

The Spirit of Social Cohesion and Sharing in Relation to Dance Consumption Practices in Contemporary Swing Dance Communities

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INTRODUCTION

Swing dances evolved in America's jazz era between the 1920s and 1940s. Similar to other popular dance scenes such as salsa or tango (see Pušnik and Sicherl 2010), this partner dance vanished from subcultures for several decades from the 1960s on (Renshaw 2006: 72–3; Carroll 2008: 448) and was revived in the 1980s and 1990s all over the Western world. Substantial Swing Dance Communities (SDCs) have been established particularly in the USA, in many European countries, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but today, they have also emerged in many cities of non-Western countries such as Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Argentina, South Africa, Mozambique, Chile, Mexico, Brazil and more.

Swing dancers are usually members of the dominant, mainstream, relatively young and urban middle-class that possess enough income, time and resources that they can take part in SDCs' activities and communicate with the scene via information and communication technologies (ICTs). Along with the spread of Internet and ICTs, these communities are today integrated in the international swing scene with hundreds of weekend dance festivals, camps and exchanges of different sizes and formats. The biggest of them, such as the Herång dance camp in Sweden and the Lindy Shock in Budapest, count thousands of dancers. International championships in Washington, DC and London present the scene's top layers, where competition and performance of the best world swing dancers is organized annually and disseminated to the world via YouTube, Facebook and specialized swing dance online blogs.

As the great majority of these events' audiences are dancers, none of them happen without large organized social dance floors (SDFs) with live bands and DJs playing swing jazz music of the America's 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. These gatherings may remind us of ritual congregations of Maffessoli's "modern tribes" or "emotional communities" that have retained passions and emotions akin to a Durkheimian religious moral community (cited in Gelder 2007: 135–6). Feelings of togetherness and sharing on SDFs create a sort of *communitas*, where participants repeatedly confirm their 'enchanted' social world. However, social swing dancing has to be seen not only from the perspective of a "doer", but also from that of a "viewer" (after Malnig 2009b: 6), for observing the dance floors and following the scene online is an equally important activity as regularly dancing and attending swing dance classes.

Moreover, beside a passion for dance, the scene's adherents are immersed in everyday life and work, which in late capitalist societies are "calling for theories of rootlessness, alienation and psychological distance between individuals and groups on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other" (Appadurai 1996: 29). SDCs fill the gaps of the former, as they ease many of the problems of contemporary individuals-in-society, such as emotional and identity crises, unfulfilling interpersonal relationships and so forth (cf. Gelder 2007: 138). The latter, the electronic propinquity (and proximity), has profoundly changed the swing dance culture. For it is through heavy mediation online that the global swing scene preserves its ideology and the interests of the mainstream dominant groups on the one hand and expand its diversity on the other (see Carroll 2008).

I have been more or less actively participating in the swing scene for the last decade or so and decided to write about it because of these general changes that have occurred with its development and popularization. Namely, contemporary swing dance culture is commodified and marketed by dance schools and teachers, which regularly organize SDFs as an additional opportunity for practicing dance steps. These highly organized rituals of solidarity and identity can be compared to different SF fan conventions (after Carroll 2006: 450), backpacker congregations (Kravanja 2016) or club cultures and music festival conventions (Firth 1996: 40–1). But through development of partner dancing, permanent learning to dance became a precondition for practicing it socially. Dance studios and their corresponding performance and competition discourses increasingly overwhelm and uniform the social mode of dancing, which in practice means that the SDFs are increasingly changed into, and for many dancers already ‘naturally’ understood, as a training facility for progressing in dance techniques.

The *fill rouge* of the present chapter is the question of how social solidarities are constructed and played out in the light of these changes. Social solidarities can be distinguished between inward, outward, backward and forward-looking (i.e. towards the self, others, the past or future). They can also be based on rational thought or on affect and emotional attachments (Crow 2002: 13). Given that all of these aspects are part of today’s SDCs, I will first look at how the leisure product of swing dance has been established through mainstreaming and cultural appropriation from the disempowered African-American population in its early years. Then I will show how the process of its popularization was invested with discourses of social cohesion of its adherents and how the dominant white middle-class embraced it also in terms of creating distinctive fashion streams.

I will then touch upon SDCs inward-looking solidarities and discuss the dynamics of different status groups that inevitably emerged within the global swing scene. In these frames, the basic mutuality and sharing of partner dance is in collision with the embodied discourse of performance and competition dancing, which is pursued among the members of the scene implicitly via social networks online as well as in dance classes. As social dancing practices cannot bypass the major embodied discourses of the scene’s performances, its inward-looking social solidarity, paradoxically, depends on dance progress of the dancers.

