PEACE BY PRACTICE

Empowerment of Dutch Sōka Gakkai International Members towards World Peace

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ABSTRACT:

This research addresses the question of how the Sōka Gakkai International, a religious organization based on Nichiren Buddhism, empowers its members in the Netherlands towards conquering their personal challenges and the challenge of world peace. It considers how the global force of the SGI touches local reality and influences it. Moreover, it addresses theories of identity in order to understand how the SGI potentially affects members' habitus, views of the 'other,' and identity positions. The thesis concludes that the philosophy of the SGI to chant and be critical of one's own actions in relation to the rest of the world is effective because members try to internalize the SGI ideology and practice. Members attend meetings where they are encouraged to do so through personal reflection and by relating personal experiences to the Buddhist theories discussed in such meetings. The happiness members experience by conquering their challenges is reflected upon others by talking about personal victories. By spreading a critical mind, making use of Nichiren Buddhist thought, and teaching people to work towards their personal happiness and that of others, the SGI aims to encourage its members to spread peace across the globe.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION[1]

> You tell such an experience to be able to realize, again, what you, thanks to the practice, thanks to the meetings, and thanks to the sharing with others, have achieved. Moreover, you can give others courage with it. My story might help you as well. In another way, with another problem. At some point you start to realize why it must be shared. You know, because […] the SGI goal is peace everywhere in the world. Working for everyone's happiness. There is no other way to do that than talking about it (Katrien, 03-02-2015).[2]

The organization for the Creation of Value, the Sōka Gakkai (hereafter SG) was created in 1930 in Japan by Makiguchi Tsunaseburo (1871-1944). In 1975, the Sōka Gakkai International (hereafter SGI) was created by the third president of the SG, Ikeda Daisaku (1928-). The SGI is affiliated to but independent from the SG. As an organization of lay Buddhists the SGI envisions to improve the world by empowering individuals and promoting peace, culture, and education across the globe. The SGI by now has developed into one of the largest lay Buddhist organizations in the world with members across 192 countries. As the quote above from one of the members in the Netherlands shows, members of the SGI try to work towards peace by sharing personal experiences, talking about each other's problems, and encouraging others to face their own life challenges.[3]

The Netherlands is one of the countries where the SGI has established itself. The establishment of a Buddhist organization in a country embedded in a Christian tradition has caught my academic interest because of several reasons. In part this is thanks to personal observations as a Dutch woman in the Netherlands. Barely 50% of the population is religiously affiliated, a percentage that has been declining.[4] Moreover, almost 77% of the population never visits any religious services.[5] Therefore, I was wondering how the SGI has been able to get foot on the ground in a society where religious interest is declining. I hypothesize that it is because the SGI offers a different kind of religions than Christian- or Islam-based religiosities offer.

Secondly, since there is very little Buddhist presence in the Netherlands, 0,5% of the population in 2014,[6] this research can contribute to the study of the religious presence in the Netherlands and the discussion on religion and society in the nation. Moreover, it can contribute to research of other western scholars on the SGI in other parts of the worlds,[7] as well as to research

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[1] N.B.: Japanese names of people are written with the last name first and the given name second, as is custom in Japan.

[2] Most of my interviews have been conducted in Dutch. Therefore the interviews quoted are paraphrased. Moreover, their words are turned into (mostly) proper sentences. This all applies unless the original interview was conducted in English. See appendix III for the original Dutch phrasings.

[3] http://www.sgi.org/general-info/ last accessed 26-07-2016

[4] See appendix I, figure B.1..

[5] See appendix I, figure B.2.

[6] See appendix I, figure B.1.

[7] See McLaughlin 2009.

on (Japanese) New Religious Movements.[8]

Much previous research on the SGI focuses on how and why the organization was able to spread around the world and what it offers to various societies. While this thesis in part draws on these previous researches and adds to them, my primary focus will be to place the SGI in a Dutch context by making use of the fieldwork I conducted on the SGI in the Netherlands. I will use theories of globalization and identity to see how the members of the SGI-Netherlands (hereafter SGI-NL) are empowered by the kind of Buddhism that the SGI offers, and how they, thanks to this empowerment, relate to the organization's goal of world peace.

This project thus aims to gain insight on the SGI's effect on members and its attempt to achieve world peace. While media have often connected religion in general to violent incidents such as the 1995 sarin-gas attacks of the Aum Shinrikyo in Tokyo, the 9/11 Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States in 2001, the recent upsurge of Islamic State (IS), and many related religiously framed incidents throughout the world, this thesis attempts to research a religious organization that actively promotes peace. Bearing in mind the connection of religion and violence by media and the many wars and conflicts in the world, I aim to create an insight in the way Dutch members try to to make the world (more) peaceful.

Based on information gathered on the SGI websites and by means of texts of, among others, Barone 2007 and Dawson 2001, at the start of this research I expected the SGI to be a positive influence on those people that are searching for a way to engage with the challenges of their lives by offering them a vision and tools of Buddhist practice that place their personal challenges in the context of world peace. As I will show, members indeed stressed that they were able to turn their lives around because they felt the need to and because chanting and SGI meetings encouraged them to face their personal challenges.

Before I set out to discuss the SGI and its members in the Netherlands, this chapter will address the methods I used to shape this thesis, address the theories central to it, and address the key concepts of agency and happiness. I will address Arjun Appadurai's theory considering global landscapes and Roland Robertsons' theory of glocalization to show how a global organization aiming to bring about global change is affecting members in the Netherlands. I, moreover, will address theories of identity to show how the empowerment of the SGI affects members and their sense of self. Here, I will discuss Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Habitus (2005), which shows how an individual's approach to the world is deeply influenced by their social environment. I will also discuss theories of otherness, based mainly on Gerd Baumann's grammars of identity/alterity (2004), to address how members' conceptions of the 'other' and their relation to the 'self' are influenced by their Buddhist practice. Both habitus and theories of otherness are important to understand before I discuss the Dialogical-Self Theory. This theory by Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka will be addressed to understand how members' identity positions are affected by being part of the SGI. These theoretical inquiries will be engaged with in chapter three by applying them to my ethnographical research.

In chapter two I will address the history of the SGI as a lay Buddhist organization. I will discuss Buddhism in Japan and specifically Nichiren Buddhism, as the SG's foundations stand on that of Nichiren Buddhism. Following up on this, I will turn towards New Religious Movements

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[8] See Baffelli 2016, Barone 2007, Clarke 2000, and Melton 2004.

(hereafter NRM) in Japan. Related to NRM, will focus specifically on Engaged Buddhism since the SGI concerns itself with presenting Buddhists a way to engage with the world. I will introduce the reader to the SGI in general by showing how it has emerged from the SG as an organization with the ideals of, but independent from the SG in Japan. Lastly, I will conclude chapter two by addressing the SGI-NL.

Finally, after having acquainted the reader with the SGI and its practice and concepts, chapter three will start out with a description of a meeting that I have attended. This provides an intimate context for the members' experiences discussed throughout the chapter. Chapter three, furthermore, will address the questions mentioned above regarding the relation of the theories and the members of the SGI to be able to conclude in chapter four how members are empowered by the SGI and relate to world peace. However, before I set out to acquaint the reader with the SGI-NL in more detail, I will reflect on how I have conducted the research that has shaped this thesis.

1.1. METHODS

Although there exists ample research about the SG and the SGI both in general and concerning the SGI in specific countries, the SGI-NL has not been subject of previous (published) research. However, previous research on other branches of SGI can complement my own ethnographic research of the SGI-NL. In the sections below I shall review the literature and ethnographic methods I have used to shape this thesis, so that in the last part of this chapter the theories and key-concepts that, next to my ethnographic research, embody this thesis can be lined out.

1.1.1. CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

My research of SGI membership in the Netherlands, apart from involving my personal engagement with the organization, has to a large extent has consisted of conducting literature research. I researched the history and practice of the SGI to understand the basics of the organization before I engaged with it.

The SGI is a Buddhist organization with its roots in Nichiren Buddhism. Therefore, when starting my research I set out to explore its history and philosophy in order to understand where the basics of SGI practice have come from. Trying to understand Nichiren Buddhism required me to get a general idea of a long Buddhist history and the creation of Nichiren Buddhism. Rupert Gethin's book on the foundations of Buddhism sheds light on Buddhism's long and broad history and the formation of many schools of Buddhism (1998). As the book offers an overview of Buddhist philosophy and ideas, it is an ideal read when new to the concept of Buddhism, especially when trying to make sense of the many schools of Buddhism. Likewise Richard Gombrich's book '*How Buddhism Began*' (2005) has proven useful in navigating the vast ocean of information on Buddhism.

Next, my research turned towards Nichiren Buddhism. In my research, I came across Richard Causton's book '*Nichiren Shosu Buddhism: an introduction*' (1991). Richard Causton was a scholar who himself was a member of the SGI. One might suggest that using his literature will present a subjective view. However, as he presents his reader with a clear and general overview on Nichiren Buddhism, I argue his SGI membership allows an insight on Nichiren Buddhism from

the insider perspective. I have, however, not made use of his other work on the SGI itself. Daniel Métraux has proven useful regarding finding literature on the SGI as he has produced an extensive body of literature concerning the organization. For readers who want to learn more about the SG in Japan in particular, I recommend turning towards Levi McLaughlin and Anne Mette Fisker-Nilson. Their literature presents an insight on new religions and case studies of the SG in Japan. Since Fisker-Nielsen is also a member of the SGI and McLaughlin is not, the authors offer different perspectives and interpretations on the SG in Japan. However, since my focus is on the SGI-NL, I have decided to not use their literature for this thesis.

Concerning the history of Buddhism in Japan, I have turned towards a Dutch author who wrote an overview of the religious history in Japan. Both the native religion Shintō and Buddhism exist in Japan, and the boundary between the two has often blurred throughout Japanese history. Mark Teeuwen offers a useful overview on the, for some confusing, religious history. Clarke & Somers acquaint us with the history of new religions in Japan. If readers want a more contemporary image of new religions in Japan, I recommend turning to works of Erica Baffelli and Ian Reader. Christopher Queen, meanwhile, will be addressed when engaging with the topic of Engaged Buddhism.

Literature was lacking for research on the SGI, NRM, and Buddhism in the Netherlands. A general overview of the history of Buddhism and Buddhist movements in the Netherlands does not exist. I came across a book by Poorthuis & Salemink about the image formation of Buddhism in the Netherlands (2009). However, although this book presents some insight about the way Buddhism entered the Netherlands, it does not consider Buddhist groups and their members. Therefore there is a vacuum considering contemporary information on Buddhism in the Netherlands. Moreover, in light of the SGI being a NRM, I wanted to touch upon NRM and their development in the Netherlands. Again, however, literature was lacking.

Furthermore, I have consulted the Dutch and international websites of the SGI (www. sginl.org; www.sgi.org) to gather information considering SGI ideals and concepts. Unfortunately, constraints of space have rendered me unable to take these websites into account for the self-representation of the SGI online. Such research would have made an interesting comparison between the way members feel empowered and address to world peace and the self-representation of the SGI online. However, I highly recommend Baffelli, Reader, Staemmler et al. (2011), Campbell (2012), and Helland (2005) if the reader is interested in the presence of (Japanese) religions on the Internet, why the representation of the SGI online is mainly informative, and why their websites do not offer a platform for members to engage with one another.

Lastly, in researching the SGI-NL I would have liked to have had access to statistics about the amount of members, their spread, demography of members, and growth of members over the years. Unfortunately I have been told by a representative of the SGI-NL that the organization does not keep such statistics. However, there must be a record of at least the amount of members registered as such in the Netherlands, for I have been told the number of members exceeds 2000. I suspect there are records somewhere of who these members are. Therefore such statistics possibly could be made in the future. For this research, however, I have not been able to draw upon them. This means that the reader might find the information provided on the organization of the SGI-NL lacking. It also means that generalizations of my research to the totality of the SGI-NL cannot be

placed in proper perspective. However, since I have come across a few members of the SGI from other districts in meetings I have attended, I argue it is unlikely for major discrepancies to be found between the districts. For, these members participated in meetings just like the other members, and did not comment on differences when I asked them. I will more extensively discuss my engagement with members and how representative they are for a general image of the SGI-NL in the next section.

1.1.2. ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

Apart from using literature to shape this thesis, I have been a participant observer of the SGI. My engagement with a group of SGI members in the Netherlands has consisted of attending meetings, where I have engaged in the discussions being held and chanted with the members attending the meeting. Meetings were held in three places per month. I have attempted to attend at least one meeting a month, preferably more. Next to the regular meetings held at the homes of members I have also attended two regional study meetings which asked for a larger location where about twenty to thirty people attended.

As ethnographers know, access to the research group and first contact are important for successful research, since it determines how much cooperation the researcher will get from the research subjects (Bryman 2008: 408). I have made contact with the particular SGI district in which I have conducted my research via the national SGI-NL center in Zeist.[9] An initial meeting with my soon to become key-informant,[10] a district leader,[11] as well as a representative from Zeist was a friendly first introduction with the practical world of the SGI. We discussed the SGI and my research for about two hours, in which they offered to answer any basic questions I had for them. Since I had expected the meeting to mostly consist of an inquiry of my intentions and way of conduct for the research, it was a pleasant surprise to be offered a two way interview, where I could ask my questions about them and the SGI, and they could ask their questions about me and my research.

Since I am a student of Religion, Conflict, and Globalization, the first concern these representatives addressed was how the 'conflict' related to my research. I explained to them that the reason decided to research the SGI was to engage with a religious group that actively tries to reduce violence. Furthermore, I explained that I wanted to focus my research on how members experience this goal of world peace, and how they relate to it, and that I, therefore, would like to conduct interviews.

I had referred to interviewing in the e-mail I sent them about my research, so I expected this not to be a problem. However, it turned out that they were concerned about the privacy of the members, and I quickly explained the measures I would take to ensure privacy. These measures

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[9] The center has recently closed down, as the building became too expensive to keep. The organization currently can be reached in Amsterdam while members look for a new building as meeting-center http://nieuwsbode-zeist.nl/nieuws/ japans-boeddhistische-organisatie-verlaat-centrum-in-zeist-na-26-jaar (last accessed 12-09-2016). However, since the building closed down after writing this thesis, I will still refer to the center in Zeist.

[10] '…[S]ponsors or gatekeepers who smooth access for the ethnographer [who] may become key informants in the course of the subsequent fieldwork' (Bryman 2008: 409).

[11] Even though notions like 'district leader' exist, it has been brought to my attention that there is no hierarchy of power in the SGI. The 'leaders' have taken upon themselves the tasks that involve being a representative of the district, such as meeting up with a student interested in researching the SGI. However, in my experience, certain figures such as president Ikeda are highly respected and therewith inevitably have more authorative power.

include, among others, full anonymity for all members addressed in the thesis. The names of members the reader comes across in this thesis, therefore, are pseudonyms. Moreover, I have not explicitly mentioned in which district I have conducted my research so it is more difficult to identify the members. While this reassured them, the district leader did ask me to consult her to approach members to interview. Since I wanted to be able to interview members, I agreed to approach her about my intended approach when I wanted to start interviewing.

In the end, time allowed me to conduct interviews with four of the members of the researched district. Since this district is located in the northern part of the Netherlands, where there live less people than in other parts of the Netherlands, I have been told that there are less members per district and that members are spread further across the area. Therefore four of the members are in my experience about half of the attendees of a meeting. The four members I interviewed attended regularly.

Honing her call, I discussed with the district leader which members I would like to interview and how I was planning to do so. At first she suggested to also attend the interviews. However, I mentioned I wanted the members' stories, and not a discussion about the SGI, like we had at the first meeting with her and the other representative of the SGI-NL. I explained that I would rather conduct one-on-one interviews, to which she agreed. I have discussed my ideas and interview guide with her so she would know what kind of people I wanted to interview. She initially approached the members about interviews to avoid them feeling pressured to agreeing with being interviewed. I hoped that this would create a more honest reply, and members would not feel pressured in cooperating with the research and giving the SGI a good name.[12] Considering the familiar way members talked to the leader, I hoped they felt they could give a hones reply. When I arranged meetings for the interviews with the interviewees, I myself asked them again if they indeed agreed and if there were any potential problems or questions. Considering the open-hearted stories I have heard, I feel like all interviewees indeed fully agreed to being interviewed.

I set out to interview members that have been a member for at least five years, so I could touch upon any possible personal change since they have become a member. My interviewees were of differing age and gender. However, since I have interviewed only one man I will address all interviewees as women, to allow for maximum anonymity. Since the district in which I have conducted my research is small, it would be easy to trace interviewees' remarks back to specific members, which I want to avoid as much as possible. Moreover, in referring to members, I will not always refer to pseudonyms, because in the context of the rest of their statements it might become clear who that member is in real life.

Lastly, it is important to note that in the context of my interviewees one member did not start her membership of the SGI-NL. So, although this interviewee is not Dutch, this member was capable of providing a comparison between the SGI-NL and abroad. Moreover, this member is western-European, and was also raised in a country with a Christian socio-cultural heritage. As a result, one of the interviews has been conducted in English.[13] However, this means that in writing this thesis I avoid using this interview to statements considering identity.

The interviews I conducted were supported by a semi-structured interview guide which I

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[12] See section 3.2.2. for comments on why members would want to make a positive impression.

[13] In appendix III one can find the original Dutch words of the translations I have used in this thesis, whereas the original-in-English quotes are not mentioned there.

discussed with the district-leader.[14] Based on questions that emerged during the observations, as well as questions I had set out with while constructing this thesis, the guide consisted of basic questions which could be asked in varying ways. In practice the interviews were guided conversations about the various topics I wanted to discuss according to my interview guide. Discussing the questions with the district-leader caused me to wonder if the SGI has and/or what the SGI regards as taboo topics, but since she had no problems whatsoever with the interview-guide I have not come across these.

In the meeting with the representatives of the SGI, I explained that I, apart from conducting interviews, also wanted to attend meetings if possible. I aimed to be a participant observer in order to gain a more practical knowledge and understanding of the SGI-NL than books or other studies could offer me. Through participant observation I, for example, learned about many personal stories of actual proof that the practice worked, and how they found this proof.[15] I will show in the second chapter that the SGI and its practice also offer an insight on how members achieve actual proof. However, participant observation has given me "as intimate an understanding as possible of the phenomena investigated" (Eriksen 2010: 27). Personal stories and hardships have been shared many times throughout my research, and I noticed, for example, how members were able to offer each other comfort by not just advice and emotional support, but also by chanting together, and relating Buddhist texts this back to the problem at hand. I had a front-seat access to seeing how members tackled personal challenges. Literature could not have offered me these insights.

The representatives greeted my will to attend meetings with enthusiasm. They told me that I was more than welcome to attend meetings where and whenever I wanted. Since I had no proper means to travel, I restricted myself to one district. The district's leader mentioned that there would be a meeting the next day, and asked if I wanted to attend. I agreed to attend that meeting, and I was given the address of the house and told to simply show up.

When I entered the house the next day, the district leader was not there yet. I, therefore, had no idea if anyone was even aware that I was coming over to do research. Therefore, I looked for the host and explained that I wanted to join in on the meeting because I was a student researching the SGI-NL. I have repeated this introduction several times over the course of my research, because I wanted to be very clear about my purpose. Every single member I explained it to immediately welcomed me to join in, and most proceeded to inquire about my Master education and my research.

While I, at first, was surprised by the enthusiasm of the members about me joining in on the practice of the meetings and the discussions, I realized later that members are encouraged by the SGI to spread the SGI ideology as much as possible. This topic will be addressed throughout this thesis by means of the notion of *kosen-rufu*. As for participating in the meetings, I had expected to stand out from other members because I had my notepad out and was very eager to learn. It turned out many members did exactly the same. A few members were making notes, and since the point of the discussion of the texts was to ask questions to understand them, I did not feel like I stood out at all. I often was specifically asked to voice my opinion on a matter, every now and again explicitly asking for my opinion about this as someone studying religions. So while the discussions groups were small, the only influence my presence should theoretically have had on the group is that my voice on matters possibly has steered the meetings towards different topics and provided different

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[14] See appendix II.

[15] See section 2.3. for more about actual proof.

insights than would have been the case without my presence. The only evidence I have to prove this theory is that when another new individual joined in for the meetings, the meetings proceeded just as they had done while I was the only new person in the group.

During the regional study meetings that I have attended my presence as a researcher stood out even less, because these meetings took place between more people in a rented venue. In my experience, these meetings consisted of about twenty to thirty members. Speakers discussed study material, and members could ask questions when they felt the need. Therefore it was much less interactive than discussion meetings and therefore did not require me to actively engage, while I, again, was among many people writing along with the information presented.

My observations and interviews will provide this thesis with the subjective view of members of the SGI. In order to fit the statements and my observations of members into the theoretical framework of this thesis, I will relate the views of the subjects of this research (emic) to my perspective as a researcher (etic). In other words: I will triangulate my sources throughout this thesis. In chapter two this means that the socio-historical literature research I present is related to my observations and members' statements, to show how the literature and observed reality coincide. Moreover, in chapter three I will triangulate with the theories and key concepts that I will explain in the next section. I will do this by relating member's statements to my perspective as a researcher: where did I find discrepancies, contradictions, or interesting statements and observations? Moreover, these statements and my insights will be related to the theoretical body: which statements and observations provide an insight on which theories, and, the other way around, which theories provide insight on which statements and observations? In this chapter I will only touch upon the authors and theories in brief relation to the SGI-NL, whereas the more extensive connection will be made in chapter three.

