

The Experience of Dancing Communities

The construction of community and nationhood among folk
dancers in Aberdeen



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Picture front-page¹

¹ <http://www.aberdeenperformingarts.com/events/ceilidh-with-clachan-yell-343683>, last retrieved: 27-06-2016

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Figure 1: Map of Scotland²

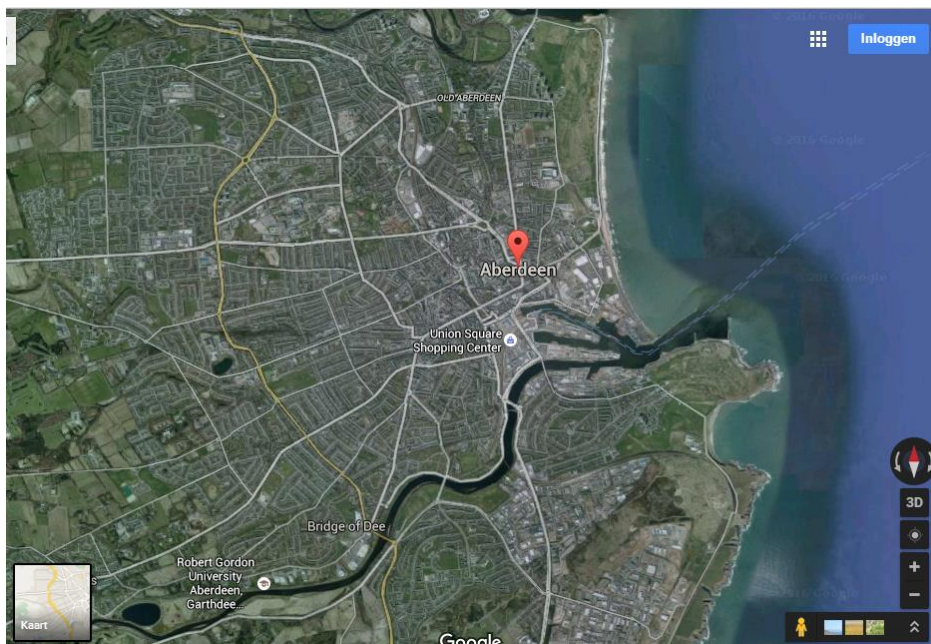


Figure 2: Map of Aberdeen³

² <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/europe/scotland/>, last retrieved: 27-06-2016

³ <https://www.google.nl/maps/place/Aberdeen,+Verenigd+Koninkrijk/@57.1466262,-2.1880436,11395m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x4884054c1fd77549:0xe8bb05da5cf4c472!8m2!3d57.149717!4d-2.094278>

Acknowledgement

Dance and music give colour to the lives of people, during our fieldwork in Scotland we experienced that it certainly does. Being surrounded by Scottish up cheering music and dance movements for three months has definitely enriched our lives. At first, we did not know what to expect when we packed our backs and began our road to the edge of the Scottish Highlands. But in the end we ended up meeting such warm and lovely people. They were very welcoming and always willing to help. After all we could not feel more at home and felt very sad about leaving this wonderful group of people.

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Introduction

The first night when we walked in a pub in Aberdeen we were impressed by Scottish cultural aspects we noticed and which we would see far more often in Scottish daily life. The Scottish flag hanging prominent in the bar, the television in the pub showing sports, the burgers and fries and few vegetables meals at the menu and the high amount of alcoholic, especially Scottish ales and whiskey, that every single person drinks. In the course of the evening, musicians walked into the pub and started playing folk music. Whoever wanted was welcome to play along, watch, sing along or even dance at the music.

Throughout the whole nation, these Scottish cultural feelings are expressed. Thereby it gave a good impression of the important role of music in Scottish culture. Often live music is played in pubs or on the streets. In the extension of this, Scottish folk dance is commonly practiced too. On primary school Scottish folk dance is learned during physical education classes and still danced later in life. In Scotland folk dancing exist in many forms like Highland dances, Scottish Country dances and ceilidh dances. These dances are old and perceived as Scottish traditions. The dances kept our interest because they bring people together and appeared to be an effective way for community making. Dancing is a way to express the self and can be seen as a non-verbal way of communication (Jackson 1983: 323). The communication and social interactions during dances cause meanings (Marrion, 2006: 64). For example, dancers become aware of a collective identity. Besides communication, dancing also contributes to a sense of communality. Anderson (2006: 145) describes how singing the same words with the national anthem, and the awareness of this, can give a sense of communality. This is also the case with dance where the same steps are danced at the same time. The communality and social interaction in dancing can create awareness of a collective identity and a feeling of community among dancers.

Moreover, dancing can also contribute to a sense of a bigger community, namely a national community. Scottish symbols like the kilt and Scottish music are imbedded in the dances. Dancing the folk dances can evoke national feelings among the dancers and can be seen as an expression of Scottish nationality. In that way folk dance can also contribute to the construction of nationhood. In the theoretical discussion about the relation between dancing and nationhood, Anderson (2006: 11) argues that national symbols and traditions are ways to express nationality and thus the group where people belong to. Due the practice of national symbols and traditions, people feel part of a nation and this is the case with Scottish folk dance.

Also Reed (1998: 511) who has done anthropological researches about dance, believes in the power of music and dance. According to her, both can create a sense of belonging. Dance and music thus can be used to foster national feelings.

Folk dance and music are able to express Scottish nationality, but especially in the case of ceilidh dancing they can also relate to specific regions of Scotland. The tunes played during dances and the way of dancing can differ per region. In that way the dance can also contribute to local feelings among the dancers. Folk dance and music can function as construction and identification with several levels and it is interesting to have a closer look.

This research focuses on two popular forms of Scottish folk dance, namely Scottish Country Dancing (SCD) and ceilidh dancing. Where SCD is performed in societies, has standardized dances and is gentle, ceilidh dance is uncontrolled and looser of nature. Ceilidhs are open to everyone. People do not have to know any dances, but just buy a ticket to join the dance night. SCD are also open to new people, but the dance nights are more a gathering of people of the society. SCD form partly for this reason a more connected group than the ceilidh dancers. The dances differ in several more aspects from each other and that provide an interesting comparison to investigate. These differences between the dances can influence the way the dancers perceive their dance as a Scottish expression or in the way the dance can bond people and ensure a feeling of belonging.

The central research question of this thesis is: *How does folk dance contribute to the experience of community making and nationhood among Scottish Country Dancers and ceilidh dancers?* In order to answer this question we first sketch who the SCD and ceilidh dancers are. Then we have a look at how these dances are perceived and practiced as constructions of community. Afterwards we look at the bigger perspective and see how these dances can contribute to nationhood.

The context to examine this research is Aberdeen, a city located in the North East of Scotland. Scotland is perceived as a strong national community so it is interesting to see how traditional dancing here can contribute and bond people on local and national level. Aberdeen provides an interesting context for the research. Firstly, both dances are practiced a lot in this city. Many SCD and ceilidh dancing are organized and visited a lot. The large amount of both dances and dancers makes it easier to do research. Secondly, Aberdeen is a city with many foreign people. As anthropological authors like Barth and Eriksen agree, groups are formed in contact with others. The appearance of people with different backgrounds or norms and values, makes people aware of themselves what results in shaping their own identity. The surrounding

of many other nationalities thus provides an interesting context to see how community forming take place among SCD and ceilidh dancers in Aberdeen.