To tackle these questions, I mainly adopted the Weberian conception of social solidarities, which is “frequently constructed around the domination or exclusion of others” (Crow 2002: 24) and based on

“the closure of social and economic opportunities to *outsiders*” (Max Weber after Crow 2002: 24, emphasis in original). According to this, contemporary swing dancing is an epitome, rather than a counterculture of the late capitalist leisure consumption.

Organization of this commodified ‘serious leisure’ product into different SDCs calls for questions about how today’s buyers and sellers strive to create something meaningful out of social dancing, rather than seeing the SDCs as self-evident *Gemeinschafts* with pre-disposed social cohesion of their members. The following section will first explore the making of the international swing scene as a whole and its heightened concerns about its own public image, which in recent years has emerged especially through discussions about the treatment of its legacy and corresponding issues of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race.

THE EARLY MAKING AND POPULARIZATION OF THE SWING DANCE AND ITS RELATION TO TODAY’S LEISURE CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Swing dances evolved in America’s jazz era in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s among the urban marginalized African-American population. According to dance historians, American vernacular dances are one of the most complex chapters of the world dance history, which in many respects reflects also in the contemporary dance scenes of the USA (see Malnig 2009a). Popular dance can be seen as synonymous with the social or vernacular dance done by a certain group, for either reinforcing or subverting dominant societal norms (Cohen-Stratynier 2001: 121). Early African-American dances such as the Cakewalk, Tap dancing, Black Bottom, Charleston and many more, were in function of the latter. Their dance steps often coexisted on numerous SDFs, and were constantly changing with transmission, mutual mixing and (re)naming, but were in general confined to the African-American part of racially segregated America. Already in the 1920s, for example, the dance form of the Charleston developed from previous African-American ragtime dances (see George-Graves 2009) and was one of the most popular dances in America, especially among the white youth. It triggered massive public concerns about the morality of the country, for it was seen as a dance that steers white teenagers to premarital sex. The Charleston, which was reproduced on so many more or less hidden SDFs, for it was also considered as too wild to get along with foxtrots and waltzes in white ball-

rooms, changed especially in Harlem,¹ where it was invested with many creative influences of its talented dancers and musicians and developed into an entirely different dance form called the Lindy Hop.

The Lindy Hop was the first African-American dance that integrated all of the previous dance forms and developed into a real performance dance. Its 'official' history is nowadays inseparably connected with the famous Savoy Ballroom, which operated in Harlem between 1926 and 1958 (Hubbard and Monaghan 2009). In the Savoy, like in other dance ballrooms of the time, the majority of the audience danced in a big circle counter-clockwise (waltzes, foxtrots, mambos, rumbas etc.). However, a group of supremely talented dancers started to gather in the Savoy's designated area right of the bandstand, which was referred to as 'Cats Corner'. They improvised their dance steps, competed one with another and gradually became also a spectacle for other visitors at the Savoy. Under their influence, the big bands gradually started to play their music differently. Especially after 'the invention' of today's perhaps most recognisable signature moves of the Lindy Hop, the aerial steps in 1935 by Frieda Washington and Frankie Manning (see Manning and Millman 2007: 93–100), the music got rougher, more syncopated, and rhythmically more exciting: the former "sweet jazz" was replaced with "hot" music, which was created along with, and for, dancing the Lindy Hop (Spring 1997: 184).²

These dance steps, in short, started to be known as 'Lindy Hopping',³ and were culturally appropriated by the white middle-class already in the 1930s, when the Savoy became also a tourist spectacle destination for the white elite. Especially after the rise of the first white star of the new swing music, Benny Goodman, the 'Swing Era' obsessed American youths. Between 1935 and 1946, the Lindy Hop crossed over to America's white audience and its dance form changed

1 Harlem was a small cultural island, a centre of African-American culture, which attracted all kinds of black artists, musicians, poets and writers from across America, especially in the 1920s and the 1930s. Given that nothing compared to its creative spirit of that time, it also should be noted that the Harlemites were a disempowered and marginalized population constantly subjected to the racist practices of New York's white surroundings.

2 In his autobiography, Frankie Manning recalls how Chick Webb, the drummer who played at the evening Frankie and Frieda publicly demonstrated their aerial step, followed them on cymbals and how in general "the band was hitting every step that we did" (Manning and Millman 2007: 99).

