.” Many teachers do take the personal connection a bit further than sharing stories and give students a lot of attention. I have experienced firsthand how a Kundalini yoga teacher in Berlin went out of her way to ‘help’ me. I received a lot of attention during classes, where I was praised for my spiritual approach, and outside of classes in the form of emails and text messages. That made me feel special. And at the same time, I was not the only one.

³⁷⁶3HO website, Idem.

When I spoke to other students about this teacher, everyone admitted that personal attention was one of the main reasons for being with this yoga teacher. Of course, it may well have been the intent of the teacher to help, but coincidentally we all kept coming to classes. Speaking to more students of other teachers, my story was not uncommon. “She has been like my therapist; we spend so much time talking over email and over the phone. I think she is the greatest teacher.” Of course, the personal bond binds. And some teachers make use of that: “Some students have a lot of things they want to talk about - then I refer them to my webpage to book a private session.” Other teachers may very well just mean to help: “What can I do? I am confronted with a student who needs help on a psychological level, some of whom have no money to spend, I can’t just turn them away.” It is not for me to determine how ethical teachers react when they are aware of a personal bond with a student, but it certainly helps keep students in classes.

4.4 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION LEADING TO HYBRIDIZATION

When looking at the marketing materials that Kundalini yoga teachers use in Berlin, we see some themes from the classes reflected; Kundalini yoga is taken away from its original goal of attaining enlightenment and re-appropriated as a stress-management and a health-management system. Third, yoga is presented as geared towards the consumer and their wishes.

Deterritorialization is seen both in the marketing materials and in the content spoken during classes. In class many elements that are linked to the mystical, such as God and/or enlightenment, are often taken out. Teachers often repeat: “Kundalini yoga is a scientific method...” Furthermore, the focus is not so much on its original goal of enlightenment, but rather on personal lives and coping with everyday life. And instead of all eight limbs of yoga being taught, most teachers stick only to asana and meditation. A teacher claimed in her classes, even though Kundalini yoga explicitly directs a vegetarian diet, that: “...people should listen to their bodies, I also need my meat to stay grounded.” Another teacher said, in spite of drinking alcohol being an explicit no-go in Kundalini yoga: “I am a modern-day man, I like to drink beer on a terrace in the city and that is what I do.” Other parts that are omitted, as mentioned before, is the language. Instead of Gurmukhi mantras, some teachers opt for the German version of the mantras, and others still opt to not use any mantras at all. Some teachers, as mentioned before, do keep the mantras in Gurmukhi. Some of those teachers study the actual pronunciation and the other part does not.

Reterritorialization has much to do with the branding of yoga; we can see that some teachers use references to a single notion of the age-old history of yoga, they use stories of personal change (personal growth), and even the reduction of complex spiritual concepts to a tool of getting rid of anxiety and/or stress. Furthermore, the focus on the spiritual is sometimes used as an active part of creating an identity. Also, yoga has been branded with an emphasis on the medical benefits, by referencing scientific studies, reterritorializing yoga by adhering to Western standards if measuring health.³⁷⁷

During classes reterritorialization practices take place in a number of ways, for example by using ‘Sat Nam’ as a greeting, instead of a way to worship God, as it is used in the Sikh community. Another way is the personal nature of the stories teachers tell in class. Teachers share personal stories about how they used Kundalini Yoga techniques to improve their lives, to heal from diseases, ailments and unpleasant feelings and to come ‘closer to God’ Sharing personal stories by teachers goes directly against the teachings of Kundalini Yoga, where one of the guidelines for becoming a teacher is to consider yourself not a man, not a woman, not a person, not yourself, but a teacher³⁷⁸. These personal stories place yoga into the cultural background that is so familiar to the Berliner yoga student.³⁷⁹ Regularly, I have heard teachers share their own personal story on how they struggled with stress and/or difficult feelings, and how Kundalini yoga has helped them deal with this. One time a teacher came in and started the class by telling us: “I was at the Turkish baker yesterday and as I was getting my bread we talked about life, and he said: ‘it is no use being afraid of life’, and I thought it was such a good reminder to be aware of where we are coming from. Before I started practicing (Kundalini yoga) I used to always come from fear.” This, in turn, also stimulates the practitioner to link yoga to their own private (and culturally marked) context. If not on their own, teachers will tell them: “Now, before we start the class, think of what you are dedicating your yoga class to today. Maybe there is something you really want to attract into your life, focus on that.” In the marketing materials Berliner teachers use, we see this act of reterritorialization showing up as the narratives that teachers in their materials to attract more clients. It isn’t just the cultural embedding of yoga through the personal stories that are inevitably linked to the local culture, but also the cultural references to the values that are important in that culture. Many times, the stories will focus on, as mentioned before,

³⁷⁷ Puustinen and Rautaniemi, Idem.

³⁷⁸ 3HO Foundation International, updated 2019, <https://www.3ho.org/kundalini-yoga/teaching/yogi-bhajan-q-teaching-kundalini-yoga>

³⁷⁹ Altglas, Veronique. *From Yoga to Kaballah. Religious Exoticism and the Logic of Bricolage*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, P 397

overcoming obstacles or gaining personal growth. In that way the teacher makes it valuable to buy and consume yoga classes, with which, as Altglas puts it: "...the hope that what is acquired will contribute to cultural and emotional forms of capital, which in turn, is convertible into career prospects and health."³⁸⁰

Another form of reterritorialization that happens during yoga classes is the creation of a unique community that consists of like-minded people, that are felt to be special, or at least different from other groups of people. In Berlin teachers often tell their students that by choosing Kundalini yoga they have "...chosen the highway towards enlightenment." Some examples of other things teachers say in class reinforce the uniqueness of Kundalini yoga: "In Buddhism they negate everything, but in Kundalini yoga we embrace everything, we make it whole," "When I see people doing Vinyasa yoga only to look good, I always think 'you are missing out on so much'," and "Here all of us are more conscious of the consumer choices we make...but out there..." Added to that, the idea of learning yoga in groups is in itself reterritorialization, as yoga used to be taught directly from Guru to disciple one on one.

Other practices of reterritorialization in class include reading texts from various other religious traditions, pop-songs or literature.

4.5 CONSUMERISM, IDENTITY AND KUNDALINI YOGA

Kundalini wants to appear legit in the eyes of the consumer and therefore uses the narrative that fits with the cultural identity, as discussed before. Part of that cultural identity is the marketplace; social roles, among which 'the (Kundalini) yoga teacher' are part of the identity, but the market offers the support to establish this performative identity towards the outside.³⁸¹ This support can be found in the objects, the symbolism and the narratives that are made available on the market. In practice this translates into, for example, Kundalini yoga teachers buying the mantras they play in their classes at a company called *Sat Nam Versand* and recommending this online shop to their students. Or getting white clothes and/or head scarfs at, for example, *Sotantar Yoga Shop* in Berlin. Classes included displaying the visible brand labels of these shops. More general objects that establish the identity are, among others, the usage of sheepskin for the practice and wearing the aforementioned attributes of a Kara and/or Kirpan. All of these objects enable the social representation of the identity of Kundalini yoga

³⁸⁰ Altglas, Ibid.

³⁸¹ edited by Eric J. Arnould, Craig J Thompson. *Consumer Culture Theory*. London, Sage, 2018, P 45.

teachers, while at the same time emanating knowledge of an imagined culture. The objects allow people to claim the identity position of Kundalini yoga teachers. The market provides access to these objects and the symbols, including the *Om* symbols that some Kundalini yoga teachers wear. In that way the market enables the social performance³⁸² of the role of Kundalini yoga teacher. Furthermore, the market becomes the place where these identity positions, in this case that of Kundalini Yoga teachers, are enacted. This enactment takes place online³⁸³, in so-called ‘service-encounters’³⁸⁴ (id est yoga spaces) and the stores³⁸⁵ where objects and/or services are bought and sold. Furthermore, the visual representation of placing teachers near objects that emulate knowledge of an imagined culture, tells the outside world who is a valid yoga teacher. In other words; placing (very often) white cis gendered able-bodied females close to the objects that enable the identity role of Kundalini teacher, tells us which bodies are authentic practitioners and, in this case, teachers, of Kundalini yoga.³⁸⁶ With that, we will have a look at how cultural hybridity takes place, as enabled by the marketplace, for Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin.

4.6 MARKETING MATERIALS

Before diving into the marketing materials, we have to consider that marketing plays into human emotions for selling goods and services³⁸⁷. The buyer of a product is usually lured in with a promise of happiness, leading us to buy objects or services that then change their meaning and become social goods³⁸⁸. With this in mind, it is not hard to imagine that Kundalini yoga teachers will try to promise happiness. Connected to this, we have to keep in

³⁸² Bloch, P., Bush, R. and Campbell, L. “Consumer “accomplices” in product counterfeiting: a demand side investigation”, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 10 No. 4, 1993, P. 27-36.

³⁸³ Schau, Hope Jensen and Gilly, Mary C. “We Are What We Post? Self-Presentation in Personal Web Space.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2003, P. 385-404

³⁸⁴ Underwood, R., L., Klein, N., M., and Burke, R., R. “Packaging Communication: Attentional Effects of Product Imagery.” *The Journal of Product and Brand Management* 10, No. 7, 2001, P 403-22.

³⁸⁵ Borghini, Stefania. “Why Are Themed Brandstores So Powerful? Retail Brand Ideology at American Girl Place”. *Journal of Retailing* Vol. 85, Issue 3, 2009, P:363-375.

³⁸⁶ NAMASTA, YIAS, LiveStrong, Yoga Journal, “Yoga Statistics,” July 28, 2013, accessed November 24, 2017, <http://www.statisticbrain.com/yoga-statistics/>.

³⁸⁷ Bagozzi, Richard P., Mahesh Gopinath, and Prashanth U. Nyer. “The Role of Emotions in Marketing.” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 27.2 (1999): 184-206. Web. 2 July 2014

³⁸⁸ Ahmed, Sara. “The Politics of Good Feeling.” *Australian Journal of Critical Race and Whiteness Studies*. Vol 4. Issue 1, 2008, P 1-18. Web. 1 August 2014.

mind the aforementioned link to medical benefits of yoga as measured (and thus authenticated) by Western standards. Also, we have to take into account the representation of what type of bodies are permitted to teach Kundalini yoga. Next, we will have to keep in mind that “postural yoga reflects the dominant religion-philosophical mode of consumer culture, which links the self to the body so that the attainment of health and beauty is central to the transformative and transcendent process of self-development.”³⁸⁹ The goal of self-development is deeply linked to consumer culture, as we have seen before. Furthermore, as yoga consumption is so personal, in order to sell it, yoga teachers will have to create a personal connection in their branding.³⁹⁰ At the same time the personal needs to appear as universal; yoga can be done by anyone at any time and has the scientific backing to prove its validity.³⁹¹ Of course, this also means that in speaking to the consumer, in a competitive market space for yoga as Berlin, teachers may incorporate different religions and worldviews to re-iterate universalism. This may, then, also include moving away from the established consumer culture, by using marketing.

When it comes to yoga’s visual culture, also reflected in the ways it is sold, has been said to perpetuate imagery that is aimed at constructing and/or strengthening constructive Orientalism in order to claim authenticity, as mentioned before.

4.7 ONLINE MARKETING: IMAGES, PHOTOS AND TEXT

Already in looking at the marketing material, we can see an appeal to different audiences in the sense that materials are presented in different languages. German and English are the most common.

4.8 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: CLAIMING AUTHENTICITY

Even though Kundalini Yoga does not seem to have any direct roots to a particular system of yoga, or to an age-old tradition, teachers try to establish authenticity, and therefore reterritorializing Kundalini Yoga by making a variety of claims about its roots, sometimes referred back to being as old as the Upanishads ³⁹²:

³⁸⁹ Jain, Idem, P 105.

³⁹⁰ Jain, Idem, P 80.

³⁹¹ Jain, Idem, P 75

³⁹² Content by Rebecca Randak: <http://www.fuckluckygohappy.de>, last accessed on 16.05.2016

What I don't mean by Kundalini Yoga

When you hear the term Kundalini Yoga, you may think of the white turbans of Yogi Bhajan and his 3HO. As it happens with many yogic and Sanskrit words, Kundalini is a very old concept that is today almost exclusively associated with the movement that first (or most) popularized it. Yogi Bhajan's is merely one interpretation of Kundalini Yoga, and a very recent one at that. Kundalini Yoga was first mentioned in the Upanishads around 500 BC. Yogi Bhajan's version dates from 1968.

And sometimes it is being referred to by simply indicating that Kundalini yoga is thousands of years old:

“Kundalini Yoga was reserved for the elite for thousands of years. Because this Rāja Yoga “supreme yoga” takes you into the present moment with overwhelming power...”³⁹³

Other ways in which Kundalini yoga teachers in Berlin lay claim to authenticity is found in the imagery teachers use to promote their courses online. The images come from a variety of backgrounds, some actually related to Sikhism, some related to yogi Bhajan himself, but mostly related to other images that come from a variety of religious contexts. Below are examples of different images that are used either on the website of Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin or portray actual images of the studio on the website. In order: an example of reference to Yogi Bhajan in a yoga studio, the usage of the Yin-Yang symbol, stemming from Taoism, the usage of the image of a prayer mala - used in several religious traditions among which Hinduism and Buddhism, images of Shiva, the image of a Buddha statue, the image of a Ganesha statue, the image of Tibetan Sound Bowls, an image of Sikh scripture and the symbol of Sikhism, an image of a Gong, Tibetan sound bowl and sheep skins, an image of an Aboriginal symbol for the cultural element of Dreamtime, and an image from Tibetan Medicine, combined with the image of a cacao bean.

³⁹³ Content by Sohan Anne Boeing: <http://www.yogadelta.de>, last accessed 04.01.2017



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Ab morgen, Montag dem 13. April 2015, wird es in meinem **18.15 Uhr-Kundaliniyogakurs** einen neuen inhaltlichen Schwerpunkt geben: **„Frauen und Männer im Wassermannzeitalter“**.

In jeder Stunde wird es entweder eine Übungsreihe oder Meditation zum Thema Weiblichkeit oder Männlichkeit geben. Es bleibt also weiterhin ein Kurs für Frauen und Männer. Es ist für Jede und Jeden von uns wichtig zu erkennen, welche speziellen Aufgaben wir im Wassermannzeitalter zu bewältigen haben und über welche Potentiale wir mit unserer Weiblichkeit oder Männlichkeit verfügen.

Wie kann uns Yoga unterstützen, beide Polaritäten zu verbinden, um ein glückliches und bewusstes Leben zu führen?