1.2. Theories and Key Concepts

Throughout this thesis I will make use of various theories and refer to certain key concepts that are the foundations of this thesis. In this section I will explicate the concepts of New Religions Movement, agency, and happiness before I turn to theories of globalization, glocalization, habitus, otherness, and Dialogical-Self Theory. SGI concepts relevant for this thesis such as *kosen-rufu*, actual proof, and concepts related to Buddhist practice such as *Gongyo* and *Daimoku* will be addressed in the next chapter when explicating the socio-historical context of the SGI and its practice.

The SGI is a New Religious Movement, a notion that defines new religions. In fact, however, it is an academic replacement for the word 'cult'. For, as Gordon J. Melton notes, 'cult' has negative connotations for many people (Melton 2004: 74). This is apparent from the second entry of the word 'cult' in the Oxford Dictionary:

2.

a. A particular form or system of religious worship or veneration, esp. as expressed in ceremony or ritual directed towards a specified figure or object.

b. A relatively small group of people having (esp. religious) beliefs or

practices regarded by others as strange or sinister, or as exercising excessive control over members.[16]

Definition a. is used by academics, while definition b. relates to the prevailing stereotype (Melton 2004: 78). Due to this negative association, cults have been marginalized throughout the world, and therefore often affirm the negative associations as a desperate attempt for recognition (Kippenberg 2010: 103, 111; Melton 2004: 82-83).[17]

 Therefore, in order to do away with the negative stereotype of cult, academics have devised the notion of New Religious Movement. NRM are in fact new religious movements that have sprung up as an alternative to the traditional, socially affirmed and, often, hegemonic religions. Their roots mostly cannot be traced back to dominant religions of the relative area, or their practices are so different from conventional religions that they are labeled as cults/NRM by those who have the authority to do so. Such authorities include, for example, governmental bodies, media, or other, hegemonic, religions (Barkun 2003: 56; Melton 2004: 78). NRM are often associated with characteristics that prevail from regarding them as cults, such as shady practices, mind control, charismatic leaders, millennial ideology, and/or relative uniqueness (Melton 2004: 74-75).

 What defines an NRM is based on relative positioning to other religions in the region, and definitions by others. This means that that they, over time, possibly will stopped to be referred to as NRM (Barkun 2003: 56; Melton 2004: 78-80). In referring to the SGI as an NRM in this thesis, I implicitly highlight their relatively marginalized position. However, in my own experience, and based on the experience of the members and other authors such as Barone, Cornejo, Dawson and Métraux, the SGI mostly is not associated with the negative aspects of a cult.[18] Rather, I refer to the SGI as an NRM as a new religious movement that is unconventional in its approach, has a growing membership, and is continuously developing itself as a religious organization. In the next chapter I will more thoroughly address how the SGI differs from conventional Nichiren Buddhism and the implications thereof.

 Another characteristic of the SGI is that stresses agency. The notion of agency refers to the ability of actors to choose their own actions and reflect upon their actions (Eriksen 2010: 48). The SGI tries to empower its members to realize world peace by stressing the abilities of members to reflect upon themselves and their actions. Therefore, agency is mentioned throughout this thesis and, in the form of empowerment, is part of the research question.

 Moreover, the SGI encourages, and I mention it often throughout this thesis, its members to work towards happiness. Although happiness in Buddhism usually implies spiritual happiness and understanding the root of suffering, my engagement with the SGI-NL showed me that members of the SGI primarily refer to happiness as fulfilling worldly desires. The reader should take note that, unless otherwise stated, in explaining Buddhism, the happiness I refer to is the spiritual type of happiness. Only when referring to happiness in the context of the SGI, I refer to the happiness of achieving worldly desires. The worldly happiness the SGI promotes, has had great appeal to people across the world. For, the SGI has spread across the globe in the span of 40 years. It has been able to

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[16] http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45709?rskey=Xdss9o&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid last accessed 07-07-2016.

[17] See Melton 2004 for a more extensive discussion of the world cult and the marginalized positions of religious organizations framed as such. Moreover, see Kippenberg 2010 for the possible effects of (negative) framing.

[18] See section 2.3.2.

do so because it has profited from globalization.

Concerning the theories of globalization, I will make use of Arjun Appadurai's theory because I argue that his theory, in contrast to many other existing theories and ideas on globalization, takes into account that global reality is ever changing. Alongside globalization, I refer to the concept of glocalization, coined by Roland Robertson, since it considers the interplay between global and local reality. This interplay, as I shall show, is closely linked to the way the SGI establishes itself in different countries.

Considering the identity and its formation of SGI members in the Netherlands I use the Dialogical-Self Theory by Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka. I have chosen to make use of this theory as it shows how individuals navigate different identity positions are navigated in one's life, and I will analyze how becoming part of the SGI possibly affects these positions. In light of considering change of identity I have also made use of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. As people change the groups to which they belong, this will also affect their place in the fields in which they operate their lives. Habitus in this sense is a useful concept to apply to see how members navigate their own fields of social conduct. Taking into account how becoming part of the SGI may change identity positions, I have used Gerd Baumann's theory of grammars of identity/alterity and Edward Said's theory of orientalism to come to terms with notions of otherness. In order to be able to understand the SGI as an international organization, we must first gain insight on theories of globalization, and glocalization.

1.2.1. Globalization and Glocalization

The SGI is a global movement that has been able to grow as big as it is thanks to globalization. However, what does globalization mean and encompass? Inda and Rosaldo explain it as the process where global interconnectedness intensifies:

> [Globalization suggests] a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages, and persistent cultural interaction and exchange. It speaks in other words to the complex mobilities and interconnections that characterize the globe today (Inda & Rosaldo 2008: 4).

Globalization consists of cultural flows that influence local realities on a global scale. In particular, these flows of "capital, people, commodities, images, and ideologies" (ibid.) have increased on an unprecedented scale. While these flows previously existed on a small scale, today technological and infrastructural innovation have allowed these flows to function globally and on a more intense scale than ever before. It is now possible to communicate with someone on the other side of the world as if they were sitting right next to you. Likewise, financial results on one side of the world can immediately influence the economy in a country on the other side with an unprecedented speed.

Besides Inda and Rosaldo there have been many other theorists examining the "transnational and global networks, flows, processes, ideologies, outlooks, and systems" (Juergensmeyer 2014: 4) that globalization encompasses. Two of the more well-known theories that have emerged

are Immanuel Wallerstein's theory about the Modern World System and Samuel Huntington's conception of the clash of civilizations (Huntington 2002 [1997]; Wallerstein 2000). Wallerstein, developing his theory from the 1970s on, considers the world as divided into three groups based on economic progress. The first of these three he denotes as the core, the wealthiest and most prosperous countries and/or regions. The periphery, the second group, consists of the poorest parts of the world. The third group of regions is the semi-periphery, which falls in between the core and periphery. This divide compares well to the idea of the first, third and second world (Wallerstein 2000).

Wallerstein has been criticized by scholars such as Eric Wolf who note that the division of the groups is too static. It does not show the fluidity of economic prosperity, nor does it properly account for the local, sometimes immense, differences of economic prosperity. Moreover, the theory is focused on capitalist societies, not taking into account other modes of measuring prosperity in societies. Therefore it comes across as if the effects of globalization are solely negative in the periphery and solely positive in the core. However, both positive and negative effects of globalization can be noticed locally over the globe, albeit some effects are more noticable in certain areas than in others (Wolf 1997: 22-23).

Huntington's theory, meanwhile, divides the world into groups of civilizations based on cultural and religious identities. Although the theory focuses mostly on sources of conflict, proposing these civilizations will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War era, it relates to globalization because it considers the civilizations and their interactions across the globe. However, the problem with his theory becomes apparent when one takes a look at how he divides the world in civilizations.[19] Huntington assigns only nine civilizations, its lack of diversity implying there are only nine kinds of civilization in the world. The theory also seems to imply that there will be no conflicts within the civilizations he proposes. Also, the division of the civilizations is presented as static, as if civilizations will never shift or will change (Huntington 1997). Even though the theory has been revised since its first appearance, I argue that Huntington's theory does not fully take into account the fluidity of globalization. Since Wallerstein's theory has the same problem, in this thesis I will make use of a third theorist.

Arjun Appadurai shows that globalization consists of flows across the world that interact on various scales and have differing outcomes depending on context (Appadurai 1993). His theory on cultural dimensions of globalization will be the center of focus considering the global spread of the SGI. The five dimensions he connects to globalization can be applied to the SGI to both understand its global spread and the differences between SGI groups in various countries.

Globalization is seen as a process of cultural flows that Appadurai divides into five dimensions, or landscapes, "that can be termed (a) *ethnoscapes*, (b) *mediascapes*, (c) *technoscapes*, (d) *finanscapes*, and (e) *ideoscapes*" (Appadurai 1996: 33). The five fluid landscapes can be interpreted differently from various perspectives, even when considering the same phenomenon, since they are not fact but "deeply perspectival constructs" (ibid.: 33). Referring to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006), Appadurai notes that communities exist because of the social imagination of human kind. Individuals shape communities, and their imagination and their acting upon this imagination also has the power to change these communities. The five aforementioned landscapes

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[19] See Appendix I, figure A.

are what Appadurai refers to as building blocks:

> [They are] the building blocks of what (extending Benedict Anderson) I would like to call *imagined* worlds, that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe (Appadurai 1996: 33, emphasis original).

As agents, individuals navigate the landscapes and interpret these to construct imagined worlds. With globalization these landscapes cover the processes across the entire globe, shaping not just local imagined worlds, but an imagined world of the entire globe (ibid.).

The five landscapes can be understood as actual types of landscape overlapping and influencing each other in the same location. The *ethnoscape* consists of the flow of people such as immigrants, tourists, guest workers, refugees, and all varieties of other moving groups that influence the world, places, and nations. Globalization has allowed for an increased perception of global flows in all landscapes. For the ethnoscape this means that people have an increased perception of others in the world. The flow of people across the world and the degree to which they do so is larger than ever, and as I will show in section 1.2.2., this means individuals have to frame their identity in a broader socio-cultural context than before (Appadurai 1996: 33-34).

The second of Appadurai's landscapes is the *technoscape*. This landscape can be explained as the flow of technology across the world. The boom of technological advancement has changed the perceived scale of the world. As goods, for example, travel faster from one place to another, the world can appear smaller because six hours of travel seems much closer to the point of departure than two weeks. Technological innovations have contributed largely to the speed of globalization, and technological flows keep influencing communities in new ways thanks to innovations (Appadurai 1996: 34).

The third landscape to take into account, especially when considering the technoscape, is the *financscape*. For, global flows of capital allow for the presence, or lack, of certain technologies in an area. The financial turmoil that runs the global market influences the technological market as well as the flow of people. There is technological innovation where there is money. Money attracts people, as it creates jobs, but at the same time, those who have money can travel and be influenced by new communities they visit (Appadurai 1996: 34-35).

The fourth landscape is the *mediascape*. It consists of the flow of information and images across the globe. Media in all forms and sizes is distributed across the world, at a faster and more extensive rate than it has ever done before. Information from one side of the world can be accessed by the other side in a matter of seconds, thanks to technological advancements such as the Internet. Those with access to the Internet can communicate media without having to consider borders of space or time. Other forms of media include, for example, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and ear-to-ear communication. As the reader might notice, the distribution of these media is related to other landscapes such as the techno-, finan-, and ethnoscape because of the technology, finances, and people needed to create and distribute the media (Appadurai 1996: 35-36).

Finally, the last landscape, the *ideoscape,* is the most complex. While the other landscapes are tangible in the form of people, technology, money, and media, the ideoscape mostly influences imagined worlds:

> *Ideoscapes* are […] concentrations of images, […] [which] are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements, explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it. These ideoscapes are composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview, which consists of a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including *freedom*, *welfare*, *rights*, *sovereignty*, *representation*, and the master term *democracy* (Appadurai 1996: 36, emphasis original).

Simply explained the ideoscape concerns the flow of ideological messages. It is the flow of ideas that influence people's habitus and their ideas of the world and others in it.[20]

However, I argue that Appadurai's definition does not account for a change of the chain of ideas, notions, and images that are currently dominant in global discourse. Appadurai approaches the five landscapes from a Eurocentric point of view since he refers to terms that emerged around enlightenment theory, a construct of European philosophy. Moreover, the ideas, terms, and images he refers to may become subject to alternative interpretations and results depending on the way they are employed. Appadurai has indeed devised the landscapes to allow for various interpretations of global flows in ever changing contexts, but his explanation of ideoscapes seems to imply that nations and state ideologies compete with counterideologies.

I argue that it is not necessary to refer to ideological ideas that are not produced by nations as counterideologies, as it is only a counterideology from the point of view of the nation. In some cases, nations will hold the most powerful ideology, while in other cases, there is a different group that holds it. Therefore, the other ideology is at most an ideology competing with the hegemonic ideology of, for example, nations. However, depending on which ideology was constructed first, it might be framed as a counterideology. My suggestion, therefore, is to abandon the idea of ideoscapes consisting of ideologies versus counterideologies, and to consider the ideoscape as the discourse of, and on ideologies, and how they are diffusing across the globe. I argue, this is essentially what Appadurai tried to convey, but failed to do so by actively placing it in a framework of the Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, Appadurai's landscapes can be used as tools to analyze global forces and their many facets and faces in different parts of the world. In chapter three I will return to the notion of globalization in an SGI context, and show how all five of Appadurai's landscapes can be applied to it from the local perspective of members of the SGI-NL. There I will analyze how a global force has touched the local reality, by showing how the SGI as a global movement has influenced part of the Netherlands.

Some people fear, as Appadurai notes, that globalization involves cultural homogenization where

[20] See section 1.2.2.1 for habitus and section 1.2.2.2. for theories on otherness.

all cultures become the same and local reality is obliterated (Appadurai 1996: 32). However, this is unlikely to happen despite local realities incorporating global cultural aspects, such as certain media or clothing styles (ibid.: 42). For, as Robert Robertson shows, global processes influence a local reality so that the global can be incorporated by the local communities. The global and local spheres are interacting (Robertson 1995: 25).

Global flows influence local communities, for example through the introduction of a new food concept. At the same time these local communities are able to transform the new food concept in such a way that a local variation of a global concept is created. A clear example is that of McDonalds, with its characteristic burger such as the Big Mac. However in India, the classics of the McDonalds – burgers made of beef – are not served. The global concept of the McDonalds with fast food, a particular kind of service, and its globally established image exists in India, while at the same time the Indian McDonalds is a local variation on this established concept (Ritzer 2008: 578; Robertson 1995: 28-29).

In an attempt to make their company profitable, many other global corporations also have adapted their products to fit with local demand. The notion of micro-marketing comes to the fore when analyzing how global corporations adapt their products in such a way that local demand can embrace the product (Robertson 1995: 27-28). However, examples such as that of a consumer refusing to buy products made in China seem to undermine this strategy of corporations. As Robertson notes "we appear to live in a world in which the expectation of uniqueness has become increasingly institutionalized and globally widespread" (ibid.: 28). People seem to actively want to differentiate between others, and governments and institutions encourage this by increasing the need to carry around papers of identification. So because people fear cultural homogenization, a growing need for identification and differentiation seems to appear. Global and local systems seem to be competing. However, Roland Robertson, in coining the notion of glocalization, shows that this is not necessarily the case (Robertson 1995).

Robertson points out that the global and the local should not be seen as two incompatible notions. Rather, they are complementary and influence communities in their own ways:

> The debate about global homogenization versus heterogenization should be transcended. It is not a question of either homogenization of heterogenization, but rather of the ways in which both of these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late twentieth-century world (Robertson 1995: 27).

At the start of the twenty-first-century, the interconnection between global and local has become apparent, and should be treated as two ends of the same spectrum as opposed to two incompatible notions. This combination is what Robertson has coined as glocalization. Glocalization, in effect, means the active approach in which global and local realities are navigated by agents to form a functional hybrid reality that incorporates, in theory, the best of both worlds (Robertson 1995: 27).

Glocalization works out differently in various settings, just like, as mentioned above, the five landscapes of Appadurai. In this thesis I will both use the theory of Appadurai on cultural flows to show how the five landscapes apply to the SGI and how they work out in the Netherlands, as well

as Robertson's notion of glocalization to see how the SGI has taken shape in the local reality of the Netherlands, or, in particular, the district of the SGI-NL that I have researched.

In analyzing globalization and glocalization the role of actors should be taken into account. Individuals and social communities are as much shaped by these man made forces as they have the ability to respond them. Global offer and local reality sometimes collide, while at other times they can turn into a well working hybrid, depending on the perspective one takes in analyzing the situation. In this thesis I shall show how the global SGI has a policy of adapting to local reality, thereby indeed allowing for the global presence to adapt to local preference. I show that the SGI offers a well working hybrid of global ideas fitting into local reality. This issue of mixing global with local also touches upon the formation of identity and the positioning of identities, which I shall discuss next section.

1.2.2. Identity

As discussed in the previous section globalization influences local societies. Roland Roberson has coined the notion of glocalization to refer to the result of actors trying to create a functional hybrid between global and local realities. I have also briefly noted that such a hybrid cannot always be achieved. Since globalization has allowed people more and better access to information, products, and humans across the globe, more people have become aware of diversity in the world. Actors have been required to take into account more and different perspectives, and have to actively learn to navigate the differences. However, as Hermans and Hermans-Kanopka show, the difference between local reality and global influence can be disjunctive for societies:

> Whereas in traditional homogeneous societies, technology, ideology, and media communication are to some degree integrated, they are widely separated and disjunctive in contemporary societies. For example, a disjuncture between mediascapes and ideoscapes can be seen in many countries in the Middle East and Asia where lifestyles presented on national and international TV and cinema undermine the rhetoric of national politics (Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka 2010: 60).

Global and local ideas are often conflicting, and the actors navigating the two forces of influence can be overwhelmed by them if they differ too much. Trying to create a functioning glocal hybrid is most difficult in societies where such disjunction is strongest. Appadurai's landscapes can be related to other visions when local needs are stressed than when global visions are, for example. When one tries to infuse a local reality with global ideas, and there is strong opposition against these global ideas, it might lead to internal conflict for a society or individual. It can lead to the question if one should choose for local tradition or global vision. Such disjunction has the potential to affect societies as a whole, but mostly affects individuals that have to deal with the increased input of complicated and mixed messages they receive from, for example, global media as opposed to national rhetoric. Individuals have to navigate such new input, and it can even lead to disjunction of the sense of self when it is conflicting with their previously established norms and values (ibid.:

60-63).

As I have discussed in the introduction of this chapter, the SGI considers the road to world peace as one where everyone comes to terms with one another. I will explain in chapter three that this vision requires not only an understanding of the 'other,' but also of the 'self.' Therefore, since the difference between global and local positions potentially leads to disjunction and issues of identity, how does the SGI affect individuals and their sense of self and how does it try to address this issue in their quest for world peace? In order to be able to addresses these questions in chapter three, in this section theories of self, in particular habitus, otherness, and Dialogical-Self Theory, will be discussed.

1.2.2.1. Habitus

As globalization affects local life, social conditions are affected by it as well. These social conditions are the norms, values, and way of life that people are taught by their social environment. Most people adhere to the set of social norms and values that they have grown up with throughout their lives, at times adding new ones to their already existing set. Culture, preferences, ways of speaking, all types of social mannerisms in humans originate from their social environment, or, as Pierre Bourdieu notes it, their habitus:

> [The habitus is] a system of *dispositions*, that is of permanent manners
> of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of *long-lasting* (rather
> than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception,
> conception and action (Bourdieu 2005: 43, emphasis original).

As a system of dispositions, the habitus can be understood as something non-natural, as acquired characteristics such as habits, norms and values that influence a person's views and actions. Since they are the product of social conditions, they may be completely or partially shared with people who have been shaped by comparable social conditions. For instance, dress, art, or religious affiliation appeal to someone because of their habitus and will coincide with other people who share a similar habitus. Those people share a similar style, or even lifestyle (ibid.: 43-45).

Habitus comes to expression in fields which Bourdieu describes as a type of competitive marketplace of social life and status. The social, cultural, and economic power that someone has received and acquired throughout life is the capital with which people compete on this marketplace. Some capital is valued more highly than others and is only a source of power in a specific field where it is recognized as capital. Everyone in a field acts according to his/her position in the field, which is determined by their capital and their habitus, which is determined by their social history. The position in the field is mostly in accordance with the actor's habitus, but every now and again they might be at odds. When this happens the actor can be regarded a misfit and put in question by structures. This allows for creativity of that actor and sometimes even enables the actor to challenge the structure (ibid.: 43-45).

An example of a disjunction between capital and habitus is that of Ludwig von Beethoven. As a musician he was renowned, yet his social status was that of a commoner. So while his music

was enjoyed by the upper class, he was not allowed to marry into the upper class. In the field of music Beethoven felt like not to belong to the habitus of a commoner any longer, but in the field of social relationships others of the upper class still regarded as belonging to the lower class (Cooper 2008: 148, 156-158).

