


# THE ULTIMATE HUMAN JOURNEY IS AN INNER ONE

RESEARCH REPORT- THESIS



## THE PROCESS OF YOGA TOURISM AND TRANSFORMATION

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# The ultimate human journey is an inner one

The process of yoga tourism and transformation

Research Report – Thesis

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## Preface

In front of you lies my Bachelor Thesis '*The ultimate human journey is an inner one*', about yoga tourists and transformation. This thesis is the first part of the graduation phase, and therefore written to comply the graduation requirements from the study Tourism Management at Hogeschool Zeeland, University of Applied Sciences in Vlissingen. I have worked on researching, delivering a research proposal, doing interviews and writing this thesis from August 2022 till February 2023.

In the past four years of my life and during this study, I have developed a deeper interest towards Health & Wellbeing. My own experience of going on a yoga related trip to an Ashram in India in 2019, has planted a seed. When searching for my research topic, being interested in many factors in relation to tourism, transformation was one aspects that returned. Gladly, I found a way to connect tourism, yoga and psychology. It feels satisfying to have spent the past months diving into- and gaining knowledge about the transformation that gets activated within yoga tourists.

First of all, I want to thank the interviewees that participated, for taking the time and bringing input that led to having enjoyable, interesting and inspiring conversations. Furthermore, I would like to thank my supervisor Mirthe Martinius-Claringbould for motivating me with positive words, making me believe I'm on the right path. Lastly, I am grateful for Elise Guichard, Giselle Garay, Celina Sczyslo, Wiske van der Werf Coorens, other friends and my family for support and faith during the process.

As a saying goes, "I am, because we are"<sup>1</sup>: we depend on the other to fully be who we are. This indirectly means, without others, I would not have done this. We as humans, need connection, need each other. Which comes together in the Sanskrit meaning of Yoga, "to unite"<sup>2</sup>.

Jolien Vinke

Vlissingen, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

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<sup>1</sup> Ngomane, M (2019). The lessons of Ubuntu: the African philosophy for a happy life. HarperCollins Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Jain, R., & Hauswirth-Jain, K. (2017). Hatha Yoga for Teachers and Practitioners: A Comprehensive Guide To Holistic Sequencing. White Road Publication

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## Abstract

As the world is going towards global interconnectedness, recovering from COVID-19, there seems to be a human value shift towards creativity, a need for authenticity, self-actualization and sustainability. Reflecting upon this, the way that is looked at wellbeing and wellness tourism, takes a turn. With yoga tourism being one of the niches within wellness tourism, the focus of this study was to examine the relationship between yoga tourists and transformation. Understanding the transformative experience in a hospitality service setting is an under-addressed area. This study unravels the transformative tourist experience within yoga related holidays- such as yoga retreats; staying at an ashram; following a yoga teacher training or vipassana- and what contributes to, or triggers changes.

Having the intention to learn about themselves or yoga, to change towards a direction, but having different motivations, ages and nationalities, eleven yoga tourists have been approached to conduct semi-structured interviews. Within these interviews, the transformative experiences is deconstructed. Consisting of the mental state of the tourist pre-trip, different areas of changes, involvement in activities, external stimulation, and (self)reflection afterwards. This, in order to answer the main question: *Which indicators of concepts from transformations contribute to facilitate the experience of yoga tourists?*

The results and discussion suggest a transformation is more likely to occur, dependent on the intensity of different encounters and intention or mindset of the tourist. Yoga-related destinations can function as locations to provide tools, improving a tourists' mental and physical wellbeing, whilst undergoing a personal change. It being a safe space with guidelines for the tourists to follow. Transformational travel changes a person from one stage to another, ideally closer to their existentially authentic self in any aspect possible. "Transformed" yoga tourists recognise a change in perspective and perception on both life, other people and the world itself. This comes along with a greater sense of responsibility, understanding, tolerance, seeing we humans are all one and the body, where mind and soul is interconnected. With the potential of unifying consciousness and people, placing mental; physical; emotional and spiritual health together, this type of travel can serve as guidance to facilitate a transition to more awareness in the globalized society.

## 1: Introduction

The nature of tourist wellbeing has become the object of debate in tourism research (Smith & Diekmann, 2017) as a result of over-consumption, global warmth, migration processes, globalization and the recent Covid-19 pandemic. These are all factors that have generated a need for self-actualization as a way to reduce feelings of anxiety and stress. In the past years, the trend of indulging in a relaxing environment to reduce stress has turned into a global movement. This trend boosts tourism to focus on wellbeing even more (Guerra, Trentin, & Vila-Chã, 2022) and asks for a new paradigm, with the urge of the tourism sector to transform (Sheldon, 2020). Peter Russell (2001), a quantum physicist suggested that “The crisis facing humanity is not so much an environmental-; political-; or economic crisis: it is essentially a crisis of consciousness.” As the world is emerging from the pandemic, it will be important for tourists to stay both mental and physically healthy. This calls for a new tourism system, where its values have changed from not supplying products, to becoming part of the natural ecosystems (Brand, 2022) with services that are based on health, self-development and awareness that humans are all part of the same system (Chhabra, 2020).

Reisinger (2013; 2015) defined a concept named Transformational tourism. Other than the experience economy, transformation is not staging personal experience, but it guides a personal change: a transformation that comes from involving meaning and engagement besides pleasure, offered individually. Designing for transformation can assist the tourism industry in realizing its potential to contribute to the wellbeing of all living beings and their conscious development (Sheldon, 2020). The possibility to rethink these building blocks of society, is currently a necessary step (Brand, in an interview with M. Verheijden, 2022) in order to lead to changes in lifestyle, towards sustainability and increased global citizenship (World Tourism Organization, 2016 as cited in Pung et al., 2020).

The similarity that transformation and yoga have, is the focus on a more holistic approach to life. Meaning, seeing the system as a whole, instead of separate parts (Brand, 2022). From the past few decades, yoga became more popular: from 2015 to 2017, the wellness economy grew with a rate of 6.4% annually, which is a growth nearly twice as fast as global economic growth, 3.6% (IMF, 2018 as cited in Global Wellness Institute, 2018) and by that, achieved an exceptional global growth, becoming a multi-billion dollar industry (Husain, Khan, & Ansari, 2019).

Therefore, in this thesis, yoga tourism and transformation are put together. Because of the intensive involvement of yoga tourists in performing yogic practices (Sharma & Nayak, 2019), yoga tourists sense an unique kind of emotional experience in the destination they visit (Aggarwal, Guglani, & Goel, 2008). As yoga tourists usually have invested in; or are open to discover their own conscious, they might be a valuable source of getting a closer idea on how transformation is experienced and potentially can be improved. The World Tourism Organization has issued a call for leadership to come with innovative initiatives for the tourism industry, to play a role in the beforementioned recovery (UNWTO, 2020). Tourists that have a preventive mindset are convinced that by coordinated human action, cooperation and system change, the collapse of natural ecosystems can be prevented (Brand, 2022).

Brand (2022) also states there should be an inspiring way to open one’s mind and create a level of consciousness to start living in another way. In this society is a growing importance of personal experiences and transformations in the consumption motivation and economic offerings (Gelter, 2010). It is important to be aware that experiences are individually subjective and therefore the transformations cannot be commoditized or standardized. To understand and serve (Ali-Knight & Ensor, 2017) the niche market of yoga tourism better, it is essential to study these emotional responses of consumers of yoga tourism (Lehto, Brown, Chen, & Morrison, 2006), examine what triggers these feelings of transformation and get to know the aspirations of individual customers (Sheldon, 2020) to create better tourism services. Once this is established, tourism will have a power to lead society through the necessary reformation of tourism, as more travellers will be transformed (Ateljevic, 2011).

Through conducting qualitative interviews during this research, an attempt will be made to find out how the shift to the transformation economy could enhance the yoga tourism market in a sophisticated way. As this is still a relatively new development, there is a scarcity of studies about the transformational dimension of tourism (Wilson, McIntosh, & Zahra, 2013). Especially in combination with yoga tourism, there are little articles that conceptualize tourists' emotions and understanding of future behavior, due to the unique process every individual goes through and how they experience the niche market of yoga tourism. By searching for yoga traveler's needs, motivation and their connection with transformation, it will shape a clearer vision on the interconnectedness of these concepts, in order for the tourism industry to continue driving the shift.

Considering the above information, the following research question will be investigated: Which indicators of concepts from transformation contribute to facilitate the experience of yoga tourists?

Sub questions<sup>3</sup>:

1. Which are key factors perceived by yoga tourists that contribute to a transformational experience?
2. What are the different motivations of yoga tourists when considering yoga tourism as a way of travel?
3. What inner transformation do yoga tourists recognize as an outcome of their journey?

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix E, *Research questions, visualized table*.



## 2: Theoretical framework

### From pilgrimages to yoga tourism in the current context

Traveling to gain a sense of purpose is not new to humanity. According to different traditions, philosophies and religions in the world, the ultimate human journey, is an inner one. Historically, travellers have sought transformation on spiritual or religious journeys to sacred sites, new places or sacred cultural events, opening up to a greater awareness of themselves, referred to as pilgrimages (Devereux & Carnegie, 2006; Ross, 2014). Whether it is called a pilgrimage or not, to travel to any destination can be powerfully transformative (Sheldon, 2020). The modern-day pilgrims focus less on physical sites and more on inner experiences with opportunities such as self-actualization, enlightenment, unity of consciousness or divine realization (as cited in Sheldon, 2020). Therefore, the metaphorical destination of this journey is not a location, but a state of mind.

Yoga tourism is one of the niches within wellness tourism (Lehto et al., 2006). Wellness is related to wellbeing, where the latter has a focus on the whole person and acknowledges we are more than only a physical body, but includes the mind, emotions, meaning, behaviour, spirit, social relationships and interconnectedness with the environment (Camfield & Skevington, 2008; Diener, 1984). A search to improve an individuals' life, both in physical and mental conditions, whilst participating actively (Weiler & Hall, 1992) in order to prevent illness, leads to yoga tourism. It is defined by Ali-Knight (2009) as "the travel to a destination to engage in the practice of yoga and in yoga-related activities that will enhance the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the tourist." In western countries, yoga is often viewed as purely fitness or exercise, whereas in India it has been considered a spiritual healing tradition for centuries. Sri Swami Satchidananda, author of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjai (1990), wrote that yoga takes the entire life of a person into consideration, where its ultimate aim is to bring about a thorough metamorphosis of the individual who practices it sincerely. This idea is matching with the concept of wellbeing. Ponder and Holladay (2013) suggest the practice of yoga indeed goes beyond health: "Yoga shifts mindsets and alters thoughts on health, while creating understanding that personal and social issues are related, which empowers change in existence." This is why the practice of yoga can be powerful in combination with traveling. According to Lederman (1996), a person on vacation should be affected: and to be affected is to be transformed in a meaningful and permanent way. Hence, the three aspects of the mind, body and spirit are necessary to encounter and balance out.

### Yoga tourist behavior

What differentiates transformational travel from other travel types, is this motivation for deeper purpose of self-realization and self-exploration (Sheldon, 2020). Vergeer (2019) and Nautiyal, Albrecht & Carr (2022) mention a holistic approach as motivator of these yoga practitioners that travel to a yoga destination, ashram or retreat to gain benefits in ones wellbeing. Yoga tourists differentiate themselves from other tourists by craving enhancement, being open to confront their problems and themselves, rather than avoiding the self (Smith and Kelly, 2006). This is in line with Ponder & Holladay (2013), who write that apart from being motivated by wellness, yoga tourists have a tendency to be more open to new experiences and change than other tourist types. Wellness travelers, both domestic as international travelers, spend more per trip than the average tourist. This is because wellness travelers are typically more willing to spend more on travel experiences and amenities that supports their health and wellbeing (Global Wellness Institute, 2021).

Nautiyal et al., (2022) have created a typology of yoga travelers to help yoga destinations provide yoga travelers according to their needs. This typology is based on one's main purpose, general understanding of yoga, traveler behaviour in the destination (such as length of stay and accomodation used) and activity. From here, three main prime motives are derived: Culture Focused, Yoga Focused and Wellness Focused. This research will focus on the Yoga Focused travelers. The yoga focused tourists are again categorized in Mainly spirituality focused, Initiators, Explorers and Masters. Their

destination activities are defined as being focused on physical and/or mental benefits, they are aware of the benefits of yoga and want to understand the yoga philosophy. They follow yoga related programmes, such as a Yoga Teacher Trainings, or at least stay at the destination for several weeks.

Of course, individual inner motivation differentiates, which creates diverse demand-side definitions for yoga travelers. Lehto (et al., 2006) have noted four main areas of motivation: enhancing physical health & wellbeing, enhancing mental wellbeing, controlling negative emotions and seeking spirituality. As a means, yoga tourism is seen as ‘serious leisure’ (Stebbins, 2001): an activity or pursuit centred on acquiring and expressing a specific skill, knowledge and/ or experience. At the location, experiences – such as yoga holidays, meditation centers, trainings and retreats are offered as tangible or intangible products and / or services.

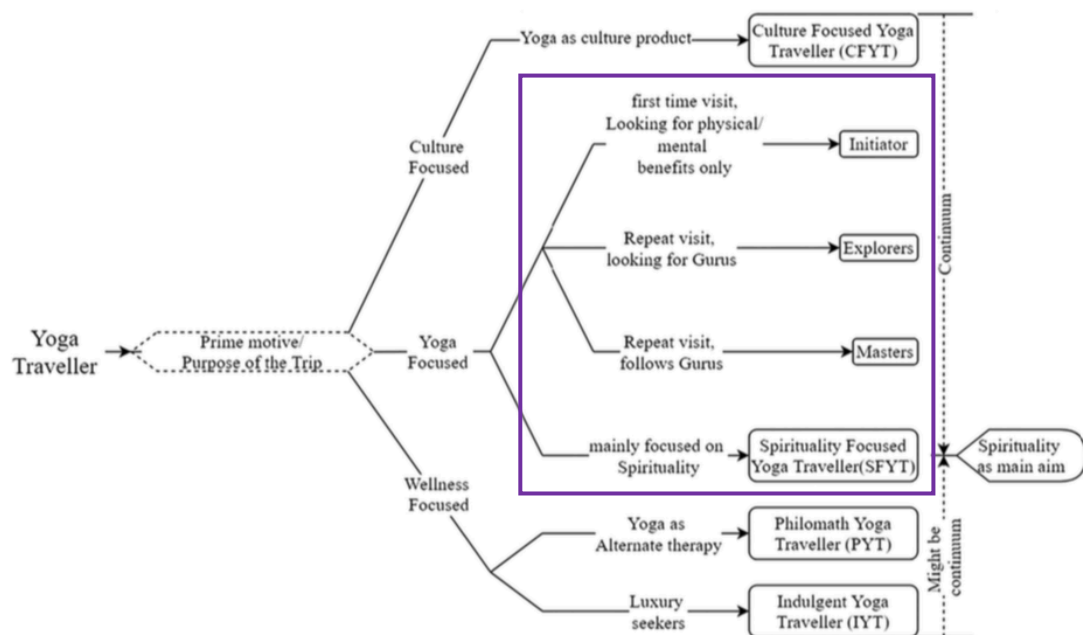


Figure as created by Nautiyal, Albrecht, & Carr, 2022.  
Conceptualising a tourism consumption-based typology of yoga travellers.

## Models and factors of transformation

Where Kaspar in 1990 already wrote about the correlation of demand for health and wellness products with the increase of pollution in cities, poor diets and unhealthy lifestyles, augmented alcohol and tobacco consumption, a rapid growth in the wellness sector of hospitality & tourism has occurred in the last decade as result of the search to pursuit a work-life balance (Heintzman, 2013) as well as in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This human value shift towards creativity, engaging with the sustainability goals and an increased need for authenticity, self-actualization and culture in a world of global interconnectedness has been confirmed by several researchers (as cited in Gelter, 2010).

Wellness tourism had a growth rate nearly twice as fast as global economic growth (3.6%), in between 2015 and 2017 it grew with 6.4% annually (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). The Global Wellness Institute (2021) expects that wellness tourism will continue to grow rapidly (+20.9%) in the coming years, as it seems to be effective for increasing stress and pressures that trouble an individual in the current society. Nowadays, many people are turning to yoga or visit a retreat away from their place of residence, as ‘escape’ of i.e. stress. Not only are people concerned about their physical, social and psychological wellbeing, they are also willing to travel long distances to experience these different forms of health, wellbeing and general life satisfaction (Guerra, Trentin, & Vila-Chã, 2022).

Kottler (1997) states that “no other human activity ... has greater potential to alter your perceptions or the ways you choose to live your life”, as travel. Kottler was the first one that introduced the term transformative travel into academic discourse and defined this as “a process that

involves the actualization of something missing, driven by intellectual curiosity, emotional need or physical challenge” (Kottler, 1998). In 1997, Iso-Ahola suggested that there are two fundamental dimensions of motivation for leisure, which are seeking and escaping. Transformational tourism is very much related to seeking, whereas many forms of mainstream tourism have the component of escapism. So, transformational tourists are looking for existential authenticity (Wang, 1999). Wang (1999) says, it is about a journey into oneself, where the object discovered is a new transformed self. The outer journey, to other places and unknown situations, is a vehicle for an inner journey.

After, Reisinger defined the concept of Transmodern- or Transformational tourism (2013, 2015) as a type of travel where the goal is to change a person into a specific direction, to potentially return to the existentially authentic self. These transformations require either change in attitude, performance, characteristics or in another fundamental personal dimension, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999). Several types of travel relating to transformational travel are: wellness, educational, ethical, volunteer, survival, community-based and mission tourism (Cohen, 1996; Reisinger, 2013, 2015).

The process of transformation and taking action to transform one's consciousness to re-invent life whilst traveling has been linked to several theories, of which will be described in the following paragraph. One pioneer on the subject of transformation is Mezirow, who defined this in 1978 as the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of the worldview and specific capacities of the self. As result, he developed the Transformational Learning Theory (1997), based on the belief that everyone has the ability to transform in their lives. Transformative learning involves changes in perspective on the sense of life and the self, on different dimensions such as cognitive, emotional, bodily and unconscious. He described the outcome of transformational learning is a “perspective transformation”, where the individuals prior values and beliefs are replaced by “a more inclusive, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective perspective” (Mezirow, 2000). The common key dimensions that characterise learning through tourism come from identifying a cultural shock, disorienting dilemmas and self-reflection (Pung, Gnoth, & Del Chiappa, 2020). What goes beyond transformative learning, is transformational change, which will be discussed later in the theoretical framework.

According to Ross (2014) the complex process of transformation is divided into three phases. Starting with a disorienting dilemma that involves choice, healing and experiencing one's consciousness towards something bigger. Following that, a permanent change in the persons' identity structure is initiated through cognitive, psychological, physiological, affective or spiritual experiences. Lastly, the experiencer, the experience and the experiencer's location in time contribute to a sustained shift in the way one thinks, does, believes or senses. This sustained final shift can be found even in Joseph Campbell Hero's Journey described by Robledo & Batle, (2017). The hero's journey normally follows a model consisting of several themes, with each separate step explained:

The first step is a departure from the known world, triggered by a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 1995). The personal situation is both a motivator to travel and a catalyst for change. To make a booking is equal to expressing commitment to undergo the metamorphosis. The second stage is the journey itself. Venturing into a new place where comfort zones are stretched, the start of the process of transformation is doing unfamiliar things – which can be done consciously or spontaneously, as mentioned before. The new location lacks the structures of home (Wang, 1999) and therefore allows the traveller to feel free of social structures (Graburn, 1989), seeing different lives and being more ready to embrace personal change (Harrison, 2003). All of the transformational trips have included a moment of hardship or challenge. Testing one's own limits, and seeing this suffering as part of the physical and spiritual cleansing (Robledo & Batle, 2017). Another basic of transformational power is the “Contact Hypothesis”: interaction in intercultural experiences, a social value of the experience and seeing themselves in relationship with the other, will result in a change of attitudes, preconceived stereotypes and prejudices (Amir, 1969). This encounter with the other can provoke a disorienting dilemma, through “which a person's orienting frames and habits of mind are

questioned driving the transformational process” (Reisinger, 2013). Then, another factor, is being present with emphasis on ‘now’, away from home, to be more aware of- and connect to oneself (Robledo & Batle, 2017). Feeling and connecting with the “energy” or setting of a location has an impact.

The last steps in a transformation process are perhaps one of the most important ones. Acknowledge the experience through time for reflection (Kottler, 1997) both during and after the trip. The isolation from external factors at home give the chance to connect with ones inside. This can be done by writing in journals, blogs or having conversations. This reflection is what makes the experience meaningful, as it brings a learning component; while doing so, a person becomes aware of what a particular experience means to him (Boswijk, Peelen, & Olthof, 2012). In Smith & Puczkó’s handbook of Health Tourism, Reisinger (2013) quotes Clark (1991), who identified three major outcomes of transformation: psychological (a change in understanding of self); convictional (a revision of one’s belief systems) and behavioural (changes in one’s lifestyle). Returning home, the tourist has to adapt back to responsibilities, whilst making a habit of the gained knowledge. Integrating new perspectives to live a life more meaningfully, whilst sharing it around and enabling others around to go and look for their authentic self too (Smith, 2013).

As explained above, transformations can occur after several factors, but to be more permanent, it requires integration (Sheldon, 2020). A study done by Fu, Tanyatanaboon & Lehtob, (2015, *Appendix C.*) shows a spectra of changes, to get the durability or permanency of a change in a concept. Temporary changes to endure changes refers to the degree of permanency and durability. Minor-major changes addresses the magnitude or scale of change, from small changes to relatively impactful, less reversible ones. This is in line with the theory of Snel (2005), who analysed the concepts of an Erlebnis and an Erfahrung. In English language, Erlebnis and Erfahrung is the same word: experience, but these are two different concepts. She sees an Erlebnis as an isolated, immediate event, whilst an Erfahrung is a continuous process and has therefore meaning for life. These changes echo also the notion of Mezirow’s proposed perspective transformation (Fu et al., 2015) where an Erfahrung leads to greater autonomy, control and responsibility (Mezirow, 1997). With this knowledge in mind, it can be stated there are several kinds of experience. The first one is primary experiences: which are an outcome of what we sense and experience; and secondary experiences, that can be seen as the result we gain when talking about it (Reed, 1996). With social media playing a big role in the society, the desire to strive for anything that is original makes secondary experiences more desired (Boswijk et al., 2012). This drives a need to rediscover an awareness of the art of living again (Boswijk et al., 2012).

Yoga itself has the power to transform one’s sense and perception of the self, one’s lifestyle and philosophy of life – with regular practice (Sheldon, 2010). Traveling to a destination to practice yoga-related activities, will stimulate this change as holidays may provide more time and a greater sense of relaxation, which will allow the practice to deepen. Back at home, this can be practiced easily anywhere and therefore be integrated, which makes it an important factor to sustain the developments.

On the contrary, in a study done by Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai (2017a.), they looked at tourists who experienced transformation during a trip with other motivations, show that transformation can happen due to any spontaneous triggering moment. Kirillova et al. (2017a.), describe such moment as “emotionally intensive, sensorially impressive and cognitively stimulating”: a peak moment. The common factors of a peak moment are deconstructed by Kirillova et al. (2017b.) in intense mixed emotions, heightened cognition, engendering the tourists’ sense of transiency and connecting to something grand. As the yoga tourists are out of their own context, in another surrounding, this spontaneous moment could trigger their transformation even more, than practicing yoga at home.

Sheldon (2020) writes there is an infinite number of transformative encounters that have the potential to transform, but four main ones exist. These are the following: deep human connectivity, environmental connectivity (setting); self-inquiry, self-reflection, self-knowledge, learning, creativity;

and lastly an engaged contribution to the destination by the tourists. Not all these peak experiences are integrated into a permanent transformation of consciousness, as some have a tendency for only short-lived inner reflection (Luhmann, 1982). Mentioning peak episodes, Gnoth and Matteucci (2014) have identified flow as a self-directed existential experience, being a mental state caused by focusing on rewarding, skilful activity, leading to recreation and self-rediscovery.

What can be assumed from here, is that inner transformation is both a motivation for travel, as an unexpected outcome (Sheldon, 2020).

When looking at tourists motivation, another important theory to look at is from psychologist Abraham Maslow (*Appendix D, Maslow's human needs pyramid.*). He used the shape of a pyramid, distinguishing a hierarchy of needs where at the base of the pyramid, physiological needs are, then the need for safety, a person's social wants, performance and self-actualisation or development. This 5<sup>th</sup> level will only be reached when the levels below have been satisfied. Gelter (2010) has integrated Maslow's pyramid in order to understand what a guest experience needs to move to a 'total experience concept'. This total experience concept is what happens when not only human need dimensions- but also human dream dimensions are taken into account (Jensen, 1999). The model outlines the base for people who aspire personal transformation. First they should focus on basic needs, to afterwards be able to arrive at their personal dreams, such as their learning goals and desired change. Deepak Chopra, known as Indian-American author of many books and alternative medicine advocate, writer of several books and creator of videos, describes (2022) a link between yoga practice this Pyramid of Needs: "Awareness is non-local, and very abstract. We (in yoga) offer practices through the 7 centres of awareness. These 7 centres are called chakras, in the Indian tradition. Ultimately one will experience awareness. The 7 levels are kind of an extension of the hierarchy of needs as defined by Abraham Maslow. And actually, if you look at his notes, it is obvious this is where he got his knowledge from." (see *Appendix D*). Yoga related destinations allow reflection and searching for meaning, which may lead to bringing one closer to themselves or stimulate transformation (Boswijk et al., 2012). This statement is in line with Smith and Puczkó (2017), who say that the practice of yoga has the possibility to transform lives within both leisure and tourism contexts, and can therefore become a vehicle for societal change(s).

### Stepping up the experiencing ladder: change in consumer behavior

As reported by Gelter (2010), the change mentioned earlier in interest from experience economy towards offering transformative experiences will affect the tourists expectations, values and consumption behaviour as the tourism business enterprises. However, it is a challenge to integrate transformative design into a destination's offerings. It requires a fundamental value shift by all decision makers away from short-term profitability towards concern for the long-term wellbeing of the community (Sheldon, 2020). To come back to the theory of Snel (2005), in the experience economy the most focus is on the Erlebnis, whilst companies should pay more attention to meaningful experiences. The meaning of an experience is revealed over time, as experiences is a part of a lifelong learning process (Gelter, 2010). Of course, every tourist has their own consumption behaviour that starts with differences in their motivation and finally having their own experience on the location location (Aggarwal et al., 2008). The experience is seen as the essence of what customers are seeking and paying for (Morgan, 2006). Therefore, in the transformation economy, the customer becomes the product (Gelter, 2010).

### Conclusion

Connecting the foregoing different concepts, it implicates that yoga, transformation and tourism can be- or are subtly already interconnected. The service that hospitality and tourism offers, such as meditation- and yoga retreats can therefore act as a catalyst for transformation. In this research, the focus will be on the desire of the tourist to transform. The general claim that can be made relevant to tourism, the change leading to transformation, is triggered by an encounter with the new and

unexpected. This leads the disorienting dilemma, challenging habitual ways of thinking and behaving, offering experiences that are different and extraordinary (Tomljenovic, 2015). As explained above, the bigger the difference or new encounters, the more likely a transformation will come to be. What the yoga-related locations provide, is a safe space with guidelines for people to follow this. As transformation changes or moves a person from one stage to another (Gelter, 2008), transformational offerings can be a method for facilitating cultural change into trans modernity.

### 3: Methodology

## Research design

The method to be used for this research was qualitative research. Qualitative research is suitable for studying people's perceptions, opinions or complex issues, according to Barriball & While (1994) and would help to gather an in-depth understanding of individual motivations, wishes and activities experienced. Therefore, this method is seen as most beneficial for this project, as the research is focusing on people's emotional and personal perception. By qualitative research, each respondent could unfold his or her unique journey, without being restricted to certain answer options.

This way of collecting primary data has been time-consuming, but it made the gathered data more valuable. The type of method used to acquire information, is the interview. One of the advantages of an open interview, is first of all, to see and hear what is going on in the interviewee, second of all, questions of a more complex nature could be asked (Baarda, 2010). This in depth interviewing is a technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small amount of respondents, to explore their perspectives on a particular idea or situation or thoughts about processes (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

More specifically, a semi-structured interview has been used, where every interviewee received the same questions, but the interviewer did not strictly have to follow the order of the questions. A list of questions had been made, of main questions and follow up questions, which guided the conversation towards the research topic. The interviewer could herein be flexible in order of the questions (Dearnley, 2005) and allowing the dialogue to flow. Over all, due to the nature of the qualitative research, questions were participant-oriented (Barriball & While, 1994). The response rate was more likely to be high (Baarda, 2010), as this approach makes the respondents actively involved in the conversation.

During the interview, room was created for discussion and focusing on different points mentioned, rather than straightforward questions with closed answers. This made it possible to focus on meaningful issues for the participants, being able to express their different perspectives (Cridland, Jones, Caputi & Magee, 2015).

The process of interviews started after scheduling a day. An email and, - or an online invitation was send with the link to the meeting in either ZOOM or Microsoft Teams. This, because all participants gathered were not psychically close in the network of the interviewer, but in other parts of The Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia, France, Germany or the US. The targeted group for these interviews were yoga tourists, which have spent a minimum of two weeks in another country with the active intention of being yoga focused: to learn about yoga and looking for physical or mental benefits.

In the description, the participants were informed about the themes the questions would be formed around. These being: their personal experience before, during and after visiting the yoga destination, what they felt in terms of change in themselves, the process of transformation and their reflection upon that, and how they implemented this returned at home.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer first introduced herself, with a short explanation of the starting point for the thesis. After a relaxed way of getting to know each other, consent was asked for recording. The interview started off with a short introduction of the interviewee including their name, age, nationality and their relation to yoga and travel. Here, it was decided whether they meet the requirements for this research. Follow up questions in the direction of the above-mentioned topics would be asked directly, or picking up on a topic mentioned by the interviewee. After receiving the information about the interview, on the spot during the conversation, the interviewee could trust their first answer coming to mind. After the last question, the interviewee told about privacy and other ethical aspects in the research, and offered a copy of the final document.

It was intended to interview at least 10, with a maximum of 15 people. The length of the interviews varied between 50 and 90 minutes, due to the possibilities of focussing longer on certain aspects. All interviews have been recorded with Voice Memos and dictated by Word. After that, the interviews were transcribed.



## Data collection

### 1. Respondents (population & sampling)

In this research, the target were yoga practitioners. The definition of a yoga-related holiday for this research, could be seen as an intensive yoga teacher training course, a yoga retreat, a vipassana or visiting an ashram or guru. Over all, one of the motivators had to be to learn about the traveller themselves, yoga practice and philosophy. The duration of such trip is at least two weeks. As this research is about the internal transformation experienced, the destination did not matter to take part of the interview. The maximal time of when this trip has been made, had to be in between now and 20 years ago.

The group concerned needed to have an active approach to reach a specific state of being, or a more holistic lifestyle. This intention on behalf of the traveller to transform is necessary, in order to be seen as transformative travel (Ross, 2010). As the need for transformation arrives in everyone's life on a different moment, the age has been taken broadly: participants could be between 18 and 70, both men and woman could be included. Ones nationality has not been of importance, since it does not make the practice of yoga different. The respondents have been reached via several ways. These calls can be found in Appendix B, 1 to 5, *Social media message*. Firstly, Bodyline HealthCenter<sup>4</sup>, a gym and health centre providing several group classes of which one is yoga, has been used as medium to share a call for interviewees both on the website, newsletter as on the Facebook page. It has 3 locations in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen: Hulst, Oostburg and Terneuzen. They exist for about 20 years and have built a loyal base of members coming yoga classes, which offered a wide scope of people. Secondly, the certified Arhanta<sup>5</sup> teacher- Facebook page, providing Yoga Teacher Training courses both in the Netherlands (Sinderen) as in India (Khajuraho) has been used to launch a call. Their customer base is international. Another way to reach potential respondents, is making use of the network of the interviewer, such as a WhatsApp group that still existed with 16 international participants from the TTC done in Khajuraho, India. Lastly, participants have forwarded contacts of people they knew, that would fit in this research.

Ultimately, 11 participants were interviewed within a scope of one month. One interview is not fully valid as, whilst interviewing, it appeared the respondent did not meet all criteria for being seen as a yoga-tourist. Though, as she mentioned several keywords that were named by other yoga travellers, the researcher decided to keep the interview included. Thence, it can be said there are 10 valid interviews. The overview of personal details, including their name and role in relation to yoga, travel and involvement and scheduled date of the interview, can be found in the table underneath. Amongst other connected to the broad scope of people that fit being a yoga tourist, each interview gave both new information and the same perspective as others gave before. This is the minimal number named prior in this chapter, that should be necessary for a decent level of data saturation, validity and reliability. Bernhard (2012) stated he could not quantify a specific number of interviews needed for a qualitative study to reach data saturation. This is in line with the general rule on sample size for interviews, is "when the same stories, themes, issues and topics are emerging from the interviewees, a sufficient sample size has been reached (Boyce & Neale, 2006). In a study done by Hennik, Kaiser & Marconi (2016), it seems saturation is on average met at nine interviews, where the range of common thematic issues were identified. Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) identified that data saturation occurs between seven and twelve interviews. This all is depending on the study purpose, the study population, sampling strategy, data quality and type of coding (Hennik, Kaiser & Marconi, 2016). In another paper, From these perspectives, ten interviews done, reaches the middle range.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://bodylinehc.nl/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.arhantayoga.org/>



## 2. Table of respondents

	Name interviewee	Role in relation to yoga & level of involvement	Scheduled
1	Asia Jokiel	Tries to incorporate yoga into the travels. Wrote master thesis in the field of anthropology of traveling. Practices for the past 10 years. Followed Arhanta Yoga Training in 2017. Did 10 days vipassana last year. Now full time yoga teacher.	Tue. 6 <sup>th</sup> dec. 11:00u
2	Katharina McGrath	Her first 200hr YTT was in 2019, it has been life changing. Has been to several more YTT's and other courses through which she would call herself a high level of involvement. Eager to learn more about yoga, and deepen her own relationship with it, as the dissatisfaction with where she was at the time (corporate job).	Thu. 8 <sup>th</sup> dec. 14.30u
3	Dientje Mollenaar	Started with yoga in 2015. After her trip (one month) to India for the 200hrs Hatha Yoga training in an Ashram, she started to follow shorter trainings in NL. Is planning to keep on expanding and developing herself in the different forms of Yoga as it brings her closer to herself, gives relaxation and to listen to her body.	Mon. 12 <sup>th</sup> dec, 09:30u
4	Selina Straver	Yoga journey have been to Bali, Costa Rica, and US, Montana. Relationship with yoga is strenuous, because when only doing yoga, body doesn't go well on it. At the same time, yoga is much more than asana's and postures. Her continuous quest on self-development, is a continuous practice of yoga. Sometimes challenging, but the devotion is what gives peace in life.	Mon. 12 <sup>th</sup> dec, 11:00u
5	Margaux Prada	Knows from the practice of yoga for about 10 years, mom registered her to reduce stress. Trip to Cambodia, yoga retreat Thailand. Very spiritual and it changed her life. After that never travelled again without the purpose of doing yoga. Place where people come to reconnect and find themselves without pressure.	Mon. 12 <sup>th</sup> 15:15u CET
6	Geertrui Den Ecker	Did several retreats outside of the Netherlands for one week: Sri-Lanka, Morocco, India and Bulgaria. Followed by one month Teacher Training in Bali. She is now a yoga teacher.	Mon. 12 <sup>th</sup> of dec, 18.30u
7	Nathan Anderson	Has taken 5 yoga related trips to India for Yoga or tourism. 2011 – 200hr yoga teacher training at Arhanta, followed by tour to Rishikesh, another meditation training in Punjab. Teaches own yoga TTC's in Los Angeles <sup>6</sup> .	Tue. 13 <sup>th</sup> dec, 15:00u
8	Thomas Aukema	Started half a year ago with yoga. Did do meditation before and was curious to human consciousness. Yoga as way of life. Went twice to Hridaya <sup>7</sup> yoga in France. First time about 5 weeks, after that went back for 2-3 months.	Tue. 13 <sup>th</sup> dec, 19.30u

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.arhantayoga.org/yoga-teacher-training-los-angeles/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://hridaya-yoga.com/>

9	Matthias <sup>8</sup>	Has done several retreats since 12 years, to Portugal, Croatia and just booked a retreat to Spain. Followed a teacher training and went to Mexico.	Fri. 16 <sup>th</sup> dec, 08:00u
10	Anna Wendlinger	Did a teacher training in Germany – Shorter interview, as she stayed in home country.	Sat. 17 <sup>th</sup> dec, 14:30u
11	Patricia Theodorescu	Her first yoga-related trip was to Mexico, after that return, did karma yoga in France, went to India for an Ayurveda course and Nepal, which was part of her spiritual journey. Now is in Hridaya, France.	Tue. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan, 10:00u

### 3. Operationalization

This research is mainly focused on tourist behaviour and inner experience, for which it is necessary to make these construct tangible and measurable. Translating an abstract construct into a tangible question and items is a process that will be shown in the operationalization (Baarda, 2010). Abstract concepts are turned into measurable observations, by translating a construct into a variable (Baarda, 2010) and helps to systematically collect data on dimensions, subdimensions and their indicators. These are based on desk research, taken from the theoretical framework, and formed into research questions. The sub questions are based on the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1997), that examines which steps are taken to change one's perspective on the world and one's own unique skills can lead to an increase in consciousness. Changes in perspective on life's meaning and the self, as well as other dimensions such as cognitive, emotional, physical and unconscious are part of this transformative learning, and examining whether it eventually leads to transformational change. Next to Mezirow's theory, also Ross' theory with 3 phases is taken into account. Robledo & Batle (2017) described the hero's journey in different steps, from pre-trip to end, on which the build-up of questions is based. In addition, the theory of Sheldon (2020) of transformative encounters that have a potential to transform, and Snels' theory (2005) have been taken to clarify what is seen as an experience. These theories can be extensively re-read in Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework.

As personal experience has been central in this research, indicators are broad and can differ for each interviewee. These, in combination with topics of focus and how these were measured during the research, can be reviewed in appendix A, *Operationalisation*.

### Data analysis

The approach of choosing for qualitative interviews, was with the aim of having depth within the conversation and get a clearer insight of participants' experiences.

To listen more carefully and be more present, interviews have been recorded with a voice recorder on the phone – after asking consent from interviewees. This contributed to more accurate transcripts and results. In addition, it reduced writing time whilst conducting the interview. To keep accuracy and control of the transcripts produced by Word, they have been checked over manually, with the recording on the cellphone. Transcripts were written in the original working language in which the interview was held, and therefore differs between English and Dutch. During the transcribing process, the researcher highlighted potential important sentences or key words in Bold. Writing out each interview individually, was beneficial to get familiar with all what has been said and mentioned with each interviewee and supported afterwards comparing the stages to find any similarities and differences between the interviews. The further processing of results from interviews has been done in English, regardless of the language the interview was held in.

This information will be worked out as descriptive data for clarification, and can be found in Appendix G: *Coded interviews*. All transcripts have been read through, whereafter, supported by the operationalization, a scheme was developed to group data together. Here, categories were made: theme 1: motivators, theme 2: key factors to contribution, and theme 3: recognized inner experience.

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<sup>8</sup> Due to privacy reasons, this participant has indicated the preference for a fake name.

Within these categories, sentences have been labeled, so that relationships or similarities can be recognized with more ease.

### Ethical aspects

The importance of privacy and ethical aspects within the research were taken into account, especially recognizing the fact that the interview questions are based around the participants feelings and personal experiences. The construction of the interviews had to include common guidelines that pleases both sides, such as minimizing harms and risks, and maximizing benefits as respecting human dignity, privacy and autonomy (Resnik, 2002). Usually, the interviews started with a warm-up of light conversations to break the ice of 5 to 10 minutes about both the interviewee and the interviewer. After that, the purpose of the research was explained, preparing the interviewee, assuring their freedom of expression – or their choice to stay silent at a question that caused discomfort.

According to Gibbs, Willis, Welch & Daly (2007) it is ethically dubious to collect data that is not completely necessary for the research. As it was an open, in depth interview conversation, it has been challenging to guide the conversation away from non-related topics or excessive details. Since these topics could be sensitive, the participants were offered the option to stay anonymous. It was explained the name of the participants will only be shown in the above table and in the transcripts (Appendix F, *Transcribed interviews*) as agreed on with ten participants. However, one indicated not wanting his official name mentioned. This participant's name can be requested at the researcher if required. Other contact information of all respondents is left out because of privacy reasons.

Before conducting the actual interview, a participant's consent was needed to obtain and record for the protection of their moral rights (Kelly, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). The interview setting was for every participant a choice, as it was online. The interviews have been conducted in the language most comfortable for the participant, leading to interviews being done either in Dutch or English.

### Validity and reliability

Following the interview protocol and questions formed in the research instrument set off by Boyce & Neale (2006) that can be found in Appendix B.6., *Process of the interviews*, it can be said the internal validity is high. The questions arose from desk research and are formed around the interviewee personal experience. Time invested in conducting the interviews has been between 50 and 90 minutes, from which can be concluded there was enough time to go in depth, and ask the same type of questions in every interview, to ensure consistency between interviews (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The respondents have been on a yoga related trip themselves and talked about what one has lived through with a healthy sense of reflection.

Seeing data that shows the amount of yoga practitioners in the US alone has grown from 21 million (2010), to 34.4 million (2021) people (Statista, 2022), the sample size of 11 interviews is rather small. Taking in account ages, intention, sex and the different nationalities with therefore cultural background, the external validity ends up lower. Controversially, this broad scope of mixed backgrounds illustrates and emphasises the wideness of reasoning and motivations.

As transformation is a phenomenon that happens gradually and organically, chances are results will somewhat differ after a change of time. After time, respondents could have experienced more situations in which they have gotten realisations, have grown in their spiritual process and therefore give different answers. Besides that, their motivation, curiosity and reasoning to undertake such journey, will most likely amounts to the same results.

A verbal agreement as metaphorical signature is asked for the interviews to be recorded, to ensure clarity when transcribing the interview, instead of being dependent on a Word transcript only.

### Limitations

After reflecting on the research process, several factors have been noted as potential limitations. Firstly, the researcher had expected more responses for the interviews. The initial plan

was to have a focus group next to the interviews, in order have a wider scope of gathering information. As the respondents mention the power of community often, such focus group could bring even more aspects to the surface. Now, due to the low response rate, the focus group was cancelled and the in-depth interviews became leading, with an attempt to gather as much knowledge from the sources handed by extending the questions. In addition, two weeks of Christmas holidays were not favorable, as other potential interviewees (not shown in table of respondents) had pointed out to be able to take part in the interview only over the holidays. The holidays caused a shortage of availability and time, which is in line with the first note.

Third, the quality of the interview guide affects how the interview and the analysis of collected data is done (Barriball & While, 1994). As it was the first time doing in-depth research with interviews for the researcher, lack of experience or interview techniques play a role in estimating the planning of the research process. In addition, responding effectively to what has been said in the interview, to really go in depth, was a challenge. Some questions arose later in the process that could have been asked to everyone to get a more comprehensive overview.

The reader has to note that this research is based on yoga tourists, where personal aspects such as age, gender and nationality were not of big importance, as this is not of any matter when practicing yoga. Though, all participants have different backgrounds, possibly leading to every person identifying differently with the questions. For instance, one of the participants pointed out having grown up with the Indonesian culture, instead of the western culture, which could bring another perspective. This could be taken into account more consciously for a next time, as well as difference of age. The range of age was from 25 to 57, showing people in different phases of their life, some with several experiences related to yoga-travel and less. Though, age does not really matter: more the ability of self-reflection of the participants.

In terms of expressing ones thoughts into words correctly, this is another aspect that could have contributed to limitations: as the interviews have been held oftentimes in English, not being the mother tongue of the interviewees, nor the interviewer, the questions could be interpreted differently or challenge the interviewees to express themselves in a way desired.

Lastly, the participants could try to think with the researcher, and by that answering the questions in a way they assume the interviewer would like them to be answered, or feeling a certain shame or pressure to (not) answer in a way. This causes doubt in terms of reliability and truthfulness. However, the participants were asked to answer from their own perspective and experience.

## 4: Results

Based on the 11 semi-structured interviews and an analysis of the acquired data, the results of this research will be presented in this chapter. Built around the coding (Appendix G: *Coded interviews*) that derived from the operationalisation, divided into themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes, the following chapter will present the analysed data. A yoga-related trip has coherent factors, which is why the following paragraphs can be read together, instead of in sub-chapters.

### 4.1 Motivators

As written by Letho et al., (2006) individual motivation differentiates, from enhancing physical health & wellbeing, enhancing mental wellbeing, controlling negative emotions and seeking spirituality. From this perspective, there were five sub-themes created: *self-reflection*, *disorienting dilemma*, *wanting to heal*, *desire to learn* and *attracted to/by something bigger*. Self-reflection had as sub-sub-themes *internal*, *external* and *expectations*.

One of the most returning internal aspects, was re-connecting to oneself. Participant 2: “I wanted to do something for myself, something that made me feel more connected to myself, because working in the office, not talking to anyone for hours at a time being, really disconnected. I also felt disconnected to myself.” Going on a yoga-related trip helps to “release all the pressure of normal life”, said by both participant 3 and 4. External stands for whether there was someone else at that time, pointing the participant towards the direction of yoga. Expectations were covered by being able to make yoga a bigger part of one’s own life, because of the discipline and awareness that comes with. This was visible in a majority of participants, where participant 2 said: “I wanted a really strong foundation for a healthy life” or “have help on my spiritual path”, P.7, are connected to the desire to learn about one’s body, mind or surroundings. Disorienting dilemmas were taken as for example being fired (P.2), being on crossroads in life (P.7); having just changed jobs (P.9); or finishing internships (P. 10 & 11). In regards to wanting to heal, some participants were struggling with for example work-pressure, depression, panic attacks, destructive patterns and social anxiety, where the yoga-related holiday seemed to be a safe environment: “There was this space to discover my inner world” (P.4, P.9, P.11). To be attracted by something bigger has been identified with an existential crisis, curiosity towards the unconsciousness or ‘something bigger’. “I didn’t know who I am” (P. 5 & P.11) “What do I want to do?” (P. 2, P.4 & P.9). However, not every participant had a perspective on every single subtheme, whereas some were more practical instead of spiritual: “Let’s go on a retreat. We like yoga, why not do that on vacation” (P.9). The overall commonality was yearning: searching for something, wanting to learn and get disciplined, looking at the body from a different perspective.

### 4.2 Key factors to contribution

This second theme, has six subthemes: *Setting* (environmental connectivity); *social contact*; *ways of reflection*; *being challenged* (comfort zone); *peak moments* (intensity) and *general experience*. Setting has five sub-sub-themes: Countries visited + type of trip; appealing factors; less appealing; going abroad; life at home. ‘Ways of reflection’ are described separately, the other themes are discussed unordered, as they coincide.

First of all, the visited countries are diverse: Nepal (2x), India (5x), America; Montana (2x), Bali (2x), France (2x), Mexico (2x), Portugal (2x), Cambodia, Thailand, Morocco, Colombia, Sri-Lanka, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Mallorca, and finally Israel.

Starting from the home-situation, participants mentioned the working pressure: “workaholism” (P.2) or “performance mode” (P.9) “the fast speed” (P.3) in which they were in, “being so distracted with our job, that we miss our own cues” (P.4). Others described having a high value on tangible achievements (P.2), or “missing the magic” (P.6): another country provides an atmosphere of magic and nature that cannot be found in one’s home country. This is enhanced by the participants pointing out having a cultural shock or uncomfortable situation which led to “having to adjust

everything" (P.1), in combination with the aspect of being immersed: "Being in a different reality, almost, which makes you shift gears mentally." (P.2) This was recognised by participant 11: "The disruption of day-to-day life, being taken out of the context. I was so identified with the role I had in the world... to kind of cut this, and see myself in a different scenario, changed everything." And participant 4: "A different environment, the whole energy feels different, the weather and food is different, you're not on your phone as much, moving the body a lot of hours of the day. It re-wires your brain, because you can't be on automatic pilot." The same participant mentioned the feeling of a bubble (later by participant 11 expressed as "container"): "I felt like this would be most transformative, having an own little bubble of doing yoga. Being submerged in one thing is so much more effective." "All those habits of having time to take care of ourselves, those habits we forget... Living in a city, life is going: we're going super-fast, we're working and sometimes we just need to stop, take a break and see what we need" (P.5). For that, one of the importance of taking a yoga-related trips is bringing people back to their centre, as a personal trip to oneself. Moments of caring for the body, cut off from previous life, learning to reconnect with parts of you, to become aware of what you want, need or feel. "The idea of not needing to perform, is easier at the retreat, because there is no competition, so it's easier to get into that vacation mood." (P. 9) "What I love about a retreat is, you taking care of your body: everyone should do that, at least one time a year, just to reset everything." (P.5)

It seems there is certainly a benefit in going to another destination. Participant 5: "Just practicing yoga wouldn't give you the opportunity to go deep inside." As said by participant 3: "Some people need a specific experience, to get far. You have to go through the process yourself." Not everyone is ready for- or open to that. The participants indicated to go "totally" or "highly" out of their comfort zone, or at least having had "a good stretch, to get out of the country and see other places" (P.7). Participant 1 added: "You are never going to be as challenged, or shocked maybe, by something that your own mind came up with, then if it's something that comes from the outside." However, several participants mentioned their trip was not about a specific place, but the immersion within yourself and the environment, without distraction: "You can go to Hawaii, you can go to Argentina and you will see beautiful stuff. But you have to put yourself inside." (P.5), "You don't need to go abroad for it to be a meaningful experience" (P.2), or "For me, it's about the practice, not really about the place. Thailand or India, this all is super nice, when you're a beginner or something. With time, it doesn't matter" (P.1). Participant 7 described: "Whatever environment you find yourself in, you need to immerse yourself in that environment... Exposing yourself to the environment that you're traveling to, and being open to whatever they have to offer, I think that's the experience." It's not necessarily the specific location, more a matter of intensity and time, because wherever you go, you bring your mind with you.

What does such yoga-related location contain, that makes it valuable? Firstly, common materialistic factors of yoga teacher trainings, retreats or vipassana's, are shared dorms (occasionally in poor state such as uncomfortable beds or no real shower), living from a backpack instead of all sorts of possessions and being served healthy food. Places could be combined with surfing courses (especially named for locations in Portugal) or other holistic practices. Appealing factors were dependent on "Location and surroundings that could contribute to the inner journey" (P.3). It is seen as "a container" with others, that has an "incredibly healing effect" (both P.11). The location should seem peaceful, "a safe space" (P. 4, P.6 & P.11). Environmentally speaking, a warm destination has been perceived as beneficial, as "you can challenge yourself, by being in the heat" (P.1 & P.6). "...you're confronted with external forces, and your body not performing as you probably wanted to perform, so to accept that." (P.9). Amongst others, sitting for a long time in the same position, having a broader reach of stretching, the heat, different eating pattern; all creates physical discomfort. Participant 1 describes her Vipassana in Nepal as "A really heavy experience, because you sit there, and you sweat, you sweat. I have never been in so much pain in my entire life, just from sitting. This is so overwhelming... In the beginning I was crying every evening, it is massive emotional." Participant 10

had a similar saying: “The mental, sitting down and getting into myself, that was a very hard and emotional journey.” This pain creates a contrast: “The biggest enemy is the pain that you are in, because besides the pain, there are very pleasant moments.” (P.1). Participant six: “Mentally and physically, you are challenged,” “This is really you with you, purely the fight with yourself.” (P.1) Again, the comparison to a desk-job, days spend here usually are intensive and differently filled.

On material level, participant 11 explains the power of experiencing, before understanding: “Where I had diarrhea every three days, sleeping on uncomfortable iron beds, which was really really difficult, but also its super amazing.... When you kind of understand that you don’t need so much, it changes everything. And it’s funny now... You have to live it in your body, to understand what it is about.” The idea of interconnectedness counts here too. Participant 8: “Everything is one, but that is an experience. You can talk about it, but it doesn’t make sense at all.”

Going through these moments with yourself, seems to be what makes such trips even more valuable: “Life changing... as it was almost a torture for me many days at the beginning” (P.5). Participant 11 continues: “There are these things of going through \*\*\*\*, but knowing that it’s just purification somehow, and that is good that you’re out of your comfort zone.” Participant 9 has verbalized this as a “feel-good pain”.

Ranges of emotions have been acknowledged, such as “Releasing happiness, sadness, love, everything.” Moreover participant 5 describes: “feeling the energy of everything”, crying, sharing and being vulnerable together, makes it “really intense, definitely really, really intense”. Intensity has been a term that was named by a minimal of 6 participants.

In context with others, this leads to placing oneself in another perspective. It is working yourself through these uncomfortable moments, like a spiral: “It goes in waves. I’m transforming, and something happens, I go back to my shadow and then... You’re spiralling again and again, and many times you’re reaching at the same point, but then something changes and changes.” (P.11) or as participant 8 said: “You think you understand it all, arrive in a new situation, where new things come to the surface and you have to go through it again.” This could be seen as the point where perspectives change, as it “just clears out your lenses” (P.11).