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³⁹⁴ Content by Daljeet Kaur: <https://www.kreuzberg yoga.de/>, last accessed 28.05.2015

³⁹⁵ Content by Elke Deichmüller: <https://www.fatehkaur.de/>, last accessed 28.05.2015



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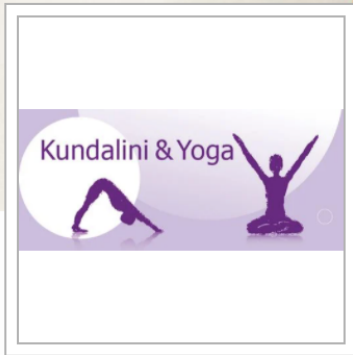
³⁹⁶ Content by Anna Zimmermann: <https://www.pinterest.de/pin/313633561540495137/>, last accessed 01.02.2017

³⁹⁷ Content by Gwendolin Kirchhoff: http://www.kundaliniyogaflow.de/Kundalini_Yoga_Flow/Kundalini_Yoga.html, last accessed 28.05.2015





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⁴⁰⁰ Content by Christiane Akaljeet Fischer: <https://www.kundalini-und-yoga.de/>, last accessed 02.03.2020

⁴⁰¹ Content by Jiwandeep Kaur: <https://www.amardas.de/about/>, last accessed 02.03.2020



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MAR
12 **Dreamtime Healing**
Sun 18:00 · Kapelle am Urban · Berlin
Shared to Kundalini Yoga Sangat Berlin

★ Interested



5
DEC

Open your heart: The Essentis Kundalini Yoga
Workshop meets Kakao

Public · Hosted by Essentis Biohotel Berlin

★ Interested + Going ...

All these images signal a knowledge of the culture they represent but more than that they refer to, as mentioned before, an imagined history of India. Even so much so, that symbols from religions of different regions in (South-East) Asia are bundled together. Bringing these images together with yoga deterritorializes yoga from its 'origins'. In this case using images of Yogi Bhajan stays the closest to the true origin of Kundalini yoga. Using images of Sikhism deterritorializes Sikhism from its original context, that would not be connected to the practice of yoga that comes from Hinduism, while at the same time reterritorializing it by giving it the new meaning of a blended form of movement and spirituality.

When asked about why these symbols are used and/or put together, reactions differ. One teacher told me: “I really like Ganesha, I think it gives the space a spiritual vibe.” The teacher did not know what Ganesha stands for. Another teacher said: “Having Yogi Bhajan (‘s photo) in the room is a reference to where this yoga came from, it is important to be reminded of that.” These reactions seem, in a broader sense, true for the larger part of Kundalini Yoga teachers; in general, the images are either placed on the website to refer to the spiritual values the teachers seek to exude, or teachers mean to refer to the specific roots of yoga. And not just Kundalini Yoga: “Shiva comes from Hinduism and yoga actually comes from Hinduism, as Patanjali wrote yoga Sutras.” This teacher means to refer back to sutras the Indian sage Patanjali wrote in the year 2-4 BCE. The Yoga Sutras, however, don’t mention doing ‘yoga’, but rather mention keep the body in harmony, in balance by using its strength.⁴⁰³ What we can derive from this, is that some images being used support a reterritorialization of Kundalini Yoga to fit an exoticized version of either Orientalist or Indigenous expectation of yoga.

For those that choose to use images that are linked to Yogi Bhajan and/or Sikhism specifically, the aim seems to be more to reterritorialize yoga by creating the sense that they know what the ‘tradition’ of Kundalini Yoga is all about, as they are connecting to the source. In general, it is true that teachers seek to display their knowledge and authenticity on the subject by using imagery that is generally connected with authentic yoga practice. Some Kundalini Yoga teachers are even very direct about this:

In the early hours of the morning (amrit vela) Kundalini Yoga is especially effective, the life energy is activated, and the subconscious mind is cleansed. That is why ... teaches Monday mornings at 8:00 o’clock in the morning. Through her many travels to India and her received training in yoga in India, she is very well-connected to the roots of Kundalini Yoga. It is her heart’s wish to bring this spiritual knowledge to the yoga class.

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Another way in which Kundalini Yoga teachers can claim authenticity is by advertising with their adopted Hindu ‘spiritual’ name. Many teachers choose to do so, while there are also teachers who choose to use their given name in advertising.

⁴⁰³ Woods, James. *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009

⁴⁰⁴ Content by Caroline Eder: <http://o-yoga.de/#>, last accessed 05.01.2019

4.9 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: CLAIMING SCIENTIFIC PROOF

Deterritorializing Kundalini Yoga, among others by demystifying it, happens when the teachers focus not on the more metaphysical background of yoga, but rather on the scientifically proven effects yoga has. At the same time of deterritorializing Kundalini Yoga in this way, it also reterritorializes yoga, by now placing the meaning of a scientific method for managing the body onto it:

The positive effects of yoga on the body and the feeling of well-being have been scientifically proven. Still, Kundalini Yoga is not a replacement for medical treatment or psychotherapy.

405

It has been known for thousands of years and even the most recent scientific studies show that every human being that chooses to engage with yoga and focuses on engaged harmonious wisdom, will profit from the many positive effects - either in preventing disease and/or in supporting in dealing with acute diseases.

406

As brought to the West by Yogi Bhajan, Kundalini Yoga combines breathing, movement, relaxation and meditation. It is the science of sequence, rhythm and sound, to work on every aspect of your body, mind and soul.

407

4.10 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: CLAIMING UNIVERSALITY

Many studios communicate the idea that Kundalini Yoga can be practiced by anyone at any time. This idea suggests that Kundalini Yoga is not tied to Sikhism, or Hinduism, or any particular tradition, but rather it deterritorializes yoga and reterritorializes it into a form of movement that can be practiced by all regardless of affiliations. It also reterritorializes Kundalini Yoga as a system that is common, it is something that is always true, which therefore can be sold to anyone in our society. One way in which this happens is by combining different yoga styles, and so different religious roots, together in classes, as in the example below:

⁴⁰⁵ Content by Jutta Schmid: <http://www.satsangat.de/>, last accessed 03.02.2016

⁴⁰⁶ Content by Annette Graff: <https://www.personal-yoga-berlin.de/>, last accessed 01.02.2020

⁴⁰⁷ Content by Ardas Kaur: <https://internationalyogateachertraining-berlin.de/en/home/>, last accessed 09.08.2017

Ha-Kun Yoga

This course combines elements from Kundalini Yoga, Hatha Yoga and Vinyasa Flow. The dynamic exercises, breath exercises and meditation from Kundalini Yoga are aimed at every muscle group and every organ in the body. The connection between posture, the movements and the experience in the body unite the physical and the emotional side of the human being. Hatha Yoga, on the other hand, makes perseverance and precise focus in yoga poses possible and aims at stretches, twists and relaxation. The third element is the flow, where we alternate between poses. Poses are no longer static, but flow from one pose to the other in the rhythm of the breath.

408

Universality can also be found in the lack of symbols, or the moving away (deterritorializing) from any religious symbols, as in the example below. The symbol of nature is relevant for all, does not exclude anyone.



All.Ein.Sein.

kundaliniyoga
KREUZBERG

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⁴⁰⁸ Content by Elisa Kallaus: <https://www.koerperklang-yoga.de/>, last accessed 04.06.2016

⁴⁰⁹ Content by Daljeet Kaur: <https://www.kreuzberg-yoga.de/>, last accessed 20.09.2017

Another way in which the universality is promoted, is by putting the images of several religious traditions together in one picture, suggesting that one can practice Kundalini Yoga, whether you worship Ganesha or Buddha, as per example below:



410

Sometimes this deterritorialization goes even further and the altars in classes, as per photos on the website, show not only symbols of different religious traditions, but include the ‘founders’ of certain yoga styles, even during Kundalini Yoga classes. The example below shows symbols of Tibetan Buddhism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jivamukti Yoga ‘Founders’ and Sikhism.

⁴¹⁰ Photo by Klaus Westermann, <https://www.ardas-yoga.de/>, last accessed 04.05.2020



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Sometimes universalism is explicitly claimed by studios, even though mentioning its roots. The message seems to be that even though you may not be familiar with Sikhism, this yoga is still for everyone.

The practice of this form of yoga is not dependent on religion, but it is influenced by the teachings of Sikhism.

412

And sometimes Kundalini yoga introduces universalism simply by saying one needs no knowledge in advance, it is for anyone.

You don't need any previous knowledge to take part in the course. The course is suited to beginners as well as advanced practitioners.

⁴¹¹ Content by Peaceyoga Berlin GbR – Moritz Ulrich und Niklas Noack: <https://peaceyoga.de/en/>, last accessed 20.09.2017

⁴¹² Content by Jutta Schmid: <http://www.satsangat.de/>, last accessed 20.09.2017

Kundalini Yoga is easy and light to practice. You don't need any prior knowledge to practice.

The exception lies in people who use drugs and/or are suffering from psychosis.

You don't need any prior knowledge to practice Kundalini Yoga, nor do you need to practice any religion. The use of intoxicants can pose a risk, as well as a history of mental illness.

Should you have any doubts about your own situation, feel free to speak to me.

By calling Kundalini Yoga a spiritual tradition, instead of religious tradition, it further erases the roots of yoga and makes it non-threatening to existing belief systems and/or lifestyles.

Aquarian Sadhana - spiritual morning Ritual in Berlin Karlshorst.

In comparison to other forms of spirituality, Yogi Bhajan's spirituality is very much suited to everyday life. You don't need any special bodily skills or prior knowledge. It is easy to learn, and it is easy to practice.

4.11 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: CLAIMING FITNESS, STRESS REDUCTION AND OTHER HEALTH BENEFITS

Deterritorialization by means of demystifying Kundalini Yoga and focusing only on certain parts of the practice, such as the benefits of asana's, is a widespread narrative in the online marketing of Kundalini Yoga in Berlin. A large part of marketing material focuses merely on the bodily aspects of yoga and reterritorializes yoga by placing the new, and rather narrow, meaning of stress reduction, relaxation and health benefits onto it. Below are examples from websites of Berliner Kundalini Yoga Teachers of the focus on these areas.

⁴¹³ Content on Urban Sports Club: https://urbansportsclub.com/en/venues/anbadaba-yoga?date=2020-07-27&service_type=1, last accessed 20.09.2017

⁴¹⁴ Content by Janin Hönig Paramjeet Singh Khalsa: <https://www.yogajapa.com/>, last accessed 20.09.2017

⁴¹⁵ Content by Verena Pelkmann: <https://www.embodiedbeing.de/>, last accessed 20.09.2017

⁴¹⁶ Content by Janin Hönig Paramjeet Singh Khalsa: <https://www.yogajapa.com/>, last accessed 20.09.2017

⁴¹⁷ Content by Christiane Akaljeet Fischer: <https://www.kundalini-und-yoga.de/>, last accessed 20.09.2017

You have the possibility to learn how to consciously relax in moments of tension. Or you can learn (anew) how to completely relax.

418

Come and learn in my classes how to sharpen your perception and to better be able to sense the signals your body is sending you, so that you are better able to cope with stress.

419

When you are looking to balance your stressful professional life, when you want to develop further, when you need a clear focus, when you lack concentration, or when you have the feeling that somehow things are not moving and you want to change something in your life, practicing yoga on a regular basis can be of great help.

420

The focus of the classes is on training your muscles by dynamic exercises and breathing techniques. This will activate your digestive system, strengthen your nervous system and help you grow the ability to relax. The exercises require perseverance and will evoke a present feeling of the body.

421

Kundalini Yoga is ideal for our hectic times and urban environments, because it unites tension with relaxation and body with mind, so you have the chance to relax and be at peace.

422

This particular example above references urban modern culture very specifically by placing yoga explicitly in an urban environment. Furthermore, it universalizes ‘city culture’ and implies that yoga is especially suitable for practicing living in the city. This reterritorializes Kundalini Yoga for the environment that is Berlin. It also takes away, and thus deterritorializing, the meaning that yoga was not meant to deal with ‘city culture’ but rather to aim for enlightenment.

⁴¹⁸ Content by Elke Deichmüller: <https://www.fatehkaur.de/>, last accessed 28.05.2015

⁴¹⁹ Content by Carola Schmidt: <https://carola-schmidt-coaching-yoga.de/>, last accessed 27.10.2016

⁴²⁰ Content by Thomas Deter: <http://anbadaba.com/>, last accessed 27.10.2016

⁴²¹ Content at TU Berlin: https://www.tu-sport.de/index.php?id=2860&tx_dwzesh_courses%5BsportsDescription%5D=214&tx_dwzesh_courses%5Baction%5D=show&cHash=b3b0235bd082115fd324c97e24db218f

⁴²² Content by Petra Rittger: <http://www.rittger.de/kundaliniyoga.html>, last accessed 22.11.2018

Taking your needs and goals as a starting point, you will be offered individual possibilities that best suit you and benefit you most. It doesn't make a difference whether you have chronic problems, are recovering from an injury or are looking to resolve emotional trauma. There is always a way out.

423

These examples show the meaning of Kundalini Yoga is well-placed within a society that demands fitness of body and mind. Furthermore, the meaning of an individual development process is placed upon yoga which, as I have mentioned before, serves the purpose of capitalizing off one's own development. The teachers cater to these individual problems by addressing them specifically in the texts on their websites and speaking directly to the individual that they, too, can overcome stress in their lives. As mentioned before, emotion plays a great part in the incentive to buy products. With the teachers promising happiness in the form of stress reduction, they make Kundalini Yoga into a social good to be bought.

4.12 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: CLAIMING COUNTER-CULTURE

Not all teachers focus on the benefits of Kundalini Yoga as they fit a society that wants to up its productivity. There are teachers who actively promote a move away from current societal values, which can also be seen as selling an alternative lifestyle.

It is only when we have found peace and health within ourselves, that we can create it in the outside world, protect our earth and can build something new together.

424

To think global and act local. Unite people and methods - creating awareness-based communities in the neighborhood.

425

Or as a teacher put it:

My very first yoga experience. After the first KY lesson I was convinced I had found something that went beyond physical exercise. The fact that KY gives me a physical

⁴²³ Content by Maigold Yogazentrum: <http://www.maigold-berlin.de/Yoga/> last accessed 22.11.2018

⁴²⁴ Content by Susanne Grützmacher: <http://physiotherapie-gruetzmacher.de/services/kundalini-yoga/>, last accessed 22.11.2018

⁴²⁵ Content by Daria Czarlinska: <https://www.sinnergie-ev.com/wir.html>, last accessed 22.11.2018

experience, but beyond that also a spiritual and life-changing experience in such a full way, never ceases to amaze me, especially as I am a huge skeptic!

Kundalini Yoga is not a competition. It is not about how flexible you are and how cute your butt looks in your new yoga pants. The focus is inwards, so we practice mostly with closed eyes to perceive the sensation and energy as it flows through our body which affects a refinement of awareness. The goal is to come back into union with yourself, with your soul. To stay connected with your inner voice that knows what you need.

