Moulin Rouge Las Vegas... unincorporated townships are a designation “originally authorized to assist in the conveyance of land and are commonly thought of as a rural form of government with limited power.” This designation is typically reserved for rural areas where a governing body cannot adequately provide municipal services the garbage collection, sewage, and electricity. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Paradise has grown to become the most populous unincorporated township in the United States, continually challenging its status as an informal city. Clark and Sharp also note that “unincorporated townships have grown so large that they are functional equivalents of cities, providing a broad range of services beyond their original ‘rural’ responsibilities.” The unincorporated township, once a state of economic and political exception, has since morphed into an acceptable form of city building with essential services offloaded to the county level of government. Modelling themselves after Paradise as a precedent of smaller government and greater corporate influence, several adjacent communities have since claimed unincorporated status, including Summerlin, Sunnyside Manor, Spring Valley, and Enterprise, effectively resisting annexation by the municipality of the City of Las Vegas. Residents generally prefer the absence of a municipal level of government, as property taxes are typically much lower. Jill S. Clark and Jeff K. Sharp, “Between the Country and the Concrete: Rediscovering the Rural-Urban Fringe,” City & Community 7, no. 1 (2008): 61–79.


The unincorporated township has grown to become the most populous unincorporated township in the United States, providing a broad range of services beyond their original ‘rural’ responsibilities. The unincorporated township, once a state of economic and political exception, has since morphed into an acceptable form of city building with essential services offloaded to the county level of government. Modelling themselves after Paradise as a precedent of smaller government and greater corporate influence, several adjacent communities have since claimed unincorporated status, including Summerlin, Sunnyside Manor, Spring Valley, and Enterprise, effectively resisting annexation by the municipality of the City of Las Vegas. Residents generally prefer the absence of a municipal level of government, as property taxes are typically much lower. Jill S. Clark and Jeff K. Sharp, “Between the Country and the Concrete: Rediscovering the Rural-Urban Fringe,” City & Community 7, no. 1 (2008): 61–79.

Dance Dance Revolution

DJ Zhao

“If I Can’t Dance, I Don’t Want to Be Part of Your Revolution”
–Attributed to Emma Goldman

“Music is a weapon, a real weapon, in a concrete sense.”
–Desmond Tutu

“Dancing is the remedy of resistance, the art of the marginalized and dispossessed.”
–Marc de la Maizon

In the summer of 2014, a ten-block area in the middle of Kreuzweg was cordoned off around a school in which some refugees had barricaded themselves in defiance of deportation orders. Next to the school, at the centre of an intersection, a mobile sound system was set up, around which hundreds of people sat in the streets in solidarity with refugees. Around them were about eight or nine police vans, with dozens of police standing around, watchful.

Before me was a one-man/woman electro-punk band, who screamed into the mic above pounding beats and abrasive slabs of synth noise at a high volume. People listened, and the police stood around, doing nothing. Afterwards, I began my set, at a lower volume, with groovy African music. Smiles immediately appeared all around, as people stood up and began to dance. Chaos erupted suddenly only three minutes later, as a dozen police rushed the sound system, yelling aggressively to shut off the music. I switched off the sound and threw my arms around my equipment, because it looked like they were about to smash everything. Protestors tried to stop them, a few fights broke out, and some were arrested, as I packed up and got the hell out of there.

This experience made one thing very clear to me: the most dangerous thing in the eyes of the police was dancing. But why?

In 186 B.C., 7,000 members of the cult of Disensus were imprisoned, tortured, and executed in Rome for challenging “Roman values” with sex, psychoactive substances, and dancing. The Bacchic Mysteries were infamous for the blurring of boundaries between genders and classes, promoting dangerous ideas such as rights for women, children, and foreigners, and giving slaves a taste of what freedom feels like. Justification for the crackdown was the claim of criminal activities during the all-night, all-day ecstatic orgiastic rites. But even such large-scale suppression failed to eradicate the movement, and Rome eventually gave the cult official status, making it a state-sanctioned religion, helping to curtail its vitality and reduce its influence on the population.

This should sound familiar to us, because it is different from the passing of many versions of Anti-terror legislation during recent decades in the UK, US, and elsewhere, based on allegations of criminal activities during the events (usually involving psychoactive substances). Under these new laws, voluntary dance gatherings outside of the structures of consumerism were strictly forbidden, and police in the UK now have the power to
groups always more extensively engage in participatory dancing, preserving remnants of age-old practices. It is not accidental that the Irish, with their rich indigenous cultural history abused and exploited by the processes of modernization and colonialism, are known to dance on condition of lifting off the span of a few hours per night. Another example of the prohibition of social dancing was the cabaret license required of bars and clubs in NYC in the 1990s for the permission of “moving in time to music” on the premises: on multiple occasions I have seen police storm venues and shut down concerts under this pretext.

In the Roman Empire, the Dionysian cult and other similar mystery religions of the last few centuries B.C. were already forming a revival movement that sought to bring back indigenous Eurasion and European practices, pre-Abrahamic animist spiritual systems—ancient methods of worship, rituals, and modes of being which by then were nearing extinction at the hands of successes of conquering armies. After going underground again since the fall of Rome, secret Bacchanals went on in the forests of Europe until as late as the 1700s, before being eventually stamped out by government and religious institutions (only to resurface in the West a couple of centuries later). Dancing together is often today largely only participatory dance later.

