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Competitive charity. A neoliberal culture of ‘giving back’ in global yoga

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Recent developments in global yoga show a tendency towards social activism in the charity market. As part of this, Yoga Aid World Challenge 2012 (founded in 2007) is a good example of how neoliberal organisational culture and generosity may become entangled. Competition stands out as an unusual strategy in the predominantly gentle type of modern postural yoga. During this 24-h event yoga is practised across 25 countries worldwide following the course of the sun. Corresponding social networks and digital media strongly promote the joy of practising and equate the meaning of life with giving months beforehand. All this is interpreted with findings from behavioural economics on altruism and from new institutional economics on the organisers’ communication and event marketing. This paints a picture of hybrid social network formation and a conglomerate of affects with competition, gratitude and a sense of obligation.

Key words: religious giving, altruism, charity, fundraising, economics of religion, global yoga

1. Introduction

Like most religious organisations and traditions, yoga is permeated by economic action. This penetration has intensified during recent decades due to a dominant economic rationality and efficiency demands in many domains of our societies. This process of economisation has introduced branding, commodification, marketing and professionalisation to non-economic institutions and has modified the multi-faced yoga field. In addition to the multi-billion dollar business of yoga, the yoga in focus here is a new agent in the charity and developmental aid sector. Markets of charity and philanthropy are traditional arenas of religious institutions and at the same time of secularist and highly professionalised global players. They raise and redistribute donations to specific addresses. With the money many of them also transfer a parcel containing the donor's religious, political and humanitarian ideas and institutions. Charity markets should therefore not be underestimated in their impact and possible manipulation. The discourse on religious giving and the contribution of religions to public welfare have often been utilised to prove or disprove their place in societies. That is why performance and reputation in this regard has a bearing on the overall reputation of the respective agents and is therefore a vital interest of institutions. If there is a general tendency to

engage in charity markets and if charity is a means of creating a global yoga community, which we think can be observed in global yoga at the moment, this charitisation, and its power to change and dominate, deserves closer examination.

This yoga case study is localised in the context of social activism, and social as well as spiritual entrepreneurship. The former is a neoliberal element in contemporary spirituality that loads the individual with the risks of an entrepreneur and sees the employment of managerial tools as being responsible for success (Burity). The aforementioned economisation is more precisely a neoliberalisation with the crucial elements of self-interest, maximisation, and competition among others. Our discussion of global yoga gets to work on exactly this positioning at the interface of neoliberalisation and opposition through generous action.

In the past few years, a global fundraising event has emerged as new form of collecting donations. Our case study more specifically deals with a multi-sited global fundraising event. Forerunners of a multi-sited event format can be seen in disaster relief and Aids charity events, like Live Aid, which have combined music and charity since the 1980ies. A further example of current multi-sited events reflecting socio-spiritual activism is "1Billion Rising" (people dancing against violence towards women) that goes back to Gabrielle Roth's five rhythm dancing rooted in the Californian Esalen Institute. Events are socially uncommitted, and just temporary gatherings facilitated by new media. Charity as the goal of these events is plausibilised by the awareness of a global financial crisis and imperatives in energy and ecology politics as communicated by global media. Charity events may be seen through this lens as reactions to economic global crises. This is a necessary background for the central affective, semantic and interactional element of the event which is giving back and indebtedness.

A globalised yoga is realised, as we will argue, through these means of "eventisation" and "charitisation". In recent years, Yoga Aid has provided a good example of these two cultural dynamics on a global scale. This worldwide yoga "cup", in particular the latest and last event that took place on 9th September 2012, is the subject of the following study. "Giving back" and "Giving4living" are key features of this Yoga Aid. Similarly the debt relief programme "Rolling Jubilee. Strike debt", an initiative of Occupy Wall Street, focuses on "giving back" but by means of buying debt and abolishing it. Debt, bubbles and bankruptcy were common themes in the first decade of the 21st century. Social and spiritual activism is highly aware of the global dimension of this issue and therefore goes global itself by campaigns and world-

wide communication means. However, the relationship of religious organisations and, especially, of informal religious or spiritual movements with charity markets is underrepresented in the literature. This is true of both case studies and an appropriate methodology.

Methodology: Behavioural economics and new institutional economics

Religious giving has always been addressed within the rational choice tradition or in sociological research on exogenous and endogenous factors for giving (Peifer 1569-72). Our goal is to overcome a mere rational choice economics of religion that assumes self-interested agents on the micro-, meso- and macrolevel and claims that small and strict congregations receive more donations because they are protected against free riders by the high level of commitment they demand. This protection in turn is said to motivate donations (Olson, Caddell; Iannaccone). Instead, we will consider behavioural economics combined with new institutional economics.

Behavioural economics is based on the premise of limited rationality and enables us to address behaviour directed towards other social actors and how they are assessed. This is an important parameter insofar as our reactions are very much resonant of our social and moral environment. According to experimental findings a player behaves differently towards another player according to whether that player is assessed as fair, unfair or altruist. In the field of behavioural economics it is mainly research on giving and altruism that is relevant to our topic. Altruism has a long tradition in the history of religions and firmly appertains to various religious ethics (Neusner, Chilton). Some behavioural economic research is explicitly on religious people (Tan), but most of it is generally anthropological (Fehr, Schmidt 2006, Gintis et al.). We will reconstruct the kind of altruism we allege occurs in Yoga Aid. The question of motivation is a decisive category here.