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These teachers seem to speak of Kundalini Yoga as an alternative to the performance society, a way to disconnect from the values of adding value and productivity to the individual. Which would be more in line with the traditional means of practicing yoga, whereby spiritual enlightenment was set to be the goal. Yet, there is no talk of the larger system that would be needed to accomplish this; there is no talk of a moral lifestyle (as mentioned in the yamas and niyamas). In that sense it rather seems that a chosen alternative lifestyle, or spirituality, is still meant to add value. Furthermore, this reterritorialization places the meaning of personal spirituality and individual enlightenment onto yoga, rather than developing a moral attitude that would serve the whole rather than just the individual.

4.13 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: CLAIMING THE PERSONAL CONNECTION

As mentioned before, making a personal connection appeals to the emotion of the buyer in the consumer culture, and therefore it is important for Kundalini Yoga teachers to establish this connection if they want to sell their service. As Lau reminds us, it is the personal life of the teachers that also becomes an object that sells yoga: “A way of life becomes another commodity to consume and to sell. With New Age capitalism, the instructional products, brochures for niche tourism, and even the more banal logos, t-shirts, caps, and pins associated with these alternative health practices come to mark the contemporary consumer landscape in

⁴²⁶ Content by Karolina Burbach: <http://www.theyog.com/kundalini-yoga/>, last accessed 22.11.2018

which our bodies themselves become part of the signage.”⁴²⁷ And so teachers allow students a look into their personal life, to create a bond and give off the message that students, too, can live this lifestyle.

Teachers find many ways to create a personal connection. Some teachers make it formal and show their resume, incidentally, also showing that a traditional path of work and/or study may still lead you to become a yoga teacher yourself.



Ausbildung

2003-2009 Studium der Romanistik/Skandinavistik (M.A.)

2009 Hatha Yoga Lehrer nach Sivananda im Yoga Vidya Ashram Bad Meinberg

2010 Kundalini Yoga Lehrer Stufe 1 Karam Kriya School ([redacted] Singh & Team) in Estland, Holland & Italien.

2012-2017 Kundalini Yoga Lehrer Stufe 2 Karam Kriya School (Shiv Charan Singh & Team)

2012-2016 Karam Kriya Berater mit [redacted] Singh & Team

2016 Aufnahme in die Aquarian Academy, im Training zum Kundalini Yoga Ausbilder Stufe 1

2016-2019 Sat Nam Rasayan mit [redacted]

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*Parallel to her track as a Yogini, (name) ascertained a degree in business with a focus in organizational leadership and has further training in LEAN, Appreciative Inquiry and as a certified mediator. At the beginning of her career she worked in finance for a multi-million-dollar company, and then moved on to work in the NGO arena where she led multiple global change initiatives toward designing new inclusive organizational models. This is where she found her passion linking the philosophies of business and yoga. Kundalini Yoga works predominantly to liberate one's full potential as a human being and change management does just the same on an organizational level. Presenting the ancient teachings of yoga in a modern context is a skill of hers, and she finds it important to introduce yoga in a way that people can integrate it into their daily lives to improve communication, relationships, and vitality in order to be successful in all aspects of life.*⁴²⁹

⁴²⁷ Lau, Kimberly, J. *New Age Capitalism. Making Money East of Eden*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000, Pp 6

⁴²⁸ Content by Janin Hönig Paramjeet Singh Khalsa: <https://www.yogajapa.com/>, last accessed 17.08.2020

⁴²⁹ Content by Panch Nishan Khalsa: <http://www.panchnishan.com/about/>, last accessed 17.08.2020

Others share their very personal experience with Kundalini Yoga and what effect it has had on their lives. By choosing to display personal stories of overcoming life's difficulties, they make themselves relatable to their students. Furthermore, they serve as an example of what their students are pursuing. Even in promising feeling more satisfaction. This construction of identity that consumers want to buy, is part of the commodification of yoga, because the chosen enactment of a lifestyle becomes the commodity.

In connection to breast cancer in 2015, I started practicing Kundalini Yoga. From the very first moment I felt enthusiastic and engaged. Very soon it became clear to me that I wanted to learn more about this yogic knowledge. Since then, Kundalini Yoga supports me to shape my life in such a way so that I feel courageous and relaxed, while also increasing my self-awareness and my capacity to hold space for other people.

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*Fate, or rather destiny, was the reason I was in Thailand on a small island during the Tsunami of 2004. It was thanks to Kundalini Yoga, and the tree that I was able to hold on to, that I survived.*⁴³¹

*This all went on for a while, I was missing home so much, and so I heard about a kundalini yoga studio in Cape Town. I booked a class and went. Hot tears started rolling down my face as soon as we started tuning in with Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō. I think I cried nearly through the entire class. After the class was over, I felt so light and happy! I hadn't felt like this in a while and through that experience of feeling light and not heavy, no anxiety or loneliness.*⁴³²

In all the experiences, teachers relate to the emotions and circumstances we all know very well. Furthermore, by showing their own experience, and the success of their story, teachers implicitly promise that this kind of experience is available for you too. These stories deterritorialize yoga from a way to overcome the personal, especially as a teacher where one takes the oath: 'I am not a person,' and reterritorializes it into a highly personal experience. The teachers themselves become the thing to 'buy', the thing to aspire too. And so, the photo material that Kundalini Yoga teachers use, shows the teachers smiling and/or peaceful. They

⁴³⁰ Content by Christiane Eske-Putzmann: <https://www.kundalini-yoga.berlin/>, last accessed 02.08.2017

⁴³¹ Content by Bibi Nanaki: <http://www.yoga-insel.de>, last accessed 02.08.2017

⁴³² Content by Rebecca Malherbe: <https://www.kybyoga.com/about>, last accessed 17.08.2020

seem to emulate that they have walked the path before you, and you can become just like them. Some teachers will not relate to the spiritual at all, but rather to the personal experience of living in a city: “I eat meat, drink alcohol and like all the things that make up a city such as Berlin. “

Again, not all teachers will do this consciously. One teacher said: “If I don’t have a picture of myself online, I will get fewer students. People want to see who will be teaching them.” This still implies a commercial motive though. Some teachers do say they want to lead by example: “I have pictures online that have been taken in a flow state, this is good, because you can clearly see the effect yoga has on a person.” Next to pictures, a majority of teachers advertises with their ‘spiritual’ name. These names are taken out of its original Indian context, deterritorialized, and have taken on a meaning in the Kundalini Yoga community. The names are seen as a reminder to carry out your spiritual destiny, which are implicit in the name you are given by your teacher. So, in this sense, using your ‘spiritual’ name to sell your classes contributes to selling your image as a yoga teacher. It communicates authority on the subject, it communicates a(n imagined) spiritual maturity and with that it contains the promise that anyone can get there too by taking the classes of this teacher.

4.14 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: TAILORING TO THE CONSUMER: WHITE, LEAN, ABLE-BODIED, RICH WOMEN

When looking at who exactly Kundalini Yoga teachers are addressing to buy their services, it becomes clear that to practice you will need money. The ‘cheapest’ Kundalini Yoga classes in Berlin are donation based, but this often goes for temporary classes that are held in summer in the park, or for teachers that are not yet established Kundalini Yoga teachers. A teacher said: “Nobody knows me, people are not going to pay 20 Euros to come to my class, especially as I am not teaching in a studio yet.” Even with price reductions for students or people with a lower income, the ‘cheapest’ yoga class in Berlin still costs 13 EUR for 1 class. The most expensive Kundalini Yoga class in Berlin costs 25 EUR for 1 class. Added to that, is the fact that a contract structure, where you pay a fee per month, benefits the rich more than the poor. A contract fee per month costs less, but also means you are obliged to pay that amount per month. People with unstable or lower incomes are more likely to pay per class, to not have (added) financial obligations and be tied to a contract length. In practice this means that if you want to do Kundalini Yoga once a week and have a contract, you might end up paying 49 EUR per month, whereas if you took drop-in classes that month, you’d pay 76 EUR. So, for

the same month of yoga, the rich middle classes who have a contract pay 49 EUR and anyone else pays 26 EUR extra per month. It is almost as if the structure has been set up to benefit an already privileged target group. Kundalini Yoga teachers often defend high prices with the following argument, as was told by different teachers in similar ways: “Well we should ask what we think we are worth, I also put in a lot of effort to create a class. Besides, everyone can come to Sadhana, which is meant to be free of charge, so in that sense I offer something for everyone.” Of course, this argument assumes that lower income households have time and capacity to wake up before 4 o’clock, make it to the studio and practice yoga for 2,5 hours. This way of thinking deterritorializes Kundalini Yoga completely, where founder Yogi Bhajan said to never become dependent on teaching yoga. He also said explicitly that Kundalini Yoga was the householder's yoga and should be accessible to everyone. He also said that teaching yoga should come as an exchange for something else and it is this argument that many teachers take to ask for high amounts of money. Some teachers make this explicit by not saying ‘price’ but calling it ‘Energy Exchange.’” With these prices it becomes clear that it will be hard to participate in Kundalini Yoga classes when you earn less money. There are exceptions to be found, but they are very few, I found one studio that explicitly states that anyone should be able to do yoga, regardless of their financial situation. These people are asked to donate time.

Work exchange

We believe that every person - independent of their financial situation- should have the possibility to participate in our yoga classes and visit our events. That is why in Amar Das, you can earn yoga classes, when you help out in our center. Please feel free to approach us for further information and details.

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Some Kundalini Yoga studios will promise that practicing yoga will bring you wealth, which reterritorializes yoga to become connected to literal wealth.

Kundalini Yoga teaches personal responsibility for developing your character and a happy and healthy life in prosperity. Kundalini Yoga conveys effective tools to break through

⁴³³ Content by Jiwandeep Kaur: <https://www.amardas.de/angebot/>, last accessed 03.04.2016

negative habits and anything that is blocking you from you feeling whole and part of the whole.

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Teacher Trainings

To become a Kundalini Yoga teacher, you must follow one of the 5 teacher trainings that are currently on offer in Berlin. On the one hand this may include the possibility of teachers losing students, that will become teachers themselves, but on the other hand leading a teacher training is business. Prices for the same teacher training range from 1850 EUR to 6000 EUR, excluding costs for food during the teacher training weekends and excluding the costs for an additional retreat week that most teacher training offers. With such amounts of money, of which a part goes to KRI (the institute that issues Kundalini Yoga teacher certificates) and a part goes to the costs for international teachers that are flown in to teach, it is no wonder that teachers want to create the desire to sell this product as well. Furthermore, the Kundalini Yoga teacher that trains other teachers has more status than the one that doesn't. The teacher training promises first and foremost a personal, individual, transformation that seems to be secondary to learning to teach others.

Join us on this journey to your true self! This Kundalini Yoga teacher training will change your life. It will give you all the tools you need to make this technique work for you and others and to prepare you professionally to teach them.

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Are you ready to make big changes to your life and become an inspiration for others to do the same? There is the very real possibility that instead of the hungry person you are now, driven by needs and led by unconscious beliefs, you will become a lighthouse. Not to dazzle others, but to serve them. To help people stand in their own light, to inspire and guide them. To bring light to this earth through the fullness of your being.⁴³⁶

With 5 teacher trainings currently on offer in Berlin, one can imagine that every year many teachers graduate and either take up teaching and/or become part of the community. In this it becomes an essential part to grow the community. As we have seen, most teacher training offers a personal transformation and a better-than-now-life. Life itself gets a value and this

⁴³⁴ Content by Janin Hönig Paramjeet Singh Khalsa: <https://www.yogajapa.com/kundalini-yoga-kurse?w=/list-view>, last accessed 03.04.2016

⁴³⁵ Content by Bibi Nanaki: <http://www.yoga-insel.de>, last accessed 09.09.2017

⁴³⁶ Content by Sohan Anne Boeing: <http://www.yogadelta.de>, last accessed, 27.05.2020

value can be upgraded: *this training will deepen your base as a human being to thrive in these challenging times.* Furthermore, the self gets a value that can be heightened by the experience: *There is the very real possibility that instead of the hungry person you are now, driven by needs and led by unconscious beliefs, you will become a lighthouse.* The group experience is important and an actual goal of the teacher training: *Build a relationship with other participating students, local teachers, and the 3HO community.* But the most important thing is the individual experience: Your attention will be focused on you and your life, *what you already know and what is new to you.* *The wish to teach others develops from your own experiences with yoga.* *The teacher training will focus on applying what you have learned to your own life.* With this, it seems that most teacher trainings are filled with consumer values to draw in students. But there are exceptions here, too, where the teacher training is not so much focused on the self, but rather on teaching: *You will learn how everything fits together and you will learn about the history of Kundalini Yoga.* *You will also learn how to teach and explain yoga to others.*

All these trainings seem to be successful, with 2 trainings added in 2014 and 2015, and so the promises work. It creates a growing teacher community that comes together at set times to practice yoga in classes, sadhana, at events etc. This may be while it is a branded community, which is grown by the creation of so many new teachers, and specifically directed at teachers, but also seems to fulfill a need of togetherness that is not always found in other places. From what I have seen at such events, is that there is, at least partly, a genuine joy at being together in a group of people that are like-minded.

White Females Bodies

Next to the middle classes, Kundalini Yoga seems to explicitly aim at lean, able-bodied, white, female bodies. Partly this can be seen in photos that Kundalini Yoga studios choose to place on their website.



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⁴³⁷ Content by Rebecca Randak: <http://www.fuckluckygohappy.de>, last accessed on 16.05.2016

⁴³⁸ Content by: Antonios Sarantopoulos: <https://agapezoe.com/de/berlin-festival/berlin-artists/kathleen-kloss-christina-sangita-mindfulness-kundalini-yoga-mit-healing-mantra-sound/>, last accessed 02.08.2017



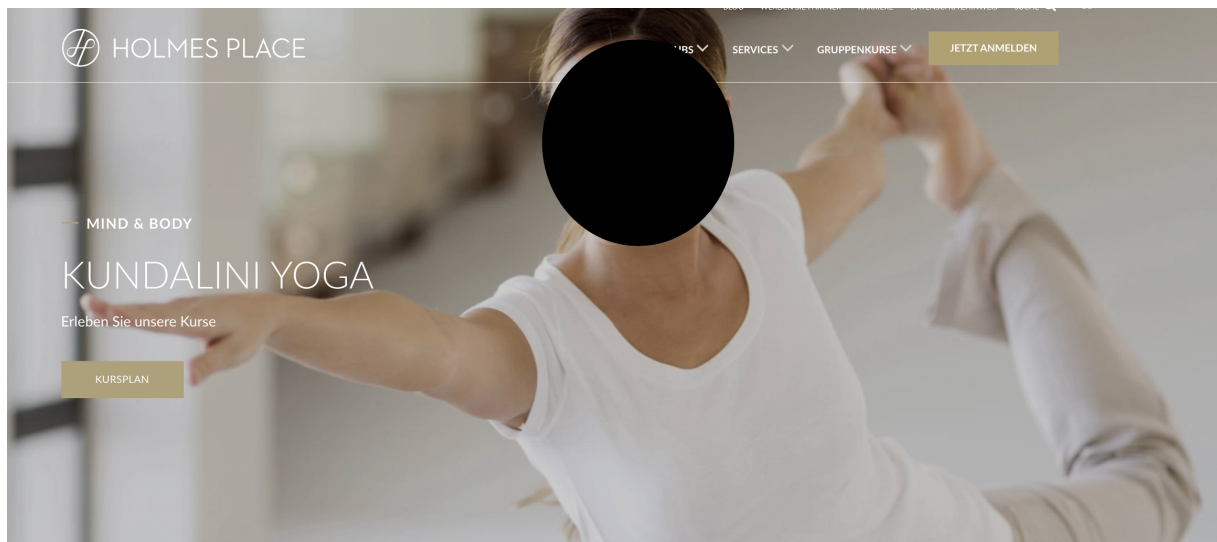
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⁴³⁹ Content by Janine Honig: <https://classpass.com/classes/yoga-japa-schule-fr-bewusstes-leben-berlin/kundalini-yoga-einsteiger-16cda8cf5b8>, last accessed 02.08.2017

⁴⁴⁰ Content by Ardas Kaur: <https://internationalyogateachertraining-berlin.de/komme-zum-sadhana-in-berlin/>, last accessed 01.06.2015



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This does not mean men never enter the picture, but they are never the majority.