3 The name was publicly given by the Savoy's pioneer dancer George 'Shorty' Snowden in 1928, when Charles Lindbergh made his first solo transatlantic flight. In the press, it was often headlined that Lindbergh 'hopped' over Atlantic, and 'Shorty George' used this in an interview, when a reporter asked him about the name of his dance moves (Engelbrecht et al. 1983: 4; cf. Hubbard and Monaghan 2009: 131–3).

so much that it became something else. Some called it the Jitterbug, others 'the Dean's Lindy' (after the renowned Los Angeles performer and dance instructor Dean Collins), and still others simply the Swing. For the teenagers of that time, swing offered not only music and dance, but a way of life, a code of dress, and more, a whole culture.

What therefore made the Lindy Hop 'American' was its selling in frames of the first American entertainment industry (Usner 2001: 94). Electrical recording and national radio broadcasting networks, which started to work in the second half of the 1920s helped to develop it into a music-and-dance spectacle, worth picturing in Hollywood movies (*A Day at the Races* (1937), *Keep Punching* (1939), *Hellsapoppin'* (1941)) and staging in choreographed routines for different (predominantly white) audiences across America. The group of Whitey's Lindy Hoppers, which consisted of the best Savoy dancers of the second generation, was the most propulsive dance group of that time's Harlem and had brought the Lindy Hop to many stages in America and occasionally also worldwide.

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From this short historical outline of the Lindy Hop's rise and early development, we can see that the very term of popular dance is, rather than simply a synonym for a social dance, "a specific process by which local, vernacular, and social dance traditions become popularized in the public sphere" (Malnig 2009b: 5, emphasis in original). Their "recontextualization" depend on "layered purposes" (Cohen-Stratynner 2001: 121) and even if a social dance in general is a medium for the creation of a specific community, rather than *vice versa* (Malnig 2009b: 4), cultural meanings that are unpredictable and abundantly produced in such communities are inevitably intertwined with the broader social relations of their members.

As today's 'subcultural' scenes cannot avoid the powers of the late capitalism market economy (Kozorog and Stanojević 2013: 359), contemporary swing dancing still presents one of the smartest products of leisure (and pleasure) consumption. For it is not only a product for scopophilic audiences, but a reproductive good, which is inscribed in the customer's body. As such, it is one of the "body-related fashion practices" (Appadurai 1996: 84), which provides a vehicle for a 'new' identity. Like other consumption social practices (see *ibid.*: 82–3) it requires a lot of time, disciplined work, passion and money, and is today unmistakably supplied with "the lubricant of nostalgia" (*ibid.*: 78), in this case evocative of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s lifestyle and fashion.

‘Vintage fashion’ and pop culture’s “retromania” (see Reynolds 2011) are widespread among today’s youth, but the adherents of ‘swing culture’ adopted an ‘alternative’ do-it-yourself philosophy and “thrift store shopping” (Renshaw 2006), which implies “relative autonomy from mass consumption” (Doane 2006: 107). As they see themselves as exclusive connoisseurs of the ‘authentic’ Swing Era dress, rather than sheer consumers of the ‘Great Gatsby’ or ‘hipster’ fashion, a lot of SDCs put an effort into cultivating the dress code of their SDFs. While some dancers just do not mind about dress style and give priority to pursuing their dance techniques, at least the more advanced and long-term dancers use their dress style also as an important marker of their supposed elitist status.

ON EXCLUSIVENESS AND PUBLIC IMAGE OF THE CONTEMPORARY LINDY HOP

As we have seen in the previous section, the group of talented Harlemites created and developed numerous steps and dance routines between the 1920s and 1940s, which today present the basis of swing dance vocabulary. The Lindy Hop was reconstructed in dance studios of New York and Stockholm in the 1980s, with the help of individual ‘old-timers’ from the second generation of the Savoy ballroom. Most of them, due to their old age, initially hesitated to start teaching dance for the first time in their life (*sic*),⁴ but when the movement started to expand, they became an indispensable part of the whole story. Especially Frankie Manning, a retired postman and perhaps the best Whitey’s dancer of the time, was exposed in this process. Later on, when many started to mysticize him on this new swing scene, he was also honoured as “Ambassador of the Lindy Hop” (see Manning and Millman 2007). After he passed away in 2009, he truly became an icon of the swing dance world.