The new institutional economic perspective is an elaboration of rational choice economics insofar as costs of interaction, the historicity of organisational fields and several types of agents are taken into account. This perspective brings in the organisational side beside the individual behaviour that is the point of departure in behavioural economics. Other-regarding behaviour is an autonomous motivation, but to some degree it is shaped by the institutional surroundings. Fundraising strategies and marketing communication are decisive. We will demonstrate in what way the supply side matters for charitable giving activities like promoting the activity, offering symbolic payoffs and mentoring participants. Our main con-

cern will be to detail how these institutions and their particular channels of communication and interaction shape the feelings, the morale and the engagement of the demand side. For this the question of neoliberal elements and tools in this interaction is crucial.

Examining these phenomena of charitisation and eventisation is promising in several respects. Major aspects of change within the yoga scene involve a transformation of social belonging, the offer of a specific purpose in life and a new interpretation of competitive action. Through our case study we can access new social formations of fluid event networks that nevertheless have the interpretive power of pushing forward an innovative narrative (here: the obligation to give back). Then, self-relatedness as conceived in a common narrative of New Age and contemporary spirituality is opened up to charitable action. This backflip can hardly be underestimated, and interestingly enough it is at the same time in tension with neoliberal elements of high performance and competition that seem at first glance to contradict the charitable endeavour. We will illuminate how the yoga event builds up an emotional complex that finds an effective way of institutionalising floating moods and urgent topics from present global discourses like that of debts and relief.

We will first position charity initiatives within the field of global yoga (2) and then analyse Yoga Aid's portfolio of funds per country and main cause (3.1), the fundraising strategies (3.2) and the motivational structure to partake in the event (3.3).

2. The place of charity in contemporary yoga

Historically today's yoga was invented in the aftermath of an initial globalisation (De Michelis; Hoyez 118-19). It is both Western and Neo-Hindu (Altglass 2007, 2011). It has merged elements from medical relaxation therapy, ascetic Indian yoga, British military gymnastics, a popular new US-American fitness style of moving while breathing (Singleton 2005, 2010) and several other influences, like Wicca (Newcombe). In the case of yoga, reconstruction using categories of Westernisation or Easternisation has been superseded by the idea of a multicultural global exchange (Hauser). Considering this bundle of elements and aims, it is thus quite futile to attempt to define yoga as religion, spirituality, or fitness in general, without reference to an empirical discourse. By global yoga we now not only address the geographical spread of yoga to nearly every country worldwide or the interconnectedness of transnational yoga schools like Sivananda, Jivamukti, Bikram, Iyengar and others. We think

there are several reasons to talk of a global yoga in the sense that a transnational discourse of yoga materialises in global events (even if episodic), global social media and the dream of a global yoga (Hoyez 113-14).

The common narrative of today's yoga insofar as it relies on elements from the Buddhist tradition regularly alludes to a logic of merits. The exchange logic of merits is to give in order to receive, and use merit-making in order to improve karma and thus to invest in a better post-mortem life or even escape from this circle of lives. For global yoga let us state only that the idea of karma is advocated in a very vague manner compared to Indian philosophy on the quality and the carrier of karma to future lives. An important strand in global yoga goes back to the vision of social activism that slowly arose out of modern yoga in India. The context of Neo-Hindu nationalism and the fight against British colonial rule made modern Indian yoga political from the beginning (Alter). These political aims in the Indian context widen step by step to more transnational visions. Good examples of this activism are Sivananda's Indian and Sri Lanka tour for peace and unity of men in the year 1950 and Vishnu Devananda's world peace mission in 1971.

Another strand of contemporary feelings of obligation, debt and owing has evolved out of the ecological movement ranging from more secularist LOHAS to dark green religion. This attitude is relevant to consumer behaviour, particularly of the educated middle class (Altglas 2008) and has a strong social ethical output. The LOHAS movement together with the peculiarities of US-American religious financing and activism explain why US-American initiatives constitute the majority of global charity yoga events. An example of engaged yoga spirituality similar to our case study is the "Give back yoga foundation" with the slogan: "Awaken. Transform. Give back".¹ The Buddha experience of "awakening" is expanded to postmodern "transformation" as a spiritual goal and the call to action of "giving back". The "mission" emerges from transformational benefits that are the "gift of yoga". It states explicitly that yoga teachers from all traditions are subsidised to teach the "under-served socio-economic segments". In accordance with this purpose, the foundation finances yoga training in prisons, with army veterans etc. The determination of the foundation's goal is remarkably self-reflexive and shows the educated middle-class milieu of its activists. This closeness to activism is also evident at the "Off the Mat, Into the World" charity (OTM) that is heavily involved at the YAWC in the USA but is also a network of yoga activism worldwide: "Using yoga as a tool for personal transformation, Off the Mat, Into the World is preparing a new wave of ac-