In this shared space, where it is noted by several “people have the same mindset to learn” (P.4), one does (karma)yoga; eats; washes dishes all together, “you’re not lonely at all” (P.9) and “we were all on the same page, with the same thoughts, vibes and purpose, and that just created such a strength.” (P.1). Together, they start a journey. One of the regularly mentioned factors, is that “the feeling of universal struggles” (P.7). This refers to courteous relationships, that are “part of our DNA” (P.11) but, something we are forgetting about. According to the same participant, this “longing, as tribal human beings”, is what connects them: “We’re social creatures, this is how evolutionary we were raised. With not having this, and more and more isolation and you could see with COVID, the harshest effects of isolation, and people can go crazy with being by themselves.” A “community experience, whatever community, is the most important” (P.5). The strength that this community feeling gives, has been emphasised multiple times.

In relation to that, different factors have been named related to the characteristics of people visiting. Firstly, “Openminded” (P. 2, P.9 & P.10) or a similar word, such as “likeminded” (P.3 & P.6) or “very real” (P.5 & P.8). Over all it seems they have a bigger awareness. “Everyone is aware of something, curious to explore this further”, or somehow “searching for the same” (both P. 8). Which is connected to the universality. “They all know there’s something to ask, or to find and seek, maybe not knowing what it is. We all have different starting points of asking these questions.” (P.7). And in this community-setting, you could “discover yourself through someone else, which creates a specific kind of intimacy” (P.8). People gather to learn or work on- and for themselves. This contributes to the respondents forming strong connections, a sense of “cohesiveness” (P.7) develops, where you support and get supported. “Everyone is different, but it also feels like a family.” (P.4). In this “different world” (P.10), a “melting pot” (P.9) of “different bodies, being in different states of life” (P.7), gather and creating a vulnerable space, where people, according i.a. participant 8, “Care more about the state of



the world” and “being aware of not causing too much harm”. Linking to the universality within the yoga philosophy. Participant 5: “It creates a feeling of belonging. Even though we don’t belong to the same culture, we all are the same and share a moment.” This together-ness is reinforced in the effect of being in a community.

However, though it is considered beneficial to be together, the power is also been found in leaving. As participant 7 described: “In the end, it is good that we went away from each other. We form this ‘group think’. The time together is important, but also what we did in that time. Because, what we did, is asking “Who am I?”, we went through a transformation together.” After being together for an amount of days, going into the world with the new learned things, sharing with others, and “working on it, to improve the world. We need to go and talk to people that don’t consider” a lifestyle that has been shown to the participants at the destination. “That’s why people take these trips.” (P.6 & P.7).

Next to the above mentioned aspects, another factor for transformation, is self-inquiry. To start looking inwards, asking the question: “Who am I?” helps to reflect on oneself. Meditation or being with yourself, where your insecurities and mental challenges come up, seems to be key. Participant 1: “To focus on myself and things that I struggle with, and face that.” Becoming aware and confronted by your own body and limits: P.8: “I was very unaware of my body, it’s weird to be confronted by that.” And P.5: “You will find some place in your body you don’t know was existing, but that’s interesting for the journey.” One starts to see you can take responsibility over your own conditioning. Hearing different stories, seeing different lives, conversation and contemplation, all contribute to re-identifying oneself.

This transformational aspect “has an increased interest, becomes a part of the whole tourist mindset. People expect more from tourism now, of which transformation is a little part.” according to participant 7, which is what more people believe in or are “sure” (P.11) about. In regards to wellness travel in the current society, two main aspects have been said. Firstly, it has been mentioned COVID-19 made people aware of themselves and their mental- and physical health, and therefore creating a shift. Secondly, “we seem to be far technologically, materialistic far developed... a lot of people don’t believe in anything and just do something.” (P.8) But, we don’t get thought how to find purpose -next to materialistically- or peace. For that, going abroad practicing yoga, can be seen as “a tool in a world where things are so crazy” (P.11), to “find a sense of purpose or feeling of belonging” (P.5, P.9 & P.11). In all, according to participant 11: “People seem to be more looking for connection, rather than just luxury or not- something without purpose”.

“I think it was yoga, it was community, it was being in a conscious place, it was just another way of experiencing life. You have to go through everything: to stretching your comfort zone, and leaving your place, focusing on this, and having the intention to really go more into depth. So it’s beautiful to do yoga in the city, but it’s so much more beautiful to take some time, to really delve more into the teachings where you need time and space, and it’s always amazing to do it in a place that is specifically designed for this.” Participant 11 formulated here, that a yoga-related trip usually not is about one thing, but about the connection of it all.

#### 4.3 Recognised inner experience

The last theme consisted of six sub-themes, which are: *temporary experience; psychological changes, in behaviour; bodily; most mind-blowing aspect (three sub-sub themes: characteristics of turning points, new perspectives and letting go of... ); named emotions and interconnectedness*. Questions in regards to these topics have been asked to wrap up and examine what exactly made the respondents change.

The participants get a taste of what it is to have a ritual. The benefits are more subtle than becoming flexible. It shapes the way for a new lifestyle, but as it is difficult to break patterns within a few weeks or a month, it is important to keep the discipline with oneself. Participant 6: “After a retreat, I’m full of good resolutions that I wish to keep doing, but it is difficult. That is why you go back to a retreat every once in a while.” This is connected to the type of life we’re having as participant 4 said:



"I'm not sure if it's realistic to expect of ourselves we can keep the same rhythm as at the destination, as we live in a world where there is not always space for that."

Going on such trip in another country, asks for adaptation. A bigger awareness changes a vision of the world, and vice versa. Participant 11: "Mostly, it is about how you perceive everything: perceiving the world, perceiving myself, looking inward, looking outward. I think this was the biggest aspect and the biggest change, the perception. It just feels like I can see life more in depth." Another participant mentioned this, after "getting more out of my own head." (P.8) seeing there is much more depth in existence- and in the body. The participants named changes of perspective on their current life such as participant 2: "To me, success was working academically... and now found out that I'm so much happier working with my hands. I navigated through the world with my mind, and forgot the fact I also have a body with knowledge." And P.4: "There is so much more to the body than we think." Participant 3: "Because of yoga trips, I have been able to see there are more layers of a human instead of only the outside, materialistic layer." Feeling more aligned with one's body, points at the interconnectivity. The magic of the body and how the emotional state is connected to movement. Moreover, there is not only the body, "it is like a puzzle: an union of the body, mind and so, in yoga, it is about the golden middle" (P.1) where the aspects support each other. People realise what they go through is a natural process, and universal, shared by many others in the community. "Yoga is a cohesive system, designed to all work together" (P.7), that can be named as: "non duality, it is the essence that you find out that everything is one" (P.8) or made for complementing, as "Everybody, literally very-body is different" (P.4). During the practice of yoga, you start to appreciate everyone's uniqueness and ability to show that without fear. According to participant 10, taking a step back once in a while, "definitely helps to be more aware of just living a healthy life, and yoga represents that."

A yoga trip seemed to offer participants a complete package- that brought together things they already knew (P.7, P.8, P.9 & P.11). Being more disciplined, get consistency and starting a process of becoming aware of who you are, coming from a place of self-care, personal work of reconstructing yourself. This comes along with deepening ones awareness, as the essence is happening inside. Being conscious of how you act, what are you curious about; what triggers you- and explore that. Truly listen to who is talking, letting go of expectations, being more relaxed and more understanding of other visions. Being less affected by emotions is an often named aspect, "I was a panicky person, but now there is a massive difference, if I look at it." (P.1) And helps to "cope with different personalities that I also encounter at work." (P.9)

The finding that participants tried to intertwine the new-learned skills in their current life, is pointing towards an experience. An experience can expand you and should reach further than only the moment itself. Participant 8: "A proper experience to me, is where you, even before you travel, while you're going there: the impact is has upon you, the changes that occur, and then wat happens after, what you take home from that, and even going on." Participant 5: "It was life changing on the moment and then after that." According to participant 5: "It was hard to go back, I was in a different state of mind" and "When I returned, people seemed stiff" (P.8). After being immersed within a community, where it could feel like a family, going back home has been perceived as coming back from another world. The reference has been made, "The world slowly became a fairy-tale." (P.8) and "It felt like living at Hogwards." (P.11). By a big part of the participants, their surroundings also saw they changed somewhat. In some cases, the participants felt like they confronted people at home with themselves having changed in behaviour or feeling. Trying to implement the learned skills, feeling more disciplined, and having more compassion or understanding to deal with life, resulted in habits such creating an own morning ritual (P.3, P.8); knowing you don't have to be perfect, but yourself; going more frequently to yoga classes; seeing own boundaries; being more appreciative of the body; feeling calmer and being able to communicate better with others. This would mean the participants indeed took aspects to take the healthy lifestyle (on all aspects) at the base of their lives, as much as possible.

## 5: Discussion

After having seen the results, this chapter will address and discuss some of the reoccurring themes and findings, by placing them in context with the previous research body (see Theoretical framework), and explore relations or possible contradictions in the gathered data.

Several findings seem to be the rulers of impact, for a transformation experience to be successful. Sheldon (2020) wrote about human connectivity, setting, self-inquiry and learning. As touched upon in the introduction, the human value shift towards engaging with the sustainability goals and an increased need for authenticity, self-actualization and culture in a world of global interconnectedness has been confirmed by several researchers (as cited in Gelter, 2010) and sought by participants as a way to reduce feelings of anxiety or stress, and finding purpose. Often, this came together with a search for existential authenticity (Wang, 1999) or as disorienting dilemma, as described by Mezirow (2000), Ross (2014), Robledo & Batle (2017) and Pung et al., (2020).

As acknowledged, the power lies in to be taken out of one's context, with an emphasis on connecting to- and being more aware of oneself, as Robledo and Batle (2017) stated. Going away from home, distracted from the usual, whilst connecting to yourself, has a bigger impact. One is taken out of their routine, rules and context whilst being surrounded by other people that have the same open-mindedness or desire to learn. Someone has the opportunity to go deeper than practicing yoga at home solely. The contrast of what is comfortable at home, to being challenged or taken out of their comfort zone at the destination, having to deal with foreign impulses, makes one "testing one's own limits, seeing suffering as part of physical cleansing" (Robledo, 2017) is what has been described by the participants. The 'feel-good pain' is what seems to make them grow. From the participants themselves, there was a difference in terms of location: geographically speaking, most preference went to a warmer destination, whereas for others, the location should not matter, as the change happens inside. One has to immerse in the location where they find themselves.

Mentioned in Reisinger's concept of Transformational tourism (2013; 2015), trips that have transformation as essence, contain a guidance whilst changing or transforming. The results show this is found helpful by the participants: mainly discipline, setting lines for a healthier life and getting necessary tools offered in one package, have helped them try breaking through patterns towards self-actualization and doing things they have not done before, leads to ways of discovering oneself.

One of the most striking findings, has been the importance of "a feeling of belonging" during the transformative experience of the yoga tourist. Even though it has been noted by researchers that "deep human connectivity", or referring back to the "contact hypothesis" of Amir (1969) has an influence upon the transformation, it wasn't expected this has such a big part of finding a purpose, especially as it is at odds with the personal journey within oneself. The community is usually automatically created by all people joining the yoga-related trip; whether that is an retreat, teacher training or vipassana. The encounter with the other in a yoga-related destination is essential, as "a person's orienting frames and habits of mind are questioned" (Reisinger, 2013). This has been recognized by respondents, saying the community is like a mirror, seeing other ways of living is perceived as inspiring, helps to shift the perception and therefore indeed "drives the transformational process" (Reisinger, 2013)- at least when the group formation is balanced. In addition, being in a community setting with more love, compassion, acceptance and tolerance, the feeling of 'a lack of purpose' seems to decrease as you can start to construct yourself with more awareness, in a way you want to. With yoga as communal factor, a space is created where one can be their vulnerable selves. Participant 2: "I've had this a few times in my life, where I could acknowledge one another, and yoga teacher trainings were part of that".

At the same time, the balance of this group is important. It has been noted by participant 1, 6 and 9, being at such destination with someone that has mental issues, can cause disharmony in the group formation and has an effect on the feelings of comfort of others. When coming with the

intention (psychological) problems will to disappear, it is an incorrect setting. “If you think a week at a yoga retreat is going to solve your problems, you are wrong.” (P.6) Such location can help support you in a way, but solving it, you have to do that yourself. It is you with you.

The feeling of purpose within a community goes back the timeline of human life. Participant 11 mentioned we’re tribal human beings. That leads back to the suggestion made by Peter Russel (2001), where “humanity is facing a crisis of consciousness”. Yoga makes one look inward, asks to fix yourself, step by step, as participant 8 put into words: “You can think of it as being a scientist of your mind, discover your consciousness.” However, connecting and having to deal with your body, can also be found in practices such as surfing, hiking or climbing. Stated by Sheldon (2020), what differentiates transformational travel from other travel types, is “the motivation for a deeper purpose of self-realization and self-exploration.” The similarity that yoga and transformation have, could be very much related to “seeking” (Iso-Ahola, 1997), that has been reflected by the participants and their urge to learn, willingness to be curious and discover (themselves) or something bigger than they believed in. “I think everything is kind of the same effect, but yoga as this spiritual, combating deep stuff, inside.” (P.5), which is what could differentiate yoga related travel from surfing or hiking. Being immersed in a place, self-inquiry is the factor that distinguishes yoga-holidays from other holidays as a surf camp. Yoga, is the journey into oneself that a traveler is taking, where the “external situations form a vehicle for the inner journey.” (Wang, 1999). Participant 7: “That everybody is going through the same thing, maybe in different directions, or on different levels, and it’s in the universalness of that struggle, that was very impactful.” Being together on a yoga-related destination, being vulnerable and open for learning creates cohesiveness.

Self-inquiry brings us to the next finding that was identified. As yoga acknowledges we are more than only a physical body, but including the mind, emotions, meaning, behavior, spirit, social relationships and interconnectedness with the environment (Camfield & Skevington, 2008; Diener, 1984). Being focused on yourself, it is suggested by Ponder and Holladay (2013) that “Yoga shifts mindsets and alters thoughts on health, while creating understanding that personal and social issues are related, which empowers change in existence.” That is why all these aspects need to be touched upon. Some of this scope are meditation, asana, living in a community, ayurvedic food and karma-yoga<sup>9</sup>. At a yoga trip, one is asking oneself the question: “Who am I?”. Brand (2022): “Eventually, it is about looking at the system as a whole.”, where participants agreed on universality, seeing that things are connected. Yoga is like a puzzle, forming small topics together to a whole. It is not only about asana, about eating healthy or understanding different stories. It is about all of it, together, the “golden middle” (P.1, P.3 & P.7). As participant 7 said: “It was more than just finding health or exercise, it was more than finding a new career. It was all of those things. It was about finding a path for me, forward, in a new world, in a new life... supporting a proper healthy lifestyle.”

This interrelatedness is closely together with social connectivity. “Because we’re living in a society, so it’s imperative to learn how to behave with people, how to let go, how to be more compassionate, how to just find your place in the world.” (P.11), which could lead to partly solving the issue our society is facing described by Russell (2001). Participant 7: “A lot of times, when we talk about transformation, I think people think of how to change the world, or change other people... we’ll have to do self-inquiry, so how do I fix me?”. Self-inquiry asks you to see what you do ‘wrong’, seeing how you can become better and thereby ends the blame which leads to greater responsibility of a person. In terms of yoga-tourists and their motives, the assumption made in the introduction of them being more aware of the world and therefore perhaps more caring, seems to fit. These taught skills will be taken home to implement in one’s own life. This is in line with Transformative Learning from Mezirow (1978), who defined it as “expansion of consciousness through the transformation of the worldview and specific capacities of the self.” The Transformative learning theory (1997), involves changes in perspective on the sense of life, the self and on different dimensions such as cognitive, emotional, bodily and

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<sup>9</sup> “An act of selflessness, where you learn you’re part of a whole.” P.8 For example, washing dishes, cleaning the floor or taking care of the garden.

unconscious. Where a transformational learning is a “perspective transformation”. This depth of perspective or change of perception and different aspects of change, is what has been recognized by everyone in another way. Looking at both personal sustainability and global-sustainability, designing for transformation can assist the tourism industry in realizing its potential to contribute to the wellbeing of all living beings and their conscious development (Sheldon, 2020). Especially the idea of self-reflection and taking more responsibility for one’s life- and other characteristics towards empathy and understanding are what participants agreed on. In previous research, it was said wellness travellers spend per trip, more than the average tourist, because they are willing to spend more on travel experience that supports their mental health & wellbeing (Global Wellness Institute, 2021). Seeing answers from participants, they do seem to be aware of the costs of a yoga-related trip and therefore consider a location carefully on specific factors (for example, less luxurious: no swimming pool as it does not add to the experience of yoga, it is more entertaining.). A question that can be asked, is, what is the carbon footprint of trips like these. Indeed, (yoga-related) tourists contribute to the local economy by entering terrain with their selves, eating healthy, and being planet-and people conscious. Though, how do they feel about taking planes for their own improvement?

In line with this, is the importance of personal experiences. “Tourism will have a power to lead society through the necessary reformation of tourism, as more travellers will be transformed.” (Ateljevic, 2011). Several participants do mention how they felt inspired after such trip, how they wanted to keep practicing the discipline, return to retreats to remind themselves of the good habits, or encourage other people to go to such destination, which is connected to Smiths’ (2013), integrating new perspectives, encouraging others too. Whereas in contrast to the importance of being together, it is seen powerful to going away from each other, spreading and applying the acquired knowledge. Reflection is part of this process, to share what one went through, contemplate with others. This is also where the ‘Erfahrung’ can be used, instead of the ‘Erlebnis’. “Erfahrung is a continuous process and has therefore meaning for life” (Snel, 2005). Participant 7 related the Erlebnis with an “artificial experience, that just does nothing for you”, and does not change the tourist in any way. “A proper experience is where you, even before you travel, while you’re going there, whilst you’re there: it has an impact upon you. The changes that occur... and then what happens after- what you take home from that, and even going on.” Comparing an artificial experience versus a true experience, the latter could explain the impact it will have. In the matter of how an experience has been viewed, “It can be with confrontations or specific situations where you will be BAM, shaken awake.” (P.8), which is an experience in the moment, or participant 3: “There is no clear point, there are moments where you get an insight and sometimes you can name them, sometimes not.” It has been explained as “An experience that you have in the moment that you experience it, but it stays present with you.” Or “After going on the yoga retreat or something, it always comes back. It’s kind of in the background and then you have realizations after.” (P. 11) An experience seems to enrich one’s life, gives a broader perspective and understanding of the world that you’re in. It is truly about the experience; when not having gone through such moment, it will be difficult to understand.

In the study done by Fu, Tanyatanaboon & Lehtob, (2015), the impact of yoga trips has been seen as major or “massive”, and therefore they become more permanent. The peak moment where Kirillova et al. (2017b) speak about, containing mixed emotions, heightened cognition and connecting to something grand, is recognized by the participants. It is mainly the intensity, the way of immersing oneself is what strengthens this development of transformation. With that, the theory of Kirillova (2017a), saying transformation can happen spontaneously during any type of trip, is still on the table. Assumed in the theoretical framework, transformation being both a motivator as an (un)expected outcome (Sheldon, 2020) is correct. It is dependent on the intensity of immersion, the split between differences of encounters and reflection on oneself that gives someone a genuine opportunity to transform.

## 6: Conclusion and recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusion

To find an answer around the main question: *“Which indicators of concepts from transformation contribute to facilitate the experience of yoga tourists?”*, 11 participants have taken part in depth interviews. Underneath, a conclusion of the three sub questions and the main question is presented.

*Sub question 1:* Which are key factors perceived by yoga tourists that contribute to a transformational experience?

Four main aspects can be mentioned as main contributors to the transformational experience. Firstly, the effect of the community, and all that comes with this: feelings of purpose, vulnerability, being real, understanding towards, being heard and creating and deepening perspective & perception. Having to share your space with others, forming strong connections, sharing things in common, spending time together and being really honest is seen as disarming. Usually, this is a space where people have the same mindset to learn and to work on themselves. Secondly the format of going abroad has been acknowledged as an effective way to have a spiritual experience: taking a moment for yourself, going back to basic and do things that bring you back to yourself. Confusion is an opening to a new and different reality. It is the moment in a phase where you let go of your previous reality, but have not fully assimilated the new reality as you are still in the learning process. This is most likely the case for yoga tourists. This goes hand in hand with community, where the yoga trips tend to go deep. Even though one doesn't have to go abroad for it to be a meaningful experience, it does deliver an extra layer by placing yourself deeper inside. Taking time off, to dive deeper into oneself seems to have been experienced as necessary and positively by the participants. Being completely immersed in a different reality, getting a disciplined style training challenges you and your own mind. External influences seem to bring that uncomfortable feeling further. Being away from home, away from distractions helps to be submerged within the experience and is therefore more effective. Different surroundings influence your thought patterns & behavior rewires your brain. Next, the contrast that going abroad brings with, brings about a culture shock, having to deal with these foreign impulses makes you have to deal with you, creating intense emotions. This follows up in changing ones vision on life, perspective or perception. Lastly, this all is created by the guidance, consistency and stability offered, whilst going through the path of building a healthier lifestyle and get to understanding of oneself, this all as a tool to deal with challenging situations back at home.

*Sub question 2:* What are the different motivations of yoga tourists when considering yoga tourism as a way of travel?

Next to a requirement to take part of this research, the state of mind of the interviewees truly is one of the motives to intentionally go for a yoga-related trip. The majority pointed at their desire to learn, go on discovery with themselves, and be out of their own bubble of life. Participants indicated to seek rather than to flee: whether that was personal related, existential related or yoga-skills related. The yoga-destination creates a space for people to be themselves, discover their inner world, life, body and wellbeing. Getting fired, moving, finishing an internship generates crossroads of asking the question, 'What do I want to do?', Whether if it is to overcome ones fears of depression or social anxiety; wanting to experiment and discover; become more flexible, understand the body better; re-identify oneself as yoga teacher: the yoga-related place is a safe container. Regardless of the motivation, a conclusion can be made where the root of the motivation lies in the current society and how to deal with that: the speed, the (work) pressure, expectations, the way we communicate with others, isolation and with that the search for a purpose or depth. Taking these trips to reconnect back-to what one wants, to people and their body, hoping to create more of that connection all around.

*Sub question 3: What are the inner transformation that yoga tourists recognize as an outcome of their journey?*

A transformation is triggered by the ability to experience, what you believe to be false or different. What covers all, is a shift of (deeper) perspective. This can be either in any direction of life. The inner changes acknowledged by the participants, as named in the theoretical framework as well, are psychological, behavioral, bodily and with emotional, of which some are temporary. Going back to one's own balance, finding personal authenticity and taking responsibility, without crossing one's own boundaries. A greater sense of feelings: whether that is sensations in the body, connections, love, compassion or understanding. The impact of emotions decreases, bodily awareness improves and doing things with greater ease, whilst being able to let go of certain external expectations. Yoga related trips show there are more layers to a person and life, than just the outer, materialistic layer. It teaches the participants how to practice yoga off the mat.

Answering the research question *"Which indicators of concepts from transformation contribute to facilitate the experience of yoga tourists?"* the comprehensive answer that can be given, is that the trips have their strength because of the union of all the above named steps.

With whichever intention you book your stay, going abroad helps to mentally shift your mindset instead of staying in the same location, where the traveler will be challenged by external factors. Being emerged in the experience without having distractions, makes one able to re-identify with oneself. Self-inquiry strengthens the confusion, as one will be confronted by themselves, unfamiliar people and new impulses in unknown situations. The community feeling that has been recognised at the yoga destination, seems to make the process of transformation even stronger. A community where commonalities in values, openminded-ness and thinking are acknowledged, brings up a sense of belonging, allowing everyone to be vulnerable and united. Though, the significance and meaning of the experience are defined by the tourist that has lived the experience.

When purchasing a yoga-holiday, people are buying more than a product. They are buying a lifestyle, a vision of themselves they want to reach through this product or service. Next to being united with other people, one will also be united with their own body and mind. It seems that, in the changing world, people become more aware of reaching towards living a healthy life, or in all speed try to find out what it is they really want, instead of getting caught up. Being at a yoga-related destination, the participants found a tied together package of the mental and philosophical part, plus directions towards good health.

## 6.2 Recommendations for practices

The impact of courteous relationships that are formed within a yoga community, came out strongest. When looking at the current society, this can be connected to searching for intimacy and realness. Our brains are evolutionary wired to seek relationships with ourselves and each other. Health, wellbeing and relationships are fundamentally important. Within health and wellbeing, a combination of mental and physical aspects are what yoga tourists search for. Yoga tourists tend to travel more in the *Erfarung*: travel to encounter themselves, in a way that cannot be discovered by being at home. They look for diving into confusion or confrontation, to intentionally provoke oneself and grow. With learning to open our heart and eyes, seeing people and the world through the lens of compassion, we can admit we all need and seek human interaction, and especially in the world where people are more dependent. We unconsciously try to control a restless energy within us, looking for ways to be loved take responsibility for our actions and how these influence the world we live in. Sharing deep experiences are gaining preference. This journey of self-discovery and actualisation is what more people start to feel appealed towards, and therefore the tourist industry, but also the daily life, should be designed towards this. That everyone, at home, or even deeper, when going abroad, can create this sustained shift in society.

### 6.3 Recommendations for future research in relation to limitations

In the current society, a true experience and individual transformation are becoming more significant factors in motivation of purchasing a tourism product. Yoga tourist do experience- and tourism can serve as a guide for, transformations. In order to stimulate this shift in the design and development of yoga tourism for it to grow towards the requested direction of transformative travel, it is needed to draw up the demand of the tourists. So that the tourism experience brings a holistic and sustainable meaning to life. By doing so, the necessary change of perspective can continue.

In this research, the connection with a community has been slightly touched upon, though it seems to be a valuable source for tourists to have a transformative experience. Therefore, when conducting future research, it is suggested to put this aspect within tourism more dominantly forward. Due to the limited amount of time for this research, at most 11 participants have been interviewed. They have provided a great base of information, though a suggestion is to strive for a bigger sample group. By setting up the previously mentioned focus groups, a safe space is recreated, to share ones experiences, which could be an addition to the in-depth interviews. Besides, upon reflection of the first interviews, the questions could be adjusted directly. On top of that, is to focus on a specific country as yoga travel destinations, instead of worldwide. This is dependent on the intention of the research. For example, interview questions can be more directed towards yoga in relation to travel and sustainability, to get clearer how these concepts of transformation can be utilized, in order to form a more powerful product development in a transformation economy within tourism practices. These interventions will give a comprehensive, but more specified scope of answers, which increases the studies' reliability.



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## 8: Appendices

### A: Operationalisation

Sub-question	Construct	Dimension	Sub-dimension	Indicators
Which are key factors perceived by yoga tourists that contribute to a transformational experience?	Motivators	Considering (before) intention.	Self reflection	Quality & discover-time with oneself
				Different context = different identity Who am I?
				Wanting discipline
			Disorienting dilemma, having to heal	Who am I?
				Enhancing mental wellbeing
				Controlling emotions: anxiety, social problems, doubts, thinking, lack of sleep or self-confidence
				Sense of direction, being attracted
				Releasing day-to-day life
			Desire to learn	About own body
				initiate deeper / better practice of yoga in total: 8 limbs
				About breathing
				Gain wisdom from teachers
			Feeling attracted by or to something bigger	Seeking spirituality
				Urge to be more aware of body
				“there is more”

What are the different motivations of yoga tourists when considering yoga tourism as a way of travel?	Key factors	Contribution to transformation (during) process  = likelihood to transform	Setting (environmental)	Different from home: sun, mountains, warm, rainforest...
				Unfamiliar environment, getting challenged
				Unstructured, being pushed
				Taken out of current bubble.
				Atmosphere
			Social contact	Community, like-minded
				Intimate, personal
				Feeling connected
				meaningful
				Sharing, having to be open, willing.
				No contact: silence
			Reflection, triggered. = conscious learning. Adds to meaning and significance.	Guides / teachers
				conversation
				Allow time to let knowledge sink
				Journal, writing
				Books
			Being Challenged	Other people: make you question your beliefs.
				Being pushed out of comfortzone
				Being open towards change
				Emotionally intense

What inner transformation do yoga tourists recognize as an outcome of their journey?	Recognized inner experience  Achievement reached, inner process.  = outcomes	Temporary. Consuming the product.	For pleasure, entertainment.	Materialistic
		Sustained shift, impactful > less reversible. Immaterial experience.  Sometimes unexpected.  = experience.	Psychological: change in understanding of oneself	Performance
				More emotionally capable, handling emotions
				Pushed out of comfort zone
				Going through challenging situations
				Characteristic (having more clarity, being more at peace)
				New perception
				Feeling more in sync.
			Convictional / cognitive: revision of belief systems	Values & beliefs replaced
				Getting a different view on life.
				Feeling magic, synchronicity
				Seeing interconnectedness: (How food, your body, your environment, people surrounded by have an effect on health.)
				See the unity
				Adding purpose & significance
				Not linear
			Behavior: change in lifestyle	Understanding mastery & control of our mental

				Being able to choose how to react
				More compassion
				Greater responsibility
				more conscious acting (ex. change eating pattern)
				More careful with other lively beings. = Ahimsa
				Seeing Love
			Bodily, physiologic	Better sleep
				Better focus & memory, improved concentration
				Less rusty, recognizing tension
				Silent knowledge: Following gut feeling. Unconscious learning
				More capable than expected
			Life changing in any aspect	
			Having a peak moment	Flow
				Synchronicity
				Intense emotions

## B: Empty Research Instrument

### 1. The interview checklist


- Send email with information about the themes that will be discussed, for interviewees to be in the right mindset before the interview.
- Preferred medium of calling is discussed; Microsoft Teams or ZOOM.
- Agreeing on language used: does the participant (in case of Dutch nationality) prefer to have the interview in Dutch, in order to communicate more easily or is it agreed to have the interview in English?
- Is it agreed to record the interview session, to be most present during the interview for the research?
- Estimated duration time of the interview is mentioned.

### 2. Social media message - Bodyline Newsletter:

#### Yoga-beoefenaars

Heb jij ooit een periode doorgebracht (minstens 2 weken) in een ander land met de actieve intentie om die weken je volledig te richten op yoga en mindfulness? Dan is Jolien Vinke op zoek naar jou! Zij studeert momenteel Tourism Management op de HZ en onderzoekt voor haar afstudeerscriptie yoga tourism. Ben of ken jij iemand met een interessant verhaal omtrent dit onderwerp? Neem gerust contact met haar op via [jolienvinke@kpnmail.nl](mailto:jolienvinke@kpnmail.nl)

### 3. Social media message - Bodyline Facebook:

**Bodyline healthcenter**  
12 november om 17:10 · 🌐

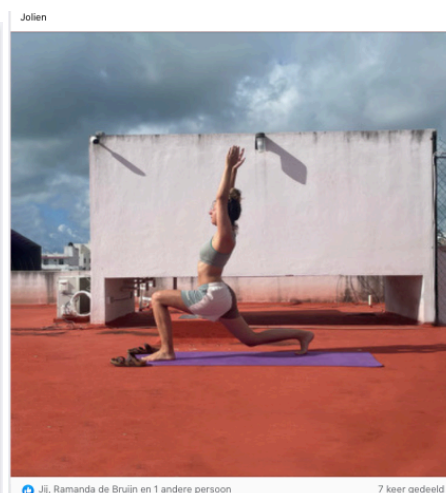
Hey yoga-beoefenaars bij Bodyline,  
Voor mijn studie 'Tourism Management' op de HZ in Vlissingen doe ik voor mijn afstudeerscriptie onderzoek naar yoga toerisme en de verandering die het creëert in de persoon: wat iemand motiveert om zo'n soort reis te ondernemen, hoe deze reis wordt ervaren en of/hoe een moment van innerlijke transformatie tot stand komt op verschillende manieren— en uiteindelijk hoe dit verbeterd zou kunnen worden.

Heb jij binnen de afgelopen 20 jaar eens-of vaker- minimaal 2 weken (in een ander land) doorgebracht met de actieve intentie om die weken aan yoga en mindfulness te richten, zoekend naar de fysieke en mentale voordelen?

(Denk hierbij aan een Yoga Teacher Training op een Ashram, rond een guru geleefd, yoga retreats of een stille retraite). Of ken je iemand die dit soort reizen maakt en de ervaring zou willen delen? Dan zou het veel voor me kunnen betekenen als we hier over in gesprek kunnen gaan ik je een aantal vragen mag stellen!

Laat van je horen door onder dit bericht je naam te vermelden, ik zal daarna contact met je opnemen.

Alvast hartstikke bedankt & met vriendelijke groeten,  
Jolien





#### 4. Social media message - LinkedIn Network:



**Jolien Vinke** • You  
Tourism Management Student at HZ University of Applied Sciences  
2w • 🌐

...

Dear Yoga Practitioners in my LinkedIn Network,

For my graduation thesis at the HZ in Vlissingen I am currently doing research on yoga tourism and the change it creates within the person: what motivates someone to undertake such a trip, how this trip is experienced and whether/how a moment of inner transformation comes about in different ways—and ultimately how it could be improved.

So, have you, in the past 20 years, once or more frequently spent at least 2 weeks (in another country) with the active intention of devoting those weeks to yoga and mindfulness, seeking the physical and mental benefits? Think of a Yoga Teacher Training at an Ashram, lived around a guru, yoga retreats or a silence retreat. Or do you know someone who makes these kinds of trips and would like to share the experience? Then it would be valuable to me if we can have a conversation about this!

In this case, mention your name under this message, I will contact you afterwards :)


Thank you very much & best regards,

Jolien  
4th years Tourism Management

 Jimmy van der Have and 3 others

1 comment

#### 5. Social media message - Facebook page Arhanta Yoga Graduates



**Jolien Vinke** is 🔍 op zoek naar een goed hart.  
5 november om 17:19 · 🌐

...

~Request "help" for bachelor thesis about Yoga Tourism ~


Dear Yoga Graduates,

In 2019, I have followed a 200hrs Yoga Teacher Training in India, whereafter I started my bachelor in Tourism Management in The Netherlands. Currently, I am in my last year, writing my thesis about yoga tourism: what motivates someone to undertake such a journey, how this journey is experienced and whether/how a moment of inner transformation comes about in different ways. After looking at aspirations of individual customers, the goal is to create better tourist services.

As this facebook page is one big group of people who have ever undertaken such journey, I hope to find some people who would be willing to have a conversation with me and share their experience.

So... in case you have spent -or even more frequent than once- at least two weeks (in another country) with the active intention of devoting those weeks to yoga & mindfulness, seeking the physical and mental benefits? (Think about a Yoga Teacher Training, living around a guru, yoga retreats or a silent retreat), then it would mean a lot to me if we could meet via an on-line interview call and share thoughts on this.

Please write your name underneath this post, and I will contact you!  
Thank you in advance  
Jolien

 2

3 opmerkingen

## 6. Process of the interview:

### Introduction

Good morning / afternoon ...*Name participant*...

Thank you very much for agreeing with me to take part of this interview today and make time to think with me about- and answer questions. Upfront, I would like to assure you the information given will be handled with care and privacy preferences in regards to the report will be asked at the end of the interview.

Before we start, I will give a short explanation of who I am and what the purpose of this interview is: my name is Jolien, I am currently studying Tourism Management at the HZ in Vlissingen in the Netherlands. From September on, I started writing my bachelor thesis about yoga tourism, with the aim to find indicators of transformation that tourists can experience when undergoing a yoga related trip. This by examine triggers the feelings of transformation and ones aspiration for such trips. The goal of the total research is to find out what is necessary to reach transformation and to get clear how such process takes place. Ultimately, findings could assist the (yoga) tourist industry to realize a better contribution to wellbeing and change within.

In 2019, I decided to follow a yoga teacher training course myself on an Ashram in India, after which I continued practicing yoga. With an interest in human psychology, yoga, and tourism, this topic came to life and I'm very curious to gain knowledge about the internal transformation that gets activated within yoga tourists. As you might have experienced yourself, going on a holiday challenges you mentally and takes you different places. It can broaden your sense of self. In the yoga tourism market it is still relatively unknown how the way products or services offered have an impact on the tourist transformation. To deepen within the needs of a yoga tourists, it can help yoga destinations to improve their offer. To get to this, the interview will cover several topics on your experience in the yoga destination, which are motivators, factors have a role and what is the recognized inner experience. The interview takes desirably in between 50 and 70 minutes, depending on how the conversation goes. Whenever there is a question you don't want to answer, or if you have a question yourself, feel free to let me know, and we can continue to the follow up question. Let's start!

### Questions

- Open-ended questions preferred
- Why, how, which, when, what..

- a. Basic information, can you introduce yourself
  1. Name
  2. Nationality
  3. Age
- b. You did undertook a yoga-related trip:
  1. Describe your general connection to yoga and travel.
  2. How frequent were you practicing yoga before you decided to go on a trip?
  3. To which country(-ies) did you go for your yoga-related trip?
- c. Reasoning or initial drive:
  1. Would you generally state whether you experienced a disorienting dilemma before leaving?  
If yes: what caused you to aspire to become someone / something different?
  2. Did you seek intentionally for existential authenticity, towards something bigger?

	<p>If yes: why did you believe you'd find it in a yoga-related trip, were you aware of the possible benefits (holistic approach)?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. As you might have wanted to change from one stage to another, what did you see as necessary skill that you wanted or expected to gain for your own future development? (Think about a certain attitude, performance or characteristic.)</li> <li>4. How was your time divided in terms education and entertainment?</li> </ol> <p>d. Describe:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1: social contact</li> <li>2: setting (environmental connectedness)</li> </ol> <p>&gt;&gt; what kind helps you to deepen it for yourself</p> <p>e. What did you learn about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Your emotional state;</li> <li>2. Your body;</li> <li>3. Your unconscious (dreams, thoughts);</li> </ol> <p>f. What did you consider as most mind-blowing discovery / disorienting dilemma / or shift in preconceived ideas, that made you question your own perspective?</p> <p>g. Were the trips either one of these, did they contain an emotional impact?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotionally intense</li> <li>2. Sensorially impressive</li> <li>3. Cognitively stimulating</li> </ol> <p>h. Which most essential values or beliefs have been replaced, and what does that show you on the bigger picture? -&gt; attaching a different meaning to your life.</p> <p>i. What are experiences you remember from this trip you have made:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did it have specific turning points, (letting go of old borders, discover new shapes of perspective), or did change happen more gradually?</li> </ol> <p>j. Can you pinpoint in which way your comfort zone has been stretched whilst your journey?</p> <p>k. What is transformation for you?</p>
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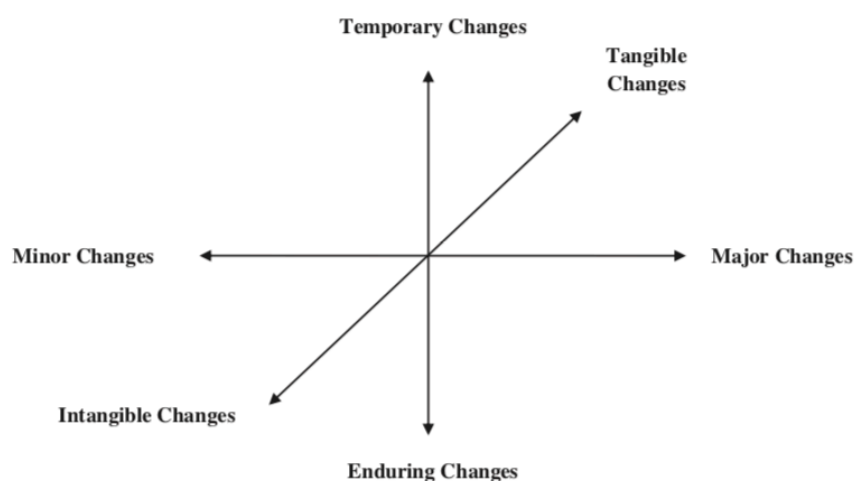
	<p>1. Do you think the interest in wellness / yoga tourism will increase over the years, and why would that be?</p> <p>Returning home:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In which manner have you reflected upon your journey afterwards: conversations, journals, blog, books...</li> <li>2. Which habit / skill changed during the journey, but you couldn't sustain it?</li> <li>3. Which habit / skills have been with you permanently after returning home?</li> </ol>
<b>Useful phrases</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To build on a comment</li> <li>➤ Get more clarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Could you give me an example?</li> <li>➤ Can you elaborate on this?</li> <li>➤ Would you explain that thought further?</li> <li>➤ Is there anything else?</li> <li>➤ What do you mean by...?</li> </ul>
<b>Closing components</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Comments</li> <li>➤ Further steps</li> <li>➤ Express gratitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Is there anything we didn't discuss that you want to add or something you want to emphasize?</li> <li>➤ Would you want to receive a copy of the report?</li> <li>➤ Asking for privacy preferences in report.</li> <li>➤ Thanking for their time.</li> </ul>

Table from: (Boyce & Neale, 2006)

### C: Spectra of changes

Figure as created by Fu, Tanyatanaboon & Letho

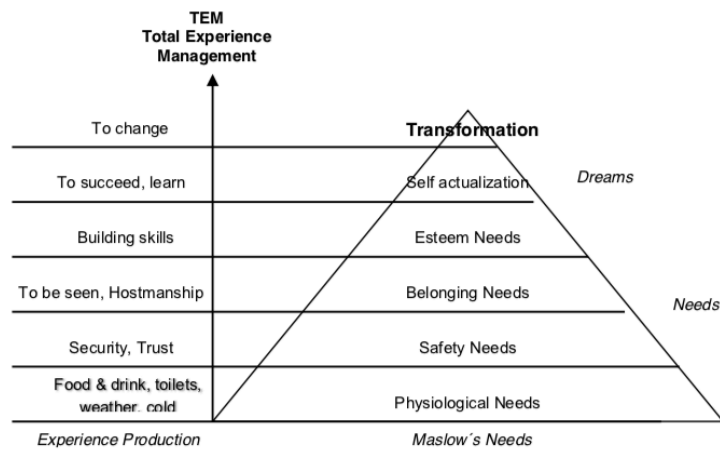
From: Conceptualizing transformative guest experience at retreat centers.



## D: Maslow's human needs pyramid

Figure as created by H. Gelter (2010).

From: Total Experience Management – a conceptual model for transformational experiences within tourism.



	Maslow's pyramid	TEM Total Experience Management (by Gelter)		
6	Self-actualization	Transformation	To change	Dreams
5	Aesthetic	Self-actualization	To succeed, learn	
	Cognitive			Needs
4	Esteem	Esteem	Building skills	
3	Belonging & love	Belonging & love	To be seen, hostmanship	
2	Safety	Safety	Security, trust	
1	Physiological	Physiological	Food, drink, toilets, weather, cold	

	Chakra	Meaning
7	Crown	Awareness, intelligence
6	Third eye	Intuition, imagination
5	Throat	Communication
4	Heart	Love, compassion
3	Solar plexus	Self-esteem, confidence
2	Sacral	Pleasure, creativity
1	Root	Stability, physical identity, grounding

Jain, R., Hauswirth-Jain, K. (2017)

E: Research questions, visualized table

<div> <div>Inside</div> <div>Outside / inside</div> </div>	Recognized inner experience	→	Achievement reached, <i>process</i>
	Key factors	→	Contribute to transformation (during) <i>process</i>
	Motivations	→	Considering, (before) <i>intention</i> .

## F: Transcribed interviews

### F.1: Transcript Asia Jokiel

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

A: Asia Jokiel (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: Let's start with basic information: what is your name, nationality and if you want to mention your age as well.

A: Yes, I am 35, my name is Asia Jokiel, the official shortened name in Poland for Joanna. Everyone calls me there Asia so I decided to use it. People sometimes think it is my spiritual name but it is my real name, nothing special.

J: for how long were you practicing yoga?

A: For like, ten years, we can easily say.

J: You practiced it also before your first yoga-related trip?

A: No, I didn't. Maybe one time somewhere but not for real, consistently.

J: When did you go to this yoga trip and in which country was that?

A: You know, I never really went with the idea: oh I'm going for the yoga trip. For me, I was practicing on my own, at home, and then in 2016 we went to Nepal, where I was joining the local classes like I always do, I like it. I found this local teacher in Pokhara in Nepal and I was going with him for a month in the morning, every day, we liked each other. It was an older guy who was in the end asking me "Hey Asia, why don't you start giving yoga classes in the Netherlands", and I was like 'oh wauw what an idea' and it just puts a seed in my mind. I came home, and I signed up for the Arhanta Training afterwards. The first for example, the first meditation class I really had in India. It was in the Ashram of Amma, in Kerala. But, I did not know either who Amma was back then; I was just traveling in India, and I met these people that were going to this ashram, and they were like "You have to see, this is Amma, she is not travelling" and I was curious so I went there, spend there two weeks, had my first meditation class, and probably my first yoga class in a setting like this, so I can not say it did not influence me in such way because I became interested very much. But it was not planned, it all just happened.

J: Special you went to Amma's ashram without knowing who she is! I read on her and looked at her ashram as well. And she travels quite often so she's not there often.

A: No! It was very special because Amma was there, the whole vibe, it was amazing. She is sometimes in Utrecht as well.

J: When you started to follow those classes more regularly, was there something you were hoping for that would have an influence on the way you behave and the way you are, or were you just thinking "I'm going to class, that's it."

A: For me it was very utilitarian because I had a massive backpain like many people, and I just noticed that this was helping me very much, the movement, it progressed into the deeper practice let's say.

But ja, it is like, **these kind of spiritual practice where you are deepening your awareness, you can really find in many fields. I have been doing a lot of those things for a long time without really knowing what I am doing, you know?** And now when I've started practicing yoga I was like woow, you know, **I've been involved in these kind of practices for a really long time but never really naming it.** I can give you an example: When I was at university and at high school, I was following all sorts of physical workshops, just for the body, we would move a lot, get into these stages that you stop thinking and allow your body to react, these physical training. Where I would go for the special trainings of singing like the very role form of singing that we have in the eastern Europe, you know where again **you put yourself through the physical training and then when you are like tired so much from the asana practice you are just so tired from all these movements and so that you stop thinking** and you start singing you know? If you think about it, it is completely the same mechanism you know? So then when I started to practice yoga I've noticed 'wow this is again the same' you know? And then I stick to it, just like that hmm. So yeah it was just like something that I could do on my own, that was really important because like, I would go to the classes ,but not very often. I preferred so much more to do it just on my own in a house. I like being alone and I absolutely hate group activities, as for example group sports you know, like running together or something, I don't like it. So I was always searching for the ways that I can just practice and be on my own like that.

J: It's funny because I prefer sometimes to be more in a group uh because then you have the really feeling of all we're all doing yoga all together.

A: I like when the teachers are how you say, giving the adjustments you know, because I can't do it myself. So I have my favorite people here that I know that they can do it well and then I go once a while just to notice you know something but yeah for the rest I really prefer to be on my own.

J: OK so you did not really have a super clear initial drive, except from the back pain, that your progress went more organic.

A: It went very organically you know just forwards like the back pain got better, and then I was like "oh I **feel so much calmer and much nicer or let's do it further**". I start to realize you know that this is **not really the asana only**. Then I started to do some meditation and some pranayama, you know and it's like just gradually it moved, but I would not say that going to India per se pushed me. I think it is all like a puzzles you know, little things that are coming together, helping you to make certain decisions. It was not that I went to India and then "Oh my God I am in love with yoga and now I'm..." absolutely not.

J: At some point you did also go to Arhanta then yeah right?

A: yeah yeah in 2017 for the first time because I did later these 300 hours with them as well couple years ago, but then in the Netherlands.

J: When you went to Nepal and India and some more, or the ashram from Amma for example, did you then engage a lot with the other people or were you also more on yourself alone there?

A: No like, like in these kind of ashrams, you are never alone. There are usually so many people, you are never granted like your own room, so you have to **share your space with others**. This is another thing that I could never be in the ashram longer than a month, I even noticed it at Atlanta these those two times and then recently I was doing this meditation training. I don't mind, like being in a group, but after a month in action like these being surrendered like I'm starting you know to be like "Oh my God I just want to have some peace and quiet" but yeah these ashrams in India they are so insanely



busy. In this ashram of Amma, back then, it was a long time ago 3000 people living permanently. **That's eating together, washing together, singing together, all the time together.** This is really not for me.

J: In terms of setting did you have preference for um, how the surroundings look like what does make you feel comfortable?

A: um the surroundings, I will be honest completely honest, um I if I can choose, just the abstract situation, I prefer to practice yoga in the **Netherlands then in India, because the weather here is better.** I travel a lot I've spent in Asia probably if I counted it all together maybe 2-3 years of my life, but I mean practicing yoga asana when there is like so **\*\*\*\*\* hot and you are constantly sweating, there is no air condition** or anything like this. I mean it is nice, because you can stretch better when it's really hot but in general I'm not a big fan. I That's why for example the second training with Atlanta I did in the Netherlands, because it's so much better, for me at least, in the terms of weather. **It's easier to breathe, we have so much better air here than in India.** I'm not talking about smoke, just the humidity. Now with this weather, you go outside, you take a deep breath in: you can feel your lungs: you can feel the shape of your lungs. And there it's like *\*inhales sharply and tiring\** like that all the time. For me this is **just purely based on the weather,** I would totally prefer to do it here. Of course, if it's **beautiful and by the ocean, it is like this romantic idea,** but if we really talk about the serious practice, I would always choose Europe.

J: And did the idea of, because now to me it sounds to me when you're in warmer weather you have to challenge yourself more to practice it, did you also feel it like that or not necessarily? Because OK you're breathing is a bit more heavy but did you also experience "oh but I can actually do this".

A: Yes I can do this, it is just like it's not as pleasurable. Like my latest experience for example we were in Nepal in June: I joined this 10 days in Vipassana. So this is like a purely meditation 12 hours a day. We were in the jungle, like really this place was in the jungle and it was the middle of the raining season. When you practice vipassana you cannot have any sensations coming to you from the outside, which means, you sit in the meditation hall: there is no airco, there are no ventilator on. We don't put them on, because you don't want to have the wind blowing on you and it **was really heavy experience, because you sit there and you sweat.** It's just like you can feel these water running through your body, like everywhere. You get up after two hours seating, for example, everything's wet all your clothes, then you go to your room and everything is wet. I had a fungus on my backpack like God dammit, you know it's not like mushrooms. Just, it was **amazing and wonderful and I will do vipassana again,** but looking for my own comfort I'm gonna do it in the Netherlands if they're going to have a place for me, serious. I travel a lot really a lot, I have now been 7 months in Asia and I really love it. I'm just telling you that if I could choose the next time-- like I it's not even about the preferences, I'm just telling you what I find better. But obviously I'm just going to do what comes my way like this.

J: When I hear it, I think: "oh OK, but it's also a bit the goal of such vipassana that you have to go through things in your mind that you didn't expect or didn't know you have to go through or something. So that in a way, if sweat is running and everything then you think "OK, OK this is it, this is the ultimate."

A: When you practice vipassana, the biggest enemy in there, it is the **pain that you are in. Physical pain: pain in your legs, pain your hips, pain in your back, pain in your neck. I have never been so much in pain in my entire life, just from this sitting, believe me. This is so overwhelming,** that if you can provide yourself a little bit nicer weather around, why not? Because **the essence is happening inside.** Because you are like so overwhelmed with the physical painful sensations in your body, that you don't really think about these weather anymore. I'm just thinking about my own comfort, that if I wash my clothes, I hang them, I want to have them dry the next day- and not four days later. Just like

this. But it only in the terms of the practice- because if you are just going on vacation and reading books and lying in a hammock it doesn't really matter.

J: Then for example with the vipassana, the two did you have the idea that afterwards you look different to your own body or not necessarily?

A: I knew that it would be heavy because I know a lot of yoga teachers and here in Amersfoort a lot of people did vipassana. You always hear that this is an extremely heavy experience. The thing is that the vipassana centers are all over the world, everywhere. Like Netherlands we have it in Almere for example, in Poland they have two: in every single country. The only difference is that here, these courses are free. **People jump on it like on a rock concert**, so I tried multiple times but I never got a spot. And then you go to Nepal and there is a place like this in every major city. I had this idea "oh I'm gonna do vipassana", I click the button, and two weeks later I could join the course. **It was just super easy, this is why I chose to do it there.** I did not do it on a preference that, oh I wanna be in Nepal or something, I chose the place where they had a spot for me. **For me, it's about the practice yeah, it's not really about the place.** I know that maybe it's not really in line with your research, because if you go on these like retreats, I know many teachers as well who **organize retreats in a place like Thailand or India or here and there. This is all super nice, but you know it is very attractive, when maybe you are a little bit like a beginner or something. Because with time you just realize that it really doesn't matter you know if you do it there or here, it really doesn't.**

J: Or it shouldn't maybe. A bit more general it can be about vipassana or during some yoga training but did you learn or what did you learn about your own emotions or your own internal way of thinking that you for example come across some moment to do that "oh this is this is my way of thinking apparently"?