The African-American legacy of swing dances and the processes of their cultural appropriation have often been discussed, especially among American scholars (see for example George-Graves 2009; Hancock 2008; Usner 2001). ‘The revival’ itself and the “racial amnesia” (Hancock 2008: 787) of the dance’s origins is also increasingly re-evaluated within the scene (see Heinilä 2013, 2015), especially when dif-

4 About the problematic treatment of ‘old-timers’ during the revival see Heinilä (2015).

ferent symbolic slips occasionally occur in its public representations.

There are few examples of such thoughtless or perhaps even provocative slips that appeared on swing dance stages and triggered huge discussions among the dancers online. The most pressing were two performances by the renowned Russian dancer and choreographer Ksenia Parkhatskaya, namely a spoof showcase 'Pickpocket' at the Moscow Open Swing Show Tournament (MOST) 2011 and a jazz roots showcase 'Four Women' at the MOST 2013 (*hors concours*) and at the European Swing Dance Championship 2013 in London. The first one Parkhatskaya did in so-called blackface makeup and the second one, a sensual choreography for Nina Simone's song (*Four Women*), which speaks about racist stereotypes that African-American women had to endure, Parkhatskaya performed the dance with her body skin sprayed bronze (see Brian Jay Elley's Post 2013). The next such example appeared almost simultaneously in the West Coast Swing (WCS) circles,⁵ when a dance couple Doug and Nicki Siltan used one blackface and the other a 'Mexican' outfit for their showcase on Halloween Swingthing 2013 in Irvine, California and again triggered a huge discussion online (see Westie Discussion of the Day 2013).

These long discussions and some other careful readings on swing dance products⁶ indeed contribute to general sensitivity towards the questions of racist and orientalist representations of African-Americans on swing dance stages, but of course still do not address the profound embeddedness of the making of swing in the racially segregated environment of America. The fact that African-Americans in general did not join 'the revival' and rather embraced their other social dance traditions such as Bop (Houston), Hand Dancing (Washington, D.C.) and Steppin' (Chicago) (Hancock 2008: 786) points to the exclusiveness of contemporary swing dancing.

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Another concern that addresses the public image of the swing scene refers to dancing the Lindy Hop outside its specific SDFs. As Loggins (2017) pointed out, the narrow and asocial frames of dance

5 The WCS came out as a more stylized version of the Lindy Hop in the 1940s. Today it is danced to very diverse popular music styles such as Blues, R'n'B, Country Music, Hip Hop, Mainstream Pop and more, and is probably for this reason even more popular than the Lindy Hop, especially in the USA.

6 See for example blogs on <<http://dogpossum.org/2011/07/two-cousins>> and <<http://dogpossum.org/2011/11/historical-recreation-fat-suits-blackface-and-dance>> (accessed 23. 1. 2017).

studios where the Lindy Hop is learned in an organized way, leads to an increase in the “sport mentality” of the dancers. He noticed that many dancers today are prone to show their “athletics” also in jazz music venues (and, I would add, rockabilly scenes), where the Lindy Hop often appears as too overpowering. As the ‘proper’ Lindy Hop has many space consuming elements, such as swing out, high kicks, areal steps and other flashy moves, it – purposely or not – often turns non-dancers into spectators. The ‘see-me-dancing/performing’ mentality is nurtured particularly in dance studios, where dance techniques are polished and flashy performative dance is encouraged, but can also be seen in occasional collective actions such as the so-called “Lindy bomb”, when a bigger group of dancers bursts out in front of a jazz concert stage, take over the place and turn it into a swing SDF (Stevens and Stevens 2011: 182).

Through pursuing this approach, swing dancing, and especially the Lindy Hop is a powerful dance that can get a bad reputation in bars and other jazz venues, even if it is, conversely, usually accepted by passers-by with amusement. For this cause, the work on ‘culture’ and on different social institutions is constantly nurtured on the swing scene. But the problem of the public image and the exclusivity of the Lindy Hop communities is also part of the scene’s inner divisions, which I am addressing in the next section.

HOMOGENIZATION AND HETEROGENIZATION OF SWING DANCE COMMUNITIES AND THEIR INNER PREDICAMENTS

Swing dance communities (SDCs) can be seen as ideologically framed social spaces of today’s leisure landscapes. Their dance classes standardize the way of dancing and create a specific heteronormative embodied habitus, which was even recognized as having potential of social change towards feminist ends of gender equality. Especially in dancing the Lindy Hop, “partners happily negotiate power” (Wade 2011: 224); the ‘lead/follow’ hierarchy between them is gradually substituted with giving space one to another and using partner connection for cooperation through body movement, which means that dance partners ideally become ‘one body’ that counts only on the predictability of the music, but otherwise improvise their shared dance (ibid.: 242–3).