With regard to the theoretical relevance this research aims to contribute to the discussion about community making on local as well as national level. It aims to function as additionally data to support authors as Jackson and Anderson who emphasize the communicative and communal character of dance. The research also provides additional insides in the relation between folk dance and nationhood since there has not been much research with regard to this topic in Aberdeen. Furthermore, the subject is of relevance in these decades in which borders between nations and cultures become vague and people search for a tangible identity and belonging to a group. Music and dance can be ways and are therefore a good topic to explore the relation between folk music and national feelings.

The anthropological methods used to conduct the research are mainly hanging out, participant observation, participant participation, conversations, online research and of course qualitative interviews. Before the research started in Aberdeen, we read about several methods of qualitative research in DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) to get an impression of possible methods. Some of the methods we used, like conversations and qualitative interviews, are taken for granted to use because these are main ways to gain data for anthropological research. We outline a few methods which helped us a lot during the research.

Hanging out helped us to discover the field in the first place. It helped to find out how 'things go' in Aberdeen and to meet people who know more about the dancing scene. Pubs, the university dance society, and the Elphinstone Institute helped us get to know where to go. Also 'hanging out online' was useful and necessary. We joined Facebook groups of SCD and ceilidhs, the Music Hall and for example The Blue Lamp, a place where dance nights were held. On these Facebook groups upcoming dance events were posted and therefore useful to know what places we could go. Piece by piece we got further into the field, learned places to go and met the many interesting and helpful folk dancers and musicians.

What also deserves some attention is the importance of participation. Going on the dancefloor and dance with the other people makes it easy for small talk and to get part of the group. People are more open and willing to talk about their motivations for joining the folk dances if you dance along with them. To make it easier to be part of the group of dancers, we took dance classes at the Aberdeen University Scottish Dance Society. Because of these lessons we became more competent and experienced in the dances. It made us more confident to join dances and thus to become part of the dancers of our research field. This applies especially for SCD since ceilidh dancing does not require any dance experience. The dance lessons also

provided contacts, because the students we met at this society could bring us in contact with people in both dance fields. By using the snowball effect we became familiar with the people in both dance scenes.

Ethics have been considered during and also after the research. In the field we always introduced ourselves as anthropology students and explained the subject of our research. By telling about the research to every informant, we ensured informal consent. To guarantee privacy of the informants, we made the data anonymous by changing the real names in fake ones. Our informants liked the dancing and were not ashamed at all to talk about the subject. Though with regard to the ethical code of anthropology we decided to use the data as anonymous as possible.

Another point of ethical reflection is our influence on the research as researchers. Within anthropological fieldwork the researcher is its own instrument. This means that accuracy, reliability and the intercourse with the informants are important to take in concern during the whole research. Our research field consist of as well men as women and are also very open and welcoming to both sexes. In that sense we think that the fact that we are both female does not have had a major influence. We had easy access to our fields.

The thesis is composed of different chapters starting with a theoretical framework to present the ideas and discussions about relevant concepts within the anthropological literature. Subsequently a chapter about the context of the research provides a better picture of the background and places where the research has been conducted. After the context the empirical chapters introduce the collected data starting with the Scottish Country Dance and then the ceilidh dance. The empirical chapters will mostly be about the collected data in Aberdeen. In the conclusion we will make the connections with literature. In this last chapter we will answer the research question as well and give suggestions for further research.

(Berber)

1. Theoretical framework

In what follows, we discuss theoretical concepts which are related to the research subject. We sketch the concepts and discussions within the anthropological literature. Main discussions within literature about dance and identity, effects of globalization on identity and community, and national identities will be outlined. Firstly, we sketch how dance can contribute to a sense of a community and collective identity. Subsequently, we will outline how in the time of globalization, traditions and a sense of community become more important. Finally, we will describe the perceptions and making of national communities.

(Luca & Berber)

1.1 Dance, music and identity

Dance and music can function as an important instrument to provide a sense of belonging and communality. In this paragraph, we would like to elaborate upon the relationship between dance, music and the connection between people. Firstly, we will describe how dance contributes to a certain self-identity. Secondly, we will outline how dance can be seen as an important form of non-verbal communication and how it deepens feelings of communality and a sense of belonging. Finally, we will sketch how dance and music contributes to the experience of a national identity.

Dance and identity

Dance and music are inevitably intertwined, because music makes dancers synchronize their movements and imbue a shared emotional state. Different types of music attract and construct different identities. According to Turino (1999: 234) “how we speak, how we walk, how we dance, how we play music- are unspoken signs of who we are, whom we resemble, and thus whom we are with”. This is shown particularly in participatory musical and dance occasions, where differences in expression can easily identify outsiders of the group (Turino 1999: 234).

Identities are relational and during performances, such as dance, identities connect through aspiration and imagination (Pegg 2001: 5). Whether these identities are individual or shared within a collective, connections are made that evoke feelings of both belonging and difference (Pegg 2001: 5). Dance allows agents to express and mediate structural boundaries,

such as ethnicity, nationality, politics, history, religion, status or gender, allowing for self-expression more elaborately than with merely words (Pegg 2001: 5). Dance can thus be seen as a form of bodily communication, and facilitates social cohesion and identity formation in different ways.

Social identity and dance

Before we will outline the relationship between dance and social identity it is important to be aware of the use of the body as means of communication. In many western cultures, the importance of dance as means of communication is often overshadowed by verbal communication. It is primarily seen as an art form and placed in a semiotic vacuum outside of language and meaning. In fact, Albright (1997) refers to dance as bodily 'texts' and differentiates in social dance, theatrical performance and ritualized movement. These forms of dance all contribute to the formation of social identities by expressing and challenging otherwise static representations of gender, race sexuality, social class and physical ability (Albright 1997) The challenging of these representations can happen through the wearing of gender-inconsistent attire or accessories during a dance performance, or by dancing actively as an elderly person. Depending on the cultural context of the dance, dancing can fulfil different roles.

According to Jackson (1983: 322) the use of the body as an instrument for communication and the expression of thoughts always remain to a great extent beyond speech. He explains that this is because our earliest memories are usually communication through sensations or direct impressions instead of spoken words or thoughts (Jackson 1983: 323). Dance is an expression form in which a lot of non-verbal interaction takes place with the body. This interaction bears meaning for people and creates feelings among the people who are dancing together that are hard to describe in words (Marrion 2006: 64). In a more fundamental perspective, one gains a sense of oneself and the external world through attunement and interaction with other bodies (Sarles 1975:30). This interaction especially happens in dance.

Dance always bears specific meanings because it is embodied with various forms of social communication, on stage or in the form of a dance party (Pusnik 2010: 107-108). Communication through dance takes form in gestures, body and music which is experienced with other people surrounding them (Pusnik 2010: 107-108). More specific, dance can be seen as a type of body language communicated in signs as the movements of the body and steps. These signs are directed by certain rules as rhythm and the sequence of the dance moves (Pusnik

2010: 107-108). In a more wider sense, dance can be seen as a cultural practice which also contains other cultural artefacts and practices associated with physical movement as music, clothing and shoes, dance parties and performances (Pusnik 2010: 107-108).

Goffman (1959) understands performance as the basic element of everyday live. In addition Turner (1987: 81) says that humans in general can be defined as self-performing animals. In line with this ideas Schechner (1987) aims that all social action is staged and in a way is a performance.