A: When I went to this deep vipassana, it was like... just to be clear, because there are different vipassana paths. I went for the training, that was prepared by the most famous vipassana teacher. It's very secular, it's like, not bind with any religion and very often during these course they make it very clear that this is a non religious thing. I just went there and everything there was aligned exactly with the way how I think about the world and about whatever God. It was just like I went there and I was like "Oh my God, it's like as my own thoughts somebody just put on a plate". I'm telling you it was so incredible, that **was the first time when actually meditation practice resonated with me so much. I got so into my own bubble**, into deep inside that, honestly for the first time in my life, I truly understood what the meditation is about. Nobody could ever explain it to me so well, and show it to me so well. I think it had to do with the fact that it was really 10 days **completely cut off from life**, that there was absolutely **no distraction and I loved it**, I loved it so much I'm gonna do it again. There were so many people that were for like a tenth time you know or 15th time, just keep going, it was insane. There were a lot of people who left in the middle of the course. I did not know who, because we were not even looking at each other, but in a meditation hall I could just see that there are empty places every day. People could not stand **these tremendous physical discomfort**, you know, **because that's it: you learn to work with pain, and at some point, if you allow yourself to sort of accept the fact that you are in pain, the pain is not the pain anymore.** Pain is the concept, right, so if you just allow yourself to feel it without putting any emotion around it, it is just there. And if it's just there, like who cares? **For me this is the realization of my life, really. And vipassana is amazing, because besides of the pain, which is like terrible, there are very pleasant moments**, you know and you just feel completely relaxed and you can feel **like the energy streaming through the body.** The whole point of vipassana is to learn, not to reject the pain nor to wait for the pleasure, **just to stay in a perfect center. The perfect middle, without wanting or rejecting.** And, it really works, like it really works! It takes some time, at the beginning I **was crying every evening**, "Oh my God, Asia, what are you doing?! Go home, why are you torturing yourself so much?" but then, I don't remember, it was maybe day six or

seven, it's like something clicked. I was like when these ten days finished, I wanna stay for another 10 days, it was really incredible. If you can ever have a chance to try it, and if you're interested, just do it and see if it's for you. Because it's not for everybody yet, but I went there with like these mindset: "OK this is my challenge, you know, like concur and defeat." A lot of things changed, and even my husband later he was like "oh Asia", I take a **lot of things with more ease, like with the less edge**. So instead of when you have a sharp corners they are not so sharp anymore. It's like more round, that **it's easier to stop yourself from falling into these lines of thinking**. It sounds abstract, but in these vipassana you actually are experiencing it. And...amazing, amazing. You know what is the most amazing about this, is that when we practice yoga, and like even in Arhanta when they are teaching us meditation, there is always external object to focus your attention to. Either it's the candle flag, or your breath, or is it some counting or so. In vipassana they teach you, don't **put your attention on any external objects: you just sit and you feel your body**. That's it. And it is really difficult, because there is no anchor to hook your attention to, so it takes really few days before you can even get used to the idea that that's possible. But this is **so freeing** and in my opinion it works just so much better.

J: did you feel timeless in a way, because at some point you don't know anymore what time it is maybe and stuff like that?

A: It's not even that you don't know, I mean maybe I did not go into such deep states of meditation, but it's more like it doesn't matter. It's like this, you just don't give a \*\*\*\* and you just sit there. It's like the most interesting part is that you sit there and there are all kinds of things coming to your head, right? Like all sorts of thoughts of course, and like cases that you are always busy with, and then you learn to like, just let it go. And then you let it go one time, two times, three times-- and then they don't come back anymore. And even if they come back later normal life, there is **no emotional reaction to it anymore**.

J: And how do you then let it go, is it just by breathing or what was your way to let go?

A: You just sit and you don't reject nor welcome. it is like yeah, like do you know like the teachings of Buddha about the meditation? Because vipassana apparently like, from what they told us, is in Direct Line of teaching from Buddha, that was never changed. That's why there is no mention about God, about anything else. When they say that when Buddha was sitting under this tree, that he realized, that what is the source of our suffering, is the fact that we are rejecting what we don't want, and we are craving what we want. So when we don't get what we want, we suffer and when we get some pain that we don't want, then we suffer as well, right. So for him, the realization of everything, was the fact that you can sit, that you can be completely free from it. There is like, the second part of this teachings that maybe requires a little bit of the belief that, right we are all gathering karma over life. Or this Samskara right, like these pieces of karma they are stuck to you, right? And when you meditate, you are able to let this karma go. Karma goes from the fact that you are rejecting things or craving things as well. So if you just allow yourself to withstand the pain, or withstand the pleasure of the streaming energy, you just don't react and when you don't react, **you are teaching your mind to don't react on other things**. Does it make sense to you or not? Because, look, our mind always works the same way. If you come across the situation you don't like, you always react the same. Even if there are some detailed changes, it's always the same. At the same time, if you come towards something that you really like, that enjoy, you always react the same. It is just the patterns in your brain, as in a road of mud and a car going into the tire-size shaped road. It is exactly how conditioning works, so when you learn not to react and not fall automatically into these lines, it's like they are being covered with sand so you are not falling every time again. It's easier to get out and search for the different thing. But you learn these just by sitting. It is abstract, I'm telling you, I **would never think that this makes sense**.

J: that what you just described about reacting differently, is that also what your husband then for example mentioned about you: that a lot has changed? Or is that one of the parts that changed?

A: Yeah, there are like certain things, not everything obviously, but because this is a work. Like **after these ten days you are expected to do this every day, for an hour or two**. When you sit in this meditation like all kinds of thoughts are coming to your mind you know? Let's say I had some family troubles with my parents, and every time I was thinking about it, I was feeling sad, when I thought about the situation I was falling instantly into one of these pathways, you know. And then I would sit with these this vipassana and I would meditate and then I would get these thoughts again. I could instantly feel that I want to, let's say cry yes? But I... kind of let it go one time, second time, third time- and now, when I think about it: well it all happened, but it **does not bring any emotional reaction**. It's a fact. You just- it is there yes, like, you don't reject it, you don't crave it, it is just there. It's OK, it happened, like this sucks, but it's not like it doesn't bring emotional reaction. They say that the more you meditate, the deeper you go into your memories, deeper you go into all these layers you know. Step by step you are being **able to release** all this stuff. Once you release it all completely, then you start releasing the stuff from the previous life. And when you release that completely, then you are free of karma.

J: As you mentioned, did you keep up with practicing it every day?

A: No, no. I do it, but not every day, yeah.

J: Because that's also one of the like factors of the transformation that they say is that, you're supposed to go home and take it with you and then practice it at home. So in which way do you practice it? How did you reflect upon it: did it happen during the travel, or did you go home and then for example write or talk to other people about it?

A: Jaaa, I **talked a lot**, like a lot. I was sharing these instantly, like everything, because after those 10 days I could not speak and I actually really enjoyed it: not speaking, because I tend to talk too much. I thought it was like a huge challenge, but actually I really enjoyed it, but then once I got out from there I did not shut up, you know, it was like a freaking waterfall just coming out. I am with you very honest and I tell you this stuff in detail, because you're gonna use it or something. But to, just the people who ask me how the vipassana was I don't say all these things. I just say that it was amazing, that it was really hard, but I don't share details.

J: Why not?

A: Because, let's say somebody decides to do this, and people go there with expectations of stuff that is 'gonna happen to them maybe', and if it doesn't happen to them then they're gonna be disappointed or something.

J: I see, though that is also their thing, because they had an expectation.

A: Yeah, yeah, but even at the beginning you know before you start the course they ask you certain questions and one of these questions is: do you have any expectations from this course? There are coming a lot of people who heard all how amazing it is, and that you can help yourself so much and everything. **People with some mental issues are coming or with the diet and stuff, and honestly, this is not for people with the mental issues.**

J: No it's probably too.. I think it's too much for them, if you have deep mental issues you maybe should go to psychologist first.

A: I really think so, that you have to feel very... yeah grounded. I would say you know, or at least not anxious, because otherwise you will drown in in yourself probably and then leave at day three or something like that. And there were people, like a lot of people come there with the expectations: there was this one guy and... people coming really with their expectations that something is gonna happen, you know, like that they're gonna get enlightened or they're going to discover \*\*\*\* or whatever. But it doesn't really work like this you know. So I can imagine that somebody is getting impatient, three days you sit, you're tired, nothing is coming up. People are used to different meditation. People are used to gurus who are jumping on and doing weird stuff, but **this is really you with you**. There is like, even the teacher he's not doing anything. All the instructions, they come from the tape, because this teacher, Goenka is already dead, and they don't want the teachings to be changed in any way. It has to be pure Buddha teaching. So even when you get the teacher, like he's just sitting there little bit higher platform and he looks at everybody. Once a day he's calling everyone and he asks you a couple of questions: what is your experience, and based on what you answered he gives you a little one sentence advice. What you do with this advice, it's up to you. It's very straightforward, you know, but these advices are like: yes don't think too much; don't focus on your pain; go and sit. This is it. **So it is purely your own let's say, fight with yourself**. And if somebody is not ready for it- I didn't know that it would be like this either. I was very surprised, but yeah I told you, I took it as a challenge, like OK let's do it.

J: What did you answer on the expectation question, what was yours?

A: There was no expectation, I went totally like for an experiment just to see what's gonna happen. Yeah like totally open you know. Because I practice meditation for really long time and it never worked for me like this. So I was just hoping that I'm gonna just learn the new form of meditation that maybe will resonate with me better and it did. Just because it was so simple, you know, that there was no religion involved in it: no devotion, no mantras, no chakras. It's like, I appreciate all these things as that philosophical concept, but I don't believe in this stuff. The concept of chakra, for example, for me at least. So being placed in a meditation setup where nobody tells me that I have to believe something, it was really an freeing experience. Just really showing what the meditation truly is. Without big words, without candles and incense... I enjoy all this stuff like, it's just nice, but it is a romantic idea you know to me at least.

J: I'm just trying to connected to some of my questions... There is this model um I was talking about education, entertainment, escape and that it looks nice. I don't know how to pronounce with Etheticism. So if I would now look at those words then for you it's OK to be, is it understood correctly that it's OK to be kind of sober for you, your environment doesn't need to have all-

A: Yeah for me it doesn't have to, like I find all those things that you name, or candles, buddha's ect, very pretty and cute, completely unnecessary and a little bit pretentious.

J: Haha, yeah clear. Oh, and did in any of those moments did did your unconscious also—

A: Wait a second, someone is trying to call me ---

J: Okay so what I wanted to ask, do you remember you're unconscious, because I was also curious about your unconscious influences. Small example, in I remember that when I was in the yoga ashram, at some point I started to dream about Oreo cookies. At least that you're unconscious also yeah have an influence on you in a way did it that your dreams or your thoughts did they... Because your thought patterns did change after a while.

A: Yeah, I can tell you about this vipassana experience because it is really incredible. When you practice this meditation, you are like what I tell you, you try not to focus on the external, but **you feel your body**. You try to feel your body, just step by step, making the very deep connection to every part. It almost feels like the body scan, you know, like you would do in a yoga nidra or whatever. But, without naming the body parts in your head.

J: Ah, so you feel, you focus on senses more than that you say “now to the shoulder”

A: Yeah, of course at the beginning you just you know follow like sort of the body scan, but at some point you just focus on your own body that's it. And what happened to me there, like from maybe day six or seven, I was waking up at night and my unconscious was scanning my body nonstop like non-stop going on and on and on. Then I went to the teacher and I told him, and he said that this is completely normal, that just means that you are really deeply into the work let's say. But then they had these methods as well that the **beds, were very uncomfortable**, so that it was almost impossible to fall into these very deep sleep, you would always stay within these dream sleep. I think, I don't know, but I expect that this is part of the method, you know, just to keep your unconscious going. So that this cleansing process of your mind, even when you don't meditate, it's still is on. Because everyone said that this is completely normal. When I was at Arhanta, like in the ashram, I was craving food so much, my God. But it's because we were moving so much, at least in the Netherlands we were hungry all the time. It was it was pretty cold as well, so we were constantly like hungry. **Not being able to eat as much as we want**, because then you have to practice asanas and then you don't want to be so full. But with vipassana, because you don't move, you hardly burn any calories. You can just eat a little bit, so then the food is not so important anymore.

J: Hmm yeah. So how would you say that your emotional state changed?

A: **Better, like Oh my God. I am like a very panicky person** you know, it's like I get into this moods like “My god, the world is ending” and “How I'm gonna make it” and I always have a feeling that I get no help from anybody, and that everything is on my head, you know like this. Yeah it really helped me, to don't let down. Of course these keep coming back and you have to keep practicing, so that stays like this. But it's massive difference, **massive difference, like myself if I look at it**. I can keep myself... **I am less affected by extreme emotions so much less affected**. But maybe this is all as well worth mentioning, that now when there was a pandemic, I had a lot of free time. I invested some money in the proper psychotherapy, because I was just really interested in how would it work with me. I finished that in December last year, and then I did vipassana in June. So I came to the vipassana with very clear idea about myself, when everything was placed in a good order. I knew exactly what I have to work with, like this, you know. I was very, very aware of my issues.

J: Yeah exactly, I see, then you sorted it already out a bit with someone else.

A: It's actually you know, even when I started that psycho therapy, I was already aware of everything. That's why I started it. So for me it was just, like, a sort of a consultation with a professional, to see my ideas are good and so on. She would help me put it everything in place. I went to the vipassana already with the pure idea there's maybe something going on with me, or maybe not, and just like that. There were no surprises. You know, when you have some issue, you have to “talk it through” with the therapist or you have to “**work it through**” so for me on that psychotherapy, I didn't really work it through. For me, the working through part happened during the vipassana. So it **was massive emotional** too.

J: Did you experience also a thought shift, in preconceived ideas that you had, and that now are different? It can be in the vipassana, but can also be at the ashram surrounded with other people, or in Nepal. That you had ideas about yourself, or about the world or about other people?

A: Yeah for sure. I'm thinking about some example, but nothing comes to my mind. But for sure, you know, I am very strong minded and I have opinions about everything. For me it's really important to remember that I don't have to have an opinion about everything. And I think it's like in this way more. That I just don't have so much need to say, every time, what I think about something. You know like that.

J: Was there another mind-blowing discovery that we didn't talk about that you really felt like whoa OK so this is big.

A: I am so much under the influence of this vipassana training, so everything is naturally connected to it because it was the last thing that I did. So it was all going on, with every day let's say, this awareness was getting deeper. It was easier to meditate, and then I think on a day nine, so almost by the end, they told us that "now exactly the same awareness that you put into your meditation, you have to put into that everything that you do that day". We didn't do so much, but you'd have to walk to the eating hall, you would have to get your lunch, you would have to eat it, you know, brush your teeth. I don't you know, these kind of things and then just to put the maximum awareness into what you are doing. So the same would just really feel your body, as you sit and meditate, then you really wanna feel what happens the pure physical sensations when you chew your food for example, or when you place your foot on the ground. My God, it was incredible. I still remember we went out from this meditation hall after we got the instructions. It was already 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and I remember I was walking and I was looking around, like really paying attention, and everything was so vivid. Like all the colors, like everything as if I had seen it for the first time. Or when I was eating food - we were getting almost the same every day, it's like normal Nepali foods, like Indian food. Very nice, but Nepal is a lot poorer even than India, so it's like you eat basically the same everyday. I was eating it, and it was like a completely different experience. I still remember, it never happened to me: before or after. **Just full awareness of your activities.** This is the thing that came to my mind then that Ram was always telling this story about that there was a king and he was an enlightened. And nobody could believe that, how the rich king be enlightened? So there were like all sorts of monks coming to the palace, just to test him. There was one monk, like a very ascetical type coming to the palace. He was looking at the king, who was eating, and looking at the naked dancers dancing, and like: how can this person be enlightened? Then the king said to him: OK monk, thank you very much for visiting me. Tomorrow I will send you on a little trip around the kingdom so that you can see everything we have here. But, you're going to take with you a glass, filled up with oil. And if you spill, even one drop of oil, We're going to cut your head off. The next day, the monk went on the trip, and he was constantly looking at this oil, hardly enjoying anything around, because his full attention was on the oil. Then when he came back to the palace, the king was like: oh how did you enjoy your trip? And he said, well I didn't really enjoy it because I looked at my oil all the time. And the king said "yes, this is how I'm looking at myself, you know. I'm don't give a \*\*\*\* what is around me, because my focus is all the time in. You understand the connotation? This is the story that came to my mind after on that day nine, when we got out, and I was like wow. **Probably this is how it feels when you're full awareness,** is really into every activity that you are doing. This is the same what Ram always was saying, that I could never comprehend it. He said that washing the dishes could be a form of meditation. And I was like "how?", well, this is how. It happened to me chewing food: it can be a form of meditation. This is something that I understood for the first time. As well as, these big meditation teachers, they say that meditation is not a verb, it's not an activity, it is a state. So saying "oh I'm going to meditate" it's stupid, we should not be saying this. Because, you understand the difference? It's not a verb, it's not the activity, it is a state. So you are either meditating, or you are not. If you are in a meditation, you can be washing your dishes,

walking around, doing your food, and you are still meditating. You don't have to sit in a Lotus, you really don't. As long as you only think about what you are doing at the moment, **really focusing on the physical sensations. Because that's about it, you know, really the feeling. That was my discovery.**

J: A good discovery, it seems. Was there also somewhere in one of those trips, that it made you question your own perspective? So for example your view on Indians, or just this is more now toward your view on other people.

A: Yeah for sure, for sure. You know, it's like... My first travel out of Europe, on my own was to India. I was 20 years old, I've never seen different world, like yeah I've been to Spain maybe, but it was a cultural shock. I can adjust myself really well, very quickly. **But I mean, if you see different world, like we're the first time you have to adjust everything no? Absolutely everything.**

J: So in that sense, what- or which values or beliefs have you replaced, changed. Can you name a few?

A: What comes to my mind right now is the fact that I still remember, a while ago when I was younger and so, like when I was thinking about the Asia, before I started to go there regularly, I was always thinking that this is like uh an exotic country. This is some exotic part, you know like Far East or whatever, but it's really wrong. This is very European centric, you know, and it just takes a moment to get used to the idea that this is not exotic. **This is just normal, just not normal maybe for us.** You know what I mean? That was one of the first things. Just to stop thinking it's something exotic, it's not exotic, it's normal. It's just... we are not used to it. Maybe it's just they influence, like too many stupid TV series like CSI or criminal. Because people are in general nice, there is only a little percentage that is a bit off.

J: OK oh and through all of those experiences, have you have you attached to different meaning to your life or a different purpose, as in did it change your way of looking at life itself? It is a very big question, but maybe you have an answer.

A: Well I don't know. I know for a fact that if I didn't go to Nepal, if I didn't meet that yoga teacher there, that would just give me an idea that I could give the yoga classes on my own, probably I would not get that idea. It made me realize that I like that I like teaching. For me it doesn't really matter what I'm teaching, it doesn't have to be yoga per se. I just like teaching people, this is my skill and I did not know this. Since that teacher then in Nepal mentioned it, I gave it a try, and I was like "oh this is what I actually really like", and then I started to teach a lot of fellow students at school, give them like an extra help if they could not do this or that, and then I just arrived at the place. **I don't what to do with my life, but I like being a teacher, so let's go in this direction.**

J: And in terms of and in terms of skills, teaching is in one skill, but do you feel like you dropped and gained a few skills? If yes then which ones?

A: No, I did not drop anything, I think no. I gained the new ones for sure. For me when I give yoga classes the most important thing is to be able to explain difficult concepts. I mean the philosophy of yoga is super difficult sometimes, and like to put it in simple terms. If I am not able to explain it so that the other person and understands, it means that I don't understand that myself. This is how I check myself as well, if I am able to talk about something in super simple terms, just straightforward, that means I understand. but if I can't, it means that I have to think about it more, it's not clear in my own head.

J: We already talked about this a bit, did you experience specific turning points for example letting go of old borders or discover new shapes of perspective but I think we already touched upon that.



A: Yeah, it happened in vipassana, it did not happen in the yoga classes, just to make clear, **that yoga is a wonderful tool that deepens and awareness and everything but it never resonated with me as much as this vipassana really.** It's like, in a base this is all the same, really it's all the same about idea like unity of body and mind and so.

J: then I had another question can you pinpoint in which way your comfort zone has been stretched the most, but that that was then maybe going through the pain as comfort zone.

A: When that is the stretch the most... For me always, I am by nature a perfectionist and I always think that I have to be the best in everything, because otherwise it means that I'm not doing enough. Through the yoga practice and vipassana as well but through the yoga practice mainly, **I have learned that I don't have to be perfect** which makes my life a lot easier honestly. You can always see it in your practice no? That one day is awesome, and you can do everything, and the other day nothing works. This is just pure acceptance, like for me like probably the most important.

J: And in general, how do you feel returning at home?

A: I am the same person, I'm just more aware. All the habits and some bad habits that I have today, are still with me, it does... **I'm more aware** of them and sometimes it's easier not to do it but... same yeah.

J: yeah comfort, as humans we're also tend to lean more towards that what's comforting so in that sense... it is okay to sometimes not.

A: But you know, another thing is that my nature as well as something that I've learned over the years about myself, is the fact that I tend to do too much. So if I decide one day that "oh I'm gonna start to do a diet", I get over the top. Always, you know, it's like this kind of idea starts consuming my life. I can never make like a decisions that from now on I'm only going to do this, or I'm not going to do this. It's like these ideas starts to control my life, instead of me controlling it. I'm vegetarian I don't need meat but that's OK just one choice, but for the rest, I give myself freedom to really do what I want. At the same time, this is my way of not falling into the extremes. It doesn't mean that I'm gonna be like drinking a lot of alcohol or this or that absolutely, not but it means that if ever I have a day that I want to, I'm not gonna beat myself about this.

J: It's also it's a form of self-protection I guess?

A: no it is like... I always go to the extreme, I cannot do it something halfway, so I either do it or I don't do it.

J: That's also part of the being a perfectionist.

A: Exactly, too much. I always believe that in all these eastern practices, **like in yoga, it's always about the golden middle:** not too much and not too little. And I know that I always fall off the rails, in in the way like that, always, always.

J: Or at least, used to, because now you know about it

A: Now I know I see the sides.

J: Is there something that we didn't discuss, but that you want to add, because you think it's something important? In terms of changing, that you experienced.

A: I think I'm I can tell you that maybe I would like to do a yoga retreat in a different country myself organized it.

J: Is giving yoga classes currently your full time job?

A: I teach some group classes and I teach a lot of private classes like one-on-one and that's basically my main source of income and private companies and once a while like every couple of weeks I do like an extra workshop or something like this.

J: Amazing that that happens from talking to one person in Nepal, and then it just started to roll like that.

A: Yeah, very cool I never planned it. It just happened.

J: I think I asked all my questions now in general, so that's that's good. Do you do you have privacy preferences; as in can I mention your name ?

A: Yeah, you can totally mention my name, why not.

I can tell you what I did in my masters: what I did was, I gave everybody a number. Like, as the person 123 and so on and then in the end I made the list with all the names, with all the numbers. So if anyone wants the reference really, they see who said it then it's checkable, but it's not into your face you know?

J: Would you like to have a copy of the report ?

A: Yeah, absolutely.

## F.2: Transcript Katharina McGrath

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

K: Katharina McGrath (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: Let us just start, can I have your basic information; so your name, and if you want your age and nationality.

K: Of course, my name is Catalina McGraw and I'm based in Germany, Dusseldorf. I'm 37 years old, **I also did my first teacher training, my yoga teacher training in 2019**. Oh, and studied intensely in that time, still study to this day and try to go to short-formed teacher trainings or workshops consistently. But I also started teaching in 2019, and teaching has also been a great teacher in return: just to figure out how do I guide someone safely into certain poses, and know what the benefit is for that particular person at the time. I've uh been lucky that uh a couple of neighbors wanted to do yoga on a regular basis and I got to like hold my skills with them and they brought all kinds of different um, aspects to their practice. Then I had an incentive to do more research and get into that and that really helped my teaching. I now teach pretty much full-time, I also do Thai yoga massage. So um between the two of those I'm completely in that, I'm completely freelance now. **I used to work in an office until 2019, and then slowly but, gradually made the switch and that's where I am now.**

J: Thank you, super great, I will come back to the Thai massage later besides the interview. I'll just entangle your introduction with the first main topic, with the motivation. You said you worked in office, before, is that also what made you change? What was the factor, did you think OK I want to do something else than work in the office?

K: Yeah, so it... the exit was uh quite abrupt or not very nice, from a from an ego point of view, because um I was at a company for only six months, which is like the trial period in Germany. Both parties can just see how it goes, and after that it's up to you to see if you want to extend the contract or not. And the company I was working for, did not. And that that was like, soul crushing to me. That someone would tell me, you don't have to come back next Monday, just go. And uh yeah, for me **that sparked a lot of existential thoughts** or yeah **pondering, but "what can I really do?", "what do I want to do?"**. Because the thing was, growing up I always thought, if you're smart enough, uh you're gonna excel academically, and you're gonna definitely study, and then you're gonna get a good great job, you're gonna work in an office. Only people that don't excel academically, work with their hands. That's what I always thought, or if you had asked me, that's what I what I would have said. I don't thought about it that much. Thing is though, I'm so much happier working with my hands, or working with my body, working with people, than I ever have been working in an office. So in hindsight, I'm really glad that **I got fired**, basically, because otherwise I would have clung to that job for ever. Yeah, with everything I had like, I would have dug my heels in. I would have bitten down.

J: Because you believed that that was like smartness or something?

K: Yeah that's what success looks like, you know, um I was just talking to a friend today. I feel like in the past I really glorified uh workaholism, as well, fetishize the... I hardly slept, I was the last one in the office, first one to open the door. I thought that was trophy kind of. **Truth is, I was not living a healthy life, whether that's mentally or physically and for what, you know?** Nobody, nobody gave me a trophy for it.

J: Family and friends, I don't know if that whole circle now changed also after this decision, but did they for example teach, you that that's supposed to be like that?

K: probably yeah yeah... I mean I was even working in my family's business for a couple of years, then switched and thought that probably it's gonna be all the better for it, because my problem was a family issue. But really it wasn't, I was just as good at repeating bad patterns anywhere else. Like um **destructive patterns anywhere** else. I would **get really hung up** on projects and saying uh this needs to happen, this needs to work, and I'm responsible for it. And get **really wound up**, and have **panic attacks**, all those things that no one really was panicking over you. And, in the end as I say, it was it was a blessing that they didn't want to keep me, because I would have stayed... I would have stayed for sure, yeah.

J: And then, your first yoga or budokon related trip, where was that was that? Was it yoga or budokon?

K: That was yoga. So um I, did also the 200 hour um traditional or classic vinyasa yoga teacher training 2019. I got fired in February, started that in March. That was already the plan before I got fired, but I think it was perfect timing really, because I had something that I could focus my mind on. **Something that I really loved to focus my mind on, and yeah just explore.**

J: You planned it before, so it was already in your you had it already as idea. Where did that come from?

K: Probably just the yearning for, for something else, yeah.

J: Was it in Germany?

K:... I wanted to do something for **myself, something that made me feel more connected to myself, because working in the office; not talking to anyone for hours at a time being, really disconnected.** I also felt disconnected to myself. Through the yoga teacher training, **I really had to bring the focus to myself, to my own stuff, and things that I struggle with, and yeah face up to that and move with that.** And also **connect with other people**, because I still remember on the on the first day, the whole group split up in pairs, and kind of did a little interview one-on-one to find out things about the other person. Almost everyone said "I'm a bit shy", "when you first meet me, people sometimes think, you know, huffy or snobby or something, but I'm really not, I'm just shy." Yeah I remember our teacher said: "oof there's a lot of us, there's a lot of introverts here huh?" and it's true, **I think a lot of people that gravitate to yoga, have that aspect to them that they're just a bit like, a bit shy.** And yeah it actually was it in Germany.

J: It's interesting that you then did want to go into this whole workspace of working in office all the time, but you also had this somewhere the desire of doing something for yourself without, making the connection yet with that you might go too far in the whole working thing.

K: Yeah, I mean I **felt a pull somewhere else.** But I think in my overachiever mind, I thought I should be able to do all of it, you know: work in an office, make a lot of money uh and then have a really strong flexible body and all this knowledge about yoga on top of it. I think if you had asked me in 2018 that was probably what I thought had to happen.

J: so not either or but just both... and before that you that you practice yoga ?

K: I started about 10 years ago.

J: OK yeah, OK so then what caused you to, or aspire you to become someone a bit different but that's then the whole..

K: just put existential crisis.

J: Yeah exactly, oh that was what I wanted to ask, you didn't have access extensional crisis before, before you got fired?

K: yeah I don't know... I think you know, if I had allowed myself to really look closely at what was going on, I would have had it earlier. But because I thought OK, I'm just gonna have to put my head down, and keep working and keep trying really hard and eventually I'm just gonna be strong enough to keep it all in. To keep it all bottled up. I don't know if you've ever had that, when...- you're a woman you're probably going to have had that, that you're in public or you're with other people and you think, "damn it I, don't want to cry, I don't want to cry right now", but you feel like you have to cry, and you keep like pushing that down. You're biting your jaw is super clenched, you're trying to tighten everything possible to keep the tears in; and that's what I did for, I think a couple of years. And.. it doesn't work. Eventually, I think it would have either gotten me really sick, or I would have had an accident, or something. So again, lucky it worked out the way it did.

J: Yeah... So did you have some kind of skill that you wanted to gain, when you were fired.. So you were fired in February and then in March the yoga teacher training started, that you feel: this is or few things are what I really hope to gain from it?

K: Uh I think at the time, I was hoping to create more **stability for myself**. I didn't really think I was gonna go into teaching, I just wanted to, um, **dive deeper into my own practice and understanding of yoga**. And uh, in I think in my mind, I had this idea that I would just have a consistent practice, through the yoga teacher training. That I would like get the ball rolling to practice every day, and that that would just be a **really strong foundation for a healthy life**. I think that was a big motivator for me. The wanted **consistency**, I wanted uh **support** from my practice, health, um and **strength** definitely. Probably also to become more **courageous, more daring**. I thought by the end of the training, I would like rock hand stands and stuff like... I would just wake up and do a handstand or something - didn't happen, but I thought it might. Yeah. And meet people that I would feel a connection with.

J: And did some of those things also happened?

K: So everything apart from the handstand thing happened, haha.

J: Something more that you didn't expect to get from it?

K: that I would go into teaching, I didn't expect that, but it happened.

J: I think now you have done... how many the teacher training, yoga trips or courses?

K: In the last three years I did 4 maybe 5, depending on what you what you count as a teacher training.

J: Does a certain setting for you matter, as in do you prefer just Germany, or a very sober place, or can it be Thailand with all the buddhas next to it and incense, or how is the what is your view on the setting and the connection with the local surroundings?

K: So I think it definitely helps, to have a **beautiful setting**. I think it's a **dream to go to Thailand or India for yoga retreat**. I think that's beautiful and I would love to do that one day as well. For me it was more a financial issue, that I did the majority of my trainings here in Germany and did one in America,

um and the rest was all here. I think it helps, because **you're then just completely immersed in a different reality almost**, and in the different environment and **that helps you mentally to shift gears immediately**. Whereas, when I did my first teacher training, I did it um in my hometown. It was very um employee friendly, the timing, because we would have training blocks on weekends where there was a national holiday or something. So you didn't have to take a lot of time off anyway, it would just fit into your free time. After the 3rd or 4th day everyone was just sore as hell, and then would just go back to work the next day or whatever. I think personally, while I love the idea of going abroad ,and I see the potential benefit, I can tell you that **you don't have to for it to be a meaningful experience**.

J: why not?

K: **Because of the people that create it and hold the space for it**. If they do their job right, it doesn't matter where it is. It can be completely... it can be a garage, it can be a really dingy kind of studio with bad lighting, it doesn't matter. What matters is the people. Bút, I would still love to go to that temple in Thailand.

J: Haha, yes, just put it out in the universe, put it out there. And with the people, then you also mean the people like you? We already talked with about it in in the beginning, but also the people that are there gathering for the course?

K: Yeah absolutely, yeah.

J: Because the social contact over all, are there similarities between the four courses that you did, in terms of how you feel the people are; what type or what do you think are like characteristics?

K: Uh-huh, so I would say one common characteristic is that people are **more open minded**. If they're already open to sharing the space with other people, for an extended period of time... And I mean there's also levels to it, if you um are even living in the same place for that time sharing bedrooms for that time, or whatever, then you can already make the presumption that people are going to be more open minded. **The likelihood of sharing things in common with them is so much higher, than if you were to meet anywhere else randomly in the world**. I think that's one of the reasons why you **tend to form strong connections** with people at these retreats. Of course there are exceptions, of course you're not going to fall in love with everyone who's there, but again, the likelihood of meeting like-minded people is a lot higher, I find.

J: Do you think that's because you're all there, that you have opportunities to talk with each other about where you're going through; do you think that also is a big aspect of you process it?

K: Absolutely I think that's probably just as important as whoever's running the training or holding the space, is **the community with other people and the exchange and allowing each other to be vulnerable**, and you wouldn't ... Again, you probably wouldn't do that in a lot of other spaces. But because you're together for an extended period of time, you're **spending definitely the whole day together, maybe even the night together**. You get to **drop a lot of pretense** that you carry around with yourself on a daily basis and you get to be **really honest**. It's... It's **absolutely disarming** in the best sense of the word, when other people are dishonest with you, and you are honest with them. Not in a superficial kind of way of like "oh you're beautiful and I'm beautiful and we're all part of this creation, hey let's have a dance"; but really in a in a profoundly honest way. **Acknowledging one another, yeah. I've had that a few times in my life, and the yoga uh teacher trainings were part of that**.

J: OK and when you're at the teacher training(s), if you're aware of them at least, what are changes in your own mental state, if I can call that. Do you recognize or recall moments that you thought "OK this is how I think apparently" or "it goes like this here now I have to react differently to it"? What did you learn about your own mental health.

K: I think, um when I went into my first teacher training I was very self-conscious about myself physically, especially if I was working with a man. That to me was really hard. And I remember we were always doing group exercises or pair exercises for certain things to kind of explore poses and work through the kind of alignment and theoretical stuff like that. Out of out of all kind of exercises that I could have paired with a man, that would physically assist, that I was paired with a guy. I was like mortified, like no, I don't wanna do handstand work with a man, that's no... that's not nice. He was so great, like he was the best. And that **created a huge shift** for me -sounds silly now - but that men are **also just humans**? They're also just people. You can work with them, and there can be a meaningful kind of exchange without there being any sexual connotation. So that was huge for me, and I got deeper into that when I did the Thai yoga massage training. We had a couple of guys in that group, it was predominantly women- as is still often the case in anything related to yoga I think. The guys are slowly waking up to it, and are like, well actually this is this is pretty great, but so far it's still mostly women. Even so, we had I think three guys in in the group, and I worked with two of them during the five day training. That was also **really healing** for me, to kind of understand, "OK you can you can work with someone energetically, and it doesn't matter if that person is older than you, or younger than you, or man or woman. It's just energy. And yeah, that to me was **mind blowing**. Like, I had to like **question a lot of my own thought patterns and presumptions that I have preconditions**, yeah, through that.

J: OK I might come back to that in a second, because I think it's connected to the to the next part. Did your perception on your own body also change?

K: Yeah massively.

J: In which in which way?

K: More trust, more listening, more acceptance, and also more playfulness. I think, a couple of years ago, I was very stubborn with my own yoga practice and also always had high expectations. And would get frustrated really easily, like, I think a really good example is balancing poses. You can you can always tell, when you're in a yoga class and a teacher goes "OK tree pose!" people are gonna be like "Oh, where's the wall?!". And it's just like, "If only the other people weren't wobbling so much, I wouldn't wobble, I'd be standing here like a pole." You know, and um, I was definitely one of those people and, yeah, through that time I got to be a lot more playful with my body again. Like, do you remember when you were little, you probably couldn't walk past a wall without saying "OK stop, I need to balance on this and probably also jump off it so everyone just wait for me, I need to do this." And I think that um the **yoga practice has brought me back to that to some extent. that I'm like, ah, I wanna balance, I wanna try, I wanna have fun.**

J: OK, good one. What did you learn about your unconscious as in your thoughts, like it's a broad question, but you just said your thought patterns or presumptions changed. So do you also have some key factors there?

K: I think... So many things that are like uh, part of our operating system them, and that is what influences how we act, how we show ourselves, how we show up in any space. As I said, **I was very self-conscious**, and if you are self-conscious, it is because you presume that everyone is looking at you and judging you, right? And, over time, I realized that probably not everyone's looking at me and/or

judging me, because they're much too busy to work with themselves, you know? To work on their own stuff, doesn't leave much room to worry about what everyone else is doing. And even if they are, it not necessarily got anything to do with me, because they got their own projections and their own and securities, and their own things that they work with. So what I can control, is how I feel in that moment and what I can do to, kind of further my practice and work with my own body, my own mind, so that has been a **huge shift**. That I'm more **interested now, genuinely more interested, in how does this benefit me, and not how does this look to other people**.

J: That's connected to how you look at success... Oh and something that popped up in my mind: you didn't expect to learn the things that you learned now just by practicing yoga yourself? Like you did before you did the training know that if you would just continue doing yoga every once in a while that it would be fine?

K: I think, on one hand I was hoping for a **motivational push**, uh that I knew was gonna help me a lot: this this **external motivation** of OK, it's not just yourself. You have an appointment with, or there are actual people who expect you to show up, so you're going to show up. The other thing was just, to maybe.. a sense of safety. Or for myself or like, **give myself over** to someone else who as experienced and knowledgeable and can guide me safely. Maybe that's also, that I thought "oh, it's great someone else has the responsibility now, someone else can tell me what to do", so that that might be a part of it as well.

J: Yeah, that's always the trick, you can always go, oh maybe that was actually the underlying thing... um OK and then if you look at the most the biggest um, mind-blowing discoveries let's say, that you had, were they either emotional and emotionally intense or sensory intense or that cognitively stimulating? That's like three factors, do you feel like those were in the moments there that when you experienced something like "wow OK, so this is this is something new." Was it very stimulating, or was it very on your own, that it suddenly just popped up?

K: No, I mean, the first thing that I just thought of was very much in the moment, not like after when I was on my own. **It was very much in the moment of realization** of like boom "OK, so this is how it is uh?" I had that. The one example that I just thought of was again at the Thai yoga massage training, we paired up and we learned a couple of techniques of belly massage; abdomen. I was again paired with the man, and I remember the teacher was kind of verbally guiding us through, coaching us. I was the one receiving the message, and the cue was "OK as they exhale, you move a bit deeper, or you do this you do that." And I was so much in my head, I was thinking "OK I'm not breathing fast enough, other people have already moved to other things, and we're still here, and it's my fault because I'm not breathing fast enough.." you know. And I tried to like, move his hand: he just gently took my hands and was like "nooo", and carried on. That was like a strong realization, of **"OK I don't have to be in control of everything"** also, not everything's my fault. I don't have to be in control of everything, I can just let him do what he does. I just have to lie down, you know, I don't have to do anything else. And also, strong realization, men can be very much giving and nurturing. Up until that point, I think I only thought like that of women. Which is, looking back, astonishing, yeah.

J: so it was indeed in the moment. Did you also experience very strong emotions, or not, when when that was happening?

K: That was very emotional for me, of course, yeah. I think it's quite a profound realization uh also, on the flip side, if you go like a good three decades, not thinking of men as nurturing or giving, that's also quite sad.

J: Yeah did you talk with him after?



K: Yeah, yeah I told him that.

J: And how was that conversation?

K: It was nice, I think he, he really appreciated it and he also said thank you for allowing closeness. It was a good, good experience and also what I told you about the physical assist, with uh the Yogi who was also a man, and when we were doing handstand work that was just uh in a similar vein to just realize OK: **we're all human. That was... that was powerful.**

J: It sounds super simple, but I think I get your point.

K: Sometimes the simplest realizations are the most profound, yeah. That's because, again, if you think about any type of phobia: why do I feel self-conscious dancing in front of another person? At the root of it is always 'othering' like: I'm different than other people, I'm apart from other people, they won't accept; me they will push me away; they will laugh at me; they will ostracize me for who I really am, if I really show up as myself; I'm gonna be pushed away. That's, that's at the root of it, **and if you can experience that's actually not true, then that is a profound realization.** It sounds simple, because it is: we are all human. But to really feel that in your bones, that is huge.

J: That's also the thing with the whole neurolinguistic training: you can think it, but it doesn't really affect you. But then if you feel the feeling, then it becomes more real.

I think we already talked about it a little bit, but the question is: which values or beliefs have been replaced, and what does it show you on the bigger picture? So it's more as in, did you attach a different meaning to what life is for you? You already mentioned how success it's supposed to look like to you, can you see it in more ways?

K: Yeah, so I used to place very high value on um, tangible achievements. I wanted a well-paid job, I thought it was commendable to be a workaholic. I wanted people to think I was a high achiever and it mattered to me what kind of perception people had of me a lot. I'm not gonna say it doesn't matter at all anymore, we're all human, and we're never going to be completely um disconnected from other people's perception of us, but um, I think **that voice has calmed down a lot** through the trainings. I'm a lot more interested in self exploration and seeing how things feel physically, and also mentally. Like, does this align with me? And if my initial reaction is: "No this doesn't align at all" **can I be curious about that, then explore that, and find out why?** Like we briefly spoke about a teacher that can be quite polarizing, right, and that people tend to have really strong reactions towards. During the training, which was two weeks, I had a few moments when my initial reaction was like "oh I wanna say something, I wanna defend a point that's very important to me, that I say this now", and I would I would **take a moment** to ask myself : why is it so important to me, that I say this now? What do I think is going to happen, if I say it? Am I gonna convince anyone to change their mind, is it important to me that they say: OK, you're right, and what I said was wrong. Is that important to me, and why? And that whole thing started seriously in 2019 before, that I would have just blablabla- I would have just blurted it out, and even in discussions to me, **it was so much more important to me that I was heard, rather than trying to really listen to someone else.** I learned a lot around that the last four years.

J: That's really amazing, that that all comes up from such thing as a course. I think we also already talked about that shortly: very specific turning points where you for example, let go of old borders, or created new shapes of perspective or at very profound points, and what was common in those moments, do you know?

K: yeah I think I gave a few examples of like clear turning points for me, again I think about Montana and the quite military style training we did there. **Where it did not at all come natural to me, to push through certain barriers, mental barriers that I had.** Physical maybe to some extent, but let's be honest, most of them are brutally mental stuff anyway. And yeah I think, you asked me earlier: "don't you think you would have gotten there, if you had just practiced consistently by yourself?" **Probably not? Because how will you know, that this is the challenge you need, if you're never presented with it from the outside?** And just like you can't surprise yourself, when you touch yourself: like **you're never gonna be as challenged, or shocked maybe, by something that your own mind came up with, then if it's something that comes from the outside.**

J: That's a.. that's a good one. So would you say spontaneous?

K: Yeah yeah, and just um, **really foreign impulses.** So uh I knew I was going for um the yoga training, and I knew we were going to do mobility, but I didn't realize the extent of martial arts training that we were going to do, and we did jujitsu and grappling like wrestling on the ground. And I've never done that before, I was really **surprised** by how much I loved it. I really loved it, it was great. And yeah, how if someone didn't give you a nudge in that direction, I probably never would have thought to try it.

J: It's also the playfulness that comes out probably.

K: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. I think the last time I wrestled was probably when I was a kid.

J: Exactly, yeah and then it becomes something "for men".

K: Indeed, and again you think about the sexual connotation 'I can't wrestle a man and then not be sexual'-- yeah you can.

J: So then the last part, in which manner did you reflect upon it: so did you write, did you have conversations, did you have a blog, something like that, and then also where there's specific habits that um you actually permanently implemented when you got home?

K: yeah OK, so how did I reflect on it? **Mainly through conversation actually, with other people, and contemplation.** I don't think I journaled a lot no. But yeah like contemplation, quite contemplation and also conversation with other people. Sorry what was the second part of the question?

J: If you took skills that you didn't have before and then you took them with you that you now implement in your still life? But that's maybe actually something you mentioned, like that you feel more courageous, and things like that.

K: Yeah so skills definitely in terms of people's skills, **like how do you practice yoga off the mat.** How do you interact with people. I don't know if you've ever seen that image of the yin and Yang um and a very modern English translation of um, yin and Yang; do no harm, take no \*\*\*\* ? I like that, I like that the kind of being respectful of everyone's boundaries including your own. That's been a huge thing for me. Very practical skills that I've taken with me, is focus on my own practice. Making my own practice a habit, like **little things that I do every day.** I'm meditate every day, the way I eat is different. Not because I consciously decided to do that, through discipline, like I have to do this "otherwise I'm not a good yogi" but, because it comes more of a place of self care. And I know this word, or this term is also fraught with a lot friction maybe these days, but like really from, a place of "OK I gotta watch out for this, and what would be good right now?"

J: The last thing to ask is, there anything that you want to add to it that you think oh that's important? Otherwise this was actually the last question for now. Oh, and if you want to have a copy of the report when I hopefully pass.

K: I would love that, I would love to hear how that went for you and I hope for a lot more interesting interviews lined up for yourself. I personally love this, I found that really interesting. I don't think there's anything to add for me that I haven't already said. I love the connections that teacher trainings and retreats create. Like, you and I wouldn't have met if it wasn't for that, so that's really cool. Yeah, yeah I'm a huge fan. If you have any follow up questions, you've got my contact details, you can always reach out, i'd be happy.

### F.3: Transcript Dientje Mollenaar

(Transcript in Dutch)

December 12th , 2022

D: Dientje Mollenaar (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: Ten eerste wat basic information, dus of je jezelf kort kunt voorstellen door je naam, leeftijd en nationaliteit te noemen.

D: Mijn naam is Dientje Mollenaar, ik ben 57 jaar, ik heb een Nederlandse nationaliteit, mijn achtergrond is Indonesisch. Ik weet niet of dat van belang is, het is wel zo dat de Indonesische cultuur anders is dan de westerse cultuur. Ik heb toch wel wat dingen meegenomen vanuit daar, heeft zijn voor en nadelen.

J: En wat zijn voor jou de voordelen eraan?

D: Dat **er meer is dan alleen je lichaam, dat het ook het spirituele** is, dat er ook een andere dimensie is dan deze dimensie. Wij noemen dat dan de geestenwereld, iedereen heeft daar een andere benaming voor natuurlijk, dus je gaat eigenlijk in energieën. **Dat er energieën zijn, en dat heb je niet in de westerse cultuur.** Dat vind ik wel een voordeel, want het leven, zoals de yogafilosofie het ook vertelt, als een mango: met de pit, het vlees en de schil. In de Indonesische cultuur ga je echt naar de pit toe. En in de westerse cultuur is het over het algemeen meer de schil. Om het even zo te vergelijken.

J: En heb je dan het idee dat veel mensen in de westerse wereld dus eigenlijk dat missen, dat ze niet naar de pit gaan? Heb je het idee dat mensen dat zouden moeten doen.

D: Nee, nee. Ik heb zoiets van, ze zijn zoals ze zijn. En soms is het net als een baby, kan je mensen geen vaste voeding geven als ze niet zo ver zijn. Dus nee, het moet niet opgedwongen worden, en je ontmoet wel de mensen die er klaar voor zijn. Het is wel een gemis, maar **sommige personen hebben bepaalde ervaringen nodig, om tot zo ver te komen**, en dat kan niet door 1 persoon die het zegt – misschien wel- **maar het proces moet je toch zelf aangaan.**

J: Ja, ik begrijp je, goed gezegd. Als je dat dan hebt over dat proces, wanneer begon dat voor jou? Of voor zo'n yoga gerelateerde trip, wanneer heb jij voor de eerste keer zoiets beleefd en waar was je toen naar op zoek?

D: Nou, ik ben yoga eigenlijk in yoga gaan verdiepen, nadat ik niet meer... Ik zat echt in een pinkstergemeente. Op een gegeven moment ben ik daar uit gestapt, omdat ik niet de voldoening vond. Want in de bijbel staat onderzoek je zelf, en **ik wilde eigenlijk veel meer onderzoeken, dan alleen gezegd werd in die kerk.** En zo ben ik eigenlijk op een gegeven moment op het pad van yoga onderzoeken. Het voelde goed voor mij, en als het goed voelt, waarom zou je dat niet doen. Ik ga niet zeggen, omdat een ander zegt, nou Buddha is niet goed... Labelen is niet voor mij. En toen is mijn pad geopend om meer van yoga terecht gekomen, om meer te verdiepen. Ik volgde al yogalessen, maar ik zocht echt meer die **verdieping, van wat het mentaal met je doet.** Want het is niet alleen het fysieke, maar ook het mentale, het spirituele. Want yoga heeft zo veel lagen, en ik wilde ook weer.. **Ik zat op een punt op m'n leven waar ik weer back to basic wilde, niet met dat geruis van het leven.** Echt het back to basic, en toen kwam ik eigenlijk bij Arhanta, die kwam ik tegen in zo een ashram helemaal, eigenlijk **ook mezelf disciplineren** om 's ochtends op te staan, te mediteren, om dat echt ervaren in een groep eigenlijk, begeleid ook. En ja, zo is eigenlijk mijn pad naar yoga en naar het diepere spirituele

bewustwording, geopend. Het was om die verdieping te zoeken, en meer te weten te komen wat yoga zoveel inhoudt.

J: Dus je gaat niet meer naar de kerk?

D: Nee, ik ga niet meer naar de kerk, dat niet. Omdat ja, ik voelde me gewoon niet thuis en ik wil ook geen masker op doen. Ik wil gewoon mezelf zijn.

J: Wel mooi, je overgangsfases zo eigenlijk: dat je dan begint bij de kerk en je meer verdiepingen wilt zoeken, en dan langzaam op zoek gaat naar wat er dan nog is; in plaats van meteen de kerk aan de kant zetten, tenminste zo klinkt het, dat je toch wel hebt gezocht.

D: Het heeft wel de basis gelegd van mijn innerlijke wijsheid, want er zijn heel veel dingen uit de bijbel: de bijbel is een wijs boek, maar het is hoe je het interpreteert. En ik interpreteerde dit heel anders dan de mensen in de kerk, en dat zat mij gewoon op een gegeven moment niet goed. Ik denk dat het heel van belang is om jezelf te zijn, want ieder heeft zijn bijzonderheden, zijn ja missie hier op aarde, om dat zo maar te zeggen, een gave of talent op aarde. Ja, dat doet me denken aan een verhaal van de 10 talenten uit de bijbel: maar zoek het maar op, want anders wordt het te lang.

J: Naar welke landen ben je geweest voor de yogareis?

D: Naar India, en ik heb in Nederland dan de yinyoga opleiding gedaan, want het is ook natuurlijk een financieel plaatje. En ik had een soort, misschien schuldgevoel als ik te lang weg zou blijven, naar m'n gezin, als ik te lang weg blijf. Maar ik zal wel weer graag weer naar het buitenland gaan om een soort retreat te doen, of een stilte ervaring... Kijk, omdat je een gezin hebt dan doe je dat niet zo vaak, dan wanneer je alleen bent, zeg maar.

J: Tuurlijk, dan heb je meer vrijheid, en nu wil je toch ook rekening houden met je gezin of dat je gezin meegaat waarschijnlijk. Wat is je main motivatie om zo'n yogareis te ondernemen. Je kunt terugkijken op de ene naar India, of denkend aan waarom je dat nu juist zou willen doen, zoals je zojuist noemde. Als ik het goed begrijp, ging het voor jou om het kijken naar, wat is er nog. Klopt dat, of niet?

D: Mijn drive is om iets te leren. Kijk, ik heb nou die hatha yoga, yin yoga en als ik een yogareis zou doen, dan is het **wel iets wat iets opbrengt, in die zin dat ik iets leer**, weet je wel? Of een yogareis te doen **om tot jezelf te zijn**, van die stilte weekenden, met yoga erbij om je **weer op te laden, spiritueel weer op te laden om**, zeg maar, weer naar jezelf toe te gaan. Ik vind wel dat dat een doel dient- ja voor jezelf- dus ik sta niet een yoga wellness reis doen of zoiets. **Het gaat echt puur om de kennis óf te releasen van all the pressure in de normal life, weet je. Dat je éven een moment neemt van stilte, dat je terug gaat naar de kern van jezelf, dat je even in de omgeving bent zoals zo'n ashram, dat je dan back to basic gaat.** Echt dingen gaat doen wat je weer terugbrengt naar jezelf, want als je gaat werken, dan zit je in die malle molen van het werk, en dan, dan, dan, ja... Ik denk dat het belangrijk is om momenten te nemen, om terug te gaan naar je kern.

J: En betreft back to basic of locatie, gaat het voor jou ook dan om dat het een beetje sober is, niet te veel poespas, of wat voor omgeving helpt jou hierbij om naar jezelf te keren?

D: Ik wilde gewoon simpel en dan ook die discipline weer terug: leren hoe het is om om 6 uur op te staan, weet je, een soort dat je een ritueel hebt van 6 uur opstaan om 21.30u slapen. Want daarvoor leef je eigenlijk onregelmatig, **en juist vond ik het ook zo mooi dat we die stilte wandeling hadden, dat je dan iets nieuws ervaart**, en ja dat soort dingen, ik bedoel ja, dat dat vond ik wel het mooie. En

eigenlijk ook het anders eten, **dat ayurvedisch eten, dat was ook voor mij iets speciaals**. Ik zal yoga in combinatie voor een detox of zoiets daar zou ik dan wel voor kiezen, of vipassana met yoga.

J: Bijvoorbeeld dat 6 uur opstaan en anders eten, wat je net noemde, heb je dat meegenomen naar huis, doe je dat nu ook nog, of gaat dat een beetje in vlagen?