tivists to mobilise effectively and serve sustainably.”ⁱⁱ OTM clearly wants “to ignite grass roots social change.”ⁱⁱⁱ Key words of OTM are action, sustainability, yoga as a tool for social change and change of awareness. In this sense yoga teacher trainings in leadership are given the name “Yoga, Purpose & Action Intensives”. The initiatives of OTM are widespread and also depend on more specific issues in the different countries. Among the activism opportunities are participation in Global Mala Day, activating grassroots democratic voting behaviour, a youth initiative, and the annual Global Seva Challenge. Global Mala Day was created in 2009 by yoga teacher Shiva Rea at the United Nations International Day of Peace. Scores of yoga communities have practised 108 sun salutations since then on that day or around either the spring or autumn equinox, to build awareness for world peace. At the same time they collect donations for charities. The US-American non-profit organisation Yoga Health Foundation coordinated events on the Global Mala Yoga for Peace Day in 2012 and has promoted the Yoga Month September with free yoga classes since 2011. The Yoga Month also has an episodic global framing on 30th September with events worldwide: “tune into a global wave of energy” with the “proven” health benefits of yoga.^{iv} Nevertheless, a cursory glance at virtual self-representations of some international yoga movements and resorts shows that the role of charity in today’s local and international yoga should not be overestimated. Bikram yoga has some special subsidies for American military service and veterans, but this does not qualify as charity. The Shivananda centres point out karma yoga as one out of four pathways of yoga and understand by this a “spiritual activism to help others”.^v They launched a project of teaching yoga to prisoners. Several of their resorts implement sustainable earth care (“permaculture”). This does not appear to be a great deal of activism in the light of the founder Vishnudevananda’s peace mission. Rajashree Choudhury, the wife of Bikram living in the United States, undertakes pet projects such as “Karma Is Action”, a yoga-based fundraiser devoted to alleviating the suffering of children with life-threatening illnesses.^{vi} Jivamukti yoga founded in New York in the 1990s adduces several fields under the header of activism: veganism, environmentalism, animal and even political activism.^{vii} Politics is generally interpreted along holistic lines as the greater body the yogi is part of. The Iyengar Yoga Centre in Indonesia only offers some teacher training scholarships. The much-frequented Yoga Barn in Ubud/Indonesia displays a sub-site “giving back” with reports on its participation in the 9th September 2012 YAWC and several other activities, for example at the “mala beyond the earth” event on UN international peace day 24th/25th September

2011.^{viii} Among their charities are HIV/Aids prevention, reforestation, an orphanage, an orangutan project, and a birth clinic. In general one does not learn much from the homepages about things like in what sense charities are supported, how much money or volunteer work is directed there, or if members of the team are active in them. Nonetheless, this small survey does indicate that going for charity is part of the virtual media self-representation of at least some of the yoga suppliers.

3. The Yoga Aid World Challenge

Founded in 2005 by the Sydney, Australia-based yoga teacher Clive Mayhew and his Japanese wife Eriko Kinoshita, the Yoga Aid Challenge was held twice annually until 2012. In spring and autumn 2012 the *Yoga Aid Challenge* matured to the *Yoga Aid World Challenge* and spread across even more countries all over the world. During the event-days in 2012 practitioners practised yoga in private as well as in public spaces. The overall goal of YAWC for September 2012 was to raise 1 Million US-Dollars. The key emotions of the 24-hour global event were to give (back) money to those in need and to enjoy practising yoga. In September 2012 YAWC took place in 28 countries worldwide. The event was thoroughly prepared and elaborately conducted over a period of months on a very professional homepage (www.yogaaid.com), in yoga journals, blogs, resorts, yoga studios, via Twitter and on a Facebook site: www.facebook.com/YogaAid. A highly skilled and goal-oriented event, the YAWC followed a script and a dramatic timing leading up to the day of the event and in its aftermath up until the closing of online-donating on the 9th of October 2012, one month after the event day. Like every other event, Yoga Aid coined a slogan that bound together diverse activities: “Help us raise 1 million for charities around the world”. The imperative slogan astonishingly set a clear financial aim that in the yogic context is only legitimised by its beneficiaries. To reach this goal of 1 million dollars, hundreds of teams in countries all over the world competed until the 9th of September to raise as much money as possible in advance and on the day of the event. The money was to be amassed from donations and the offer of free yoga classes by teachers who donated their teaching fees earned at the event.

3.1 Portfolio analysis of the Yoga Aid World Challenge charities

According to the ‘Yoga Aid Meter’ on the Yoga Aid-Homepage 1.925.274 USD (1.48 million Euros) was raised by 17,199 fundraisers (“challengers”) during the September 2012 event

worldwide.^{ix} The homepage does not indicate how much money went to which charity if more than one was selected in a country. Some of the charities were umbrella initiatives that promoted several projects, like Japan Platform or the US-American Off the mat (OTM). The initiatives of the latter for example range from social “street work” with youth in US-American cities to the training of yoga teachers and campaigns against sex trafficking in India.