The communality and intensity of dance experiences can contribute to the forming of communal identity and identification (Marrion 2006: 91). Because of the communicative character of dance and music, it can contribute to the awareness of a collective identity and sense of belonging. Of all shared experiences, dance can be the most valued because the individual experience takes place within the collective conscious of the community. As (Marrion, 2006: 74) argues of all shared experiences, dance can be the most valued because of the absorption of individual experiences within the collective conscious of the community. Dancing is a social activity which brings people together in solidarity (Marrion 2006: 74). This experience of a collective identity through dance and music, is also reflected in the experience of being part of a national community.

National identity and dance

Music and dance can be strong elements in the creation of nationhood (Connell, Gibson, 2003: 118) As described above music and dance can reinforce feelings of a shared community, since it contribute to the process of inclusion and exclusion, it includes members who belong to the same group and exclude 'outsider' (Connell, Gibson 2003: 118). In this section we will outline how music and dance are responsible for the creation of a national community.

Anderson (2006: 145) argues that in the hearing and singing of the words and tunes of national anthems an experience of simultaneity is formed. Within such moments people who are unknown to each other speak the same words on the same melody (Anderson 2006: 145). In the awareness that others are singing the same song at the exact moment as we are doing it, even though they are strangers, and we might not even hear them sing, we are all connected by imagined sound (Anderson 2006: 145). These feeling of connectedness becomes even stronger during as shared dance experience, where people are moving synchronized together on the same melody. Here the dancers becomes part of the whole group and loses itself in an act of

participation. This is evidently the most strong in the participation of dances that are considered to be 'traditional' dances of the nation.

According to Edensor (2002: 81-82) dance is an embodied performance, performed in styles which embody national characteristics. Desmond (1997: 34) argues that by the language of bodily movement complex networks of relationships are constructed. Furthermore that through the way of participation together collective identities are constructed (Desmond 1997: 34).

In conclusion, dance and music are responsible for the creation of certain self-identities. Since dance and music are mostly bodily shared experiences with others, it also contributes to the feelings of a collective identity and community. This community feeling is also experienced on the level of national community, whereby music and dance evokes feelings of being part of the same 'imagined community'.

(Luca)

1.2 Globalization, locality and tradition

Dance and music can thus contribute the creation of self-identities and collective identities. The surrounding and the time we live it influences this process. Therefore, in this paragraph we take a closer look at global processes and effects. Nowadays we live in a globalized world. Since the eighties and nineties, the world has become more and more interconnected through the development of technology and the increased access to the internet (Eriksen 2007: 3). It should be clear that these kinds of global processes are not new. There have always been interactions and networks over the world, but because of acceleration of these developments, interconnections are more visible nowadays (Eriksen 2007: 5). The increasing interconnectedness between people and communities have influence on the way people perceive themselves, others and communities.

Essential to globalization is the debate about homogenization and heterogenization. Some believe that globalization has a negative effect on specific local identity, since many different cultural aspects are implemented into the main culture. Since this process can be found in many places in the world, cultures become increasingly similar and homogenized. However, the idea that globalization means homogenization is seen as simplistic and misleading according to Eriksen (2007: 6). Globalization inevitably leads to forms of standardization, but this does not mean that all cultures and societies become the same. Appadurai and Schuerkens both agree with this. Appadurai (2002: 50) states that arguments in favor of homogenization fail to take in

consideration that forms of standardization become indigenized into societies. The word 'indigenized' means that cultural forces are modified to fit in with local culture (Kottak 2011: 381). Schuerkens (2003: 215) cites Hannerz to explain that norms and values and symbols create the social reality in daily life. This local daily life is considered as the area in which a culture is created and spread, locally as well as globally. Both authors imply that because through the effects of globalization, local communities become aware of themselves and how they present themselves.

Although cultural elements and identities are initially formed and created in local life, Eriksen argues that globalization leads to disembeddedness. The aspect of location is perceived as less important for the formation of cultural elements and identities (Eriksen 2007: 8). When distance is less important, locality is less important as well, because places are separated by meaningless distances. According to Eriksen (2007: 8-9) this results in a feeling of vulnerability about people's position, identity and belonging. A response to these disembedded feelings could be what Eriksen (2007: 142) calls re-embedding. Re-embedding projects attempt to recreate local uniqueness and a sense of security and trust. These projects can be focused on different aspects of identity: from culture to religion to politics to ethnicity.

Bauman also writes about feelings of disembeddedness. According to Bauman (1998: 77) there is less reason to stay at one certain place. Natural borders fade away and we can go everywhere in short time. This reduces the reasons to stay at a certain place and because of this and people might feel disembedded with their own culture (Bauman 1998: 77). This disembeddedness and insecurity makes people look for ways to get a grip on their lives. This reality that we live in today is what Bauman calls the liquid modern society. This is a society which does not remain the same shape for a long time, it changes fast and is because of that always uncertain. Many new beginnings and endings follow each other quickly and it is hard to establish habits (Bauman 2005: 1-2). Like identities, communities also become momentary and fleeting and have a 'single-purpose' (Bauman 2000: 199). This type of society involves what Bauman calls cloak communities: a community of temporary nature, gathered around a shared focus but without much commitment (Deuze 2007: 677). There is a so called spectacle or performance of shared interest of separate individuals that brings them together for a short period of time (Bauman 2000: 200). These kinds of communities come and go and there are many of them. Like Eriksen said, a place has to become meaningful again by re-embedding aspects of identity. Cloakroom communities provide an opportunity for re-embedding. Even though it is short-term, people have the opportunity to belong to a group. This way they can gain the meaningful feeling that Eriksen describes.

Besides belonging to a short-term community, Friedman (1994:86) states that nowadays people also like to identify with a nation-state to find roots and meaning. The nation-state can give people a feeling of belonging and its stable character provides a way for identification (Friedman 1994: 8). This form of re-embedding can make space meaningful again and in that way not fleeting, because the nation-state is territorially defined.

Another way of re-embedding is the use of traditions as a tool to give meaning to a place and a community. By practicing a tradition in a group, people will feel a sense of connection with each other. It creates a feeling of belonging and shapes people's identity. In their definition of tradition, Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012: 1) encompass the formally constructed and instituted traditions, as well as the traditions which emerged but established rapidly in a short period of time. According to Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012: 1) the inventing of a tradition is taken to mean "a set of practices", "tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature". In short, traditions are a response to changes of the modern world and try to structure parts of social life.

Though traditions can function as a way of re-embedding, Giddens argues that we live in a post-traditional world in which traditions cannot be taken for granted anymore. Instead we have to defend them to keep them alive (Giddens 1994: 48). He says that in the world of today we have to choose what traditions we want to keep, and in what way traditions can stay valuable for our daily lives (Giddens 1994: 49). This implies the possibility to adjust traditions, or in other words, that traditions are adaptable to new circumstances. This is an important feature because it says that traditions can be created and performed in the way people wish. In that way traditions can be used to provide a safe feeling and belonging.

All in all, the invention and practicing of traditions can be seen as a way to construct and maintain a community. Because of the mentioned effects of globalization, people have a desire for a stable and secure community, and last but not least, a community which is meaningful to them. Traditions like dance can be practiced to make this community meaningful and thus can play an important part in the construction and reconstruction of personal identities, ethnic groups and nations. In this thesis we will have a look how this applies to the folk dancers in Aberdeen. In the next paragraph we will continue on this construction and pay specific attention to the nation and nationalism.

