



Landelijk
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Talk title: **Beyond Therapy: Mapping Mindfulness in the UK**

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Abstract: Mindfulness has become a global phenomenon, a mass meditation movement, even a revolution. Yet, despite the popularity of mindfulness, social studies of the mindfulness phenomenon are few. What does the popularity of mindfulness tell us about the world in which we're living? In this talk, I draw upon insights from the Mapping Mindfulness project. This is the first large-scale, interdisciplinary, mixed-methods study of the UK mindfulness teaching community. We study the making of mindfulness practitioners and mindfulness teachers; how mindfulness teachers seek to make people and society mindful; how they make a community of practice, a professional field, or a movement. Conducted over three years (2017-2020), and funded by the Leverhulme Trust, our aim was to study the people, places and practices of the mindfulness field. We collaborated with over 60 mindfulness centres, organisations and networks; gathered over 800 survey responses; recruited over 80 interview and focus group participants; and conducted over 35 field trips across sectors featuring mindfulness provision and training: health, work, education, politics and religion.

In this talk, we investigate how mindfulness teachers who teach mindfulness for health and wellbeing negotiate the status of mindfulness as 'therapy'. The mindfulness field involves a democratising of psychological and therapeutic expertise, knowledge, and practice which creates dilemmas for mindfulness teachers. At their heart is a tension between mindfulness as a 'talking cure' and as an 'embodied practice'. Mindfulness is produced in varying, and sometimes contradictory, ways. As mindfulness continues to be translated, and is travelling beyond the Global North, we call for further empirical studies of how mindfulness is being transformed, and in turn is transforming, our world, across a variety of locations, settings, and fields.

Dr Steven Stanley is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University, Wales (UK). Steven is a critical psychologist interested in the therapeutic cultures of late modernity, with a particular focus on social studies of mindfulness. His research comprises three interwoven threads: (i) Historical scholarship of meditation and mindfulness in Buddhism and Psychology – specifically as applied to ethical issues; (ii) Qualitative analyses of mindfulness-based teaching in action; (iii) Experiments in post-therapeutic contemplative practices as forms of social exploration. His articles have appeared in the journals *The Sociological Review*, *Theory & Psychology*, *Social & Personality Psychology Compass*, and *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Alongside his academic research, Steven has a 20-year meditation practice, and has completed the two-year *Committed Dharma Practitioner Programme* at Gaia House, Devon, and Pāli Summer School at Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, Oxford. He is leading co-editor of the *Handbook of Ethical Foundations of Mindfulness* (Stanley, Purser & Singh, Springer Publications, 2018). Steven has recently been conducting a series of interdisciplinary social science/humanities collaborations on mindfulness, meditation and mind wandering. He is the Principal Investigator of the three-year research project *Mapping Mindfulness* (2017-2020), a landmark study of the mindfulness movement in the United Kingdom, funded by The Leverhulme Trust.