Being all that true for the more experienced dancers, there are many struggles among the less experienced ones. Doane (2006: 93), for example, claimed that “with a one-hour lesson, and two to three

hours of practice a week, most dancers move from the basic rock-step to variations of the swing-out within three months.” Well, yes, this is how most SDCs advertise their product, but the Lindy Hop is not an easy dance, albeit it is the most desired and popular on the scene. It was created through dance contests at the Savoy and other Harlem clubs (see Manning and Millman 2007: 82–92) and the dancers rehearsed its steps also during the daytime, often in ballrooms together with rehearsals of bands (Stevens and Stevens 2011: 59). These *performance* steps were faithfully copied by the early revivalists and vernacularized for the masses.

The archival film footage of ‘official’ dance performances from the 1930s and 1940s and the contemporary vast circulation of different dance clips online have always played an important role in this process of “step stealing and textual poaching” (Carroll 2008). Even if the last generation of swing dancers is different from the enthusiasts of the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the fact that they put more effort in being inspired by numerous SDFs (and not from obsessive learning of ‘original’ steps), “the revivalist impulse persists in contemporary swing-dance culture, and is in part the dominant ideological approach to choreography and ‘style’ in many local communities” (Carroll 2008: 194).

The most persistent in this ‘style’ are performative elements, sustained in teaching materials of today’s instructors, who have to promote themselves in competitions on international stages, if they want to be hired for teaching classes and get students in them. With this, the exclusivity of swing dancing is not confined only to macro-levels of race, ethnicity, social class, age and gender, but stretches also to the micro-levels of SDCs. Hence, the formal hierarchy of dance levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced) develops ‘upwards’ towards performance mode of dancing; exclusive institutional spaces of the so-called invitational dance classes and events are established, where the ‘super advanced’ dancers and instructors can (im)prove themselves under supervision of their peers and/or established ‘rock stars’ of the scene.

Today, the scene is already full of the unprecedented excellence of its dancers who are ready to compete, perform and teach. The question of *attribution* of talent (and not talent *per se*) is a constant subject of stress and paranoia in music schools and scenes (see Firth 1996: 36–40) and the swing dance scene is no different. Progress of the dancers is encouraged at the scene’s classes with constant calls to ‘more practice’, but their craving for recognition of their ‘talent’ is also balanced by emphasizing that the final goal of all that learning and investing is

'to have fun' on the SDF. This latter sedative ideological procedure for (over)ambitious students and 'advanced wannabes' is, however, not always effective. Problems often occur at the initial ranking of dancers at festivals (short auditions are often made to 'clean' the levels, especially the advanced one), but even more so on SDFs, where dancers "rather make exhibitions of themselves than really dance with their partners" (Heinilä 2013).

There are a few more elements on the scene for balancing this unlikely situation of growing "egoistic individualism" (Durkheim after Crow 2002: 21), which works destructively on social solidarity on SDFs. First, the scene provides opportunities for showing-off separate from the SDF: ('cat') corner for 'elite dancers' usually shapes spontaneously in bigger ballrooms, occasional swing jam circles are initiated during dance evenings and open competitions of different formats are organized. Second, the scene's positive public image of neutral, harmless and noble cultural practice is additionally strengthened with established behavioural etiquette, dress codes, community rituals and passing values of decency, distinctiveness and genuine friendliness between the sexes.

The scene is already way too developed to take any steps back. As we have seen, it succeeded in making its events simultaneously filled with warm feelings of the community's togetherness and hot feelings of competition and performance. While many dancers would at this point argue that they are happy with their however fast or slow progress in dance techniques, for they anyway do it to increase the enjoyment of their social dancing, it is the profoundly organized nature of the scene, which is neither vernacular social dancing nor a proper dance school that make its social solidarities multilayered, polyvalent and often confined to different dynamically emergent status groups.

Ethnographic scrutinization of different initiatives among the dancers, which sometimes succeed in creating a separate (and usually temporary), more or less autonomous 'scene' in this or that venue would show that the practices of mutuality and sharing, which are the basis of swing partner dances, are not always in complementary relation with discourses of social cohesion, which are pursued among the members of the scene. On the contrary, they often bypass the major flows of social cohesion and with that, paradoxically, create the most vital parts of the scene which in the long run most efficiently contribute to the actual social solidarity of the scene.