⁴⁴¹ Content by Holmes Place Health Clubs GmbH: <https://www.holmesplace.com/de/de/gruppenkurse/mind-body/kundalini-yoga?club=55>, last accessed 24.06.2020



540 x 720

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⁴⁴² Content by Rebecca Randak: <https://www.fuckluckygohappy.de/kundalini-yoga-ausbildung-mit-panch-nishan-kaur-khalsa-in-berlin/>, last accessed on 16.05.2016



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There are currently no pictures found of Black People or People of Color who participate in Kundalini Yoga classes in Berlin.

The same goes for teacher representation of Kundalini Yoga in Berlin. The majority of teachers are white women. Some teacher teams consist only of white women.



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And some teacher teams consist of a large majority of white women, with a few exceptions: there are some white men.

⁴⁴³ Content by Ardas Kaur: <https://internationalyogateachertraining-berlin.de/en/kundalini-yoga-teacher-training-level-1-berlin-rostock/>, last accessed 01.06.2015

⁴⁴⁴ Content by Christiane Eske-Putzmann: <https://www.kundalini-yoga.berlin/%C3%BCber-uns/>, last accessed 02.08.2017



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There are currently no pictures of Black People or People of Color that are Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin.

Another way that Kundalini Yoga teachers cater especially to white women is in the language they use around, for example, workshops. This can be ascribed partly due to the fact that a number of courses aim at women explicitly.



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The female moon points. Your power as a woman is subjected to constant change.

⁴⁴⁵ Photo by Klaus Westermann: <https://www.ardas-yoga.de/ardas-yoga-in-hamburg/team>, last accessed 02.08.2017

⁴⁴⁶ Content by Federico Mesa Althabe: <https://www.yoga-lotos.de/yoga-fuer-schwangere-neue-stunden-ab-maerz/>, last accessed 02.08.2017

Some teachers state that they aim to go into women's needs during the classes.

During my Kundalini Yoga classes for women, we will have 2 full hours to focus on particular themes. Every course has 10 classes and is focused on a main theme, like Chakras, the 10 bodies, yogic lifestyle, being a woman, detoxing, clear mind, etc. I will shape my classes according to the women in the group.

Other teachers take exercises from Kundalini Yoga that are, allegedly, better suited to biologically female bodies and teach those during classes to women. Even when it is known that Kundalini Yoga contains exercises for both genders, teachers may choose to only teach women. In light of emancipation this may be a good thing; as traditional yoga was mainly taught to men, the choice to teach women deterritorializes yoga and reterritorializes it for women.

Kundalini Yoga für Frauen

Speziell im Kundalini Yoga werden bestimmte Übungen für Frauen und Männer unterschieden.

Im Mittelpunkt steht das Muskeltraining in Form dynamischer Körperübungen mit begleitend eingesetzten Atemtechniken. Hierüber wird der Stoffwechsel angeregt, das Nervensystem gestärkt und die Fähigkeit, zu entspannen entwickelt. Die Übungen verlangen Ausdauer und erzeugen ein intensives Körpergefühl.



Ansprechpartnerin

Gesundheit TU Sport

 [Kontakt](#)

In some cases, it is not so much about the exercises, as it is about the 'biological state' of women. Many courses aim at women around pregnancy, for example.

⁴⁴⁷ Content by shunyi.com: <https://www.yoga-infos.de/index.php/unsere-energie/83-mondpunkt>, last accessed 08.06.2016

⁴⁴⁸ Content by Mara Kowalewsky: <https://www.yogaflow.de/kurse-seminare-einzelstunden/Event/13/kundalini-yoga-fuer-frauen.html>, last accessed 08.06.2016

⁴⁴⁹ Content by TU Berlin: https://www.tu-sport.de/index.php?id=2860&tx_dwzehl_courses%5BsportsDescription%5D=214&tx_dwzehl_courses%5Baction%5D=show&cHash=b3b0235bd082115fd324c97e24db218f, last accessed 08.06.2016

Yoga für Schwangere

Montags 20.00 – 21.30 Uhr

Mittwochs 9.15 – 10.45 Uhr

Yoga für Frauen nach der Geburt

Mittwochs 11.00 – 12.30 Uhr

Kundalini Yoga für Frauen

Montags 18.00 -19.30 Uhr

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Or, if not during or around pregnancy, some courses aim to teach women during their hormonal cycle.

⁴⁵⁰ Content by Yoga Rundum: <https://yogarundum.de/yogaklassen/>, last accessed 24.03.2019

Hormon Balance Workshop

Was dich konkret erwartet:

Theorie: Zyklen, Jahreszeiten, Frausein-heute, Aromatherapie

Praxis: Kundalini Yoga, Yoga Nidra, Meditation, Aromatherapie Anwendung

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Sometimes it is the contrast with Yoga for Men courses, the absolute minority, currently only one course, that accentuates that Kundalini Yoga is mainly for women.

Yoga für Männer



Be a man.

Während Yoga in Indien traditionell von Männern praktiziert wurde, sind die Yogapraktizierenden im Westen überwiegend Frauen. Inzwischen beweisen auch hier immer mehr Männer, dass die Vorstellung vom Yoga als "Frauensport" überholt ist. Dieser Kurs lädt alle Männer herzlich ein, sich durch eigene Erfahrung selbst ein Bild vom Yoga zu machen. Wir werden spezielle Übungen und Meditationstechniken praktizieren, die den männlichen Körper kräftigen und verjüngen, Stabilität und Virilität verleihen, den Geist ruhig und klar werden lassen und dir die Möglichkeit geben, dem Stress und den Herausforderungen in deinem Leben erfolgreich zu begegnen. Entdecke dein wahres Potential als Mann. Überwinde negative und unliebsame Gewohnheiten, Verhaltensmuster und Blockaden, die dich als Mann behindern, schwächen und einschränken. Lerne, was wirklich wichtig ist, um ein glücklicher Mann zu sein.

Im Männeryoga geht es nicht um Wettbewerb sondern um Vervollkommnung.

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By the way how Kundalini Yoga teachers create their online offers, from the price per class to the images they put up, it becomes clear that they explicitly aim to attract white middle class, able-bodied women. Able-bodied, because currently there are no courses on offer for people with disabilities. With this type of advertising it will be no surprise that most Kundalini Yoga

⁴⁵¹ Content by Sandra Winkens: <https://www.sandrawinkens.com/termine/2019/10/26/hormon-balance-workshop>, last accessed last accessed 24.03.2019

⁴⁵² Content by Paramjeet Singh on: <https://www.thai-hand-berlin.com/de-singh>, last accessed 24.03.2019

classes in Berlin consist of an all-white female audience. In all my years of visiting Kundalini Yoga classes, I have only come across one Black person and one Person of Color. When I asked teachers about the lack of diversity in their classes and connection to the way they advertise, I got different reactions. Some teachers seemed not to be aware: “I have to say I never thought about it. I just asked to take some pictures during class, which I put up on the website.” Other teachers were defensive: “I think that as a yoga teacher you attract the students that you are supposed to attract. It is just a coincidence that they are all white, I don’t think it has anything to do with what I put up on my website.”

4.15 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: PUTTING A VALUE ON KUNDALINI YOGA

Several websites of Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin, and yoga studios offering Kundalini Yoga in Berlin, have the biographies of teachers on their website. To accentuate that the teachers are good, and you should buy their product, several websites have a ‘product-review’ in the form of reviews and recommendations of the clients:

Customer Reviews:

Ilona B.

Cornelia Sch.

Taran Jot S.

Natalie V.

Kerstin F.

Katrin N.

Sophia K.

Jacob B.

It may be of no surprise that these reviews all create a highly positive image of the teacher and establish why you should take classes with this particular Kundalini Yoga teacher:

In my first meeting with Sohan my heart felt touched in a very special way. A few classes later I understood why: Sohan teaches with love. A love that is very wise, that grounds truth and then brings it up in a tender way, in a manner that is both challenging and tender. She

radiates a warrior-like love for the inner being of every one of her students and in that way, she creates a courageous atmosphere in her classes.

Some studios take their product reviews to the market in a different way and advertise the value of what they are offering by having clients rate their products, and thus creating the appearance of objective value, on ranking websites such as Yelp:



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Such 'product-reviews' may lead the consumer to think that some teachers are better than others and some studios are better than others. This implies an element of market competition, a consumerist value that gives higher or lower statuses to one teacher/studio or another. Traditionally competitiveness was never part of teaching Kundalini Yoga, as it was meant to transcend the states of wanting and greed.

But not all Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin sell their yoga in the marketplace like. There are also teachers that explicitly show anti-consumerist values in how they advertise yoga:

*In Kundalini Yoga there is no higher, faster, further...*⁴⁵⁴

Here we can pose the question if such anti-consumerist values are in fact used as tools to sell yoga none-the-less and thus become consumerist again. Perhaps the creation of an identity of anti-consumerism fits the current trend of politicized consumption, in which consumers

⁴⁵³ <https://www.yelp.com/biz/satsangat-berlin>, last accessed 20.07.2017

⁴⁵⁴ Content by Hanna Juergens: <http://www.kundalini-yoga-mitte.de/seite%2077.htm>

actively try to influence the market economy and state policies to create change.⁴⁵⁵ And so it sells, whether this is the intention of the Kundalini Yoga teacher or not.

4.16 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: GROUP TEACHING

Traditionally Kundalini Yoga was, allegedly, taught from teacher to student directly. In Berlin, it is oftentimes taught in groups. What teachers are selling is a branded community, an identity, a way to give meaning and status to the practice and status to the members of the community. This branded community is displayed in the focus on group activities, even though originally Kundalini Yoga was taught one-on-one. Yogi Bhajan did take in New Age elements into Kundalini Yoga, also emphasizing group activities that allegedly create a stronger effect of yoga. In modern day Berlin, however these group activities get a new meaning that fits the local context. In the example below we see that chanting Kundalini Yoga mantras has become a frivolous activity, perhaps to be seen as an alternative to going out and dancing. Originally the mantra singing was meant to align yourself with the universe and to bring the mind into a meditative state that allows for clear awareness.

23:00 Mantra-Dance & Gong until the full moon at 24:30. We will sing and dance to famous Kundalini Yoga Mantras (we will hang them up in the space, translated).

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But the opposite is also found:

*The chanting of mantras is a technique to consciously align the mind, “Trang” - wave or projection. We all know different moods: happiness, worry, joy, regret, anger - they all are vibrations vibrating at a certain frequency. And depending on the frequency, an unconscious program is run by the mind. And this is how we shape our world with every word we speak, even if we only think the words, because sound possesses the power to change realities. When we sing mantra, we become conscious of this power and empower the mind not to react in a programmed way and choose a conscious direction. To accomplish this, we have access to a wide range of mantras that have proven their effect over thousands of years. Singing together is the focus of the course. Prior knowledge or the ability to sing are not necessary.*⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ Miller, Daniel. *Acknowledging Consumption*. London, Routledge, 1995, P 36.

⁴⁵⁶ Content by Daria Czarlinska: <http://www.dariayoga.com>, last accessed 20.07.2017

⁴⁵⁷ Content by Sohan Anne Boeing, <http://www.yogadeltaa.de>, last accessed 20.07.2017

Here group energy isn't mentioned directly, even though this was part of the original way to teach Kundalini Yoga in the West. Activities that state more clearly that group activities are in some special are, for example, full moon meditations:

The guided new moon meditation is a special form of Mantra-meditation, during which the meditators are sitting in a circle. The healing powers of the moon are absorbed in the circle and become available to each individual meditator. No prior knowledge of yoga or meditation is needed.

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Here we see that the group activity gets a special status, as the 'healing power of the moon' gets transferred to those who take part in the meditation. This is, at the same time the creation of a branded community and thus a consumerist element, as well as a traditional element.