D: Ik heb natuurlijk geproefd hoe dat is, en sinds kort zit ik ook weer in het ochtendritueel ik verdiep me altijd in heel veel verschillende boeken, en ik had kwam een boek tegen, van Hal Elrod de Morning Savers<sup>10</sup>. Daarin, de s staat voor alle letters SAVERS, maar dan is mijn streven, om 6 uur sta ik op, rond die tijd in ieder geval, en dan ga ik mijn oefeningen doen, mijn ochtend ritueel met zon rolmassage, even de zonnegroet en dan schrijf ik in mijn **Journal mijn gedachten of dingen die opkomen**. Trek soms een engelenkaart en dan ja ga ik mediteren. Dus dat doe ik nu alweer meer dan een maand, doe ik dat in die ochtendritueel. Ik ben een boek tegengekomen van Julia Cameron<sup>11</sup>, over beter luisteren, en daar schrijft ze dus ook over mensen die die journalen in de ochtend, **en er gaan wegen open voor je, die je hebt genoteerd of geschreven**. Want het is ook een **soort intentie** die je noteert, want uit de pen vloeit soms gedachten, en dan denk je van “huh, heb ik dat geschreven?” of dan in plaats dat je het uitspreekt, schrijf je het op, en ja er gaan dan wegen open die je dan hebt genoteerd. Dat is zo... Ja ik vin het heel wonderbaarlijk dus daar ben ik mee aan het experimenteren voor mezelf. En ik moet je zeggen dat er wegen zijn geopend waar ik dacht van “oh hé hoe wonderbaarlijk is dit?” >> *verhaal veranderen van baan*<<

J: En met verandering van werkveld, bedoel je dan een holistischere baan, in plaats van advocaat? Wel mooi ook dat je zowel advocaat bent, meer strak en het staat, en ook juist gericht op spiritualiteit, engelenkaarten enzovoort. En boeiend dat je merkt dat het nu toch te veel botst, die twee totaal verschillende kanten en daar wat afstand van wil doen.

D: Ik moet zeggen, op mijn werk heb ik wel gesproken tijdens thema **lunches over stoelyoga en meer over mindfulness, dus daar heb ik dat wel geïntegreerd**. Of ik zet wekelijks een quote of post ik een message op een holistische manier dus een heel klein beetje integreer ik het ook in mijn werk. Mensen staan er dan voor open, of niet, ze kennen mij wel ondertussen en weten dat ik met dat soort dingen bezig ben.

J: Ik heb trouwens ook een boek gelezen over morning pages, dat je elke dag 3 bladzijden moet schrijven, om je gedachten te manifesteren. Misschien toch een keer écht proberen. Even kijken, ahja, de volgende vraag is, je zat of zit een beetje in zo'n overgang van de kerk en dus het het hardere werk van advocatenkantoor, naar meer yoga gerelateerd. Wat zie je als een soort skill die je nodig had om, die je moest ontwikkelen om daar meer in te komen?

D: De skills zijn eigenlijk meer in de zin van, mijn onderzoek was eigenlijk welke middelen technieken zijn er om mensen te helpen. en zo ben ik gekomen bij NLP. Ik heb energetisch werk gevolgd, ik kende het nog niet: mijn collega die sprak over een vriendin van haar die arts is en kanker heeft, en in plaats van dat ze in de medische wereld iets zoekt, zoekt ze In het alternatieve gebied, op de holistische manier, ik heb reiki gedaan dus in die zin van ik ben me gaan verdiepen in verschillende energetische tools en praktische tools en daar ben ik nog steeds mee bezig.

J: Echt heel mooi dat je zoveel gedaan hebt van dit, ik echt geïnspireerd. Ik wil ook meer te weten komen zoals jij, zoals jij allemaal dingen weet van over jezelf, vooral. In terms of sociaal contact, wil je juist bijvoorbeeld bij sociaal contact. Dus wat is voor jou als je naar zo'n een yoga locatie gaat, vind je

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<sup>10</sup> Elrod, H., 2012. The Miracle Morning: the 6 habits that will transform your life before 8am.

<sup>11</sup> Cameron, J., 2021. De weg van het luisteren.

het fijn dat er anderen zijn, of juist liever geen anderen om je heen, deel je graag wat er gebeurt, of liever niet hoe zit dat?

D: Ja ik vind het juist leuk om gelijkgestemden- want als jij een bepaalde reis doet, zijn het gelijk gestemden- dan vind ik het leuk om juist gelijkgestemden om te ontmoeten. Het is niet het doel, maar het is de bij komst die er is: dat je mensen ontmoet die gelijkgestemd zijn aan jou, en dat is het fijne dat je dan over wat jou passie is, om daarover te praten en te sparren. Je wordt ondersteund eigenlijk door al die gelijkgestemden, in wat jij graag doet.

J: Wat geeft jou het gevoel dat je geconnect bent met de omgeving, of wat voor omgeving geeft jou het gevoel dat je het meest geconnect bent met jezelf

D: **In de omgeving die die hetzelfde doel heeft met mij**, kijk als je zeg maar een ademsessie volgt of een vipassana meditatie training, **volgt dan heb je het gezamenlijk doel dat je graag vipassana wil leren, en dat leert je connecten**. En het connecten met de persoon is, je voelt het of je een bepaalde klik heb met die persoon of niet, dat dat voel je, en dan maak je verbinding of niet verbinding. Maar ik heb altijd wel in al die dingen, connect je altijd wel met een persoon.

J: Ja, er is altijd wel 1 iemand waarmee je sowieso een gevoel mee hebt, dat is juist het mooie tijdens zo'n reis dat je dan iemand ontmoet per ongeluk en het zo klinkt. En wat heb je door yoga en die yoga die reist naar naar India en de andere cursussen geleerd over je eigen emotionele staat?

D: Oef, er zijn heel veel inzichten... Meer zelf bewustwording, om het even kort te noemen. **Meer zelf bewustwording, authentieker en meer in je kracht staan.**

J: Voel je je dan ook nu zelfverzekerder?

D: Nou het zijn momenten, natuurlijk, ik ben niet altijd 100% zelfverzekerd. Kan ook het Indonesische zijn, of niet, ik ben altijd een beetje kat uit de boom kijkend, ook niet mis, natuurlijk. Maar bijvoorbeeld yogales geven in een hele grote groep ,nou dat vind ik wel een ding. Daar zou ik meer zelfvertrouwen voor willen hebben...

J: En betreft je lichaam, wat is een van de grootste leerpunten over je eigen lichaam: zijn er dingen waarvan je nooit had gedacht dat je dat zou kunnen, of hoe je naar je lichaam kijkt?

D: Ik ben **flexibeler geworden** en yoga is mijn manier van bewegen, ja ik daarnaast doe ik natuurlijk ook fitness hoor, moet ik je zeggen. **Het is voor mij de balans tussen voeding en beweging om toch gezond te leven.**

J: Dus dat sluit aan bij het gehele proces om jezelf fitter te voelen. Je noemde het net al, maar dat we niet alleen het lichaam zijn, dat we ook Energy zijn, dat hoort er ook bij.  
Als je bijvoorbeeld bij Arhanta bent, dat je dat je dromen dan veel sterker zijn dan nu doordeweeks?

D: Mmm, ik weet niet precies. Maar wat ik wel merk qua onderbewustzijn is het gebruik van affirmaties, want ik doe ook affirmeren. Hierbij ook het anders verwoorden van bepaalde dingen: "Ik heb mijn droombaan" in plaats van "ik ga mijn droombaan vinden" want dat betekend dat het nooit komt. Ja. **Het gebruik van affirmatie, het law of attraction, het manifesteren.**

J: Wat vond je het meest mindblowing thing tijdens deze reis wat je bijstaat?

D: Er zijn verschillende mindblowing things die ik heb meegemaakt, onder andere tijdens mijn doop.

Maar goed, ik heb laatst vipassana meditatie gedaan voor vrouwen van stilteweekend en bij het mediteren kwam ik in de meditatieve stand daar ik dacht echt van nou ik zit in een tempel in stilte tempel van mijzelf. Het was mindblowing. Het was net of jij zeg maar in een kerk wordt geplaatst, maar dan heel innerlijk in jezelf.

J: Met deze verschillende yogaervaringen, heb je daardoor een andere betekenis aan het leven gegeven? Wat heb je tijdens zo'n reis ontdekt.

D: God wat een wat is belangrijk... Ja, goed voor jezelf zorgen. Je innerlijke grootsheid uiten, grootheid bedoel ik niet met ego, maar ik bedoel met groot van jezelf. In al je nederigheid, kan je ook groot zijn. Dat is denk ik belangrijk om je zielsmissie, om daar alignement mee te zijn. **En, succes is niet het materialistische of welke "managing director functie" je hebt, of executive weet ik veel wat. Ik ben het wel anders gaan zien wat succes is ja, dat heeft me dan wel m'n mindset anders gezet.**

J: Op welke manier dan, naar die holistische manier?

D: Ja, naar meer het holistische en dat je eigenlijk door je uniekheid als individu in alle individuen, dat **jij dan ja die parel mag zijn, zijn dus alle parels. Je uniekheid, ieder heeft zijn uniekheid, en dat ik dat kan tonen, mag tonen, wil tonen, ben bereid om het te tonen en geen angst daar in.**

J: oh ja Als je dan zo kijkt naar de yoga gerelateerde dingen die je hebt gedaan, de uitstapjes, waren er dan bepaalde punten waarbij specifieke punten van omdraai dat je echt weet: oké op dit moment heb je een soort van oude grens laten gaan, of dus dat je een nieuw perspectief kreeg, of zoiets en wat is dan wat is dan een kenmerk van zo'n moment?

D: **Het is een doordat je iets doet, krijg je een soort het ingeving, en door die ingeving krijg je een inzicht, en door dat inzicht die je krijgt op dat moment: het kan tijdens een stilte wandeling, of achteraf... Als je maar reflecteert naar de reis die je hebt gemaakt. Dat je dan bepaalde inzichten vindt, en bewaart die jou pad naar geluk, of het geluk vindt in jezelf, De tevredenheid. En dat je daardoor kan stralen, en andere mensen kan helpen. Want eerst is van belang om die relatie met jezelf te onderhouden, en hè, voordat je anderen ook kan helpen. Soms moet je dingen meemaken in je leven om ook anderen te helpen. En wát jij dan hebt meegemaakt, dat je dan in die diepe dalen een zegen kan zijn voor anderen, juist blijheid brengt aan een ander, omdat je het ook blij maakt, zeg maar, omdat je die anderen hebt geholpen om uit die put te halen.**

J: Dus het is geen lineair process, en ook niet iets wat specifiek van een op ander moment gebeurt...?

D: Nou, het moment is gewoon een ingeving die je krijgt, en je kan het soms benoemen, en soms niet, ja hoe moet je dan zeggen... **Het is ervaring die je op dat moment maakt, de ervaring die, dat is er op dat moment dat je dat gedaan hebt, en dat blijft ja aanwezig.**

J: Hadden die momenten een diepe emotionele impact voor jou?

D: Nee, het is niet diep emotioneel. Het is een ervaring die je meeneemt, Het is een tool, of een herinnering waar je op kunt terugvallen in momenten, het is een inzicht, een belevenis. Een herinnering, als een mooie ketting is het als een herinnering. **Een ervaring die je hebt meegemaakt die je leven verrijkt en meer en breder perspectief geven van het leven, dan alleen in het wereldje waarin je zit van advocatenwereld ik noem maar wat. Een breder perspectief van het leven krijg je.**

J: En wat bedoel je daarmee voor jou, of hoe komt dat via zo'n reis?



D: Dat er meer is dan het fysieke leven, dat er ja dat het ook mentaal en zowel spiritueel, **alle lagen van het mens zijn, dat ik dat heb mogen ervaren door die yoga reizen eigenlijk. Dan alleen de uiterlijke, materialistische laag.**

J: was bij Arhanta bijvoorbeeld je comfortzone heel ver gestretcht of viel dat mee?

D: ja Het **was helemaal uit mijn comfortzone, echt hélemaal.**

J: Wat vond je daarvan, vond je het fijn dat iemand je een pushte daar?

D: Heel blij dat ik het gedaan heb, ondanks voordat ik de beslissing had gemaakt, heel veel twijfels, zaten heel wat hobbels op die weg, maar ik ben blij dat ik het gedaan heb. **Ik wilde gewoon uit mijn comfortzone, om datgene te doen wat ik nooit eerder heb gedaan.**

J: Tegen de laatste vragen aan, wat heb je geleerd qua gewoontes daar en meegenomen naar huis?

D: Ik heb wel geleerd om elke dag dus de yoga oefeningen te doen. En dat ik heb **geleerd dat ik meer kan dan ik denk.**

J: Is dat ook omdat je dan in een andere locatie zit, dat je dat voor jezelf creëert?

D: Omdat je die **discipline hebt, die patroon van elke dag die yoga doen want** op een gegeven moment was mijn lijf bijna op maar ik merk wel dat ik sterker ben geworden in mijn lijf.

J: Merkte je familie dat je verandert was daarna?

D: Nee, dat weet ik eigenlijk niet, ik werd voor gek verklaard door mijn moeder maar verder heb ik er nooit commentaar op gekregen. M'n moeder kon niet begrijpen dat ik dat deed.

J: Dit was het, wat ik tot nu toe wilde weten. Wil je nog iets toevoegen?

D: In de vorm van toerisme, is locatie wel heel erg van belang voor de keuze die je maakt. Dat heb ik wel onderzocht en bekeken voordat ik kies. **De keuze ligt heel erg aan de locatie en omgeving, dat dat bijdraagt aan je innerlijke reis.**

J: Ja, en wat zijn jou overwegingen hierin?

D: Ik **denk de witte gebouwen, zo veilig omringd, dat het er netjes uitzag, en het gaf me een betrouwbaar gevoel.** En ze hebben in Nederland ook een locatie, dat heeft ook geholpen. Voor mij is het **voor belang of ik me er veilig voel en het een mooie omgeving is**, dat dat in je reis iets is om op te letten. En je bent zo 2000 of 2500euro kwijt als je ver naar het buitenland wil gaan, dus toch best wat.

#### F.4: Transcript Selina Straver

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

S: Selina Straver (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: First question, are you ready? Can you name your basic information, so to introduce yourself with your name, and nationality and age?

S: My name is Selina Straver, I'm 32 years old and I'm from the Netherlands.

J: First about, about motivation.. For how long were you practicing yoga, before you went on your yoga trip, and what made you start practice yoga; to get some context?

S: When I was 18, my boyfriend's mother took me to a yoga class, and yeah I instantly really enjoyed it. There was just something about it. And I was doing a study of psychology back then, and then I realised that I wanted to do something... Well I wasn't sure that I should just become a psychologist at the age of 22, and I felt like I needed to **discover my life** a little bit more. And so then I quit my studies and started working to do more yoga, and I did actually sort of a yoga teacher training back then, and I never stopped doing yoga after that. So during those ten years, maybe eight years, I never really stopped yoga but, on and off you know sometimes more than others, and then it never left me. So I never started teaching, but I also never stopped doing yoga. I didn't feel like I was ready to teach back then, but it was a good experience to do more yoga, **and get more personal knowledge about myself**. And then when I was 27 and working at a gym, I felt like okay, now I feel ready to teach, and I want to dive into that concept again. So then I went to Bali for one month to start another yoga teacher training, and I think by that time I had already practised yoga for eight years.

J: And what was one of the things that you got to know about yourself that you mentioned, the knowledge about yourself?

S: I felt that, by doing yoga, I felt that there was **space to discover my inner world** and to **look at your body and well-being in a different way**. There was one specific moment, where we had to do a meditation, the teacher was trying to explain us, that there was someone behind ourselves. So we were doing a meditation to experience that we were in this place, seeing everything, hearing everything, but at the same time, there was someone inside me. Seeing that I am seeing, observing that I am hearing. So there is something inside me that is seeing the seeing, and it and then meditation I really felt that, that there is like a higher self, or I don't know how to call it. There is many different ways you could name it: maybe it's consciousness itself, and that really, like, **change my point of perception**. You at you're living this life, but at the same time, you're observing yourself, living this life. **And that distinction really put my life and myself in a different point of view.**

J: OK we will come back to that later. Oh yeah, to which country did you go?

S: To Indonesia, Bali.

J: And what was your initial drive to go to any of your yoga related trips?

S: A, well I felt like I **wanted to be emerged in the experience**, I didn't feel like doing a teacher training in the Netherlands, where you had to do work, and then go to a weekend of teacher training, and then go work again. I felt like that would be way too much pressure with all the other tasks you had to do. I'd rather just go to a place for a month, and be fully emerged in what I'm doing, and then from there

have **no other distractions**. Just be in that space to learn, and because I have experienced what yoga can do for me, I knew that if I would be in a place where I would be **completely cut off from anything** else. Also because of my previous experiences with travel, I knew that when you go to a new place, **when you're not in the surroundings that you're always in, it's easier to get to know different perspectives**. It's easier to figure out who you are, **because you don't have the same surroundings anymore that are influencing your thought patterns and behaviour**. And most of the time those are the same type of influence that you grow up with, and because you put yourself in a different environment, **there is new space and opportunity to become something or someone else to experiment with**. That and that's why I felt like I wanted to go abroad, and really be emerged in this yoga teacher training for a specific amount of time. **I felt like that would be most transformative**, and that would be the way to allow myself to teach myself the most as possible.

J: You went with the intention that it is going to transform you?

S: yes, yes.

J: And then was there an external factor next to what you described that made you want to "become someone else"... Not someone else, but..

S: Not necessarily someone else, but I think I was **searching for a certain type of peace**. I think I was **very stressed**, and I **had to process somethings**, and I know that yoga always gives me **peace of mind**, because you are being allowed to process things and observe things without judgement. So I think I was looking for that type of space, where I not necessarily could forcefully change myself, but where **I had the space to be myself**. With both positive and negative emotions.

J: Great answer. So you could say you were seeking for something bigger?

S: Yes, yes. I always do that, and still do.

J: As you kind of wanted to change from one to another not another stage, did you feel like there were skills that you needed to gain, that you expected you would get from going to such place?

S: Well I knew that I wanted to be a yoga teacher, so I knew that I was going to get **skills to teach**. So for me I think, because of when my first experience in the Netherlands with my yoga teacher training, I felt like it was a nice experience for me, but I didn't know how to teach. They never thought me how to teach. I felt like this teacher training has to be like a solid training, so you just know that when you finish that training, you are going to be a good teacher. So I expected to have a lot of solid knowledge about... well, not just about the philosophy of yoga, but also more about the physicality of yoga. So that you know how to teach people safely: physical wise, with the postures- and also how do you verbalise your cues; how do you make a yoga flow; how do you correct people when they're doing the postures in a non-beneficial way? So I think those were my expectations, because they were **very like practical**, in a way. **The format itself, so being able to go abroad for a certain amount of time, the format I chose was because I knew it would be personally good for me, to be away, and have like also that spiritual experience**. The practicality was that they needed to have a good quality teacher training to become a good teacher.

J: Because you ended in a different area, going abroad, different environment, did you feel like your comfort zone was stretched a lot?

S: Um, well I'm used to travelling, so in that sense it was okay for me. But I think my comfort zone was stretched a lot, because I was still very **insecure**, I guess? And I didn't feel comfortable with most of

the girls. They could be mean sometimes, um and for me it's always been a challenge to be with bigger groups of people, because you get very self-conscious and my **insecurities come up and in that sense I was stretching my comfort zone**, to no longer **feel the need to be liked**. And at a certain point, I let that **go, to belong**. As an example: I would say in a group that I wanted to go to lunch somewhere, and then they said "Oh yes that sounds, great let's all go together." And then by the time it was lunchtime, they left without me. So those type of things really hurt my feelings, and at a certain point I was like: okay I'm just not going to try anymore, to be liked, to belong, and then I just decided to start doing my own thing, and do what I wanted to do. I was no longer asking other people to come join me, and just had breakfast /lunch, wherever I felt like I wanted to go. And that **shifted things** for me, because as soon as I decided I didn't have to belong anymore, **I started to belong with myself**, so in that sense my comfort zone was stretched. And also, yeah, I was in a place where I felt the pressure of the stretch, but also in the end I allowed myself to stretch my comfort zone. So I got more comfortable with who I am, I would say. No longer being apologetic, or feeling like I need to be someone else to be liked or belong.

J: So it was a combination of action the yoga, your own knowledge and the environment in one. Did you have engagement with the environment, or not really?

S: I think not so much, because we were training, from morning till night: so the only time we had was a time to go and eat. So I would get out on the street, to have lunch and dinner and stuff. In that way I we had some connexion with the environment, and we did go on a surf trip once. Then we had one day a week, where we didn't have anything to do, but on those days I was so tired, I just wanted to relax. I didn't go on day trips or anything, so yeah I think we were **completely submerged in our own little bubble, doing yoga**.

J: Mm, so you went there really for the sake of being your own bubble, being with yourself and a supportive group around.

S: Yeah, I mean there were people that would on the off-days they would go on day trips to other places, but I felt like **it was already so intense**, that I needed that day of quiet. And not do more things, have more stimuli. I didn't have the type of energy level for it, and that's why I like that format, because I like being **submerged in one thing**. Because it's so much **more effective**.

J: And in terms of stimuli, do you feel like there is different ones, and in which one are they different than the environment you already know?

S: Well, first of all, because we were in a **different environment, so the whole energy feels different: the weather is different; the temperature is different; the food is different, you're not on your phone as much, because you're learning new things; you're moving your body a lot of hours of the day...** So there's of course still stimuli from all the people that are surrounding you, and have to learn all these new types of information from your teachers, but it's a different type of stimuli, then when you would be out in the street. Of course, there as well you have traffic and everything, but it's a new experience, it's a different type of traffic than in the Netherlands for instance. But you don't have your job to worry about, you don't have social media that much to worry about, yeah... Of course, you keep in touch with your family/ friends, but you're not... You're just in a completely different space, so everything is different. The type of stimuli is also different and that kind of like **rewires your brain**, because **you can't be on automatic pilot**, because you are in a completely new space.

J: So you have to change your habits for sure to adjust to that space. In terms of social contacts, can you describe how do you feel about the people that you met there? Do you feel like it's a different type of people going to those places or do they have specific similar characteristics?

S: I remember when I was doing that teacher training in Bali, I didn't really feel a connection with most of the people, unfortunately. I think also because I wasn't in that type of space. I do still have contacts with contact with some of them, just a few, that I felt okay with. Um but, I don't think I was in the right mindset to connect. And at the same time, I still feel like most of those people were not my type of people. I'm not really sure why. Well I know why we didn't match, but I'm not sure why there was such a big group of people that I didn't really connect with. **Because usually you come into space where people have the same type of mindset to learn.** Like, apparently you all want to learn yoga. I think maybe the concept of that the teacher training was kind of, pop, it wasn't very wishy washy. So it was very like down to earth and modern, and it looks really cool, so maybe also draw different types of people to a place like that, then if you would go to a very spiritual-looking yoga teacher training. **So I think the branding of the yoga teacher training also influences the type of people, and I think there were a lot of party type of people in that place.** But for instance, when I go to my teacher training for Budukon, it was such a big group of people, and **we were all very different, but at the same time I never felt more connected with a group of people** than there, because I felt like we **were really a family.** But I never experienced that at my teacher training in Bali. I think it really depends yeah, you never really know who's going to end up in your surroundings. And I think it really depends on the people, so every group is going to be different, every group of people is going to have a different vibe. And I think sometimes that you will feel like that works for you, and sometimes it won't, if that makes sense.

J: Yes, it does, and also what you said about the branding. How that is done, does affect the people that come there. If the pictures seem very modern and fancy, it will attract different people than if the beds look just normal. And about your mindset, if you're in such place, you should have to be in some kind of the right mindset that fits.

S: I think that you're right, and I think that they... There were a lot of young people in that group, so of course **most people that are young, they have a different type of consciousness,** if you will. I think that also makes a difference: if you're 21, most people look at life still different than if you're 28. so I think that also made the difference for me, that I was just a little bit... I wouldn't say more evolved, because that sounds very arrogant, but you're just in a different phase of your life. You're still not very conscious an out of looking at yourself, you're doing your personal work, looking at your triggers, or habits, how you treat people. And I think a big part of that group was not there yet, so then I that's why I felt like I didn't really belong or connected with them as much.

J: and in terms of environmental setting: What should be there for you to help deepen your connection with yourself?

S: Oh yeah, I think definitely nature: hearing the birds; hearing crickets; hearing the waves of the ocean, or feeling hot temperature from outside, just being **outside in the open air,** you know? Seeing trees, seeing green, a **cut-off from most of the electronics all day.** I think that really allows you to **connect more with yourself, because we are nature.** We've been so disconnected from nature itself, and therefore also from ourselves, because we no longer learn to listen... Just like with a plant: when you see the leaves are getting brown or they start to hang you know like oh \*\*\*\* I have to give them water, or I have to do something. Put it more in the shade, or in the sun, to make it flourish again. And it works the same with us: there are certain signs in our body that tell us we need to change things, mentally or physically. But because **we're so distracted** with all... with our job, with all the things we have to do, with the social media, TV, we are no longer connected to our nature. So **we miss our own cues,** our own leaves turning colour, or getting weak because we need water it. And if you're more in nature itself, you **learn to reconnect with those parts of you, to feel like, oh: What do I need? What do I want? (With) what do I feel?**

J: And with which parts did you reconnect?

S: Good question, it is so beautiful question. I felt... like I reconnected with accepting myself, that it's okay that I am different than most people. I always feel that it's hard for me to connect with other people, because I see the world in a certain way, I think different. People don't always understand me and I had to become okay with that. By allowing myself to be who I am, I felt more happy, because I didn't feel like I needed to be liked. I think because it's **so quiet there: in the sense that you don't have the distractions, you have time for introspection**. And that was a process that I could go through that time.

J: In terms of the process that you go through, what did you learn about your own physical body?

S: Yeah, I think I learned a lot from my teachers based on posture: what things to focus on, how to carry your body. That **everybody, literally every-body is different**. And that you can adapt any posture, so not to be as dogmatic just as in life, also not in postures. You don't have to put your hands like this, with your fingers straight to the front, if your shoulders are built a certain way: it's fine if your hands go outside a little bit more. Like, you have to listen to your body and **not focus on the perfect posture, but focus on how that posture can be made perfect for you**. That is really what I experienced during that training.

J: Okay, and in terms of mental, emotional state, was there something that you experienced, that for example you came across your own projections of yourself or something like that. And that you discovered that is how you think, and you are learning to think differently.

S: Hmm. Yeah, I felt I realised, there was one guy there that I really liked, but back then I was confused, because I didn't know why I liked him. But I think I didn't really like him, I just thought I did, because he made me feel like, it was okay to be myself. I think he wasn't really in a great state of mind, and me neither, and I think because he wasn't, I felt like it was okay for also for me to not be in a great state of mind at that moment. I think I didn't realise that, until after, but just the **whole process of having those feelings ignited that process within me**. Like okay, why do I feel so attracted to this guy, even though there's a part of me that also knows I don't really like him, but still I do...? So yeah, I think that was a process that I needed to learn sometimes you don't necessarily have to like people but, you feel safe with them for a reason or something.

J: You said it started to happen afterwards, so a general jump to another question: how did you usually process what happened?

S: I talked to friends and I wrote a lot. And I also read in books, I think at that time I was reading "The subtle art of not giving a fuck" of Mark Manson, I think also I like to read those type of books where you look at life, and psychology. Reading those type of books also always give me a lot of insight. If I'm struggling with one thing in that time it can sometimes offer perspective.

J: Just a quick thing, you did practise yoga and you went to yoga classes, but then why do you feel like you needed to go onto this yoga trip specifically?

S: Well, I really like to travel, I like to get away, I don't know if **it's running or if it's just getting new energy**. I like to be submerged in new experiences and be cut off from my previous life in a way, because I know it always **helps me grow** and it gives me **new meaning to life**, new energy, yeah... It's different than when you would do yoga for an hour.

J: Ahh, you need to be in the bubble. What did you consider as most mind blowing discovery or like dis oriental dilemma or change of perspective?

S: One of my teachers, well people call him the wizard, because he's very intelligent about the physicality of the body, being osteopath, but at the same time it's very spiritual and the way he looks at life, the things he told about energies and things he sees and the things he feels in other people's body. I did a treatment with him in his practise, and I wouldn't have found him if he wouldn't have been my teacher at that time during the teacher training. It made me experience that **there is a lot more to the body than we think**, like we just think the body is the body, like a physical thing. It's like an energy being, and I could experience that in that moment, because of the affect the treatment he had on me. That the effect of the treatment that it had on me, wasn't just the physical part, but also emotionally, in energetically, **something shifted**. So it really... that was for me that mind blowing experience, because it proves to me that **there is more than meets the eye**. That we can sometimes be so arrogant, that we think that only what we see is what's real, but there's so much more the things that we can feel, the things that we... yeah I would say, mostly feel with our body, physically or energetically. Some people even see things that we normally don't see, but it doesn't mean that it's not there. Just because we don't see it, or just because most people don't see it. I got to experience that layer in a way, that I would say was a mind blowing experience to me, because I felt like: okay, just because there is no proof, doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

J: Would you say like this, those three points: emotionally intensive, sensorially impressive, and cognitively stimulating, that those breaking points, are those. But I think it does sound sensorially impressive. Which beliefs of which values have been replaced, and what does it show you on the bigger picture? As in, that you attach different meaning to your life, what you think is important for you.

S: Everything has change in the sense that, um my happiness, **my authenticity, is more important than being liked or belonging**. So I would say one of my main values now is being authentic, being authentically me who I am. And that I no longer need to be liked to feel safe, but that I can feel safe by being me.

J: Would you say there are very specific points of turn as in specific key points or but you can see OK this is where something happened, this is where something happened, or would you say it is more organic. Because you just explained the one with energetic feeling.

S: Yes, that was definitely one big moment, but I'm not sure I realised it so much. Well I remember feeling like I was hit by a truck, the day after, like everything was sore and hurt and I felt like I didn't sleep in three weeks. But the **energy shifts came suddenly, and later**. So I think it's not just... It can be... **Sometimes it can be one big thing where you're like: Oeff, this is it**. Like when I was in Montana doing my budukon teacher training, there was this moment, where I sort of found my feminine power, sensuality. Like it was very specific moment that that happened; but I think during that time, the first real teacher training, being in the bubble abroad, I think it was just like a combination of things happening throughout that month. And then afterwards you start to process and things come together. **It wasn't like one specific thing, but I think that just depends on what you're working on, what you're going through, what's happening**. It can be either -or, but in my case in that teacher training or trip it was I think more a combination of things going through time. Overtime, started to shift and change also a lot of **processing afterwards, not just in that time but afterwards**.

J: I see, it can be both; happening in the moment and the realisation coming later. So what skill or habits or characteristic the has been with you after you returned home?

S: In my case being able to teach. Yeah I was really ready to start teaching, and I was really good at it.

J: Which habit or skill changed during the journey, but you couldn't sustain?

S: Meditating every day, it's hard to keep that up. I mean, I have times where I do meditate a lot, it's very peaceful to do that every day, but I'm not sure if we can really do that. **I'm not sure if it's realistic to expect ourselves to do that for the rest of our life. As we live** in a world where there is not always space to do that.

J: Would you want to go on a yoga related trip again?

S: yes, I would love to do like a regular or yoga trip for like a week or something, not to learn new things, but just as a **personal experience, to relax, come back to myself, and be centred again.**

J: And you were talking about different perspectives before, in a new environment, I'm not sure if we talked about this but can you tell me what you think about that

S: I think being away in a completely different environment allows you to change your perspective on things, and I think, if you want to change, or grow, it's what's necessary. Because if you do what you always did, you will get what you always got. So yeah, it is very valuable.

J: Nice ending, I have questions can I come back to you?

S: Of course. I want to add something, I would recommend it to anyone.

J: Why?

S: Because it's very valuable for your personal... happiness, I would say. For, yeah just, **becoming aware of who you are.** It is a beautiful process.



## F.5: Transcript Margaux Prada

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

M: Margaux Prada (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

*Short written text about conversation before starting.*

*... "So it can be community in yoga, can be community with like local communities like indigenous, can be community like surfing community, and yeah I did my thesis about that."*

J: The first question, is if you want to introduce yourself with your name and nationality and age, just simple.

M: OK so my name is Margaux Prada, I'm 25 and I'm French, I'm leaving Columbia at the moment since two years now almost.

J: And when did you do your first yoga related trip?

M: So my first real related... I don't know because, when I was in Cambodia, it's really the time when I started going back to practise yoga. And I was living in Cambodia so it's attributed, but after that, my first like trip where I was like I want to go in a place where I'm doing yoga every day and it's part of the plan and it's part of the trip it: was in Thailand and I think it was in 2018, before covid.

J: that was the first time that you decided to practise yoga? Or you practise yoga before that and then you decided you want to deepen?

M: yeah, I was practising yoga before. I think like 10 years ago, like my mom literally forced me to do yoga because I was stressed for, even like school and stuff like that. And she was like, hey why you don't try yoga? I was like hmmm, (I was fifteen) so I was just like... It's for old people. I was literary with people like my mum age in the in the course, so I was like no this is not for me, so I quit yoga. And then, when I was doing my first internship abroad, like in Cambodia, one of my friends she opened yoga shala. Then I went back to yoga; my teachers were from India, from the US, from every part of the world, it was amazing for me to experience all this practice. Then six months after that, I went back to Paris. I continue yoga in Paris, in a studio and stuff. And then at some point I did a trip to Thailand, at this point I did a yoga retreat, this was really yoga related. After that, I always have done like yoga related trips.

J: What was your drive, when you went back to Paris, to search for a yoga related location?

M: Well it was more like I was planning to go to Thailand for one month, and I was like yeah what I'm going to do in Thailand? I didn't have any plan, so I met someone, German girl, and she told me you have to try yoga retreat, as you will you're travelling alone and you love yoga, man it's your place! And I've done that, I really like last minute searching like a nice yoga retreat, not too fancy, **like a yoga retreat where you cannot use your phone during the week, where you really are in the yoga practise**, in meditation and everything. And I found this place in Thailand and **it changed my life after that**. Yeah, it was really nice experience, I love it.

J: Can you can you say in in key points what was life changing about it?

M: I think this is where I learn about your **community travelling**, you know? **I open myself, I learn to be like vulnerable but i a nice way**. I saw like so many nice people, like, really kind inside. I make so

**deepest friendship**, like in one week I make those super deep friendship and we still in contact and they're **all over the world**. It's so cool, to be honest, it was one week. **It was so intense**, and also about my practise, I **learned that I really love meditation**. I was doing a lot like the physical practise of yoga and there I learn to meditate. **I tried to see the world differently**, you know? And I loved it. And then I was like just, lots of love, it was really cool. And after that I tried to find the same place, but I didn't, to be honest. Because it was so their style of doing yoga retreats and stuff, and the place was really cool. It was not like just a typical yoga place, they made it like super cool. They just inspired me a lot. I mean I want to do something like really similar to them, now. I've also been to Morocco, to do a retreat and surfing retreat. I've been to Portugal, doing the same. But it will never be the same, because it was the first one, and I guess it was just like wow. I did it here, I've done like 3-4 yoga weekends, like really short time, because I don't have very much time whilst working. I love it, I love yoga. I love the fact that also about yoga retreat is like, **you taking care of your body**. I really like the fact that you're paying to take care of yourself, and you are here to take care of yourself, and you have this time to take care of yourself - **and those habits that we forget**, even if we do yoga, we will forget that. And that's just a reminder for your body and your soul: "hey just go back to this, it's a practice, you can just practise 20 minutes a day, it's fine. Just like **going back to yourself** and I'm just... everyone should do that that at least one time a year, you know? Just to reset everything in. Yeah... I love yoga.

J: And you said, meeting people, do you feel like the people that go to those places; those weekends, or full retreats for a longer time, that they have specific characteristics that other people don't have?

M: I don't know, because I think I have like another vision of yoga now. Still I love yoga, but I went back to the physical practise: I love the flow. I went back to the less spiritual practise, because I noticed here- not in Thailand, because I was in another state of mind. I think everyone in Thailand **would have something that we want to work on ourself**. Like sadness, anger, some traumatising stuff that we experience and **we are aware** of. That we want to somehow find a way to **work on it, accept it**, and everything. So I think in Thailand all the people were like that, like aware of something that they want to do. But a lot of people there, weren't practising yoga. Like they practiced meditation but not yoga, so it was like super cool, because we were like **exchanging stuff**, working on... speaking about everyones practise. But here, it's really different vision of yoga in Colombia- and I think in Latin America like most for Colombia and also Mexico. It's like super spiritual: they use a lot of, you know cacao ceremony, stuff that are really indigenous. And I'm just like man, I don't know if it's cool or not but they really like, stole a lot from the indigenous people. And I don't know if it's cultural stealing, if it's kind if it's nice for them to do. Because in Mexico, it is a lot of like US expat or travellers that do like the cacao ceremony and I'm just like, "guys, this is not from your country, this is really deep inside the indigenous community." And there is more, here the ayahuasca. I think people here are somehow close minded, because they were just doing yoga with some Indian personage guru and Jesus, I was like man that's weird. I know but, actually they really... if you see the stuff, it's really similar. The spirituality of yoga, the pantajali stuff with Jesus, it's really connected. And when I saw that, I was like, I don't know if I still want to go on this spiritual stuff, because I feel that it is sect. They were not accepting the other, I mean, we were eating and I was trying not to connect with them, and it was just like super closed. And I was like OK... Why am I here? I just wanted to be in a nice place and see some people I could like, just escape but.. I don't know it was super weird.

J: So it wasn't a good place, no?

M: No, I mean the place was super nice, like beautiful, that was cool, it was a different yoga. I've never done that really Indian based yoga. But it was too much, too much. They were always singing like mantras in Hindi, some super weird...

J: Ah, I see. I did my YTT in India, but happily my location was quite sober, not that we were chanting all the time at all. Once we had a chanting-workshop. I guess it also really depends on which organisation you choose to work with, because I guess also the more... At least you really have to look into where you want to do it, because otherwise you get those expats that maybe don't care that much, at the end of the day want to sleep in a huge king size bed. You also have retreats like that, but that's not the type of retreat that I would like to go to, because it doesn't go to the core.

M: It was interesting to see the connection with Catholic religion. Also with the teacher training there is always something with Jesus, always. And im just a bit mmm. There was some book, actually, connecting yoga philosophy with Jesus philosophy. I'm just like woah that's cool. The profile here was like not that kind as I've experienced, even in Portugal in Morocco. Because those people were really serious, and I really felt I was in sect. And at this point I still practice yoga and everything, but I'm super picky with where I'm going. I'm always going **to American based teacher, because I love how they almost all done their school in India**, and I love how they combine yoga with a lot of physical flowing stuff, but also like the spirituality so I'm always going to those people. Because in in Thailand, the teachers, the guy was from the US, and the girl was from Austria, so super cool. So yeah... **the profile of the people that do yoga, can be different**. In France, they are "hey I'm doing yoga", and it's really not affordable, man this is not the principle of yoga. Sorry, I'm speaking a lot.

J: But it's true, some people indeed go for how it looks on the outside, as the yoga teacher training, it's just different than if you actually take the knowledge and implement it somehow. Everyone has their own thing, that makes it diverse. Before you said, "oh it's really intense", would you say that your experiences when you go on such retreat or trip or course, that the things you experience are more intense than daily life?

M: Yeah, for sure. It's going down, it's more deep as well. I mean, trying to put everything we have on our presence normal daily life in just being focused on me. And try to actually understand what is good for me. **Not being surrounded by the life, but being surrounded by me**.

J: Would you say there was some curiosity or something that aspired to not really become someone else, but to change in a way? Was there a dilemma, and a feeling you need to know more, or what was your initial drive.

M: I think first was physically. Like I did yoga, I was doing a lot of sport before I was swimming when I was young, I do a lot of sporting stuff, but never done like ballet, or gym or whatever, **I was só inflexible**. I mean, I think it was about to just touch my knees, when folding forwards. Yoga was first physical, and I was like "wow, this is my body", wow, I have **learned to understand the body first**, and then I felt like "**wow I feel super high**", like most of the time after the yoga session. I was like, why I'm super high? I felt so relaxed and like everything is in line. And then I was like, "What is that?", so I was searching about yoga, chakra's, energies, and point of energies, what the posture brings you, and then came meditation. "Wow, that's amazing" and then came **being kind to each other**, and **seeing yourself in the other**, and then become all the deep stuff, like the personal work and find your **dark parts** you know, that I've done that, so yeah. So yoga brings me to all these parts and really spiritual stuff. I can see **myself from the outside**, and I was experienced at the yoga. I was like "woah that's cool, that's beautiful". And then I changed my life, I've become vegetarian, I'm not anymore vegetarian Haha ooops It is complicated in latin America. I've experienced drugs, psychedelic drugs, and then yeah all of this was not linked to yoga, but at some point yoga really brings me like a lot. I read a lot of Osho, about your life and stuff and at some point I was a bit too much. I was really too much, because I wanted to change everyone. I don't know if it happens to everyone, but I was like, "hey, you have to do yoga" or "hey dude, why you're not so kind with the other", like "yoga is life: if you're not doing yoga you're \*\*\*\*\*". I was almost like this. And then some of my friends just let me, and just... "Man

this is your practise, this is what you love, and its cool, but you cannot force every one, and it is everyone's path." As in, working on our troubles and stuff. And yeah, then I changed. I'm on the physical, because somehow I'm not afraid of spirituality, but I don't want to fall down again on this.. you know extreme vision "of you have to be vegetarian if not you're \*\*\*\*". I was really mad with people, with my parents, I was like asking them to buy everything organic. I mean... there is no one way of living your life, you can live your life differently. And you just have to let everything come in, and don't keep your friend behind because they're not like you. And now I also do pole dance! Which is really linked to yoga.

J: In which way, would you say?

M: You are aware of your body, strength, focus such as breathing stuff. And also combination of surfing and yoga is the best. For me, everything is **made for complementing. You are aware of how you breathe and the movements are with the breathing, and this is my best favourite part of yoga.**

J: Let me see the next question, yeah so: this is looking back at when you before you started with the yoga related trips did you feel, or see, that there were necessary skills that he would gain at those yoga places for your own future development. It can be skill, a way of behaviour, attitudes, characteristic...

M: yes yes yes yes yes yes. I think like attitude... everything. I think just yoga travels, as I told you it's not just in to practise yoga, it was like all the vibe there; actually being in community, and after that, I was like I know how to act with community, and I know how you know travelling can be cool and travelling alone can be so... You are not lonely at all. **Just like being more aware of yourself, thanks to yoga, helps your whole life.** Like being more positive, maybe in somehow being **aware of catching like those emotions** and those were always here, but you don't really get them before. All this that small steps, but yeah, definitely changed my life, and it changed how I was acting with others, with myself... I really want everyone to experience that.

J: Why?

M: Because at some points my mom just started yoga, I was -of course- sending my mom do more yoga. She stopped because she got two cancers, and now this year she came back to yoga, and I'm so proud of her. And she told me, yeah it changed my life. Even those little things that we have in our body, like little tensions that we don't really know what is it, and you can go to your chiropractor, but it's still the same. And then you do your yoga and it turns out it is just emotionally like connecting. Just put it out. Yeah, for me it's super important that people travel with that, practise that.

J: in a way of seeing the world different, as you mentioned earlier, in which way did you see it different?

M: I don't know if it is just yoga, also travelling in those places that are really different than Europe, travelling differently. The place where I did yoga was really like, we do yoga altogether, but we also clean the dishes, we also do karma yoga stuff, we help each other we, were not like here like in the chill away. It changed my vision of the world, there is **good in everyone OK. In just the way you are you interacting with people, just change the way they act with you.** And just being more chill, I just saw that also like people can be super cool. Like sometimes, we ourselves, are the one that are really closed. **If we don't like someone, is just because this person has the same stuff that we have.** And that's for me... that's really the point. I meant to be like more kind with my friends, family and stuff, after like I've been to the extreme part of my yoga period. **Being more understanding of everyone's visions.** I think also people saw that. I listen to the people, trying to go more deep on what they want,

but also if they don't want to speak- don't speak with them. You know, like those stuff? The yoga shows me that, also the vision of nature. I know **how the body and the mind is connected** and I can see that in the people as well, people are nice. I think yoga taught me that.

J: We already talked about social contact, you mentioned nature as environmental connectedness, but does it matter for you a lot that you do this, instead of practising yoga just for yourself? Is it the discipline that you get there, or to push, to really look into it again? Or what is it that you search for in those moments?

M: I think I search for.. literally everything. Like, to be honest, I search for yoga, as well-being **reconnect to myself, and also connect to the others, to nature.** I'm living in the city so most of the time, just like in my life like this, and going. When I want to do yoga retreat I want to be in the middle of nowhere, and **feel this energy of everything.** I the energy around, the energy of the others. Let myself being a bit more vulnerable, like just and find some answers. Most of the time, this is why I'm doing yoga. Lately is just to re-connect back to who I am. Mostly in the city, we don't... What people will think about me, like all the stuff that you can have in the city, and connect back to what I really want in my life, what I really need. **That's the point of yoga retreat, is really like personal trip to myself,** and I really need this. This is the time of the year, where I'm just, I want to travel for myself. I can travel the rest of the year and whatever, but if I do yoga retreat, it's really like **"hey, I want to connect back to myself."** I just want to be me with me, and other people of course, but just have a **one on one situation with myself, and see what's going on.** I think it's really how also other people travel with yoga, you know, **I think it's to reconnect back to what they want.** I did go on a small retreat a month ago, this is what I saw in other people, is like this. We have a life, **we're going super-fast, we're working, and then sometimes we just need to stop, like break this, and see what we need.** Because sometimes yeah we are in situations and we just go, and go, and go.

J: So do you think more people will go on trips like that in the future anyway, because indeed there is this everything is happening, maybe more people want to relax and come to themselves.

M: I think it's more than relaxation, it's just like training time with ourselves. "Hey what's going on", there also some people, I really.. some of my friends who do yoga with me and they really don't understand the energy, chakras, and they really don't want to understand me, which is also fine, I think it's gonna be like democratised, but also it can be cool that just people practise for themselves in some way. Just for themselves to help them, if they have back pain or stuff like that, to see yoga as a nice and cool medicine, that yoga becomes as normal as drinking water. I think world is going to democratise yoga, and if it's good, I don't know, if it's bad- everyone should find their way but it can help people some why, it's for sure it can help people, and that's really important as well.

J: if they can want to see that at least. Is there something specific that you learned about your own emotional state, when you go on those trips?

M: Yeah for sure, I learned that I was like super angry inside. I'm going to have to work on this stuff.

J: Oh what were you angry, do you know, if I may ask?

M: Yeah, well, I don't know... Like I think some stuff in my life, that from before, and I'm just stays with. But it's more deep inside, I think like took me more than one yoga trip to do this. But I think **I learn with yoga to be just more chill sometimes:** I have this time when I have this anger, and that's okay, it's part of myself, and I'm just accepting it. Because in some breathing exercise, doing like even just five minutes of yoga, being in my mind it just helped me a lot. Recommend it. **With yoga I learned the emotional state is linked to our body and we need to practise,** I mean this is the stuff. And if

people can travel, and practise at the same time, I think it make it even more beautiful. Like the trip is even more life changing, because you can go to Hawaii, you can go to Argentina, and it's fine and it's cool you will see a beautiful stuff, but you have to **put yourself inside**. Even if it's not yoga, just doing like a really nice climbing or stuff like that, **it's life changing as well. Because you have to connecting with your body again**. It's not just going to the beach, sure that's pleasant but also surfing, because surfing as well you connects to your body and yourself again, and climbing is the same, running is the same. I think everything is kind of the same effect, but yoga as this spiritual, beating in fact, in deep stuff inside, that is beautiful.

J: Nicely said, it is also connected to the idea that the strongest human journey is an inner one. I also looked into hiking, because hiking also makes you focus, to meditate in your head- and surf therapy. Surfing is seen as that as well, you constantly have to deal with whatever life throws at you: sometimes you fall and you have to get up again and sometimes waves are big, sometimes they are small. Dealing with external situations.

Anyways, in terms of your body, physical body, did you did you learn something that you didn't know before, or the way you looked at your physical body changed?

M: Oh yes, Oh yes, way more acceptance. Way more. I pushed myself too much in yoga, and yoga is not that chill. Everyone says yoga is so chill, it depends on which yoga you practice but it is not about chilling. You stand in a pose for minutes, ashtanga pretty hard, hot yoga is pretty pretty hard. I'm just like, it can be the vision of yoga you have, but on my side I get like several injuries because of yoga, and because I had this not competitive mind. But.. like I will push myself, I can do this, I can go. No! I cannot do this, and I cannot go that far. So I just learned to be like patient, because yoga is a real practises. And like you said, like surfing: sometimes you have big waves, you have small waves, and you will fall, you will catch this beautiful wave and it will be amazing and the next day it can be like a mess. And yoga is the same. And also, like, at the beginning, I had this vision of my body of yeah all the yoga personal super skinny, and they don't eat anything, and they are super healthy. I change again you, I can be with muscles, because also I met those teacher, and I'm really inspired by them, because they do a lot of hand stands and stuff. This is also linked to poledance. I like the strength. I will just eat more, because I want to have more strength for several activities that I'm doing, and yoga helped me a lot in this, I understand I have to be a bit more gentle on myself, like all the flexibility works, I have to be gentle.

J: ahh so it also reflects your way of life, it sounds like it was a mirror.

M: yeah yeah, "if I don't do this perfect, its stupid, I'm bad", It is so important... I mean, you will fall, and you won't have the position right away, and you will fall again, and someday it's harder than other day, and that's OK. You just have to be not super stubborn, but you have to be gentle with yourself, and go to go where you have to go today. And maybe tomorrow you will be so strong that will make it directly. But you don't have to be frustrated, and I think with yoga.. I was doing that much, trying to prove to myself that I can do it. "yeah, if you can do it, you can do everything." I'm just like no man, I think now the most important in yoga is to learn to how you cannot do it. Be okay and accept that this I cannot do, it and I will work on it. I have to be consistent with my work and with my practise. **The teacher won't let you push you too much**. It shows your boundaries you have. **And every body is different**, some people can do nice hip-openers and this is their body and some other people can do some stuff with their legs because their body. It's like this. **And just knowing the body, in this vision to know where you have to be gentle, I think it's the most super important stuff in yoga**. In yoga classes, the teacher cannot see everyone, and in some positions I see myself like going in, and really like painful movement, and obviously the teacher wasn't aware of that because I was just "yeah its fine, its fine". Even if you don't like the spiritual stuff, so even if you do like other sports, I always tell them, do yoga. Like really it's the best, you can use it for everything.

J: So you're still inspiring people to go into it. But it makes sense, because also cyclist they should know when they cross their own boundaries.

M: Yes, exactly, it also helps to extend the muscles and yeah that's complementary, everything is complementary. And a lot of people will say, I won't do yoga, because I'm not flexible, because they saw on social media that those yoga people look like it. I think yoga is for everyone, is just like, finding the right kind of yoga and have trust in yourself, interest in the journey.

J; indeed, it's not the goal to be flexible, it's more the goal you start to feel what you can do and what not.

M: Yeah, it is the point to work with your body. It is going to serve you for everything. In the bus, working. But I also hope that the perception of yoga will change because I have some friends, not the skinniest in the world, but the body-shape stuff and they don't want to practice yoga because they think it doesn't fit. They are afraid everyone will look at them when they go to yoga class. I really want to fight for yoga to be a practise for oneself, is not like a group. Just being kind with each other, and not being in this competition, that "hey I can put my legs behind my hair" that's not the point. Or I'm super skinny, and I'm doing like all these juicy stuff, all these details, because I'm yoga teacher.

J: I see, we have that knowledge that is not okay, but for people that don't know yoga yet, or didn't try for them it's more something that scares them away, because indeed they think they should look like that. You're just showing up, for you.

M: I mean doing yoga is really hard, and **you're gonna sweat, and you will find someplace in your body that you don't even know that was existing. it's just interesting for the journey for you**, yeah. There is all this, it's a pity not everyone just goes and practise this, seeing what they love.

J: I agree, maybe it just takes a while and then people are starting to change around it. Sometimes people need to see the effect on others or to experience a profound moment themselves in order to change habits.

Which values and believes have been replaced, have we talked about that already a bit? That you started to have a different meaning on life, after such trip.

M: How to just let it go, and also the present moment. I think this is the something I really... not failure, but it's hard to, you know, let go to the stuff and not being too much on the on the mental.

J: I think there were some moments that you suddenly realised, or get different perspective or you question your own perspective- where they for example emotionally super intense, or in terms of senses very strong, and people made you think, or what were some key factors of those moments to you?

M: Really **intense, definitely really, really intense. Emotionally people, really make me think about life**. Some people, like X-people, like I don't know them, you met them in this moment. Super intense stuff, with yoga. I **never been able to crying in front of people and in yoga Retreat I can, it's easy**. In this this moment, just realised some stuff in life an just want to work on some stuff in life. Those moments really help me. Literally I was really on drugs before I've done the first yoga retreat, and I just realised after that, that it was not that good for my health and for me. And at one retreat I met this guy from Australia and I didn't speak to him, he said, look at me in the eyes and he told me "I know what you feel, I know why, I know somehow why you here. He was not even a yoga teacher, it was just part of the retreat. We had to work in circles, stare someone in the eyes and tell them what

we see. And this guy told me that, and I was like “wow, that’s big”. Then after that, well I was like yeah, no drugs. Is not good for me, is not good for my body, is not good for my mental health, I will have health issues if I still keep on going on do this. After that, I stopped, like this. I stopped all toxic relationships, I just stopped from there. So it was really a life changing experience. I learn a lot and I also accept a lot it's, okay to not be perfect. Just if it's really bad for you, work on it. Yeah. Life changing. I want to go back. Actually I wanted to do my teaching training with them, next June but I will be here. I don't know I just want to try here and see but, I'm pretty sure in my life I will go back there. I am 100% sure, we’re still in contact.