(Berber)

1.3 Identity, groups and nationalism

The previous paragraph illustrated how perceptions of identity have become more vulnerable and how people deal with it. The processes that take place to create an identity, we will firstly elaborate on the debate about identity construction. Subsequently, the establishment of communities will be linked with the broader context of the national community.

We all have an image of who we are or want to be, we all ‘have an identity’. Jenkins has researched identity and the way we identify ourselves with different groups. According to Jenkins (2000: 7) processes of identity and identification have everything to do with categorization. Social identification is formed by classification: the way we identify ourselves and the other. Jenkins describes the shaping of social identification as an “ongoing interplay” (Jenkins 2000: 7). Subsequently, he discusses the ‘internal-external dialectic as a feature of identity (2000: 9). This means that the internal definition of a group is shaped by the categorizing of an external, other, group. On the other side, the external definition influences the group identification. Both aspects are essential to the process of identification, which implies that social identification is never a one way process (Jenkins 2000: 8). Where Jenkins believes identification of the internal group is inextricably linked to the definition of an external group, Brubaker links identification with relational and categorical networks. Identification in a relational mode means identifying on the basis of family or friendship, in other words identification in a relational network. The categorical mode concerns identifying on the basis of a shared membership like a shared language, ethnicity or nationality.

With regard to group forming Barth argues that social boundaries define a group, not the cultural stuff inside (Barth 1969: 15). Group identities are defined and redefined in interaction with one another. Ethnic identities, for example, constitute at the intersections of ethnic boundaries. The presence of other ethnic groups highlight differences in behavior and values, and this results in the rise of ethnic boundaries (Barth 1969: 15). Thus, Barth emphasizes the contact between cultures as a necessity to maintain their groups and perceives this as is an ongoing process. This is consistent with the ‘external’ aspect of Jenkins’ internal-external dialectic. Both authors think that the other, external groups influence the own group identification.

Eriksen agrees with Barth that ethnic groups develop in interaction with other groups. There must be contact between groups and during this contact, groups form ideas about being culturally different than that other group. This certain relationship is a key element of ethnicity instead of a property. But, different from Barth’s point of view Eriksen defines ethnicity as an

“aspect of social relationship between persons who consider themselves as essentially distinctive from members of other groups whom they are aware and with whom they enter into relationships” (Eriksen 2010: 16-17). In other words, the members perceive their social relationship as ethnically different from another group whereas Barth focus on difference in behavior and values. Additionally, Eriksen (2010: 17) perceives ethnicity as a social identity which can have political and symbolic meaning. So, ethnicity is in this view more than difference in behavior and can be an instrument too.

With regard to the ethnicity debate, Smith (2002: 24) states that ethnicity is one of the oldest and most used ways to differentiate populations in categories. According to Smith (2002: 25), an ethnic community contains certain main features which focus, in contrast to Barth, on the cultural stuff inside including myths, ethno-history, memories and elements of shared culture. These ethnic values and symbols are closely linked to the formation of a nation. According to Smith, myths and memories are important: “they represent the inner fundamental foundation of many nations” (Smith: 2000: 25). Ethnic groups and nations are formed by shared cultural elements. In contradiction to the ethnic origin of the nation-state which Smith believes in, Gellner emphasizes the political aspect and defines nations as “groups which will themselves to persist as communities” (Gellner 2006: 52). According to Gellner, culture and ethnicity are not the basis of nations because they can change in relatively short time while the creation of a nation-state is a process of a long time.

Apart from the content of a nation-state, Gellner (2006: 46) states that the nation-state is a new phenomenon and a modern construction. It is a new sort of social organization arising from the political will to create a nation. The idea of the nation as a new and modern construction is shared by Anderson. While Gellner sees the nation as a fictive concept, Anderson sees it more realistically. Although the nation-state is relatively young, people want to see it as something old which is legitimated with a specific story and traditions which are perceived to be old (Anderson 2006: 11). Similarly to Smith, Anderson believes that the nation is among others defined by created national symbols, a specific history and national traditions. Anderson’s belief that these are all created leads to his core argument that the nation-state is an imagined community. It is imagined because you will never know all the people of the nation you belong to, but you do identify with this nation like natural ties (Anderson 2006: 6). Because of the traditions and national stories, people feel connected to a community which is larger than a face-to-face community.

Furthermore, Anderson (2006: 10) makes a comparison between religion and the nation-state. He explains that religion tries to answer big questions in life that go beyond our rational

knowledge, for example, questions about life and death, immortality and fatality (Anderson 2006: 10-11). Moreover, religion can give a secure feeling of continuity, a safe community which will always exist. A nation gives this feeling of a community and security as well. According to Anderson, the nation-state gives people a strong sense of belonging and identification. Hence, national heritage can be seen as a significant pillar of contribution in the constitution of a community.

To conclude, identification plays an important role in the life of human beings. Especially identifications on ethnic or national level. They occur with interactions with other people and groups. These identifications are dependent on time and context. In the current times of globalization, the contexts have changed and there has been a renewed interest in these concepts. New circumstances leads to new needs of identifications and community forming. In the next chapter we will see how this is the case for folk dancing and how Scottish folk music and dance are ways to practice a feeling of shared community and national community.

(Berber)

2. The Scottish experience of identity and dance: Ceilidh dancing and Scottish Country Dancing

In the previous chapter, we have outlined the theoretical main concepts embodying our research in Scotland. In this section, we will take a closer look at the context of our fieldwork study and reveal the relevance of our study. First of all, we will outline how people in Scotland construct national identity. Subsequently we will explain the central place of dance and music within community forming. Finally, we discuss how this is experienced by the Scottish Country Dancers and Ceilidh dancers at our fieldwork site in Aberdeen.

The Scottish passport: National identity in Scotland

The Scots generally feel a strong identification with their country. This is visible in different aspects of Scottish life, for example in music, dance, football and politics. The latter has become particularly clear since the recent referendum, held on the 18th of September in 2014. The Scots particularly felt that leaving the British Union and joining the European Union could be beneficial for them after the discovery of North Sea Oil on their territorial waters. (Kumar 2000: 593). At the aforementioned referendum, people in Scotland had the choice to vote for an independent Scotland or to stay with the British union. With an outcome of forty-five to fifty-five percent, Scotland remained part of the United Kingdom (The Guardian 2014). With the recent Brexit referendum on the 23th of June, British citizens voted to leave the European Union with a small majority of fifty-two percent. Since sixty-two percent of the Scots voted to remain in the European Union, Scottish politicians are searching for ways to stay in the EU, for example in the form of a second referendum on Scottish independence.

The wish for some people in Scotland to become independent stems from their perspective of Scottish nationalism, since there is a difference in the perspective of Great Britain by Scottish or English people. This can best be understood by the conceptual distinction between citizenship and national identity (Abell, Condor, Stevenson 2006: 209). The United Kingdom is a multinational state, instead of a nation (Abell, Condor, Stevenson 2006: 209). In England it is common to view the United Kingdom as a 'nation state', and British citizenship as a form of 'nationality'. However, this idea of British nationhood is not shared by people living elsewhere in the U.K. such as the Scots and the Welsh (Abell, Condor, Stevenson 2006: 209). They generally differentiate their British citizenship status from their Scottish or Welsh national identity (McCrone 1998: 2-4). Even more so for Scots it is usual to consider their nation

as a singular and distinctive society, whereas in England it is more general to experience society in local or regional terms (Abell, Condor, Stevenson 2006: 209).