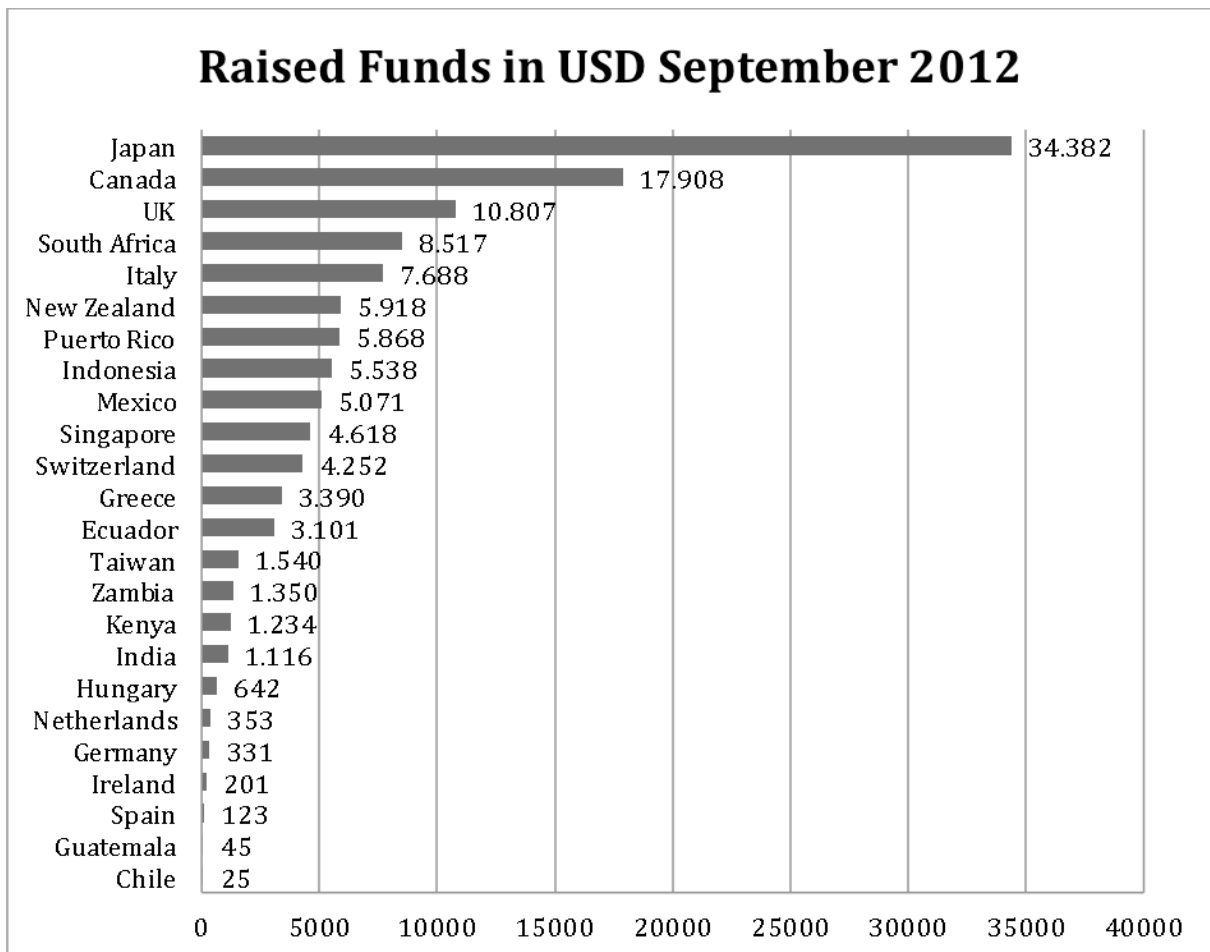


Fig. 1: Fund raised s at YAWC autumn 2012 per country in USD according to the organisers’ homepage (source: www.yogaaid.com, accessed 1 December 2012). To allow for comparison all non-US currencies are converted to USD (according to the Yahoo currency converter in December 2012; therefore all values are only approximate).

On the whole the comparatively low mobilisation in Europe is salient insofar as the density of yoga studios is comparable to the US, Japan and Australia (Fig. 1). This brings up the question as to reasons for this finding. The USA (283,173 US-\$) and Australia (244,157 US-\$) beat all competition in the amount of money raised. The high sum of donations in Australia can be explained among other things by the networking of the founder couple who live and work there. The top six fund-raising countries, US, Australia, Japan, Canada, UK, and South Africa,

are all (with the exception of Japan) Anglophone in dominant language and cultural tradition, and some of them are former British Commonwealth countries. This dominance of YAWC in Anglo-American cultures contrasts with the slight attention it captured in India (only 1,116 USD). An attempt at explaining the comparably high fundraising amount in Japan might be due to the fact that one of the founders is Japanese (Robertson). In addition, the 3/11 triple catastrophe of Fukushima in 2011 is still very much alive in Japan and has triggered a good deal of giving and initiatives there. In 2011 the founder couple attended the Yoga Aid event in Tokyo Midtown only weeks after the Tohoku earthquake. For a more fine-grained comparison of donations on the national level, further economic variables like the GDP, income elasticity, the state's official developmental aid, tax benefits, income distribution, and the total population in relation to the sum raised would have to be taken into account. However, as the event involved an informal, locally random base on a financially small scale, the data is not sufficient to make farther-reaching economic interpretations.