J: probably the moment you can go, is the right moment for you to go there. So what experiences do you remember from this trip that order very specific turning points, just like you described above here? Where you for example let go old borders or discover new perspectives. Do you think this change happens in points of or gradually, when you reflect after wards?

M: Everything was really life changing, you know you **receive love**, I was able to feel that people was **really honest**, and stuff and they were like really nice words in some places in your room or whatever. I still have everything from this retreat, the words, the books. I do reflect on this even on this. I saw it like a month ago, I was like yeah my intention is to go to Colombia and at this point I was really not into Colombia. I mean now I'm in Colombia and that was my intention. This retreat was really making me reflect, but also there I, mean it was **like really intense, emotionally it was intense. We were all crying, from deep inside**. And even after that, the pictures of the end of the retreat we are all like super glowing, we all went super deep inside. And we connect to everyone, I mean, it was one of the most beautiful retreat, because it was it was true. I think, it was really true. **It was life changing on the moment and then and then after that**, it was really life changing.

J: and what type of emotions would you say is it more is it more happy or it is a mixture of everything?

M: Everything, releasing happiness, sadness, love, everything. it was intense in all kind of way. I also tried to do this with my friends, you know, give them some love... and I OK it doesn't work as I wanted to do, they thought it was weird. **After that retreat it was hard, because I was in this state of mind that everything is cool**, and then you have to go back - to somehow you have to go forward, maybe. I told you, like you can be in this super happy state of mind, and people are maybe not in the same mood. It was hard because I was really like so full of love, full of I want to be good with people, I really want my friend to feel good, feel loved you know, family as well. Everyone is not for this. I had to re-protect myself in some way. I will do this for me. If the people want to learn about this, OK, but if they don't, just keep it for me. It was the big down face, I would say, of this retreat, because **I was that full of love, I wanted everyone to be happy and experience the same. Now I realise that not everyone is ready, firstly and not everyone can do this**. It's not easy to speak to a stranger that you never met before from Australia, and just tell him that the worst thing... something that you're really ashamed of... it was hard.

J: And in terms of your comfort zone or was it stretched, or can you pinpoint in which way it has been stretched. You just mentioned talking to someone you don't know as a point that takes you out of your comfort zone, but what more?

M: the moment that was most hard is where we have to be really honest with ourselves, and with others. “I just don't want to talk about this” but you will have to. Like, really not comfortable and also like the meditation for me was really hard, because I had so much in my head and sometimes I feel it like super painful today. Like man, no, it was like **almost a torture** for me, many days at the beginning, because I was really like thinking about all this. The moments where we did not speak, were the



hardest because I was most in my head. But then I learned. Oh yeah, we had to wake up at 5:00 AM and that was not the best you know comfortable situation in the world different.

J: how did you reflect upon it, what is your way of reflecting?

M: I **write a lot, I read a lot, I was reading a lot after that**, like yoga books. About the muscles of the body, physical body parts... Osho, everything. There were books so I bought them. I was writing a lot at this time, like **reflecting what happens in the body and how I feel, the changes in the body**, changing in the mind. I'm still doing this and it's very cool and I love that.

J: So do you think there's a difference in yoga trips and surf trips in the way how you process it.

M: I think yoga trips could be really deep, like really, really deep. You go deep inside and you have to cry a bit, and then surf trip, the difference... it's more chilled to do a surf trip, it will be hard physically, because you will do lots of movement but you won't go deep deep deep inside. **This is what yoga has, and other stuff don't have.** Also, I think, that if you don't experience travelling with yoga, you won't have this experience, you know. And I'm pretty sure of that, you have this moment where you are completely like out of this, at least like three days you won't go that deep inside as you can do. **If you don't have like a trip with yoga, I don't think just practising yoga would give you this opportunity to go deep inside.** Definitely people that like yoga would think about, going just one time in their life to 1 retreat or weekend. Every retreat can be fine, it's just, like, I think the phone... Get rid of the phone. If you're working on something super important OK. **But don't have your phone.** Something I also learned there, phones are horrible. When you get travel this step, a bit forward, like in a bit more deep inside your practise of yoga, definitely.

J: To lose outside connection?

M: Yeah, for WhatsApp, you're always in connexion with someone, somehow. I think 30 minutes a day is perfect, because well, if it's a one month you know teaching training it's long and you still have to send some news to your parents.

J: and you're also more your own bubble if you don't have the phone because, otherwise you will get distracted all the time, not deepen as much. That's why I don't like the whole super fancy places, with big beds, because it's not about that specifically. It depends where you go for, because if you don't want to go that deep, and you still want luxury and good food..

M: think I am exactly like you, I like the place I send you, in Costa Rica, I felt it is it's nice, it's beautiful, there is a swimming pool and stuff - but this is really not my vision of yoga. It's super hard to find like a yoga retreat, like nowadays they're all almost all fancy and it's pretty hard to find one that is like how I experienced it, **more authentic, no swimming pool.**

J: I think it also differs if you know someone who went there because they can talk about how was the process there.

M: Also this is something with yoga retreat, I mean yoga travel is something but yoga teaching training is a lot. There is so much options that we don't even know what you expect to experience, you know?

J: That's why I liked it to go, because I also went to a place that someone else in my environment knew, and then I know okay, it will be fine. Otherwise there are so many places that you can go to, and I wouldn't know how to choose which one is like the best or correct or most suitable.

M: yeah I think this is how it works, it's not that cheap, retreat as well, can be expensive, really expensive in Europe. Everything is an experience, but if you have a place where it's really not your type, like fancy yoga, why am I here.. lot's of offer. Yeah that is still good is still good to **experience like the travelling with yoga, it makes it put a purpose on a trip. The community experience with people**, whatever community- is the most important stuff. I don't want expensive, I want cheap. It is about the people that you are surrounded by. I don't want to travel for the best luxurious place, what you remember is the connection. Yoga is the first step and the most beautiful connection.

J: The meaning of Yoga is Unity, as well right, so that makes sense.

D: Yes, the **feeling of belonging**, even if we don't belong to the same stuff, and the same country, the same culture... we're all the same. And right now, we're all sharing a moment. It is so cool to remember that, it makes beautiful memories.

J: on that last note, I want to ask if you want to receive copy when I'm done?

M: Yeah, sure please! Please.

J: In terms of privacy, I'm planning to only write your full name in Appendix, not in the report itself. That will be numbers, is that okay?

M: Ooh, don't worry about it at all. Also, if you want me to clarify something, or know more about the experience, let me know.

## F.6: Transcript Geertrui Denecker

(Transcript in Dutch)

December 12th, 2022

G: Geertrui Denecker (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: De eerste vraag gaat over of je jezelf, wil je je introduceren met je naam en je waar je vandaan komt, je leeftijd?

G: Ja, mijn naam is Geertrui Denecker, ik ben van België en heb ja meer dan helft van mijn leven woon ik nu al in Gent, waar ik gestudeerd heb. Ik ben een wetenschapper, dat is wel heel belangrijk in mijn yoga carrière: ik doe al 10 jaar yoga en 3 jaar yoga teacher.

J: Wat voor wetenschapper?

G: moleculaire biologie, biotechnologie, ja ik vergelijk mij altijd: je hebt zoveel teachers die heel spiritueel zijn, en dan heb je mij die zo wat meer back down to earth is, en ik zou niet zeggen dat ik de yoga wetenschappelijk benader, maar ik ben heel methodisch en structureert en veel mensen houden daar wel van, want niet iedereen houdt van spirituele eventuele zweverige yoga. Veel mensen dat gewoon doen om bezig te zijn op een gezonde manier met hun lichaam, dus deze doelgroep wil ik vooral bereiken eigenlijk.

J: Wanneer ging je weg voor je eerste yoga gerelateerde trip reis?

G: Ik denk dat ik toen twee of 3 jaar yoga deed, dus ik had wel eerst voldoende yoga gedaan om mijn eerste retraite te doen. **Omdat yoga is super tof maar ook wel duur, dus qua hobby of passie, dus je moet wel, als je zo een retreat wilt doen, niet zomaar in het niets springen vind ik.** Dus ik denk dat ik twee jaar yoga deed of zo, vooraleer ik mijn eerste retraite en die was meteen in Sri Lanka, in een ecodorp. Dus dat was het oerwoud, fantastisch.

J: Hoe kwam je bij deze locatie?

G: Mijn eigen teacher van België, van Gent, die gaf daar een retraite twee weken en ik ben een week geweest naar hinder.

J: Wat maakte je starten met yoga en waarom wou je graag die reis ondernemen?

G: Ik ben eigenlijk gestart via een vriendin, die zei laten we het uitproberen. Meteen de eerste les was ik verkocht, gebruikte ik spieren die ik normaal nooit gebruikt had en ik was direct gepassioneerd. Dus ik deed maar 1 maal yoga in de week en toen deed ik die retraite, dus direct **onderdompeling**, een week lang yoga 's morgens, en 's avonds elke dag. Toen ik daarna terugkwam heb ik wel onmiddellijk gezegd, ja ik wil meer dan eenmaal in de week les volgen en uiteindelijk 4 keer. Ik was echt wel gepassioneerd, dat heeft geleid naar nog een aantal retreats verder ben ik na 6 jaar yoga volgen mijn eerste teacher training gedaan, in vinyasa en Antwerpen, heb ik dit teacher training gedaan, dus was een heel intense training waar ik heel veel had heb, en dan denk ik twee jaar later heb ik een teacher training gedaan in Bali voor ja telkens 200 uur eigenlijk. En ik geloof 4 keer met dezelfde leraar geweest, maar ook in India zo in Goa in een retraite Center geweest, heb ik ook gedaan, wat ook heel leuk was. Maar das dus geen teacher training he, dat is echt puur 200uur training en retraite is een retraite. Een training is echt een vorming van jezelf.

J: Oh wil je iets meer vertellen over het verschil?

G: Ja, een **retreat heeft meer de nadruk op ontspanning** en een training ja, wil je bijleren maar op de retreats wil ik ook altijd bijleren hoor. Vaak onthoud ik de les, nieuwe les, oh interessant, een lesje opschrijven en thuis nog eens bekijken. Ja dus retreat kan ook wel een beetje ontspanning en toch wat dingetjes bij leren zijn, als je die intentie dan hebt.

J: En voordat je voor de eerste keer dan naar Sri Lanka ging, of naar een andere locatie, was er toen elke keer een specifieke intentie waarmee je weg ging, een soort drive?

G: Nee de dingen was wel combinatie van **"Ik wil naar een ander land gaan om me een week onder te dompelen,"** Ik ben al alleen geweest op retreat en mijn vriendinnen, soms ga je ook naar een retreat specifiek, omdat het daar op die plaats is, bijvoorbeeld in Italië ben ik ook al op een retreat geweest, en ja ik had dat ergens gelezen in de happiness, die je waarschijnlijk wel kent, en ik dacht "wauw daar wil ik eens naar toe, dit lijkt mij een magische plaats," Soms ga je ook op retreat om op een magische plaats te zijn. Dan mis je in België, of in Nederland misschien ook wel. **Dan mis je wel een beetje zo het magische aan de natuur, kan je wel wat missen, de warmte mis je ook van vaak in België en Nederland.** Voor mijn teacher training in Bali vond ik **dat fantastisch, de gehele maand in de warmte zitten: je kan dingen met je lichaam doen,** dat je een België niet kan, omdat je door de kou stijver bent. Dus je kan jezelf wat meer uitdagen ook, door de warmte. Goh, specifieke spirituele intenties had ik niet, wel meer ontspannen. Voor retreats, wil ik me wel een week onderdompelen, genieten.. Ja iets bijleren ook wel, een andere manier van lesgeven zien.

J: Dat magische van de natuur, wat maakt het magisch voor jou.

G: Veel van die retreat centers zijn wel in een magische plaats hé. Ik ben al op twee plaatsen geweest in Sri Lanka bijvoorbeeld, de ene was echt midden in het land en het jungle en ecodorp, dat is dan echt een magische plaats, de andere retreat plaats was dicht bij de zee. Dat was ook tof, ondanks het feit dat dat ook midden in de rijstvelden en bij de jungle. Ik hou van reizen ook, ja dat is misschien ook wel een belangrijk aspect in mijn leven, ik houd van reizen en ver weg gaan. Dat is wel een belangrijk aspect in mijn leven.

J: Ging jij ook weg met het idee om een soort van anders te worden?

G: Nee, niet echt. Ik wou wel anders zelf bouwen en daardoor anders worden, hè een betere versie van mezelf, maar niet zo... Meer in de yoga context, beter kunnen worden in het mensen helpen, dat is ook mijn motivatie in het yogales geven. En om dat dan zo goed mogelijk te kunnen doen, **dat is meer een drive voor mij maar om mezelf te veranderen, daar anders te zien uit te komen, nee. Daar ben ik misschien anders in dan andere mensen, maar niet iedereen is het zelfde.**

J: Zocht je naar een soort existentiële duidelijkheid?

G: Nee, ik ben me al bewust van mezelf ja. Ik hoef niet meer te worden. Ik wou wat bijleren van andere mensen, dat is ook wel tijdens het teacher training in belangrijk, **dat je meerdere studenten leert kennen en hun manier van het leven aanpakken,** en ze leert kennen, dat vind ik wel belangrijk. Het is niet dat ik daar helemaal niet voor opensta, maar dat ook niet dat ik daar zelf naar op zoek ga.

J: Want bijvoorbeeld het sociale contact bij van die retreats of yoga teacher centers, is dat anders dan het contact dat je hier met mensen hebt?

G: Ja... Dat is wel best intens, omdat je samen bent met een groep van de ene keer 35 en de andere keer 51, dus je hebt zo 8 waar al groepsgevoel mee hebt. Dat is wel leuk, je zit **allemaal met dezelfde intentie in de les, ja dat vind ik wel belangrijk**.

J: Heb je ook het idee dat iedereen die daarheen komt een soort zelfde karakteristieken heeft?

G: Nee, ik voel mij meestal nogwat allemaal verschillend van de rest ja, net door dat feit omdat ik nogal wetenschappelijk aangelegd ben. Sommige yoga teachers inderdaad volgen dat, om hun existentiële ik te vinden, hun spiritualiteit te verbreden, ja ik voel dat met een andere reden. Dus als best wel interessant om die mensen te leren kennen, maar ik vind het sociale contact belangrijk om over de training zelf te kunnen praten: wat vind je belangrijk.

J: je zei in het begin al dat je, er vanaf een andere manier in, wat is dan volgens jou anders dan misschien de gemiddelde persoon?

G: Bijvoorbeeld: "als wij bezig zijn, ja we voelen de Energy rondom ons, dit en dat," ja ik heb zoiets, ja jullie voelen dat, maar ik voel dat niet. Of zoiets als een energetische behandeling, veel jonge mensen die staan daar voor open. Ik kan dat ook niet zo uitleggen... Dat is het grote verschil, **dat zij wel dingen voelen die ik niet voel. Soms werd ik daar ook gefrustreerd door he**, want ik heb een goede vriendin en doordat wij in elkaars tegenpool zijn, vullen wij elkaar supergoed aan. Zij is heel spiritueel, ik niet, maar wij vullen elkaar supergoed aan. Wij doen ook wij geven ook samen yoga retreats nu. We gaan dit jaar onze tweede yoga retreats zelf geven nu in België en een lang weekend dus... Ik ben de nuchtere, zij zorgt voor de andere aspecten op de retreats en dat is eigenlijk echt wel een toffe combinatie van ons.

J: Ik kan me voorstellen dat dat soms inderdaad frustrerend is. Wat ze zeggen komt bij jou dan anders binnen, of je voelt het anders (of niet eens)... In dit proces eigenlijk van verschillende yoga retreats gaan doen, heb je een gedrag of skills die je hebt ontwikkeld die daarvoor al in je zaten, maar nog niet zo sterk ze waren?

G: Het belangrijkste ding dat ik van retreats geleerd heb, is dat ik echt wel gepassioneerd ben door yoga. Voor mijn eerste retreat had ik dat zo niet door van mezelf. Toen ik terugkwam van mijn eerste retreat, dacht ik echt wel: wauw. **Ik was helemaal flabbergasted**, helemaal zo into yoga erna. Ik heb toen ook verschillende yoga richtingen gevolgd, zowel yoga vinasa, als iyengar. Op een iyengar weekend ben ik nooit geweest, omdat ik dat heel streng vind. **Dus bij mij is wel belangrijk om te zeggen dat dat ik ook wel van de ontspanning van yoga houd**. Yoga mag heel gestructureerd zijn, maar het moet ook nog... Niet te strikt zijn. Maar ja ik heb zelf 4 jaar iyengar gevolgd, meer strikte. Ik heb daar veel aan gehad om dat in te bouwen in mijn minder strikte lessen. Dat klinkt een beetje contradictorisch, **maar ik heb er wel veel gehad om die verschillen allemaal te zien**. Ja.. ik vind **de combinatie van verschillende yoga ervaringen belangrijk om te vormen tot wie je bent. En dat haal je ook uit je retreats**. Iemand vroeg mij ooit eens van hoe zie jij jezelf als teacher, hoe ga jij jouw identificeren als teacher. Eerst wist ik dat niet, maar nu met de historie van 10 jaar retreats en trainingen die ik deed, **hebben mij gemaakt tot wie ik ben**. Zonder die retreats, ging ik niet zijn wie ik nu ben, ook als teacher. Dus dat is het belangrijkste wat zij mij bijgebracht hebben. Ook de vriendschap die ik er aan over gehouden heb met de andere mensen. Soms kan je een enorm goede klik hebben, omdat ja, **meestal zijn het gelijkgestemde mensen die op zo'n retreat zijn**. Dus jij hebt wel kans om goede vriendinnen te ontmoeten eigenlijk, op zo retreat.

J: Als je naar zo een yoga retreat gaat, heb je dan ook contact met de locals of is dat echt puur alleen in de retreat?

G: Met de locals, hmm, ja iets minder denk ik, je bent zo volledig in die yoga mind. Natuurlijk de mensen die werken op de yogaretreat leer je wel wat beter kennen. Bijvoorbeeld in India heb ik dan toevallig iemand leren kennen, die yoga-sup deed, je kent dat wel, zo een surfplank, ja toen was dat nog nergens bekend stond, dus ik heb dat daar onmiddellijk leren kennen. Dus ja, op die manier had ik wel een lokale yoga teacher leren kennen, maar nee als **je op een retreat bent, dan ben je gefocust op je retreat, dan, nee dan ga ik met een ander doel op reis eigenlijk**. Want ik reis ook veel.

J: In wat voor staat moet jij zijn om jezelf dieper te begeleiden: je zei net al setting van: oh je wilt dat het iets warmer is, want dan kan je jezelf beter bewegen, dat soort dingen?

G: Ja, goh, dat is misschien een beetje gek, maar de omgeving, en het fysieke en het, ja... Het is erg om te zeggen het 'materiële aspect' is ook wel belangrijk: je moet je goed voelen in een yoga retreat, **je moet een aangenaam gevoel hebben**. Ook de medestudenten zijn natuurlijk belangrijk, **want als daar plots 2 / 3 mensen in zitten waarbij het totaal niet klikt, ja, dat gaat je beïnvloeden he**. Je kan niet meer zo rustig zijn, dus dat is wel belangrijk altijd, dat je een goede klik hebt met de medestudenten.

J: Maar dat kan je natuurlijk van tevoren niet kiezen.

G: Nee en ik heb dat een aantal keer meegemaakt dat een iemand, ja, niet in de groep paste en dat is echt niet fijn, ja dat is eigenlijk niet fijn. Je moet dat proberen dat naast je te leggen, proberen yoga-minded te zijn, maar dat is niet heel makkelijk. Ik denk ook bijvoorbeeld, en dat was misschien je vraag niet, **maar als je denkt dat een week yoga retreat al je problemen gaat oplossen, dan ben je verkeerd**. Dat is niet zo. Als je echte problemen hebt, ja, dat gaat een yoga retreat niet oplossen. Jij zelf moet dat oplossen. Je kan wel zeggen, ooh, ik heb superveel gewerkt, ik ben te moe, en nu ga ik gaan ontspannen. Ja dan kan een yoga retreat je echt je weer opkikkeren, maar als je problemen hebt met je partner of zo of met je kinderen, heel zware problemen, ja, die yoga retreat gaat dat niet oplossen. Dat is het soms, vind ik, **een beetje de verkeerde, moet zeggen setting?** Als je een angststoornis hebt, dan gaat yoga dat niet oplossen. Je moet er mee werken, en yoga kan je helpen om te kalmeren, maar om te zeggen dat yoga dat gaat oplossen, is een gevaarlijk statement. Yoga kan het supporten, die moet je zelf oplossen.

J: Ja, het zou je inzichten kunnen geven, om er aan te werken

G: Ja, dat wel, maar het gaat het niet zomaar oplossen he.

J: Dat is dan misschien soms de "verkeerde" mensen die worden aangetrokken door zo'n yoga retreat.

G: Ja, je krijgt geen help van een psycholoog of een medische dokter ofzo hè, je krijgt het echt van een yoga teacher.

J: Denk je dat dat gevoel van community die connecties die je maakt daar, nog sterker maakt? Omdat er vaak wel persoonlijke dingen aan bod komen.

G: Je kan Natuurlijk wel goede vrienden vinden op zo'n retreat, omdat je je geconnecteerd voelt met iemand anders. Ja, dat denk ik wel ja. Maar je bent natuurlijk niet op een yoga retreat om de problemen van iemand anders op te lossen.

J: Wat heb je geleerd, zijn er een paar sleutelpunten die je hebt geleerd over je eigen mentale, hoe je zelf reageert op dingen, je eigen patronen?

G: Ja, zo wel **een beetje leren je grenzen stellen**, in een retreat, het klinkt onnozel, maar je bent soms in de yogales en heb je soms de neiging om zo super super je best te doen. Maar ja dat hoeft niet altijd, en zeker op een retreat, je moet kunnen zeggen: **“nu ga ik gewoon mezelf zijn, en niet erover gaan”**. Dus grenzen stellen naar jezelf, ja dat heb ik geleerd over mezelf. Ik kan me geweldig daarin en opgaan, gepassioneerd, ja en ook wel de **fysieke limieten van jezelf leren respecteren**. Want ja, ik heb een knie blessure gehad, en een nekblessure ja en tijdens zo’n retreat wordt je daar wel mee geconfronteerd.

J: Ah, ja dat is de volgende vraag, van wat heb je over je physical body geleerd?

G: Dat je dat zeker moet respecteren, ja dat je niet erover moet gaan. Dat is heel belangrijk, ook om als teacher uit te stralen naar je naar je studenten. Dat ze niet mogen kijken naar iemand anders. Ja die kan die houding, en jij kan die houding niet... Ja, so be it, niks van aantrekken. Dat is een belangrijke les dat veel mensen moeten leren in de yoga.

J: Waardoor komt dat, denk je, dat veel mensen precies dat moeten ontdekken?

G: Ooh, mensen willen altijd haantje de voorste zijn, de teacher kan dat, ik kan dat ook. Ik vergelijk yoga vaak met skiën. Bij skiën ervaart iedereen dat de teacher over de zwarte pistes glijdt en doet, en dat zij beginnen met de blauwe piste, dat vinden ze normaal. Maar in de yoga, hebben mensen vaak, aah de teacher kan dat, ik ga dat ook kunnen he. Oei en ik kan dat niet, oei oei oei, er is iets mis met mij. Nee, je bent gewoon nog maar begonnen... Mensen **hebben heel veel excuses** en als ze beginnen met yoga. “Oei ik kan dat niet, daarom en daarom en ik kan dat niet daarom en daarom, en ik heb dat omdat ik een issue heb daar,” Maar ja, laat dat maar allemaal vallen, we gaan gewoon beginnen bij het begin. En dat is heel moeilijk voor veel mensen, om te beginnen bij het begin.

J: Grappig dat je dat zegt, onze teacher deed ook nooit iets voor. Nooit had ie iet voor gedaan, dus wij zaten ons af te vragen of hij überhaupt het wel kon. Toen hadden we dat eens aan hem gevraagd, en zei die van “ja ik doe het niet voor omdat ik jullie geen idee wil geven, van hoe het eruit hoort te zien”, of zo iets. Niet dat hij bedoelde dat hoe hij het doet is perfect, maar hij vroeg altijd iemand uit de klas om het te tonen. De laatste dagen van de teacher training, toen pas deed ie met ons mee. Ik vond het slim aangepakt.

Wanneer je toen in die retreats zat, had je toen ook sterker een dromen, was je onbewuste ook bezig?

G: Ik sliep misschien wel beter, omdat je weg bent van je werk, je bent waar je wil zijn, en je eet super gezond, dat is ook meestal geassocieerd met retreats, **supergezond eten**. Wat ook leuk is, je doet 2 keer yoga op een dag, meestal ga je ook nog wandelen ertussen. Vergeleken met de bureau job is dat best een **intensieve dag geweest, dus zeker beter slapen**.

J: En wat zie jij als het meest mindblowing, qua gebeurtenis of ontdekking die je hebt gehad of een shift in je gedachten, dat je dus een andere blik krijgt op iets?

G: Ik ben nog al wetenschappelijk hè, Dat was eigenlijk tijdens een TTC in Bali. Dus ik deed toen al 8 jaar yoga en zoals ik al gezegd heb, 3 verschillende soorten yoga gevolgd, en op die training in Bali, hebben wij eigenlijk heel veel geleerd over skeleton variations van de mens. En dat niet iedereen in kruiselingse zit zitten, niet iedereen kan kind houding doen, zelfs. Ja, dat was zo effekes een shock voor ons. In een groep van 50 zijn er altijd een aantal die dat niet kunnen. Dat vond ik een heel belangrijk aspect en ook mijn eigen lesgeven is daardoor veranderd. Ik kan veel beter de mensen geruststellen, kijk, als je dat niet kunt, dat is niet erg, misschien komt het later wel, misschien komt het nooit. Doe de variatie die voor jou goed is. Dus de meest mindblowing ding is eigenlijk, **het feit:**

**yoga is voor iedereen. Past het gewoon aan naar die persoon.** Ja vooral yoga is voor iedereen en elke teacher moet dat kunnen overbrengen.

J: Zijn er bepaalde waar dus of zeg maar beliefs die zijn vervangen? Misschien is dat bij jou niet zo omdat je zegt meer van het praktische te zijn, maar toch.

G: Klopt ja, nou aansluitend op wat ik zojuist heb aangehaald, dat iedereen anders is, en yoga er aan moet kunnen worden aangepast, dat moest ik wel leren. Ik was strikt opgeleid, **dan is het moeilijk om dat patroon te doorbreken.** Ik heb ook leren spirituele mensen leren appreciëren natuurlijk. Vroeger stond ik daar totaal niet voor open, nu sta ik daar wel voor open. Iedereen mag zichzelf zijn, ja, ik sta daar wel voor open nu. Nieuwe dingen leren vooral, vind ik een belangrijke waarde die mij bij heb gebracht is ja.

J: Waren er bepaalde punten van omkeer tijdens je reizen of na je reizen, soms dan komt het in een moment, was dat emotioneel of omdat je meer de praktische kant op, valt het mee.

G: Ja er waren er wel zo'n momenten op praktische wijze, maar spiritueel, nee... ik ga waarschijnlijk een andere in jouw lijstje zijn zeker...

J: Ja, het is iets anders maar je hebt wel bepaalde dingen gezegd die terugkomen bij anderen, en uiteindelijk gaat het erom dat er een aantal similarities of bijzonderheden uitspringen. Bijvoorbeeld, dat yoga voor iedereen is. Dat er sommige mensen zijn die zeggen: "ik doe niet aan yoga, want ik ben niet flexibel", dus het idee hebben van nee, daar moet je even overheen. – en je bent dus op veel verschillende plekken geweest, bulgarije, italie, sri-lanka; heb je een voorkeur of maakt het je eigenlijk niet uit, en gaat het gewoon meer om met wie je gaat en dat je op dat moment daar iets gaat leren.

G: Het is leuk om in het **buitenland** te zijn, **omdat je dan meer kan dis-connecten van je eigen leven. Hoe dichter dat je bij je huis blijft, hoe meer je daar connecteert dan blijft.** Hoe verder je weg gaat, ja soms ben je nog maar 10 uur weg in het vliegtuig en **alles van thuis is al vergeten, en dat alleen al, is een goede mindset om je yoga retreat te starten.** Weg van alles zijn is heel belangrijk op een retreat.

J: Is jouw comfortzone gestretcht als je naar dat soort plekken ging, werd je getriggerd op een bepaalde manier? Normaal gesproken doe je vaak dingen via je eigen manier, maar daar wordt je vaak toch uitgedaagd.

G: Ja je wordt wel uitgedaagd op retreats. **Mentaal en fysiek he, word je uitgedaagd.**

J: En als je van zo'n retreat of teacher training komt, hoe reflecteer je daar dan op? Schrijf jij of praat je met mensen of lees je boeken, of zoiets of wat reflecteer

G: Hmm, niet echt, goh. Het belangrijkste ding dat ik er meestal aan overhoud is dat ik voorbeeld 5 6 lesjes eruit gehaald heb, van nieuwe manieren van lesgeven. Want je moet jezelf constant heruitvinden als teacher, dus ja. Het leuke dat ik eraan overhouden is "oh tja ik heb nog nooit zo over nagedacht zelf, een manier van lesgeven" of "Ik vind dat tof dat die het einde van de les doet" of al die soort ademhaling dat ik nog nooit gedaan heb gedaan. Ja op die manier reflecteer ik wel, nieuwe dingen leren. Ik ga wel zeggen, met 5 minuutjes moet ik gaan lesgeven.

J: Ja! Ik had hem door, ik ben bij de laatste vragen. Wat voor gewoontes zijn bij jou bijgebleven na bijvoorbeeld zo'n retreat? Ik weet even niet of we het hier al over gehad hebben.

G: Nee dat had je nog niet benoemd. Goh... Ik ga een ding zeggen, na zo'n retreat zit je bomvol goeie



voornemens. Echt je gaat fantastisch alles doen, je leven ga je overhoop gooien, en jouw veranderen. En dan twee dagen – moeilijk! Ik zou dat graag kunnen, ga toegeven, maar das echt zeer moeilijk, om je leven overhoop te gooien en te zeggen “oh vanaf nu, ademhalingsoefening! Ja Ik ga dat iedere morgen doen, want op retreat deden we dat ook en ik kan dat, ik kan dat”, dat doe je dan 2 dagen en dan.. **Ik wou dat ik dat kon blijven vasthouden, maar dat is moeilijk. Daarom ga je telkens weer opnieuw op een retreat. Omdat je daar telkens weer naar op zoek bent, naar die goede dingen, die goede gewoontes die je wilt doen, je gaat daar telkens naar op zoek eigenlijk.** En daardoor blijf je opnieuw naar retreats gaan. Dat is misschien een belangrijke voor je thesis, ha. Ja, mochten zij mij nu zeggen, Trui, nooit nooit meer op retreat, ik zou dat wel echt super ja nee... Ik wil telkens opnieuw gaan, om weer die **goeie energy terug** vast te kunnen houden, ja.

J: En je kunt het niet vasthouden omdat je weer in je normale bubbel komt?

G: Ja, je komt weer een werkleven, je bent moe, oh Ik kan moeilijk opstaan, de kinderen zijn daar terug, dat is niet gemakkelijk. In de ideale wereld dan doe je dat he, maar dat is niet gemakkelijk.

J: Naja, als je het in ieder geval probeert dan ben je al op weg.

G: Ja, wat ik er wel aan over heb gehouden in het begin is dat ik.. ik ben meer yoga gaan doen, meer lessen gaan volgen, yoga teacher geworden, dus ik heb wel de dingen eruit gehaald. Maar om dat vanaf nu alle dagen te doen, dat is moeilijk. Maar, ja, je moet het voor jezelf.. ja.

J: Wil je een wil je een kopie ontvangen als het klaar is, en heb ik toestemming je naam te benoemen in de appendix bij het transcript? Verder was dat hem dan, dus bedankt voor je tijd! En succes met je yogales.

G: Oh ja, dat zou ik fantastisch vinden. En ja, ik was meteen enthousiast, ik vind het leuk om te doen.

## F.7: Transcript Nathan Anderson

December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

N: Nathan Anderson (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: Then the first the first question is very simple: if you want to name your name, where you are from and your age?

N: My name is Nathan Anderson, I live in Los Angeles CA, had my birthday a couple days ago, 57 years old now, and I did my yoga teachers training in 2011.

J: That was your first one, correct?, Because you did quite some trips.

N: Yes, I went back for advanced teachers training in 2015-that's when we met- and after that I wanted to do yoga teachers trainings.

J: I think actually it was 2019, when we met.

N: Ooh! That's right. So I went for advanced teachers training in 2015, and then in 2019... We wanted to do teachers trainings on our own, and so Ram said yes, you can do your own teachers training program under the auspices of Arhanta, so we're officially Arhanta Los Angeles... But he said to do so he wanted me to come back and do some additional training so in 2019 I went back, and did some additional training with him, and you were there. That's when we met, yeah. On how to run the program, and uh so far we've brought about 4 or five different teachers training since then, and we've got several students who graduated and now they're teaching as well. On the page that I put up, the Secret Yoga Society, those are all teachers that I have trained.

J: And before you went on your first yoga teacher trip you also practiced yoga, I suppose?

N: I did, I've been practicing asana<sup>12</sup> for about four or five years. My teachers at that time said: you're doing very well, you should consider yoga teachers training. They're available here in Los Angeles of course but I asked each of the teachers individually privately "where would you recommend, where would you recommend" and the only different recommendations, but then finally it hit upon the idea of going to India to study, instead of locally. I found Arhanta, I like the way they look, **it was very clean and straight. it wasn't wasn't very "airy fairy"** you know? Wasn't it all new-agey, it was very **direct, authentic hatha yoga** of India Shivananda style and that's what I wanted. An authentic tradition, and so that's sort of what attracted me. Because a lot of times, people will use a lot of like, new age talk, to cloud and issue, or make it more complicated than it really is. Yoga does not have to be a complicated issue, it's complex, but it's not complicated, if that makes sense. **But people can try to obfuscate things and make it more mystical, rather than mystic.** It complicates things, and I like to clear introduction, clear explanation, and that's what I try to do as well.

J: And India, why did you decide for India specifically?

N: One, **it was nice to travel, but two, it was also a source for yoga**, and I thought those two things went well together. I like the idea of going back to the source to study.

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<sup>12</sup> Asana is a body posture. Defined by The Yoga Sutras of Pantajali, as "A position that is steady and comfortable".

J: I can agree with you on that, India is the root. When you started practicing yoga, did that happen or asana itself, how did that start?

T: Yeah, actually I've been studying about yoga, since I was very young. I started reading about yoga and as a little boy I was given some books when I was younger, **so I was very fortunate that I had a good understanding of yoga philosophy.** Then one day my wife said: oh they opened a new yoga studio down the block, you should go, you should go try asana. Because I've never done asana, I played sports and things, I was you know, active but I've never done yoga. I thought OK I'll try it, I went down and took the class, and it was fun I enjoyed it, and then it would go like every day. I practice 5-6 days a week, so it's always down there every day after work, or in the mornings, and on the weekends. I took to it very quickly, I liked it a lot. I was fortunate because I was healthy, I was flexible, and I was a little bit strong, so it came easily, so I was very happy.

J: And in terms of going to do a yoga related trip, what was your initial drive for that, now you already mentioned your teacher telling you, you should do that, but what was your own motive?

N: The teachers encouragement was very nice, so that gave me some encouragement to go in that direction. But really I **needed to make a change in life**, like you've indicated. I was kind of at a **crossroads**: I had had a lot of life changes going on, had moved from Northern California down to the South, so I changed my whole life. New location, everything was starting all over again as they say. And just needed to find my way, **so it was more than just finding a health or exercise, it was more than just like finding a new career, it was kind of all of those things. It was also finding a path for me, forward, in a new world, in a new life.**

J: And why did you expect to find that in going to a teacher training, instead of just keep on practicing yoga around the corner?

N: It was **mostly just the advancement of the practice**, you know? I've done all the asana that these teachers could teach me, and they have a little bit of pranayama locally, but not a lot. I wanted to learn more, and so to learn more, I figured I better take that next step and do the teachers training. I considered, yeah maybe I'll teach, maybe I won't. I wasn't, you know, hard set on "I have to be a teacher", but I definitely wanted to learn more about it. I already had a good yoga practice, in the philosophy world, I already followed the yoga path -so a vegetarian diet already, and no drugs or alcohol, those types of things. But it also **needed help, so my spiritual path needed something to help support it.** And asana was helping to support that. Just like we learned in like 8 limbs, or five points of yoga, they all support each other. It's not just, "you can do one thing only", they all work together, comprehensively, to **support a proper lifestyle.** And then I realized it's more like a lifestyle than it is like oh 'I'd like to meditate' or 'oh, I'd like to anasa', you know? It's all of them, work together, and you need all of them. If you have a part missing, it becomes just a physical thing- just like exercise, it can miss part of the benefit.

J: So going to such training, it creates the patterns in your brain a bit more, to focus on the full package, instead of on only the physical training. You really go there, you have to take care of what you feed yourself, it is way more disciplined, to push you into the right road.

N: yes, absolutely, **it is the full package, different things that support a healthy lifestyle.**

J: I read that quite that some people that go to those yoga places, they seek for existential clarity. Did you also have that, as you said you just moved, you also read already some books...

N: I had access, that's funny, because I've already been on the spiritual path, so on the very high end that was pretty well established. I had existential clarity. But my own physical life is not in a good form at that point. I was kind of in between jobs all the time, I was kind of struggling to find a way, you know who do I want to be, in the real world, the physical world. I had this high level spiritual philosophical approach, that I was very comfortable with, I had good health, strength, and flexibility. **But bringing the two together into a proper daily life, where I could earn a living, support myself, and make advancement in the world, take care of my necessities, take care of my responsibilities- was always a bit of a struggle.** And so, actually yoga filled in the middle part for me.

J: Because what work did you do before?

N: Everything, I've done oh... everything. I drove a truck, I did labor, I did construction, and sales, I've done management, I've done auto parts, have done healthcare, I've done... You know, **I was trying to find a career path, and didn't have one.** It was always a struggle, because just kept bouncing from thing to thing. I wasn't sticking to one thing. Asana, I was starting to stick to and it was starting to help me get trained. And so, when I went to the teachers training, **I felt a lot more disciplined,** and when I got back, it was very funny. When I got back, I started teaching the first week I was back. Right away, like right away. The first week I was back, I started working, started teaching, and then right after that, work got straightened out: I got a good job and all of a sudden everything was normal, and it was all stabilized. And it was kind of an accident, but it worked.

J: Did you find a job in a gym or did you work directly on yourself, in the park, to see who will pass by?

N: You know the studio that I was practicing at, the same studio that was right down the block that opened up. I've been practicing there for five years, I went to my training, I came back and said: OK I'm a teacher now, I'm going to teach. And they said, it was funny, because they said: well, schedule's full like you always hear, of course. The yoga studios saying this, they're very are kind of Snooty. Like well, what did you practice, whom have you taught. Yoga ashram is very welcoming, yoga studio not so much. They put me on the schedule of 6:30 in the morning, one or two days a week, and I had one or two people, they would come pretty regularly. And then it grew and grew, and finally it was a very popular class. It gave me a little bit of pleasure sticking to what I was taught. When I was out there, I said this is classical hatha yoga, if you go to studio most people offer vinyasa flow. Everybody offers vinyasa, they don't even know what hatha is at the time.

I went to talk to Ram, when I went the first time- they don't do this anymore, but when I went in 2011, on the second day he said: OK everybody shirshasan in the middle of the room, 10 minutes. He told us to get up, and head stand in the middle of the room and stay for 10 minutes, wow. So I went up, I stayed there and I stood there for 10 minutes, and I don't think anybody else can do it for so long. Ram, as he walked by, he wouldn't even look at me. He just ignored me. Like alright, if you can do it, I don't need to talk to you, fine. **He's not gonna feed the ego.**

J: Oh yeah when before you went on the teacher training, or any yoga related trip that came afterwards, were there specific skills that you found you need? Or that you kind of hoped or expected to gain? It can be skills, but can also be attitude, or a characteristic that you felt that you lacked.

N: I think **consistency and stability,** because I also moved a lot in my life, and so I wanted to live in one place for a while, stay and be stable. Not just blown around by the breeze, it felt like I was very much blown around by the breeze. Part of having a consistent practice has really added to that, having a consistent daily practice, forcing myself to teach every day, has made me much more stable, so that's what I lacked. What **I needed to develop was consistency in life and do something, find it, pick a**

**thing and then just keep doing it, every day, until it grows into something.** Not jump from thing to say.

J: Was that also your biggest change?

N: Yes, absolutely, that was the thing I did get. **I did get that stability and that constancy, and that has been the biggest thing that's benefited me the most.** That I'm doing it every day, stick with it every day. Because even other than asana, even wanna do meditation, they say you're better off doing a little bit every day, rather than doing a lot, and then skipping a week. I wasn't consistent before, and it took a long struggle to get there- and it's still a struggle of course, but yoga has really helped me get that consistency.

J: How would you describe the type of social contact with the people you meet, that you have when you go to those places or on those yoga-trips ?

N: Actually, it's also a pretty wide range of things there too, you know. Some of them, that's a big group, so sometimes you don't get to meet everybody or you don't remember everybody. But many of them, I'm still friends with on Facebook, of course most of them are in Europe. I'm probably one of the further away ones, **but I feel very close to them still, even though we met once and only for 25 days** or so. We established good friendships, and we're watching each other grow, because I know some of the other ones are opening their own studios, they're opening their own schools, and watching their families grow up online at least. We say hello now and then, and **we encourage each other and the things we're doing**, but you see other people that you train with, also blossoming in their own cities and in their own countries. **And it's very encouraging, to see that you know this is happening all over. We all came together into one place, we shared a thing together, then we all went home and started working on it. To help improve, the world. And everybody that went home, started getting to work in their own place. And it's good that we come together, to learn together, and develop relations, but it's also good and very important that we went away from each other. To talk to other people, and not just talk to each other, like in a bubble, where we all think the same; we all feel the same; so we encourage each other and we get this 'group think' where we all think the same. We need to go talk to people that don't feel that way, that don't consider diet, don't consider how they think, how they deal with their emotions, how their mind works. We need to go talk to those people, and get them on the path.** Yeah so it's really important that we go away from each other, and everybody has their own field that they start working in.

J: Do you think that the fact that you are together for a few an X amount of days, makes the contact also stronger?

N: Well, yes, **the time together is important, but also what we did at that time. Because in that time, we asked "Who am I?", we asked those types of questions.** So, it was what we did, because we could have spent that time on the beach: drinking and dancing, and it would not have been the same. We'd have fond memories of those people: Oh yeahh, remember that time we went to the beach side, everybody's had so much fun, we're dancing on the beach, and drinking all night. OK we had a lovely time"- **but we went through a transformation together, which is a much more important thing, much more impactful thing, in a person's life. So, going through a transformation with that kind of group together, there's a cohesiveness that develops in the group, and we all grew together. By doing so, I think it underscores a lot more, how important that time was.** Now the relationships become a little bit more important as well. I think about those people, and we don't talk a lot, I don't know them well. You know other than our yogic worlds, but I **still hold them very dear, because of - not just the fact that we spent time together, but what we did together.**

J: Yeah... That's beautiful answer. And talking in terms of transformation, what do you see then as transformation? Because you said "we transform together" but, yeah what is what is that for you, or what should it contain, because I also think everyone transforms their own way. So what do you think is a general way of transformation, or and then separately from that is: what is it for you?

N: I think a lot of it, especially in the yogic context, is **self-inquiry**. Starting to ask questions of yourself. **Because a lot of times when we talk about transformation, I think people think of how to change the world, or change other people.** You know, a lot of times when people want to fix something, they want to fix something else, you know. Like: 'Oh my relationship is not good, I wish I could fix my partner', 'Oh, my jobs' not good, I wish I could fix my boss'... **It's like, we'll have to do self-inquiry: so how do I fix me. How do I fix me, so that I have better relations. So that I don't fall into relationship traps at work, or home, or friends. So the transformation of the self, I think is the key.** We always want to point the finger, you know: 'my boss is a jerk, that's why my job is terrible', it's well, 'what does that say about me?' **So the self-inquiry, I think is the biggest transformation.** You have to ask those questions of yourself first, and then you know, you then have a **better understanding** of "OK if I knew what my problems were, and why I was acting the way I was acting", if I see those same things in another person, I might have some understanding of what they're going through. I can't fix them, but at least I can understand and **empathize**, with them. So it helps increase your **compassion** as well, when you see other people struggling with the same thing, or some of the same things they've gone through, I have more compassion for it. I might not like it, you know, but I can still say "OK I was struggling for a time too", and self-inquiry was what helped.

J: And do you think that the talking afterwards with other people is also part of the whole process of changing yourself still?

N: Oh yeah, comparing notes. I think it's also good to see that other people are going through the same thing, **because then you realize that 'what I'm going through is a normal natural process'.** Yeah... Because there's a tendency to also think that: what I'm going through is unique. But it's not, **it's universal. It's just the opposite, we're all going through the same problem, we're all going through the same process. Some of us are lucky enough to start the self-inquiry, where that transformation starts to occur, but we're all on the same problem, we're on the same soup together. Some very few of us start to say: "OK, well why am I here, what am I doing wrong, oh what do I need to fix?", and that's a very good state to be in. Where you start to turn and look inward, and ask "What am I doing wrong", you know, it ends blame.** But yeah, it makes it good to see other people going through it too, so you're like OK, this is a common thing, not a unique thing. It's an universal thing.

J: And in general, because now the whole everything is going on in the world, do you also experience yourself because you give the teacher trainings, that more people are getting interested this type of travel or tourism? Because it is expected that Wellness and yoga Wellness tourism, will grow, but do you think that that has to do with all the changes in the world, that people are going to search more for this kind of: OK how can I change myself, so that I can support the world?

N: Kind of yeah, I do. I think that, because so many people have been doing these trainings, or retreats, **and sharing and going home and telling other people, I think it's increased the interest in it.** And I think also it's become a part of the whole **tourist mindset**, because you know, decades ago, when you went on a tour, you would just go to a place and you would sit on a chair and they would bring you a beer yeah and that was your vacation. Or you would go and grand canyon, to look at the big Canyon on the ground, and then you're going to have a beer. You go to a buffet, and you eat a bunch of food, that was it. But now Wellness has become a big part of the equation. **I think people expect more from tourism now. I think transformation is a little part of it now.** It's not just eating and drinking and going

looking at some old buildings. **It's a little bit like "how will this change me", "How will this transform me?", "What will this give me?".** A lot of people are saying you should spend your money on **experiences**, like travel, rather than on things. So even that, it's a little bit better, it's not perfect, but it's a little bit better, like instead of just buying more stuff. **Go somewhere and travel, and experience something. Because it'll make you a more complete person,** that's a good step. And then the next step of course is: **and while you're there, you start to self-inquiry, where or you start to look inside, or you start to do some yoga, some Wellness, some proper diet, some meditation, or whatever. Umm, and then you'll get much more out of it. So I think it's part of the future,** I think it's going to be expected and tourist locations: I could think if you went to a spa hotel, now you would expect there to be yoga classes. You would expect there to be some proper diet choices, vegetarian choices, or healthy choices. You would expect there to be at least some little bit of this. I mean you can't go into a Grand Hotel now without seeing a statue of the Buddha somewhere in the corner. It's definitely becoming part of it, I think it will continue to do so, yeah.

J: Because we talked about social contact, in terms of environmental, do you feel like you need to be connected with the environment in a way, what does make you feel more connected with yourself in terms of environment, nature, ect.

N: You know, environment is more than just nature. Of course environment starts with the nature, but even if you go to the city, even if you go to Paris or Prague or Barcelona, that's an environment, and that's also an environment that needs protection, just like a rainforest or wetlands needs protection. The city needs care, so I think when you go to a place you... I think it's best to immerse yourself in that environment. It would be nice to say "oh, when I go there, I wanna see trees", well every city has trees, I'd walk up front, there's a tree right out front and it's Angeles. There's skies and dirty streets, but there's a tree, you know so it's more than just a tree. It's the environment itself, and the health of that environment. And if you go to someplace you have to expect that: "OK I'm going to immerse myself in that environment, and I'm going to experience that environment as it is." It would be nice to say: "yeah, I wanna see rainforest, I wanna see trees," but even then, a lot of times it brings along some ecological degradation, because you get this eco tourism where all these people wanna go see rainforests, and then it is bad for the rainforest in some ways. If everybody's going there. **So whatever environment you find yourself in, and you need to immerse yourself in that environment.**

J: OK yeah that's yeah I like that answer. And part of it is also the practice of yoga, actually by itself then. because if you would go somewhere else 50 degrees you still have to handle it in a way. You still have to deal with the un comfort, with whatever is there, so it is part of the yoga philosophy.

N: I go to a place, so can you tell me who you are? I'm in another city, I'm in another country, what's your story, rather than me forcing my story onto them. So you tell me what is the story of this town, what is the story of this country: let me experience it. It was hot, it was rainy, it was snowing, it was cold, and I experienced it. That's really what travel experience is, not so much like, I'm managing it, like OK when I travel experience I go to the spa, I see a rainforest, I see some monkeys, I get to buy a sari, I have some exotic food and then I come home. You know, that's like a an itinerary, yeah. **Exposing yourself to the environment that you're traveling to, and being open to whatever they have to offer, I think that's the experience. The other is just an itinerary; an experience that's picking whatever comes and dealing with it.**

J: could you say something more about experiences?

N: I think, uh experiences can also be sort of artificial. I had to go to Las Vegas recently to meet some people. Las Vegas is the most artificial town in the world. And it's completely... that's completely...

J: Oh yeah, it's not Dubai?

N: Oh probably it's like Dubai for the West, yeah, but completely artificial like everything's funny, everything is plastic, everything is fake. It's an experience, and a lot of people are there. There are tons of tourists there, and people love that. So as much as we think a lot of people are going towards this consciousness, ecotourism- they are, but there's even more going towards this: gambling, drinking, eat meat, you know. Walk around on the streets and you know, a very wretched type of tourism, that's very artificial.

J: That's interesting, I just realize, there are also lectures saying there are different types of experience. The one that lasts short and does not have much impact and one that has bigger impact. Oh, and maybe their behavior just has to do with, if they want to get adrenaline and distraction, so that they don't have to focus on what's actually there. Or why would that be?

N: Well that's true, I think. It's like, **experience can expand you, or you could go on an artificial experience that just does nothing for you**, so you went there, you had an artificial experience, you came home, and you were not changed in any way. Or a proper experience- I think this might be what you were referencing in your notes there, **a proper experience is where you, even before you travel, while you're going there, while you're there: the impact it has upon you, the changes that occur, and then what happens after- what you take home from that, and even going on.** Because India is still with me even now, it's been 13 years now, but Las Vegas I couldn't wait to get home and shower it off of me, you know? So it was an artificial experience versus a true experience.

J: Yeah I hope more people will go towards them non artificial experience at some point. And I understand not everyone can, but I hope in a way...

N: There are plenty of them, don't worry.

J: OK back to another question, what did you learn about your own mental state when you did, your when you went to your yoga trips; were there specific um things, that you discovered for yourself?

N: That's a good question. I learned I was not as even keeled or as moderate as I thought it was. I thought I was pretty well reasoned, and that I was pretty even keeled, and that I had a pretty good grasp of things, but it was even that was very surface level. When I went to the training, it really made you dig in a little bit further, and I saw how much more work I had to do, you know, to get my thinking in line, to get my emotions in line, and to get my impulses in line. It made me see how far I have to go. We tend to think of ourselves as projects that are almost finished, but there I **realized that there was so much more for me to do. Even to get to the place, I thought that was at. So I was very unfinished piece.**

J: And do you think you will ever be finished?

N: I think we'll get to a point where we're, uh, as finished as we're likely to get in this lifetime. Not that our learning is done, because we'll probably be learning till the day we die, but that we will hit a certain plateau, and we're like: OK I have a certain amount of intelligence and wisdom and capacity and compassion and the positive qualities I'm looking to develop in my life are established. I'm not likely to change much, much more, you know, obviously learn new facts and new information, but we'll get to a place where like: "OK, this is who I am, and I have to be able to be comfortable with that." Have to be able to be comfortable with this is who I am now, and even if there's maybe a little bit more icing on the cake later on, that's fine, but we're heading on the a downslope of life at some point you hit 50 60 70 80 years old. It's not like you're gonna pick up a whole new career, when you're 70 or 80



years old. People pick up hobbies and stuff, they start doing painting or they start doing yoga, or they start doing things, but we get to a point where this is who I am, and you have to be comfortable with that.

J: Same question, but then about your physical body. What was the biggest thing you learned or insight you got about your physical body.

N: Like I said before, I was in pretty good shape. I was always, been very healthy (knock on wood), and that's one of the few embraces I've been given in this life is good health, **but it showed me the importance of maintaining it.** And having a regular practice it also showed me that, to maintain that proper health. You want to do a little bit every day. I have friends who like go workout, they do a lot of weight lifting, or heavy extensive cardio and then they get hurt. And then they can't do anything for six months, while they get better. And I realized, OK that's not the path for me, I'd rather just do a little bit of 10 or 20 minutes, that's enough. Do 20 you know 30 or 40 minutes to an hour class, that's enough, you don't need to go beyond that. And that's one thing we learned at Arhanta, when they talked about overload. You know, not going too far. Going up to where: OK I'm feeling it now, OK then that's when you stop.