Yogi Bhajan did say that full moon meditations would require at least 11 people.⁴⁵⁹

Another event that creates a branded community was the Kundalini Yoga Day in Berlin, which was organized every year, but which is currently suspended. This event was especially targeted at Kundalini Yogis and gave a stage to the more prominent Kundalini Yoga teachers of Berlin to do a presentation, teach a kriya/meditation, lead mantra chanting and/or other activities:

⁴⁵⁸ Content by Sat Mitar und , Sunderjeet Kaur on: <http://satmitar.blogspot.it/2012/06/neumondmeditation-am-19juni-um-20-uhr.html>, last accessed 20.07.2017

⁴⁵⁹ <https://www.3ho.org/3ho-lifestyle/health-and-healing/meditation-healing-ring-tantra>. last accessed 20.07.2017

16.11.14

**Gemeinsam durch das
Wassermannzeitalter
gehen.**

**Ein Nachmittag der Berliner
Kundalini Yoga Zentren mit Yoga,
Meditation, Musik und Vorträgen**

Sonntag, 16.11.14 von 12.00 - 17.00 Uhr in der
Villa Elisabeth, Invalidenstr. 3, 10115 Berlin-Mitte
Anfahrt: U8 Rosenthaler Platz, S-Nordbahnhof, Tram M8

Spende: 12,- Euro
Bitte Geschirr/Besteck und Yogaunterlage mitbringen!
Kinder, Freunde und Familie sind herzlich willkommen.
Kinderprogramm von 12.00 - 15.45 Uhr

Eine Kooperation der Berliner Kundalini Yoga LehrerInnen

Programm

11.30 Uhr - Einlass und Ankommen
12.00 Uhr - Begrüßung und Chanten zur Einstimmung
Bahwant Kaur und Joy Gabrielle
12.15 Uhr - Kundalini Yoga Kriya - Claudia Wiedemer
13.10 Uhr - Gong Entspannung - Jap Nirantar Singh
13.30 Uhr - Meditation - Video mit Yogi Bhajan
Dashmesh Singh
14.00 Uhr - Sangat - Pangat (gemeinsames Essen)
15.00 Uhr - Mantradanza - Ana Carbia
15.20 Uhr - Vortrag: Wer ist Yogi Bhajan - heute?
Amrit Kaur
15.45 Uhr - Pantra - Hari Singh
16.00 Uhr - Celestial Communication - Panch Nishan Kaur
16.15 Uhr - Mantrachanten mit den Grace Singers
Amrit Sadhana Singh
17.00 Uhr - Ende

 **KUNDALINIYOGA.BERLIN**
www.warja-escherich-design.de



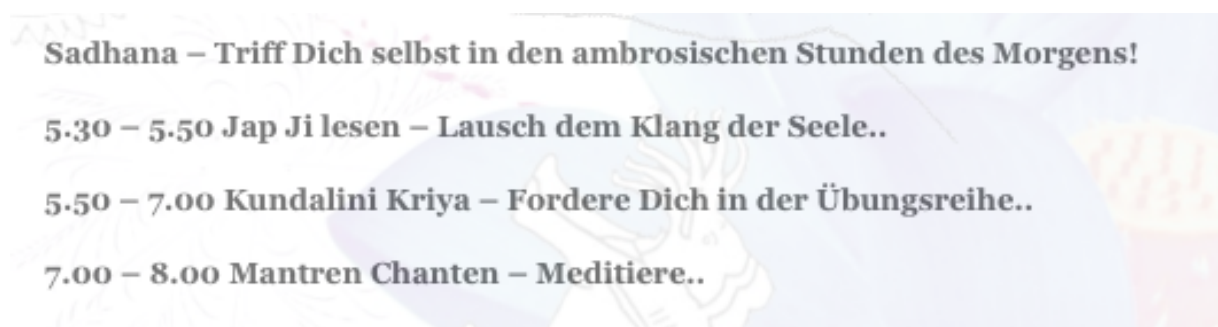
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The pretext under which this event was sold, was the idea of facing the Age of Aquarius together, as Kundalini Yoga teachers. This age was said, by Yogi Bhajan, to bring much suffering, among others while people would be overloaded with information in this age (which would last around 500 years) and become depressed. It is up to the Kundalini Yoga

⁴⁶⁰ Photo of leaflet

teachers to bring them back to health. Be that as it may – the event grants a status of uniqueness for all the members that join in, it sets them apart from other yoga practitioners and non-yoga practitioners and creates the identity of the Yogi that will go through the Age of Aquarius supporting mankind. And within that group not all are created equal; some yogis are visitors and others are bringing their gifts to the stage; it is not by accident that only well-known names feature on the flyer, this is to sell the event and further display the mastery of the teachers teaching. If Kundalini Yoga was taught here in the way Yogi Bhajan taught it, completely unknown beginning teachers should be allowed to teach. And yet the Western mind wants to assure itself that what is on offer is quality and what better way to prove high quality than by being well-known/famous?

Finally, the group activity that gives its members the highest status within the Kundalini Yoga community is Sadhana. This is an activity that takes place between 5:00-7:30/ 6:00-8:30 a.m. and was recommended by Yoga Bhajan as a daily practice. In this timespan yogis read the Jap-ji out loud, practice one hour of Kundalini Yoga, including deep relaxation, and sing the 7 morning mantras. Kundalini Yoga teachers who regularly attend morning sadhana get a lot of reference and students who start attending sadhana regularly are *promising*. In other words; if you can *endure* getting up for sadhana often, it is seen as a sign of strength and a sign of how far along the spiritual path you are, as getting up for sadhana is no problem for those that have practiced a long time and reached the level of Aradhana.⁴⁶¹ And yet in Berlin has become a sign of how good your practice is. And how could it be different when the way the events are advertised invite great expectations:



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⁴⁶¹ Yogi Bhajan, *The Aquarian Teacher. International Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training, Level 1 Instructor*. K.R.I. Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training Level 1 Book-Set, 5th Edition, 2005

⁴⁶² Content by Katja Muschter: <http://www.harmanjotkaur.de/uber-mich>, last accessed 20.11.2016

Event Details - Sadhana in Maigold Studio

“Desire only has one purpose: it must take you to God.” - Yogi Bhajan. Sadhana is a direct way to connect with and deepen the divine source in you.

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In the last statement, it is interesting that while the text seems to be written to sell the event and create the desire to be part of the community, the text itself refers to the original meaning of Kundalini Yoga – to be one with the divine.

What we also have to take into account is that sadhana is, originally, free of charge, although some yoga studios/teachers will ask for a *spende* (donation) that helps them cover the rent of the space. So perhaps rather than sadhana as an event is being sold, it is an image, an identity, namely that of spiritually advanced Kundalini Yogi that is sold. And ‘buying’ is done by participation.

4.17 ENSUING HYBRIDITY: LEVELS, NEW FORMS OF YOGA, YOGA AS A JOB, WEALTH, AND PRODUCTIVITY

With de- and reterritorialization of yoga, we can already see where the current Kundalini Yoga culture in Berlin creates spaces that are a mix of different cultural customs. White female teachers chant mantras in Gurmukhi, but place personal, often consumerist, meanings onto them. And those same teachers, or at least some of them, disrupt the daily routine of waking and going to work, by starting off the day by saying prayers from the Japji. Kundalini Yoga teachers create a feeling of a universal spirituality, tailored to the individual’s need to choose not from a confined set of religious systems but from their own ideological ones⁴⁶⁴, while at the same time using words and daily rituals from a very specific religion. This kind of hybridity may very well occur unconsciously. Reterritorializing Kundalini Yoga, however, also means looking at what the customer wants in a modern-day city. And in this respect, there are many Kundalini Yoga teachers that consciously create hybrid forms of culture, and/or of yoga. Sometimes this takes the form of combining several strands of yoga into new combinations:

⁴⁶³ Content by Maigold Yoga Berlin: <https://allevents.in/berlin/sadhana-im-maigold/1333921506667863>, last accessed 20.07.2017

⁴⁶⁴ Jain, Idem, Pp 75

Ha-Kun Yoga

This course combines elements from Kundalini Yoga, Hatha Yoga and Vinyasa Flow. The dynamic exercises, breath exercises and meditation from Kundalini Yoga are aimed at every muscle group and every organ in the body. The connection between posture, the movements and the experience in the body unite the physical and the emotional side of the human being. Hatha Yoga, on the other hand, makes perseverance and precise focus in yoga poses possible and aims at stretches, twists and relaxation. The third element is the flow, where we alternate between poses. Poses are no longer static, but flow from one pose to the other in the rhythm of the breath.

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In other cases, Kundalini Yoga is explicitly linked to the demand to be more productive in the workplace and so new forms of Kundalini Yoga come into existence, for example (Kundalini) Business Yoga.

Through conscious breathing you can direct inner and outer awareness. Don't let yourself be led by your thoughts but learn how to use your thoughts in a meaningful way, as you would use a computer. During the yoga classes concrete everyday situations take the center stage. For example, what do I do when:

- *I'm tired when I'm at the office*
- *I can't sleep at night*
- *All the people I speak to seem to be irritated*
- *I experience constant neck and backache*

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Kundalini Yoga offers ca. 1500 sequences, 5000 meditations, and also offers individual exercises for specific life situations. Kundalini Yoga leads to the awareness of self-responsibility with regard to the personality. Instead of withdrawal, a lively joyful creation in connection to the world is what Yogi Bhajan teaches us. With that we are taught how to create a human, happy and healthy lifestyle in responsibility and prosperity.

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⁴⁶⁵ Content by Elisa Kallaus: <https://www.koerperklang-yoga.de/yoga/kursangebot/kundalini-yoga/4/>, last accessed 04.06.2016

⁴⁶⁶ Content by Eileen Seibt: <http://all-one-yoga.de/>, last accessed 04.06.2016

⁴⁶⁷ Content by Guido Witte , Carola Huß: <http://www.trainingarts-berlin.de/was-ist/yoga.html>, last accessed 04.06.2016

We focus on the needs of the participants. Stress reduction, flexibility and increased performance are the goals of the yoga course. We can co-create a fitting course concept to fit your individual needs.

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This type of yoga makes a better performance its sole purpose, while using techniques that are meant to take you away from the concept of ‘person’, let alone ‘performance.’ Other forms of hybridity include yoga for special interest groups, such as groups for women, pregnant women, office workers etc. This means stepping away from the idea that Kundalini Yoga is meant for all. The focus on higher productivity is not just alluded to in explicit advertising, but also comes through in the way that Kundalini Yoga is offered in Berlin.

Special time slots during lunch, for example, assures you can always practice yoga and feel good again even during a busy workday. Furthermore, it can be sweat-free, as per example below, so you can still easily continue working.

Take time in the middle of the week to renew yourself with Kundalini Yoga and meditation. This is a uniquely presented class aimed at providing the extraordinary Kundalini Yoga and meditation teaching for those who require a complete yoga practice in English. Whatever your ability, the supportive environment of this class provides you with the necessary foundation to develop a safe and rewarding practice. These sessions are designed to meet you at your level: beginner to experienced and elevate you from there leaving you mentally and emotionally balanced, both exhilarated and calm. Sweat-free - perfect for a lunch break.⁴⁶⁹

Other special interest groups may include Kundalini Yoga for sportsmen and Kundalini Yoga actors. The examples below are of Kundalini Yoga for highly sensitive people and for seniors.

⁴⁶⁸ Content by Daljeet Kaur: <https://www.kreuzberg-yoga.de/business-yoga/>, last accessed 12.05.2017

⁴⁶⁹ Content by Eric Leclercq, <https://yellow-yoga.com/eric-leclercq/?lang=en>, last accessed 12.05.2017



Kundalini Yoga for high sensitive people

Schulzestraße 1
13187 Berlin Berlin
Germany

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Amrit Nam - Yoga * Geistiges Heilen * Coaching

Yoga Richtungen: Yoga für Senioren, Kundalini Yoga

» [Amrit Nam - Yoga * Geistiges Heilen * Coaching anzeigen](#)


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Next to combining different yoga styles and/or making yoga suitable for different interest groups, Kundalini Yoga sometimes explicitly combines consumer culture with elements of other cultures. In the example below a Kundalini Yoga teacher offers yoga in combination with a spa wellness retreat. The focus on luxury seems to underline the importance of the individual choice for consumption and lifestyle and the rejection of a universal view that dictates how to do yoga. As Jain reminds us, the individual that consumes yoga can choose to do so, while at the same time not giving up other lifestyles.⁴⁷² Coincidentally, it also shows how much money you need to participate in this form of yoga.

⁴⁷⁰ Text by Daria Czarlinska: <https://www.yogatrail.com/studio/kundalini-yoga-for-high-sensitive-people-4980041>, last accessed 12.05.2017

⁴⁷¹ Text by Stefan Datt: <https://www.yoga-linx.de/verzeichnis/nach-ort/berlin/yoga-fuer-senioren>, last accessed 12.05.2017

⁴⁷² Jain, Idem, Pp 70

	<p>Das.Goldberg "Yoga & SPA Mountain Retreat"</p> <p>Das.Goldberg – Traumhafter Logenplatz über dem Gasteinertal mit herrlichem Ausblick auf Bad Hofgastein und auf die umliegende Bergwelt. Annette & Yamina möchten dich im zauberhaften Ambiente des Eco Luxus Resorts mit unvergleichlicher SPA Landschaft für ein langes Wochenende mit ihrer inspirierende und lebensbeiehenden Yoaa Praxis verwöhnen.</p>	<p>DETAILS</p> <p>Sa, 26.09.2020 – Di, 29.09.2020</p> <p>Alle Level</p> <p>Mit Annette Graff, Yamina Vetter</p>	<p>PREIS</p> <p>ab 810 € pP im DZ</p> <p>ZU DEN DETAILS</p>
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Kundalini Yoga in Berlin sometimes even entails combining different rituals from different cultural systems. Yoga is actively combined with not just consumer culture, but also with the Native American tradition.

Friday, October 23, 2015

RISE : Cacao & Shamanic Journey - Kundalini & Sweat Lodge



Hosted by
Essentis Community

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Lastly, Kundalini Yoga in Berlin becomes about different levels of practice. This division in levels is not uncommon in Berlin; most studios and teachers that offer Kundalini Yoga classes offer at least one 'beginners' course'. In this model the student can make 'progress', implying a divide between those that are beginners and those that are advanced practitioners. Originally Yoga Bhajan didn't aim at creating advanced yogis, but rather at getting *everyone* to practice and through practice reach enlightenment, as is mentioned on the web page of 3HO. Levels of experience were less important than the depth of your practice.

DONNERSTAG	
09.15 – 10.30	PILATES mit [REDACTED]
16.00 – 17.00	YOGA 50+ mit [REDACTED] 10 Termine, ab 23.3.17, Krankenkassenbezuschung möglich)
18.00 – 19.30	HATHA YOGA mit [REDACTED]
20.00 – 21.30	KUNDALINI YOGA für Anfänger mit [REDACTED]

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⁴⁷³ Content by Annette Graff: <https://www.personal-yoga-berlin.de/programm/retreats>, last accessed 12.05.2017

⁴⁷⁴ <https://www.meetup.com/berlinconscious/events/226206079/>, last accessed 12.05.2017

⁴⁷⁵ Content by Caroline Eder: <http://o-yoga.de/>, last accessed 12.05.2017

Reterritorialization also takes place by bringing elements into the practice of Kundalini Yoga that are already known by the local population of Berlin. What is currently popular in the local culture is used to give a new meaning to the practice by incorporating it in the practice. Below are the examples of a Kundalini Yoga events that create a novel form of yoga by adding popular elements like women's circles to the practice:



RED TENT Berlin/Brandenburg

Community

WOMENCIRCLE - KUNDALINI YOGA - NATURTHERAPIE -
SOULHEALING - RITUAL&EXSTATIC DANCE - WAHRHEIT -
INNER SELF - PATH OF LOVE - CHAKRA MEDITATION -
BERÜHRUNG

And so, Kundalini Yoga in Berlin mixes its Sikh elements, New Age elements and Hindu elements with consumer culture first and foremost; using other styles of yoga and cultural images/rituals as props to sell the alleged universalism of Kundalini Yoga.

4.18 ETHNOGRAPHIC AND INTERVIEW OBSERVATIONS

In general, I would say that most teachers in Berlin are not actively aware of cultural hybridization and/or the fact that hybridization takes place whether they want to or not. As I will discuss in the results around reterritorialization, teachers are often not aware of their own cultural background and their preferences for which elements they would like to take in and which they would like to leave out. The degree to which Kundalini Yoga plays a part in the lives of teachers differs per teacher and so with regard to deterritorialization, there are teachers that only take the practice of asanas, pranayama and meditation into their classes and into their personal daily lives, where in fact all 8 limbs of yoga should be taught and lived by the teacher. I have also spoken to teachers that only take in one of these 3 elements.

