

Embodied Spiritualities and Emerging Search for Social Transformation: An Embodied Ethnographic Study of Yoga Practices in Medellin, Colombia

Authors : Lina M. Vidal

Abstract : This paper discusses yoga practices involvement in both self-transformation and social transformations by means of an embodied ethnographic approach to different initiatives for social change in Medellín. In the context of gradual popularization of embodied spiritualities, yoga practices have opened their way in calls for social change in a performative perspective which involves collective experiences, reflections and production of embodied knowledge. Through the reflection on bodily dimension and corporal experience, this ethnographic approach acknowledges inter-corporality and somatic modes of attention during observations and personal experiences. In social change initiatives that include yoga practices were identified transformations of common understanding on social issues such as it is produced by institutionalized education, health system and other fields of knowledge. This is clearly visible in yoga projects for children in vulnerable conditions, homeless people, prisoners, and young people recovering from drug addiction. These projects are often promoted by organizations and networks, which incorporate individual life stories into collective experiences. Dissemination of yoga is heading to a broad institutional and cultural legitimization of yoga and of spirituality that impact different fields of social work and everyday life in general. This way, yoga is becoming an embodied activist way of life and a legitimate field for social work.

Keywords : embodied ethnography, Medellin, social transformation, embodied spiritualities, yoga practices

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