Bourdieu argues that it is difficult to change any dimension of a habitus, it "being a product of history, that is of social experience and education" (Bourdieu: 45). However, it is not impossible to change it, as new experience, education and/or training can alter it. Beethoven's musical education, for example, gave him capital that had the power to compete in the field of the upper class, changing part of his habitus. It requires consciousness of the part of the habitus one wants to change and pedagogic effort to change it. So while habitus is a structure shaped by social conditions, people can create awareness of the habitus and have the agency to change it when have find the need, will, and power to do so. In this fasion a linguistic habitus can be altered by learning different pronunciation (ibid.).

Actors cannot only consciously act and only function with agency; their actions are embedded within their habitus. This allows for, for example, fast and unconscious reactions and responses in daily life. An agent, for example, likes a certain type of dress over another, making a choice between the two, while at the same time it is difficult to explain why and how he has developed that taste. So while in the fast changing globalizing world agency is emphasized by people, encouraging others to take their life in their own hands, habitus, as a system of dispositions, influences the way we empower ourselves. Thus, agency is limited within the structure of habitus (ibid.: 48-49).

Accordingly, habitus influences identity positions within groups. It accounts in part for the groups an individual belongs to, the way that individual is positioned in the fields, and the disposition of that individual within the fields. Acquiring new capital is difficult, but, as noted, not impossible. In the globalizing world where new information becomes easier accessible there is more room than ever before for conscious change of (part of) positions in the fields and for attempts to change (part of) a habitus.

The members of the SGI-NL have chosen to adopt Buddhism in their lives, while Buddhism is not common in the Netherlands.[21] In trying to understand the way members of the SGI-NL relate to the goal of world peace, it is important to remember that their perceptions do not only relate to the ideas and visions of the SGI they have acquired, but also to those of their habitus. The capital they have acquired throughout life is just as relevant in considering how the members have adopted the SGI into their lives as the new capital the SGI offers them is. In chapter three I will discuss this potential (conscious) effect of the SGI on the capital and habitus of members.

While habitus is a system of dispositions that affects people within the same field, the hierarchy in the fields shows who belongs within a certain group in the field and who belongs outside of it. Habitus influences not only structural identity as the hierarchy of capital in fields, it also creates a reflection of the other. As I have mentioned, positions in the field, and dispositions about the position in the field can be at odds. When such disjunction occurs, ideas about self and other are at the core of it. Therefore, I shall turn to theories that consider how identity is also shaped by conceptions of the other.

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[21] In 2014 0.5% of the Dutch population was a registered Buddhist. See Appendix I, figure B.1..

1.2.2.2. OTHERNESS

As Gerd Baumann notes, "claims to identity […] are inevitably tied to exclusions of alterity. [...] [E]very 'us' includes a 'them'" (Baumann 2004: 18). That is, whenever a part of the self is defined, what the self is not is also defined. Baumann proposes to differentiate between various approaches of selfing and othering and to use these differentiations for analytic purposes. He has defined socially shared classificatory structures, or, as he calls them, grammars, of ascribing identity and alterity to anyone (ibid.: 19).

Baumann defined three grammars that explicate identities and alterities as "mutually constitutive and at least residually dialogical" (Baumann 2004: 46). In other words, both the 'self' and the 'other' add to life in their own way and can even influence one another. The one grammar that people are inclined to refer to when distinguishing between self and other, the binary-grammar of 'good' versus 'bad', does not follow this rule of the grammars, and therefore, as Baumann notes, can be regarded an anti-grammar (ibid.: 46). For, if there, for example, is only bad in the 'other', it has no characteristics that could possibly be useful for the 'self', and therefore has no need to exist and could theoretically be eradicated. However, the three grammars that Baumann defines as the orientalist, the segmentary, and the encompassment grammar, imply otherness that is not as black and white as the binary grammar suggests (ibid.: 18-19, 46).

The first grammar Baumann defines is the orientalist grammar, based on Edward Said's theory of orientalism (Baumann 2004: 20). Said explains orientalism as the European way of coming to terms with the orient based on their own experience with that orient (Said 1979: 1). There are three ways this orientalism works. Firstly, there is academic orientalism: writing about, teaching about, and researching the Orient all orientalizes the Orient, as it creates an image of the orient from an academic perspective that has the power to define the Orient (ibid.: 2). Secondly, Said explains orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (ibid.). In other words, orientalism creates a 'them' which is often opposed to an 'us'. Some traits of the 'other' are seen as negative as opposed to the 'self' while others can be considered positive. Thirdly, orientalism "can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - [...] orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (ibid.:3). This means the power of the Occident over the Orient is actively used to influence the Orient. Orientalism is a discourse that defines ideas about the Orient in the Occident, even if these ideas do not coincide with the local reality of the Orient (ibid.: 2-4).

This leads me to critiques on Said's theory. First of all I would like to argue that Said's theory is Eurocentric, for orientalism is not purely based on the 'classic' European colonizers as Occident versus the colonized as the Orient. It is one power defining an 'other' as opposed to the 'self', and having power over that other. Moreover, even though the Occident has power over the Orient, occidental ideas about the Orient are not set in stone. Said makes orientalism come across as if orientalized societies are "susceptible to the constraints of a single, monolithic agenda" (King 1999: 86). Societies in general are flexible, hybrid and heterogeneous, and hegemonic (colonialist) power does not necessarily supersede agency at all times. While orientalist powers do have the power to re-define the orient, as has happened when the British set the Indian caste-system in stone, the Orient can choose to rebel against occidental definitions, or use them in their favor and advance

their society from there on. Orientalism as Said uses it silences the heterogeneity and complexity of both the Orient and Occident (ibid.: 85-86).

Especially in the age of globalization, defining an 'other' as a static alternative to the 'self' undermines the fluidity of societies. Situations chance so quickly that even at the publication of a study about a society, the situation regarding that society can already have changed.[22] Orientalism as a theory that considers 'the West' (mainly Europe and Northern America (Said 1979: 3-4)) the Occident with power over the rest of the world, the Orient, can no longer hold as such. Orientalism as a theory that does not take into account the agency of people, the fluidity of life, and the constant shifts in power, needs to be amended and interpreted in a less static way than Said has described it in 1979.

With authors such as Richard King doing exactly that, redefining orientalism in a way that is less static, more fluid, and taking into account agency and responses to being orientalized, in this thesis orientalism will be used as one of Baumann's grammars of identity and alterity. Baumann's grammars will be employed in this thesis as a way to show how members' preconceptions of 'the other' are being re-defined by their Buddhist practice.

Understanding orientalism, Baumann uses this main concept as a grammar for selfing and othering that does not merely consider a binary:

> Orientalism is […] not a simple binary opposition of 'us = good' and 'them = bad', but a very shrewd mirrored reversal of: 'what is good in us is [still] bad in them, but what got twisted in us [still] remains straight in them' (Baumann 2004: 21).

The occidental power that uses the orientalist grammar, therefore can consider a self-critique that laments what is lost in 'us' but still remains in the (self-invented) other. The positive and negative characteristics that underlie this kind of selfing and othering are made to mirror each other in reverse: good in them is (no longer) bad in us; good in us, is (still) bad in them. This grammar seems to imply a kind of backwardness of the other, while that backwardness at the same time is admired, and possibly even used to learn from by 'us'. Such can be seen, for example in the traveler to exotic places to re-find himself (Baumann 2004: 19-21).

Segmentation is the second grammar that Baumann discusses. This grammar is based on E.E. Evans-Pritchards theory of structural segmentation that he developed on the basis of the Nuer's way of determining friend from foe depending on context.[23] This segmentary grammar defines identities and otherness are determined according to social context (Baumann: 21). In a local context, for example, people can be neighbors that dislike one another, while they in a larger context, for example, oppose globalization together by protesting against a multinational taking over their local store. Identity and otherness in this grammar are fluid. Baumann notes that this grammar only works in acephalous context: without institutionalized political and territorial power. Because this applies to the SGI, I will show in chapter three that this is a grammar that can be well applied to the analysis of identity and otherness in the context of my research.

[22] Such can be the case, for example, because of war breaking out, peace having been achieved, et cetera.

[23] See Evans-Pritchard 1969: 192, 235, 246, 262, for more information on the social structure of the Nuer in South-Sudan.

The last grammar that Baumann defines, is that of encompassment. It is a grammar where selfing includes appropriating selected types of otherness (Baumann 2004: 25). It works on two levels of cognition. One recognizes difference between the 'self' and 'other,' while the second level recognizes that which is different falls under a universal category of universalness:

> To put it somewhat polemically: 'you may think that you differ from me in your sense of values or identity but deep down, or rather higher up, you are but a part of me. […] Your difference, in other words, is not situational or contextual; […] rather, it is a fiction caused by your own low horizon: '*Your* low level of consciousness may need *my* otherness to define itself, but *my* heart is big enough for *both* of us' (ibid., emphasis original).

Otherness is only present for the people who actively distinguish between an 'us' and 'them' and use them to differentiate from the 'them', while at the same time there are those that do not make this distinction at all and gather everyone under the same category. For example, one distinguishes between 'men' and 'women', while another says they are both belonging to the category 'humans' (ibid.: 25-26).

Since the grammar of encompassment is always hierarchical, I argue that the problem with this grammar may be that the higher level of cognition may state that the lower one is the same, and therefore no need for a definition of 'us' and 'them', while those defining via the lower cognition might not want to be identified as belonging to the same group as the higher cognition. However, this does not do away that this grammar is highly useful in understanding how identities of 'self' and 'other' are defined. What, moreover, is important to understand about the grammars is that in one social situation all three grammars can be chosen to be employed by different groups within that same social situation.

In my research of the SGI all three grammars have come to the fore in various contexts. I will visualize this in chapter three when discussing otherness in an SGI context to come to an understanding how the 'other' potentially influences the sense of self of SGI members, and how the 'other' is viewed and taken into account by the SGI and their aim for world peace. I will show there that, when touching upon the notion of world peace, members often reflect both upon the self and the other. As members pointed out to me, individuals need to become peaceful to be capable of spreading peace. Therefore, in discussing how to be a peaceful person the 'self' is reflected upon by making use of examples of the 'other' as both peaceful and non-peaceful. As I will show, their examples of these 'others' touch upon all three grammars.

In a globalizing world where access to more information about a larger array of people is easily accessible, the views of the 'other' the members refer to can vary, and can have different effects on their sense of self. In order to be able to analyze the effect of globalization on not only members' views of the 'other' but also their own identity, I shall next turn towards Hermans & Hermans-Kanopa's Dialogical-Self Theory.

1.2.2.3. Dialogical-Self Theory

As I have explained in section 1.2.1., globalization allows for more and better interaction between humans all over the planet. The consequence is that more individuals come across more differences between humans as well. Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka have devised the Dialogical-Self Theory (hereafter the DST) in order to capture the effects of globalization on individuals:

> Globalization is supposed to have a deep impact on the organization of the self: its repertoire is populated by an unprecedented density of positions; the repertoire becomes more heterogeneous and laden with differences, oppositions and contradictions; it is confronted with a variety of changes in the environment and receives more "visits" by unexpected positions; and there are larger "position leaps" (jumping from one position to another) (Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka 2010: 76).

Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka argue that globalization requires identity management, because it brings individuals in touch with many more and new people, cultures, and therefore new identity positions individuals can take. The otherness they come across continuously influences individuals' sense of self, because they have to navigate the poles of different opposites to conclude where they position themselves (ibid.: 25). In other words, there is need for an internal dialogue that considers a variation of "*I*-positions or voices in the landscape of the mind" (ibid.: 31) to conclude which position an individual wants to take in which context. Globalization has led to an increase of such positions to consider, making a functioning dialogue between the internal and external voices that identify the different *I*-positions more important than ever. For, only when one is capable of successfully navigating the positions, an individual will have a clear sense of identity (ibid.: 25, 31-32, 76).

In considering the different positions, an individual takes into account the favorable features of the in-group – the group which fits best with the self – and focuses on the negative of the out-group – the group not fitting with the self. This means that the individual is focused on identifying based on features of the defining of the in-group, therewith seeing only what the out-group has not, based on that in-group definition. The individual thus disregards the original features of the out-group (Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka 2010: 25). To relate this back to orientalism, and the orientalistic grammar, in defining the 'self,' one defines the 'other' based on what the 'self' is not, and not based on what the 'other' in fact is. In navigating *I*-positions this means that the most powerful, or most positively interpreted, position for a certain context will most likely be the one used as the position to take in that context.

The dialogical self constantly navigates *I*-positions for various situations: it is constantly in flux because every situation requires new assessment of one's position. In that regard it is the same as the segmentation grammar of Baumann, the only difference being that the segmentation grammar considers the position of the 'other' based on the 'self,' while Dialogical-Self Theory considers the position of the 'self' based on other possible positions of the 'self.' Thanks to globalization there are many more positions to consider, and this increase of positions can create uncertainty for the

individual which *I*-position to choose in which context. As mentioned in the introduction of this section on identity theories, disjunction can occur when there is too much conflict between the positions to consider and individuals are unable to successfully navigate their *I*-positions (Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka 2010: 29-30, 60-63).

For a successful navigation of *I*-positions acknowledging the alterity of the other is required. If two parties keep expressing their views without acknowledging the views of the other party, there is no possibility for a mutual understanding between the two parties, or, in other words, then there is no dialogical conversation going on. In order for individuals to be able to navigate the fields of the global and local social situations they need "the capacity to recognize and respond to the other person our groups in its alterity" (Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka 2010: 31). Understanding what the other stands for, in theory makes it possible to identify the problems with one's personal opinion.

In summary, there is need for dialogical conception of self and identity in global-local connections due to the risk of disjunction. This risk has become larger in the globalizing world thanks to the increasing multiplicity of self and identity. Therefore there is need for developing the dialogical capacity to deal with this increase of positions to consider. In order to be able to properly do that, one needs to acknowledge the alterity of the 'other' in order to create a functioning dialogue where both positions of the 'self' and the 'other' are considered. Then, in considering which *I*-position to take, an individual decides on the most powerful or most positively interpreted position for that social context.

Taking this as the premise for DST, the question arises how SGI members navigate their *I*-positions as members of the globally present SGI in the local reality of the Netherlands. Moreover, how do they relate their personal positions back to world peace? So the DST serves to see how the members' sense of self is in dialogue with their position as SGI members and how they are becoming accepted in *I*-positions. In chapter three I will show how members try to coincide their personal views with those of the SGI, and try to come to a frame of mind that is peaceful, and allows them to be peaceful in all contexts.

Finally, the DST can be well connected to Appadura's landscapes of globalization. Since globalization requires individuals to re-conceptualize their sense of self in their imagined worlds, they have to consciously weigh their local *I*-positions against their global ones, Appadurai's landscapes have both a local and a global implementation, fueled by the positioning of individuals depending on the context (Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka 2010: 60-62). Global positions have local counter-positions and, as I will show in chapter 3, the local implementation of the global concepts of the SGI leads to creativity of interpretation by members.

To conclude this section, it should be clear to the reader that identity is shaped by social constructs such as habitus, is based on a relative relationship to an 'other,' and requires navigating *I*-positions based on internal and external influences. The 'self' can be reflected upon by turning towards an 'other,' and the 'other' is, at the same time, used to shape a sense of self. To place identity in the context of habitus is to show how this identity and the multiple selves of an individual are in part consciously shaped, while another part is formed by social associations, norms and values: the habitus. The global forces that influence the social settings in which an individual has formed his identity can be disjunctive for the individual if one is not able to form dialogical *I*-positions that

take the new cultural flows into account. Globalization and identity therefore are closely connected and for a global movement to work on a local scale, this interconnection needs to be taken into account. If properly done so, the functioning hybrid of global and local in the form of glocalization occurs. These aforementioned theories will form the basis of chapter three where I will discuss the SGI-NL.

In this chapter I have created the outline for this thesis as a research considering the identity positions of Dutch SGI members regarding world peace. In chapter three I will return to all aforementioned theories in order to connect them to my research. However, first the next chapter will be presenting the reader with information about the current organization of the SGI, and also address its history, beginning with its roots in Mahayana Buddhism.

CHAPTER 2:
HISTORY OF THE SŌKA GAKKAI, SŌKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL, AND SŌKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL NETHERLANDS

In the previous chapter I have briefly introduced the topic of this thesis and considered the methods and theories used to shape this thises. This chapter will focus on the origins of the SGI and its practice. The Sōka Gakkai International is the international counterpart of the Sōka Gakkai: they have been established in Japan and are both based on Nichiren Buddhism. Therefore, in explaining what the SGI is, I shall first present the reader with a brief history of Buddhism in Japan. Next, I shall place the emergence of Nichiren Buddhism in Japan in historic context and explain what this Buddhist school entails. When the reader is acquainted with Nichiren Buddhism, I will focus on the historical, social, and cultural circumstances in which the SG(I) emerged, to show how the SG in the early twentieth century has adapted Nichiren Buddhism to fit new and modern socio-historical contexts in both Japan and later, as the SGI, abroad. Hereby I shall focus on the emergence of Japanese New Religions after World War II. Moreover, I shall explain the concept of Engaged Buddhism, since the SGI also can be classified as such. Lastly, I shall turn to the SG itself. I will adress the history and the practice of the movement, and following up on that, turn to the SGI specifically, and show how the SGI is independent from the SG even though it has emerged from it. I will show that the SGI is a humanistic organization because it is an organization that values the agency of human beings and encourages members to be critical about its practice and find evidence that it works for them. At the same time it is part of Buddhist humanism, which means they encourage that Buddhist thought can be applied to everyday life. Moreover, I shall discuss the organization of the SGI-NL to, concluding this chapter, summarize what the SGI is, where its origins lie, how it has developed into the organization it is today, and how it functions. Finally, it is important to note that I, throughout the chapter, will touch upon Buddhist notions that are relevant for the understanding of the practice of the SGI-NL.

2.1. HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN JAPAN

Before presenting the reader with a history of Buddhism in Japan, I shall turn towards a very brief explanation of Buddhism.[24] Buddhism is concerned with offering people the tools to address struggles in life. It aims to guide people towards spiritual enlightenment so they can get away from the ongoing cycle of rebirth and enter Nirvana (Gethin 1998: 32-33). Dharma is the core of Buddhism; Dharma is the ultimate truth, the doctrine that shows the way life is, and also how one should act in life:

> According to Indian thought Dharma is that which is the basis of things,
> the underlying nature of things, the way things are; in short, it is the

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[24] For a clear, extensive, explanation of Buddhism I highly recommend Gethin, Rupert 1998 The foundations of Buddhism, Oxford: OUP, and Gombrich, Richard F. 2005 [1996] How Buddhism Began: the conditioned genesis of early teaching, London: The Athlone Press.

truth about things, the truth about the world. More than this, Dharma is the way we should act, for if we are to avoid bringing harm to both ourselves and others we should strive to act in a way that is true to the way things are, that accords with the underlying truth of things (Gethin 1998: 35).

Understanding the Dharma therefore means becoming aware of the truth of the universe. This understanding and acting according to the Dharma is what it means to achieve Buddhahood (Gethin 1998: 32-34; Gombrich 2005: 4-5). The Buddha Sakyamuni revealed the Dharma to all the people so they could reach Buddhahood.[25] However, as Gombrich explains, because Sakyamuni lectured his teachings orally, it may be that the words later put on paper differ from the original oration. Moreover, the texts themselves have been open to different and sometimes contradictory interpretation. Therefore it is a personal journey for each individual to understand the truth of the universe and attain spiritual enlightenment (Gombrich 2005: 4-6).

Consequently, it should come as no surprise that many schools of Buddhism emerged throughout history. Moreover, there have been numerous disagreements between various groups about what Buddhism is and how it should be approached. These disagreements often caused rifts in the Buddhist Sangha (the monastic community), leading to the establishments of new schools of thought. One of the most important discussions for the development of Buddhism that lead to the establishment of the Theravada and Mahayana traditions is whether enlightenment can be reached by only the Sangha or also by laity. The Theravada group holds that it can only be reached by those living according to the monastic codes. In consequence their laity is regarded as a support group which does receive Dharma but cannot achieve enlightenment. In the Mahayana tradition, however, laity is central to Buddhism and reaching enlightenment. It claims that every individual has the ability to attain Buddhahood. Mahayana Buddhism holds that Buddhism is a religion for everyone, helping ordinary people to tackle their day-to-day lives (Causton 1991: 22). This tradition spread all over India and past borders into China, Korea, and from there into Japan (ibid.).

2.1.1. *The origins of Buddhism in Japan*

Japan's first introduction to Buddhism was in 538 or 552C.E. (there are conflicting sources) when the king of Paekche, a kingdom on the Korean peninsula, sent a little Buddha statue to Japan (Van der Veere 2003: 21). However, the Japanese did not immediately embrace Buddhism. At first some saw the veneration of Buddha statues as the cause for the plagues that haunted Japan at the time (ibid.: 21-22). People believed that the Shintō *Kami* (deities) were angry at the people for turning towards Buddhism. Strife between the supporters and opponents of Buddhism roamed the country for some decades, until Shōtoku Taishi (573-621 C.E.), started promoting Buddhism in Japan once again, and became the actual first important supporter of Buddhism in Japan (ibid.: 22). In the seventh century, Buddhism spread all across the country and gained influence in many areas, such as in burial traditions, which remain to this day (ibid.: 29).