Furthermore, for Kundalini Yoga a number of requirements, such as wearing white and living the yogic lifestyle (including the yogic diet of no meat and no alcohol) are often disregarded by teachers and so the practice is de-territorialized by taking these elements out, and so I have observed teachers eating meat, advocating eating meat in classes, advocating alcohol and disregarding the yogic lifestyle. As for a more traditional line of teachers, they, too, often neglect to teach the 8 limbs of yoga beyond asana, meditation and pranayama, but not always.

I have observed these teachers wearing white and wearing turbans more often (not always), praying (part of niyamas), living (for the part that I could observe) and talking about the yogic lifestyle and so advocating in classes ishnaan (cold shower in the morning), morning sadhana practice and the wearing the 5 k's: Kara (bracelet on the right hand to remind of acting for the purpose of serving God), Kesh (keeping the hair uncut, so no energy is lost in growing new hair), Kanga (a wooden comb that is worn in the hair for creating energy), Kachera (linen underwear as a sign of chastity) and Kirpan (small sword as a sign of dignity).

From the interviews, I have done with Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin, I got a mixed picture about (unconscious) deterritorialization; there were those that felt it was time for a Kundalini Yoga 2.0 and there were those that held on to the traditional way of teaching Kundalini Yoga. Some fragments from the interviews I held with Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin show a preference towards letting go of the original tradition on the one hand and sticking with the tradition on the other hand.

Teacher 1: “Kundalini Yoga spiritual? No, I think it is just a tool that can be used to make your body healthy and your mind calm. And that is enough.”

Teacher 2: “Maybe it is time for Kundalini Yoga to change. In these rigid structures, no real change is possible, and therefore I teach Kundalini Yoga in a different way. I don't believe in Sikhism nor do I believe that the kriyas should always be taught the way they are just because some man said so in the 60s.”

Teacher 3: “Sikhism and Kundalini Yoga belong together, you can't practice Kundalini Yoga without Sikhism. Just like you can't skip exercises in kriyas or randomly put the meditation before the deep relaxation.”

Of course, these statements only concern the self-observed part of teaching Kundalini Yoga. Subconsciously, teachers may say one thing and do another. Furthermore, teachers may take in elements of consumer culture, the culture in which they were born and raised, without even knowing it and/or naming it differently. In the chapter about reterritorialization I will discuss fragments from interviews that show this, largely unconscious, process.

In ethnographic observations, I have seen teachers that said to be very strict about not changing anything in a kriya, adapt exercises in class. I have witnessed teachers adapting the

number of repetitions for an exercise, the length of an exercise and even the order of exercises within a kriya. Some teachers brought in different exercises that were not originally part of the Kundalini Yoga, altogether. And some teachers left out crucial parts of yoga class; for example, the meditation or the warm-up phase. In some cases, this had to do with teachers offering 1-hour classes, instead of the regular 1, 5-hour classes. I have observed teachers not referring to the spiritual tradition behind Kundalini Yoga and/or say that it is not necessary to integrate spirituality into your practice. I have heard teachers say yoga is about feeling good and feeling fit and enlightenment is something that is not meant for people living in modern cities, living modern-day lives.

And I have also observed teachers teaching kriyas exactly as described in the instructions. I have also heard teachers refer to Yogi Bhajan and his teachings, Sikhist beliefs and the Indian roots of Kundalini Yoga.

It seems that there are 2 types of teachers; those that reterritorialize Kundalini Yoga by taking out the spiritual dimension and not referring to the roots of Kundalini Yoga, but rather make it a personal re-interpretation of yoga. The advertised material online supports this.

This workshop will offer the chance to experience Kundalini Yoga in a non-dogmatic way, and instead through an embodied anatomy approach. We'll work using techniques from Body Mind Centering (BMC) to learn about the endocrine system: where these glands are, what they do, and why they are important for our health and well-being. Then, we'll integrate this new body awareness into our practice of the Kundalini Kriya.

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...would like to offer you a modern, unconventional perspective on this ancient spiritual practice...⁴⁷⁷

The spiritual aspect, even though that is at the heart of Kundalini Yoga, is often downplayed and sometimes denied, to demystify yoga. In the example below, from a Berliner Kundalini Teacher's website, we see that the goal of Kundalini Yoga is not so much enlightenment and transcend duality, but rather Kundalini Yoga is presented as a practical tool to create your own reality. This also creates a desire to do so:

⁴⁷⁶ Content by Larissa Hickey: <http://www.englishyogaberlin.com/tag/mind-body-centering/>, last accessed 11.08.2016

⁴⁷⁷ Content by Seva Siri: <http://sevasiri.com/yoga/>, last accessed 11.08.2016

...finally arrive in the moment. This grounding in the here and now makes it possible to experience the day-to-day in a new way and to actively shape it.

In another example, it is also made clear that Kundalini Yoga is mainly there as a tool to manage your daily life and instead of wakefully observing the mind (one of the goals of Kundalini Yoga) yoga is presented as taking a holiday from the thinking mind:

The deep meditation - going deep inside oneself and listening to the stillness within- to quiet the mental noise - is the true gift of the Kundalini Yoga class.

The second group of teachers actively adheres to the tradition and want yoga classes to be as traditional as possible, as shown in this example of a Kundalini Yoga studio in Berlin:

A Kundalini Yoga class always has the same sequence; a few warm-up exercises for the back and the legs, followed by a sequence of various exercises (kriya), followed by deep relaxation and finally a meditation. Every class has its own focus and it hardly ever happens that a kriya is taught twice in one week.

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And even though there are these 2 types of teachers; in the end, it is creolization and thus the blending of culture and society that makes that even within these groups one preferred direction does not exclude another.

This reterritorialization and active hybridization, taking in the personality of the teacher into yoga, is an unconscious process. Most teachers don't consider teaching from personal experience as a new way of interpreting the Kundalini Yoga tradition. As mentioned before, a Kundalini Yoga teacher is not a 'person' when they are teaching and should therefore merely teach yoga and not project their own experiences onto the students, who may then not be able to have a different experience. And most teachers don't feel that talking about personal experience is in fact hybridization in the making, adding elements to the way Kundalini Yoga is taught. Again, some teachers are stricter about following the tradition, than others. The interview fragments below show the attitudes of some teachers towards these matters:

⁴⁷⁸ Content by Jutta Schmid: <http://www.satsangat.de/>, last accessed 03.02.2016

Teacher 1: *The most important thing is to take in your own personal experience. This way students can relate to what you are saying and what you are teaching.*

Teacher 2: *I've been practicing Kundalini Yoga for over 20 years now and I have found that I can guide students in a better way, when I tell them about my own experience. So, at the beginning of a class I introduce a theme and then talk about my own experience and if time allows, I ask students about their experience. In this way, I give them examples from my own experience and teach my students how they can use Kundalini Yoga to create similar changes in their lives.*

Teacher 3: *I don't want to talk a lot during my classes, because if I do, I risk that my own experience will be the measure by which students evaluate their own efforts of practicing Kundalini Yoga. If I say that this type of meditation or that type of kriya has had a certain effect upon my daily life, students might look for this experience. And if they don't find it, they may be disappointed, and they will not see what it has meant for them personally.*

Here we can see that even though some teachers are less conscious about adding their personal experience, the ones that are more conscious will still focus on a personal experience, rather than transcending the dual nature of the personal experience. It seems that teachers are not aware of what elements they are taking into Kundalini Yoga that are very much connected to the culture they come from.

During ethnographic observations, I have seen and heard teachers use (Western) pop music during classes, which Yogi Bhanjan prohibited. This is a way of making Kundalini Yoga fit the local cultural context. Other observations of reterritorialization I have made include:

- The focus on personal experiences, rather than transcending the duality of personal-impersonal. Many teachers start the class with a theme and add their own personal stories from their daily life. They encourage students to take their own personal as a guide for their practice.
- Another focus for classes is body culture; many teachers will accentuate the benefits of Kundalini Yoga for the body, including health, strength and fitness. Rather than these benefits being side effects of a concentrated effort to transcend the physical, teachers often take this focus on the physical as the main goal of Kundalini Yoga.
- Kundalini Yoga and goal setting is another form of reterritorialization and the adding of elements that don't originally belong to yoga. Many teachers will say that Kundalini

Yoga will *improve* health, help you *gain* better concentration and will generally take you to a *better* place in life. Teachers make many promises about what is to be gained from Kundalini Yoga; I've heard teachers promise (physical and mental) health, happiness, better relations, healing, strength, serenity, prosperity (material and non-material) and finding your goal in life. Rather than practicing Kundalini Yoga for the sake of practicing, deepening concentration, increasing awareness and eventually leading to enlightenment (which would merely be a side effect of practicing), these teachers set a goal to be accomplished by the practice, which focuses attention on these goals and the individual wants and needs of the students.

- The themes that Kundalini Yoga teachers teach have to do with the local context of Berlin; many teachers teach about reducing stress in daily life, increasing concentration to be more efficient at work, find ways to allow yourself to take a break during the day, become more attractive to a partner, finding a partner, earn more money, find your dream career, be patient in the metro etc. It is a long list of city related topics that are taken into Kundalini Yoga classes and serve as themes. In addition to this, some teachers take it upon themselves to deal with the original Kundalini Yoga themes such as clear awareness, steps in transcending duality and embodying your true potential (enlightenment).
- Texts that were originally in Gurmukhi are often translated into German in classes, and so the German language is taken into Kundalini Yoga.
- Some Kundalini Yoga teachers make yoga into a fitness practice; here the teacher will, like a fitness teacher, focus on the bodily aspects of yoga and, like a fitness instructor, shout encouragement while students work through challenging exercises. The focus is on getting through the exercise, instead of allowing a process of clear awareness of all bodily sensations to take place.
- I've seen many novel forms of Kundalini Yoga such as; Kundalini Yoga and dance sessions.
- I have visited classes that had nothing to do with Kundalini Yoga as it was originally taught in the format of 1, 5 hours; first tuning in, then warm-up, then kriya, followed by deep relaxation, meditation and tuning out. I have seen classes where teachers left out warm-ups and kriyas in favor of doing a long meditation, focusing only on mantra singing or a gong meditation and/or taking in exercises from very different disciplines/thematic backgrounds, even after tuning in. These disciplines included

other types of yoga, shiatsu, Buddhist meditations, theater exercises, 12-step program (like AA) items, authentic relating games, Theory U, Reiki and massages.

Consumerist values and commodification of teachers, students and yoga are passed on in subtle and non-subtle ways within the Kundalini Yoga teacher community. When visiting events with lots of Kundalini Yoga teachers, such as Sadhanas and workshops, the following questions are frequently part of the conversation: 'where do you teach?' 'And how many students do you have in your class?'. When referring to great teachers, it is often mentioned that what makes them great is the very fact that they have a lot of students. Other remarks made about the quality of a teacher include the amount of Sadhanas she/he visits, if she/he is currently the lead/trainer/mentee in a Kundalini Yoga teacher training and the amount of special workshops (centered on a theme) she/he teaches and/or visits and if they have their own studio. In my ethnographic observations, in classes and during events, I have witnessed the following remarks about teachers to the above:

If you (reference a particular teacher) can't get out of bed for sadhana, it means you still have a long way to go on the spiritual path. You will see that once you reach deeper levels of awareness, it will feel very natural to get up for sadhana. This is how great teachers come into being.

She is such a great teacher – she has her own studio, and she offers her own teacher training too!

That`s a very successful way of teaching; she has 1 regular class, but teaches workshops too, and they are always packed!

Ask him to play the gong at your studio – he will bring in a lot of people, and besides he is doing the teacher training as a mentee now, he must be good.

In interviews teachers express the same ideas about consumerist values and creating an identity for their brand. When asked how the brand of one of the Kundalini Yoga studios in Berlin would describe itself, the owner and lead teachers says:

Teacher 2: *I am not following the mainstream Kundalini Yoga as taught by Bhajan, so I operate on the 'borders' of the Kundalini yoga community in Berlin and am more in contact with the teachers that feel less connected to that traditional scene. I want my studio to express different values; I want them to grow and I want my studio to have these teachers that don't teach the traditional Kundalini Yoga. It sets my studio apart from the rest and my students want to be a part of that.*

Teacher 4: *It's very important in which studio you teach. If the studio is famous, it is easier to get more students. And in the end, you want to have full classes, why else would you become a teacher?*

Teacher 1: *I would very much like to teach at this studio, because it is so well-known. And the lead teacher is so good...she always has so many students.*

Teacher 5: *We come together in this studio to do Sadhana once a month, I think this is important to make the community feel at one. It is something special. Even those that haven't been doing Kundalini Yoga for that long feel included, they feel they are part of the community by joining in.*

There are also teachers that seem less concerned with the identity of the group and/or how many students they have:

Teacher 3: *I have about three courses and all are dear to me. My course on Thursday morning usually only has about 3 students, sometimes less, but I don't mind. I like seeing how yoga works on these students, and they are very dedicated.*

The workings of yoga have the priority for some and so it isn't always the case that a certain identity is created.

Teacher 6: *Anybody can do Kundalini Yoga everywhere! I'm not sure if it's necessary to do it in a group or if you should be in the community...of course it supports your way of living if you have others around you that think alike. But if it's necessary...no, in the end it is about the spiritual, it is about how well you learn to love and how well you learn to let go.*

From my observation in classes and from the interviews I have held, I have gotten indications that some teachers will purposefully alter the way they teach, what they teach and how they dress to make sure the classes attract and keep students. When it comes to dress, a lot comes down to not wearing white, not wearing a head cover and wearing modern clothes. Or as one teacher puts it:

Teacher 2: If I go around wearing a turban and only wearing white, I will not reach many people. We are in the middle of Berlin here and yoga students expect to see modern-looking yoga teachers, not teachers that look as if they belong to a cult.

Teacher 6: I have to admit that when I first came into a yoga class where the teacher was wearing a turban and was dressed in white clothes, I didn't like it. I decided that when I would be a teacher, I would dress in a way that was recognizable for my students and wouldn't make them feel uncomfortable.

From my observations in classes, there seems to be something to it that those teachers who are wearing modern clothes seem to have fuller classes than those who wear traditional clothes. But that doesn't mean that all teachers adapt their ways:

Teacher 3: Of course, I wear a turban during class, and I am dressed in white. This is the way it was taught. And it helps you stay neutral...you are actually helping the students stay in their neutral mind too, this is important to further their spiritual development.

When it comes to yogic philosophy and yogic lifestyle there, too, are different ways of teaching. But there seems to be some evidence that *the fewer rules the better*. Some teachers are afraid that too much philosophy will scare away people, and so they omit certain teachings:

Teacher 1: I myself don't believe in all this spirituality surrounding yoga and I don't believe Berliners are very susceptible to it either. If I would start about Guru Nanak, or even the Jap Ji, this would mean I'd have fewer students in my class.