J: Yes, exactly the golden middle.

N: So you build up those benefits, and then keep it. You don't wanna build up those benefits and then spend them, because you went too far and then you hurt yourself. Well now you've got nothing. Taught me to a little bit every day.

J: Oh, this is a big question but what is one of the biggest benefits for you, what changed for you that made the perspective on what life is about, different?

N: Well unfortunately I had that experience prior to going, because like I said, when I was very young, my dad used to read a lot. He'd always give me books, and he was reading, so as a young boy started reading books about yoga philosophy and read yogananda's book when I was in 8th grade. I read some books he gave, me some books about sophism, when I was in 6th grade, so I'd already had a good understanding of that field. **I think the 'aha moment' for me, and this time was tying it all together. Because I had the mental part of it, the philosophical part of it, and I had a good health, but it didn't have it all tied together.** The five points of yoga that we learn or the eight limbs was that there is a cohesive structure for the whole thing. From body, all the way through, and that they all tie together, they all work together. So there was one big take away, that was probably that **it's not a piece meal thing; that there's a cohesive system designed all to work together.**

J: That's metaphorical because yoga also means unity, right?

N: It's the union of course, it's the union of all these steps. Is one level of talking about it, you know, all these unified steps, is really the way to achieve union. We want to achieve union with the divine, that's the ultimate goal, but to do that, all these steps have to be in order. It's like if you had a stairway going up to the upper floor with a couple of stairs were missing, it would make it a lot harder to get upstairs and downstairs. So they all have to be in place and in their proper order and then it's a much easier path.

J: When you relate the yoga related trips that you have a lot of emotional intensive moments or was it more, cognitively like for simulated for your brain, or was it more working on your senses for example. Because you were in a different area, so everything touches you differently, what was it, what do you remember?

N: Everything did touch a little bit different, it was it was interesting being in a new place and seeing all that. But the emotions were the same. In fact, it was kind of curious, because **there was a range of emotions**. I had a lot of fun, and there were wonderful people, I actually had a couple arguments. You know, wherever you go, you bring your mind with you.

....

J: What was your behavior more during the teacher training?

N: When I'm training, I try to be very dedicated, very strict, very good student. I work, almost like it was a boot camp for military. I was there to do it very strict, do what the teacher said, get as much out of it as I could and just hit it, really hard. And so people that were acting all loosey goosey, like it was a vacation, "we're just here for fun", whatever- it didn't work for me. That's just me, though. If you want a bit more vacation, they have yoga retreats, if you just wanna go to a vacation, go on a vacation. But this is a teacher training and I wanted to take it very seriously.

J: I can see the comparison of the military, because it is very disciplined. Waking up at 5.30, going to meditate, karma-yoga. It's no question whether you attend the classes. We already mentioned it, but which values or beliefs have been replaced? Maybe it is difficult to say as you already had some knowledge before due to the book, which made your values change gradually. If you had some perspectives on the bigger picture that changed.

N: as far as values have changed, I think when we talk about like yamas and the ni-yamas, they kind of really come into people's minds. Like for example when we talk about ahimsa (non harming) they mean not to kill other beings, you know. Not harming people in the word, thought or deed; not harming others or yourself in word, thought or deed. And people say "Oh yes, yes, I do that," and then you see them eating meat, like... well actually that's kind of why they say not to harm other things. **So it brings the values to what their actual meanings are**, because you'll see people saying "ohh I love animals, I love cats and dogs," and then you see them eating meat, yeah and you're like well, you love some animals, you don't love the other ones, because you just think they're food? They like the animal, because it makes them happy, but its not something that they have compassion to those things. **So it makes you understand the true meaning of these values, rather than a superficial meaning**. We often carry a superficial meaning, and that's just one example of people saying I love animals but then they eat meat. And it's like: OK well, you say it, and that's nice of you to say that, but you don't get the actual meaning of it, of ahimsa.

J: Yes... So to be more in line also with the actual meaning of the values.

N: **To be more in line with the actual meaning**, could people can spot values, but they don't have the actual... what does that mean in your real life, you know? One other says: "you should love one another", but what does that actually mean, you know. If you should care about everyone has it through your brother and sister.

J: What was one of the ways for you, one thing?

N: I was already vegetarian, but it even got to OK well what about me being upset about them? I get upset about them, I'm just as angry as they are, so I'm doing it too. So then you get to work with what is the actual meaning of not harming others in thought, word, or deed. If I'm thinking bad thoughts about what they're doing, I'm still engaged, so I haven't freed myself from that yet. **So realizing that, got me another level down**: oh OK, what does that really mean, because you can say what does it really mean: it means not eating animals. That's another level down, so the levels of meaning inside

of these values keeps getting deeper and deeper, the more you go along. It's not even being upset with yourself, if you do it, if you get upset with yourself, because you do something wrong, that's harming. Because they say to self or, others. **Levels of values are getting deeper and deeper. Levels of understanding of the balance.**

J: It's the same with the thought patterns, because it just gets practiced every time that you go to such place, or practice it on your mat, so it just gets like deeper in engraved. So in terms of the yoga related trip, did some of them have a specific turning point, a shift, a spontaneous moment of impact?

N: There're probably lots of little turning points, uh I don't know that there was any grant turning point. I know that, when I got to go to the meditation retreat after Arhanta, and saw a spiritual teacher there, it was very impactful. To see a whole lot of people at this location, that are living a spiritual path, and it was it was impactful to see that it's not a lonely path necessarily. There's a lot of people doing this, there's a lot of people working on meditation, working on living a better life, working on finding union. So it's realized how universal this thing works, because we often think of it as a personal thing, or an individual thing, and **"I'm going through this, it's just me going through this", but seeing how it's actually a universal thing, was pretty impactful.** That everybody's going through the same thing, you know? We're all maybe a different directions, or different levels, we're all struggling in the same way and it's in the universalness of that struggle, was very impactful.

J: OK, that's funny because that's something that I hear more in the interviews, people saying that we're all the same, in the end. Would you say that your comfort zone had been stretched when you went on such trip, or were you already used to it in a way because you had knowledge before?

N: It was a good stretch, I hadn't been traveling in a long time, so **it was a good stretch to get out of the country and to see other places. Even just like dealing with itinerary, of catching buses and planes, and being in a country where you don't speak the language, yeah, it definitely caused me to stretch quite a bit.** But it felt good, it wasn't too much of a stretch, it was a like a vigorous exercise: it's all good. So I **was open for an adventure**, and it was an adventure, but it was one that I was ready for, so it worked out fine. But yeah, it was definitely an adventure and it's stretch, but I wanted that.

J: And saying you were open, do you think that those yoga tourist or the "non plastic" uh tourists, let's say, do you think they have specific characteristics all the same, or that that they have something in common?

N: I think, I think **they're seeking something.** They may not know what it is. I think some people, maybe they've read books, maybe they've heard speakers talk about this, they know that **there are questions to ask**, and they may know what some of those questions are. Other people have questions to ask, but they might not know what the questions are yet. But **they all know that there's something to ask, or something to find and seek.** Some people have a better understanding of what that is you know like: "I'm gonna pass, I'm gonna go find this thing", some people are like: "I know there's something out there for me," and some people just know that: "where I'm at now, is not working, I've got to go out, and find it." So we're all on different starting points, necessarily of, asking these questions, but **we all know that there's some question to ask, and that's I think why people take these trips.** There is something: I need an answer. I don't even know what the question is yet, but I need an answer. Maybe on the way I'll find out what the question is, and then I'll ask, it and then I'll find answers.

J: Nice. This is more about the returning home phase: in which way do you reflect on it do you for example, use journaling, because the effect of the retreats or teach training of course also lasts, till

when you go home, as we spoke about before. You said you talk to people, but in which other ways do you keep your process going?

N: I use it in my teaching and I honestly I think about it probably every day, because I teach seven days a week. So every single day I teach and every morning when I get ready for class, I try to think of something that I might say to the students. A lot of times a teacher will have a plan or a Lesson plan, or a what does it seem that they're working on that week. I don't do it that way, I wait for it to arrive spontaneously. And I'm kind of lucky in this way, because usually when I just see the students, we start talking. It depends on who shows up, some of them have heard my stories before, some of them know some of the stuff. So when I see who arrives, I'll try to engage with them. We'll talk a little bit, we'll start moving, I'll make a little comment or give a little bit of a yogic lesson or topic, and I try to have a little button up at the end, where I tie it all together what we talked about at the beginning. I don't write them down, one of my students said, you should be writing all these down and I said honestly after I say them, I can never remember them. It happens naturally, it's based on yogic principles, and then once it's done, I'll let it go. But I've had the students come back later, one of them said: "uh two years ago you said..." And then I think mm that sounds likely like me.

J: So talking with others and sharing stories are your two main things... Great, in that way the knowledge becomes more intertwined in your life as well. I wanted to know if you want to receive a copy – and otherwise that where my questions, thank you for the time and talking.

N: I'd be happy to see, when you when you put out, of it yes.

J: Also, I am allowed to put the written transcript in the report with your name?

N: OK that's good, you have all permissions, so don't worry about it, all right?

## F. 8: Transcript Thomas Aukema

(Transcript in Dutch)

December 14th, 2022

N: Thomas Aukema (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: Wil je eerst ten eerste even je naam en leeftijd en waar je woont, opnoemen?

T: Ik ben Thomas, ik ben 25 jaar en momenteel woon ik in Sneek, ben weer even terug bij mijn ouders, maar ik ga binnenkort weer weg.

J: Oke, en waar woonde je daarvoor als ik vragen mag?

T: Groningen.

J: Als ik het van Omar heb begrepen, ben je naar Frankrijk gegaan. Was dat ook je eerste yoga gerelateerde reis?

T: Ja, de eerste keer was april denk ik of mei van dit jaar nog, ja en eind juli voor de tweede keer.

J: Waarom koos je twee keer voor dezelfde plek, of hoe kwam je daar überhaupt terecht?

T: Nou, dat het gewoon een hele mooie plek was. Ik kwam er via een vriend van mij die had iemand in Mexico ontmoet. Ze hebben in Mexico ook zo'n school, die was heel erg over te spreken dus en wij zijn beide wel veel met, nou ja gewoon met spiritualiteit... Ik weet niet hoe niet zo van dat woord, met meditatie en een beetje **bewustzijns gerelateerde onderwerpen bezig, dus onderzoeken we samen**. En hij zei van: ja hier moeten we echt heen. En toen dat had mijn kamer opgezegd en toen gingen we daarheen.

J: Hoelang heb je daar gezeten?

T: Die eerste keer was nog niet zo lang, dat was 5 weken. En toen daarna ben ik heel even terug gekomen. Nog een maand of twee maanden, toen ben ik daar weer twee of drie maanden geweest. Ik volgde meerdere dingen zeg maar, ze hadden daar allerlei yoga modules. Module 1 is dan 3 weken lang, en dat doe je dan met een hele groep, maar ze geven ook stilteretraites enzo. Dus dat deed ik de eerste keer, zo'n yoga module en toen was daarna gelijk 10 dagen stilteretraite er achter aan. En ik weet niet, ik had daarna gewoon wel het gevoel dat ik het wel lekker vond om stil te zijn, dus toen dacht ik, ga ik ook doen.

J: En qua omgeving, is het luxe of zijn het slaapzalen?

T: Mm, been beetje ertussen in, het is wel, het is wel fijn. **Ze hadden dorm rooms, dat is met 6 personen, en ja je kan kiezen hoe luxe je het wilt hebben, maar dan wordt het ook duurder**. Als je het relevant vindt, ze doen daar ook een vorm, dat noemen ze karma yoga, ja je kan het als een trucje zien om je te laten opruimen, maar ergens het zit daar wel echt de filosofie.

J: Ooh ja dat moesten wij ook doen in de teacher training, de zaal schoonboenen en zo, om je te onderwerpen aan de ruimte, er zat inderdaad een theorie achter.

T: Ja, ja het past er heel mooi in. Het is een hele vorm van yoga, volgens mij. Is gewoon een soort zelfloos dienen, **dat je leert dat dat je gewoon onderdeel bent van het geheel**, en dat kan best wel meditatief zijn, schijnt. Het is niet per se mijn favoriete bezigheid, maar ja.

J: Wat is wel je favoriete bezigheid, op zo'n plek?

T: Dus je bedoelt zeg maar wat mijn favoriete ding was daar? Ja, dat vind ik een beetje lastig zeggen eigenlijk. De combinatie van eerst yoga doen voor 3 weken lang, en dan deden we ook wel een beetje meditatie. en daarna vervolgens iedere dag iets van 8 uur per dag mediteren of zo, maar dan ook een klein beetje yoga, die combinatie is gewoon heel fijn. En **het zijn allebei hele andere ervaringen, want de ene doe je met een groep en de ander ben je gewoon helemaal in jezelf**.

J: Deed je ook al yoga daarvoor?

T: Nee, eigenlijk niet. Nou eigenlijk, hangt het er vanaf wat je met yoga bedoeld. Want de traditionele term... Yoga staat voor, ademhalingsoefeningen, dat is **yoga, maar ook de hele manier van leven, al die regels. Het opzoek gaan naar... Je kan het ook zien als een beetje soort wetenschapper van je geest, een beetje je bewustzijn ontdekken** en bestaan ontdekken of zo, en dat deed ik eigenlijk altijd wel een mediteren de laatste jaren ook steeds meer. Ik studeer filosofie, maar dat was altijd teveel in het hoofd nog. Dus **toen kwam ik bij de traditionele yoga, en dan kwam ik erachter van "oh dit is wat ik zocht eigenlijk"**.

J: Want toen je naar die eerste locatie ging in april, wat verwachtte je daar te vinden of wat hoopte je daar te vinden, wat zou daar zijn wat jij dan zocht?

T: Waar? Ooh bij toen die eerste keer? Ik weet niet... Ik begon het laatste jaar meer te voelen, gewoon, wat goed voelt. En ik had gewoon heel sterk het gevoel dat ik daarheen moest, dat. Dat is misschien een beetje vaag om op te schrijven of zo, maar... Oke ik kan je ook wel even wat, ja het leek me ook interessant om ja. Ik weet dat yoga gewoon heel gezond is en het lijkt mij ook wel **heel fijn om bepaalde dingen aan te leren om wat gezondere levensstijl te creëren**.

J: Zoals?

T: Gewoon je überhaupt **daar heel lang zitten en dan alleen maar gezond eten, en iedere dag 4 uur per dag yoga doen, en 's ochtends mediteren dat het best wel... was best wel anders dan hoe ik daarvoor leefde eigenlijk**, in Groningen als student.

J: Dacht je, oh er is iets groters dan mijzelf en dat dat wil ik gaan zoeken of daar wil ik achter komen, of had je dat juist niet of wel omdat je filosofie studeert?

T: Ja leuke goeie vraag. Nou ik had dat jaar in daarvoor had ik best wel veel andere dingen gedaan die mij al best wel veel werk, innerlijk werk gedaan, snap je? Dus toen dit op mijn pad kwam, voelde ik me al wat meer in lijn, gaf ik me al wat meer over aan ja, hoe je het wil noemen: **het onderbewustzijn en het universum**, whatever, weet je wel. Dus toen ik daarheen ging, toen zat dat voor mij al goed. Het versterkte het natuurlijk wel dus dat is wel waarom ik daar ook **heen wou om die holistische kant op te gaan**. Ik weet niet, was dat een beetje wat je zocht?

J: Ik zoek niet echt iets, maar ja in principe is het wel een antwoord. Ik probeer even een lijntje te leggen. Je studeert al filosofie, dus dat is al vrij gefocust op denk-wijzen, zal ik maar zeggen, want sommige mensen die ik geïnterviewd heb maar die zitten de hele tijd achter een bureautje en die hebben het gevoel dat er iets is wat ze moeten vinden, wat er niet is, snapje? Maar jij hebt dus denk

ik een iets andere insteek al omdat je eigenlijk al een beetje in die zone zit van “Er zijn meer perspectieven” dus dat probeer ik even nu een soort van te verwerken. Want toen je daar was, de eerste keer of misschien de tweede keer van was het toen iets wat je heel sterk soort gewoonte of manier van doen, waarbij je dacht oh dat wil ik mezelf dus aanleren, of dit wil ik graag voor mijn eigen toekomstige ontwikkeling in meer verdiepen?

T: Ja, heel veel.

J: Heb je een paar voorbeelden?

T: Ja mijn... Eigenlijk gewoon bijna alles wat ze zeiden gewoon, die hele... gewoon die hele yoga eigenlijk. Bij Hridaya gaven ze het heel erg, ja het **voelde heel erg compleet of zo, wat ze aanboden**. Je hebt het ook misschien wel ervaren op een bepaalde manier. **Het gehele, gehele pakket van yoga is gewoon best wel interessant, hoe dat allemaal met elkaar verwoven is** en hoe... Maar ja, bijvoorbeeld tapas vind ik interessant. Ken je tapas?

J: Dat is één van die je hebt toch Ahimsa<sup>13</sup>, van wie tapas, de yama's en niyama's, dat soort dingen.

T: Ik ben niet zo goed met ik met namen enzo maar, ja dat pas doe ik. Je kan het een soort afspraak met jezelf noemen, maar dan is het iets serieuzer nog of in ieder geval het is echt-die die breek je niet. In ieder geval, zo heb ik 'm geïnterpreteerd weet je wel om het even te versimpelen. Het is een soort afspraak met tussen jou en devine ofzo, **bijvoorbeeld dat deed ik toen ik terugkwam: zei ik dat ik iedere ochtend een uur moet mediteren**. Toen ik even thuis was toen kwam m'n pa met zo van oh je kan hier wel even werken, en daar werk ik nu nog steeds. Maar dan heb je dus die tapas gezet, maar dan moet ik beginnen om 7 uur 's ochtends. Maar ik heb ook die tapas gezet, gezegd dat ik een uur... dus ik moest ik om 5 uur 's ochtends iedere ochtend opstaan. Dat doe ik wel. En dat heb ik daar wel gewoon weggehaald. En ja gewoon de yoga doe ik nog steeds regelmatig, soms wat minder.

J: De fysieke yoga bedoel je dan?

T: Ja de fysieke yoga, ja heel goed. En nog wel een paar dingetjes. Ik ben een beetje... Dat is het soms. Voor mij is het heel duidelijk, alleen om het echt te specificeren naar jou toe dat dat moet ik mezelf ook nog even vertalen, ik neem het dan allemaal op weet je wel.

J: Geen zorgen, mocht je het weten gooi het er uit, ik doe dit interview en dan kijk ik wat eruit komt. Kijk wat er in je op komt, en dat is het ook gewoon.

T: Oh ja, ik was ook wel geïnteresseerd, dat vond ik heel mooi, we daar ook van de tantra stroming van tantra en hoe je seks benaderd, weet je wel? Dat is meer als een soort iets ook met die seksuele energy, hoe je dat ook kan opsparen en hoe je dat zeg maar kan omhoog laten stromen. Ja jij hebt verschillende paden, je kan wel seks hebben, maar je kan ook leren dat je niet een fysiek orgasme hebt, dat je een orgasme hebt, maar die heb je dan meer van binnen op de hogere chakra's ofzo.

J: Geven ze daar dan cursussen over?

T: Ze Ja ze geven daar wel op in en ze hebben ook **wel workshops volgens mij die daar wat dieper op ingaan**. Niet dat het dan draait om seks per se alleen, maar ook gewoon echt om dat hele opvangen

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<sup>13</sup> Ahimsa means non-violence. One of the five Yamas (restraints) as described in the Yoga Sutras. Source: Yoga International (n.d.) <https://yogainternational.com/article/view/do-no-harm-the-art-of-ahimsa>

van energy. Maar ook van iemand dat je elkaar in de ogen aankijkt en leert op een diepere manier te zien in plaats van dat beestachtige wat de meeste mensen toch hebben. Ik vond het wel heel mooi om dat mee te krijgen.

J: Kun je benoemen wat je met beestachtiger bedoelt?

T: Hoe meer... Te meer ik met dit soort dingen bezig ben, zie je **dat het idee waar je mee opgegroeid had wij in het westen heel erg ontwikkeld zijn, eigenlijk niet heel erg klopt. Dat we eigenlijk vrij... op veel vlakken eigenlijk vrij oppervlakkig zijn.** Dat concludeer ik zelf hoor, dat zeggen zij niet.

J: En 'zij' is, waar komen zij vandaan, zijn zij Indiaas?

T: Nou die school is opgericht door een man en die is gewoon zijn hele leven een yogi eigenlijk en die... wacht.... Ja. En zo is die school opgericht. Sorry, ik was eventjes iets te veel aan het nadenken, ik ging op een gegeven moment nadenken over hoe jij wil dat ik ga antwoorden, snap je? Wat zoek jij? En toen raakte ik de draad kwijt.

J: Oke, probeer daar niet al te veel over na te denken, want ja, wat ik vooral zoek is jouw antwoord. Dus het maakt niet zoveel uit wat je antwoord, zolang jij maar zegt wat er in jou gebeurt. Ik moet eerlijk zeggen, ik heb kunstacademie hiervoor gestudeerd en ik kan me wel een beetje vinden in hoe jouw brein op dit moment lijkt te werken, of hoe het over komt, maar "laat het los".

T: Is goed.

J: Of in ieder geval in hoeverre dat het mogelijk is. Het idee dat het westen niet heel ontwikkeld is, bedoel je dan qua sociaal vlak?

T: We zijn **technologisch misschien heel ver, materialistisch heel ontwikkeld**, weet je wel, de dingen die we hebben allemaal en dat soort. Maar misschien is er wel... **Bijvoorbeeld heel veel mensen geloven nergens meer in en iedereen doet maar van alles.** Maar als je weer eigenlijk terug gaat en dat hoeft niet eens zo te zijn bij de yoga, maar gewoon misschien in verschillende religies kijken of zo, maar dan meer naar de mystici die echt diep gingen, kan je- en bepaalde tradities dan bijvoorbeeld, hoe we met de dood omgaan en hoe we dus ook, nou ja, met seks omgaan tegenwoordig; met porno en dat soort dingetjes, en ook misschien wel met mensen. Heel veel mensen, een uitspraak van de Dalai lama, dat mensen.. Ik kan hem niet meer goed citeren, maar **het kwam er op neer dat we mensen ook tegenwoordig steeds meer gewoon als spullen behandelen, ofzo. En we verafschuwen vaak gewoon allemaal van die religies en dat soort dingen, maar als je soms er echt naar gaat kijken dan zit er vaak ook best wel iets heel moois in.** Dan kan het leven best **wel verrijken** en dat is iets wat ik de laatste jaren steeds meer begint te zien, en ik echt een paar jaar de jaren daarvoor echt juist helemaal tegen was. Dus dat is best wel interessant hoe je daarin kan veranderen.

J: Want, daarvoor was je juist een soort van materialistisch ingesteld?

T: Nou, meer gewoon ja ik noem het een beetje mijn logie-Thomas fase. Ik ben ook... Ik kan best wel **analytisch zijn**, en meer heel erg van mijn argumenten, en zo, en dat vind je bij de filosofie misschien ook wel terug. Maar, dat je dus alles gewoon probeert binnen een logische kaders probeert te ontdekken. En daar daarin kan je heel snel uiteindelijk concluderen dat alles geen betekenis heeft, dan wordt alles vrij leeg, en dat ga je dan ook voelen op die manier, ga je de wereld ook op die manier waarnemen. Maar als je meer, nou ja dat weet jij ook wel denk ik, als je meer gaat voelen wat er in je zit, **en meer in je hart gaat zitten, rusten, en meer die liefde gaat voelen, zie dat er veel meer diepgang in bestaan zit dan... dan alleen maar in het hoofd.** Zoiets.



J: Daar ben ik het wel mee eens, al denk ik dat jij je daar wel meer in hebt ondergedompeld dan ik, als in, jij hebt 4 maanden op zo'n plek gezeten.

T: Ja, maar ik ben hier altijd best wel veel mee bezig dus het is altijd een beetje mijn hoofd interesse geweest dit soort dingetjes.

J: Want, even kijken hoor, heb je dan het idee dat je nu dan ook meer voelt? Niet alleen intuïtief, maar ook dat je meer toelaat hoe je je voelt, misschien? Of, om het te rephrasen, op welke manier ben je anders gaan voelen?

T: Nou ik zit **nu niet meer zo veel in mijn hoofd**. Ik zat daarvoor in ieder geval, psychologen zouden hier diagnosticeren met ADD of zo, dus dat je er heel veel denkt, en dat je daar heel druk... Maar ik heb daar eigenlijk helemaal- Ik denk helemaal niet meer zoveel of zo. Ik ben veel meer.. maar ik ben er nog steeds. Als je altijd heel veel in je hoofd zit, en je komt daaruit, dan is het net alsof je een **soort nieuw leven ofzo hebt**. Zo voelt dat ik voel bijna wel een beetje, alsof ik een ander leven heb.

J: En wat zou je denken is dan de grootste verandering daarvoor geweest, is er een bepaald punt waarop dat gebeurde of dat veroorzaakte?

T: Dat is wel **geleidelijk** gegaan. Maar ik denk ook wel bepaalde middelen enzo, ik was ook met feesten een beetje extreem. Met drinken, en uiteindelijk ging ik ook wel een beetje blowen. Maar zo'n plant, geeft eigenlijk ook best wel interessante perspectieven. Ik geloof alle planten of zo iets met je delen. Maar op een gegeven moment, als je dat dan niet goed gebruikt... Ik kon dat ook niet heel lang doen, op een gegeven moment ging ik er alleen maar van denken, dus dan werd het alleen maar heel erg. Maar ja, dat het zo erg wordt, dat je op een gegeven moment een punt komt dat je je moet overgeven of zo, anders kan je het gewoon niet meer aan. En dan realiseer je je van "oh Ik ben niet m'n denken" en dat is dan de eerste stap. Maar dan ben je nog wel veel in je hoofd zeg maar. Ik denk dat het zo steeds een kleine stapjes bepaalde puntjes in je leven komen, dat hoeft niet alleen maar met middelen, **kan ook gewoon met confrontaties of bepaalde situaties zijn waardoor je een soort van, boem, wakker geschud wordt** ofzo.

J: Waren er op die yoga locatie bepaalde confrontaties met mensen of met situaties want Ik kan ook in de situatie die je daaraan kan koppelen? Had je daar bepaalde confrontaties met jezelf?

T: Confrontaties hm.. Ik ben ook maar gewoon een beetje de juiste woorden aan het zoeken hoor. Misschien ook wel.. nou ja ik denk dat **meditatie gewoon wel key is om met jezelf zitten stil te zijn**. En dan komen er vanzelf dingen omhoog, en die kunnen confronterend zijn of niet, die kunnen laten zien ja.. Wij deden dan **zelf inquiry**, dat is een van de vormen van meditatie dus vraag je de hele tijd.. misschien ken je het wel?

J: Een andere meneer had het er ook al over, volgens mij hij zei dat daar gaat yoga over, van "wie ben ik"

T: Ja, who am I. En dat vraag je dan niet hier (wijst naar hoofd) maar dat vraag je eigenlijk aan je hart. Of in ieder geval, dat die combinatie deden wij dan, het hart center. Dat is wel heel mooi, want dan alles wat er omhoog komt, of alle gedachtes iedere keer geef je dus antwoord. Als je dan realiseert dat je dus in die gedachte gaat, of in die emotie of... whatever, en je realiseert weer dat je dat aan het doen bent, dan vraag je weer aan jezelf, van 'maar wie ben ik', dan laat je eigenlijk steeds meer jezelf zien, dat alles wat omhoog komt, dat helemaal niks te maken heeft met jouw ware essentie zeg maar. En volgens de yogi's en je kan het misschien wel voelen als je het diepe meditatie hebt gehad, dan kan op een gegeven moment wel voelen dat je, dan voel je gewoon niet meer je lichaam en dan voel je

eigenlijk. Ik heb wel een meditatie gehad voelde ik alleen pure extase. Wat wil ik hiermee zeggen... Ik weet niet of het nog iets slaat op wat je net vroeg met die confrontatie of zo? Ik kan alleen wel zeggen dat het **heel fijn is om geleerd te hebben dat je kan rusten in je hart hierzo, en dat dat ook iets is wat ik eigenlijk dagelijks met me meeneem**. Dat ik iedere keer weet, wat er ook gebeurt, dat ik iedere keer weer kan inademen en gewoon kan voelen hier zo van: ohja, that's it. En alles daaromheen, doet er eigenlijk niet toe.

J: Dat was een antwoord op de vraag denk ik, mooi gezegd. Als je daar bent, heb je dan het idee dat je daar bepaalde sociale contacten maakt, die je normaal gesproken niet zo snel zou maken? Hebben die mensen die daar rondlopen bepaalde karakteristieken?

T: Ja, ja enerzijds wel, natuurlijk. In ieder geval Als je dan weer benaderd dat alles universele energieën zijn, en dat als iedereen uit hetzelfde bestaat. Maar nee, ik denk aan de andere kant, dat je, ik kom **wel meer mensen tegen die op een bepaalde manier... ja ja ergens bewustzijn, van zijn geworden, en dat nieuwsgierig naar zijn of misschien zelfs de noodzaak voelen om dat verder uit te zoeken in zichzelf**. Bijvoorbeeld ik heb daar gewoon ook allemaal vrienden gemaakt die waren In de 40 ofzo weet je wel, dat is best wel leuk, leeftijd maakt op een gegeven moment helemaal niet meer uit. Mensen die waren heel succesvol in hun bedrijf of zo, of zijn architect geweest en hebben eigenlijk een heel leven daarvoor gehad, en toen kwam.. Ja dat noemen ze misschien wel de awakening of zo of iets en toen kwam dat **stukje extra bewustzijn** en toen **dan ben je eigenlijk allemaal weer op hetzelfde** ofzo, snap je wat ik bedoel?

J: Dat je allemaal in dezelfde fase zit, in dezelfde lijn: dat je wil ontdekken wie je bent en

T: ja ja ja, precies! En dat is dus best wel bijzonder want dat doe je echt met de leeftijd verschillen, erg grappig van mensen in de 60 of 70 en je hebt ook mensen zoals ik, ik was vrij jong nog, 25, en dan van alles ertussen in, en nog wel een beetje jonger, misschien. En iedereen is met het zelfde bezig. Ja inderdaad. De contacten daar... Het is ook fijn om met mensen te praten die allemaal een beetje hetzelfde. Bijvoorbeeld die eten allemaal heel gezond, die zijn ook bewust hiermee bezig, **die geven vaak ook gewoon wat meer om de staat van de wereld** of zo, weet je wel? Zo van oh, **die zijn bewust bezig om niet teveel schade aan te richten**.

J: Ik geloof ook dat een van die regels is, dat je geen schade aan andere en jezelf brengt.

T: Ja klopt, ik denk dat het ook wel een beetje automatisch ermee omgaat, hoe meer je begint te voelen, hoe meer je ook van gewoon... dat krijg je gewoon tot je van, oh ja, dan voelt het ook niet meer fijn om op een bepaalde manier te handelen ofzo.

J: In relatie tot je dromen, onderbewustzijn, heb je daar gemerkt dat dat veranderde naarmate je bij die yogaplek zat, of op reis er heen?

T: Er was wel een droom, ik kwam daar een entiteit tegen, die was eigenlijk alles, die was zeg maar alles zeg maar. Dit glas de muur die was dat voelde ik gewoon, snap je? Dit was gewoon alle materie, en die praatten daar doorheen en die was op een gegeven moment een kapmes, en die ging mij uitleggen of zo dat ik meer dingen ging zien. Het was een hele heldere droom, en toen kwam ik in een andere kamer en er was een soort grote hal, en toen kwam er weer een entiteit ik dacht dat dat weer die god was of zo, maar dat was dus in een keer een heel demon, dat was super eng, toen wilde ik weg rennen maar toen realiseerde ik me in een keer, dat ik daarin moest. Dat ik gewoon niet bang voor hoefde te zijn. Toen sprong ik erin en toen werd ik wakker, toen mompelde ik "shiva". Maar ik kende helemaal niet Shiva echt. Maar ik ging ik wist wel iets dat het iets was, dus ik ging Googlen wat Shiva was, dus die ken je wel denk ik, toch? Waar die ook voor staat, zo heel interessant. Ook de droom

representeert dat een beetje, waar 'ie ook wel voor staat. En een week later ging ik naar Hridaya, **en toen voelde ik heel sterk: dat moet ik doen**. En ik had ook het idee dat het in relatie daardoor stond, en toen kwam ik daar weer een week later ofzo, of twee weken later, toen waren er overal shiva beeldjes. En toen was het zeg maar net alsof... Dat is gewoon een van de voorbeelden. Of het jaar ervoor... **Nagoed ik kan allemaal dingen gaan opnoemen**.

J: En je werkt nu, hoe is dat, na een tijd in zo'n plek te wonen, met wisselende mensen om je heen?

T: Ik ben nu eventjes dan in een fabriek, en dan ben ik in een keer laser operator of zo, sta ik gewoon bij een lasermachine en ik moet stalen platen behandelen, eigenlijk gewoon helemaal niet iets wat ik perse ambieer of zo. Maar het is best wel grappig, want ik kwam van het yoga mediteren, en nu kom ik in een keer in een hele harde omgeving met allemaal Polen die aan het werk zijn, en dan schreeuwen enzo. Alleen het is wel heel leuk om dan dit toe te passen daar, snap je? Dus dan **vanuit die liefde** echt, maar ook gewoon de lessen die je dan uit het staal haalt in een keer, en dan gewoon: Oh ja, dit is nu blijkbaar wat ik nu moet leren, ofzo. Dit is waar ik nu ben. En dat is wel heel fijn, **want dan hoe meer dat vertrouwen heb, hoe meer ik erachter kom dat het eigenlijk helemaal niet uitmaakt waar je bent**. Sta je gewoon ergens te werken in een fabriek, en dat maakt eigenlijk ook niet uit, want ik heb wel het gevoel dat ik in lijn ben met waar.. Dat ik op het goeie pad ben ofzo, snap je? Dus dan heb je dat vertrouwen al, alsof het al toch al gaat komen wat je doet, dus dan maakt het niet uit waar je op dat moment bent, want dat andere is er al, en dat voelt dan ook zo. Dus ik begin dat nu wel te voelen echt, dat durf ik nu wel te zeggen. Ik vind het wel spannend een beetje, als ik het zeg dan denk ik van "oh dat klinkt wel heel cool als je het zegt". Maar het zijn ook wel offers die je dan brengt want het is ook wel gek. Ik kan niet meer... Heel veel mensen die nog gewoon naar feestjes enzo en dat soort dingen, dat is gewoon nu steeds raarder. **Hoe bewuster je leeft, hoe meer je binnenkrijgt, weet je?** Als mensen gaan drinken en zo, ze zijn luid en schreeuwen en ze vertellen verhalen maar half, en dan ben jij nog alles aan het luisteren, en ja ik weet niet. Het voelt wel steeds lastiger om je dan in die sfeer of zo te begeven, dus dan merk ik ook wel van oh, dan moet ik dus ook bepaalde dingen loslaten.

J: Het was ook jou leven, dus dan moet je dat een soort van zachtjes wegblazen.

T: Dat is dus het gekke, er is niet echt een struggle.. Het voelt stiekem een **klein beetje alsof je dood bent of zo, maar ergens... een deel van jezelf**, snap je? Maar niemand heeft dat door.. Misschien ook wel want sommige vrienden verwachten dat je dat ook weer doet maar dat doe je niet meer dus je verdwijnt ook langzaam.

J: Je creëert dan eigenlijk andere gewoontes en normen en waarden, zeker als je daarvoor wel een drinker was. En dat is voor die vrienden ook lastig te begrijpen, want zij zitten nog wel in andere soort bubbel dan jij, denken anders over het leven. Wat ook niet slecht is, het is ook wel oké, maar dat is dan toch en daar moet je dan wel mee kunnen communiceren.

T: Ja, ja en het is ook niet altijd leuk om, het voelt vooral alsof je heel confronterend eigenlijk bent, snap je? Want jij doet in een keer eigenlijk... **Heel veel mensen willen gewoon dit**. Ergens toch, die willen gewoon, heel veel mensen waar ik mee gesproken heb in mijn studietijd, die zijn zich wel bewust van dat eigenlijk niet zo gezond is, en dat ze misschien niet zo lekker in hun vel zitten, en dat er dingen zijn en dat ze daarmee moeten... En als je eigenlijk gewoon laat zien dat je daar gewoon mee bezig kan, terwijl je op een feestje bent, dat is dan een beetje party poepen ofzo.

J: Zo voelt het dan in ieder geval voor jou.

T: Ja, zo voelt het voor je want dan staan zij te drinken en jij drinkt dan niet en dan al heel snel krijg je "oh waarom drink je dan niet?" en dan heb ik helemaal geen zin om over te praten, maar dat gebeurt

wel snel. Maar ja dat zijn gewoon bijvoorbeeld dingetjes die ik nu al een beetje tegenkom. **Aan de andere kant krijg ik er wel weer nieuwe mooie mensen voor terug.** En je merkt ook wel dat sommige mensen wel met je, die willen mee erin, dus die gaan nog vragen van “hoe werkt dat dan, hoe mediteren?” of zo. Ik geef nu maat van mij die wil nu ook leren mediteren, en dan ga ik even met hem mee geven. Dat is wel grappig, **maar zo krijg je langzaam ook een beetje die positieve impact om je heen ofzo.**

J: Ja dus dat is ook weer de power of attraction, or law of attraction. En, dat ene van jou hadden ze ook een locatie in Mexico, zei je dat nou?

T: Ja in Mexico, Mazunte.

J: Oke, ook gaaf. Hoe is jou blik op je eigen lichaam, je fysieke lichaam veranderd?

T: Dat is een combinatie met alles, maar sinds ik gezonder leef en dus ook yoga doe, in al die dingen voel ik me zo veel comfortabeler nog in mijn lichaam, bijvoorbeeld ik voel me veel lichter, voel ik in mijn lichaam alsof alles stroomt, veel meer, als je een beetje snapt wat ik bedoel. Toen ik net begon met yoga ben ik ook wel geconfronteerd met hoeveel ik eigenlijk helemaal... **Hoe onbewust ik eigenlijk was van mijn lichaam.** Dit al zeg, deze warming up, zo met je met je schouderbladen of zo, als je dat nooit gedaan hebt, dan is het eerst even zoeken, zeg maar. **Dat is best wel raar om daarmee geconfronteerd te worden** en dat je ook merkt als je met je nek dingen gaat doen, dat je dan: oh jeetje wat is dat, is stijve altijd zo? en nu dat contrast tussen het beginnen, nu merk ik hoe.. ja **hoe lekker het is om gewoon in mijn lichaam te zitten.** Ja.

J: Dat is wel mooi effect, ja echt.

T: En moet ik het nu terug vragen, hoe is dat bij jou dan?

J: Je moet zowiso niet terug vragen, maar ik kan er wel op antwoorden. Dat is nu altijd al... klinkt een beetje dramatisch, maar vanaf kunstacademie heb ik altijd een beetje het gevoel gehad dat ik niet echt in mijn lichaam zat ofzo, dus het gaat nog een beetje met vlagen. Soms zit het wel lekker en soms niet meer nu zit ik weer even in zo'n periode dat het niet zo lekker zit. Terwijl ik me wel erg bewust ben van m'n lichaam en wat het kan of niet kan, ik kan wel voelen. Ik heb opzich wel door wat er gebeurt in mijn lichaam zeg maar op die manier, maar dat is denk ik meer dat zou dat zelfbeeld gedoe. Er is op een of andere manier een grote dissonantie met mijzelf in mijn lichaam en dat heeft dan te maken met verschillende factoren die daaraan bijdragen en waar ik me ook gewoon bewust van ben. Er wordt ook wel gezegd dat je lichaam je tempel is, en dan vraag ik me af hoe het kan dat ik mijn tempel zo verafgunst, want je lichaam is eigenlijk de tempel van je ziel. Dus als jij dat zo vertelt, denk ik, ooh dat moet toch fantastisch zijn.

T: Dankje, soms neem je dat dan ook weer dingetjes die je dan gewoon hebt, dat voelt dan een beetje vanzelfsprekend of zo. Maar dat is dan eigenlijk iets, wat ik heb waar ik heel dankbaar voor kan zijn. Ik heb het ook niet altijd zo gevoeld dus eigenlijk is het best bijzonder. Maar dat is... Ja dat is in ieder geval iets, of ook wel jammer dat het weer heel bijzonder zou zijn, want ik gun iedereen dat het ook op zijn eigen... en misschien is het bij jou over een paar weken, bedoel ik niet om mee te praten, maar dan gaat het ook weer eventjes even iets minder, dat je ook weer een beetje uit balans bent, en daarna gebeurt er weer iets dat je denkt oh ja dit was hem, weet je, dit hoe.. het gaat dus zo, zo gaat het ook gewoon.

J: Ik hoop het, op de uni zijn mensen allemaal zo lekker zichzelf, en dan ben ik hier in gevecht met mezelf en wat ik vind dat ik moet doen, en wat anderen vinden dat ik moet doen, en wat ik eigenlijk

wil doen, dat dat zit er denk ik ook wel een beetje in hoor dat dat conflict van wat ik nou eigenlijk wil gaan doen dat trekt door naar m'n lichaam.

T: Ik weet niet... Mensen zijn gewoon interessant, misschien is het een soort spiegel, als je probeert te ontdekken 'wie ben ik' dus het is ook echt interessant, om andere tools, **door andere mensen zeg maar weer jezelf te leren kennen of zo**. Alleen kom ik er wel achter dat eigenlijk iedereen wil gewoon mijn dingen... Er zijn echt heel weinig mensen die de vrijheid ervaren die ik nu steeds meer begin te ervaren. Het is niet zo van oordeel is belangrijk of niet, ik bedoel niet dat je beter bent, maar bijna niemand heeft gewoon geleerd om... gewoon chill te zijn. En **niemand**, nou ja wat je net zei, **mediteert op school of zo, dat soort dingen, je leert het gewoon niet, om die rust te vinden van jongs af aan. Dat is heel gek eigenlijk, en dat maakt het ook dat iedereen zo met zichzelf bezig is. En zich zo alleen voelt, denk ik. Maar dat is heel raar, want als je met elkaar gaat praten, dan kom je erachter: "oh jij bent ook wel onzeker over allemaal dingen, ik ook". Maar heel veel mensen durven dat niet zeggen, want er zijn hier allemaal mensen die hebben weer allemaal redenen om zichzelf weer boven een andere te willen plaatsen. En die gaan dan daar weer... Maar is eigenlijk allemaal heel primitief ergens. Toch? Als een soort aapjes die zo met elkaar zijn.**

J: Ja, en nee, omdat apen misschien wel meer in een community leven denk ik. Ja het zijn wel primitieve dingen, maar tegelijkertijd, hebben apen wel een community gevoel meer dan mensen, voor m'n idee.

T: Het komt op het zelfde neer zegmaar, bepaalde dieren vechten met elkaar op deze manier, maar omdat ons intellect zo gegroeid is, hebben we hele complexe manieren om eigenlijk hetzelfde primitieve spelletje te spelen. Maar dan gebruiken we gewoon slimme tactieken voor. Maar dat betekent niet per se dat dat wijzer is of zo, of dat het bewust is. Volgens mij wordt dat ook gezegd, **je kan wel heel slim zijn, maar als je dan niet bewust bent, is dat een hele gevaarlijke combinatie.**

J: Ook zonde, want dan heb je dus heel veel potentie voor wat dan ook, toch.

T: Ja, maar als je dan dus niet bewust bent van alle andere mensen, en dan alleen maar met jezelf bezig, dan ga je misschien al die dingen gebruiken om alleen maar heel rijk te worden of zo. En **daardoor meer schade aan de wereld, want maakt jou niet uit wat je anderen aandoet, want je bent alleen maar bezig met dat jij dat krijgt.**

J: Dan kom je in zo'n non-community gevoel, dat ego groter is. Ik heb hier nog niet zo veel over nagedacht, over onze connectie met apen, volgens mij is dit een Jordan Peterson onderwerp. Ik moet het even laten bezinken denk ik.

T: ik weet ook niet precies waar het heen gaat hoor, ik ga gewoon mee in het gesprek.

J: Het is wel grappig, ik vroeg eerder aan het begin iets over confrontatie en toen wist je dat niet zo goed, maar daarnet noemde je zo uit jezelf iets over wat je confronterend vond. Met het feestje, daar ging het over, over party pooper zijn.

T: Ja dat was inderdaad dat ik me realiseer dat mijn oude leven en dat ik nu niet meer hetzelfde leven heb. Nee klopt, ik ben makkelijker in een flow praten, ik vind het moeilijk om zo in een keer..

J: Dat merk ik, vandaar dat dit ook wat langer duurt dan een uur, zoals eerder aangegeven, maar ik vind het nu wel interessant om het over van alles te hebben. Maar als er up den duur klaar mee bent, moet je het gewoon zeggen hoor.

T: Ik vind het leuk om met je te praten, eigenlijk.

J: Ik zit even te kijken op de vragen, of ik het een soort kan omvormen, zodat het weer wat leidt naar de vragen.

T: Als jij het gevoel hebt dat jij er klaar mee bent, mag je het ook.. Ik wou je wel de ruimte geven, mocht je dat gevoel hebben. Je mag de vraag ook direct stellen hoor, dan praten we er wat omheen.

J: Bedankt. Een van de vragen is bijvoorbeeld, wat is het meeste mindblowing gedachte verandering, of ideeën, of perspectief. Maar daar hebben we het volgens mij wel al ergens hierboven over gehad. Je hebt volgens mij wel benoemt dat er iets was waarbij je dacht wow, dat was mijn grootste ontdekking.

T: Mijn grootste ontdekking? Meng je dan ook psychedelische ervaringen in? **Voor mij is het allemaal interconnected.** Maar ik snap wel voor het ding wat je maakt, misschien moet het dan binnen een bepaalde.. lijn.

J: ik ben het met je eens dat het interconnected is, beiden zijn gericht op je onderbewuste, dus het staat zeker met elkaar in een lijn. Alleen ja, het is dan getriggerd door een mushroom en niet door de yogareis en daar gaat het voor mij nu vooral om. Je mag beiden vertellen, maar de ene is meer relevant.

T: Misschien wel een van de mooiste dingen die ik ontdekt heb zeg maar op die yogareis, is **dat je je je echt kan centeren hier, zeg maar bij je hart**, wat ik al eerder noemde. Als je daar gaat op mediteren, en daar steeds dieper in gaat, dat daar gewoon een hele... Ja dat daar gewoon alles zit. Dat is heel interessant vind ik. Dat is een van de meest revolutionaire technologieën die ik in de afgelopen tijd heb ontdekt voor mezelf, ja.

J: Een organische technologie dan.

T: Ja. Ja maar het is ook wel vet want het is dus... diegene die school is mag, of in ieder geval hoe je dat dan vertelt, hij haalt allemaal dingen uit van de soefi's en dus van christelijke mystici, maar ook van yogi's en van Tibetaanse boeddhisme enzo. Er zijn **allemaal oude teksten die ze wijzen allemaal naar hetzelfde punt**. En dat is best wel mooi om te zien dat al die leren en zo eigen in de kern eigenlijk allemaal over hetzelfde spreken. Dat ze allemaal onafhankelijk van elkaar ontstaan zijn, zeg maar, of sommige dan.

J: en dat gene waar ze het dan allemaal over hebben, is...?

T: Dat is het hart center. Het heeft allemaal verschillende namen, metaforen enzo, en dan wijzen ze allemaal naar dezelfde dingetjes. Ja dus dat is ook echt een aanrader. Meditatie gericht op je hart.

J: De volgende vraag, gaat over je comfortzone. Had je het idee dat toen je er heen ging, dat je comfort zone heel erg werd opgerekt, of dat er situaties waren waarin deze werd opgerekt? Ik had dat zelf namelijk wel een beetje.

T: Ja, wat had jij? Of zal ik eerst vertellen.

J: Ik kan het je vertellen, sowieso de reis erheen was al een beetje een comfortzone, omdat ik in mijn eentje in het vliegtuig ging. Daar, ik denk omdat, tijdens zo'n teacher training, we waren met z'n 30en of zo, je moet door de mensen heen lopen, in de picture staan, waar ik niet heel erg fan van ben. Maar

het was wel een goeie manier, je moest er gewoon gaan staan en iedereen, ook al kon je het of kon je het niet, je moest het gewoon doen. En bijvoorbeeld bij de final relaxation, wilden ze dat... Ik ging daar helemaal niet daar toe met het idee om te gaan teachen, ik ging vooral voor de yoga en het teachen kwam er dan bij. Dat was helemaal niet echt in mijn verlang verlanglijstje, zeg maar en voelde me daar ook niet heel comfortabel blij. Ook tijdens het mediteren, het blijven zitten op het zelfde kussentje voor een uur, rechtop, is iets wat ik niet perse comfortabel zou noemen, of 3 keer per dag eten maximaal, omdat hier is overal eten- als je wil weten, kun je het pakken. Geen suiker, of het slapen met een andere mevrouw in een kamer, die mevrouw kende ik niet, dat zijn allemaal van die kleine stapjes. Het is echt niet zo heel erg allemaal, maar je moet er wel net even over heen eigenlijk, op die manier. En natuurlijk soms zit je in een houding en daar moet je dan in blijven, al is het net heel comfortabel. En daar blijf je dan toch in omdat de rest het ook doet, dus kan jij het ook.

T: Dan wordt je een beetje door de groep meege... Of iniedergeval **het effect van de groep werkt wel.**

J: Ja, dat is het mooie vn zo'n yoga omgeving, dat maakt dan niet uit of het een retreat is, of hoe het dan heeft. En, hoe is jou zone dus gestretcht?

T: Ik moest nog vertellen. Ja, ook best wel veel eigenlijk ja, nu je zo allemaal dingen noemde dacht ik van ja dat is ook zo. Ten eerste, toen ik daar kwam, en dan kom je op een nieuwe plek en dan weet je niet hoe de mensen gaan zijn en dan ben je nog even... Ja, dat is eigenlijk al interessant, want de sfeer is gelijk anders of zo. Die mensen zijn daar allemaal, **leven heel erg ja heel real**, of zo. En als je net komt uit een wereld waar je wel ook een sociaal dier bent, en je gewend bent iedereen zo hee hoi! Dat is helemaal niet hoe mensen daar doen, dus daar moest ik wel even aan wennen. En, eten ook, ik lust eigenlijk helemaal niet zo heel veel altijd, ik was altijd een moeilijke eter. En ik at ook helemaal niet vegetarisch, gewoon vet veel vlees en zo. Maar dat was in de laatste jaren al wat meer dan het veranderen. Alleen hier moest ik in een keer poem, helemaal, dus ik ging dat gewoon doen. Ik had niet alles, dan, maar wel de meeste dingen, dus dat was ook al mijn comfortzone uit. En het grappige is trouwens, tijdens die eerste keer dat ik er kwam, toen had ik die 3 weken gedaan en toen daarna die stilte retraite, op dag 6 of zo, toen realiseerde ik me in een keer van - alles wordt dan voor je opgeschept, want je mag niet praten, mensen niet aankijken... "Je gaat nu (ik zat in een meditatie) je gaat nu gewoon alles eten wat op je bord ligt" dus ik zo 'ugg' en "ja maar je bent hier ook gewoon voor dit soort dingen" 'oke' en toen ging ik dat doen, en ik nam een hapje, en ik had helemaal **geen weerstand meer**, dat was gewoon weg. Terwijl vroeger had ik echt kokhals neigingen als een stukje sla.. Dat was dat heel diep, maar het was gewoon weg! Ik kon gewoon alles eten in een keer, dus ik was in een keer van die handicap af. Ja voor mij is dat best wel een heel... Ik ben heel blij dat ik in een keer alles kan eten. Wat nog meer.. Ja, dat was ook wel interessant, hoe mensen omgaan met elkaar, dat aankijken; elkaar in de ogen aankijken en aanrakingen of zo. Het heeft niks te maken met, ja gewoon **bepaalde intimiteit die je met iedereen kan delen**, snap je hoe ik bedoel? **Dus mensen geven elkaar dan echt een goede fijne knuffel ofzo, of als je dan echt even met elkaar praat of elkaar echt even dan best wel soms sommige mensen die houden heel lang oogcontact. En dat soort dingen vond ik best wel... Ja ik hield er wel van om te denken dat ik al best wel uit mijn comfortzone was, maar dat soort dingen, dat is best wel intens.** Dus daar ben ik ook wel heel blij mee, dat ik daar doorheen ben gaan. Nog meer dingetjes.. zo heel lang stil zijn, want dat doe ik nooit, maar dat was eigenlijk wel heel leuk.

J: Intimiteit is ook wel interessant, daar zat ik laatst ook nog over nagedacht. Dat je heel duidelijk het verschil kunt voelen met mensen en hoe ze je een knuffel geven. Is even een statement. Heeft wel te maken ook met hoe dichtbij je iemand laat, wil je zomaar iedereen dichtbij laten en die energieën uitwisselen. Hoe ga jij daar mee om?