But this general historical process of erasing aboriginal cultures by dominant empires, and the resultant institutionalized negative attitudes toward social dancing, are not confined to Europe. Without exception, legacies of participatory dancing around the world always exist in the cultures of the systematically oppressed, under-privileged, and marginalized. On the flip side, the official music of kingdoms, states, and their elites is typified by grandiose, courtly, self-important, reserved, and restrictively cerebral “classical” forms that dictate docile and passive modes of enjoyment. In China, the thousands of ethnic minorities (such as the Uyghur) have exquisite and flamboyant customs of social dance to the beat-driven music and social dance

### NIGHT: INSURGENCIES

### Victory of forests and islands promote

### more joyful, freeform dancing, in contrast to the large-ensemble court gamelans that play stately, majestic, and monumental compositions where dance is pure spectacle.

### Compared to other places, traditional ways of dancing survived much better in Africa. The African continent, as many cultures were only recently conquered by sovereign powers and thoroughly subjected to the homogenizing and destructive forces of imperialism, which occurred much earlier in most of Asia and Europe. Large African states such as the Mali Empire also somewhat differed from their counterparts in absorbing the cultures of the groups they conquered, rather than eradicating them wholesale. This is why the culture of rhythm and dance in Africa survives and thrives to a greater extent than elsewhere. Ever since the advent of colonialism, rhythmically focused music from Africa has been regarded by the European establishment as primitive and subhuman, its guttural noises and beats seen as belonging much more to the reign of savagery than polite society. In particular, hip movements were and are, as seen in the recent controversies over twerking) a huge taboo among domesticated Western subjects. Unbroken connection with the body and guilt-free expression of sensual energy was (and is) considered “improper” and “lewd” to people conditioned by millennia of body-shame and sexual repression.

This is why Africans had to be demonized, humiliated, brutalized, subjugated, “civilized,” and Christianized, because their supreme dignity, and lack of shame and inhibition were greatly intimidating to the prohibitive cultures of Europe.

Anyone not convinced of this only needs to compare the contemporary dance floor of any African with those in Europe, and the joyful, healing movements—of the human body, as that has been perfected in the land of Africa, perhaps more than elsewhere.

### music, in terms of sociology, drumming, singing, and dancing together (along with ritualized orgasmic practices in conjunction with the imbibing of sacred entheogens) builds group cohesion, develops trust, encourages cooperation, and forges strong bonds between members of society. Participatory dance is a deeply ingrained, centrally important social
trait, an essential organizing principle common to human communities around the world prior to the advent of class and hierarchy roughly 12,000 years ago. Because it brings people together voluntarily, and creates ecstatic group consciousness via collective trance states, communal dancing reveals divisions, categories, inequalities, and laws to be arbitrary and meaningless, and is a convivial activity inherently corrosive of top-down authority. As David Hesmondhalgh writes,

[R]ave confirmed the subversive populism of dance. Its dangerous reputation was sealed by a “moral panic” in the national press about the drugs associated with the scene. [...] Accompanying this panic, though, was an especially strong Utopian discourse of collectivism and equality within club culture, which stressed the breaking-down of terms, gender differences. Dance events had long been viewed as rituals of togetherness and inclusion, but the new dance culture went further, and the rhetoric at least was genuinely democratizing: “No performers, no VIPs, we are all special,” was one typical slogan from a club flyer.

The popular notion today that dance music and its “unreflective hedonism” is apathetic and apolitical needs to be turned on its head: participatory dance itself is inherently anarchic, democratic, and revolutionary. Re-connection to both the flows of our own and other bodies can be insurrectionary; and an embrace of communal, orgiastic sexuality on the dance floor, even if only symbolically, is itself a radical gesture caustic to authority and its enforced repression and alienation. House music, for example, came from the queer Black spaces that marginalized people had carved out for themselves, and Techno was “a reaction to inner-city decay, as by-product of African-American struggle, as a form of protest.” We may have much work to do concerning the utilization of the emancipatory power of dance in specific revolutionary praxis, but around the world it is already a central part of liberation struggles (such as the Freedom Songs and dances of Anti-Apartheid South Africa). Despite the effects of commercialization, and even within the co-opted space of the club, consumerist codes can break down and borders can dissolve, as ecstatic dancers experience extraordinary states anathema to normalized dehumanizing and exploitative relations. After all, dancing has the potential to take us beyond ego-identification, and break up impediments to libidinal flow. Perhaps in some ways, the 12,000-year-old oppressive walls of hierarchical civilization can be dismantled, and the structural cancer that is capitalism can be cured simply by joyful hip-shaking.

NOTES

1 Desmond Tutu, Power of Freedom Songs (Making Music, 2002).
2 Marc de la Maison, Facebook comment (Facebook, 2016).
3 Daniele Bolelli, The Slave Wars (History On Fire, 2015).
5 NYC Cabaret License, (NYS Department of Consumer Affairs, 1997).

Listen to soundtrack: https://soundcloud.com/djzhao/dance-dance-revolution