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[25] Sakyamuni is the current Buddha. Buddhism comes and goes in cycles, and Sakyamuni was the Buddha that acquainted people with Buddhism in this cycle. For an extensive explanation on Buddha and the cycles see Gethin 1998: 30-34.

However, the governing bodies of Japan feared that Buddhism was a religion that enabled the common people to undermine the state and royal family. Therefore, in 623, the government created the *Sōniryō* 僧尼令: the edict to regulate the activities of monks and nuns (Van der Veere 2003: 24). From here on, emperors and other rulers such as Shōgun interchangeably favored Shintō and Buddhism as the state religion (ibid.: 30-31). Consequently both Buddhists and Shintōists gained political influence. This led to many political issues throughout the years, because policies constantly needed to change to indulge the religion in favor at the time. However, from the Tokugawa-dynasty (1600-1868 A.D.) on, religious influence was banned from the political theatre (ibid.: 75).

While in the political field Buddhism and Shintō were often competing, in everyday life the boundary between Buddhism and Shintō seemed to blur. This is clear, for example, from the many NRM emerging in the nineteenth century that combined the ideas of both traditions (Van der Veere 2003: 80). Over the years, many Shintō temples had also become part of Buddhist organizations, blurring the boundaries between the two even further. This process of the jumbling together of Buddhism and Shintō is called *shinbutsu-shūgō* 神仏習合(ibid.: 82).

After the Meiji-restoration, where from 1868 on a chain of socio-political events returned the power of the state to the emperor, and Japan became accessible to the rest of the world again,[26] the new rulers wanted to do away with the blemished religions, and decreed to separate the Shintō-temples from their Buddhist organizations. This process is known as *shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離. The Shintō temples became responsible for the reverence of the Emperor who was placed at the head of state as a descendant of the sun goddess. Moreover, in 1870 the *kannagara* 惟神, meaning 'the way of the *Kami*' 神 (Shintō deities), was chosen as the state religion. This meant that reverence of the Kami became state enforced. It lead to the iconoclastic *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈: destroy the Buddhism and gone with the Buddha Shaka (Van der Veere 2003: 82). In World War II, this separation of Buddhism from Shintō even was taken as far as a nationwide ban on Buddhism (Barone 2007: 122). For, in the war nationalist imagery became of utmost importance. Reference to foreign religions, such as Buddhism, had no place in the patriotism the Japanese government propagated to its people. In consequence Buddhism was shunned as a religion. However, as Ohnuki-Tierney shows, the government referred to a lot of Buddhist symbolism in the nationalist propaganda, and it had become so much integrated into Japanese life that essentially Buddhist rituals, such as funeral rites, kept existing. The main difference became that people were not allowed to call themselves Buddhists and had to officially be registered as Shintō (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002: 12-13, 90, 104, 272).

Buddhism in Japan has known many periods of resistance as well as acceptance. Currently, Buddhism in Japan is accepted although often regarded with suspicion since the sarin-gas attacks by the Buddhist NRM Aum Shinrikyo in 1995. While some Buddhist organizations in Japan, such as the Sōka Gakkai, are still relevant, Buddhism has suffered decline in popularity (McCurry, J., in *The Guardian*: 6-11-2015). The SGI, meanwhile, is gaining in popularity internationally. In the next section I shall turn to Nichiren Buddhism, since the Buddhism the SGI offers to its members is based on the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

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[26] For an extensive discussion of the Meiji-restoration see Beasley 1972.

2.1.2. Nichiren Buddhism in Japan

The Japanese monk Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282), attempted to make Buddhism accessible to all people, advocating that everyone has a Buddha inside them. He wanted to return to a Buddhism that Shakyamuni had envisioned, a Buddhism that enabled people to face their challenges and live empowered lives. Because of that, he has become known to his followers as the 'true Buddha.' Although there are many sutras, Nichiren regarded the *Lotus Sutra* as the ultimate truth. Therefore he disregarded the other sutras and focused solely on the *Lotus Sutra*. The form of Buddhism he thereby created has become known as Nichiren Buddhism (Causton 1991: 25-26).

Nichiren Buddhists regard the name of the *Lotus Sutra*, *Myōhō-Renge-Kyō* in Japanese, as the universal Law of life. The *Daimoku*, as the mantra *Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō* 南無妙法蓮華経 is called, is displayed on a *mandala* in calligraphy called the *Gohonzon* (Barone 2007: 121, Causton 1991: 28; Van der Veere 2003: 61).[27] Through reciting the Daimoku, one's "inner Buddhahood, the highest status of one's life," (Causton 1991: 28) will be revealed. Bringing forth such inner potential is what Buddhists refer to as 'human revolution.' As I shall show in section 2.3.4., human revolution is also a major goal for membersof the SGI-NL. In contrast to many other religions, Nichiren Buddhists to not pray to deities. Instead, Nichiren Buddhists chant *Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō* to reveal the Dharma to themselves. Chanting puts Nichiren Buddhists "in harmony, or rhythm with the universal Law" (ibid.). This, in combination with studying the liturgy, allows them to see how they have the capabilities to engage with the problems and challenges of life. Therefore, it is important to learn about and understand the Dharma to be able to apply it to personal life (Ibid.: 28-30).

Having presented the reader with a basic explanation of Buddhism, the history of Buddhism in Japan and Nichiren Buddhism, we have come to see Buddhism empowers individuals to improve their lives. In the next section I shall engage even more with the humanistic aspect of Buddhism when I show how Buddhism fares in the 21st century.

2.2. A religious response to modernity: new religions and Engaged Buddhism in Japan

While after the Meiji-restoration (1868) a strict separation between Buddhism and Shintō was introduced by the Japanese government, and the phenomenon of new religions (*shin-shūkyō* 新宗教) emerged (Van der Veere 2003: 85). Many new groups and sects emerged and grew, but most quickly dissolved again. Apart from the Japanese New Religions a new kind of Buddhism also emerged that engaged with the social realities of the modern world (Queen 2000: 23). The Sōka Gakkai and SGI are not only examples of these new Japanese movements, but also examples of the so-called 'Engaged Buddhism.' Therefore, before turning to the history of the Sōka Gakkai in Japan and how the International emerged from it, in this section I will first introduce the reader with NRM in Japan and, following up on that, explain Engaged Buddhism.

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[27] I have been told that although depictions of the Gohonzon do exist on the internet, they originally are not meant to be depicted any other way than in its original form. Therefore I have decided not to include a picture in this thesis. For an accurate description of the Gohonzon and its meaning, see http://www.sgi.org/about-us/gohonzon.html last accessed 28-07-2016.

2.2.1. Japanese New Religions: Shin-shūkyō

As shown in José Cassanova's book about religions in the modern world (1994), many scholars, such as Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere, once suggested that the rise of the modern era in the West would mean the demise of religions. For, governments would separate church and state and a secular era would be upon us. This prediction did not come true, for religion still exists, and is constantly evolving (Casanova 1994: 11-20). However, the kind of religion that people in the West are interested in, has changed. A type of religion that engages with the troubles of everyday life and offers people options to tackle these troubles, in other words humanistic religions, have become increasingly popular (Clarke & Somers: 1994: 7). As Clarke & Somers note, the Japanese *shin-shūkyō* offered such humanistic appeal:

> [*Shin-shūkyō*] steadily advanced overseas with the aim of transforming people's lives by influencing the major issues of the modern world such as those of peace and war, attitudes to work and the environment, as well as individual health, well-being and prosperity (Clarke & Somers1994: 1).

This recipe of addressing people's current life and offering ideas to improve the world had proven useful in Japan where it was a response to the rapid cultural, economic and political changes since the Meiji-restoration, and especially since the end of World War II (ibid.).

The NRM in Japan emerged around the beginning of the Meiji period (1868). In contrast to the West, the sudden plunge into modernity made religion become more important in Japan, since it in a way had always been concerned with engaging the troubles of everyday life. However, the movements that emerged at that time focused even more on individual issues than on larger communal issues as many other religions before have done. Many of the NRM were and still are part of an ongoing historical process of religions constantly evolving to fit with their current social climate (Clarke & Somers 1994: 3). What is new about the Japanese NRM, therefore, is not their content, but the way they engage with the content. The new religions have emerged as socio-religious organizations that aim to rework and revitalize traditional beliefs and practices "for the purpose of ensuring their relevance to daily life at a time of unprecedented change in all spheres" (ibid.). Because this change was of an organizational and practical nature, in contrast to a change of content, it was hard to distinguish between reformation of old religious traditions and the emergence of 'new, new' movements (ibid.: 1). Nonetheless, there is a consensus on what movements are regarded as *shin-shūkyō*, such as the Sōka Gakkai (ibid.: 1-3).

Japanese NRM, as already noted, aim to provide their members a modern religion that relates to current social reality. The need for this was especially great in Japan after World War II, since in that period the faith in the government, economy and general society was very low. As nationalism had been widely promoted in the war and patriotism was very strong,[28] the loss of faith in the country led people to search for new meaning in life (Barone 2007: 123; Ohnuki-Tierney 2002: 76-77). Japan needed to reevaluate how it saw and presented itself to the world after the war.

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[28] See Ohnuki-Tierney 2002, for a clear understanding of the extent to which the Japanese government influenced the views of its people during World War II.

The NRM offered answers and solutions by, for example, presenting Japan as "peacemaker and protector of the environment" (Clarke & Somers 1994: 4).

Another feature of the Japanese NRM is that they often implement a mixture of beliefs and practices from different Japanese - and sometimes foreign - religions and traditions. They are usually also built around a charismatic founder or leader, who is often seen as an *ikigami*, a person that is possessed by a deity. Many movements, like the religions and traditions before them, place an emphasis on spiritual healing, miracles, and on "the importance of ensuring that the ancestors are at rest" (Clarke & Somers 1994: 4). Pacifism, environmental care and protection, and world transformation, are elements that are new to the mixture of tradition and modernity present in the Japanese NRM. This is to say that besides enveloping tradition with a modern twist, new elements are also added to the NRM (ibid.: 4-7). Along with these NRM, a new form of Buddhism emerged that enabled engagement with social reality. This so-called Engaged Buddhism will be the subject of the following section.

2.2.2. ENGAGED BUDDHISM

Engaged Buddhism in Japan emerged as a response to the same kind of problems that made the NRM in Japan flourish after World War II: disengagement with a traditional, no longer relevant, view of life. People started to look for a vision that would give meaning back to life. Previously, I have shown that the Buddha Sakyamuni had envisioned Buddhism as a religion that was able to empower people to improve the quality of one's life. However, modernization proved it impossible for people to keep solely measuring the quality of one's life on a religious scale. Being spiritually happy became increasingly irrelevant in comparison to having earthly happiness measured in capital such as money and property.

In the 21st century global economic, political, social, and financial forces are at work that bring about many problems regarding quality of human life on all scales. For example, the world, countries, even cities are unfairly divided into wealthy and poor areas, human rights are not always acknowledged, and marginalization and social scrutiny continue to grow worse (Queen 2000: 1). Next to religious devotion, many other factors to measure the quality of one's life have arisen:

> For Buddhists and practitioners of the other world faiths, it is no longer
> possible to measure the quality of human life primarily in terms of an
> individual's observance of traditional rites, such as mediation, prayer, or
> temple ritual; or belief in dogma's such as "the law of karma," "Buddha-
> nature," "the will of God," or "the Tao" (Queen 2000: 1).

Queen explains that quality of human life present-day is mostly measured in worldly terms, like capital, instead of otherworldly achievements such as going to heaven or getting out of the ongoing cycle of rebirth. Therefore, traditional religions that solely focus on the afterlife are no longer satisfactory. People want a religion that takes the modern world into account.

After World War II socially Engaged Buddhism officially began to make its appearance in Japan as a Buddhism that offered members practical ways to engage with the problems of

their everyday lives. It returns, even more than Nichiren Buddhism, to the principle the Buddha Sakyamuni envisioned: a Buddhism that works for the world, and thus changes with the world. On the same principle as discussed in the last section, Buddhism was reshaped so that it would continue to inspire and empower people (Queen 2000: 5, 23).

In a way, as the reader may reason, all Buddhism is engaged, for it has always been concerned with the troubles of the world (King 2005: 80). The difference, then, lies in how Buddhism engages with the world: passive or active. If Buddhism actively engages with the world, not only by praying, but also by helping to change the world by empowering people to change their lives and by means of projects, peace proposals, etc., then this is what I am referring to as an 'actively social' Engaged Buddhism.

Lastly, it must be noted that although Engaged Buddhism in many aspects overlaps with Japanese NRM, they are different in two senses. First of all, while Engaged Buddhism as a concept does not originate in Japan, the NRM I refer to as Japanese NRM do have their origins there. Although throughout the world NRM emerged, Japanese NRM are based on (mostly) Japanese religious traditions re-shaped to be relevant to the modern world. Engaged Buddhism, therefore, can be part of a Japanese NRM, but it doesn't mean al Japanese NRM are forms of Engaged Buddhism, nor are all forms of Engaged Buddhism necessarily a (Japanese) NRM. As I shall show in the next section, the SGI is, however, an organization which is both a (Japanese) NRM as well as a form of Engaged Buddhism.

2.3. Sōka Gakkai, Sōka Gakkai International, and Sōka Gakkai International Netherlands

This section is divided into three parts. Before turning to the SGI itself, I shall first touch upon the history of the SG, the Japanese national founding quarters of the SGI. Although many of the SGI members I spoke to have pointed out that the SGI and the SG are independent from each other, I will refer to the SG history, because, ultimately, the SGI did derive from it. The second part of this section will consist of a discussion of the SGI mission and its history in relation to both the SG as well as Nichiren Buddhism. From there on this thesis will solely consider the SGI, and therefore follow the remarks of members that the SGI and the SG are two different organizations. Finally, this chapter will end with a focus on the practice of the SGI to show how the SGI operates across the globe and, in particular, in the Netherlands.

2.3.1. History of the Sōka Gakkai

In 1930 Makeguchi Tsunesaburō (1871-1944) created the Society for the Creation of Value '*Sōka Gakkai*,' as a study group for educators who wanted to reshape the educational system in Japan. However, from the start the ideas of the group were connected to Nichiren Buddhism, and it was quickly transformed into a lay support group, practicing the same way as explained in section 2.1.2. Although it was a group of only a few hundred people, the members held dearly to their ideals, which became most clear when the SG was banished in World War II because of the nationwide ban on Buddhism (Barone 2007:122; Métraux 2013:424). When Makeguchi refused to convert to Shintō and desert Buddhism, he also advised his members against going to Shintō temples. As a

result, Makeguchi, his favorite disciple Toda Josei (1900-1958), and nineteen other disciples were imprisoned in 1943. While Makeguchi did not survive his imprisonment, Toda did, becoming the second president of the SG. In the depression and ashes of the defeat of Japan after the Second World War, Toda revived the SG and turned it into the large post-war NRM that it is today (Barone 2007:122; Métraux 1988: 21).

The aim of the SG is to bring "peace, harmony, and happiness to mankind" (Métraux 1988: vi).[29] As explained in section 2.2., many Japanese were feeling negative after the Second World War. Therefore, this lay Nichiren Buddhist organization that aimed to "lead mankind away from the certain destruction of nuclear war to a better and more peaceful world" (ibid.: 1) quickly gained support. The credibility of the group's statements was supported by actions of the SG. In 1957, for example, Toda called out for an abolition of nuclear weapons, which is now a crucial part of the agenda of both the SG and the SGI. Moreover, peace work in general was set onto the agenda, and with the active support of members the SGI built "an extensive network of non-profit organizations around the world, including schools and universities, foundations, journals, and commercial firms" (Barone 2007: 118). While the SGI has no political affiliations, the SG has political influence in Japan. Their political party *Kōmeitō* 公明党 is heavily influenced by the views of the SG (ibid.). It is in their presence on the political playing field in Japan that the SG differs most clearly from the SGI.

After Toda Josei passed away, Ikeda Daisaku became his successor in 1960. He is president of the SG and SGI to this day. Under Ikeda's presidency the number of SG members has risen far into the millions (Dawson 2001:344). He continued the path for peace and set out for internationalization.[30] However, in the course of the growth of the SG, as well as the SGI that I shall discuss below, the ideas and practices started to turn away more and more from conservative Nichiren Buddhism. The Nichiren priesthood seemed too feel that the ideas of the SG strayed too far from what Nichren Buddhism was about. In the eyes of the Nichiren clergy Buddhism should only engage with larger aspects of general life. In 1991, the increasing power play between the two groups led to an excommunication of the SG (and with it the SGI) from Nichiren Buddhism (Barone 2007:123; Dawson 2001:344; Métraux 2013:425).

This was problematic for the Sōka Gakkai and the SGI, because the SG(I)'s basic principles are based on those of Nichiren Buddhism. Since their practice of chanting is the same (doing *Gongyo* and chanting the Daimoku in front of a Gohonzon),[31] it proved problematic for the legitimacy of the SG(I), and even troublesome for its members. As one of the members of the SGI-NL explained to me, she was unable to get her Gohonzon at the time and could not become a full-fledged SGI member.[32] However, after a while the Nichiren clergy seemed to become less frustrated with the SGI, as the priests resumed handing out Gohonzon, even though the SG from thereon was no longer part of the Nichiren Buddhist organization in Japan. However, because the SG and SGI still base their practice on Nichiren Daishonin's work, they are still seen as a lay Nichiren Buddhist movement. Moreover, while the split between the two definitely led to a loss of SG members in Japan, it did mean the SGI could pave the path of Engaged Buddhism, putting the emphasis even more on obtaining personal (worldly and spiritual) happiness and world peace. As I shall show

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[29] In this case happiness can be interpreted both as spiritual and material happiness.

[30] See section 2.3.2..

[31] See section 2.3.3..

[32] Individuals become an official SGI member when they have received their Gohonzon.

next, these two factors have contributed to the appeal of the SGI to people in the West (Barone 2007:123; Dawson 2001:344; Métraux 2013:425).

2.3.2. Sōka Gakkai International

Much of the philosophy of the SG can be found in the SGI as well. The organization does not only try to help members to achieve peace and happiness in their own lives, it also tries to achieve world peace. The SGI is officially registered as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Every year the president of the SGI, Ikeda Daisaku offers a peace proposal to the United Nations. In these proposals he offers, as he phrased it in the proposal of 2015, "thoughts on ways to generate greater solidarity among the people of the world for peace and humane values and for the elimination of needless suffering from the Earth" (Ikeda 2015: 4). Ikeda's proposals cover various topics such as economics, politics, human rights, war and peace, and creating a sustainable society (ibid.). As both president of the SG and the SGI he actively engages with the world in an attempt to change the world.

As I have mentioned in the introduction of section 2.3., the SG and the SGI are to be regarded as two separate organizations. The SG had spread abroad already in the 1960's, but in 1975 Ikeda officially established the SGI, as a derivation of, yet independent from, the SG. As far as I have understood, this independence means that the already established SG holds no power over the SGI, the SGI being independently organized, as well as having no political affiliations in any of the countries in which it has established itself. Members have told me that president Ikeda has specifically noted that political affiliations of these international affiliations is very inadvisable, as the aim of the SGI is not power, but peace (Dawson 2001: 344).[33]

In 1995 the SGI created a charter stating principles and purposes of the SGI and thus explaining that the aim of the organization is to contribute "to peace, culture and education based on the philosophy and ideals of Nichiren Buddhism."[34] Examining the charter, one can see that the SGI is much less of a proselytizing organization than the SG in Japan has been in the past. The SGI, in contrast to actively approaching people and asking them to become members, is a grassroots movement in which members find other people interested in the SGI via personal contacts. However, since *kosen-rufu* which means "the ceaseless effort to enhance the value of human dignity, to awaken all people to a sense of their limitless worth and potential"[35] is one of the goals of the SGI, the organization does encourage members to acquaint as many people as possible with the SGI. Nevertheless, kosen-rufu is an informal practice, and when I return to the concept in the last section of this chapter, I shall show members do not view it as a means of proselytizing.

Consequently, all of the members I have spoken to have learned about the SGI via people they were familiar with. As Carlo Barone explains, possible new members are introduced with the SGI and its benefits:

> [There is an] emphasis on material and nonmaterial benefits as the
> driving incentive to entice potential converts and to motivate new

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[33] http://www.sgi.org/general-info/ last accessed 26-07-2016

[34] http://www.sgi.org/about-us/sgi-charter.html last accessed 28-07-2016.

[35] http://www.sgi.org/about-us/buddhism-in-daily-life/kosen-rufu.html last accessed 24-07-2016.

members: it is taught that, by chanting the mantra Nam Myo Ho Renge Kyo, they can ensure better finances, better health, better social and personal relationships, and so on (Barone 2007:119).

The engagement of the SGI with the troubles of everyday life is a possible incentive for people to join. Members introduce others to the SGI by explaining how it has helped them improve their personal lives. Potential new members are presented a new way to engage with the world and, most importantly, the potential personal benefits of becoming a SGI member (Barone 2007: 119).