Twenty-four different charities were chosen at the YAWC in September 2012. The national teams selected 1-3 charities. Many charities were small and local. The organisers' explicit idea was to change the local and by this the global. Behind this was also the principle of closely relating the donor to the recipients for reasons of greater identification with their need. In addition to domestic charities, a range of overseas charities, mainly in Africa and central Asia, could also be selected. The main types of charities can be categorised as follows: developmental aid, healthcare, children/youth projects, nature protection, the promotion of yoga. A portfolio analysis of the causes promoted by the 24 charities reveals dominance in the promotion of yoga (15 times, Fig. 2). The promotion of yoga leads the list mainly because of the charity Africa Yoga Project that was chosen by many countries.

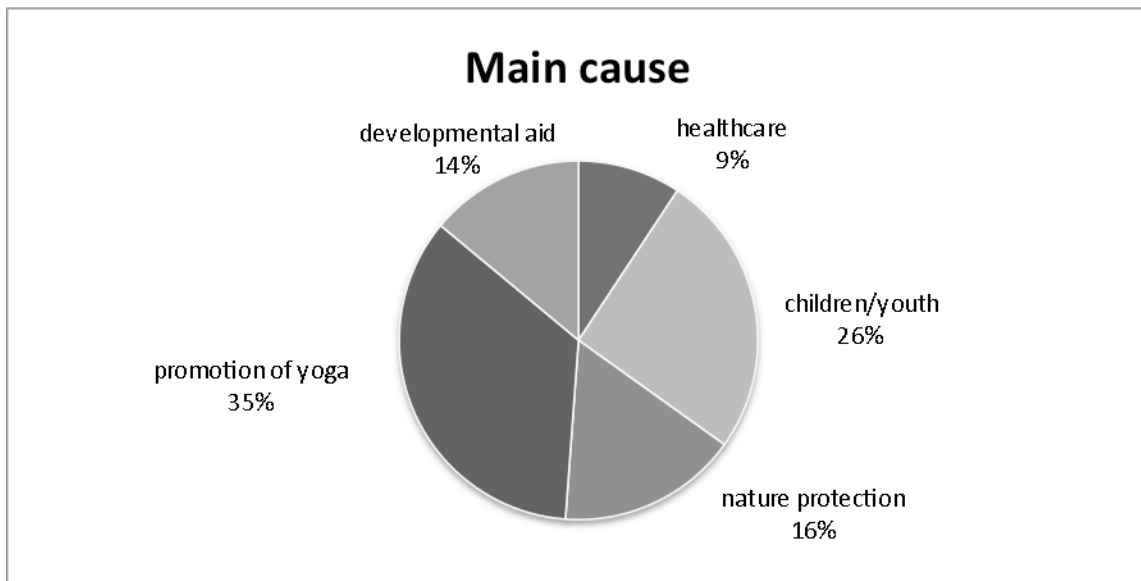


Fig. 2. Charities grouped by main cause of activity.

With multipurpose causes in the charities' agendas, the picture changes: it is then support for children and youth that prevails, followed by developmental aid (Fig. 3). These two main aims, the promotion of yoga and the supplementary aim of supporting children and youth, may unlock a high "missionary" potential: to spread yoga by complementing it with a positive experience for young people. Such a potential future outcome could change the structural positioning of yoga in the field of alternative worldviews, secularism and postmodern spirituality.