Other teachers feel that students may be afraid of what they have to sacrifice in order to do yoga and so it is better not to tell them the whole truth:

Teacher 2: *Some people will never start anything in their lives if they have to follow rules, especially nowadays. They would see the 8 arms of yoga as an obstacle and not come to yoga at all, so I'd rather talk about the advantages of daily practice with them, that way they know what is in it for them.*

Some other teachers will teach all yoga-rules regardless, albeit not always as yoga-rules:

Teacher 6: *It is very important for students to understand that discipline, responsibility and intention are crucial on the spiritual path. We don't do yoga to look good or to feel nice, but to gain a deepening awareness of what it means to be human and ultimately to transcend our limited understanding of that by transcending duality. So, indeed, I talk about the limbs of yoga, of which physical exercise is only 1. But I often take in Buddhist philosophy, the 8-fold path, which basically teaches the same.*

Some teachers believe that Kundalini Yoga needs to change in order to survive in the modern world, and perhaps new visions, new versions of Kundalini Yoga:

Teacher 2: *The way Kundalini Yoga is taught now is still very much patriarchy centered, that is why I want to focus on strong women who transcend the traditional role patterns. If that means that Kundalini Yoga, the way it is taught now, will die out, so be it.*

Teacher 6: *I understand the necessity to stay with one tradition, it is better for the human mind. But Kundalini Yoga itself is already a mixed tradition...Hindi yoga, Sikh prayers...I think it is more important to look at how we can reach the hearts of students, so that they may attain the highest wisdom. Being a yoga teacher is the path of the Bodhisattva.*

Teacher 4: *We can't expect people living in a city such as Berlin to conform to Kundalini Yoga as it was once taught. We have to provide an up-to-date version that makes sense to them. That is why I use modern music and adapt exercises to fit the modern body's demands.*

Teacher 5: *People want to belong to a group where they feel at home. In many cases Kundalini Yoga provides it, but you see that people find their own tribes and not all of them want to be traditional, especially the younger ones.*

On the other hand, are the teachers that are reluctant to teach yoga beyond what Yogi Bhajan taught, as to them it signals the loss of a tradition:

Teacher 3: If teachers start doing their own thing, changing kriyas, making up kriyas... Kundalini Yoga will be lost.

Both attitudes might ensure selling Kundalini Yoga to its audiences. For the first group, selling yoga seems to depend on selling universalism and for the second group it seems aimed at selling the more foreign aspects of it. Yet, both leave the consumer a choice to pick and choose a lifestyle and add value to themselves by consuming yoga.

CHAPTER 5: CASE DESCRIPTION - SOCIAL MEDIA OBSERVATIONS: WHAT DO BERLINER KUNDALINI YOGA TEACHERS THINK?

Many Berlin teachers are active on social media by posting information around their classes/events and taking part in discussion on a Facebook page that was created especially for the Berliner Sangha (Community). From looking at these discussions it becomes clear that some teachers feel a modern approach, that doesn't entail all elements of traditional Kundalini Yoga, is the best way to go and/or is how it should be:

...that is the beauty of Kundalini Yoga: everyone can take what they like and leave the rest. For some it's the religion, for others it's not.

I always taught from my personal experience, that was more important to me than rituals.

Some teachers don't interpret Kundalini Yoga as an alteration of a culture that is not native to Berlin. For them it is difficult to understand that creolization is about power balances, leaving the members of the original culture feel marginalized (posted by a local, white, Kundalini Yoga teacher):

The discussion going on here amongst the Sikhs in this group about Gurmukh, who took part in a Hindu ritual with lots of dedication, is very strange. They see it as a betrayal towards Sikhism. What would Guru Nanak think of this attitude? I personally don't think he would have approved. I don't think he would be against any religious ritual, but rather against dogmatism.

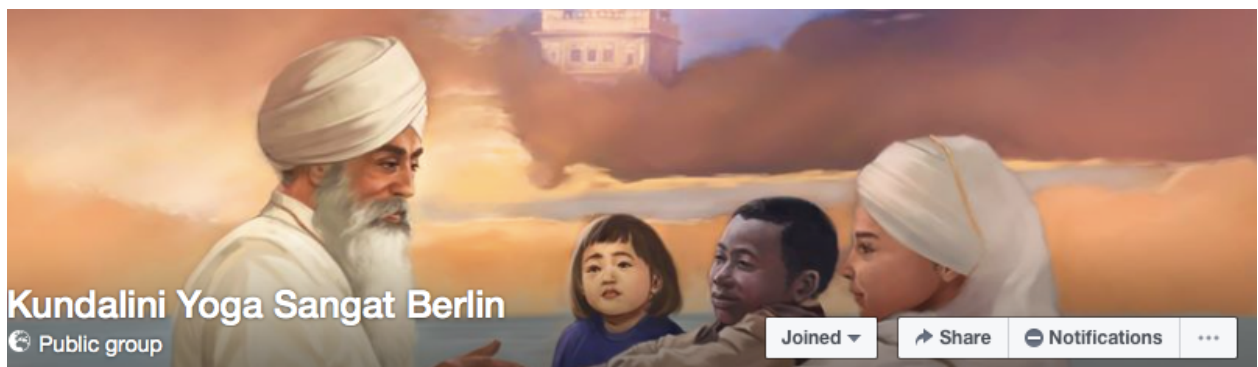
Of course, it is problematic that a teacher who wasn't born and raised in a certain culture suggests she knows the culture better than its members. Furthermore, in the local Berlin context she is in a position of power to do so.

Deterritorialization also takes place when teachers are concerned about the right understanding of a culture that is non-native. And thus, they will want to leave out certain elements that they don't understand. It is a fine line to walk between cultural appropriation through not understanding the background/rituals of a culture on the one hand and not

honoring that tradition at all on the other hand. The following post shows this concern of a teacher who would rather transfer all Gurmukhi texts of Kundalini Yoga into German:

When I see people pray in a rigid and tense manner, in a language they don't understand, let alone are able to pronounce correctly, dressed in robes of a different culture - that are only suited to these summer temperatures, expelling flies that are not there with ritualistic hand movements, then I ask myself if we might not be better off using the words we have to express our surrender to the divine.

On the other hand, the Berliner sanghat uses a lot of symbols that do refer to the roots of Kundalini Yoga. For example, the main image, upon entering the Facebook page of the Berliner sanghat shows Yogi Bhajan:



In the online Facebook Sangha in Berlin, reterritorialization is shown in the form of adapting Kundalini Yoga and Sikhism to the local context, for example, the translation of the Japji in German:

What is right? I, for example, love the Japji Sahib -but that only after I read the German translation from Sat Hari Singh.

Other elements that are added to the practice are, for example, the active role of the teacher. Traditionally the teacher does not participate in exercises. In Berlin, there are many teachers that practice along with their students during class. The reasons for doing so are manifold. Some teachers fear that the students will not be able to continue the exercise:

I think it's horrible when the teacher just sits there while the students have to go through some sort of boot camp. That's why I participate in class. It inspires students and marks a clear tempo for them. Especially when holding arm positions for a long time you will only get your students there if you show the way.

This attitude also shows a desire to accommodate the students' wishes, as clients, rather than being the teacher that guides the students without considering what is most comfortable for them as Kundalini Yoga was originally taught.

Reterritorialization doesn't just happen to accommodate students, but also happens to accommodate the teacher's own goals. Whereas Kundalini Yoga asks teachers to keep up their own practice, this is only meant to inspire teachers to be able to teach wisely, not because of a physical need to stay or look fit. Furthermore, the personal practice is meant to take place outside of the classes, not during the classes. The Facebook post below shows how some teachers interpret these rules within the cultural framework of body culture and personal growth thinking:

I participate during class. I could never come to terms with a teacher who would demand so much from his students, while clearly showing signs of being unfit. I would like to be a credible teacher for my students.

The statement also implies that it is physical exercise that gives the teacher status and the right to teach, rather than, as is taught in Kundalini Yoga, letting the divine move through you, giving you all you need to teach. Finally, the statement seems to indicate a form of competition, in which some teachers are not as good as others, because of their level of physical exercise. These teachers take many new elements into Kundalini Yoga, reinterpreting the original teachings; competition, body culture, and commodification of yoga, by making the product fit the clients' needs all find their way into the classes.

Not all teachers create their own way of teaching and from social media observations, I could also find teachers who will stick to the prescribed way of teaching and who ask themselves why there are teachers that teach differently:

How come there is so much "I teach in a way that feels right to me" when the handbook has such clear instructions?

Reinterpretation of the original way in which Kundalini Yoga was taught, also takes place in the way in which teachers interpret their own role. Kundalini Yoga teaches that it is the divine that guides the teachers during classes, therefore the teacher is not a person. Some teachers, however, may feel their own individual intuition is more important than the teachings:

Intuition is a great value that should be used when teaching. It's not about blindly following the teachings.

Some teachers feel this is too personal, a form of ego, and therefore the teachings themselves should be the guide (in reaction to the post above):

I'm not so sure it's intuition, or ego.

Taking in elements into the original way Kundalini Yoga was taught also encompasses altering the original music. There are several mantras that are original to Kundalini Yoga, which have also been re-made by contemporary Kundalini Yoga mantra artists. Pop-variants or dance-variants are not original mantras. Some Berlin teachers play any kind of music:

Sat Nam, I am looking for upbeat Kundalini Yoga music, like on the album Kundalini Rising and Kundalini Remix - Yoga Mantras revisited.

Consumerist values are prevalent within the Kundalini Yoga teacher community in Berlin, albeit largely unconsciously. Some feel that the more students you have, the better a teacher you are. In such a vision, yoga students themselves become commodities that have to be bought in order to fill your class. Students will also add value to you as a teacher. The more students you have bought, the more status you gain. Students have become the goods that give status to the individual. And so, teachers may use certain things Yogi Bhanjan said in order to justify why they feel having more students is important.

If there are only 1 or 2 students, it's not a real group...Yogi Bhanjan once said that it's better to drink tea together, if you teach a group of less than 5 people.

Another viewpoint is that the number of students you teach should always be growing, so your yoga class goes up in value, ' once your classes attract more students:

When you just start teaching, it may very well happen that you only teach 2-3 people in the beginning.

But Yogi Bhajan said many things, he also said that every student is worth teaching. And as Kundalini Yoga was originally taught one on one in India, the value should lie in transmission of yogic philosophy. These voices are also heard on Facebook:

I think even the smallest group is worth teaching. Yoga Bhajan said never to turn away a student.

Teachers themselves also become commodities to be sold and bought and offering products to be sold and bought:

And yes, as a yoga teacher I sell myself. My knowledge, my energy and my time.

We invest our time and get something in exchange: money.

Yoga teachers that have made a career out of yoga should be transparent; they have to tell their students that they are a service provider.

Yoga literally makes money; here we can see that the symbolic meaning of energy exchange that Yogi Bhajan accentuated, is replaced by monetary value. Yogi Bhajan clearly stated that Kundalini Yoga teachers should never try to make a living out of teaching Kundalini Yoga, because this would imply a dependency on the number of students in class. With consumerist values that help Kundalini Yoga teachers express their individual identity and that give Kundalini Yoga teachers a status within the community, this principle of Yogi Bhajan is sometimes dismissed:

For me it was tough that Yogi Bhajan said not to make a living out teaching yoga. I didn't want to do anything else. Everyone has to find their own way.

I teach a lot of courses. I have no problem with getting money for them, as I give myself completely. Why should I have a problem with it?

It (teaching yoga) is a fully-fledged profession.

Some teachers, on the other hand, so do follow the golden rule and try not to become financially dependent on students:

We are not allowed to make a living out of teaching yoga, we should live for yoga.

An important reason not to make a living out of teaching yoga is the danger of 'prostituting' oneself for the students. I mean that your financial dependency on the students makes it difficult to have off-days and you will flatter your students because they have become your customers.

With that comes the problem of dependency on students for money and the question of how much value you put on your course, or how much money you can ask students to pay for a class. Here we find that Kundalini Yoga teachers use spiritual values as a tool to sell a product. They sell access to spiritual values and being part of the solution of healing:

I don't think it makes sense to speak of the commercialization of yoga. I am a zealous teacher and I wish for this health-invoking system to reach everyone. Yoga Teaching is a career.

There are teachers that prey on people who have been through a lot, just to sell more.

Some teachers feel that it is the student that 'sells out' spiritual values, forgetting that it is the teacher who is assigning monetary value, instead of a symbolic value, to the classes:

In general people want to get everything for free, especially when it comes to spirituality.

But this attitude could be part of the confusion around the symbolical and the physical value of yoga. As mentioned before, I have heard teachers promise monetary prosperity by practicing certain Kundalini Yoga meditation – this assigns a pure capitalist value to and uses

spirituality to gain worldly goods, which is very far away from attaining the spiritual abundance Yogi Bhajan was talking about:

...since my post where I spoke about the fact that practicing the prosperity meditation for three years has earned me my income...

CHAPTER 6: CASE DESCRIPTION - SURVEY RESULTS

HOW DO BERLINER KUNDALINI YOGA TEACHERS MAKE SENSE OF HYBRIDIZATION AS THE RESULTS OF MIXING CONSUMER CULTURE WITH OTHER CULTURAL ELEMENTS?

In total 25 Kundalini Yoga teachers participated in an online survey, equivalent to around a quarter of the total number of registered and actively teaching Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin.⁴⁷⁹

6.1 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: IS KUNDALINI YOGA BEING ACTIVELY ADAPTED?

In the online questionnaire, I have found evidence that at least some teachers are actively participating in creating hybridization, by (e.g.) deterritorializing Kundalini Yoga. Some comments in the open question section indicated that some teachers actively despiritualize their Kundalini Yoga classes to keep their students and/or gain new students. 3 teachers say that yoga was demystified when it was brought to the West and 2 teachers agree that the benefits of yoga are marginalized in the West because that better fits the Western mind. Some go as far as to say that the current way Kundalini Yoga is being taught, has been adapted and altered by current teachers to get more students: 13 teachers agree with this. 17 teachers believe that yoga is a well-defined balance between traditional values and modernity. 15 teachers admit that the way they teach Kundalini Yoga is a combination of their own life experience, blended with yogic exercise and spirituality. 9 teachers believe Kundalini Yoga in itself is a blend of Sikhism, yoga poses and Ayurveda. 18 teachers said that Kundalini Yoga is just a form of yoga, without a particular tradition, to support people.

Yet, 15 teachers believe that Kundalini Yoga is an ancient tradition that Yogi Bhajan brought to the West, 9 teachers believe that in Berlin at least some teachers teach according to the original Kundalini Yoga, without adapting the original, Indian, style. And 13 teachers say they only use the materials of Yogi Bhajan, not adapted in any way, to teach.