Through its successful appeal to individuals, the SGI has developed into one of the largest lay Buddhist associations on earth, with estimates of at least 1.8 million members living outside of Japan across 192 countries and territories.[36] There are 94 registered constituent SGI organizations worldwide.[37] These organizations are connected to the SGI headquarters in Japan, but they do regulate, support, and organize themselves in their own way.

2.3.3. SŌKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL – PRAXIS

Buddhist practice, as it is conceived by SGI, is based on the principles of Nichiren Buddhism. Moreover, although the SGI is an independent organization from the Sōka Gakkai, it upholds the same teachings and functions by means of the same principles as the Sōka Gakkai in Japan. The *Lotus Sutra* and the chanting of the Daimoku (*Nam-Myōhō-renge-kyō*)[38] are, just as in Nichiren Buddhism, crucial to its practice. Chanting *Nam-Myōhō-renge-kyō* to an enshrined Gohonzon at home is part of the daily practice of SGI members as well (Barone 2007:122). Although the focus is indeed on the chanting of the Daimoku twice a day during morning and evening chanting, during these times members also chant selected parts of the *Lotus Sutra*. This process of evening and morning prayer is called *Gongyo*. Over the years the SGI has realized that not all passages of the *Lotus Sutra* are pronounceable in all countries. Therefore, some passages have become exempt from Gongyo. This has happened in Italy, for example, with a certain part of the Chinese part of the scripture that, as Carlo Barone tells us, one member described as a never-ending torture (ibid.: 126-127).

Although chanting is a tool to improve one's karma, and a certain amount of Daimoku is deemed necessary to reach goals, challenges are not magically overcome. Members need to act upon their personal challenges. Chanting helps people to understand what they need to change in order to be able to successfully engage with their challenges. Moreover, there are regular meetings among members that serve as a way to reflect on current issues. During the meetings the members also offer advice and try to inspire each other by relating actual proof that the practice works. Dobbelaere explains how practicing functions:

> The practice is really not magic, it forces the practitioners to ask questions like: "Why are there these problems? What is it that prevents me from

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[36] http://www.sgi.org/general-info/ last accessed 26-07-2016; http://www.sgi.org/general-info/sgi-membership.html last accessed 26-07-2016.

[37] http://www.sgi.org/general-info/ last accessed 26-07-2016 http://www.sgi.org/about-us/sgi-facts/sgi-organizations-registered-constituent.html.

[38] See section 2.1.2..

moving forward?" This exercise is very well adapted to the posture of post-modernity that stresses the realization of the self and the necessity of reflexivity. The practice also strengthens the person's determination and makes him or her capable of altering circumstances: it invigorates them (Dobbelaere 2006:108–109).

The SGI encourages members to reflect on their problems and so shows members that they are having control over their own situations and that it is up to them to engage any challenge to improve their lives. This, as mentioned in section 2.1.2., is the human revolution members strive for. The SGI advocates that, as members get insight into their own life, and reflect upon themselves they become able to change what they feel needs to be changed and so revolutionize themselves (Barone 2007:127; Cornejo 2013:70–71; Dobbelaere 2006:10). In this way, I argue, the SGI tries to empower its members and offers a humanistic religion that prioritizes agency.

Seeing the effects of their practice in change of situations, for example, is what the SGI refers to as 'actual proof' (SGI-USA 2000: 19-20). For the SGI it is a concept that is mentioned when members emphasize how insights gained by practice as an SGI member helped them to conquer a personal challenge. The actual proof the members share in meetings, the advice they offer to others, and the way they handle their own problems all are personal, and therefore allows for much variation in meetings (Cornejo 2013:71, 74). In the next chapter I shall dive into the personal experiences during meetings in more detail.

During the meetings I attended happiness was one of the themes that was often addressed and considered a crucial part of being an SGI member. For, as members said, achievement of world peace is connected to happiness. Happiness coincides with reaching their personal goals in life, as well as being able to lead others towards happiness. Such goals are mostly practical, such as being able to afford something, or overcoming fears. The SGI advocates that the personal happiness of members will be reflected onto others asking how to become happy like them, and by sharing their feelings a snowball effect can appear, eventually allowing everyone in the world to achieve personal happiness. While members connected happiness to reaching goals, and as such were speaking of tangible happiness, I argue spiritual happiness is important as well. Spiritual happiness as understanding how the world works and therewith understanding the root of suffering, as explained in chapter one, is advocated by Ikeda just as much. For, only when one understands the way the world and, as he states, the universe works, then one is able to change it. Therefore studying Buddhist liturgy, he notes, is also important for SGI (SGI-USA 2000: 13-14).

On the institutional level, the SGI is organized in a similar fashion in all different countries. Every month, sometimes more often, dialogue groups are held at the house of one of the members. These meetings are held based on the locality of the members, so each member has a meeting in (relative) close proximity which he or she can attend. During the meetings a text from the monthly magazine called Indigo, which is issued across the world in different languages, is discussed. Usually this is a text written by president Ikeda to inspire, motivate, and educate the members. These texts can be discussed in different ways, but often members apply them to personal experiences so the abstract idea of the texts becomes relatable to everyday life. The texts and the following discussions, as mentioned, then serve to let members gain insights about their lives (Barone 2007:126; Cornejo

2013:66).

Besides the so called discussion meetings there also exist general meetings and study meetings, which, in my experience, are the same as the other meetings, because in the district where I have conducted my research, members seemed to prefer discussion meetings. However, study meetings can be held at the request of members. Moreover, study meetings are organized by the SGI on a regional level because discussions are impractical to have when a meeting between all members of a region is held.[39] These study meetings, as the name implies, serve to educate the members on Nichiren Buddhism, such as its terminology, and its philosophy (Barone 2007:126; Cornejo 2013:66). Next I shall show how the general ideas of practice and the organization of the SGI discussed here have shaped the SGI-NL.

2.3.4. *Sōka Gakkai International-Netherlands*

The SGI has thanks to increasing global interconnectedness been able to engage with people all over the world, allowing for establishment in countries across the globe. As such, it spread to the Netherlands and the district where I conducted my research. The Netherlands are a country with a Christian heritage in which relatively few people practice Buddhism. However, Buddhist practice in the Netherlands is growing.[40] Buddhism reached the Netherlands in a similar fashion to many other Western countries: brought along by Asians traveling to Europe, and introduced by Western intellectuals and explorers with an interest in the Far East. While stories about Buddhism reached the Netherlands already in the fourteenth century, it took until the nineteenth century for Dutch people to understand it as a religion. As Poorthuis and Salemink argue, Buddhism was officially introduced in the Netherlands around 1840. At the time there was a romantic interest in the Far East, which resonates to this day in the image Dutch people present when asked about Buddhism. As I shall show in chapter three, the SGI members themselves saw the idea of Buddhism as harmless and peaceful reflected by many non-members as well. It was not until after World War II that Buddhism started gaining a following in the Netherlands. (Poorthuis & Salemink 2009: 9-10).

Thanks to new technologies and developments, people in the West gained easier access to more information, such as about Buddhism. Moreover, the influx of people from Asia into Europe and North America helped Buddhism to spread further across world. In the aftermath of World War II, and the decades to follow, people became interested in humanistic (religious) groups that helped face the issues of current life and not the afterlife. As explained in section 2.2., Engaged Buddhism offers psychology and philosophy that engages with the need people feel to address their daily struggles. The SGI as an organization that promotes prosperity and happiness and offers ways for people to help deal with their personal challenges, has appealed to millions of people across the globe (Baumann 2001:16; Dawson 2001:339, 344; Poorthuis & Salemink 2009: 9-10).

These developments allowed the SGI to also establish membership in the Netherlands in the 1960's when three Japanese people introduced the SGI into the Netherlands.[41] When Ikeda Daisaku came to the Netherlands for the first time in 1968 there were only five members of the, then

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[39] See appendix I, figure C for the structural division of the SGI.

[40] See appendix I, figure B.1..

[41] Although the SGI was not officially established until 1975, as explained before, the SG did spread abroad earlier than this year. For the purpose of distinguishing between the SG in Japan and the SG outside of Japan, I do already refer to the international departments of the SG pre-1975 as the SGI.

officially established, Dutch department of the SGI: one Japanese man and two Japanese women and their Dutch husbands.[42] In 1998 the national SGI center was established in Zeist, since this is a central point in the Netherlands. Even though there were no clear statistics of the SGI-NL for me to have insight on, I have been told, that since the establishment of the center in Zeist the amount of Gohonzon given to new members in the Netherlands has been registered. Between 1998 and 2016 members have increased until over 2000.

This membership has been increasing gradually over the years via a grass-roots communication which is a result of the kosen-rufu discussed in the previous sections. Experiences that members view as actual proof that the practice is working for them are shared with connections, and if people who have heard about the SGI and are interested in learning more about it and even joining, they are "more than welcome" (interview 10-07-2014) to attend meetings. Consequently, the Sōka Gakkai in the Netherlands has grown in a very informal way, which has led to Dutch members of the same districts knowing each other well. This informality and friendly manners between the members in the Netherlands became instantly clear to me when I attended my first SGI meeting, as I was well received and everyone was willing to teach me and involve me in the discussions.

At the same time, the familiarity, in my experience, had the potential lead to tensions. In a few meetings I have come across people with varying opinions that almost turned their discussion into an argument. However, every time I noticed these tensions rising, members resolved them by concluding that they were of different opinion and started discussing a different topic, or resolved it in another way. This way no-one ever seemed to be bothered by another member's attitude or behavior longer than five minutes. I, of course, cannot tell if other districts deal with these personal tensions the same way, but in my experience it seemed to work, and exemplified members battling a personal challenge and resolving it.

The layered geographical organization of the SGI-NL also allows for members of the same geographical area to have close connections. As it has been explained to me, echoing the organization of the SGI in other countries, the SGI-NL has been arranged into a layered structure meant to support the local activities as members ("*een gelaagde structuur die* [...] *bestaat om de locale activiteiten te ondersteunen*") (preliminary meeting with SGI-representatives 2014). The SGI-NL is structurally divided into four areas (*gebieden*), and these areas into three regions (*regio's*) per area. The exception is the northern area, which holds only two regions due to a lower membership count. Every region in its turn is divided into separate chapters (*afdeling*), ranging from two to five departments per region. Lastly, these departments split into two to three districts (*district*).[43] Currently the SGI has created 95 districts in the Netherlands, in which one of them I have conducted my research.

The district in which I conducted my research exists since about the start of the 21st century and is located in the northern part of the Netherlands. This particular district started out as a gathering of two women interested in the SGI and Buddhism trying to figure out if the SGI was their cup of tea. One of these women explained to me that they were entirely free in their development of the practice. The main center of the Netherlands in Zeist did give them feedback and mostly ideas about how to possibly go about their practice, all based on the principles of the SGI. The ideas were

[42] The five members lived in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Breda.

[43] See Appendix I, figure C for an illustration on the structural organization of the SGI-NL.

appreciated and as this woman told me, at some point a bond with the main center emerged which made her want to truly belong to the SGI, resulting in her deciding to officially become a member.

There are three meetings a month that the members of the district can attend. In my experience meetings are attended by at least five people, including the host, while meetings of ten people or more have also happened. During the meetings members discuss texts or subjects of interest or from the Indigo (monthly magazine). The discussions about the texts showed me that members are rational and critical about what they read and their goals. For example, during one meeting the goal of world peace came to the fore. A few of the members laughed at the idea because they regarded it as an almost impossible goal to realize. They voiced their opinions by saying, for example, that world peace would never happen in this lifetime, but that it would not stop them from trying to be a peaceful person who sincerely wants the world to be a peaceful place. Some other members voiced their own concerns, but also started to note how they felt they could personally improve the world. Moreover, previously discussed texts and Buddhist thoughts were referred to when discussing the rationale behind the firm believe that world peace can be achieved. Although highly rational and, because of it, skeptical, members did encourage each other to keep aiming for a better world, and firmly believed in the realization of world peace.

The discussions about study material are always put in the context of members' personal experiences. This way the meetings not only touch upon larger goals such as human revolution[44] and achieving world peace, but relate it back to a micro level in which they discuss how to use the insights of the discussions in daily life. Hence, meetings serve not only the purpose of learning about Buddhism, but mostly allow for reflection on personal situations with others in the context of any topic. In a meeting in the Netherlands the members therefore focus usually on Dutch society, while relating back to larger issues such as world peace.

The SGI spreads its ideas by making non-members aware there are tools that can help to improve their lives. As explained in section 2.3.2., the SGI encourages kosen-rufu, where members try to make others aware of their human potential and how the SGI can help them to find it.[45] Kosen-rufu, as members explained to me, is not meant as proselytizing, but rather as a tool to make others aware of the tools SGI offers:

> I never try to convince people. I just say I'm really sure about what I'm saying. And then people can just try it or not. But I think that […] it's important to give the instrument to people' (Anja 23-02-2015).

Kosen-rufu is meant as a tool to show people there is another, peaceful, way of life. And if everyone can be happy in their own way, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, atheist, or part of any other faith, or non-faith, then world peace can become reality. Or so argues the SGI. Therefore, as I will also note in the next chapter, not everyone necessarily has to be part of the SGI, so SGI members told me.

As I have shown in this chapter, the SGI is a humanistic movement that offers a form of Buddhism that allows members to engage with the troubles of everyday life. The SGI has as an overall

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[44] See section 2.1.2.

[45] http://www.sgi.org/buddhism/buddhist-concepts/kosen-rufu.html last accessed 28-07-2016.

goal to achieve world peace by making use of the concepts and philosophies of Nichiren Buddhism. The organization stems from the Sōka Gakkai, which in Japan gained a large following after World War II, because it was able to offer people comfort and improvement of life in a country that was broken and beaten down as a result of the war. Following up on this engaged Buddhist organization SG, its current president Ikeda Daisaku established the SGI to globalize the organization's work towards world peace. In the next chapter, I shall analyze the members' experience of the practice and views of the SGI-NL. Hereby I shall mainly examine way the SGI has influenced their lives and sense of self, by making use of the theories of globalization, glocalization and the identity theories discussed in chapter one.

CHAPTER 3:
SŌKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL-NETHERLANDS IN PRACTICE

The three of us grab a chair and position it in front of the *Butsudan*, a little cabinet that houses the Gohonzon. As soon as we are all seated. I borrow one of the *juzu* (chain of beads) of the host. She host starts chanting *Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō*, lights the candles, and opens the Butsudan. We open the meeting with half an hour of Gongyo, by chanting for fifteen minutes, following by reciting the passages from the *Lotus Sutra*, and then chanting again until the half an hour has passed. During the chanting three other members enter the house and join us in Gongyo. Afterwards we grab our chairs, position ourselves around the table, and chat while we get something to drink. I introduce myself as a student doing a research about the SGI and hope that no one minds my presence. All greet me with enthusiasm, and a few immediately offer to answer any questions I have and encourage me to ask questions during the discussions as well. Once we are all settled, everyone takes out their Indigo, and looks up the discussion topic of the month. I, since I do not have a copy, quickly ask if I can read along with someone.

This month's text by president Ikeda discusses the 'big self.' Initially I do not quite understand what we are supposed to do with the text, but quickly after having read the little text out loud someone summarizes: the big self opposes the small self. The small self is the egocentric self that merely thinks about personal gain and does not consider the needs of others. This text encourages the people who read it to take a look at themselves and try to grow the small self into a big self that tries to help others.

Nina chimes in and gives as an example to be there for another even when you are not feeling good yourself. Everyone nods and seems to agree. Katrien adds that it also means to be motivated to take action, to help others. Moreover, she notes, working towards a big self also relates to kosen-rufu. Katrien notes that kosen-rufu is perhaps difficult, because members do not want to feel like they are proselytizing. However, she enthusiastically continues, that giving others the chance to work towards happiness is the best way to help others. Therefore, introducing others with the SGI is very important, so they can do what we are doing here this evening. We, she states, are reviewing how to make ourselves a better, happier person. She continues that it is very confronting to critically review your 'self' but that will make you feel better in the end. She exemplifies by describing of her personal experiences of actual proof.[46]

The hour of discussion quickly passes as I make notes of much what is

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[46] The example is not addressed for the protection of privacy.

said, and every now and again chime in with thoughts of my own. Luckily I am
not the only one making notes, and my remarks and questions are considered,
evaluated, and reflected upon just like those of the members present. At the
end of the hour the host notes that it is time to end the meeting. We all turn
towards the Butsudan that is still open, and recite the Daimoku while she
closes it and extinguishes the candles. "That was a very productive meeting!"
the host concludes. Sounds of agreement emerge, while everyone starts to
pack their Indigo's and notebooks. Some say goodbye and quickly leave, while
others stick around for a bit longer to chat. As I cycle home, I wonder how long
I will stay critical of myself.[47]

The practice of the SGI discussed in the previous chapter can be found back in the observations
I made of the meetings I have attended. The topics described in the setting above are one of the
many topics addressed during the meetings I have attended. However, I have chosen to highlight
this particular meeting, because, as I will show in this chapter, kosen-rufu, happiness, and working
to improve one's 'self,' are topics that are highlighted by many members and addressed very often.
In this chapter I shall engage with these and other observations of the SGI-NL and my conducted
interviews in order to address how the SGI tries to empower its members to overcome their
challenges and change the world.

3.1. A global movement in a local context: Sōka Gakkai International-Netherlands

As explained in the first chapter Arjun Appadurai has defined five landscapes to analyze globalization:
the ethnoscape, technoscape, finanscape, mediascape, and ideoscape. In this section I will analyze
how these landscapes can be used to understand the global spread of the SGI, in particular to the
Netherlands. By making use of my observations and interviews, I will sketch an image of the local
reality for members of the SGI-NL to, subsequently, place this locality in the context of the global
organization.

The flow of people and their distribution, the ethnoscape, is relevant for the global presence
of the SGI. It, among others, relates to the interconnectedness within the SGI itself. SGI groups
from various districts, chapters, regions, areas, and nations all have meet-ups on different levels.
International meetups, such as collective European meetings, or meetings for members from across
the globe in Japan, are the biggest and most rare, whereas district meetings the most common. Apart
from official meetings, I have noticed through conversations between members that members often
also meet up outside of meetings to chant together. SGI-NL members also move and mix with SGI
members across the globe without issues, because they noted that in their eyes meetings of the SGI
in other nations are essentially the same as those in the Netherlands.[48]

First and foremost, however, the ethnoscape relates to the spread of the organization across
the globe by members transferring the ideas of the SGI to other people. As the SGI is a grass-
root movement, the spread of their ideas via media, such as the Internet, is much less relevant for

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[47] Description of the SGI meeting I attended at 11-07-2014, paraphrased.
[48] See section 3.1.1..

finding new members than the spread of the ideas via individuals.

As explained in chapter two, the SGI encourages its members to do kosen-rufu, to engage with others to share their ceaseless effort towards human revolution and improving the world. In other words, the SGI encourages members to meet up with as many people as they can and share their experiences as SGI members with them. In this fashion the SGI tries to reach out to non-members to show them a different way of life that has the potential to make them happier. Of the members I have interviewed one noted to actively do kosen-rufu. She did not actively try to persuade people to become members, but rather, as noted in chapter 2.3., aimed to tell as many people as possible about how being a member had improved her life. In this way of conduct she hoped to inspire non-members to engage with the SGI. Others, however, noted they were a bit more hesitant to discuss their membership with strangers:

> I don't speak about it easily yet. But I do drop it in conversation sometimes. However, I do notice that I still have some kind of diffidence about it. When the topic is brought up in regular conversation, I will mention it. And often when I tell people they respond with something like "o that's nice," you know. So there are few people who are immediately enthusiastic and like to learn more about it. I still need to be stimulated by the questions of others before I start talking at length about it. I will not easily speak about it (Nina 11-02-2015).

Like this member, others also mentioned they only like to discuss their membership either when asked, or when it comes up naturally in an already established conversation. Members explained this was because they felt like needing to improve themselves before daring to actively bring up the topic in conversation. I shall return to this topic more extensively in section 3.2..

Ethnoscape, in the context of the spread of the SGI, thus relates to the members spreading the ideas of the SGI across the globe. The actions of individual members hereby influence the speed and quantity in which such spread transpires. The ethnoscape, in case of the SGI, is closely connected to all other landscapes, because members and their actions are what fuels the SGI.

The mediascape, the flows of information and images, is mostly relevant for the spread of information and ideas between members. Information is shared in a number of ways, such as via the global monthly magazine that is translated into various languages, and via the official SGI websites. While these media are not interactive, they are used as an extra utility to get information across to more members and a general public of people interested in the SGI. The magazine is used to let both the words of the SGI president Ikeda reach the members, as well as the experiences of members abroad. The Internet as media is mostly used within the group of SGI members. Media such as Skype and WhatsApp are amply used for communication between members. It are useful tools for sharing information between members who are not in close proximity. Through these interactions on various levels between SGI groups in different nations, there is, moreover, a cultural exchange taking place between Japanese Nichiren Buddhism and the different cultures in which the SGI has become established.