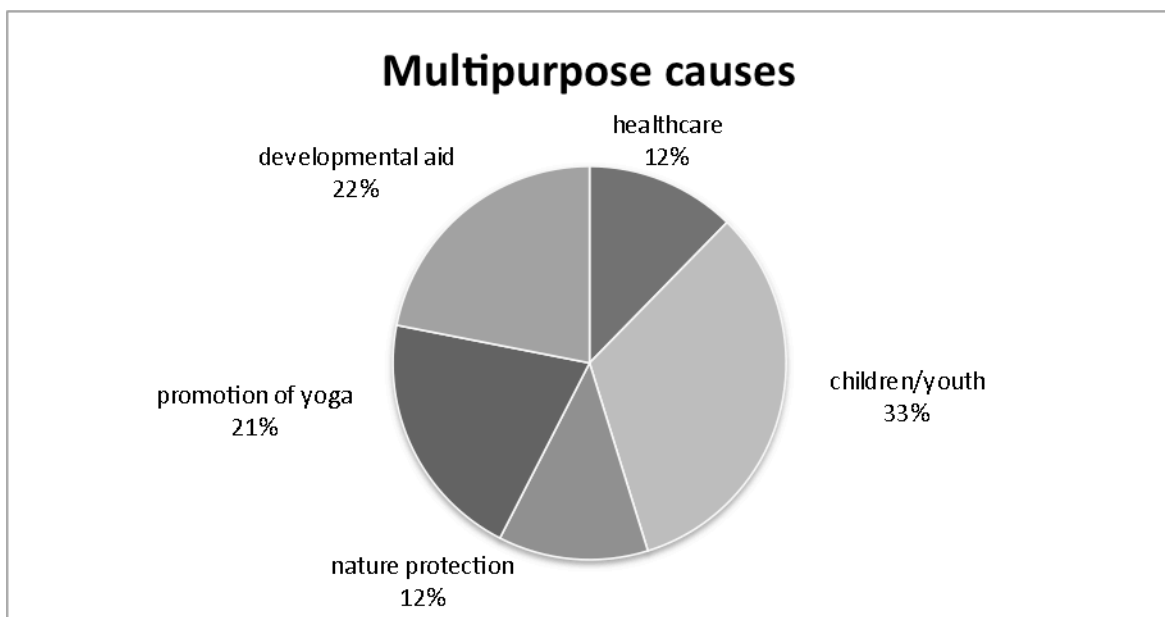


Fig. 3. Charities grouped by multipurpose causes.

3.2 Mobilising through marketing, competition, and communication

In this paragraph we will outline how the fundraising of Yoga Aid is performed through specific marketing, competition and communication and to what degree this entails neoliberal elements. Fundraising as a way of marketing can affect donations positively as well as negatively. Positively, fundraising may create a perception of need on the demand side of possible donors. Negatively, fundraising may produce excessive campaign and administration costs, or fail to motivate donors. Nearly all marketing for YAWC is cost-neutral volunteer work. It keeps running somehow from event to event, not following an overall plan or professionalisation of staff, office, etc., in the manner for example of the yoga Wanderlust Festivals LLC in the US. Thus, “the organisers” are not employed professionals but highly diverse people in Sydney and other localities. This must be considered in order to properly evaluate the activism. On the other hand, the founder, Clive Mayhew, made a fortune in the 1990ies by building up the Australian Internet. Through his privately founded Yoga Foundation, he disposes of the means and the staff to set up Yoga Aid on Facebook and on a homepage using professionally social media.

Marketing aims at outreaching and mobilising. In return for the donor's act of giving, the charity promises the marketed joy of practising. This is an important tactic in fundraising (Andreoni). In addition, joy is an experienced good that diminishes the information asymmetry between the charity organisation of Yoga Aid and the individual donor, an asymmetry which poses an important problem to solve for charities according to James Andreoni's rational choice reconstruction. Information asymmetries between supply and demand side open up room for deception and cause transaction costs, according to new institutional economics, since search costs, control cost or the cost of establishing a legal relation to prevent misuse occur on the demand side. The lessening of information asymmetry is therefore a vital goal for interacting partners.

The Yoga Aid marketing is not so much guided by the image of suffering people, people in need or disaster-stricken people, as by the positive and empowering idea of the donor and his wealth, his “having too much”. First, I am endowed with this glorious practice, and then come some diffuse people in need to whom I give. The typical giving is not so much giving to someone, but rather extending oneself beyond the limitations of the mat. Yoga Aid functions as an intermediate between charities and the yoga practitioner. One tactic is to encourage the feeling of being enriched by the attitude of feeling an ancient yoga tradition; another is

to foster the experience of giving as joyful. This put together means that the marketed product is a complex of affects. This is the base for fostering activism.

Important for marketing is also high recognisability through corporate design. The two websites and diverse logos for free download to use as posters or on information leaflets follow the same aesthetic. In style, pictograms, and colouring they are minimalised. They symbolise mainly the idea of standing together (stick-figures forming human chains by holding each other's hands) on the globe and expanding around the globe. Further pictograms are yogis sitting in postures and lifting their arms, a radiating globe symbolising the charisma of the event, and red hearts floating over the screen to express the peaceful intention.

Competition is essential to the dynamics of the Yoga Aid performance. Competition plays a decisive role among the challengers at the level of local yoga studio teams in which normally one studio forms a team. Challengers compete within a team, and teams compete with other teams in the town to see who can raise the highest amount of money. Under the header of the yoga teacher, the "challenger", the "donation activity" is indicated with date, amount of money, names of donors and grateful comments by the challenger. This strategy fits well with Andreoni's observation of useful "seed grants" that spur others to give and that should not be anonymous but an example for others to follow (59). Also very generous "leadership gifts" should be made right at the beginning of a campaign to prompt followers.

Communication in YAWC takes place in two forms: digital and real-agent communication in the respective networks. In communication prior to the event-day, the virtual representations and forms of social media communication with individual participants are very active. In addition to the competition itself, the Facebook timeline staging is also vital in mobilising people. Regular updates on Facebook, homepage and Twitter, new information and photos, interviews and little films elevate the eager anticipation level towards the event-day. On the Facebook site of Yoga Aid, yogis from all over the world post their event plans and "share" these with typical net-finds like links, likes, smileys, and nuggets of wisdom. The social framing of a global yoga community and like-minded people all anticipating similar global challenges of ecology, peace, and health creates a feeling of not being alone.