T: Nu ik merk wel dat ik steeds meer... Omdat je bepaalde omgeving gewend bent, waar iedereen dan zo lief is, en gewoon daar steeds meer comfortabel is met die grenzen zeg maar. Dus dan ook op die fysieke manier, die liefde eigenlijk delen, dat ik dan wel merk dat ik. **Toen ik dan net terug was hier dan merk je, het is natuurlijk wel aanvoelen altijd, dus het is niet dat je precies hetzelfde doet maar merk wel van oh wat zijn mensen stijfjes. En dat was ik zelf eigenlijk ook altijd. Dus het is op geen enkele manier een oordeel of zo. Maar dat valt dan gewoon in een keer heel erg op. En sommige mensen zijn daar nog niet helemaal klaar voor.** Ja ik weet niet.. Iedereen krijgt van mij gewoon een knuffel, dat vind ik leuk. Ja. Kom maar. Is toch leuk? Als je gelijk een goeie knuffel geeft, als je het leuk doet, voelt het gelijk alsof je al...

J: Ja je maakt meteen hart tot hart verbinding in principe.

T: Ja, maar het voelt goed. Ik moest wel wennen met andere dingen, ook wel met, vroeger was ik meer gewend. Bijvoorbeeld met vrouwen relaties aangaan is wat meer op stap, met drinken en je gaat dansen en dan is het heel anders dan nuchter. En dan merk je in een keer van oh hoe ga je daar nou weer mee om? We hadden een Wadjan, zo heet dat dan, dus gingen we mantras zingen en de muziek was heel luid. Dat is wel cool, want je kon een soort extatische dans doen, en toen was ik met zo'n vrouw een soort van hele intieme dans aan het doen. Maar ik merkte dat ik dat heel spannend vond in een keer, want dan is ben je helemaal open, je **voelt eigenlijk superveel en ja, dat is dan weer een heel nieuw territorium ofzo.** Dan voel ik me echt weer even zo een jongetje, van oh shit, hoe doe je dat ook weer? Terwijl ik altijd dacht, dat kan ik wel goed. Maar dat moet ik gewoon helemaal opnieuw leren. Dat zijn wel hele **leuke territoria om te ontdekken** eigenlijk, want soms merk ik van- misschien is dat een foutje die ik maak, daar ben ik me dan wel bewust van, maar het gebeurt toch- dan nou ja, dit kan ik en ik weet niet wat ik nou nog meer moet doen, weet je wel? **Je snapt het toch allemaal nu al. En dan kom je in een nieuwe situatie, waar allemaal nieuwe dingen omhoog komen, naar boven drijven, en dan moet je er weer helemaal opnieuw doorheen.**

J: Heb je daarna nog met deze mevrouw gecommuniceerd?

T: Nee, dat is gewoon, nee. Het was heel leuk. En dat heb ik nu ook wel een beetje, soms kan je steeds meer momenten hebben dat ik gewoon geen woorden meer heb of zo.

J: Daar kan ik me iets bij voorstellen. Tenminste, ik weet natuurlijk niet precies hoe jij het ervaart en hoe ik het ervaar is ok weer anders. Maar als je iets in een korte zin moet vatten, dat kan dus niet want nu zijn we ook al een tijdje aan het bellen en eigenlijk allemaal over hetzelfde maar ook weer net niet en het duurt gewoon langer tot je bij de kern bent. Omdat het allemaal met elkaar verwoven is, en sommige dingen ook niet uit te leggen zijn, zeker van toevalligheden enzo, dat soort situaties. Bijvoorbeeld had ik een keer een 12 lagen meditatie waarin we tegen elkaar moesten zeggen: "alles in mij ziet alles in jou" en dat kan dan heel erg raken maar de vraag is hoe je dat uitlegt. En sommige dingen zijn zo moeilijk uit te leggen maar je voelt het wel heel sterk.

T: Ja nee ik snap je, dat is, ik weet niet of je die term kent, ik denk het wel, dat is gewoon **non dualiteit**. Ik denk dat het ook erg **onderdeel is van yoga of iniedergeval van de essentie uiteindelijk is om er achter te komen dat alles een is.** Dus op een gegeven moment, is het ongeveer zo dat je eigenlijk alles wordt en niks tegelijkertijd, en dat is allemaal paradoxaal. **Maar dat is dus een ervaring. Dus je kan er wel over praten, maar dat slaat helemaal nergens op. Dat is een beetje wat jij nu net zegt, over dat jij ziet mij in jou, en dat kan je wel zeggen, maar als iemand die ervaring niet kent dat hoort, dan hoort die iets heel anders, en die hoort dan misschien een beetje dom gebrabbel of zo van ja wat lul je nou, toch?**



J: Ja. Dat is zo. Als je zinnen maakt, sluit je dingen ook uit automatisch, dus, dat maakt soms praten best wel ingewikkeld. Welke woorden je kiest en welke niet.

T: Filosofie is eigenlijk ook een soort gevecht met taal, ik heb dit zo uitgestippeld zodat jij er niet meer tegen in kan gaan. Maar goed nu ga ik opeens over filosofie beginnen, het gaat alle kanten op. Had je nog meer vragen?

J: Ik weet niet meer precies waar we zaten...

T: Ik zit gewoon hier.

J: Ha, hoe reflecteer je op die hele reis? Je maakt met jezelf afspraken als je terug komt, dat is een deel al.

T: Ja wat ik daar wel geleerd heb, en dat is wel fijn, dat zeg maar, dat er een soort bewust.. ja nu moet ik weer het woord gebruiken, spirituele ontwikkeling was in de afgelopen jaren. Alleen toen ik daar heen ging, werd het **wat meer in een soort jasje gestopt** of zo. Yoga pakte het gewoon.. Heel veel dingen die ik al **los van elkaar had onderzocht, die vond ik samen daar**. En waarom zeg ik dit... dit zeg ik.. omdat ik wilde gaan zeggen dat.. Oh omdat **ik geïnspireerd ben om dit eigenlijk een beetje als de basis van mijn bestaan te zien of zo**. Dat het, het allerbelangrijks is. Die ontwikkeling. Mediteren, en dat soort dingen, dat is belangrijker dan wat dan ook.

T: .. En het in een flow komen, een vriend van me op Ibiza zit helemaal **in een flow** zegmaar en ik heb al meerdere mensen om me heen die ook in zo'n gekke flow zitten, dus het voelt gewoon steeds meer alsof, je kent **Harry Potter wel toch? Alsof dat gewoon echt is, alsof langzaam de wereld steeds meer zo sprookjesachtig begint te worden**.

J: Ah zo, ja op zich logisch, ze zeggen toch ook van de 5 mensen door wie je omringd bent, dat is wat jij ook doet. Dus als jij omringd bent door drugs en die bier en wiet rokende mensen, dan is de kans groot dat jij ook zo bent, en als je omringd bent door sportieve gasten die elke week gaan hardlopen, is de kans groot dat jij dat ook interessant vindt. En als je dus omringd bent door mensen die in de flow zitten, is de kans groot dat jij daardoor wordt meegenomen.

T: Ja je kan elkaar wel versterken, zoiets geloof ik wel.

J: Mag ik het transcript in de thesis doen, je naam?

T: Wil je het er zelf in hebben?

J: ja, ik wil het er wel in hebben, in de appendix.

T: Ik vroeg het me af, omdat het heel veel is.

J: Ik moet hem sowieso gaan uitschrijven, dus ik zal er al doorheen werken.

T: nee nee, tuurlijk, het mag er in.

J: en sorry dat het wat langer duurde, ik dacht op een duur, oke, volgens mij werkt het vragen stellen direct niet met jou, dus ik ga het even wat anders doen, daardoor werd het een heel gesprek. Het was een heel ander soort conversatie, wat iets minder letterlijk ging over alle losse stapjes maar wel over de verandering of bepaalde perspectief wat je van yoga hebt gekregen, en een soort verandering. Ik

had het meer richting toerisme kunnen sturen maar het was een boeiend besprek. Ik ga eerst eens even kijken wat ik hier uit kan vissen, anders kom ik nog bij je terug als je dat goed vind. En anders wil ik je heel erg bedanken voor je tijd van 4 uur lang bijna.

T: Ja. Nou geen probleem. Nou jij ook bedankt. Ik vond het oprecht leuk om met je te praten. Dat had ik niet verwacht, niet dat ik had verwacht dat het heel \*\*\* zou worden, maar gewoon neutraler, maar ik vond het leuk. Ja. Als je nog een keer wil praten, voel je vrij.

## F.9: Transcript Matthias

December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Due to privacy reasons, the name has been changed. The real name can be requested at the researcher, if required.

M: Matthias (interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (interviewer)

J: OK this is the first question, it's about basic information: so if you can state your name, your age, where you live, and a short summary of your own yoga trip.

M: OK so I'm Matthias, um 44 years old, and um my yoga trip... I am an IT guy, so more a technical guy, and I never did sports at all. And round about 12 years ago, my girlfriend got a voucher for yoga class, and on a Friday and she was like: "hey, do you want to join?" and I was like "oh I don't know". And then she needed to leave, she said: "now decide", so it was a bit of like a strange situation, and I went, because I had nothing else to do. After the class I felt really good, I slept better, so it was... um I **had a real tough job at that time**, so with long over hours and stuff like that, and I had trouble sleeping, getting to my weekend mood. After that it suddenly changed, and so I was more like wow, well, sort of the day later I said we should stay with that, it seems to be good for me- and then I stayed with it, and it changed everything. I had to leave early on Fridays work, because "I had to go to class". That was a good thing, a **fixed date is a good thing**. I went to the yoga class, I felt good, but it was sort of like, a bit painful, this **feel-good pain** like hips and stuff like that, where you don't move and so on. It changed my body quite a lot and yeah... I met new people, and so on. I did more yoga, and more yoga, and online yoga and did the teacher training, and retreat and so on and this is where the whole story basically started.

J: OK yeah it's funny that you describe about the break that you're more practical guy and then decide to go and also decide to stay with it, that's good.

M: So that's also um interesting, because I **met different people**, and also different teachers and... The thing is, some of the teachers, they always were flexible, they always did sports. And sometimes they cannot really imagine how it really feels, if you well, are not flexible. I still can relate to that, because I was not flexible, I had sort of like this pain thingy, so like "oh I did something for my hips yesterday, now I feel my hips." And this is something that some teachers cannot really relate to, because they never felt that in their own body. And if you haven't felt it, it's difficult to like, transmit or get some understanding for other people. So that's why I think it helps me, teaching basically, because I have a sort of like a feeling for that. Also males in yoga classes is... it's getting better, but I was always the only one for years. Thing is, the girls are always so flexible, and hips, and stuff like that. But I got used to that, and I can relate to that when this single guy turns up in my class. I **can relate** to that because I know how he feels.

J: And why do you think that there might be not that many guys turning up at yoga in general?

M: it's probably a prejudice or stereotype, but I think guys are often more ego focused. That's what I also see in class, so they are more ego... so it's like: "I want to be in a position, that I am the one in the top range, whatsoever." So competitive, that's more a male signature I think, but that's not what it's about. And also like in the class, there's also always in the front row a male guy that starts before the class, with a handstand, headstand, free key positions or bit like a Peacock telling "hey, yeah I'm there now". that's the point.

J: boys...

M: yeah that's it, that's it, but I think it gets better. They realize that relaxing in your own body is also good, and **that competition is not always the thing to do, there's enough competition in the world, that we don't need that at yoga.** My personal thought over that.

J: Oh yeah, it is expected of yoga to develop more and more, for wellness tourism to develop, because there is competition, because everything needs to go faster, there is so much going on in the world lately that they expect people to search for retreats, and connect more with themselves. Can you agree on that, do you think that's right?

M: **Absolutely, absolutely.** I think what pulls people towards yoga, is that they realize, when they are on the mat: "I don't need to be someone else right now, I don't need to perform, it's just me." But it takes some time to realize, and to be able to just accept that, because it's people in the room. **At the retreat, it's easier, because you're in a vacation mood anyway. There is no competition, so it's easier to get into that mood** there. But if you're coming from work, you're in the performance mode, and then you're on the mat it's like: oh I need to perform here too. But my personal experience is that when they started with it, anyone, it's like the first 2-3 classes to get acquainted with it. But when people get acquainted with it, then they realize "oh, that's actually a good thing."

J: What was for you, because you said that is easier to get in the mood of a retreat for example, but what's your first yoga related trip?

M: We went to a retreat in Croatia. It was really nice, it's **always a mixed set of people with different experiences, different bodies of course, but different states in their yoga journey** basically. It's always a bit of a **melting pot**, so with regards to the to the yoga practice, it's also difficult for the teacher to have a practice where everyone is included. That's a challenge for any yoga class, but sometimes you have those class descriptions where you more or less say: "hey if you are like that, then you're welcome".

J: Yes, it is important to be attracted somehow to the right location for you.

M: Absolutely, we were kind of lucky, because we had always -except for one occasion- where the teachers matched our expectation, whatever you mean with that. I think like we clicked with each other. So it's like and this, is the only thing that I really look now for because if - and for whatever reason, the teacher does not work for you, then it is not good to be at a retreat. You're then at a place with a class and paid for it, you want it to be nice. But you will not get that out of there.

J: I see, but how can you know beforehand?

M: Uh, difficult, difficult. At least, at least look at the teacher's name, maybe sometimes they have some reference. Also you find some online classes with them or so, just having a sort of an idea what the class could be like. And it's even more important for those who are teacher trainings. So that that can be difficult, especially at retreats. I was in one on a short trip to a hotel here in Germany, kind of a yoga hotel with different teachers, where it's bit difficult to find out who's teaching there at which time, because it's there are more or less changing all the time, and the teacher was there was not it was not my style. I'm always looking for if I'm good with the teacher, just looking before I book the retreat. Look at the teacher, and look at the schedule of what to expect. In fact I booked a retreat yesterday, for next year for Spain. Yeah, let's see how that works out.

J: Sometimes you say "we", so it's then you and your girlfriend?

M: With my girlfriend yeah. The teacher training I did on my own, but a retreat is more or less a kind of thing that we do for our summer vacation basically. Mostly a combination, so it's like those retreats often they are like that, that there's class in the morning class, in the evening, and free time in between. We're doing that, and in between we both do our normal vacation stuff basically.

J: What you said before, that it's a melting pot of people, do you feel like going to those retreats or maybe yoga teacher trainings, that the people there have specific commonalities in characteristics or in ways of thinking?

M: Oh that's a really interesting question... Um, for the for the retreats, yes I think so yeah. Its... **It's open minded people, so it's easy to get along with.** That's what I would describe at the retreats that I were. Like, very relaxed with the folks. So it was like easy to get along, yeah, that's what I would describe them. But also it's like, retreats attract a specific kind of people basically, because... Those retreat centers are sometimes also a mixture of different people that go there. **I was in Portugal more than once, and there are yoga retreats are often coupled with surfing.** This is a bit different then, because yoga is not the center of things. You can sometimes really sort the people there, to two more or less kind of divide them into two groups. The "Well, I'm here for surfing, but yoga is good for me." and the others, "I'm here for yoga, but I go surfing or start surfing with friends." or whatever. So it's like a question, of what the **main focus of why you're here.**

J: It is about the intention about why to go to such place. I can maybe tell you that prior I did some research also about surfing, and the conclusion that I made from it, is that surfing in a way is similar to yoga. Because you get confronted with yourself as in: there's external factors, the waves sometimes they are big, sometimes they are small. You fall off the board, you have to get up again, and try again, so the board is a metaphor for the mat.

M: Interesting... I was in Portugal it was like a totally separate discussion: separate teachers, separate experience, separate to books. So it was are you here for the yoga package or the surfing package? But you're so right, **it's like you're confronted with external forces and your body not performing as you probably wanted to perform, so like to accept that** yeah... It's not that wrong, the concept, I like that.

J: And in general if for example, yesterday you booked this yoga retreat, what is your drive or what is your main motivator to go to a retreat?

M: The thing is, if you combine yoga with vacation, we did that... Just going somewhere and saying: I'll book a yoga class at the place somewhere... There's yoga studios everywhere, but it's sometimes a bit difficult, because it doesn't fit the schedule. That's one practical thing, because we want to do something else than yoga probably, and also it's like it depends on the on the studio what they offer. We were at Mallorca this year basically, and we did exactly that: so we had just an apartment, went to yoga class 2/3 times, something like that, but the classes then are more for basically tourist folks. This is again a separate group, so it's like, if you are **at a retreat, it's more like growing on a topic** or something, so that teachers are more yoga focused, than if you're just a normal teacher studio.

J: did you really want aspire to go into a different direction of your life or not necessarily?

M: The first retreat was more like the first time that we said: we do yoga really somewhere else. It was more or less the first time, so we tried that out, it was just a test basically. Let's go on a retreat, because we do we like yoga, so why not do that on vacation? It was without any thought giving any thought to it, and it turned out quite good. It was really nice, but it wasn't that we had any expectation. It was more like: let's try that, and if it's not what we want, then we had an experience. I had a yoga

teacher training in Germany, and then I **switched jobs** and I had some time. Exactly a year ago basically, and had some free time, and in December or November I wanted to be somewhere where it's warm. And looking for yoga but retreats at that time is very difficult, and with COVID in place I thought, what do I want to do? And then I did a yoga teacher training, another one, that's because I wanted to be somewhere where it's warm and I **want yoga to be in the focus of things**.

J: So, where did you do it?

M: Mexico, it was really nice. I was a bit scared because Mexico is also like not the safest spot on the earth, but it was not no problem at all. And interestingly enough that was, changed my... what do you call that... **changed my view on people** and everything. And also on yoga, **because it was even larger melting pot, because it was like people from different cultures**. And also different, because it was one of those condensed yoga teacher trainings, with 200 hours in 14 days or something. So different expectations, and also different phases in the others' yoga journey. That was a bit unexpected by me, and a bit strange, because in the end they had well, many had **several psychological issues, and they used the yoga teacher training as a therapy session**. It was a bit strange, because people started crying all over the place, and it's OK that that comes out at a yoga teacher training, but... it was a bit too much for me, at least. Everyone was crying, including the teacher, and I was the only one that didn't cry at the morning session. And they were more like "Hey Matthias, I think we need to open up, you need to talk about your pain", so they wanted to find the spot where I have my weakness, my issue, but I'm OK, so there was nothing to be uncovered.

J: And there in terms of social connection, how was that?

M: Its again a melting pot, so that was again the thing, but the connectivity there was rather low, because the cultural and the distance in where you are in your yoga journey and stuff, was too extreme. So I had not so many connections there, and also people between other peoples they did not connect that well. There were no real friendships, or **really close community, that I normally had at retreats**, that was not there at all.

J: So that close community, do you think that also strengthens the experience?

M: Absolutely, sure. I think it's also getting into contact with people. Typically you start in a retreat, you start your morning session, and then there's breakfast. And typically talking to strangers in the morning, can be difficult. But if you had a yoga class, you have a topic. So that's how it starts, you have a topic, you say: "ohh my leg hurts, how's your leg?" and that easy. It's sometimes also, again different cultures behave sometimes different, but at least German folks are more or less a bit restricted. If you talk to Americans, it's like you're the best friend after two hours, so in a way that is more easy. But here you have a topic, and then you see how to well, with which persons, you click- and well, where it doesn't work out. You have a topic to talk about, and that that loosens things, and also you have the experience; you did **something together in the morning**, so you're basically happy because today **starts with an achievement**- whatever that was, like "I was on the mat" could be the only achievement of the day, but it was an achievement. That helps to get into contact and that also strengthens, like when **you start, you start together at a journey**. Because typically you arrive; that's by the way different with retreats. Sometimes they have this ongoing schedule, where people come and leave, but sometimes they also have like groups that come together. And then you're in a group which is also not what normal vacation is, so **you start in a group, you share some things, you share that classes, you talk about the classes, whatsoever, and this gets you together as well**, yeah.

J: Good point.

M: And I didn't like the experience, with this rolling-over schedule, because it's very difficult to meet people. Typically you meet someone, they say: "oh, we're leaving today", so like oh OK, next one.

J: yeah, so it's really about those connections that then help you in your journey, yes?

M: Yeah yeah yeah, **different views on things** as well, so and different experience with yoga and with whatsoever, so sure.

J: Now would you say, because you were talking about achievements, what would you say that are your achievements that you could take from it?

M: For me, it's always **talk talking to people**, is the thing that I was not good at, and that is where the retreats help. Especially because of those things what I said, **so talking to someone that I never met, is like a big step for me**, so and if there's a common topic that is sort of, everyone has an opinion on that, and it's clear to talk about that, then it makes it totally easy to me. But talking about the breakfast in the morning is not a topic, **it doesn't have this depth**, basically. But talk about the yoga class, you can spend hours talking about yoga class, and it's no problem. And then it's easy for me to get into contact with people, so that is sort of like the things that I took out of it at least.

J: Did you also switch jobs because of yoga, that yoga showed you a different version of life?

M: Yeah, sort of, sort of, it's more like looking it's like this: there's a life outside the work, that's basically the thing, and it's a longer journey for me. So I was in the other company for 16 years and had a lot of work, and really the feeling worth, the things that I did, and so. In fact, **I think yoga contributed to the change of mind** to say: "hey, why should I go on with that?" And um, absolutely and to bring me over the tip, to sort of, like switch. It's the same profession, it's more like I'm doing the same at another company, where the culture is a bit is better than it was before. But in the end, I'm at the point where you could say, work is not where you probably, get your full happiness out of it, so you should focus on other things. Jobs may pay the bill, but it's not the only thing where you can pull your happiness from. So that's currently the situation where I'm in.

J: When you started, hm, I'm thinking is this applicable to your situation, but I'll just ask: if there were skills or a certain attitude or ways of performing, that you thought it would be necessary for you? That you found during the yoga trip that you thought, oh this is something that I want to develop for myself?

M: Not sure if that fits me, mm. It could be, my view on hey, probably I should go and do more do into yoga teaching, so say like do a teacher training- that could have been the result of retreats and meeting people. Saying like oh "the yoga journey goes on for me", that could be one of the things that the **retreats contributed to**. But it was not the only thing why, but to stay on the yoga path, retreats were one part of it, **because you meet people that are similar**, and also abroad, so that's something: **that sometimes you think you're alone, and you aren't**. That's something that comes from the retreats as well.

J: Because you went to Mexico, you're going to Spain, you went to Portugal, Croatia... What is for environmental connectivity or connectedness important for you, if you choose a yoga retreat? You mentioned it should be warm.

M: Yeah, warm, so I said that the teacher the what do you do outside of yoga. So it's like, it's more like what do you want, when you book the retreat. **It's like, do you want a full experience: the whole day is planned for you? Or do you want some free time, to do some things on your own, with other**

**people, or not? That's the thing that I typically think about.** So also, language is a topic, I wouldn't do a yoga retreat in Spanish for example, it doesn't make sense. Just bits of English, is really difficult.

J: In terms of your own emotional state, so that's different side, did you have an AH! moment about your emotional state of being in any of those moments?

M: In Mexico I really had an emotional hard time, because actually the others had a strong psychological history, let's put it like that. So it's not like, they explained what they had experienced in their life- it was actually really bad, and everyone had a bad story. So being in jail, but mother shot herself, and things like that you normally only watch on TV, basically. I wanted to have a good time, and this was sort of... like it felt to me as someone took something away from me so, it felt like a deep dark wave through my brain, because I wanted this nice spot, and beautiful beach, and so on in the in the afternoon. But it was like, my mind was more like: "but look at the bad stories that the people experienced, look at that." And it made me feel really awkward, because I want to experience it, but I couldn't. I wanted to "oh it's nice, I want to have this all, it's so nice there"- but it wasn't there. I was short of leaving the teacher center, of just quitting.

J: To be honest if I hear this story it makes sense, because you're not there to be psychologist to other people. And I think, we also shared stories, but you're not going there, because you hope to fix all your mental problems, then you should go to psychologist.

M: I was awake at one night and I was at this tipping point, I said like either I say something, you cannot go in there like: "hey your bad stories, your bad life, I'm bored with that." I don't want to offend people, **its also a safe space**, I don't want to be the guy telling them to focus on the good life. I had really... I was awake full night or so, and I said to myself, what do you do? And then I played it through, as you do, what do I say in the morning. I said: I'm sorry but I won't join, and then interestingly enough, some others approached me later on, like oh I was so happy that you said that, I couldn't dare it. I realized **maybe that was probably a change in my life**, because I was at that situation before: **that I'm the one that needs to speak it out, because others are silent**. Also at work, it's sometimes the situation where things are bad, and I'm the one who speaks it out, and then others come back: "Oh yeah I wanted to say that for ages, thank you that you said it." I'm always like, why do I have to be that guy?

J: To me, it seems also for you that you set your own boundary, which is also a part of yoga, to take your own responsibility. Maybe you can agree on that then but, that yoga is also trying to teach you to take responsibility for your own choice choices and your actions, it's the point that you speak up for yourself.

M: absolutely, absolutely, and it felt so good afterwards. I was so happy with myself that I did something, instead of just closing eyes like oh I'll stand through it, I'll just don't do anything. I was happy that I did something, at least. But in a group it's always a group. So you have these things then, and if you are teaching more often, and they know the folks, then they open up, and that's good. And it's slowly, and then I think it makes people stronger in their expression, and talking about feelings and so on. Because those group and everyone does it.

J: That's also I think matching with what you just said, that you prefer, when you are on a retreat, that you're there with the group, and that you don't meet someone and they go again. Because then you don't have that vulnerable connection.

M: And also that safe spot, so that you say like "**this is a safe place**", because it's like "I know this guy". Well, it's like we're all humans, so but you need to have some sort of like connectivity, that you say: I



trust, I have confidence, and I trust that I can tell something, and I'm not getting laughed at, or whatever. But this takes some time at least, and if it's like people coming and going, it's not a safe group anymore.

J: Yes, exactly like that. Now I'm not sure if this is for you, but did you have a mind blowing experience, or like you already mentioned, that there was a shift, but something that during the retreat or yoga teacher training that really showed you different perspective of life?

M: I it was at the yoga teacher training, we talked about those are you with a dosha's. At first I was a bit offended, because I don't like putting people into boxes. That led to a lot of confusion with people, and I don't think it's a good idea basically. But in the end when we more looked into that, I realized that if you look at those, it helps me a lot now to understand how behavior of people is hardwired into them. Sometimes you can formulate that as an excuse for certain behavior, but even if, it makes me better at understanding people's behavior. So, it's clear why they say that, because he's pita it's clear that he behaves like that. Also it helps at the yoga class, if you say like oh it's clear what he needs; it's not what he wants, or she wants, it clear what they need for the class now. It's probably not that mind-blowing, but it **helped me cope with different personalities, that I also encounter at work life**. It is sort of, I'm not saying life changing, but it helps lot communicating with people better, and understanding, and giving them what they need. Basically.

J: And also an insight for yourself, not only about them.

M: For me it was interesting, because I had always the feeling that I'm a Total pita- guy, because I'm focused, and achieving things, and doing things. So on the training the teacher said: look at yourself, you're not pita, forget it. I was really relieved, it was suddenly clear I was vata. It was really funny, because I was like: I didn't want to be Pita, I wanted to be more creative, and I'm doing fancy yoga classes, and music and stuff, so it's for me afterwards like clear, oh I'm not a Pita guy or at least not 100%. It was a really relief, because I didn't want to be that.

J: So did you feel like you got a different identity somehow ?

M: I.T. helped me to give myself some space when I didn't feel well, me happy also doing strange yoga classes so go to this class so I realized that and, that's kind of like a change of thought of life. How do I go on with that monkey mind, and that subconsciousness, and that sometimes gives you signals that you don't want, and it's like "Oh yeah, that's my pita again. Come on, stay where you are, stay in the box. I'll pick out the vata part of me and life is better again. And it's like a bit strange, because I didn't want to put people into boxes, and I still don't, but it's clear if I meet someone, it's clear what is happening but anyway it's more like, it's it gives an understanding of behaviors, and likes and dislikes and so on. It **helps me a lot to cope with people basically**.

J: That's a good story. Then there's one question about which values or beliefs have been replaced, you said you talked to a lot of different people, different cultures, maybe that somehow changes your way of looking?

M: I think that my beliefs did not change there, when we talked about our elevation of yogis or with their pure thought they managed to levitate, and fly around, and I've got people saying: Oh yes, you have to be deeply meditating, and then you'll manage. Where I was like: "folks... it's gravity." That's where my beliefs did not fully change.

J: It needs to be still somehow practical, in terms of also vata, pita, kafa, they are a bit based on practicalities which make it more reachable for you?

M: Absolutely, absolutely, sure, but as I said: I'm also hard wired in some aspects, so I'm still a science IT-focused guy, which will probably not change. At those retreats you always meet also more spiritual and esoteric focused people, this is kind of like also in the in at COVID times, it this can result in clashes. Like Ohhh, you're also one of those believers, and the pharma industry, and they are lying to you... things like that, you know. OK, I have to admit, I have to leave, so when will your thesis be finished?

J: My deadline is 9 January, so that's oh relatively soon. One last thing, before you go, to ask for privacy reasons, can I put the transcript in the report at the appendix, is that allowed? Or is it preferably not.

M: if, yeah... well don't put my full name in there, if you can give it a fake name, I'm okay.

J: Yes, I can do that for you. Do you also want to receive a copy of the report when it's done?

M: Yes, I'd like that.

## F.10: Transcript Anna Wendlinger

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022

A: Anna Wendlinger (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: So if you want to start with your name, and age, and where you live, that's like general information?

A: Yes, my name is Anna and I am 27 years old, and I live in Dusseldorf, Germany.

J: Did you do, because you did a yoga teacher training, did you practice yoga before already or was it new?

A: Um, yes, I practiced yoga before, and the first time I practiced yoga was when I was 15 years old. I spent a year abroad in the US in Oregon, and my host mom... So I spent the year over there going to a high school, and I stayed with a family, which is like called a host family, and my host mother, she was a yoga teacher, for hatha yoga. So and then and she introduced me to yoga. I would do yoga every day with her, then I came back to Germany and I did not do yoga for a while, because it was too expensive for like being a student and then I started doing yoga again in 2019. So I started you doing yoga again and I loved it and then I immediately did it like three or four times a week, so like I really hit it off again with the vinyasa yoga and hatha yoga. I did that a lot and then also **during corona even more**, and that's why I decided to do the teacher training.

J: And what was in your real motivation to go for such teacher training?

A: It was very spontaneous I guess, I just loved doing yoga and I wanted to **know more about yoga** and be better, because in the teacher training you do not only learn how to teach, but also you **get your practice on a deeper level, like the next level**. I really wanted to get better and then I could also imagine myself teaching it, making yoga more like a bigger part of my life.

J: And did you expect to... What did you expect to learn there? That you could learn how to teach, but there are other things that you really thought you could find in such training?

A: yeah I thought I would learn more about anatomy, like about the different body parts and how they are affected by yoga, or because I also have like lots of issues with like my back or my knee, and I wanted to learn more how I could take care of it. To learn more about how the body reacts to certain yoga poses, and how you can even hear your body by doing yoga yeah.

J: And did it get proven that you can heal your body?

A: Yes, yeah and I... definitely. So many poses, I now do like differently or more correct and then it doesn't hurt my back anymore or like my back hurts less, a lot less. Yeah it really helped.

J: Was there also a point that there was something big or you wanted to change jobs or something like that, that you decided to go?

A: Um, I think it was... Um so I did my master studies while working full time, so on the weekends I did my master studies, and when it was over I kind of **needed a new project** and that became the yoga teacher training then. I think that was more or less one of the reasons that's why.

J: Was it was it then a teacher training that is every weekend or it was for a month, directly?

A: It was over seven months, and then on the weekends. Not every weekend, but like every other weekend. It was in Germany, but it was taught in English because the teacher was an American.

J: Yeah, okay. Did you search in, whilst practicing yoga, also for something that you felt that is bigger than just you?

A: Honestly no, I'm not very spiritual, so for me yoga is more of **like being active and being aligned with my body, but I'm not that much on the spiritual side.**

J: That's alright, I need to think about how to form it, because you didn't really go on a retreat away, you know? so I'm just thinking OK how can I put that so it somehow fits a bit. Was it in your own city as well?

A: Yeah it was my own city, so in the evenings we went back home. I mean nonetheless it was feeling a little bit like a girls camp, because we were like 20 girls and no guys and we met on the weekends or sometimes it was a Friday and then Monday as well for like 3 three or four days, from the morning to the evening, so we **became like a really close group and I made many new** friends, and every time we went back home after such a weekend, it was like **feeling strange to be back in normal life.** Because even if it was only for a couple of days, you were like so **in this different world, because we also have this really nice location kind of like a church,** where we did it. So, it... **It was like stepping into a different world on the weekends, and then coming back every Monday, it was super hard.**

J: Yeah, I can imagine, how did that feel like if you have to come back all the time? Do you feel like you have to... That you are stepping out again of this total different layer, kind of?

A: You know, we kind of to make up for it, because... So we formed a group of four girls, so we also tried to meet like once or twice a week in between **to keep our layer closer,** and to work on like the tasks and assignments together. So we **try to keep our little world a little bit longer.**

J: And do you think that the people that you meet in such yoga teacher training, that they have specific common characteristics?

A: Yes, I think we were all very very different: like having different lifestyles, and different um employers or like we worked in different areas. **But then we all had this common ground, which was yoga and the same thinking, the same vibe kind of.** Like, we got along - we still do, we still meet like the four of us, although it's been like a year now. Because even though there are so many differences between everyone, you have like this common ground. Everyone has the same.. let's say, **"spirit"** I guess? So, like um... **the ability to listen to each other, and to be like open minded, and being interested in different things, learning about each other.** I think that's the common spirit that we all had, and that's yeah... Why we got along so well.

J: Do you think it makes a big difference to go for a weekend and then come back again, like do you think that the things that you learned in such teacher training, you couldn't learn them in just going to practice every day or four times a week?

A: Because when you go to practice, you only do... You just practice and follow the teacher what they do. But with the teacher training, you learn like how to align a pose, what could be misalignments, you learn about the history of yoga, about the Physiology, about the philosophy as well, you learning the anatomy: what can go wrong. And yeah, you just learn so much on a deeper level, not only doing it, but also the theoretical stuff.

J: Would you want to go for a teacher training for one month?

A: yes, i think so. The only reason I did it like this over several months, is because it was like corona times and the option just like presented itself. It was the yoga studio where I've already gone for several years, so I just thought, why not? But I also think, I mean if you would go to a teacher training, **that's like a full month you would get like the full experience, I think it would be even more... um yeah, even more like, in your face kind of. Because you don't go back to your normal life,** and then come back to the teacher training and so on, but I also think that if you do everything in one month it's a lot. **You don't have time to process, because it gets on you all the time, you just get confronted with new things for like a month, and then it like stops. And if it's over a longer period of time, you have the time to really let it sink, and then next week you go back,...** nja, it has its pros and cons, and you get that ripped out of it, but also you have time to process.

J: yeah that's indeed, because I hear a lot of people that say "Oh it was great to be there for a month, because then you're really out of it and otherwise you have to get back all the time" that makes like in the half, but I also see your point that it helps maybe to reflect, instead of everything all at once, and then it's also easier to somehow process it or to implement it in your life I think. Because you go back to your life and then you have to do it and it helps maybe more instead of everything and one month and then: there you go, just good luck with it. And do you think that in the teacher training that you changed a lot personally in terms of how you act to people or how you perceive people or how you perceive yourself maybe?

A: I think a little bit, so first of all, very typically: I'm now trying to live a little bit more vegan. So I mean I've always been a vegetarian, but I met many girls that are vegan and I tried different things like I mean, I love cheese so that's not an option to swap, but I swapped like milk against like almond milk and then the stuff you put on your bread; now I changed it to hummus or more vegan alternatives so **I got more aware of eating,** that for sure. And then also **more open minded to all different kinds of people,** because we were such a **hybrid group** of girls, and you really **learn to like communicate with everyone, no matter what they do and their other life, or how old they are.** So um, I think it makes you more open, more aware.

J: That's a good one. That's a good one. And um in terms of your body, did you learn a lot of your like your physical body?

A: Yes, yes, um I learned what, like if I did like wrong movements, what caused back pain and how I could prevent that. So that's like one of my key takeaways, I now know I also learn what I'm good at, and also what I'm not good at: like for example hip opening like huge pain point, but now I'm like trying to do that even more to get better so I learned a lot about like what my body likes to do, and what it doesn't, and how **I can get better at the things that I didn't like before, and I never did because it was hard.**

J: Hipopeners really is a thing.

A: And I also note that it's okay not to be able to do everything.

J: Yes, just you in the moment, that you don't have to push it further "because everyone else is doing it" or whatever. And was there a very big aha! Moment, like a realization. Or was it for you more practical, learning how to teach?

A: I think it was more practically, like it wasn't really life searching. In school I had like lots of those

little aha moments, where like things about yoga came together, or understood better so that's for sure, but yeah I don't think there was a moment where: oh that's my life or that's what I should do.

J: I see, that's okay, you also went with a different intention. That also makes the interview somewhat shorter, sorry for that. But it's okay, you said some things from a different perspective from someone that went for in cut in pieces amount of time. Oh yeah, do you feel like in in those yoga teacher training, that your comfort zone is stretched a lot, that they somehow push you into places that you wouldn't go yourself ?

A: So I'm for example **very very much afraid of inversions** like handstand or headstand so I tried, like didn't have to have to learn it, but they made us practice this all the time and I have to honestly say at the beginning: I kind of try it **but at the end I just couldn't step out of my comfort zone, I never did it so, but they didn't push us as well so it was like very much like up to us.** uh I think **where I definitely stepped out of my comfort zone and also was pushed out of it was for the meditation part**, because I've never did meditation before, and we had we had to do it all together for, I think the longest was like an hour, and that was **very very much out of my comfort zone and I learned a lot about um myself.** Like how, how difficult it is for me to just like sit there and think of nothing.

J: Okay, oh yeah would you say it was really emotional?

A: Yes I think so, I think so. It was uh like **this whole like emotional vibe for the for the weekends, when we were there together also we sang like lots of mantras, and that was like really connecting everyone.** And it's not like things came up but it was just such an emotional moment: 20 people in this church buildings, singing together mantras and meditating, and no one said anything. And um yeah, definitely.

J: And do you do you know what creates that emotional value around it?

A: I think it's because, especially in those moments, **we were all very much connected, because we came for the same reasons.** Everyone wanted to teach, that's not even like the main reason, but **everyone wanted to get deeper into yoga and do something for themselves: learn something about themselves, about their bodies and physical and psychological minds. So I think it was just this moment, where we were all on the very same page, like with the very same thoughts and vibes and purpose, and that just created such a strength. That made it pretty emotional at some moments.**

J: And what was an emotional moment for you, do you remember?

A: Yeah, I think um learning how hard it was for me to meditate in the beginning, it made me really, really angry. Like I said there **and I would just get so angry, because I was frustrated that it wouldn't come easy.** So that was like definitely emotional, maybe a different emotional feeling, but for sure. **And then it got better, so that was really like a real journey for me.** Because the physical part is fine, because I like doing sports and everything and being active, **but the mental, sitting down and really getting into myself, that was very very hard and an emotional journey, I guess.**

J: So it's an emotional journey, but because of the teacher training gets it gets in faster speed kind of? Before you said also that you can go home, and you can reflect upon it: how did you reflect upon it?

A: They told us that we could do journaling, but that's not really what I like to do, so what I did was meeting the other girls like the our group of four, **and then we just spoke for hours and evenings and everyone sharing their thoughts and feelings,** and we would really miss each other after a weekend, try to meet up again, and just make some tea, and yeah, talk about different yoga topics. Just like

throwing in, **and then discussing them or arguing even, because we had all different opinions, but we were very much open to each opinions**, so that's kind of what we did to reflect. We just went into **discussions about our thoughts, yeah was really helpful, also to see different sides.**

J: Plus it is in a small group, so it is in a safe bubble, so it is a safe space. And cool that you're in contact now, than you can keep on reflecting through life.

A: Yeah we stay we stay do it right now, about things that happen in our life and we would just share that, and then you would get take opinions from the other source.

J: Would you say that there are specific skills that you like took from it, from the teacher training, in terms of getting your emotional mind in order?

A: Definitely to just **spend more time, just being and thinking**: not listening to music or reading a book so just giving myself time, to like **reflect on myself or just let my mind wander and take in my thoughts**. So just **be more open to myself and listen to myself more, not like blurring it out with being active all the time**. That's definitely a learning and then I mean, of course like all the learnings you get for like teaching: being very open to the different kinds of people who sit in front of you, and getting better at seeing the people like who they are, what they are what can do, what can they not do, and just trying to be **more adaptive**, I guess. For different kinds of people you know.

J: Oh yes, so you get more empathy. And values, that you changed values or habits? Because you switched towards the vegan side.

A: I think also what changed is before that, **I would like push my body super hard**, through like all kinds of workouts until I had like injuries. And **the yoga teacher training made me more aware and appreciative of a healthy body, so I tried to take a step back every once in a while**, when I think I'm pushing myself too hard, so the self-awareness, reflectiveness um yeah, being more appreciative and careful with your body and also with your mind, and more open... Being able to tell yourself that it's OK to not do everything all the time.

J: And in regards to pushing yourself, telling yourself it is okay not to do everything all the time, do you think that people that want to follow yoga teach training or retreat will increase in the future?

A: You mean like the interest in doing things like that?

J: Yes.

A: yeah, for sure. I'm **very certain, because I feel like the whole society currently is shifting more towards this self-awareness, and mental health**, and physical health, and **I think yoga and yoga retreats and getting aligned with yourself is something that in our society gets more** and more awareness, so I would say: for sure that more and more people would want to do teacher trainings or retreats. **Especially corona, you know, because that really made people think about themselves, and being with themselves**. I think that's also something that would push more people to go do yoga.

J: when they have time to think about it? Or you mean in such time of corona. Or why corona specifically ?

A: I think the whole corona situation, when you were just like locked up, **made everyone aware of themselves and their mental health and physical health**. And people started, at least I feel like it,

**being more thinking about life, and life purposes and spirituality, so I guess that also just helped, the kind of change happening in society.**

J: What did you think about life and what was your change before COVID and after COVID?

A: I'm just like thinking that, because during COVID, I did yoga like twice a day and it just helped me push through, like being at home all the time, because yoga was something that I could do like everywhere and anytime so maybe that's why I'm thinking that this was... you know like help. Because I know many people who just like started doing lots and lots of more yoga, and meditating, because there wasn't really much- anything else to do. And was like something **an anchor**, that you could hold on to, during the time. But regardless of that, **I think definitely society gets more and more aware of just, living a healthy life, and yoga represents that.**

J: Nicely said, I think that's true. Those were my questions for now, I had to change some, because you didn't go away to another country. But this last thing what you said, about yoga representing that, is interesting.



## F.11: Transcript Patricia Theodorescu

January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

P: Patricia Theodorescu (Interviewee)

J: Jolien Vinke (Interviewer)

J: The first question is going to be simple, if you just can name your name and your age, and your nationality?

P: My name is Patricia Theodorescu, I'm 31 and I come from Romania.

J: How many yoga trips did you do? Toga related trips can be teacher training, can be something where you are now like to an ashram, or retreat or silent walks...

P: Well uh, I did a lot of things in my life, I think I started with having a trip where I went to Mexico in Mazunte in 2017. That was my first trip. Actually Hridaya **Mexico**, because this place here also has another center in Mexico, and I started with module 1, which is like a four week course in... like a beginner course of yoga. And then after that I came here, and did the karmayoga program for six months, and then we opened the school, as I told you before. I after that, **went to India**, where I did an **Ayurveda course** for one month and then to **Nepal**, which was also kind of part of the spiritual journey, but not a as a specific retreat and yeah, and then one year and a half ago in 2021 in August, I came here also to do some karma yoga for four months, but now I'm here for one year.

J: You said going to Nepal was part of the spiritual journey: you really had in mind to go on such spiritual journey, or what do you mean with spiritual journey?

P: I think, when I heard about Hridaya, how it started for me, was that I was in Berlin, I was doing an internship there in native advertising, and I started going more to yoga practices and meditation. Then I met my teacher, that actually did the teacher training in Mexico at Hridaya, so I think I really... **I think my kind of heart longs for doing something like that, and also because I was struggling with like somehow depression and social anxiety and stuff like that, I was like OK I need to kind of like yeah go and decide.** It was it was more intuitive than a rational decision, so this is how it started. And then it just came from one to another, you know, there was nothing planned actually. I didn't know I'm coming here to France straight back after Mexico, this wasn't even... They just bought the place so in the last day when I was in Mexico, I knew that I wanted to kind of like continue going on retreats and stuff, and somebody held the presentation that this is opening and I was like "Oh yeah, I'm going there for sure." So it was just like that, there wasn't a premeditated in any way.

J: Yeah, I can imagine that then it just flows somehow all together, awesome. You said that you had anxiety and social anxiety yeah? Was that also one of the motivators to start such trip?

P: For sure, for sure. Like, first I knew that I wanted to kind of, overcome my fears, you know? When I was living in Berlin for seven months, and I finished my internship. And I was kind of... **I didn't know who I am**, you know? I was 26 and then I've been living in Romania, and **I've been struggling with depression for a really long time in my life, so it was kind of like... Just wanting to look for myself and be who I am, and its just, it is so lucky it felt like a good container**, you know? **Like not traveling by myself, because it would have been too scary, but also traveling by myself, but being somewhere where you have a schedule, and you have a community, and it's easier to know people, and build connections** and stuff like that. **But also subconscious**, like I can tell you now retrospectively when I think about it why I took this choice, but then I was like "wow, this place" and then I looked at online,

and I was like “Wow this is amazing, it looks really good”. The other thing was that, because I'm Romanian, actually the school is founded by Romanian.

J: Yes, I read that!

A: So when my teacher told me that “hey, there's this school in Mexico and it's founded by a Romanian” so I was like Oh my God. So it was just this thing for me, that I was like “wow this is interesting, OK I'm going” so it was just like that.

J: Yeah, and for someone with anxiety, maybe it feels more familiar in a way if you know that it's a Romanian startup

A: Yeah, it was it was, there's **this kick** that I kind of needed **to choose that over something else**.

J: OK and did you travel before a lot already, or to Mexico was the first trip outside of Europe?

A: Yeah it was my first trip outside of Europe. I was traveling in Europe, but very kind of anchored in the real world, like just trips with my friends. I always love to travel, but not as kind of like an initiation, you know like more than a more than a little break, or a little excursion.

J: Okay, so that is your general connection to yoga and travel, I think. And existential questions about life, but that's about what you just mentioned, that you didn't really know who you are. Do you feel like you know, do you feel like traveling in combination with yoga helped you to find out?

A: Yeah absolutely, **it changed my life**. Yeah. **I think it was everything: it was yoga, it was the community, it was like being in a conscious place. It was just another way of like experiencing life**, right. It was just so different. And on one hand the yoga in itself, that was incredible. You know the teachings that we have at Hridaya are really special, but I think it was most of the part it was yeah, **just being in the container with other people. That makes it really really special**.

J: And what you said ‘another part of experiencing life’, do you feel like people need to experience that more, also in the current state of where the world is going?

A: Absolutely I think that's why I'm very driven by higher purposes in my life. So that's why I'm here, **it's because I really, really, believe that it's so healing**. Even if I were to go... Because from that moment to now I did six silent retreats in my life, and I think it's one of the most amazing things on this planet, like really. **To have this tool in a world where things are so crazy, and you're so kind of drawn in so many places, and people struggle more with the sense of isolation or lack of purpose or just not feeling that you belong**. And I see this, and I talk to my friends, and I also I'm a coach, so I work with people and I know this is something that is ongoing. So for sure. And I could see this, because my friends came here, you know, I was like “oh guys, you have to do the module one” and they were **so grateful just to kind of have this disruption in their day-to-day life and just focus on themselves, and connecting to their body, and connecting to their soul**. And yeah... For sure, for sure. I see the benefits.

J: Because yeah, before you also mentioned that you... It's a lot of processes happening that you see now, so that's what you mean with your friends, that you can see how they experience it also?

A: Yes, and I can see it here with the karma yogis as well. There are **major transformations**, there are people that came here, absolutely, there are people that came here with really lack of self-confidence, and just sadness and not being able to connect, and it's so healing you know? For example one of my

very good friends earlier, that came here when he was eighteen. He had suicidal thoughts, he was just a child and he was so thin, and yeah now many years later, he's just that amazing man, his change was outside and inside, he is a father now, just this amazing man. It just this transformation that I've never seen really.

J: And transform, what is what would you describe as transformation?

A: Um, I can share my experience from this, and I think my transformation comes so much from... Meditation is such an **amazing tool**, right, **to kind of build awareness, and clarity, and focus**. So I could see this for myself by meditating all the time, like before I was so reactive, and I also had anger issues, and like these thoughts and whatever. And by meditating and doing yoga, you see that **you're not just your thoughts**, you're not just in the loop of your mind. But **you can have also awareness and kind of like step back, and you're not just a slave of your conditioning, but you can also construct yourself in a way that you want to**, you know? And of course, when you are cultivating love, then you can see that for sure. Like I was the kind of person that was always so pessimistic, and looking at all the things that I don't like, and going back to Romania now for holidays... It was such a **massive difference, then before**. I was like 'Oh my God I hate this, and this, and this, and this and blah blah blah', and now I was like... love. You know? Like acceptance, and love, and resilience, and yeah. But of course these are subtle, I cannot say that I'm a different person, but I can say that my friends tell me that I'm a different person. They're like "wow, you're glowing, and you're so radiant, and you're so happy, we just want to come there because you look so good, so something good is happening".

J: That's such a nice compliment.

P: Yeah, **it's just becoming more conscious, you know, conscious in how you're acting, what you're eating, how you're seeing the world, how you connect with everything, how you look at the flower...** you know.

J: And you get indeed the tools how to do that, instead of you having to figure it out yourself. Hm, before when you went to Mexico, was there something that you saw as a skill or type of behavior that you felt like you wanted to learn from going like, what was your expectation, your attitude or characteristic or something like that?

P: I don't think I had any kind of expectations, I didn't even know what the thing is about. Like I learned, I read a lot about yoga, and I read a lot about meditation and philosophy, so I was very mental. So for me it was like **"Yes, I know about these things, I read it and blah blah blah," but when it came to experience it, for sure it kind of opened a different realm**. It was interesting for me just see what's about you know. I knew the benefits of yoga by, just knowing the philosophy behind it, so of course I would say like: **discipline, awareness**, stuff like that. **But it was after I experienced it, that I know what is about, rather than before**.

J: Yeah OK, so you would say that ... That's interesting, so is it not a realization come or is that realization that you're there and you're experiencing everything, and then afterwards it suddenly settles.

P: Yes, hmm hmm, much more. **It's such a visceral thing, like, you have to live it in your body, to understand what is about**, you know? You can project before that, it's like, oh it's cool, because you do this and this, and it builds muscles or whatever, **but the benefits are so much more subtle than that**.

J: Such as also the connection and the food and the people and the workshops that you probably get, and the knowledge. And so, in terms of social contact, do you feel like there is a specific type of people, or do they have something in common, those people that go to India or Mexico, and what is that?

P: Yes, absolutely. Um, if I were to kind of go on the business dialysis of it, in Hridaya Mexico for example or rather than Hridaya France, they attract different type of people. Let's say that in Mexico, there are other people that are traveling, like **solo travelers young people that are kind of going more into this search for oneself**, and this journey. And here in France, I see more mature people that are coming, and also people that you wouldn't expect from very different backgrounds. Like we had people that are working for the French government that are coming here for retreat, or people that had many different things, but high performance companies people. **But if I were to see the nucleus behind with everyone, it's... It is a longing, you know? It is a longing, that it's very hard to express in words.** I don't know if you felt it for yourself when you did the TTC in India, **but it's just this thing that you feel, that you want to kind of like just live this, experiment this, so yeah I think it's searching for oneself**, searching like how people that go to therapy or they go to coaching, or they go to astrologers, it's kind of the same search for me.

J: I hear a lot of people saying about this community, do you think the community that is there is one of the biggest factors that also brings this growth and transformation? Because of other people, you are the one that's growing, or changing or reflecting on yourself. And seeing "O I am like this, and I see that now, because you are here reflecting that to me in a way."

P: Hmhm, yes.

J: The power of community is really big. And maybe that's also that people miss in in current society, that they have the feeling that there is not really a community, or they cannot really go somewhere. I think it's quite a big thing, actually.

P: Yeah, this is actually something I've been contemplating so much, and I think **one of the biggest factors is the community. We're tribal human beings, like we're social creatures, this is how evolutionary we were raised. With not having this, and more and more isolation and you could see with COVID, the harshest effects of isolation, and people can go crazy with being by themselves.** Yeah, for sure, community is incredibly important. Like just to kind of have this support group, and we here have a lot of sharing; once per week we share it, you know? I talk to people after to see if this works for them, and there are people that don't share, they don't have people to share with, or that they know don't know how to be listened to. **So being in a courteous relationship: eating together, coming together, singing together, this is something that is part of our DNA somehow and we lost it. So it's incredibly healing in many different areas.** Also, you know very well that, even people that are working in teams like... It's so important for kids to do sports, because we're living in a society, so it's **imperative now to learn how to behave with people, how to let go, how to be more compassionate, how to just find your place in the world.** So yeah, this is... This is super important, super important.

J: Nicely put in words, definitely. It's so clear to see, but I feel like there is not that much done about it by educational schools, for example meditation

P: For sure, for sure. It's also something that is an acquired thing, for kids it's so much more difficult to meditate, because they have a lot of energy, so that's very difficult to stand still. You know, awareness kind of grows also with maturity of the brain, but for sure, for sure it's it's really really important. And yoga, even for kids, there's so many yoga for kids nowadays, I know from my friends that have kids that are they really enjoy it.