As Kiely et al. (2001: 35) describes the sense for Scottish people to feel connected with Scotland derives from certain 'identity markers', these can be defined as characteristic items or activities by which people choose to identify with their group. These 'identity markers' in the Scottish context are most often commitment to place, ancestral ties, dress and music (Kiely et al. 2001: 36).

Research of Henderson (2007: 27) revealed that most of the 'identity markers' stem from the Highland traditions. These are the tartan, bagpipes, whisky, highland dancing, ceilidh dancing and Scottish Country Dancing. In our research we will focus on the latter two. Research of Knox (2008: 257) points out that the national symbols and stories represent a form of Scottishness and that this is experienced most intensely by means of participation in the Scottish social dancing together with other people on Scottish tunes. Combining the stories and symbols that are embedded in the dancing, contributes to a sense of belonging (Knox 2008: 257). Research from Kiely et al. (2001: 36) showed that the most important 'identity markers' for Scottish people are; place of birth, ancestry, place of residence, length of residence, upbringing and education, name, accent, physical appearance, dress and commitment to place. On certain occasions, Scottish people would feel an even stronger awareness of their national identity, which happens during sport matches between Scotland and England (Kiely et al. 2001: 34).

Community making through dance and music

In this paragraph we will outline how dance and music contributes to the process of community making. Firstly, music and dance performance is a social activity, it is mostly experienced with other people, and it is a practice which bears meaning (Stokes 1994: 4-5, 24). As outlined in the theoretical framework, dance, like music, not only creates a sense of individual identity, it also invokes the feeling of a community and thus a collective identity (Shoupe 2001: 129).

This is particularly interesting with the disappearance of traditional gatherings in public spaces of face-to-face contact, such as churches in modern societies (Pusnik 2010: 109). Because of the increasing tempo of life, socialising through an interactive dance form can fill the gaps caused by the fading away of these spaces (Pusnik 2010: 109). Everyday people see and pass each other, most of the time without the occurrence of social interaction. Feeling alone in space full of people has become one of the main characteristics of modern societies. Nonetheless interactive dance forms as Scottish Country Dancing and Ceilidh dancing can serve

as a meaningful way of interpersonal communication in such solitary circumstances (Pusnik 2010: 108-109).

Because of the communicative character of dance, it is an effective way of community building. As elaborated upon in the theoretical framework, the interactive attributes and synchronized bodily movements of dance and music contributes to the feeling of a shared collective identity. For the context of Scottish dancing, it is interesting to investigate the interplay between ideas about community and tradition as reciprocal (Shoupe 2001: 129). In the Scottish context it is useful to see how people use traditions of dance to create identity or define themselves as a community (Shoupe 2001: 127).

Dancing provides possibilities for the forming of more intimate social connections within a group of people (Shoupe 2001: 141). These connections can remove the barriers of individuality and relates bodies and spirits together (Shoupe 2001: 141). Turner (1969: 127) argues that community implies, that people no longer live side to side but together with other people. According to Spencer (1985: 28) dancing is a highly social activity that brings people together. Besides that it is not only the imagination of the people that is sparked with dancing, but their whole body. The power of dancing to build a community lies in the embodiment of feelings of connectedness (Shoupe 2001: 141).

Scottish Country Dancing and Ceilidh dancing

As described above in our research we will focus on Scottish Country Dancing and Ceilidh dancing and we will investigate how these dances contributes to a sense of belonging to a community, in both national and more local sense. Our research site is Aberdeen in Scotland, which lies on the North-eastern coast of Scotland. Aberdeen has 202.370 inhabitants. Because of its position on the coast and the oil industry there are a lot of international people living in Aberdeen as well.

For our research we also focused on the rural areas of Aberdeenshire, with smaller villages included. Since there were also a lot of dance activities as well. In Aberdeen we followed two organisations that organized Scottish Country Dance events, the Aberdeen branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS) and Aurora. The RSCDS has branches all over Scotland and the rest of the world. This society is responsible for many dance events in the North-eastern part of Scotland. The committee is run by the dancers themselves. Furthermore we have focused on Aurora, which is a local organisation in Dyce, a little bit outside of Aberdeen. Here dances are held and classes are given in a community hall in Dyce.

For ceilidh dancing, there are no big organisations as there are in SCD. Therefore we have focused on the events held in the Music hall in Aberdeen and people from the Celtic student society in Aberdeen. Besides that we have been to meetings in the Blue lamp where we could meet musicians playing in ceilidh bands. Ceilidh dancers are in contrast to Scottish Country Dancers younger people and although the dancing is really much alike and originates from the same dance which was invented on the country side, there are also some crucial differences which are interesting to investigate. The details of SCD and ceilidh dancing and the differences and similarities between them, will be discussed in the following texts.

3. “Fun, Fitness and Friends”: Scottish Country Dancers

In this chapter we will focus on the Scottish Country Dancers and how their dance contributes to the building of a community. Firstly, we will explain the demographical characteristics of the group and their leisure activities. Secondly, we will outline the relationship between Scottish Country Dancing and the experience of being part of a community. Finally, we will discuss whether this local community feeling also translates into an experience of a national community.

3.1 Scottish Country Dancers

In this paragraph we will give a sketch of the group that does Scottish Country Dancing. First of all, we will outline their demographic characteristics and leisure activities. Subsequently, we will examine their dancing experience and the role of SCD in the life of dancers. Furthermore, we will present the two main SCD organisations active in Aberdeen; the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society and Aurora.

3.1.1. Characteristics of the Scottish Country Dancers

The Scottish Country Dancers are a group of people aged between seventeen and eighty, with the majority of people aged between fifty and eighty. There are also younger people involved in the dancing, especially students. With a ratio of sixty to forty, the majority of dancers are female. The dancers come from a multitude of social backgrounds and are in that sense very heterogenic. John ⁴told me this is not important: “it doesn’t matter where you come from, what your class, ethnicity or level of education is, during the dance I would dance with everybody!”. The ambiance during dance events can be described as very open. While there are some foreign members, most of the Scottish Country Dancers are from Scotland. The SCD community consists of two major subgroups with different characteristics; the older aged dancers and the students. Therefore, these groups will be examined separately. Additionally, the rest group falling in between these major groups will be discussed.