Claiming the advantage of a completely volunteer initiative, it is stated that the full amount of the donation will reach its target. Charities are foremost local ones, following the communicative strategy to create closeness to the receiving institution and thus a higher identification with its needs.

3.3 A conglomerate of affects

The narrative of the beginning of Yoga Aid is crucial for an understanding of the emotion complex. It says that the founder couple was travelling through India and stayed with a “wonderful swami” who taught them yoga and said it was “time to give back” (Robertson). The Facebook-timeline indicates this meeting as the birth of Yoga Aid in March 2006 at the International Yoga Conference in Rishikesh: the Swami “said, very simply, that we are here to give back to the world. So when we got home to Sydney, we started building a not for profit platform for giving back and called it Yoga Aid.”^x Gift and gift-return occurs in this narrative on an intercultural scale: between India and the rest of global yoga world. A charity is seen here as a cultural return mode for a gift. ‘Giving back’ appears as engaged spirituality. How can we understand that someone feels that by giving he can receive meaning in return? In the behavioural economics literature, altruism comes near to the phenomenon of charitable giving. Rather than offering explanations in terms of signalling and costly punishment, some behavioural economists invoke this concept to explain specific cooperation behaviour (Gintis et al.). Crucial for the evaluation of altruism is the question, what motivation guides altruism. Altruism is distinguished from egoism, inequality aversion, and fairness. Altruism still may be motivated by self-interest for example if the actor seeks the good feeling (“warm-glow”) of giving. In this sense warm-glow-giving counts as “impure altruism” because the public good production is mixed with the individual profit-seeking of feeling good because of the charitable giving (Andreoni). Strong reciprocity by contrast means an intrinsically motivated pro-social agent (Schmidt, Fehr). The quest for meaning of life also stimulates giving (Olson, Caddell). Games prove that increasing the cost of helping does not decrease the help, an occurrence that is interpreted as altruism (Tan). From interviews with heroic and philanthropist individuals, Kristen R. Monroe concludes that an altruist interpretation of the world is responsible for an other-regarding perspective and critiques the rational choice focus on self-interest. Nevertheless, a problem in current explanations of pro-social behaviour is that research on complex social group behaviour is still in its beginnings; this is even more true on a transcultural level and for institutions beyond family and kin (Tan). That is why Herbert Gintis et al. adduce guilt, shame and empathy as social emotions that should deserve special consideration in the future (169). The problem that arises for neo-classic rational choice economics is the mixing of rational with emotional preferences,

because the latter do not follow the same rules as rational reasoning but are nevertheless relevant to decision-making. The dynamics of emotional preferences may include instantaneous fulfilment without calculation of cost-benefit. One would need motivational psychology for not just back-shifting altruism to explanations in terms of innateness and evolutionary advantage. In what follows, we would like to remedy this deficiency in a defined historical context by developing the politics of affect that governs the event. To understand this culture of giving it is necessary to reconstruct the underlying motivational structure of the affect complex. Therefore, we bring symbolic and social payoffs into the game.

The desire to give back appears to be motivated by one's own privileged situation. In this logic of gratitude, those in need help to give those who give a sense of fulfilment. Fulfilment is the immaterial good received in return for giving away surpluses. There is good reason to see the addressee of the guilt more in a self-relational circle of an exchange economy: it is the gift of yoga to which I am duty bound. "Yoga" in this formula takes on the meaning of a substitute. It is the entirety of a long-standing tradition, millions of practitioners and endless narratives of existential self-finding. One is "I owe yoga so much". It is a feeling of finding peace, values, oneself or even a life through yoga. How close the meaning of life - or even in a sense, "our life" - can be connected with giving is manifest in the Yoga Aid advertisement:



Tab. 1: Advertising poster in the Yoga Aid corporate identity design.^{xi}

Life is interpreted holistically as giving. Giving is what makes sense. In this way giving is equated with meaningful life. The quest for a sense of fulfilment and for quality of life, which is so fundamental in the subjective culture of alternative and secularist spiritualities, is answered by the performance of giving, sharing and dividing up of what I have in abundance. At the very least, this giving adds to the feeling of connectedness and companionship. The public performance of YAWC and the community gathering make visible what remains invis-

ible during the rest of the year in lonesome yoga practice or small-scale groups. Some research considers social capital building as central to motivate religious giving, or more generally to establish generosity (Nemeth, Luidens). There are two ways in which social capital may motivate someone to donate. First, giving to religious organisations for the benefit of the religious in-group would be impure altruist behaviour. Second, social capital as a feeling of connectedness could foster other-regarding behaviour and constitute an altruist perspective and solidarity (Peifer). Behavioural economics has discovered that willingness to commit is higher when other members also publicly display high commitment. This social signalling is observed in diverse smaller groups (Ruffle, Sosis). Eventisation in global yoga reinforces the signals and thus the degree of commitment.