The effectiveness of the media reaching members across the world is related to technological advancement. Although the technoscape does not directly affect the SGI-NL since members still would be able to hold meetings without technology, it is crucial for the distribution of information of the SGI between members, regions, and national established SGI organizations. Moreover, the Internet, and programs such as Skype and WhatsApp allow for fast communication without having to be face to face. This is particularly useful for the SGI when, for example, trying to arrange a larger meeting for several districts at once. In this fashion, Skype is used by one of the members as a tool to keep in touch and chant with one of her friends abroad. Moreover, Skype is used in video-meetings where a video connection between members in different nations is established. Technology, and in particular the Internet, allows for easier access to media and, with it, information for members and non-members.

The finanscape at the SGI in my experience is not referring to the actual exchange of money. The members do pay a subscription fee for the Indigo, but they deem this logical since there has to be paid for the paper and printing of the magazine. It is in another form of exchange that the finanscape becomes to the fore: by giving. One of the members told me that when the (former) headquarters of the SGI-NL is in tatters and it feels like it is falling apart, members assemble to get the building in prime condition again.

She also told me that the SGI is not allowed, and does not want, to accept gifts from non-members. The members themselves device ways to get the job done, even when individuals do not have money to contribute (Katrien 03-02-2015). This can be related to the Mahayana Buddhist concept of *dāna* दान which means the spirit of giving. Some members will turn up with paint, others will use their skills, for example painting, and this way the members give to the SGI. To keep a community center alive, to be hosting meetings, or to even give advice to other members on how to resolve a problem during these meetings: all are forms of *dāna*. It belongs in the finanscape as the spirit of giving that was explained to me entails not only investments into the SGI itself, but investments to improve the lives of others, and eventually the world as a whole. These investments in the world can be seen, for example, by the SGI as a NGO investing in projects for education and sustainable developments.[49]

The final dimension Appadurai describes is the ideoscape. As my discussion on the ideoscape in chapter one has tried to convey, this dimension can be interpreted as the discourse of ideas, in which certain ideas are stronger than others. The ideoscape is relevant to the SGI, since the global spread of ideas of the SGI is related to the spreading of SGI members. A main component of the SGI is to teach people a (modern revision of the) Nichiren Buddhist way of life. As I have explained in the previous chapter, the ideology of the SGI is to hand people the tools to become happy, prosperous and, most importantly, peaceful human beings. The appeal of this approach for members is to be empowered to change their own lives around.

Since the first and foremost goal of the SGI is to achieve world peace, its worldwide spread suggests that many people across the world see the possibility of achieving it. Nevertheless, as mentioned in chapter 2.3.4., many members are skeptical about seeing it realized it in their lifetime. In asking members how they felt about the goal of achieving world peace, the most general statement was that even though it is hard to imagine, flying was once seen as a utopian idea as well.

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[49] http://www.sgi.org/resources/ngo-resources/ngo-resources-overview.html last accessed 28-07-2016.

They explained world peace starts within the self. My informants noted they felt the need for world peace, but that at the same time they were not able to actively work on it yet, as they felt they had not yet reached the point of peace with themselves to do so. This is comparable to the comments made about kosen-rufu mentioned previously in this section (Nina 11-02-2015).

This response to the question of world peace suggests that, even though the ideas of the SGI about world peace have reached the members in the Netherlands, it has not (yet) been internalized by the members to (fully) act upon it and convey the ideas of achieving world peace to others. It shows that the dominant discourse of a group about its ideals is not necessarily the dominant discourse in the minds of individuals. So, in considering the ideoscape as the ideologies of groups and the spread of these ideologies, we see that the SGI tries to empower its members to spread the tools to lead a peaceful life and achieve world peace this way. This allures to members and potential members, but among members in the Netherlands this way of achieving world peace seems to not (yet) have been fully internalized.

The global spread of aforementioned ideas, accompanied by the spread of media, people, technologies and finances, as Appadurai shows, are all elements of the notion of globalization. In this section I have tried to convey how these five global flows have allowed the spread of the SGI across the globe. However, until now I have merely noted local examples of a global influence, while disregarding the fact that global forces can be influenced by local realities. Therefore, I will discuss glocalization in the next section.

3.1.1. Glocal impact of the Sōka Gakkai International

In the previous section I have analyzed the global organization of the SGI by making use of the five landscapes of Appadurai and applying it to my research on the local actuality of the SGI-NL. By making use of Roland Robertson's theory of glocalization, in this section I will shed light on how the SGI as a global organization with roots in Japan functions in the local setting of Netherlands. I will show this is because the SGI has been adapting to fit within the local reality of the Netherlands, therewith creating a functioning hybrid of global and local forces.

In my interviews I have asked members whether they feel if there are concrete differences between the Dutch section of the SGI and sections in other countries. No one deemed this to be the case, exemplifying it by personal experiences of the SGI abroad. Their statements are attested by the fact that, as previously mentioned,[50] the structural organization of SGI is the same in different countries. Moreover, the Indigo (monthly magazine) consists of the same texts that have been translated in different languages so all SGI members can understand them. It is to be expected, that through these overarching aspects the SGI and its meetings throughout the world are roughly the same.

However, I deduced dissimilarity between SGI organizations through two elements. First of all, meetings are shaped by the social and cultural context of the location of the SGI organization. Although the Indigo is globally the same, applying president Ikeda's words and Buddhist thought onto personal experiences and different contexts can lead to differences in textual interpretation and following group discussions. The second aspect to take into account is local culture. Ikeda Daisaku has noted that wherever the SGI wants to establish a membership, it needs to adapt to fit

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[50] See section 2.3.4.

within the social and cultural norms of that country. One of the members agreed with him:

> The Sōka in the Netherlands needs to adapt to the mentality and
> the circumstances in the Netherlands. That is incredibly important.
> Otherwise you cannot reach the people (Katrien 03-02-2015).

In order to appeal to people in a certain culture, it is important, as Katrien notes, to adapt to their code of conduct. While in my research I have not come across large differences between general SGI ideology and organization, nor large disagreement by the members,[51] there were little aspects that members mentioned that showed me that there indeed has occurred such adaptation to the local reality of Netherlands.

Two adaptations were pointed out by a member comparing a meeting in the Netherlands to one in Italy. First of all, she noted that there are multiple locations for meetings per district in Italy. Such is logical considering the amount of members in Italy is much larger than in the Netherlands. If members of the same district would meet up at the same location, it would not fit into one house.

The second thing that she noted, and struck her as most different between meetings in Italy and the Netherlands, were the drinks served during meetings:

> Like, [it is a case of] adaptation … Here in Holland we are pretty new, so
> we try to […] make it a more cosy and warm environment. For example
> they have always coffee and […] pastries [here]. And in Italy usually we
> usually just have water (Anja 23-02-2015).

Anja suggested that the serving of coffee and tea could be related to trying to create a warm and inviting environment. She deemed this related to the relative new presence of the SGI-NL. To me her statements seemed to imply a difference in the way meetings are presented to members: as modest, marked by the water, or cozy, marked by tea, coffee, and biscuits. This difference strikes me as especially interesting because I have been told that Italians serve coffee at practically all social events.

It is possible that in the Netherlands, at first, it was suggested to serve water as well, but that the members felt the need to serve coffee, tea, and biscuits. There are various reasons why this could be the case: perhaps, as Anja noted, to create a warmer environment to attract new members; possibly it was because it fitted within a Dutch custom of serving drinks and snacks at social gatherings that members did not want to give up; or maybe there was a completely different reason for it. Either way, serving coffee and tea, for me, when I came to my first meeting, made me feel more comfortable because I had something to do with my hands and could just listen while I drank. In this fashion, I argue that the drinks have not been employed per se as a way to reach Dutch people to make them become members, but just to make everyone that comes to meetings feel more comfortable. Nevertheless, reaching Dutch people was made possible for the SGI by letting the meetings develop in a "Dutch" way.

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[51] For members views on SGI ideals and conduct, see section 3.2.

Another member noted that in South Africa, during a larger regional meeting, members were divided in three different groups, based on language. In these smaller groups they discussed the texts, and later they would return to the large group for a communal meeting. This was an organizational difference between the meetings in the Netherlands, where language barriers also exist because of the presence of foreign SGI members. In the meetings I have attended the issue was solved by one of the members in the group translating for the one or two people not understanding the language that was spoken. The member pointing this difference out viewed it as merely organizational, while the basics of the meetings, and the SGI in countries in general, according to her are the same (Nina 11-02-2015).

However small the differences are, they seem to be important in order for the SGI to function in different settings. The exemption from part of the *Lotus Sutra* from Gongyo mentioned in chapter two is another such example. As I have explained glocalization as being the interplay between global concepts and local reality, the spread of the SGI across the world can be viewed as a success story. President Ikeda in that regard has correctly understood that making a global concept emerging from the East adapt to the West requires a flexible approach. Consequently, while the basic philosophy of the SGI is viewed the same throughout various countries, cultural and social circumstance have led to slight variations in SGI groups.

In this section about globalization and glocalization I have shown that the SGI successfully has tried to integrate within various cultural settings. Members try to spread the ideology of the SGI by introducing other people with the tools of achieving a peaceful happy life. Their quest for world peace is aided by media such as their monthly magazine and the Internet. Technological advancement has allowed for easier spread of such media and the ideals of the SGI. Moreover, while the SGI is a global organization, it is sustained based on the efforts of members, who try to live the ideology of peace that the SGI aims to achieve. Following up on these forces of globalization, I have explained that local realities allow, and sometimes ask, for variation of the global success formula of the SGI. The glocal product of global SGI ideas shows that globalization does leave room for diversity in the world. Next I shall turn to the effect of the global vision of the SGI on the lives of members of the SGI-NL.

3.2. I, A Dutch Sōka Gakkai International Member

Previously, I have discussed globalization and glocalization as forces influencing the SGI as an organization. Hereby I have disregarded the agency of individuals. However, as social structures are made up of individuals, the forces of globalization and glocalization are dependent on these individuals. For, individuals have the power to respond to global forces and either incorporate them in their already existing structures of life or refuse to do so. Moreover, it is important to take note of the effect of the SGI on individuals to understand if the working glocal hybrid discussed in the previous section indeed works.

By making use of the DST of Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka discussed in the first chapter, I will explore how SGI members in the Netherlands have incorporated Nichiren Buddhism and the SGI in their lives. Before I turn to individuals and identity making, however, I will engage with globalization and localization in the context of habitus. For, in analyzing the response of members to how the SGI has affected their lives and identity, it is important to understand how members'

identities are shaped within the socio-cultural context we can refer to as habitus. A second aspect to take into account before turning to identity itself is that of otherness. As explained in chapter one, imagery about the other plays a role in shaping an image of the self. Otherness is important for the analysis of identity formations of Dutch SGI members, because Buddhism is not native to the Netherlands. So before a member can make Nichiren Buddhism part of their own identity, they need to review how they consider the other, and if it fits within their own lives. The main question to consider in this section, therefore, is how the SGI affects members and their sense of self.

3.2.1. HABITUS AND ME

As explained in chapter one, the set of internalized schemes through which people understand and act in the world that Bourdieu calls habitus are a result of the interplay between structure and agency. Human behavior stems from the cultural and social capital acquired and internalized throughout life (Bourdieu 2005:45). As a consequence it is difficult to change one's habitus. Relating this back to the fear of a global culture mentioned in section 3.1, because of the many differences between individuals and habitus of individuals it is very unlikely for homogenization of culture or habitus to occur. However, globalization does offer the possibility for certain types of capital to evolve in a way that they can be employed in fields on a global scale.

The SGI is provides an example of the possibility of spreading specific kinds of capital globally, and thereby allowing people to (slightly) change their habitus and the way they are positioned or position themselves in a field. The fields in which members employ the capital of the SGI can be diverse since the SGI offers a different way of approaching life, mainly aiming for world peace through study and practice. Therefore, the capital can be employed in the fields that members choose to. If members search financial happiness, they can try to change their position in a financial field. If they search for a better way of communicating with others, they can change their position in the field of communication. In other words, members are offered the tools – capital of the SGI – to translate (discourse about) capital from the field of religion into other fields of life so they, as a final goal, can work towards world peace.

Most Dutch people who explore Buddhism do so with a habitus shaped by Dutch social and cultural capital that bears hardly any or no reference to Buddhism. This means that many of the SGI members I have spoken to have not grown up with the concepts of Buddhism embedded in their habitus. Engaging with the SGI consequently means that (potential) new members enter a religious field which they do not know how to navigate. The teachings and practice of the SGI and its vision of Nichiren Buddhism therefore can be understood as new capital for members to employ in the fields. As one of my interviewees noted, Buddhism equals a peaceful lifestyle to many. She thought that Dutch people who do not practice Buddhism themselves, are unlikely to see harm in Buddhism:

> Everyone is open minded and interested when I mention Buddhism. Buddhism is very unthreatening I think. [I mean], non-threatening. [People here think:] "O Buddhism, that is so peaceful, that is always okay," or something like that, I think. Yes, but note that this is my own interpretation (Nina 11-02-2015).

According to Nina, the image Dutch people have of Buddhism is the general stereotype of a peaceful tradition. I argue that such an image allows people with an interest in Buddhism to take a better look at it without feeling like they are exploring something that feels morally wrong having an interest in. This is of importance when one wants to understand why the SGI was able to gain a foothold in the Netherlands in the first place. For, if people feel wrong to pursue Buddhism, for example because they, or people around them, feel like they are joining a cult, then they would not pursue it in the open, or share their experiences with non-Buddhists. It would mean defying one's own habitus if they cannot create a working hybrid of their previous established lives with the newly incorporated Buddhist practice. Since the SGI is an organization actively trying to cooperate with societies for a better world, a negative image of the SGI would have been counterproductive for its establishment in the Netherlands.

Instead, as mentioned in the previous section, the SGI tries to establish itself in countries by adapting the social conditions of that country so it becomes easier for people to fit the SGI in their already established lives. As a member told me, it needs to fit into your environment, and you need to fit yourself as a Buddhist in the environment you live in. If someone decides to become part of an organization that is not accepted by that society, he/she disengages from that society. However, when one takes new concepts that originally did not exist in your environment and make them fit in this environment, then the already existing social environment is much more likely to accept the concept (Nina 11-02-2015). In other words, if someone tries to engage with an organization not fitting within someone's habitus, disjunction can occur. I argue that the SGI consciously tries to avoid this disjunction by advocating and teaching its members such as Nina that it is important to stay connected and adapt to local reality.

Moreover, and as one member explained, the SGI encourages its members to be critical about the SGI and Nichiren Buddhism. By doing this and searching for actual proof of the practice working, the members confirm for themselves how the SGI complements their lives and make sure it is not contesting it:

> And the SGI notes in particular that you have to be as independent as possible. They encourage you to stand strong in your shoes, to make your own decisions, to think for yourself. I think that's appealing to people. I think that is fantastic.
>
> […] So it is very important to think in an independent way. And to consciously hold on to your values and norms. What are your set values? What kind of conscious choice? Have a sort of critical period. Because you are thinking about how to make the right choice. And don't let yourself be dragged by the masses. […]
>
> But they don't say what you need to think. And that makes me really happy.
>
> That Buddhism. And they neither say, you must not eat meat, or you must quit smoking, or you must stop drinking, or you must stop doing drugs, or you must this, or you must that, or you must that. They don't

tell you anything. It says: chant. Chant for your happiness and discover
what makes you happy (Annabel 25-02-2015).

Encouraging people to be critical about the SGI and Nichiren means encouraging people to consciously consider how these can fit it into their lives. Through critical thinking aspiring members are able to ascertain whether Buddhist practice works for them. The new insights, continuous practice, and engagement with the Buddhist teachings can be employed by members and, eventually, be internalized into their everyday life. This internalization implies a change to their habitus.

One member, for example, told me that she had been chanting for the Virgin Mary for a long time. She had incorporated Mary into her life through her catholic background, and felt the need to thank her during her chanting. However after a while she stopped chanting for Mary in particular:

> I have been chanting for Mary for a very long time. Now I don't do that
> anymore, because I don't feel the need anymore. For, when you chant
> *Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō* that is for the totality of it all, so of course it is
> also for Mary, also for my mother, also for everyone. Actually, it has to
> do with the cosmos, with life and death. I won't think small anymore.
> When you chant you have to stand above all (Annabel 25-02-2015).

She fitted chanting within her own habitus which for a long time also included reference to her Catholic background, even though she had separated from the church. She came to realize for herself that chanting was chanting for the universe, and thus involved the Virgin Mary and everyone she cared for, no matter what. With the passing of time, she had adopted the cultural capital the SGI had given her to navigate the field of religion, whereas she previously had used capital gained in her Catholic upbringing.

Moreover, in my interviews, I found that members consciously employ the tools the SGI offers to turn their lives into a different direction, often a direction they could not find before they started practicing. One of my interviewees told me that she could be very critical and doubtful about a lot of things, including Buddhism. However, at the same time she relayed that she could never imagine herself giving up on practicing. She explained that this was because Buddhism had given her the tools to take control of and responsibility for her life:

> [The SGI] really [offers] the possibility for improvement. […] [You
> can], in that sense, constantly learn more from it. [...] [Like] taking
> responsibility, and [...] self-acceptance, and [such]. [...]
> But how do you do that?
> You know, I realize that that also is a very large challenge, to find peace
> with myself. Well, here I can do that best, with these tools [of the SGI],
> instead of with those nice self-help books. Those are all nice, but they

don't work for me. And this, [the SGI] simply works (Nina 11-02-2015).

While Nina had been trying other ways to improve her life and take more control, the SGI had offered her the only tools that worked. In the interview she often referred to her past self to show how she, thanks to the SGI, had broken away from that self and turned towards becoming the active person she wanted to be. As she stated "I am like that because of growing up at my house. […] I also think that is part of my character. Because I took in that role" (Nina 11-02-2015). Nina in that regard showed to have been actively trying to change part of her life, a part that she has incorporated through growing up and the events in her life. Therefore, I argue that the SGI has empowered her to be the active person she wanted to be by offering her new capital to use in fields of social conduct, thus allowing her to re-shape part of her habitus.

Habitus, in the context of world peace is important because the SGI offers members a different way of approaching the world. In doing so, members learn to see paths to world peace they felt they could not approach before becoming a member. Nina, for example, told me that although she saw world peace as very difficult to achieve, she thought more positive about the concept than she had done before joining the SGI. This was because she was finally able to keep working towards those goals thanks to the practice and the encouragement of others. Becoming part of the SGI and working towards her goals, gave her the sensation that she was finally taking responsibility of her life. This made her feel that she might have the tools to empower others to do so. Despite being hesitant about kosen-rufu, she did want to spread the vision of the SGI as much as possible, and hoped that she might become more comfortable with kosen-rufu in the future. (Nina 11-02-2015). I argue that her feelings about kosen-rufu can also be understood as her trying to fit practice and teachings into her life, and, as such, habitus.

I shall return to the point of members' feelings about kosen-rufu in section 3.2.3., because it does not only relate to habitus, as I have explained here, but also to identity and *I*-positions that I will discuss there. For now, it is important conclude this section by noting that incorporating the capital the SGI offers is an individual process that is easier for some than for others. However, during my research I have not come across people noting that the SGI could not be incorporated into their present lives. This suggests once more that the SGI is successful in creating a glocal hybrid of the SGI with local life in the Netherlands, and successfully avoids problems of disjunction for members. The capital they offer works in the fields of the already established lives of members, and for many proves to be more powerful and successful capital than the capital they previously used. The habitus of Dutch members therefore seems to slowly shift into a direction that has the SGI incorporated into it as a natural part of their life. Members balancing their new insights with their previously existing lives makes me turn to the question how otherness is approached from the view of the members.

3.2.2. Otherness and us

SGI members that change part of their habitus have changed parts of their selves. They turn towards an 'other' to improve their 'self.' In this section, by making use of the grammars of identity/alterity by Gerd Baumann, I will show how the 'other' potentially influences the sense of self for SGI members and how the 'other' is viewed and taken into account by the approach of the SGI and their aim for

world peace. Members' views of the 'other' can be related to all three grammars Baumann proposes.

As explained in chapter one, the 'other' can also be used as a tool to reflect upon the 'self.' The orientalist grammar takes into account that some aspects of the 'other' are viewed as being better in the 'self' while, mirrored and reversed, some characteristics of the 'self' are viewed better in an 'other.' We can see how Nina employed this reasoning in the example in the previous section of wanting to change from a passive to an active person. The active 'other' was viewed as better than the passive 'self.'

This grammar can be found in its opposite form in statements of members as well. One of my interviewees, for example, noted that she used kosen-rufu as a way to show people there is the possibility of a different approach to life:

> [I] feel […] kind of responsible to give […] other people […] this instrument. […] And then people can just try it or not. But I think that, [like] Ikeda says, it is important to give the instruments to people. And then, if they like to try it, it's okay. And then, otherwise, [they just don't] (Anja 23-02-2015).

Anja explained feeling responsible to give others the instruments to change their life around like she was able to. Even though she does kosen-rufu so other people will become aware of the possibility for a different approach to life, the statement to me relayed that for Anja the tools of the SGI, of her 'self,' were viewed more powerful to deal with the world than those of an 'other.' This relates to Baumann's statement noted in chapter one that what is good in the 'self' – which includes the SGI and its practice - is not (yet) good in the 'other.'