⁴ Interview with a SCD, March 8, 2016

3.1.2. People aged between fifty till eighty

The SCD subgroup of people aged fifty and over form the majority within the SCD community. Since this group consists of mostly retired people, SCD is one of their main social activities. The majority, dances three times a week, two times a week they go to classes and one time they go dance on an event. In addition to dancing, they also indulge in other leisure activities, such as gardening, farming, hill walking, taking care of their dogs and spending time with their grandchildren. A remarkable fact is that most of them are in good health and for their age they are very physically active. All of the people I have interviewed have told me that the dancing keeps them in good shape and mentally fit as well, because you need to remember how all the dances are danced and you need to move as well. At first we were surprised when we saw people in their eighties dancing so quickly and maintaining this tempo over midnight. When I asked Jack⁵ about his motivations for the dance on our way back home, he said: “there is a slogan: Fun, Fitness and Friends, that sums it up quite well”. By this he meant that the dancing is fun to do it and as described earlier, it keeps you fit. Besides that, it is a nice way to get together with friends and meet new people. Most of the dancers in this age group have a long history in dancing and have danced for at least thirty years. As Bob⁶ has told me once: “I do not have that much dance experience, I have danced for ten years now”. Ten years is perceived as a relatively short period of time, because the majority of the dancers have more dance experience. They started dancing as children, when they had classes on primary school. At primary school they did not like the dancing so much, as Martha⁷ told me: “There was a line with girls and a line with boys, everybody felt embarrassed to dance with the opposite sex”. Most of them did not continue SCD on secondary school but continued dancing in their student years. The majority stopped dancing when they got jobs and got married and children. When the children went out of the house, they continued the dancing and have been dancing ever since.

3.1.3. Students

In comparison to the group mentioned before, the student group contains more foreigners. This is because people who study abroad in Scotland like to try SCD and meet new people by doing

⁵ Interview with an English man from Banchory, March 10 2016

⁶ Informal conversation during a SCD event, March 12 2016

⁷ Interview with a SCD teacher, April 6 2016

so. The foremost reason for students to join the dancing is to meet new people in a city where they barely know anyone. The student organisation is run by (ex-) students who have a lot of dance experience. Generally students dance one or two times a week and go to dances on a weekly basis. Mostly, they go to the dances that are held at universities in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow once a month. Besides that they also go to the dances that are organised by the RSCDS. In addition to the dancing they study, go to work, and undertake social activities such as going out with friends. Some of them also go to ceilidhs, but they mostly prefer to go to SCD because they think it is more challenging. Most of the time they do not have that many dance experience before they started SCD. The Scottish students followed classes at their primary school, but only a few continued these classes at high school. Most of the foreigners had no experience at all before they moved to Scotland.

3.1.4. Rest group

This group will only be discussed shortly since it is the minority within the SCD community. This group is composed of people aged between their mid-twenties till their forties. The reason it is the smallest group within SCD, is because most of the people in this age group are raising their children or are busy with their careers. As Stan⁸ explained to me: “there is a gap in age between people from their student years till their forties. This is seen as a problem and the RSCDS is busy with programmes to encourage this age group to keep on dancing”.

The people within this age group that have kept on dancing are mostly people without children. Some of them are teachers at the university or primary school and like to follow classes in order to teach SCD at school. Their dance experience varies a lot; the older people have more experience than the younger ones who just graduated from university. One thing they have in common is that they are active in committees, and like to help with organizing SCD events.

Age gap

Jack⁹ told me that the interest in Scottish Country Dance is decreasing. In his younger years, all dancehalls were filled with hundreds of people, while nowadays there are not nearly as many dancers. SCD is increasingly seen as something for elderly people. To revitalize the community and revert the decrease in members and change of image, the RSCDS organizes campaigns with

⁸ Interview with the chairman of the Aberdeen branch of the RSCDS, March 28 2016

⁹ Informal conversation with a SCD, March 20 2016

dance classes for children in primary school. There has been a period without dances on primary school, resulting in a generation which did not had classes on primary school. The RSCDS thinks it is problematic that SCD is dropping in count of members. Because some people get too old for the dancing, the amount of members leaving the SCD community exceeds the influx of new members. Through their promotional programmes, the RSCDS hopes to reach more children and people for the future generations to pick up the dancing again.

3.1.5. Royal Scottish Country Dance Society and Aurora

In the context we have explained the two main organisations that are active in Aberdeen. In this paragraph we will compare both organisations. At the RSCDS the majority of the people are aged between their fifties and eighties, and at Aurora the group is more heterogenous, with a younger public and more students. The ambiance at Aurora is more lenient in terms of choreography and more informal compared to classes and events from the RSCDS. This is visible in what Marsha¹⁰ told me: “I go to classes from the RSCDS and Aurora. At Aurora I don’t need to think about what I’m going to wear, I just dress casually. However, when I go to a class from the RSCDS I would go in a proper dress, you know. During RSCDS classes the teacher would dedicate half an hour on technique. At Aurora, instead of focusing on technique, we would try to dance as many dances as possible”. While the people going to Aurora think it is more important to have fun than dancing according to the rules, the people joining classes at the RSCDS prefer working on their technique.

Scottish Country Dancing is still alive in the Scottish culture of both the youth and older aged people, although the majority consist of people aged between fifty till eighty. And there is a decrease in the popularity of the dance. Besides dancing they also participate in a broad range of other leisure and social activities. There are two organisations in Aberdeen active for the organisation of classes and events, Aurora and the Aberdeen branch of the RSCDS. The former is a smaller local society, whereas the latter branch is also part of an international network, reaching out far beyond the Scottish borders. These organisations facilitate social cohesion and the maintenance of Scottish Country Dancing, as elaborated upon in the next paragraph.

¹⁰ Interview with a SCD, mainly active at Aurora, April 13 2016

3.2 Connecting through Dance: Community building among SCD dancers

In this paragraph we will sketch the relationship between Scottish Country Dancing and the feeling of a sense of belonging. Firstly, we will discuss their perceptions about community building and secondly, we will outline how they bring this community feeling into practice.

3.2.1. Perceptions of community making

Because of disembedding mechanisms caused by globalisation, as Eriksen (2007: 142) describes, people try to look for a sense of certainty and trust. In a world where everything goes faster and faster, people try to search for a sense of belonging and feelings of being part of a community. Dancing is a way of connecting with other people and being aware of a collective identity. Because through the practice of dancing, people unite together. During our research, we discovered that Scottish Country Dancing is a way of re-embedding and contributes to feeling part of a community. The act of dancing together reinforces these feelings. From all my participants, it appeared that Scottish Country Dancers experience being part of one community. Jenn¹¹ from Aurora, told me: “We see each other three times a week because of the dancing and besides that we also go to the movies together. Actually, we are all one big group of friends”. Also Mary¹², a member from RSCDS, told me: “We have a lot of friends. Bob (her husband) had a sixty-five birthday party a few years ago and we had a hundred-sixty dancers. There were even twelve English people, people throughout Scotland, from Stirling way up to beyond Inverness who attended the party”. On the other hand, another informant, Ben¹³, told that RSCDS members are more closed during lessons compared to classes at Aurora. Ben was a teacher at the university dancing association and he preferred going to classes from Aurora, since the dancing is about enjoying yourself instead of dancing according to the formal rules”.

Regardless of the different dance societies, SCD can be seen as one community. Jack told me¹⁴: “I feel part of the SCD community, because everybody is always open and everyone is welcome, even if one is new or comes alone to an event. Aside of this, the dancing has a very inclusive character and everybody is always very friendly”. All the people that I have interviewed would describe the ambiance of SCD as very open and friendly.