J: OK, part two, this is more about yourself maybe, as in is there something specific that you learned about your mental state?

P: I think it's very present for me now, because I went back to my parents, and my parents are growing old, and I can also see their patterns and their conditioning and how they react. It came as a very big realization that, you know, **we have these tendencies of course and conditioning and whatever and trauma, but also, we have the ability to overcome it**, you know? So **what I learned the most, is that thoughts come and go, but I don't have to feed into this thought**. For somebody like me, that struggled with like really self-deprecating thoughts, when I was the younger, it was magical to discover meditation, and kind of **training my mind to not go into this story that I'm telling myself**. So **for sure my mental state is so much better now than it was five years ago**, for sure.

J: Do you think it would have differed, if you didn't go on yoga trips but just went to yoga classes?

P: Ah.. yes for sure. I had to go, and I had to... **Everything changed it. It's like, just taking me out of the context** that I was in Romania, where **I was so identified with the role I had in the world** like: oh this is Patricia, she's like this and like this, I do like this and like this, and then to kind of **cut this, and see myself in a different scenario, changed everything**. Yoga classes are very punctual and specific, but a retreat this different, it has a different power.

J: And what the different power, that it has everything included, you mean?

P: Yes, and because it allows you to go more in depth, **than just the yoga class that comes, lasts for two hours, and then you go back home**. And then you did the same thing but like just doing it more and more, it's like a retreat, you can meditate every day and it's amazing, it's amazing, like I can... They are two different things, **but if you go and retreat them meditate 6 hours a day after 10 days it's gonna touch something for sure**. So I think **it's a matter of intensity and time**.

J: Hm Intensity is a good one... And what did you learn about your physical body?

P: Well, that uh it can do more things than I thought. Yeah, it's funny, when I started the yoga I wasn't doing any sports at all, so I was so rusty. I could do the forward bent, I could do it till my knees, something like that, and to kind of like see because you're practicing and you can go more and more and more and become more flexible, that's amazing. Yeah it's actually... **I think the body is very much put aside in many aspects, but I think the body is much more magical than we thought it is**. For me at least, **I was a very mental person: I was always focusing to be smarter, better, and I thought that I kind of navigated in the world through my mind. But then I forgot about the fact that I also have a body, and the body has knowledge and well. Like my intuition comes more from my gut, rather than my head, it's also giving me many signals**. Of course I'm far away from where I want to be, but I can sense this feeling of like when my body is tense or yeah. There's so much on the somatically level that can be learned as well.

J: Yes, yes. Did you feel there was a difference going to India in Mexico and in Nepal in terms of the yoga trip was, was it made differently?

P: Yeah, it was very different. I didn't like India so much, for me I was.. It wasn't my cup of tea. I think the teachings were everywhere that I went was, there were common points in teaching, and I could see that as well. I think from all the religions and after actually I went **to Israel** at some point, because it was the journey about God - whatever form it has, and I can see common points in everything. Like they all say, all the philosophies, if you go look beyond the dogma it's the same thing, but for sure

there are different flavors. I personally resonated more with unorganized taste, rather than when I was in India, and it was so chaotic and I was like I don't know...

J: In any of those places, what would you consider, was the most mind blowing discovery that you had? Or that you already named it before, about your body and your mental, be in terms of that you had certain values or the way you perceived the world or ideas?

P: Yeah, I think you put it very well, it was **mostly about how to perceive everything, perceiving the world, perceiving myself, looking inward, looking outward. I think this was the biggest aspect and the biggest change: the perception.**

J: And in general, would you say these trips were emotionally more heavy intense than just the trips you made with friends, like you said?

P: Yeah, absolutely, of course, they were all emotionally intense. Like I've been going through many things of course. But um, there are two kinds... Like when you feel bad, and you feel bad. **Then you feel bad like there's something that is wrong and you're going through \*\*\*\*. But also there are these things of going through \*\*\*\*, but knowing that it's just purification somehow, and that is good and that you're out of your comfort zone.** So of course things are not easy. Yeah... It was also on the **material level** of like "oh I'm going to Mexico, and I have scorpions in my room," or "I'm going to India and I have no water and I have to wash my clothes in the bucket," and "I'm afraid of mosquitoes," **or so it was also this kind of challenges, but also mental challenges of like yeah. Many things coming up, like many memories, traumas, stuff like that. Like a therapeutical process.**

J: Yeah, yeah I see. And that's also because you're placed in a different environment than you used to be in, then, right?

P: Of course, and I wasn't in these places there are super beautiful, and super easy, like **I didn't go to Bali where it's super luxurious and everything is wonderful. I went to Mexico where I had the diarrhea every three days, because of the water,** and I was always afraid that I'm gonna die. Or India that was just like the filth and everything and it was just so crazy.

J: That's something I was thinking about while doing research, because there are different type of teacher trainings and different type of retreats. You have retreats where everything looks white and blankets hanging down, and candles, and Buddha, and what not, fruit bowls, king size beds... And then you have something similar to where I went, where you just have a wooden bed, with very thin mattress and indeed no water you just have to put water on your head like that, you eat three times in a day, it is more sober.

P: Exactly, exactly. Where did you go to in India?

J: It was in Khajuraho, an organization that also has a location in NL. So, in that sense, it is kind of similar to yours, having two locations. And I thought, if they have an organization in the Netherlands, at least its not a scam. Because, I thought, I want to go to India, but if I Google "yoga teacher training in India" there are trillions of things, so how do you choose the right one. Then I met this woman and she went to this specific one and she told me about it, I thought 'OK let's just go for that, because I don't know where else to go.' \*shows map of India\*

P: Aah, okay, okay, exactly in the middle.

J: Yes, I had to travel through India for that as well, really impressive. Do you feel like when you go on those trips that there is more also more room for coincidences, or if that exists coincidence?

P: Oooh, **I don't believe in coincidence anymore, I believe in synchronicities**, for sure. Sometimes I talk to some of my friends, and I'm like, **I feel like I'm living at Hogwards**, you know? Because it feels like I've discovered the magic somehow, like I don't know how it happened, but then, you go in one place, you meet one person, and then it comes... Like I did the silent retreat, here my first silent retreat, and then I went to Nepal. And in Nepal, on the street, I met a guy that I did the silent retreat with. And I was like... It's impossible, what are the chances?! We became friends and whatever, but it was just like this is crazy.

J: It's funny how you say Hogwarts, because this other guy that I interviewed, he also said it feels like Harry Potter, or something, and now you say it's also Harry Potter, so it's interesting how both of you say that.

So this question is more about which values or beliefs have been replaced and show you an understanding of the bigger picture, so what, how did you change the view of life?

P: I think it's **an accumulation of many things**, but it clears out your lenses. So rather than seeing life through kind of like a low frequency vibe, and in terms of like comparison and whatever, you just see like with the eyes of love, actually. It's even... It can't be more direct than this. **I see the world with more compassion, and love, and understanding, and acceptance, and tolerance, and I'm not so eager to take one side of the story or another one.** I feel like I'm more kind of neutral, and I'm very I'm a very opinionated person, I have a very strong mind and some opinions, and I think now it's also a sign of maturity of course, but it's also a sign of practice- that I'm much more not throwing myself into this or that, but I'm kind of like not taking sides and being more aligned somehow and more neutral. And from that it feels like I see the world... **It's very different, it's also looking beyond what you hear, and what you see. It just feels like I can see life more in depth and with a sense of sensibility somehow**, I don't know. **It's very it's very difficult to explain in words, but for but for sure my perception is much wider, and much more deep.** It's kind of like all-encompassing, rather than just very narrow minded.

J: In general, do you think that, because you also transformed, do you think it was on specific points that it happened or was it more gradually?

P: Oh.. it's like this \*makes waves with hand\*, it is in waves. I'm transforming, and something happens, then I go back to my shadow and then I come and then... It's very, it's very chaotic. It's never like, in many philosophies, it's like described as **this spiral**, rather than a direct line though. **You're spiraling again and again, and many times you're reaching at the same point, but then something changes and something changes.** I wish it could be smooth and simple and "now I know, and I'm never going back," but no.

J: It doesn't work like that, no... You said something, on which I wanted to ask, but... I don't remember what was it. Should have written it down. Ok, do you think or, in which way has your comfort zone been stretched?

P: It **was highly, highly stretched for me**. I was uh very much... When I lived in Romania, I was having my own apartment, and my car, and I was always going to the hairdresser and blah blah blah - we're very much into beauty in Eastern Europe, and then even now, when I came here, coming from my apartment that was 100 square meters, to going and living in a dorm with three other people, with having bathroom but the door didn't work for a while. We didn't have a door to the toilet, we were all in a girl's area but I was like, wow I'm like really going for it. I don't need anything anymore, and also

like from a million clothes in my drawer, I had to come with the backpack. And yeah, in Mexico we didn't have any toilets, we had this dry toilets and you had to kind of be like a cat, and we didn't have showers so you had to use little buckets to wash yourself. And in India, how you said as well, sleeping on- and in Nepal I slept on iron with not even a mattress, but a blanket as a mattress. So it was really, really, yeah difficult, but also it's super amazing, like **when you kind of really understand that you don't need so much**, it really changes everything.

J: Yes, because that's also part of it, that it doesn't sleep nicely for example, in the end I thought it's also part of the whole thing, that you just accepted instead of that you end up in a king size bed and just have your luxury again.

P: And it's more fun **to say a story when I look back**, I will never say a story about "hey I went to this nice hotel and I slept amazing" I would only say the story when I slept in the dorm and Nepal on a \*\*\*\*\* iron bed, and I thought I was gonna die for three weeks, or something like that. And it's funny now. Uhuh, it was painful but life is also funny and painful so.

J: Plus it makes it more rewarding afterwards.

P: Exactly, you then appreciate a good bed.

J: Yes exactly, oh.... I remember there was no shower for us at the ashram, just buckets, an then I went to Delhi after 30 days, where I stayed in a hotel. And there was a shower... It was amazing, it felt so good to shower, and also be grateful for water coming out like that from the wall. Plus there was a huge mirror on the wall and it was just... Wauw.

P: After India and Nepal for two months, I went to Abu Dhabi, which is like the most luxurious place on planet earth, I've never seen something like that, and we went to have a room that was never seen... I think it was 200 square meters, it was gigantic you know with like beds and baths and whatever. I went there and I was like I don't know what to do with this kind of comfort. I took a bath and I was like, is this heaven

J: Yes! It is amazing and also very unnecessary.

P: Completely unnecessary.

J: We already talked about if you think the interest in yoga tourists will increase over the years...

P: Ah for sure, for sure. I actually have planned to start organizing retreats, because there's such a high demand, and I've met a lot of amazing people that are really incredible. I can see this going more and more, and also in the behavior of consumers in Romania, because I'm mostly interested in doing other stuff there. And I could see like in the last year there, was so many eco retreats or like yoga retreats, **also because they're kind of connected you know? It changes, like I think people are more and more looking for connection, rather than just luxury or not- something without the purpose.**

J: And this connection can be found in a community. The eco-things you mentioned is connected in a way because it's also holistic, the holistic side of tourism, instead of the entertainment side maybe. You said before, the realization arrives later, do you write when you are there, you speak to a lot of people because you're surrounded by people, but yeah, do you write, do you read, what's your way of reflection?



P: I journal a lot, especially in silent retreats. I was in silent retreat in Romania and here, and this is my go to thing. And I'm very **introspective** by nature, so I'm I always think about what's happening, and I go to bed and I think about the day and I think it goes more... And also on the spot, **but after going on the on the yoga retreat or something like it always comes back, you know, it's kind of in the background and then you have realizations after.**

J: hmm, yeah now if you returned home after a trip, so the one question is and which habit or skill change during the journey, and you couldn't sustain it...

P: I went back to Romania after I traveled for three years, and I **didn't sustain anything**. Really. that's the truth. Except the fact that, of course you had an epiphany, and then you kind of something changes anyway, but I tried to do meditation for a while, I had moments and moments, where I kind of... "Yes, I'm doing meditation, or I'm doing a tapas, or I'm doing mantras," or whatever. And then I didn't, and then again, but it was so much more difficult to sustain, so much more difficult.

J: Why do you think is that, because you're not in a bubble anymore?

P: Because uh, it requires self-discipline, which I lack generally, and because there are other **temptations**. There's a **different lifestyle**, and then you go more **you're caught in the thing** and then I had to go to work and I didn't have time in the morning, and then I come and then I want to go out drinking, or whatever, and then you sleep late, and then you're tired and so it's... **You don't have so much support.**

J: Did I ask that what do you think is it that makes the connection or combination of yoga and travel that strong?

P: Hm. That is a very good question. I think it's because they're just specific places where you have access to the teachings, it's not like it's everywhere. And it's also, yeah, because **I think you have to go through everything: to stretching your comfort zone, and leaving your place, and focusing on this, and having the intention to really go more into depth. Which is kind of bringing everything together. So it's beautiful to do yoga in the city, but it's so much more beautiful to take some time to really delve more into the teachings where you need time and space, and it's always amazing to do it in a place that is specifically designed for this.** And it's also exactly how you said, it's a holistic view right, so you go there and you eat the food that is satvic and then you have meditation and then you're supported by people who know what they're talking about, and many times it's beautiful or not beautiful, but it's kind of like thought to be a container for this. So I think that's why it's so important to have both.

J: Nicely said again. Yes. I don't know if there's something, that you want to mention, but otherwise that would be my questions for now.

P: No, I was very happy to share with you a little bit of my experience and my journey, and thank you for all of the questions and I really hope it helps you. And if you come here, just tell me. I'm looking forward to meeting you in person as well.

J: Yes! I will do that for sure. I feel the need to go into that direction again, especially when hearing stories from people like you, that feels inspiring. And maybe Hridaya is the place to go, as there are several people in my circle me now, that went there, I feel like it is the way to go. It feels more familiar or you know if I go there, it will be fine.

P: Don't worry, it's safe and it's very beautiful that it kind of comes to you, so follow... **Follow the magic. This is what I can tell you.** But without any pressure!

J: I will try, I will try.

P: OK it was it was really nice meeting you.

J: Yes I agree, thank you, thank you for your time and your answers. Oh yes, do you want to receive a copy if I'm done, and you would like to read it?

P: I actually wanted to ask you that, so yes, for sure.

J: OK and then last question is, because I will have to put the transcript in the thesis in the appendix, is it OK if that's with your own name, or should I change the name?

P: No, no you can put it with my name.

J: OK yeah alright, that was it! I will send you a copy when I'm done, and then I thank you again for your time and stories and exciting things.

## G: Coded interviews

### Interviewee 1: Asia Jokiel

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	Utilitarian, I had massive backpain;
			External	Yoga teacher asked me, why don't you start giving classes;
			Expectations	It was not planned, it just happened; I went with mindset, this is your challenge;
	2	Disorienting / confrontatio dilemma	This is really you with you, purely the fight with yourself;	
	3	Wanting to heal	You have to feel grounded, without expectations of something willing to happen;	
	4	Desire to learn	Had first meditation class; learning to meditate	
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger		

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	Nepal, India, Netherlands
			Appealing factors	Netherlands has better weather; its easier to breathe; purely based on the weather; of course ocean is beautiful, but is romantic idea; super easy to sign up; for me, it's about the practice, not really about the place; Thailand or India, this is all super nice, when you're a beginner or something. With time, it doesn't matter; without big words, candles and incense;
			Less appealing	Hot; constantly sweating; no air conditioning; fungus on backpack; people jump on it like a rock concert; some people with mental issues are coming; pretentious & unnecessary stuff;
			Going abroad	first time outside of Europe; cultural shock; having to adjust everything; this is just normal, just not normal for us;
			Life at home	Completely cut off from life; absolutely no distraction and I loved it;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	Have to share your space with others; everything together, singing, washing, eating; beds were very uncomfortable; not being able to eat as much as you want;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	
	3	Ways of reflection	These kinds of spiritual practice, you are deepening awareness, you can find in many fields; talk a lot; sharing experiences;	

	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	Put yourself through the physical training; heat makes you stretch better; everything is wet; tremendous physical discomfort
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	Vipassana in Nepal, really heavy experience, because you sit there and you sweat; Never been in so much pain in entire life, just from sitting, this is so overwhelming; in the beginning I was crying every evening; work it through; massive emotional;
	6	General experience	Resonated with me; got into own bubble; just to stay in a perfect center;

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones		Expected to meditate for an hour or two;
	2	Psychological changes		
	3	cognitive changes, behavior		You're deepening your awareness; the essence is happening inside; panicky person; massive difference, if I look at it; much less affected by emotions; being with full awareness of your activities; don't have to be perfect;
	5	Bodily		You feel your body; making deep connection with every part; awareness;
	6	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	Biggest enemy is the pain that you are in; because besides the pain, there are very pleasant moments;
			New perspective	If you allow yourself to feel without putting any emotion around, it is just there, for me this is the realization of my life; teaching your mind to not react; I would never think that this makes sense; really focus on physical sensations, feeling, that was my discovery;
			Let go of ....	Emotional reaction; releasing memories, layers;
	7	Named emotions		I felt much calmer, much nicer; amazing and wonderful and I will do vipassana again; feeling energy through body; I take a lot of things with more ease, with less edge; easier to stop yourself falling into lines; so freeing;
	8	Interconnectedness		Not asana only; it is like a puzzles; in a base this is all the same idea, like unity of body and mind and so; in yoga, it's always about the golden middle;

## Interview 2: Katharina McGrath

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	Wanted to do something for myself; something that made me connected to myself; in office not talking is disconnected; overachiever mind;
			External	To have external motivation; motivational push; showing up for others at the place;
			Expectations	Focus mind on something; just explore; create more stability for myself; dive deeper in own practice and understanding of yoga; consistency; really strong foundation for a healthy life;

			support; strength, become courageous, more daring; sense of safety; giving myself over;
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma	Working in office, company did not extend contract, getting fired.
	3	Wanting to heal	Destructive patterns, get really hung up, wound up, have panic attacks,
	4	Desire to learn	Yearning
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	Sparked a lot of existential thoughts; what do I want to do?; feeling a pull somewhere else; "existential crisis"

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited + type of trip	About 4/5, Teacher training, workshops Germany, America
			Appealing factors	It can definitely help, a beautiful setting; a dream to go to thailand or india for retreat;
			Less appealing	
			Going abroad	Financial issue; completely immersed in a different reality, almost; helps you mentally to shift gears immediately; <b>really foreign impulses; really surprised by how much I loved it</b>
			Life at home	Glorified workaholism; hardly slept; not living a healthy life, mentally or physically; high value on tangible achievements;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	You don't need to go abroad for it to be a meaningful experience; having to share space;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	Having to connect with other people; introverts; a bit shy; create and hold space for it; more open minded; tend to form strong connections; likelihood of sharing things in common is higher; community with other people, the exchange; allowing each other to be vulnerable; spending long time together; drop a lot of pretense; really honest; absolutely disharming;
	3	Ways of reflection	Mainly through conversation; and contemplation	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	Through teacher training, focus to myself & things I struggle with, face that; Military style training; pushing through brutally mental stuff; <b>you're never gonna be as challenged, or shocked maybe, by something that your own mind came up with, then if it's something that comes from the outside.</b>	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	It was very much in the moment of realization of like BOOM. Ok, so this is how..; it was very emotional for me;	

	6	General experience	
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Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones		
	2	Psychological changes		
	3	cognitive changes, behavior	Success = working academically; taking a moment before reacting; that voice has calmed down a lot; being curious about that, then explore and find out why; trying to really listen; boundaries; coming from a place of self care;	
	5	Bodily	Massive perspection change; more trust, more listening, more acceptance and more playfulness;	
	6	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	question a lot of my own thought patterns and presumptions that I have preconditions
			New perspective	Being paired up with a man created a huge shift, that men are also just humans, that was really healing for me to understand; shift in self-consciousness;
			Let go of ....	High expectations, otherring, if you can experience that it's not true, is realization;
	7	Named emotions		
	8	Interconnectedness	We're all human, that was powerful; how do you practice yoga off the mat;	

### Interview 3: Dientje Mollenaar

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	To search for that deepening, to get to know what yoga so much contains; to learn; Purely the knowledge; release from all the pressure in the normal life; back to the root of yourself;
			External	
			Expectations	
	2	Disorienting dilemma / confrontation	I was on a point in my life where I wanted to go back to basic, no more white noise anymore;	
	3	Wanting to heal		
	4	Desire to learn	Searching for deepening, what it does mentally; wanting to discipline myself; it should benefit somewhere; how to help people; energetic work;	
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	Wanting to discover more, than only what has been said in church.	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	India; would like to go abroad again;
			Appealing factors	To be with yourself; to charge yourself, spiritually; ashram, taking a moment of silence and going back to basic, doing things that bring you

				back to yourself; I just want simplicity and the discipline; ayurvedic food; an environment that gives me the tools to learn whatever I want to learn; trustworthy feeling, for me it is important to feel safe and that the environment is beautiful;
			Less appealing	Financial; feeling guilt towards family;
			Going abroad	I did do reseach for the location, this is of very big importance; the choice is dependent on location and surroundings, that contribute to your inner journey;
			Life at home	Indonesian culture; at work, you're in the fast speed of work; lawyer, I have tried to integrate chair yoga and mindfulness;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	I like meeting likeminded people; that support you, in what you like to do; making connections with at least one person;
	3	Ways of reflection	Write in journal thoughts or things that come up; taking an angel-card; ways open for you when you write, because you set an intention;	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	Yes, I was totally out of my comfort zone, totally really; I just wanted to get out of my comfort zone, to do that whatever I haven't done before;	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	It was like being placed in a church, but then very deep inside yourself;	
	6	View on experiences	Some people need a specific experience, to get far; you have to go through the process yourself; I think it is important to take moments to go back to your center; and it is so beautiful to go on a silent walk, that you experience something new; by doing something you kind of get the prompting, and through that prompting you get an insight, and through that insight that you get at that moment... If only you reflect on the journey you've been on; first it is important to keep track of the relationship with yourself; An experience that you have experienced, enriches your life and gives you more and a broader perspective of life, than just in the world you are in. You get a broader perspective of life;	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones	You get a taste; I strive to wake up at 06u; tried to create my own morning ritual;	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	Making use of affirmations; law of attraction; manifesting; that I can do more than I think;	

	3	Bodily	I got more flexible; it is a balance between food and moving to live a healthy lifestyle; getting stronger in my body because of the discipline;	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	No clear point, there are moments where you get an insight and sometimes you can name them, sometimes not;
			New perspective	More awareness, to name it shortly; more self-awareness, being authentic and stand in own power; what is important... taking good care of yourself; success is not materialistic or which managing director function you have; because of the yoga trips, I have been able to see there is more layers of a human instead of only the outside, materialistic layer;
			Let go of ....	
	5	Named emotions		
	6	Interconnectedness	There is more than only the body, but also the spiritual; to be unique, everyone has their uniqueness, and wanting to, being able to and willing to show that without fear;	

#### Interview 4: Selina Straver

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	Wanting to get more personal knowledge about myself; searching for a certain type of peace, I was very stressed and had to process some things
			External	
			Expectations	Looking for that space to be myself; very practical in a way, getting skills to teach; the format itself, being able to go abroad for a certain amount of time, is good for me, to be away, and have that spiritual experience
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma		
	3	Wanting to heal		
	4	Desire to learn	There was space to discover my inner world; look at your body and well-being in a different way;	
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	Felt like I needed to discover my life; I always seek for something bigger, and still do;	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	Bali
			Appealing factors	Definitely nature, hearing the birds, hearing crickets, feeling hot temperature from outside; just being outside in the open air, seeing green; cut off from most of electronics all day;



			Less appealing	The branding also influences the type of people, there were a lot of party people in that place;
			Going abroad	Wanting to be emerged in the experience; have no other distractions; just be in that space to learn; would be completely cut off from anything else; when you're not in the surroundings that you're always in, it is easier to get to know different perspectives; don't have the same surroundings that are influencing your thought patterns & behavior; space & opportunity to become something or someone else, to experiment with; I felt like this would be most transformative; own little bubble doing yoga;
			Life at home	Don't have to worry about your job, you don't have social media that much to worry about, we're so distracted with all.. with our job, all the things we have to do, that we miss our own cues;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	Usually you come into a space where people have the same type of mindset to learn;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	We were all very different, but at the same time I never felt more connected; It felt like we were really a family;
	3	Ways of reflection	I talked to friends, wrote a lot. I also read in books. Books can offer perspective;	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	My insecurities come up and in that sense I was stretching my comfortzone; different environment, the whole energy feels different, the weather is different, the temperature is different, food, not on your phone as much, moving body lot of hours of the day; rewires your brain, because you can't be on automatic pilot;	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	It was already so intense, that I needed a day of quiet; being submerged in one thing is so much more effective;	
	6	View on experience	Most people that are young, they have a different type of consciousness; cut off electronics allows you to connect more with yourself, because we are nature; Learn to reconnect with those parts of you, to feel like what do you want/ need/ feel; the whole process of having those feelings ignited that process within me; I don't know if it's running or getting new energy. I like to be submerged in new experiences and cut off from my previous life, because I know it always helps me grow; gives new meaning to life; would go again, to come back to myself, and be centered again;	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
	1	Temporary ones	Meditating every day is hard to keep up; I'm not sure if its realistic to expect ourselves we can do that for the rest of	

Recognised inner experience			our life, as we live in a world where there is not always space;	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	Adapt, just becoming aware of who you are, it is a beautiful process;	
	3	Bodily	there is a lot more to the body then we think;	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	Story of the teacher changed my point of perception; so quite that there's time for introspection; there is more that meets the eye, energetically; sometimes it can be one big thing where you're like: oeff, this is it; energy shifts came suddenly, and later; afterwards you start to process; it wasn't like a specific thing; not in that time but afterwards,
			New perspective	As soon as I decided I didn't have to belong anymore, I started to belong with myself, that shifted things for me; being authentic is more important than liked;
			Let go of ....	The need to be liked; of the need to belong;
	5	Named emotions		
	6	Interconnectedness	Everybody, literally every- body is different;	

### Interview 5: Margaux Prada

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	Becoming more flexible, learning to understand the body first;
			External	Mom brought her to yoga
			Expectations	Search for everything; reconnect to myself, also connect to the others, to nature
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma		
	3	Wanting to heal	Finding a way to work on it, accept it;	
	4	Desire to learn	Learn about from just physical yoga "wow this is my body" to feeling super in line, searching about yoga and chakras and energies, what posture brings you	
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger		

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	Cambodia, Thailand, Morocco, Portugal, Colombia, 3-4 days to longer amounts of time
			Appealing factors	Where you can not use your phone during the week, where you really are in the yoga practice; a nice place, see some people, and like escape; I'm super picky about

				where I'm going; American based teacher, because they have almost all done their school in India; the middle of nowhere; more authentic,
			Less appealing	In Colombia it seems super spiritual; they use stuff that is really indigenous; felt like a sect; singing mantras in hindi; nowadays all fancy, pretty hard to find one without swimmingpool
			Going abroad	I open myself, I learn to be vulnerable but in a nice way; Just going back to yourself; not being surrounded by life, but being surrounded by me; just practicing yoga wouldn't give you the opportunity to go deep inside;
			Life at home	All those habits of taking care of yourself, having time to take care of ourselves, those habits we forget; living in a city, life is going; we're going super fast, we're working, and sometimes we just need to stop, like break this and see what we need;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	Being in a community, the vibe there; you're not lonely at all; you do yoga altogether, but also clean the dishes, we do karmayoga, we help each other;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	Making the deepest friendship; all over the world; everyone has something we want to work on ourself, like sadness, anger, some traumatizing stuff we are aware of; exchanging stuff; profile of people that do yoga, can be different; I think it is to reconnect back to what they want; people make me think about life; people were really honest; The community experience with people, whatever community- is the most important stuff;
	3	Ways of reflection	I want to connect back to myself to see what's going on; I still have everything like the books and words, still reflect on this. It was hard to go back, I was in a different state of mind; I write a lot, read a lot, reflecting on what happens in the body and how I feel changes;	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	The teacher won't let you push you too much, it shows you boundaries; I've never been able to cry in front of people, in a yoga retreat I can, its easy; I want cheap,	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	It was one week, it was so intense; feel the energy of everything; its really hard, and you're gonna sweat, you will find some place in your body you don't know was existing, but that's interesting for the journey; really intense, definitely really, really intense,	

			Emotionally; life changing; we were all crying from deep inside; almost a torture for me many days at the beginning;
	6	General experience	It changed my life after that, it was a really nice experience; what I love about a retreat is, you taking care of your body; everyone should do that, at least one time a year, just to reset everything; that's the point of a yoga retreat, is really like personal trip to myself; You can go to Hawaii, you can go to argentina, and you will see beautiful stuff, but you have to put yourself inside. Even climbing is life changing as well, because you have to connect with your body again; yoga trips could be really deep; you go deep inside and cry a bit; this is what yoga has, and other stuff don't have; receiving love; it was life changing on the moment and then after that; not everyone is ready;

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones	It took me more than one yoga trip to do this, but I think..	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	Being kind to each other; seeing yourself in the other; personal work and finding the dark parts; can see myself from outside; became vegetarian; aware of catching emotions; being more understanding of everyone's visions, be more chill sometimes;	
	3	Bodily	More acceptance, less pushing; more strength; having to be more gentle;	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	Learned about community traveling; I wanted to change everyone;
			New perspective	I tried to see the world differently; just being more aware of yourself, thanks to yoga, helps your whole life; changed my vision of the world, there is good in everyone;
			Let go of ....	The mental stuff
	5	Named emotions	And then it was just, lots of love; releasing happiness, sadness, love, everything, it was intense in all kind of ways;	
	6	Interconnectedness	Everything is made for complementing. You are aware of how you breathe, and the movements are with breathing; emotionally connectedness of tensions in body and yoga; also the vision of nature, how the body and the mind is connected; emotional state is linked to our body; every body is different; experience like the travelling with yoga, it makes it put a purpose on a trip. feeling of belonging, if we don't belong to the same stuff, the same culture, were all the same, and sharing a moment;	

#### Interview 6: Geertrui Denecker

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	Was passionate by using muscles I usually don't use; I want to become a better version of myself, but not necessarily change
			External	My yoga teacher gave a retreat
			Expectations	Relaxation and learning more

	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma	
	3	Wanting to heal	
	4	Desire to learn	Wanted to go abroad to immerse myself for a week; that's why you go back to retreats, because you're constantly seeking these unsustainable good habits; seeking good energy
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	No, I didn't want to become more, I wanted to learn more from others;

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	Sri-Lanka, ecovillage; Bali; India; Bulgaria; Italy
			Appealing factors	Down to earth; In the jungle, that was fantastic; reading about it in a magazine; magical place; in bali it was the whole month of heat, you can do things with your body that you usually can not, because cold makes you stiff; middle of ricefields, close to the sea; material aspect is important, it needs to have a pleasant feeling;
			Less appealing	Talking about energies around, I don't feel that; if you think a retreat is going to fix your problems, you're wrong, it is the wrong setting;
			Going abroad	Because yoga is great, but an expensive hobby, you should not just jump into something; for one week directly an immersive; It is fun to go abroad, because you can disconnect more from your own life. The closer you stay at home, the more you stay connected; Feels like everything at home is already forgotten;
			Life at home	Wetenschapper moleculaire biotechnologie; missing magical nature and the warmth; people have a lot of excuses when starting yoga;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	Retreat has bigger emphasis on relaxation, teacher training is more learning;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	Learning about others' way of living; intense contact, because you are together with a group of people; you're all with the same intention there, which is important; likeminded people; peer students are important, if it doesn't click, it will influence you;
	3	Ways of reflection	Writing new classes, and having to re-identify myself as current teacher.	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	You can challenge yourself, by being in the heat; if you're on a retreat, you're focused on that, if I want to meet locals, I travel with other reasons; Mentally and physically, you are challenged.	

	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	Sometimes it frustrated me, that others are feeling what I don't feel; flabbergasted into the passion for yoga which made me try different types of yoga; It had an effect on me to see the differences; in comparison to a desk-job, it has been an intensive day, so better sleep;
	6	General experience	Seeing differences will form you to who you are, that's what you can get from retreats;

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones	It is difficult to break patterns; after a retreat I'm full of good resolutions, I wish I could keep on doing that, but it is difficult. That is why you go back to a retreat every once in a while;	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	Learned about setting own boundaries; now I'm just going to be myself, and not cross the limit; eating super healthy,	
	3	Bodily	Respect physical boundaries, because you will get confronted with these; so be it;	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	I am more practical, so yes, but spiritually, no.
			New perspective	Learned to appreciate spiritual people, everyone may be themselves;
			Let go of ....	
	5	Named emotions		
	6	Interconnectedness	Yoga is for everyone, you just have to adapt to the person;	

### Interview 7: Nathan Anderson

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	I needed to make a change in life; bringing the two together into a proper daily life... was a bit of a struggle
			External	Teachers encouragement was very nice;
			Expectations	Getting advancement in the practice, I wanted to learn more; consistency and stability; find it, pick a thing, and then keep on doing it every day until it grows into something;
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma	I was kind of at a crossroads: had a lot of life changes going on; moved; changed my whole life, new location; it was more than just finding a health or exercise, it was more than just like finding a new career, it was kind of all of those things. It was also finding a path for me, forward, in a new world, in a new life.	
	3	Wanting to heal		
	4	Desire to learn	needed help, so my spiritual path needed something to help support it.	
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	I had existential clarity, but my own physical life is not in a good form at that point	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
	1		Countries visited	India,

Contributed key factors		Setting (environmental connectivity)	Appealing factors	I like the way they look, it was very clean and straight, it wasn't very airy fairy, but direct, authentic; the authentic tradition, that's sort of what attracted me; india is nice to travel; it was also the source for yoga;
			Less appealing	People try to obfuscate things and making it more mystical, rather than mystic.
			Going abroad	Whatever environment you find yourself in, you need to immerse yourself in that environment; Exposing yourself to the environment that you're traveling to, and being open to whatever they have to offer, I think that's the experience.
			Life at home	Living in L.A.
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	I like to be very dedicated, very strict, almost like it was a bootcamp for military;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	Not feeding the ego; pretty wide range of things; feel close to them still, even though we met once for 25 days or so; encourage each other in the things we're doing; also very good that we went away from each other; we get this group think (bubble); the time together is important, but also what we did in that time. Because what we did, is asking "Who am I?"; we went through a transformation together; cohesiveness that develops; I think they're seeking something, they may not know what it is; there are questions to ask; they all know there's something to ask, or something to find and seek; different starting points, of asking these questions; and that's why people take these trips;
	3	Ways of reflection	Self-inquiry, starting to ask questions of yourself; it brings the values to what their actual meanings are, makes you understand the true meaning of these values rather than their superficial meaning; what does it mean in your real life; telling stories;	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	Ending the blame; it was a good stretch; it was a good stretch to get out of the country and see other places; yeah it definitely caused me to stretch quite a bit; I was open for adventure, and it was an adventure;	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	How do I fix me, so transformation of the self, I think is the key;	
	6	General experience	Getting the full package, different things that support a healthy lifestyle; because a lot of times when we talk about transformation, I think people think of how to change the world, or other people; a lot of people are saying you should spend your money on experiences like travel; Go somewhere and travel, and experience something, it'll make you a more complete person,	

			and while you're there, you start to look inside; experience can expand you: , a proper experience is where you, even before you travel, while you're going there, while you're there: the impact it has upon you, the changes that occur, and then what happens after- what you take home from that, and even going o;
	7	Transformation	self-inquiry I think is the biggest transformation; start to look inward and ask yourself what you need to fix; it becomes a part of the whole tourist mindset; So many people have been sharing and going home and telling other people, I think it's increased the interest in it; I think people expect more from tourism now. I think transformation is a little part of it now;

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones	Artificial experience	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	I felt a lot more disciplined; yoga really helped me to get that consistency; getting a better understanding; empathize; compassion;	
	3	Bodily	It showed me the importance of maintaining it, a proper health;	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	I realized there was so much more for me to do; the 'aha-moment' for me was tying it all together, because I had the mental part, the philosophical part, and a good health, but I didn't have it all tied together; going another level down; levels of value go deeper and deeper, of understanding the balance; how it is an universal thing, was pretty impactful
			New perspective	Overload; not going too far;
			Let go of ....	
	5	Named emotions	There was a range of emotions, I had a lot of fun, there were wonderful people, had a couple of arguments. Wherever you go, you bring your mind with you.	
	6	Interconnectedness	it's not just, you can do one thing only, They all support each other, comprehensively, to support a proper lifestyle; we came together, shared a thing, went home and started working on it to help improve the world; we need to go talk to people that don't consider; Realizing what you're going through is a normal natural process, it's universal; it's not a piece-meal thing, there's a cohesive system designed all to work together; the union of all these steps	

### Interview 8: Thomas Aukema

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	I started to feel more, what feels good;
			External	A friend went to a version in Mexico;
			Expectations	
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma		
	3	Wanting to heal		



	4	Desire to learn	Busy with consciousness related topics, that we investigate; it is very nice to learn specific things to create a more healthy lifestyle; I was also interested in tantra;
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	Then I found traditional yoga, and I discovered “oh, this is what I was searching for”; this felt like more in line about the unconsciousness and the universe; I wanted to go to the holistic side;

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	France, modules about yoga, silent retreats;
			Appealing factors	Really beautiful place;
			Less appealing	
			Going abroad	
			Life at home	Studied philosophy, but that was always too much in the head still; we seem to be far technologically, materialistic far developed; a lot of people don't believe in anything and just do something; lately, we treat people more as things; we disregard religions but if you really look at it, there is beauty inside; no one learned to find peace, when being young, no one meditates at school; that makes everyone so busy with themselves, I think; many people don't want to say that, and have all kinds of reasons to place themselves above others;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	Dorm rooms, you can choose how luxe you want to have it, then it becomes more expensive; they have workshops that go deeper into it; eating healthy; caring about the state of the world; being aware of not causing too much harm; people live very real;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	More people who in a way, have become aware of something, and are curious about it or perhaps even feel the need to explore it further within themselves; an extra piece of consciousness; you're all searching for the same; different ages; everyone is being busy with the same; people are like a mirror, when you try to discover “who am I”; to discover yourself through someone else; the effect of the group, works; a specific kind of intimacy;
	3	Ways of reflection	Having a dream in which I said “Shiva”, When I returned, people seemed stiff, like I was as well, so its not judgemental, but it is just very clear; and some people are not ready for that	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	It can be with confrontations or specific situations where you will be BOEM, shaken awake; meditation is key to be with yourself sitting still; self-inquiry, where you ask who am I; it feels like I am	

			confronting, because many people want this; I was very unaware of my body, that's weird to be confronted by that; having to eat all kinds of food, being a difficult eater; I used to think I was already kind of out my comfort zone, but stuff like that that's pretty intense;
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	If you're coming from your head, it feels like having a new life; it went gradually; it feels a bit like dying, inside, just a part of yourself; keeping eye contact, being silent for a long time, giving a good hug, that was quite intense; you think you understand it all, arrive in a new situation, where new things come to the surface and you have to go through it again; being in a flow and getting more people that are in a flow;
	6	General experience	It is both very different experiences, because one you do with a group and the other you are just in yourself; You can think of it as kind of being a scientist of your mind, discover your consciousness; it felt very complete, what they offered; the whole package of yoga is quite interesting, how everything is interconnected; the more you live consciously, the more enters you; that everything is one, but that is an experience, you can talk about it, but it doesn't make sense at all; inspired to take this as the base of my existence, that meditating, the development, is most important;

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones	Set a tapas for myself, I said I had to meditate every morning for an hour;	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	To be more in your heart, rest there, and feel more of that love, see that there is more depth in existence than... just being in the head; not being so much in my head; feels a bit like having another life; to work from that love; the more trust I have, the more I see it doesn't matter where you are; you can be very smart, but if you're not aware, that is a very dangerous combination; you can bring harm to the world, because it doesn't matter for you what you do to others, you're only busy with what you get;	
	3	Bodily	How nice it feels to be just in my own body;	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	Being there for a while, eating only healthy, doing yoga and meditate is pretty different than I used to live; that everything is interconnected; that you can center, in your heart;
			New perspective	The idea with which we got raised, that we in the western world are very developed, is not right. We are quite on the surface level on various layers; religion can broaden your life, which is something I start to see recently more and more;
			Let go of ....	Being analytical; reframing within logical lines;
	5	Named emotions	You feel a lot, and as if it is a whole new territorial; fun territorias to discover; as if the world is slowly becoming like a fairytale;	
	6	Interconnectedness	We had to do KarmaYoga, which teaches you that you're part of the whole thing; yoga is a way of living, all the rules, searching for...; I felt very strongly, that's what I have to do; I	

			can start naming all kinds of things; when you start to talk with others, you'll see: oh you are insecure about all kinds of things, me too; That for me everything is interconnected; psychedelics, but also yoga; there are old texts, that all point to the same direction; in the core, they talk about the same; non-duality, it is the essence that you find out that everything is one; what I researched separately from each other, I found together in yoga;
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### Interview 9: Matthias

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	Fitting the holiday schedule; a retreat is more like growing on a topic;
			External	Invited by his girlfriend
			Expectations	
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma	Then I switched jobs, I had some time, I wanted to be somewhere warm. So I asked myself, what do I want to do? And I wanted to be somewhere where its warm and I want yoga to be in the focus on things;	
	3	Wanting to heal	Had a real though job at that time, long over hours; trouble sleeping;	
	4	Desire to learn	Let's go on a retreat, we like yoga, why not do that on vacation, without any thought giving, it turned out quite good; talking to people is where the retreats help	
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	The retreats contributd to continuing the yoga journey;	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	Croatia, YTT, germany, more than once in Portugal; booked a retreat in spain, Mallorca, Mexico;
			Appealing factors	At least look at the teacher's name, to get an idea of what the classes can be like; warm; language; it was a nice spot, beautiful beach; needs to be more practical;
			Less appealing	Several psychological issues, and they used the yoga TTC as a therapy session; a rolling over schedule, because it is difficult to meet people; no friendships; the cultural and distance where you're in in your yoga journey, was too extreme;
			Going abroad	If you're coming from work, you're in the performance mode, takes a while to realize it is a good thing and being acquainted; Going to Mexico changed by view on people
			Life at home	I.T. guy; it gets getter, men start to realize that relaxing in your own body is also good; that competition is not always the thing to do, there is enough competition in the world;

	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	Retreats are often coupled with surfing; really close community, that I normally have at retreats; getting in contact with people, you have a topic; you start in a group, you share some things, you share that classes, you talk about the classes, and this gets you together; it's a safe space, where there is some sort of connectivity, that you say I have trust, I have confidence that I can tell something and I'm not getting laughed at;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	I met different people; mixed set of people with different experiences, different bodies and different states in their yoga journey; open minded people, easy to get along with; melting pot; very relaxed folks; it was even a larger melting pot, because it was like people from different cultures; because you meet people that are similar; you will meet also more spiritual & esoteric focused people
	3	Ways of reflection	Being able to relate to other man; there's a life outside the work	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	it's like you're confronted with external forces and your body not performing as you probably wanted to perform, so like to accept that; talking to someone I never met, is like a big step for me;	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	Feel-good pain, you start a journey together, emotionally hard time, because the others had a strong psychological history; dark wave through my brain; I was awake at night, at this tipping point; I was short of leaving the teacher center;	
	6	General experience	Expects wellness tourism to develop more; the idea of not needing to perform; at the retreat, it's easier, because you're in a vacation mood; there is no competition, so it's easier to get into that mood. Retreat is more or less a thing we do for our summer vacation; It's like, do you want a full experience: the whole day is planned for you? Or do you want some free time, to do some things on your own, with other people, or not? That's the thing that I typically think about.	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones	I'm also hard wired in some aspects;	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	I think yoga contributed to the change of mind to say: why should I go on with that; brought me over the tip; it helped me cope with different personalities that I also encounter at work; and understanding, giving others what they need; helps me to cope with people;	
	3	Bodily	It changed my body quite a lot;	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	I realized maybe that was probably a change in my life, that I'm the one that needs to speak it out, because others are silent;
			New perspective	Different views on things as well
			Let go of ....	
	5	Named emotions	You're happy because the day starts with achievements	
	6	Interconnectedness	That's something; that sometimes you think you're alone, and you aren't. that comes from the retreat as well;	

## Interview 10: Anna Wendlinger

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	During covid even more, issues with back & knee;
			External	
			Expectations	Learn about anatomy, different bodyparts and how these are affected by yoga;
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma	I needed a new project, between master study and working full time;	
	3	Wanting to heal	Definitely got proven yoga can heal your body; it really helped;	
	4	Desire to learn	Wanted to know more about yoga and be better; getting own practice on a deeper level; making yoga a bigger part of my life; learn how to take care of it; learn how the body reacts to certain yoga poses;	
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	Not very spiritual, so it was more about being aligned with my body	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	
			Appealing factors	
			Less appealing	
			Going abroad	
			Life at home	Society is currently shifting more towards this self-awareness and mental health; getting aligned with yourself is something that gets more awareness; especially corona, because that really made people think about themselves and being with themselves; being locked-up made everyone aware of themselves and their mental health & physical health; being more thinking about life, life purposes and spirituality, that just helped, the kind of change happening in society;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	We were so in this different world, because we have this really nice location; It was like stepping in a different world in the weekends; emotional vibe that was connecting everyone; coming for the same reasons;
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	Became a really close group; I made many new friends; we're all very very different; having different lifestyles; different employers; but

				we all had this common ground, which was yoga and the same thinking, the same vibe kind of; the same spirit I guess; ability to listen, to be open minded, being interested in different things, learning about each other; hybrid group;
	3	Ways of reflection	We formed a group to meet and keep our layer closer, work on the tasks and assignments together; we tried to keep our little world a bit longer; in one month, you don't have time to process; meeting the other girls; spoke for hours and evenings, everyone sharing their thoughts and feelings; discussing and arguing even, because we all had different opinions; we went into discussions about our thoughts, that was really helpful to see different sides; we're still doing it now;	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	How I can get better at the things I didn't like before and never did because it was hard; very much afraid of inversions, they didn't really push us, it was up to us; I definitely stepped out of my comfort zone for the meditating part; very very much out of my comfort zone and I learned a lot about myself;	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	A full month, you would get the full experience, I think it would be even more, in your face, because you don't go back to normal life; you get ripped out of it; we were all on the very same page, the same thoughts and vibes and purpose, and that created such strength, that made it pretty emotional at some moments; and then it got better, so that was like a real journey for me; the mental, sitting down and getting into myself, that was a very hard and emotional journey;	
	6	General experience	Feelings strange to be back in normal life; we still meet, like, the four of us, although it has been a year now; You just get confronted with new things for a month, and then it stops.	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones		
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	Trying to be more vegan; I got more aware of eating more open minded to different kinds of people; you learn to communicate with everyone, no matter what they do and how old they are; being more adaptive; being more open to myself and listen to myself more;	
	3	Bodily	I learned about what my body likes to do and what it doesn't; being more appreciative and careful with your body	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	Little aha moments where things about yoga came together, but not a moment about that's what I should do;
			New perspective	It's okay not to be able to do everything; spend more time just being and thinking; reflect on myself instead of blurring it out with being active all the time;
			Let go of ....	Pushing myself really hard; it's okay to not do everything all the time;
	5	Named emotions	Learning to meditate made me really angry; I was so frustrated that it didn't come easy;	
	6	Interconnectedness	It made me more aware and appreciative of a healthy body, so I try to take a step back once in a while; I think definitely	

			society gets more and more aware of just living a healthy life, and yoga represents that
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### Interview 11: Patricia Theodorescu

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Motivators	1	Self reflection	Internal	My heart longs for doing something like that; I was looking for myself and be who I am; subconscious, now retrospectively;
			External	One of her teachers went to Mexico. Needed that kick to choose that over something else;
			Expectations	Discipline, awareness, stuff like that;
	2	Disorienting / confrontation dilemma	I lived in Berlin for 7 months, and finished my internship. I didn't know who I am, you know? ;	
	3	Wanting to heal	Struggling with somehow depression, social anxiety and stuff like that, I wanted to overcome my fears; it felt like a good container	
	4	Desire to learn		
	5	Attracted to / by something bigger	but it's just this thing that you feel, that you want to kind of like just live this, experiment this, so yeah I think it's searching for oneself	

Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Contributed key factors	1	Setting (environmental connectivity)	Countries visited	Mexico, beginner course of yoga; France, India ayurveda and Nepal, Israel;
			Appealing factors	
			Less appealing	I didn't go to Bali where it's super luxurious and everything is wonderful.
			Going abroad	Not traveling by myself, but where you have a schedule, where you have a community, its easier to know people and build connections; I really believe its so healing: grateful just to have this disruption in their day-to-day life, just to focus on themselves, connecting to their body, connecting to their soul; one of the biggest factors is the community; everything changed it; taking me out of context; I was so identified with the role I had in the world; to kind of cut this, and see myself in a different scenario, changed everything;
			Life at home	To have this tool in a world where things are so crazy, you're so drawing in many places and people struggle more with the sense of isolation, or lack of purpose or not feeling that you belong; more and more isolation, the harshest effects of isolation, and people can go crazy with being by themselves; last year there, was so many eco retreats or like yoga retreats, also because they're kind of connected you

				know? It changes, like I think people are more and more looking for connection, rather than just luxury or not- something without the purpose; other temptations; different lifestyle, you're caught in the thing; you don't have so much support;
	2	Social contact	Characteristics of place w/ people	Being in the container with other people, that makes it really really special; meditation is such an amazing tool, to build awareness, clarity and focus; being in a courteous relationship: eating together, singing together; is part of our DNA we lost it; incredibly healing in so many different areas; didn't have a door to the toilet; coming with a backpack; we didn't have showers, use buckets to wash; sleeping on iron
			Characteristics of people in yoga-related place	Mexico and France attract different kind of people; solo-travelers; going into this search for oneself; But if I were to see the nucleus behind with everyone, it's... It is a longing; we're tribal human beings
	3	Ways of reflection	but after going on the on the yoga retreat or something like it always comes back, you know, it's kind of in the background and then you have realizations after.	
	4	Being challenged, stretch comfort zone	imperative now to learn how to behave with people, how to let go, how to be more compassionate, how to just find your place in the world. there are two kinds: when you feel bad, and you feel bad But also there are these things of going through ****, but knowing that it's just purification somehow, and that is good and that you're out of your comfort zone. Highly stretched for me;	
	5	Peak moments (intensity), contrast	It is a matter of intensity and time; but if you go and retreat them meditate 6 hours a day after 10 days it's gonna touch something for sure. All emotionally intense; going through many things; material level but mostly mental challenges, mostly coming like memories, traumas, therapeutical process; where I had diarrhea every three days; sleeping on iron, was really really difficult, but also it's super amazing; like when you kind of really understand that you don't need so much, it really changes everything; And it's funny now. Uhuh, it was painful but life is also funny and painful so.	
	6	General experience	It changed my life: it think it was everything: it was yoga, it was community, it was being in a conscious place, it was just another way of experiencing life; there are major transformations; after I experienced it, I know what it is about, rather than before; opened a different realm; It's such a visceral thing, like, you have to live it in your body, to understand what is about; this spiral, its in waves: I'm transforming, and something happens, I go back to my shadow and then...; You're spiraling again and again, and many times you're reaching at the same point, but then something changes and something changes; I think you have to go through everything: to stretching your comfort zone, and leaving your place, and focusing on this, and having the intention to really go more into depth. Which is kind of bringing everything together. So it's beautiful to do yoga in the city, but it's so much more beautiful to take some time to really delve more into the	



			teachings where you need time and space, and it's always amazing to do it in a place that is specifically designed for this
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Theme		Sub theme	Sub sub theme	Code
Recognised inner experience	1	Temporary ones	Didn't sustain anything, that's the truth	
	2	Psychological / cognitive changes, behavior	awareness and kind of like step back, and you're not just a slave of your conditioning, but you can also construct yourself in a way that you want to; feeling love; conscious in how you're acting, what you're eating, how you're seeing the world, how you connect with everything, how you look at the flower; training my mind to not go into this story that I'm telling myself. So for sure my mental state is so much better now than it was five years ago; seeing the world with more compassion, love and understanding, acceptance, tolerance;	
	3	Bodily	Glowing, being more radiant; the body is very much put aside in many aspects, but I think the body is much more magical than we thought it is.	
	4	Most mind blowing aspect	Characteristics of turning points (contrasts)	We have our conditioning and trauma, but also the ability to overcome it; an accumulation of many things, but it clears out your lenses
			New perspective	You're not your thoughts; the benefits are so much more subtle than that; mostly about how to perceive everything, perceiving the world, perceiving myself, looking inward, looking outward. I think this was the biggest aspect and the biggest change: the perception; it just feels like I can see life more in depth; It's very it's very difficult to explain in words, but for but for sure my perception is much wider, and much more deep.
			Let go of ....	Thoughts: thoughts come and go, I don't have to feed into this thought;
	5	Named emotions	Having anger issues; massive difference then before; magical to discover meditation; feel like I'm living at hogwards;	
	6	Interconnectedness	Hard to express in words; I was a very mental person: I was always focusing to be smarter, better, and I thought that I kind of navigated in the world through my mind. But then I forgot about the fact that I also have a body, and the body has knowledge and well. Like my intuition comes more from my gut, rather than my head, it's also giving me many signals; all the philosophies, if you go look beyond the dogma it's the same thing; I don't believe in coincidence anymore, I believe in synchronicities; follow the magic;	