4. Conclusion: The dynamics of charitisation and eventisation in global yoga

We are witnessing the emergence of a global yoga that is characterised by social activism more than ever before. With charitisation and eventisation, this article considers important trends that use neoliberal tools such as competition and professional marketing communication, and also realise a finely tuned conglomerate of affects. Sharing the aim of transforming the whole person, the movements mentioned above are spiritual and at the same time activist in their concern for the disadvantaged. Alternative spirituality is united with engaged spirituality, at least in a global episodic way. The clearly spiritual goal differs clearly from the goals of other protest and social movements that oppose the nation-state and strive for more justice, democratic participation, or equal rights. In contrast to those movements, the spiritual activism of YAWC approaches the victims and under-represented but refrains from political demands; it is not against something. In this sense, it is awareness work in the political context, although in an almost apolitical way.

Research on charity markets generally looks at the demand side and the donors' characteristics such as income flexibility. Donations are then modelled as identification with the cause or with persons in need. We have offered another version of the motivational structure. Essential for this methodological approach is to understand the exchange dynamics at the interface of individual affect and intermediary institutions. The new institutional analysis shows that charitable giving is essentially triggered by the active marketing strategies of YAWC as grassroots fundraising making use of the dense distribution of yoga institutions and amplifying the mobilisation rate by competition. This is combined with the communication

network of a global movement and social digital media to work together on occasion for a bigger aim. This solidarity unifies the activities on a temporary basis in the social formation of an event. This comes with a transformation of social belonging. By pushing yoga into worldly activity (“yoga off the mat”, “yoga as skill in action”, “yoga as work”), belonging is widened beyond the individual mat and familiar yoga class within a temporarily associational setting and a fleeting digital communication. A visually represented world map, uniting those of good will as a community, a shared time frame and a narrative expressing the global-minded people’s mood of obligation build up the “global” aspect of yoga. Belonging is also directed towards a moral community. With the activities for a good cause, a morally significant home is inaugurated beside the emotionally significant symbol system. Perhaps the biggest difference between this and common strands of modern yoga is that global charity yoga does not emphasise the body as pre-eminent. While the event consists of practising yoga postures, with competition playing a central role, it is linked to neoliberal values and more recent power yoga styles rather than the “gentle” style of even more dynamic types like Ashtanga or Vinyasa flow. It has been noted that a high number of yoga-promoting charities support youth projects. This maximises a flow of future practitioners.

The analysis of YAWC charity proves that charitable giving is not only a function of donors’ characteristics like income, but also intrinsically relies on affects. A feeling of owing something to someone is accompanied by a general gratitude towards life and one’s privileged situation that seems in turn to engender the mood of owing something. This feeling of gratitude and of owing something to somebody is merged with an altruistic giving back. Self-development is still an aim, as it previously was, but now it includes the reconciliatory work of giving back. This holistic interpretation of the personal quest for the meaning of life by the essence of giving and owing embeds the individual even more deeply in human, natural, and intergenerational relationships. As a comfortable and wealthy life-style is taken for granted, the participants are beyond finding the meaning of life in materialism and consumerism, even if charity yoga is not post-materialistic. The movement is not about asceticism, renunciation or a critique of consumerism. On the contrary, much of the procedural logic turns out to be neoliberal: companies appear as sponsors; teams and challengers compete; rewards are also material. In other words, Yoga Aid has found a way to institutionalise certain feelings (Koch).

With philanthropy and charity markets, not only are important alignments at stake but also future directions of our societies. Such a vital relation as that between the state and civil society is negotiated over this issue: to what extent is either of these parties responsible for providing support and detecting real public need (Pharoah)? With a market failure in the allocation of vital goods for every citizen, the state intervenes through social laws, insurance, and social aid, and by supporting suppliers of public goods like charities. Secular and religious people might differ as to who should provide welfare, with secular people holding the state responsible for social programmes even if this results in higher taxation (Brooks). Political psychology has observed new and sometimes unexpected alliances between donor institutions and suppressed groups or between conflict parties that may dissolve battle lines and long-standing conflicts (Scuzzarello, Kinnvall, Monroe). Furthermore, the sometimes hidden influence of normative elites in huge foundations and NGOs, and of religion, is crucial for defining who or what is in need and who gets what kind of support. Therefore the allocation systems and those groups which promote a specific worldview through social or spiritual activism, creating a new awareness, training multipliers, and solidifying structures that could easily develop over the next few years from informal to associational forms, are very important for the future. These issues need to be examined thoroughly in future research.

New cultural economies of generosity are developing in these philanthropic markets – and global yoga is one of them. YAWC, OTM's Seva Challenge or Global Mala Day are episodic mega-structures of welfare provision using existing local channels of distribution to many decentralised small charities. These initiatives are new players in the governance of public welfare in the private charity sector. In the cases considered here, yoga at the interface of spirituality, secularist belief-system and nonreligion proves creative in motivating other-regarding behaviour. This is an important finding regarding research on the differences in religious and nonreligious giving (Brooks; Eckel, Grossman) and questions an essential link between religiosity and generosity. With an example from global yoga, this article highlights how trends and events may become agents of globalisation with important ramifications for institutions. They exert symbolic power, transfer money, and influence ideas on justice, personal fulfilment and intercultural moral obligation.

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