¹¹ Informal conversation with a woman dancing at Aurora, April 12 2016

¹² Informal conversation with a SCD dancing at RSCDS, March 2 2016

¹³ Interview with a SCD teacher at the Student association, March 3 2016

¹⁴ Interview with a SCD during a SCD event, April 10 2016

People mentioned often that SCD is not only part of a local community. As Penny¹⁵ told me: “SCD is part of a local (North-East), national and an international community, so there are actually many layers in the community aspect feeling”. In this sense, dancers feel connected with all of the other dancers throughout the world. Of course Lynn¹⁶ said, “There are people with whom you would have a stronger connection than with others, as in all communities. But I do feel part of a big community”. She said that the social aspect of the dance also contributes to this community feeling, because there is a lot of interaction during the dances. Another lady, Marscha¹⁷, told me that the community is more national than local, because all the dancers come from all parts of Scotland. Therefore, she would say that the SCD community is spread throughout the country. Sometimes she would travel all the way up to Inverness and it is very common to see the same faces at all the dances, even if you go to a dance further away from Aberdeen.

One man, Leary¹⁸, said that if he would go to a dance further away from Aberdeen and he wouldn't know people, the other people would take his hand and ask him to dance, because they know he is new. I also have experienced this very often when I arrived at dances where I didn't know anyone and everybody would take me on the dancefloor. Besides that, many people went up to me and talk to me as well as offering a ride back home to me. There is an ambiance of openness and they try to involve you in the community. This openness is also due to the character of the dancing. In the next section we will outline how they bring this community feeling into practice.

3.2.2. The practice of community making

‘Are ye having a good time?’ A lady puts her arm around my shoulders as we all get ready for the next dance. A woman dressed in a blue tartan printed skirt recaps the dance for everybody, The Duke and Duchess of Perth is the name of the dance. After the short recap she looks at the band and nods her head. All dancers take an elegant bow to the partner in front of them, and when the fiddle and the accordion starts playing, the first couple begins to dance. We are in a church hall in Banchory, a town on the countryside, one hour drive away from Aberdeen. The church has big stained glass windows and there are some religious portraits hanging on the wall.

¹⁵ Informal conversation with a lady dancing at Aurora, February 23 2016

¹⁶ Interview with a SCD dancer, February 25 2016

¹⁷ Interview with a former chairman at the RSCDS headquarters in Edinburgh, April 10 2016

¹⁸ Informal conversation with a SCD dancer, April 12 2016

On the sides are long benches dedicated for dancers to take a rest during the dancing. The lady of the first couple is dressed in a black evening dress and her hair is pinned up in a bun. On her neck she wears a necklace with pearls on it. Her partner is dressed in a blue and green tartan kilt with long white socks and a pouch that's hanging over the kilt. All of a sudden the musicians start fastening up the tempo of the music. This is followed by the men who are taking the ladies arms and start twirling round and round in a fast tempo. The other dancers join in a circle while circling around in the rhythm of the music, holding hands. The dance has come to an end and the man in front of me takes a bow, 'thank you for the lovely dance' he says to me. An old lady dressed in a long red tartan skirt and grey hair lays her arm on my back, 'Will ye dance with me?'.

This is how a regular Scottish Country Dance night looks like. People interact a lot during the dancing, they are all familiar with each other and are very open to newcomers as well. According to Scot¹⁹ this familiarity is a result of having a shared interest in the dance and the music, making them already feel connected to each other non-verbally. For all of the people that I have talked with, Scottish Country Dancing holds an important place in their lives and is one of their main social activities. Therefore, they see each other a lot through the weekly classes and dances, giving many opportunities to get to know each other very well. Besides that the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society and Aurora organize lots of weekend trips with their members, where they dance together and socialize. A committee member²⁰ of the RSCDS told me that the aim for these weekends is to create a sense of community among the dancers. During these weekends, people really get to know each other. When I sat next to John²¹ during a dance, he told me: "The best aspect of the dancing is enjoying yourself, having fun, being surrounded by good company and good exercise. When the RSCDS organize weekends away I always go, because it is great fun!".

Sharon²² said that she and her husband would also go to dance classes when they are on a vacation or lived abroad for a couple of years. This is an easy way to make friends and get to know people in a different country. In these classes they would also find a lot of other Scottish people who like to dance, meet new people and feel connected to their homeland. Because of the informal, open character of the dances it is very easy to make friends.

¹⁹ Informal conversation with a SCD dancer, March 22 2016

²⁰ Interview with a SCD dancer, March 8 2016

²¹ Informal conversation with a SCD dancer, March 22 2016

²² Informal conversation with a dancer at RSCDS, March 18 2016

This is because there is a lot of social interaction taking place during the dances, they would look at each other and recognize their partners by smiling at them. Every dance is danced with a different partner: it is an unwritten rule to not dance two times with the same person after each other. In this way you would meet and interact with a lot of different people in one night. It is also very open to single people as well, you do not need a dance partner, you can go to a dance by your own. In fact, partners would not dance together too often. Sheila and Robert²³ told me that they would dance the first and the last dance as a couple, the rest of the night they would dance with other persons. Each dance-event has a break where attendees share homemade food that is brought in by everyone. They would put a lot of effort in making the freshly made food, such as chocolate cakes and fruit salads. During breaks the dancers socialize a lot with each other. There is a lot of laughter and people would come up to you if you have danced with them even if you have not seen them before. After the break there is time for a raffle, a lottery occasionally taking place at a dance to collect money for charity. A lot of people would bring a small gift for the raffle. Raffle tickets can be bought for one pound each and the gifts you can win are a bottle of wine or a box of chocolate. Even though most dances are with one partner, there are sets in which you dance with a group of six to eight people. After the last dance of the evening, the dancers always end by dancing in a big circle with everyone in the hall, instead of only dancing with your own set. Each evening will end with the song Auld Lang Syne, this song creates strong feelings of connectedness and will be elaborated more deeply in the next section. Besides the community feeling through the Scottish Country Dancing, some dancers also perceive being part of a national community, this is sometimes even stimulated through SCD.

3.3 “Strong roots and strong blood”: Perceptions of National identity among SCD

In this paragraph we will sketch the perceptions about national identity and the feeling of being part of a national community? To start with, we will discuss the Scottish aspects of SCD, and how SCD can reinforce the identification with Scotland. Secondly, we will outline how this feelings of national identity are reflected in the way they dress. Primary we will describe a relevant impression of how Scottish-ness is being expressed in SCD.

²³ Interview with a couple that dances SCD, march 18 2016

Scottish-ness among dancers of SCD

The sound of bagpipes resonates through the village hall, all of sudden people stand up and walk to the middle of the hall where they gather in a circle. A man next to me, dressed in a blue and green patterned kilt takes my hand. A woman on the other side takes my other hand. As the lyrics of Auld Lang Syne are echoing through the hall, people hold hands and move them back and forth. They sing; “And there’s a hand, my trusty fiere. And gie’s a hand o’thine. And we’ll tak a right gude-willy waught, for auld lang syne.” At the end of the song people walk, still holding hands, to the middle of the circle and then back again, they do this three or four times. At the very end they make a circle on their spot, and look at their neighbours with a smile on their face.”

Auld Lang Syne is sung at every ending of a Scottish Country Dance event. It is a poem written by the famous Scottish poet Robert Burns, in old Scottish dialect. The song is about meeting old friends and about good old times. The lyrics written above means: “And there’s a hand my trusty friend. And give us a hand o’thine. And we’ll take a right good- will draught, for good old times.” When I had coffee with Lydia²⁴, she told me this: “I always feel very emotional during that song, It is hard to describe in words, it’s just very emotional”. She told me that during this song she feels very connected to her Scottish roots and to the other dancers. Bob²⁵ told me: “I always feel emotional and very proud of Scotland whenever I hear the sound of the bagpipes, I don’t know why, I just do”. Scottish country dancers thus evoke their connection with Scotland by listening and dancing to the Scottish music that they hear.