However, other members pointed out to me that they see variety in life as something positive. Many members have stated that there is no need for human kind to become completely homogenous in order to be able to achieve world peace. As mentioned above, the SGI encourages critical thinking so people can reach conclusions and base decisions on their personal reasoning. It became most clear that this sentiment is shared by members through the difference in opinions that I have come across when attending SGI meetings. One of the members, in this context of otherness in particular, noted that she does not expect everyone to be a Buddhist. She said all people want the same thing, no matter what culture or religion:

> Having enough food, a roof, and a future for our children. We all want that. That is universal. Just like music, it is universal. Just like language is actually universal. We do have different languages, but we all have one. This is why the dialogue and communication is very important. And I think that is great. I enjoy it when I hear that more religions are in dialogue with another: Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists, all in conversation (Annabel 25-02-2015).

Annabel explained these similarities as inherent to humans. At the same time she noted she enjoyed the presence of disparity in the world. Thinking on your own for her meant distinguishing yourself from another and thereby creating your own personal sense of self in which you can place yourself in the world.

These remarks of Annabel can be related to the grammar of encompassment that Baumann has identified. As noted this grammar identifies an 'other' as belonging to a larger 'self.' Those people who are not members of the SGI, as Annabel phrased it, work according to the universe, like everyone else. Therefore, I argue, they are not completely an 'other,' but only an 'other' in reference to not being an SGI member. They are part of the 'self' because they are regarded part of the universe. Annabel noted that she has been taught by the SGI that, as time moves on, practice will lead members to overcome the self - the ego - and think about the world in a larger perspective that encompasses everyone and everything. In that regard, I argue, the members learn to overcome differences with an 'other' and regard them as part of the 'self.' Extending this idea, the SGI notes that if not only members, but every human being is capable of overseeing the differences that are reason for strive, world peace can be achieved. However, while we can understand from this that difference, or otherness is irrelevant with regards to violence, the SGI also encourages members to be individual critical thinkers. I argue that, since members use critical thinking to reflect upon their 'self,' they need an 'other' to reflect upon.

One might wonder how otherness and a goal of world peace which should affect people universally can coincide. There are two reasons why otherness and the goal of world peace are not conflicting. They both relate to Baumann's third grammar of segmentation. The first reason concerns the call for dialogue from the SGI and the second reason concerns the SGI's argument that peace starts with the self. The SGI is an organization which calls out for dialogue between different people and groups in order to achieve world peace. As one of the members noted, in order to have dialogue between different groups one has to look at the similarities between these different groups. She noted that the similarities and working together allow for the creation of a better world (Katrien 03-02-2015). Therefore, not everyone has to be part of the SGI in order to try and achieve world peace. However, as acknowledged by the SGI, it is important to speak to other groups about achieving it. For, through dialogue people and groups are able to understand one another and make a step towards world peace, even if these groups do not agree on all matters. Therefore, relating this to the grammar of segmentation, the 'other,' I argue, is only an 'other' on a certain level of segmentation. On a lower level of segmentation SGI and non-SGI groups might disagree about many subjects and argue about them, while on a higher level, they, for example, have dialogue about and are working together towards world peace.

The second reason that the idea of world peace and otherness are not contradictory, is because that, as SGI members noted, world peace starts with the 'self.' An individual has the capability to not only want peace, but to act peaceful. They note that if all humans act peaceful, there will be no wars. I argue that it may, in fact, be crucial for individuals to embrace differences instead of trying to get rid of them in order to achieve a completely peaceful world. If everyone accepts that differences exist, because people accept that everyone thinks for themselves and can reach different conclusion, then difference should no longer be a reason for quarrel. The differences may be cause for arguments and discussions on a lower level of segmentation, but if everyone at

a higher level agrees they want peace, these differences will no longer be the cause of violence. Differences between the 'self' and the 'other' thus can be superseded by a common vision.

Otherness, moreover, can be analyzed by taking into account how others view members of the SGI-NL. Members' views on the views of others in general reflected that they, personally, had never met resistance from others. The comments of members were overall showing that members thought Dutch people saw no harm in the concept of Buddhism. Moreover, a survey about Buddhism in the Netherlands notes that the words mostly associated by the people questioned were "peace-loving," "wisdom," "patience," and "calm" (Hek 2010: 11). In other countries close to the Netherlands, such as Germany and France, there have been governmental inquiries regarding the nature of the SGI. There was inquiry about the way the organization approached members and if it, for example, was demanding money, or other effects of people. Katrien stated that during the inquiry in Germany, the SGI has been trying to be as open as possible about the organization, showing what their goals were and how they functioned. After this official inquiry the SGI became officially acknowledged by the government. These comments made me wonder if this was part of the reason why the SGI-NL was so happy to cooperate with my research.

As I have shown in this section the members of the SGI-NL seem to interpret otherness positively as a source of opportunity and self-reflection. Members have told me to have not come across others that have had problems with their membership of the SGI, or the organization as a whole. I have argued that the 'other' the members observe is relative and can be overcome by employing grammars of segmentation and encompassment. Relating to the oriental grammar, otherness allows for a reflection of the 'self.' For the 'other' can show where the 'self' has room to improve, or can serve to highlight positive features of the 'self.' Moreover, because the SGI encourages critical thinking about its organization and practice, the members do not merely reflect upon their individual selves, but as their 'self' as an SGI member as well. In this fashion members do not only learn to fit SGI Buddhism in their own habitus, but also are able to use the 'other' to construct their own sense of self as a SGI member. How members navigate their identity as SGI members will be the topic of discussion in the next section.

3.2.3. Dialogical-Self Theory and I

As conveyed in the previous section, conceptions of the 'other' are related to members' conceptions of their 'self.' I have shown that the 'other' is used to review personal positions and seen as a source for dialogue. However, I argue that in order to internalize the SGI's ideals and practice, members also create a new internal dialogue. In this section I will show by using the Dialogical-Self Theory of Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka how becoming part of the SGI-NL affects member's identity positions (*I*-positions). I will show how members navigate their *I*-positions, and if they successfully manage to do so.

However, what made members initially search for an 'other' that offered them a new *I*-position to employ in their lives? Most members had incentive to start practicing because they, for example, felt there was something fundamentally wrong in their lives, such as depression and/ or not being able find direction in life. For others, there was no such negative incentive as they were only looking to add an extra dimension to their lives. I argue that their incentives to start practicing have been a need for a new *I*-position to take in order to deal with the challenges they could not

deal with before. For, as mentioned in the first chapter, in the globalizing world people come across many new positions to navigate. One can only successfully navigate them if they can successfully employ their *I*-positions. In turning to the SGI, members have found a new *I*-position is more powerful in dealing with their challenges, and life in general.

Members turned to the SGI as a new approach to life for various reasons. Some members told me that they had not actively sought out Buddhism but that acquaintances familiar with the SGI suggested it might improve their lives. One of the members noted that she was hesitant about practicing at first, but that when she started to find actual proof that it worked for her, she slowly became comfortable with it. Another member told me that she had reached a point in her life that she had nothing to lose and tried practicing. For her it immediately proved to work and had notable effects, such as regaining a will to face the issues in her life. A third member told me she had always been looking for the meaning of life and had tried many different self-help techniques and Buddhist ideas to improve her life. It was not until a friend actually acquainted her with the SGI that she thought of trying to become a part of a Buddhist organization. She told me that soon the chanting, the meetings, and the encouragement of other members made her able to keep working on her personal goals that previously would fade after only a few days of inspiration.

Reflecting back on the period they started chanting, all members I interviewed noted that practicing and the meetings helped them to not only face their challenges in life but actually conquer them. Members told me they were able to actually achieve the goals they set thanks to practicing, relating examples of actual proof of when they just started practicing.[52] All mentioned in one way or another that they had changed from the way they related to life compared to before they had started practicing Buddhism. More importantly, they noted how these changes had truly become part of who they were now. They all felt they had become slightly different, improved, people. One member, for example, noted that others could see that change in her as well when she had just begun practicing and was not an official member yet:

> He said to me: '[…] I really feel like I don't have to worry about you anymore.' Because they saw that I really changed because of the practice. I had become a bit more stable, perhaps. […] Or was not that extreme anymore. And they feel that's nice (Katrien 03-02-2015).

The SGI and Buddhist practice had allowed Katrien to change a part of her 'self' that she and others regarded as negative. In other words, I argue, she employed a different *I*-position, that of an SGI member, which was interpreted more positively by both herself and her family than the *I*-position she had previously taken.

As her family, as non-members, saw that being part of the SGI helped her, Katrien noticed how this comment gave her the last bit of courage to keep practicing and make the decision to become an official member. I argue that that was the moment for her to consciously keep using this SGI related *I*-position. As explained in section 3.2.1., in incorporating the SGI and Buddhist practice into one's life, over time it can become part of an individual's habitus. In effect, I argue, that incorporation of an SGI-Buddhist *I*-position allows for this shift of members' habitus.

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[52] See section 2.3.3..

The discussions during meetings, I argue, prove a platform for members to actively discuss their dialogical positions with others. As exemplified at the start of this chapter, in my experience connecting personal stories to the topics discussed, often touches upon the way a member handled a certain situation. Usually these personal stories are analyzed by the group, discussing the good points of how someone handled, thereby encouraging them to act like this more often, or discussing how that member could have perhaps dealt with it differently, encouraging them to try and do so next time they are in a comparable situation. In their encouragement, members who are more familiar with Buddhist liturgy refer back to such liturgy or refer to SGI president Ikeda Daisaku to relate it back to how Buddhism can improve the member's actions and, in the long run, life. In constantly re-assessing the usefulness of practice, I argue, members try to encourage each other to find proof the practice is working and that it is beneficial to stick to it and shape one's life in light of it.

Such re-shaping of members' lives does not require drastic changes, but mostly a change of attitude towards one's 'self.' As one member phrased it, members have to be critical of themselves, and face their personal shortcomings. Such can be confronting and therefore scary:

> I was not critical [about starting to practice]. The thing I can really remember, is really fear. And really I was really afraid of practicing, […] because that would have meant facing my life, facing the reality, and facing all the bad things that I didn't like in my life. […] So it was just much easier to […] avoid them. […] I felt like, lost, […] because I didn't feel like [I had] the proper instruments to realize my life (Anja 23-02-2015).

Anja did not want to keep practicing because she was scared of the effects it had on her. She noted to try practicing multiple times before she finally had the courage to stick with it and change the parts of her life that had a negative effect on her. It required a very conscious effort of changing part of her 'self.' I argue, that she had such difficulty changing her life around, because she needed to turn towards an *I*-position that was so different than what she was used to, that it was almost disjunctive for her to do so. However, in the end, as she noted, she was able to change her life around because she truly wanted to, and it turned out it did not stop her from being her 'self,' but improved it (Anja 23-02-2015).

For another member the idea of belonging to a group was problematic. However, by approaching the SGI and its practice on an individual level, she found the practice to work and meetings encouraging. Therefore, being part of an organization was relativized because it aided her in reaching her goals. She explained to me that for these reasons being a part of the SGI for her was the exception of not wanting to belong to a group. For, upon realizing that this group would not restrict her in any way, and possibly only broaden her views on life, she realized that she did want to be a part of this group (Annabel 25-03-2015). Other members, however, might choose not to be part of the group:

[I know] a woman, she knows everything about Buddhism, of what is Buddhism, […] but she never goes to meetings. Because she doesn't want to [laughs]. […] She doesn't like to be with other people (Anja 23-02-2015).

Anja used this example to exemplify how meetings are not obligatory. Moreover, she emphasized that the SGI does not force anyone to do what they do not want.

However, as the previous three paragraphs might have shown, the SGI is an organization that might not suit everyone. Potential members need to consciously want to face their 'self' and not everyone will be able to. In returning to the DST of Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka, I argue that in assessing which *I*-positions to take, some individuals will find that they can navigate the position of an SGI member, while for others it does not fit within their lives at all. During meetings I have come across members who stated that everyone could be an SGI member because everyone has an inner Buddha that they could reach. However, they noted that these people can only reach their inner Buddha if they want to. I would like to add that that is only possible if they are capable of doing so, for otherwise it could cause the disjunction I have discussed in the first chapter.

For example, while one of these members regarded the SGI as an intricate part of her life, she felt hesitant about sharing this part of her identity openly with others. I would like to argue that for this member, and possibly also others, the SGI is part of a private identity position. This *I*-position is only shared with people who are showing enough interest about it for her to feel comfortable in sharing it with them. This member explicitly noted she doesn't feel like non-members would see any harm in anyone practicing Buddhism, so it is not quite clear to me why she was hesitant about sharing her Buddhism with others. Possibly this member is not very open about her personal life in general. Or, perhaps, she feels the SGI does not fit within the habitus of non-Buddhists. In that case she might not be open about it, as she might feel that others possibly cannot fully comprehend how Buddhism is improving her life (Nina 11-02-2015).

Moreover, I found that members mostly critically discussed kosen-rufu. As explained in chapter two, kosen-rufu means that members actively engage with others to share their ceaseless effort towards human revolution and improving the world. Although kosen-rufu is of major importance to the SGI, I have noticed that members in the Netherlands are spending most time working on their own understanding of Nichiren Buddhism, and their personal human revolution. As noted, many members stated they felt not comfortable with with actively sharing their Buddhism with others. Some even have said they disliked the idea of purposefully setting out to tell others about the SGI and Nichiren Buddhism.

The comparison to a Jehovah's Witness has been often made during meetings by members in order to state that kosen-rufu should not be regarded as proselytizing. Remarks like these showed me that some people are more at ease with the way how the SGI envisions spreading Nichiren Buddhism than others. Some members see kosen-rufu as explicitly linked to the SGI while others see it as something that is promoted to do, but not really fits with them as a person. These members do want to achieve world peace, but they have conveyed to me to work towards it in a, for them, natural way. They want to convey SGI Buddhism only to those who seem interested to it, and do not want to sell it as if they're trying to convert people.

The members, I argue, navigate their *I*-positions in different ways, and for some kosen-rufu is an explicit part of it, while for others it is implicit. While being a SGI member has become intrinsically linked to all the interviewed members' identities, and the way they position themselves in life, kosen-rufu seems to be is much less part of it. It is in the notion of kosen-rufu and the way people view it, that we can see there is much variance in the way members establish their identity as Buddhist SGI members.

The identity formation of SGI members in the Netherlands therefore is not only determined by the SGI, but mostly by the ways members already viewed life before coming members, in other words, their habitus. The habitus of members determines what they are comfortable with, and therefore determines the way they employ SGI Buddhism in their lives and regard it part of their identity. They stress a critical mind, choosing one's own path, and chanting as a way to face their troubles and goals.[53]

In this chapter I have been engaging with the local reality of the SGI-NL. I have shown how the global vision of the organization impacts the members' lives. Members work towards their personal goals in their personal way, but, as I have been explained, all members help to realize the common goal of world peace by trying to revolutionize themselves. Human revolution is crucial to change individuals from focusing on their own life to them learning how to see their lives in a global perspective. I have tried to convey that members work towards personal happiness in order to become able to help others, and eventually the world. Moreover, I have shown how turning towards the SGI for Dutch members has meant adapting the capital of an 'other' into their lives, using it to re-shape their *I*-positions. In the next chapter I shall conclude this thesis by reiterating how Dutch SGI members are empowered by the kind of Buddhism that the SGI offers its members, and how they, thanks to this empowerment, relate to the organization's goal of world peace.

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[53] As such the SGI as NRM can fit within a broader academic 'self-identity as a project', as Anthony Giddens frames it. He relates to the self as a reflexive project based on social context. Due to restrictions of space I am unfortunately incapable of going into it more substantially. For more information see Giddens 1991.

CHAPTER 4:
CONCLUDING REMARKS ON SŌKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL EMPOWERMENT

> You tell such an experience to be able to realize, again, what you, thanks to the practice, thanks to the meetings, and thanks to the sharing with others, have achieved. Moreover, you can give others courage with it. My story might help you as well. In another way, with another problem.
>
> At some point you start to realize why it must be shared. You know, because […] the SGI goal is peace everywhere in the world. Working for everyone's happiness. There is no other way to do that than talking about it (Katrien 03-02-2015).

As I have shown in this thesis personal experiences of actual proof of the Nichiren Buddhist SGI practice working are central to the reasons that SGI members are practicing. During meetings the experiences are used to practically relate to abstract texts and other study materials, but mostly to encourage others to keep facing their personal challenges. The SGI encourages members to reflect on personal experiences so they learn how to deal with their challenges in life, begin to understand Buddhist scripture in the context of everyday life, and so become happier people that have the power to change the world.

The SGI aims to empower individuals towards global change, mainly envisioning world peace. It aims for such peace by empowering individuals to turn their lives around to a peaceful one where strife can be negated. Members try, by means of kosen-rufu, to spread the ideas of the SGI to other individuals, creating a snowball effect that, in theory, will eventually lead to world peace. Aiming to achieve world peace is no small undertaking, and in this thesis I have conducted ethnographic research in a district of the SGI-NL, in order to see how members are empowered by the kind of Buddhism that the SGI offers and how they, thanks to this empowerment, relate to the organization's goal of world peace.

The relation between global visions and local reality have been central to this thesis, because I have tried to convey how the global vision of the SGI influences the local organization of the SGI and identification processes of members. Globalization has been addressed by engaging with Arjun Appadurai's five landscapes of analyzing globalization I have explained the ethno-, media-, techno-, finan- and ideoscape in relation to the global spread of the SGI. Moreover, I have addressed glocalization which is useful for analyzing how a global concept is reshaped to fit within local reality. The SGI has especially excelled at such adaptation as, as I have shown, it encourages SGI organizations to adapt their operation to fit within their respective social and cultural contexts. I have noted that, as a result, there is local variation between the ways SGI meetings are organized, while the concept and visions of the SGI are envisioned alike worldwide.

In order to fully understand how the SGI tries to empower individuals and affects their sense of self, I have related to theories of identity. Three specific theories have been employed in

this thesis: habitus by Pierre Bourdieu; Gerd Baummann's grammars of identity/alterity; and the Dialogical-Self Theory of Hermans & Hermans-Kanopka. Habitus has proven to be relevant in my analysis as it regards personal norms and values a result of social surroundings and upbringing. It allowed insight on the strategies the SGI needs to employ for it to gain access to new surroundings. Moreover, I have shown how members try to fit the SGI into their personal lives. As Buddhism is not a very familiar concept to the Netherlands, otherness has also been considered for understanding the way the SGI has been able to enter Dutch members' lives. Moreover, I have shown how the 'other' is useful for members to gain insight on their own identity. Relating back to habitus and otherness, the Dialogical-Self Theory has been used to understand how the members come to identify themselves with the SGI and Buddhism. I have explained how being part of the SGI has affected members' *I*-positions, and how they have employed new and/or changed positions in order to be able engage with their challenges in life in ways they could not before.

In the second chapter I have shown that the SGI originates in Japan as a lay Buddhist organization based on the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism. It started out as an organization aiming to empower individuals to create happiness and peace. As a form of Engaged Buddhism it developed into an organization that allowed members to take their lives into their own hands and engage with the challenges of current society.

The tools employed to reach their human potential are chanting, reciting the *Lotus Sutra*, and studying Buddhist texts and using the insights gained to reflect on one's personal life. Reflecting is especially encouraged during meetings when people relate the topics of discussion to their personal challenges. Moreover, members encourage one another to use the insights gained from texts, studies, or other members, in their daily lives. By continuously doing so, and combining this with chanting and studying, members attempt to employ SGI Buddhism as a way of life. They aim to improve themselves as human beings so they will be able to encourage others to transform their lives as well.

Chapter three has been used to apply the theories explained in the first chapter to, and the the empowerment the SGI offers mentioned in chapter two in the context of the everyday reality of SGI members in the Netherlands. Using the five landscapes of Appadurai, the ethno-, media-, techno-, finan-, and ideoscape have allowed insight in the way the SGI has been able to gain a foothold in the Netherlands. As a grass-roots movement the SGI spread across the Netherlands via people acquainting each other with the SGI. Media such as the Internet and the monthly magazine Indigo allow Dutch members to acquaint themselves with the SGI and have topics of interest to talk about during the monthly meetings. Exchange of goods and knowledge are based on the will of people to share, whereas technology helps to arrange meetings, gather more information, and allows members at a larger distance to communicate with one another. Finally, the spread of the SGI ideas is most crucial to both the SGI in global perspective as to the individual members. Sharing ideas with other members allows for new insights, while sharing the SGI ideology with non-members allows for the spread of the ideas across a growing platform of people.

The way global and local forces can interact is clear in the context of the SGI, as the global views discussed in local meetings are related to examples of everyday life to make it relevant for individuals. Therefore, when regarding the identity theories in an SGI context, it is clear that the SGI offers new capital for members to add to their habitus, and allows members new ways to navigate

the fields of their lives. The ease with which new insights of Buddhism enter Dutch member's lives and are reflected upon, shows that the views of the SGI successfully can be easily adopted to their habitus. As I have shown in the previous chapter, members might be critical about certain aspects of Buddhism or the SGI. By reflecting upon these points they learn how and if they can adopt it to fit within their lives. Having a critical eye is, as shown, encouraged. Consequently, members are constantly reflecting on how they go about their lives and how they employ Buddhism in it.