As exposed in the introduction, social solidarities are "open to many different expressions" (Crow 2002: 4). If I looked at it strictly on local levels of, for example, Slovenian SDCs, or even just the SDCs

that developed only in Ljubljana, all of the aspects of social solidarities would be found there, not only the dichotomy between discourses of social cohesion in the Lindy Hop's dominant streams and its performative and competitive roots, which in the extreme case pursues egoistic individualism.

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The small scale scenes and temporary repeating events that constantly emerge locally in Ljubljana, Slovenia and also around the world (see for example descriptions in Renshaw 2006; Usner 2001), would certainly open up the discussion towards diversity and power struggles on local levels. Due to the scope of this article, I cannot discuss these alternatives, which would also question the power of the SDF to create enough satisfaction for dancers, even if their dance techniques were awfully bad.

However, here I wanted to expose that the categories according to which contemporary Lindy Hop is evaluated are today internationalized and institutionalized within the global scene. In the light of this, there is little possibility for alternatives to survive longer, because they are not compatible with other scenes, and therefore have to be interesting enough for their members and different audiences to survive on their own. What usually happens with such alternative scenes within the swing dance culture is that they either develop and raise the quality of their dancers or close themselves into a private group of friends or a clique that do its own thing and organize its own events according to its narrower preferences (for example listening to a particular kind of music, dancing in a particular way, dressing in a particular style etc.).

CONCLUSION

Transplantation of the Lindy Hop as a performance dance on contemporary social dance floors (SDFs) has several consequences concerning the social cohesion of the swing scene. As we have seen in this chapter, the Lindy Hop was an integrating dance already at its beginnings in the late 1920s; its drive and progress in its formative years lies in the stealing of steps from other dancers on SDFs and in pursuing originality of the dancers at competitions. With the introduction of changes in jazz music styles in the 1930s and 1940s, it developed into a spectacular dance form of its own, which was danced to incredibly fast tempos that only those who seriously rehearsed steps could catch.

Even if today this dance form is stripped down and adjusted to the contemporary standards of an easy leisure commodity, there are of course many dancers who can copy the ‘wildest’ parts of its rich legacy, often not being aware that the choreographies in the 1930s’ and 1940s’ Hollywood movies and other clips were made for that particular historical context, when the Lindy Hop was in the midst of the process of its cultural appropriation by the mainstream cultural industry of white America (i.e., the Lindy Hop was largely presented as a mockingly wild and exaggerated ‘black’ dance).

Dance techniques have of course developed and are today influenced by many other dance forms, such as steps from other vernacular dances, Modern Jazz, Hip Hop, Latin dances and even Ballet, but they are still the most important thing in today’s swing culture. Dress style, behaviour, haircut, lifestyle or whatever is not dancing provides proper contexts for social dancing, but does not present the core of swing dance culture. What is satisfying for both groups, instructors and performance oriented dancers on the one hand, and ‘average’ social dancers, buyers of the embodied products of various swing dance forms on the other, is celebrating, posing, socializing, flirting and dancing in order ‘to have fun’. But the real constitutive frame of the contemporary swing scene is still based in dance studios, where progressing and struggling to master dance steps is at the forefront.

As SDCs do not explicitly promote equal economic opportunity for all, but strive and mutually compete for new members to – first of all – get them into dance classes, SDFs importantly ‘correct’ their image in public. They are in themselves complex social milieus, where fragile relations of different sorts of social solidarities, such as social cohesion and feelings of *communitas*, interdependence and mutuality between dancers, balance between different status groups, solidarity with less skilled dancers and attentiveness towards the outsiders, when a SDF is temporarily established in other music venues, are promoted and played out.

The question of how these different aspects of social solidarity relate to the diverse meanings that social dancing bear in the midst of late capitalist societies is in the scene’s nourishment of its own public image. Images of happy, harmless, sexy, addictive, magical, surprising, life-changing and healthy social environment are promoted and publicly distributed in many promotion spots online. But much as swing dancing does bring a sort of solidarity model to the advanced capitalist societies and is wide and generous enough to embrace many ‘lost’ individuals, it does not so equally for all. It would, if structural contexts allowed it, but for that cause it should step out of the capitalist frames, which is a utopian wish given that swing dance is an American product.

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