

## **Capitalism, values and moral in CI**

**Heike Kuhlmann**

Contact Improvisation is a dance form which has no trademark. It is an open source dance form where Contact Improvisers continuously research and develop the dance. They share their knowledge in the dance we share weight. If only one gives weight the other no, it doesn't work. If that happens the dance can get rather boring. There are no fixed roles of leading and following. Both dancers take both roles, both need to listen and bring their own impulses into the dance. Then the dance becomes a real dialogue, where the two dancers discover together unknown places and reach to where we couldn't get alone.

I am deeply passionate about this dance and its value for my life. As I feel this dance is like a playground where I can practice many different scores: one is educating my awareness about myself, my patterns, another is practising meeting other dancers. How do I meet sb? How much am I open to an encounter? Am I able to meet sb on eye level? Can I follow what is in the moment or do I choose familiar movement patterns, am I looking for familiar experiences or wanting to discover the unknown and being able to surprise myself.

When we meet on the dance floor and practice this dance form, we actually practice non-hierarchical encounters. We practice presence. We practice listening to ourselves and others. We practice openness and mindfulness. We practice being authentic and bringing ourselves into the dance with our whole being. We practice our creativity. We practice Contact Improvisation.

Really - are we?

How much are we aware about how much power structures in society influences our meetings, our dances? How much do we keep on practising the same social roles?

Many times I hear that we speak about a Contact community. What is a community? What do we/you/me mean by community?

The word community<sup>1</sup> first just means a group of people that feels connected

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<sup>1</sup> A **community** is a small or large social unit (a group of people) who have something in common, such as [norms](#), [religion](#), [values](#), or [identity](#). Communities often share a sense of [place](#) that is situated in a given geographical area

with each other. In a jam and even more in a festival we live and practice community and share the interest, CI, and also moments of daily life with each other. Therefore we look closer at the questions:

What is a community? What kind of community are we creating? What are our values in this community? Do we share the principles of CI as values for this community? Have most of the Contact dancers thought about what we are practising while we practising the dance? Sharing, giving and taking, supporting and being supported, leading and following, meeting on eye - level so, equality, listening and giving impulses - do we share these values?

In my point of view a community which is based on the principles, we practice in CI, could also be named as anarchistic dance community. Anarchy means without somebody leading. It is not a democratic dance form, because if we look what democracy means, it is a political form, where a majority decides and the minority accepts that. In old Greece the founding place of democracy, just free man were allowed to vote, slaves and woman where excluded. I think in Germany women gained the right to vote in 1918. Thus democracy has never been an inclusive political concept. Anarchy - in its theory - is the absence of a leader. There are different theories and different beliefs about what is anarchy.<sup>2</sup>

Just imagine what if we live together with other people without any leadership. As we are people who are coming from different backgrounds, having different socialisations, roles and positions, we need to acknowledge first our differences and different possibilities, before we can meet at eye level and follow no leader? Is it just a dream that one day in the future we will meet each other on eye- level? How can we include our respect about the differences, the different possibilities, respecting our brutal colonial and sexist history of the world as victims and opressors. E.g. Can I as a white european mainly heterosexual woman acknowledge my privilege and listen to what POC, trans or queer

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(e.g. a country, village, town, or neighborhood) or in virtual space trough communication platforms. Durable relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties also define a sense of community. People tend to define those social ties as important to their identity, practice, and roles in social institutions like family, home, work, government, society, or humanity. The word "community" derives from the [Old French](#) *comuneté*, which comes from the [Latin](#) *communitas* "community", "public spirit" (from Latin *communis*, "shared in common").<sup>[4]</sup> Human communities may share [intent](#), [belief](#), [resources](#), [preferences](#), [needs](#), and [risks](#) in common, affecting the [identity](#) of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness. ( wikipedia)

2 You can find more informations of anarchy online or in libraries.

people tell about their experience with white european heterosexual, mostly CIS people. Although it might be a critical and claims my privileges.

Most of us probably have been brought up in capitalist neoliberal societies. We have absorbed that life is about realizing the individual dream. Most of us learned this untrue belief that we can gain everything alone using our hard work or intelligence?

How many of us have learned that life is a huge process of negotiation?

Pondering and balancing the different desires and needs ?

How many of us from the Contact community are able and willing to face difficult group processes to create and live a society where all people are listened to and have the same rights?

From my personal perspective the Contact community is free to everybody who can afford it. It is an open community, if you accept the mostly heterosexual norms and power structures. It is far beyond being inclusive although theoretically it could. If we ask ourselves how we want to create a CI community? What are your desires/ your values? What do you/we/me want to share? Who do we/you/me want to include in the community? What does it need? How can we/you/me create access to this community? What can we share and distribute so that all who love or might love this dance can learn and practice and enjoy this dance? Where are your/my/ our boundaries?

If we start discussing also those aspects, maybe we can become more clear about what we are acutally sharing together in our Contact community besides a shared space for dancing.

And CI can offer the ground for this, very simply and yet difficult in focusing on our body, the earth and our partner.<sup>3</sup>

When we/you/me start thinking, philosophing, discussing our/my/your values/ beliefs with our body in motion, with our partner, with our cells, are we starting to bring what we love and practice in CI to also my/your/ our day-to-day life?!

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3 Daniel Lepkoff: "what happens when I focus my attention on the sensations of gravity, the earth, my partner? ....one needs to have a curiosity about one´s unique patterns of response. The underlying pratice requieres an appetite for not knowing, and a willingness to experience disorientation." ( CQ vol.25.1, Winter/Spring 2000)

I would like to meet other Contacters with the similar believes. As we live in capitalist societies, we need to consider what capitalism is doing to our dance, to our community! As capitalism is very intelligent, it has the ability to absorb new ideas and transform them on behalf of capitalism, leaving just a container without content. Is that happening with Contact Improvisation?

If I assume the community is sharing the principles of CI as values, I can ask you as the community if you are conscious about what capitalism is doing with our dance, doing with our community? What do we need to really share, support and listen? If we look at the promotion of festivals, flyers etc., we realize there is a huge market of selling CI to ...What are we selling? To whom are we selling? What are we promoting?

I really ask all of you to start talking, discussing, dancing our values and what we share in common practising CI. What kind of community do we/you/me want to create together? What is our/your/my common base?

I am Heike Kuhlmann, dancer, choreographer. I have been dancing CI since 20 years. I study movement and dance since I am child. Professionally I trained and invested a lot of money in dance, somatic movement and bodywork trainings and workshops. I am deeply grateful to all my teachers, which shared their knowledges with me. I am deeply grateful to my students with whom I am learning, with my colleagues with whom I sharing, with my friends in- and outside of the Contact community. I thank you for sharing your knowledge, your time, your friendship, your love, yourself with me. I am deeply unhappy and also I am angry angry about the way we live in the world. The ones who have a lot get more, the ones who have nothing need to work harder and harder to still have nothing. I am fortunated living in Germany, living and being able to sell my work and sell CI. But there is more that I want.

My utopian and anarchistic vision of society tells me there is more to achieve in CI and in society, the world and life. There is so much potential in CI. I invite whoever is got interested through this text in entering in discussion, dancing dialogues.

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