⁴⁷⁹ As per 09-2017, teachers registered at IKTYA: <https://www.ikyta.org/search>

It seems some teachers believe Kundalini Yoga is adapted to the Western mind and some see that this process involved, among others, a demystification of yoga to make it palatable for a Western audience. Others seem to believe that Kundalini Yoga is an ancient tradition and is, at least by some teachers, still taught in an unaltered, traditional, way. All of this may indicate that some teachers are aware of cultural blending taking place and some may not be aware. Both groups may be unaware of their own cultural positioning within teaching yoga, as we will see later.

6.2 DE- AND RETERRITORIALIZATION: COUNTERCULTURE

As mentioned before, Berlin is already a melting pot of different cultures. Albeit within a white, capitalist, power structure. So, the individual choice for an *alternative culture* is not hard to imagine. As mentioned before, this is still likely to add value to oneself. And it still sells a certain lifestyle of choice, that is accessible to some and not to others, even if the lifestyle choice seems to be a counterculture. 15 teachers who took part in the questionnaire feel that spirituality of Kundalini Yoga is needed to counterbalance consumer culture. 7 teachers believe that yoga and its teachers have the power to change society. 14 teachers agree with the statement that inner change is the starting point for social change and Kundalini Yoga is the starting point. 8 teachers actively want to change consumerist values in their students. And 5 teachers see themselves as spiritual teachers.

10 teachers also mention that not all students come in for fitness and health reasons, but some are looking for community. 13 teachers agree that (at least part of their) students come to class to find spiritual meaning. 9 teachers also believe that teaching is their own spiritual path. These answers indicate that, at least to some extent, some teachers believe the Kundalini Yoga culture is different from the ruling, consumerist, culture.

6.3 RETERRITORIALIZATION: THE CONSUMER-SETTING

At least some teachers in Berlin believe that Kundalini Yoga is taught from a consumerist perspective. First, most teachers, 22 in total, are highly aware of why their students come to yoga: fitness and health. 7 teachers believe that yoga is a product to be sold. 8 teachers say that it is in fact the consumer that dictates how yoga is taught and what the content of the classes is like. In contrast, 11 teachers admit that they actively solicit what themes are

important to their students, so they can teach those themes during classes. Even more teachers, 14, say they focus on what their students need during classes. In that regard it is also interesting that 10 teachers don't see themselves as a person transferring teachings (6 teachers), but as a coach to their students. Only 4 teachers say they see their students as clients though. Connected to this, 10 teachers admit that they adapt what they teach in classes to the modern urban environment. This means they teach e.g. about stress reduction, the lack of spare time. 2 teachers believe that yoga is exotified on purpose, in order to gain more students.

Again, we have to consider that marketing plays into human emotions for selling goods and services.⁴⁸⁰ And so teachers profit, knowingly or unknowingly, from the personal connection with students. 10 teachers say they spend time outside of classes to interact with their students. Some of these teachers do so because they believe that it is necessary to be able to guide their students. To be able to guide students, trust is needed. 15 teachers admit that their students come to their classes because they trust the teacher. 6 teachers say they know exactly what drives their students. 4 teachers admit that some of their students need a lot of guidance and therefore they spend a lot of time, outside of classes, on them. All of these indicate that there is a personal connection between students and their Kundalini Yoga teachers, that probably contributes a great deal to the success of these teachers in selling classes.

“...the hope that what is acquired will contribute to cultural and emotional forms of capital, which in turn, is convertible into career prospects and health.”⁴⁸¹ As mentioned earlier, teachers know their students come in for health and fitness.

Part of selling yoga, as we have seen before, is that teachers themselves become the exemplified way of life that can be bought. 3 teachers actively confirm this by agreeing with the statement that Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin are using indigenous Indian culture to sell their yoga. 5 teachers say that it is best to advertise with a photo of yourself, because students are attracted by what they see. The personal also comes back to the individual:”

*...triumph of individualistic consumerism, and its crowning social achievement, the creation of a socially guaranteed personal space in which individual consumers can produce their own identities”.*⁴⁸² This is, perhaps, the reason that teachers don't refer to the original teacher,

⁴⁸⁰ Bagozzi, Richard P., Mahesh Gopinath, and Prashanth U. Nyer. “The Role of Emotions in Marketing.” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 27.2 (1999): 184-206. Web. 2 July 2014

⁴⁸¹ Altglass, Idem.

⁴⁸² Turner, Terence. ‘Bodies and Antibodies: Flesh and Fetish in Contemporary Social Theory.’ In: Scordas, Thomas J. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Pp 27.

Yogi Bhajan, as their inspiration, but rather to their own teacher within their individual experience (15 teachers). This implies that the values and yoga that are transmitted, come through the filter of teachers that were not initially taught Kundalini Yoga as yogi Bhajan was. It may also imply that the own, perhaps more Westernized, teacher is easier to relate to. This deterritorializes yoga completely from its Indian roots and leaves it in the hands of Western teachers. And perhaps this is why 9 teachers declare that the personal advantages of a yogic lifestyle are the main driver practicing Kundalini Yoga. And it may be why 12 teachers feel their own, individual practice, is the main source of inspiration. 17 teachers even admit that teaching solely serves their own personal interest, as they seek to master the practice. This is far removed from the goal to transcend personhood as a teacher. It is also very likely that these teachers are adding value to themselves by consuming the experience of teaching, albeit unknowingly.

These teachers have chosen a lifestyle and this, too becomes part of what they sell. It also testifies to the fact that these teachers see their practice and bodies as a product of individual effort, which, as mentioned before, is more likely to happen in the middle classes, where individuals will have had time to take up the practice. It is not a surprise, then, that 10 teachers feel the prices they ask for their classes are perfectly fine. 5 teachers feel that their prices are market conform, and therefore right. 5 teachers feel prices are below value, for different reasons. As mentioned before, it is likely the existing prices exclude those who are not middle class. This means teachers actively set prices so reach their target group: the middle classes. Furthermore, as we look at the target group, 19 teachers who participated in the questionnaire were female. I did not ask for ethnic background of the teachers, so I can't assume those who participated were all white, but it is very likely. With that, it seems that the teacher community reflects the students they aim for: white middle class, female.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Nevrin argued that even though movements are influenced by culture, movements can also be a catalyst for changing the perception of the receiving culture of those movements and so disrupt it.⁴⁸³ This would fall in line with Nederveen-Pieterse's assumption that cultural hybridity has the power to disrupt, by making the periphery more visible and heard. Part of this disruption has to do with the fact that the emotional involvement in movement, and stimulated in yoga spaces by the surroundings in terms of a.o. lighting and music, creates a different sensory awareness of the self and of identity.⁴⁸⁴ And here the disruption, as well as the pathway for a new culture meaning come in: not only does cultural meaning inform movement, but feelings (of practitioners) also influence the meaning of movements. In this way new meanings are instilled upon yoga, which at the same time may disrupt both the originating and the receiving culture and create something new, as the sense of self changes through the movement. As we have seen, for teachers in Berlin, consumer culture is instilled upon yoga, yet many teachers believe that with yoga, they can produce a counter-consumer culture. It becomes, then, the responsibility of the teacher to think about framing yoga. Furthermore, we have to keep in mind that there never was one unique traditional form of yoga that is rightfully the *original* yoga.⁴⁸⁵ Geoffrey Samuel suggests, therefore, to look at any form of yoga within its own context.⁴⁸⁶ Yet, teachers who choose to give a new meaning to yoga, erasing its Hindu and Vedic ideology contribute to advance the dominant culture that pushes non-Western beliefs to the periphery by encouraging the misconception of ancient religious traditions.⁴⁸⁷

Instead of only looking at the way yoga is taught and received by teachers and practitioners through the lens of appropriating culture, trying to bend culture to consumerist norms or defying consumerist norms, we can take an alternative view. Puustinen has mentioned we can instead take the view on spiritual *prosumption* that Andrew Dawson introduced, by looking at

⁴⁸³ Nevrin, Klas. "Empowerment and Using the Body in Modern Postural Yoga", in Mark Singleton & Jean Byrne's (eds.), *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*. (London, Routledge, 2008, P 119-136.

⁴⁸⁴ Nevrin, Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Singleton, Idem, P 117-125

⁴⁸⁶ Samuel, G. B. *The origins of yoga and tantra: Indic religions to the thirteenth century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, P 196.

⁴⁸⁷ Antony, M. G. (2016). "Tailoring Nirvana: Appropriating Yoga, resignification, and instructional challenges." *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, Volume 12, Number 3, 2016.

yoga practitioners (and thus teachers) as both the actor and authority of spirituality (modality).⁴⁸⁸ In this view the body and mind (site) experience well-being (benefit) through yoga (repertoire). The practitioner is both the one that acts and the one that receives (modality). In this way, yoga can neither be completely devoid of the economic dimension, nor can it be devoid of the cultural dimensions. As Kundalini Yoga teachers in Berlin practice yoga they, too, cannot avoid either dimension.

My research has focused on showing how market players, in this case Kundalini Yoga teachers, use different strategies to use meaning-creation and symbolism to create hybridity with the goal of expanding the customer base and growing popularity of this type of yoga. The market actors combine several different strains of Indian yoga, as shown, and other culturally popular elements to adapt to consumers tastes in Berlin. De- and re-territorialization practices are used to undo part of the meanings of the original cultural elements of Sikhism and the 'original' meaning of Kundalini Yoga. Re-territorialization is used to bestow a new meaning, better suited to the consumer narratives of the individual yoga students, upon these same elements. It is this highly hybridized form of Kundalini Yoga that is, then, spread by teaching. And yet for some teachers teaching is considered a spiritual calling, and they believe their students are not solely there for personal accomplishment. Some students come in for a sense of community and others seek to give their lives a spiritual meaning. Creolization of elements, such as when teachers choose e.g. yoga poses and endow them with meaning (e.g. anti-stress), become the basis for a hybridized community.

Many aspects of Kundalini Yoga, its studios and advertising remain problematic: props in the studios promote an imagined Indian history, and actively erasing cultural elements as well as cultural appropriation in class and in advertising promote a neo-colonial rhetoric. And at least some teachers are in it for the money and promote mainly fitness and health benefits. And yet it seems that this in-between space, between consumer culture and elements from Hindu, Vedic and Sikh culture, also allows participants and teachers to occupy an in-between space for themselves. Perhaps it allows them to be re-enchanted; which is not a return to previous ways of being religious, but rather the emergence of new ways of being religious, ways which meet the new wants and needs of new Western people.⁴⁸⁹ It allows teachers to create ambivalent identities that can simultaneously enhance the number of students they teach, while also creating a community where students actively reflect on their (e.g. consumer)

⁴⁸⁸ Puustinen, Idem.

⁴⁸⁹ Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West. Volume 1 Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*. New York, T & T Clark International, 2004, P 40.

behavior. In that sense the Kundalini Teachers are between cultural binaries, as Pieterse calls it, ‘transcending binary categories.’⁴⁹⁰ There are teachers that stick to the traditional form of yoga, wearing white and wearing turbans. And there are teachers that take in a minimal amount of rituals that are connected to the traditional teachings. Even though Nederveen Pieterse might signify this as transcending categories, the real center of culture remains with the dominant culture. And so, we have to ask ourselves if the division between inner and outer is helpful. Perhaps what comes into existence in the Kundalini Yoga community in Berlin is not so much hybridity, but rather a temporary space where boundaries are overcome in ad hoc representations of culture. “In restarting the past, it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a received tradition.”⁴⁹¹ Kundalini Yoga may therefore exist in an ever-changing imagined space that is the result of the interaction of different cultural elements.

In the end it is exactly the hybrid that makes Kundalini Yoga so successful. The ‘pop culture spirituality’⁴⁹² that teachers bring into class, communicating cultural trends, have proven to be the most successful forms of yoga⁴⁹³.

⁴⁹⁰ Nederveen Pieterse, Jan, “Hybridity, So What? The Anti-Hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 18 (2-3), SAGE, London, 2001, P .238.

⁴⁹¹ Bhabha, Homi. *The location of culture*. Londres/Nova York, Routledge, 1994, P 2.

⁴⁹² Jain, Idem, P 104.

⁴⁹³ Jain, Idem, P 71.

ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH

In this thesis, I will take the Kundalini Yoga teacher community in Berlin as my case study in order to investigate the extent to which cultural hybridity is present in this yoga stream. I will discuss how the community in question incorporates Sikh elements in their classes, while also catering to their western audience by adapting Kundalini Yoga to fit the local context. Also, I will look at the role consumerism plays in shaping a community culture that consists of a mix of eastern and western elements.

This thesis focuses on the question of how does Kundalini Yoga in Berlin (or rather its teachers) create a hybrid culture where yoga is appropriated to a practice that is acceptable in the dominant capitalist culture in Berlin (e.g. reducing yoga to a fitness and stress- reduction practice), while also inserting into that dominant culture new elements and meanings, contributing to the formation of a local Kundalini Yoga culture, propelled by the workings of consumerism? The objective of this research is to contribute to the body of research on (cultural) hybridization in the face of globalization. Furthermore, my work will contribute to the body of research on yoga and my work will re-conceptualize hybridization by looking at the role consumerism plays in the hybridization of local cultures.

ABSTRACT IN GERMAN

In dieser Studie werde ich die Kundalini Yoga Lehrgemeinschaft in Berlin als meine Fallstudie nehmen, um zu untersuchen, inwieweit kulturelle Hybridität in diesem Yoga-Strom gestaltet wird. Ich werde beschreiben, wie die betreffende Community Sikh-Elemente in ihren Unterricht einbezieht und gleichzeitig das westliche Publikum anspricht, indem sie Kundalini Yoga an den lokalen Kontext anpasst. Ich werde auch mitnehmen welche Rolle Konsumismus bei der Gestaltung der Gemeinschaftskultur spielt, wobei die entstandene hybride Kultur aus einer Mischung östlicher und westlicher Elemente besteht. Diese Dissertation konzentriert sich auf die Frage, wie Kundalini Yoga in Berlin (oder besser gesagt seine Lehrer) eine hybride Kultur schafft, in der Yoga für eine Praxis geeignet ist, die in der dominierenden kapitalistischen Kultur in Berlin akzeptabel ist (z. B. Yoga auf Fitness und Stress reduzieren), während gleichzeitig neue Elemente und Bedeutungen in diese dominante Kultur eingefügt werden, die zur Bildung einer lokalen Kundalini Yoga-Kultur beitragen, die durch die Funktionsweise des Konsums vorangetrieben wird. Ziel dieser Forschung ist es,

einen Beitrag zur Erforschung der (kulturellen) Hybridisierung angesichts der Globalisierung zu leisten. Darüber hinaus wird meine Arbeit zur Erforschung des Yoga beitragen und meine Arbeit wird die Hybridisierung neu konzipieren, indem ich die Rolle des Konsums bei der Hybridisierung lokaler Kulturen untersuche.

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