Reflecting on their own lives means, as I have shown by employing Baumann's grammars of identity/alterity, considering an 'other.' The 'other,' in the form of other members, other Buddhists, or any 'other' that one can think of, has the potential to provide new useful views to the 'self' that can be used for self-improvement. This reflection, I have shown, can also be regarded as a reflection on the 'self' as an SGI member to understand how the SGI fits into one's life.

By understanding habitus and otherness one understands the issues members might come across in navigating their *I*-positions. However, at the same time, I have shown that the SGI offers new positions for members to navigate their identity, and offers insights to change already existing positions to ones that work better to face challenges. The members I have interviewed have shown me that Buddhism has become an invaluable part of their lives. Even when being critical, chanting and meetings allow members to reevaluate their lives and relate it to human revolution. Their inner change is fueled by not only their critical selves but also by other members, study material, and life around them. As I have shown, members try to achieve a position in life where they feel strong and peaceful enough to share their way of life with others. As such they attempt to spread peace.

The SGI is an organization actively striving to reach this goal by spreading a Buddhist ideology of peace and prospect to all outskirts of the world. This thesis has been an attempt to engage with the view of world peace and how a select group of members aims towards this goal. To conclude: how do Dutch SGI members feel empowered by the SGI and relate to the idea of world peace?

As I have mentioned in chapter three, members often laughed when talking about world peace during meetings. This laughter stemmed not from an inability to envision world peace, but from an inability to see it achieved in their lifetime. With wars raging, intolerance towards different people growing – just look at the way some people in Europe respond to refugees entering their countries – and being confronted with the troubles of everyday life, there is much reason for SGI members to be skeptical about world peace. However, this does not stop them to try and become peaceful. Nor does it stop them from trying to share their views of a peaceful world with others.

In the vision of the SGI, world peace is achieved through individuals inspiring each other towards a peaceful way of life. Dutch SGI members use chanting the Daimoku (*Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō*) to improve their karma, study Buddhist philosophy to understand how the world works, and encourage each other towards reaching such goals. Human revolution is central to such change. The concept is based on the idea that everyone has it in oneself to find their Buddhist nature, but they need to learn how to.

As I have amply exemplified in chapter three, every member has their own way to engage with the world and the teachings of Nichiren and ideas of SGI Buddhism. Members learn to be critical towards their own life and imagine how to overcome the boundaries that keep them tied to

their personal struggles. In order to grow, members try to place their personal lives in the broader spectrum of all life. By learning to understand how the world, and the universe, works, they become able to understand their struggles and those of others, and learn how to overcome them. I have found that if members felt confident about overcoming any trouble in their own life, they were more likely to share their view of life with others.

Members view world peace as a goal too large for any individual to conquer. They feel dazed by the sheer magnitude of the goal. However, by seeing the effects of their attempts to inspire others, they are able to reflect on the effect of such inspirations by the combined effort of all SGI members. By constantly being made aware of actual proof of the practice working by sharing their experiences in meetings, I argue that members keep feeling encouraged to keep practicing. Furthermore, it keeps them motivated to encourage others to keep working towards their goals. In continuing to experience actual proof, members, I argue, feel empowered and start to believe in the possibility of overcoming even the most difficult challenges. Members that felt this way explained that some goals just take more time to reach than others. Therefore, larger goals require more of a spirit of trust. It is not strange, therefore, that members that practice longer have a stronger conviction about the possibility of achieving world peace than newer members. Skeptical as members may be at times, reminding themselves and others of the possibility of achieving goals keeps spirits high during meetings and individual practice. This allows for the conviction that, although far away, world peace is, in fact, possible to achieve.

In the process of making this thesis it has become clear to me that global challenges can be engaged by challenging smaller issues first. The SGI attempts to tackle global problems by empowering individuals in such a way that they themselves have the tools to change the world. Through the process of overcoming personal challenges, members start to work to achieve goals of a larger scale. As they continue to do this, it becomes clear to them that changing the world can be achieved by a change from within. In engaging with a small group of members in the Netherlands I was able to experience the effect of this conviction. The impact of encouragement is especially clear because the community is so small. For, if ten people are already able to encourage one another as much as I have experienced, imagine how much impact a hundred people can have on one another, or a thousand, or everyone on the globe.

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APPENDIX I: FIGURES

Figure A.: Scan The World Of Civilizations: Post-1990. From: Huntington, Samuel P. 1996 The Clash of Civilizations. Simon & Schuster: New York, Page 26 https://web.archive.org/web/20070312101415/ http://s02.middlebury.edu/FS056A/Herb_war/clash3.htm Accessed 25-11-2015.

3.1.1   Kerkelijke gezindte, 2010–2014

	Geen	Rooms-katholiek	Nederlands hervormd	Gerefor-meerd	Protestantse Kerk in Nederland	Islam	Joods	Hindoe	Boeddhist	Andere gezindte
	%									
2010	45,3	27,3	7,8	3,8	6,3	4,5	0,1	0,6	0,3	4,2
2011	46,8	26,5	7,2	3,7	5,9	4,7	0,1	0,6	0,3	4,2
2012	47,4	25,8	7,4	3,4	5,9	4,8	0,1	0,6	0,4	4,2
2013	46,9	26,3	7,3	3,5	5,3	4,8	0,1	0,7	0,4	4,8
2014	49,2	24,4	6,7	3,4	5,7	4,9	0,1	0,6	0,5	4,5

B.1. Religious affiliation in the Netherlands

3.1.2   Bezoek religieuze diensten, 2010–2014

	1 keer per week of vaker	2 tot 3 keer per maand	1 keer per maand	Minder dan 1 keer per maand	Zelden of nooit
	%				
2010	10,2	4,0	3,8	8,0	74,1
2011	10,4	3,7	3,3	7,5	75,0
2012	10,1	3,4	3,3	6,9	76,3
2013	10,1	3,6	3,1	6,9	76,4
2014	10,0	3,4	3,0	7,0	76,6

B. 2. Attendance religious services

Figure B. From: Hans Schmeets, Carly van Mensvoort 2015 Bevolkingstrends mei 2015: Religieuze betrokkenheid van bevolkingsgroepen 2010-2014, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag: 4.
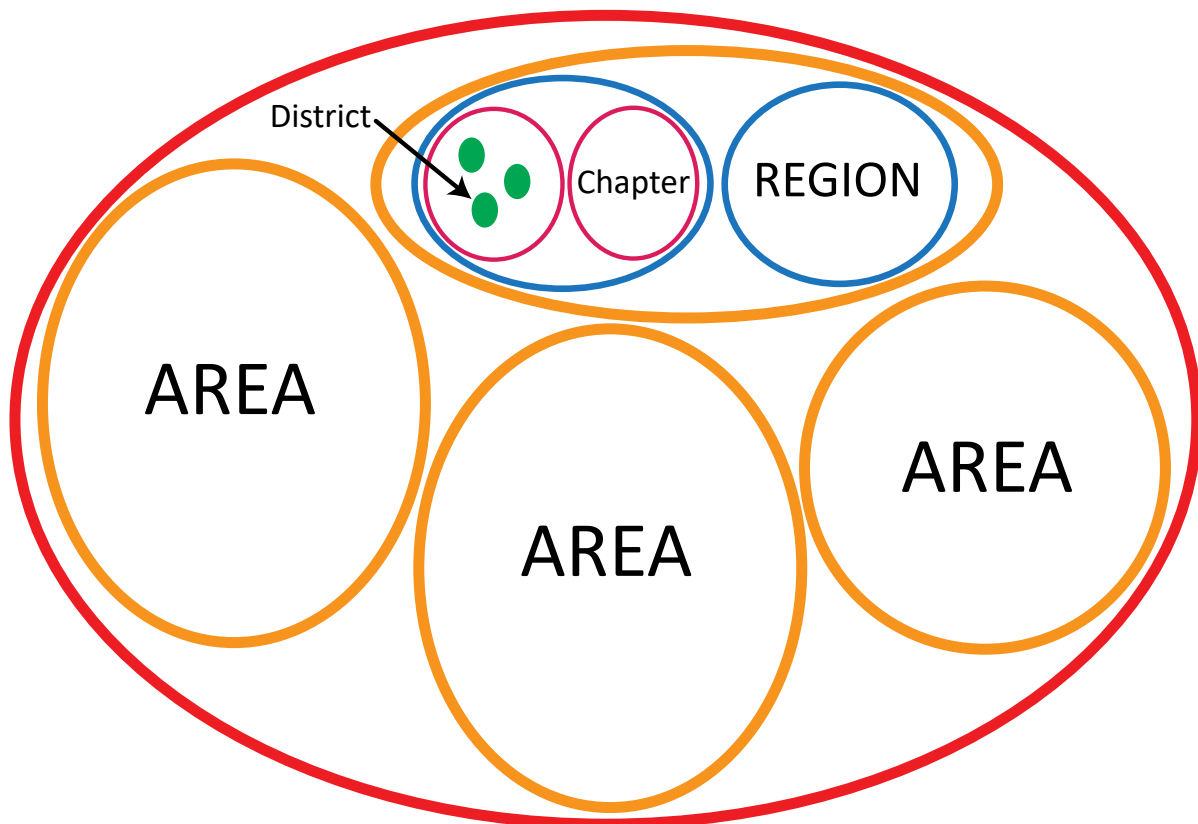

Figure C.: Overview of structural organization of the SGI-NL, based on information from interview on 10-07-2014.

APPENDIX II: Interview guide

Before I start the interview I will notify the interviewee of the following aspects:

- I will ask whether it is okay with the informant if I tape the interview. In doing so, I also will explain that I will use this taping for no other reason than to be able to recall the interview well as a reference for in my thesis.

- I will make sure the informant knows that I am respecting his/her privacy, and will not make use of personal information of the informant when I use information from this interview.

Aspects of the informant that I as interviewer need to take into account are age, nationality, level of education, etc.

Themes and topics to be addressed:

- What is the Sōka Gakkai International Netherlands?
- Motivations
- Meaning
- Inspiration
- Chanting
- Ideals and goals
- Identity
- Views
- Perceptions of others of the SGI/members/the interviewee as a member as perceived by interviewee

Preliminary information:

- Name:
- Age:
- Country of birth:
- Highest education:
- Can you sketch me a image of your day to day life? I would really like to know more about you and how the Sōka Gakkai fits into your daily life.

Questions about being a SGI member and views:

- Can you tell me about the time you became a part of the SGI?
- What does it mean for you to be a part of the SGI?
- When did you become a member of the SGI-(NL)?
    - How old were you when you became a member

- How long have you been part of the SGI-(NL)? (and how long before that have you come in touch with the SGI?)
- Can you tell me what made you decide to become a member?
- How have you come in contact with the SGI/ learned about it?
  - Who introduced you with the SGI?
- How did you become an official member? (e.g. when did you receive the gohonzon?)
  - What does it take to be a member? (money, effort, etc.?)
- What spiked your interest for the SGI?
  - Were there particular parts of the SGI/ the SGI Buddhism that attracted you?
- Are these reasons for you to become a member?
- Do these still represent your current motivation to be a part of the SGI/ to practice?
- What are for you the reasons to be a part of the SGI?
- Do you see the SGI as a Dutch organization?
- What do you like about the SGI?
- Are there things you dislike?
- What do you think about the meetings?
- Which kind of meeting do you prefer to attend?
- How do they help you, if they help you at all?
- *Perhaps more questions about views about certain things, depending on what kind of topics come to the fore*

Questions about the contents of the SGI:

What is the SGI? (Can you explain it to me? What is it to you? What is it to others (both members and non-members) do you think?)

- If I would ask you 'what is the SGI', what would you tell me?
  - Is that what you tell anyone?

Questions about inspiration:

Inspiration (what inspires you (about the SGI), who inspires you? Do you inspire others? Etc.)

- What is your inspiration as a SGI Buddhist?
- What about the SGI inspires you?
- Are there specific people of the SGI that inspire you or help you?
- Can you explain what they do for you?
- And President Ikeda? What does he mean to you?
- Do you try to inspire people as well? In what way?

Questions about meaning and identity:

Meaning (what does it mean for you to be a member? What does the SGI mean to you? How do you give meaning to being part of the SGI? Etc).

Identity

- What does the SGI mean to you?

- What does it mean to you to be a Buddhist?

- How important is the SGI in your life?

- Does the SGI play a big role in your life?

- Do you chant a lot?

- Do you always chant the same amount?

- What is your reason for chanting? Can you give some examples perhaps?

- What does chanting mean to you?

- Do you have contact with many different members?

- Do you know members abroad?

- Do you think there are differences between the SGI in different places, countries?

Questions about ideals and goals of the interviewee and SGI:

Ideals (Do you/does the SGI aspire to achieve something? What are your goals (in life; as a member; do you have any?))

- Motivations (for being a member; what keeps you motivated? Etc).

- Can you tell me about your activities as a member of the SGI?

- Do you feel like you contribute something to the SGI?

- What do you do for the SGI?

- Since it is one of the SGI's goals, do you promote world peace?

- In what way do you promote it?

- Is this your personal approach?

- Does the SGI help you find goals?

- What kind of goals?

- How do you try to achieve them?

Perception by others as perceived by the interviewee:

- How do you think or noticed others perceive you?

- Do you notice that others are open to the SGI/ the ideas of the SGI?

Further questions:

- Is there anything (else) you would like to tell me about the Sōka Gakkai that you would like me to know? Perhaps I forgot to inquire about certain topics?

APPENDIX III: Dutch Interview Phrasing

The interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms.

A preliminary interview was conducted on 10-07-2014 with a representative of the SGI district I have attended meetings and a representative of the national SGI organization.

The interviews I have conducted based on the interview guide of Appendix II, have been conducted on the following dates:

> 03-02-2015 Katrien.
>
> 11-02-2015 Nina.
>
> 23-02-2015 Anja.
>
> 27-02-2015 Annabel.

Original Dutch words and the translated quotes used in thesis, in order of appearance:

1.

You tell such an experience to be able to realize, again, what you, thanks to the practice, thanks to the meetings, and thanks to the sharing with others, have achieved. Moreover, you can give others courage with it. My story might help you as well. In another way, with another problem.

At some point you start to realize why it must be shared. You know, because […] the SGI goal is peace everywhere in the world. Working for everyone's happiness. There is no other way to do that than talking about it.

Je vertelt zo'n ervaring om jezelf nog eens goed te realiseren […] *wat je dankzij die beoefening, en dankzij die bijeenkomsten, en het delen met anderen, hebt bereikt. En je kunt er andere mensen moed mee geven.* […] *Mijn verhaal helpt jouw misschien ook. Op een andere manier, bij een ander probleem.* […]

Op een gegeven moment ga je begrijpen waarom het gedeeld moet worden. Hè want, ons grote … het SGI doel is, vrede in de hele wereld. […] *Werken aan het geluk van iedereen.* […] [*Dat gaat*] *niet anders dan dat je er over praat* (Katrien 03-02-2015).

2.

I don't speak about it easily yet. But I do drop it in conversation sometimes. However, I do notice that I still have some kind of diffidence about it. When the topic is brought up in regular conversation, I will mention it. And often when I tell people they respond with something like 'o that's nice,' you know. So there are few people who are immediately enthusiastic and like to learn more about it. I still need to be stimulated by the questions of others before I start talking at length about it. I will not easily speak about it.

Ik heb nog niet zo snel dat ik daarover praat. […]Maar ik laat het soms wel eens vallen ofzo. […] Maar ik merk wel dat ik daar nog een soort schroom over heb. […] Meer op een natuurlijke… ja. En vaak als ik dat vertel dan is het heel grappig van … 'o wel leuk,' weetjewel. Dus dus der zijn weinig mensen die 'ooooo' daar wel eens meer van willen weten. […] Want ik moet altijd wel gestimuleerd worden door vragen van anderen. Ik zou dat niet zo snel uuhh… vertellen (Nina 11-02-2015).

3.

The Sōka in the Netherlands needs to adapt to the mentality and the circumstances in the Netherlands. That is incredibly important. Otherwise you cannot reach the people.

De Sōka in Nederland, moet zich aanpassen aan de […] mentaliteit […] en de omstandigheiden in Nederland. […] Dat is verschrikkelijk belangrijk. Anders bereik je ook mensen niet (Katrien 03-02-2015).

4.

Everyone is open minded and interested when I mention Buddhism. Buddhism very unthreatening, I think. I mean, non-threatening. I think people here feel Buddhism is so peaceful, that is always okay, or something like that. Yes, although, this is my own interpretation.

*I*dereen *is wel open en geïnteresseerd. Het is heel onbedreigend* […], *denk ik.* […] N*iet bedreigend. 'Ooh Boeddhisme dat is zo vredelievend, dat is altijd wel goed,' ofzo. Denk ik.* […] J*a dat is mijn eigen invulling hoor…* (Nina 11-02-2015).

5.

And the SGI notes in particular that you have to be as independent as possible. They encourage strong in your shoes, to make your own decisions, to think for yourself. I think that's appealing to people. I think that is fantastic.

[…] So it is very important to think in an independent way. And to consciously hold on to you values and norms. What are your set values? What kind of conscious choice? Have a sort of critical period. Because you are thinking about how to make the right choice. And don't let yourself be dragged by the masses. […]

But they don't say what you need to think. And that makes me really happy.

That Buddhism. And they neither say, you must not eat meat, or you must quit smoking, or you must stop drinking, or you must stop doing drugs, or you must this, or you must that, or you must that. They don't tell you anything. It says: chant. Chant for your happiness and discover what makes you happy.

En ze [de SGI] zeggen ook juist dat je zoveel mogelijk moet zelfstandig te zijn. Zelf uuh sterk in jouw uuh schoenen [te staan]… om zelf beslissingen, te denken, beslissingen te nemen. Dat vind ik juist een opening. Ik vind dat fantastisch.

[…] Dus het is zo belangrijk om stevig in jouw […] hoofd op een zelfstandige manier te denken. En uuhm echt bewust van jouw […] waarden en normen, om vast te houden. Wat zijn jouw vaste normen. Wat voor bewuste keus. Om, een soort kritische periode. Omdat je bent, de goede keuze te doen. En je niet laten slepen van de massa. […]

Maar ze zeggen niet wat je moet denken. En daar ben ik heel blij mee.

Met die Boeddhisme. En ze zeggen ook niet, je moet geen vlees eten, of je moet stoppen met roken, of je moet stoppen met drinken, of je moet stoppen met drugs, of je moet uuh dit, of je moet dit, of je moet dat. Ze zeggen niks. Ze zegt: chant. Chant voor jouw geluk en en ontdek wat maakt jouw gelukkig (Annabel 25-02-2015).

6.

I have been chanting for Maria for a very long time. Now I don't do that anymore, because I don't feel the need anymore. For, when you chant Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō that is for the totality of it all, so of course it is also for Maria, also for my mother, also for everyone. Actually, it has to do with the cosmos, with life and death. I won't think small anymore. When you chant you have to stand above all.

En ik heb heel lang voor Maria gechant. […] $^{\text{Nu niet meer}}$. […] Nee, omdat ik heb niet meer die behoefte. […] Omdat als je chant Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō is dat voor de totaliteit, dus natuurlijk, is het ook voor Maria, ook voor mijn moeder, ook voor iedereen. Eigenlijk [heeft het te maken] met de kosmos, met leven en dood. Ik ga niet meer, ga niet meer krap denken en klein… […]Als je gaat chanten moet je boven alles staan. Je envoloppeerd, [evolueert], je probeert alles (Annabel 25-02-2015).

7.

Having enough food, a roof, and a future for our children. We all want that. That is universal. Just like music, it is universal. Just like language is actually universal. We do have different languages, but we all have one. This is why the dialogue and communication is very important. And I think that is great. I enjoy it when I hear that more religions are in dialogue with another: Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists.

Want willen hetzelfde, mensen. Overal, maakt niet uit uit welke cultuur, genoeg eten hebben, een dak, en een toekomst voor onze kinderen. […] En dat willen we allemaal. En dat is universeel. […] Net als muziek, dat is universeel. […] Net als taal, is universeel eigenlijk. We hebben wel verschillende talen, maar. […] Dus uuh… ja en dat ja, daarom de dialoog en de communicatie heel belangrijk is. En dat is, ik vind het geweldig. Ik geniet er van als ik hoor dat meer religies samen, de Christendom, de moslima, de joden, de boeddhisten, samen … ja praten (Annabel 25-02-2015).

8.

He said to me: '[…] I really feel like I don't have to worry about you anymore.' Because they saw that I really changed because of the practice. I had become a bit more stable, perhaps. […] Or was not that extreme anymore. And they feel that's nice.

Hij zegt '[Katrien], ik geloof dat ik me niet meer ongerust over je hoef te maken. Want … ze zagen dus dat ik echt door die beoefening… ja toch een beetje anders werd. Toch een beetje… ja… stabieler misschien?[…] Of uh… niet meer zo uuh uuh extreem. En dat vinden ze prettig (Katrien 03-02-2015).