During my research it was very clear that the Scottish Country Dancers experience a strong identification with Scotland. Just after a dance with John²⁶, we sat down for a drink. and he told me this: “People in Scotland have strong blood, generally they feel a strong connection to their homeland. I’ve lived in England for fifteen years but I always felt more connected to Scotland and a bit homesick to my own country”. Jack²⁷ once told me that: “Everytime when I leave Scotland for a holiday and return back to my country, you know, at the moment I touch Scottish soil it just feels like coming home. I cannot think about living in another country”. He said to me: “I think all Scots have this feeling, there is something about Scotland which makes you feel like home.” When I asked Lydia²⁸ when she started SCD, she told me this: “I started

²⁴ Interview with a SCD dancer, March 23 2016

²⁵ Informal conversation with a SCD dancer, April 10 2016

²⁶ Informal conversation with a man from Banchory, April 12 2016

²⁷ Interview with a SCD at RSCDS, April 13 2016

²⁸ Informal conversation with a SCD dancer, April 2 2016

SCD when I was living abroad in Canada, I felt a bit homesick and SCD made me feel connected to my homeland once again and I have also met other Scottish people there. I have kept dancing ever since". This also shows that SCD is a way of feeling connected to their Scottish roots, even if they are far from home.

Anderson (2006: 6) describes that the nation is defined by created national symbols and traditions. Participating in certain traditions can thus enhance the experience of a connection with the nation state. Anderson (2006: 6) argues that the nation-state is actually an imagined community, these traditions can help in the imagining of this community. By the experience of traditions, such as Scottish Country Dancing people feel connected to a wider community, than face-to-face communities only (Anderson, 2006: 6).

Scottish elements within the dancing

The reason why Scottish Country Dancing also contributes to the feeling of a national community, is because of the Scottish elements that contains the dancing. Firstly, the dance is originated at the countryside and already exists for a long time. Therefore it is believed to be a Scottish tradition. Undoubtedly, the dance has also changed over time. In the beginning there were no rules or books for the dancing, nowadays there are already fifty books with also new dances that are mad every year. Secondly, all the names of the dances, mostly contain place names. In the context we described how place and locality is important for Scottish nationality. This strong connection with place is thus also visible in the names of the dances. Most of the dancers, besides being Scottish also felt connected to the place where they live. This is best expressed by Richard²⁹, he told me: "I also feel a connection with Scotland, but besides that I identify stronger as an Aberdonian", by which he meant being from Aberdeen, the city where he has lived all of his life. The experience of a Scottish nationality among the dancers also has more layers in that people can feel Scottish but also feel connected with the place where they have been born and raised. Thirdly, the Scottish music contributes to the identification with Scotland. Bob³⁰ told me this: "you just have to feel Scottish if you dance on Scottish tunes, we grew up with this music and it traces me back to my younger years". They also think that the music is very up cheering. Steven³¹ told me this: "One day I felt a bit sick and I was planning to skip the SCD event, but the I turned on the music and I heard the tunes and I just felt like

²⁹ Informal conversation with a man from RSCDS, March 23 2016

³⁰ Interview with a SCD teacher, March 22 2016

³¹ Informal conversation with a SCD dancer, April 13 2016

dancing, I knew I was going to go anyway!”. Sharon³² also said that she thinks that SCD would not be so popular if it was not danced on Scottish tunes, it really contributes to the dancing. Another Scottish element which is visible in the dancing is the wearing of traditional Scottish cloths.

Clothing

During SCD events people would wear sages and kilts in their family pattern. Men, without an exception, wear a traditional kilt and sometimes tartan patterned trousers. For woman the dress code is less strict, they are usually dressed in an evening dress and sometimes wear a sage over their dress. Especially during Scottish occasion, like national holidays as Burns Supper (where the famous Scottish poet Robert Burns is celebrated) the ladies would dress up more ‘traditionally’ and wear sages in their own family tartan. Back in the old days, women used to wear white dresses with a sage. But this tradition went out of fashion, and woman nowadays are more free in what they like to wear. Sheila³³, who is active in the Aurora organisation, told me that when she performs with her Aurora group on a folk festival, with folkdances all over the world, the ladies would wear the white dresses with the sage over it. This is only done on more formal occasions, and not during regular dance nights. The dress code in general is quite formal, so women would do their best to dress up fancy. I have experienced that the way my informants dress has an impact on how they feel. Men particularly like the wearing of the kilt, as became clear during the break of the Banchory SCD event, Frank³⁴ told me: “My strong identification with Scotland, comes with Scottish Country Dancing. I like dressing up in a kilt. I think I look very smart in it, all the men look smart, the ladies not so much.” By the last he was referring to the dress code of the ladies, which is more informal compared to the dress code of men and less traditional Scottish. Also some of the ladies like to dress up in their own tartan patterned sage. When I had lunch with Sharon³⁵ we were talking about her descent of the Mc Donald clan, and she said: “I like to wear my sage of the McDonald clan, because I am a very proud Scot!”. This shows that the wearing of the Scottish sage of the Mc Donald clan, is an expression of her Scottish identity.

³² Interview with a primary teacher, April 23 2016

³³ Informal conversation with a dancer from Aurora, March 18 2016

³⁴ Informeel conversation with a committee member of the RSCDS, March 18 2016

³⁵ Informeel conversation with a SCD dancer, March 12 2016

International character of the dance

Not everyone experienced a strong identification with Scotland. Karl³⁶ told me that he just liked the dancing very much and did not feel more Scottish because of SCD. Jenn³⁷, who was a former staff member of the headquarters at the Edinburgh branch of the RSCDS, told me that the dancing also has a very international character. She told me that SCD is quite popular in Japan, and also in other places all over the world. At dance weekends in St. Andrews all the people from other countries come together to do SCD, this also creates an international community feeling among the dancers. As Sharon and Jane³⁸ told me, Scottish country Dancers see SCD as part of their national culture and are very proud that ‘their’ dance has been so popular all over the world.

Scottish country dancers thus experience a strong identification with Scotland, also the participation in the SCD and the wearing of traditional Scottish cloths are an expression of this feeling. They all really liked the music, and thought it was an important aspect of the dance and of their Scottish roots. However they also feel that it has become an international dance as well and they think that you don’t need to be Scottish to like or participate in the Scottish Country Dancing although they still connect this dance to their own cultural heritage.

But not everybody experienced this connection to their cultural heritage, as some said that they just like the dancing very much and did not feel more Scottish during dancing.. I have been told many times that the dance has a very international character as well, and is danced throughout the world. Several times I heard that it is quite popular in Japan, because they like the formal character of the dance. They would dance in a different way than the Scottish, as Jane told me that Scottish people have a stronger way of dancing and the ‘fun’ aspect of the dance is very important as well, whereas the Japanese tend to dance in a softer more elegant way.

Country Dancers see the dance as part of their culture and are very proud that ‘their’ dance has been so popular all over the world and are very proud of the Scottish Country Dance in general. The dancing is a great part of their social lives and also dance on national holidays such as Burns Supper, where Scots celebrate Robert Burns, a famous Scottish poet who wrote the lyrics for Auld Lang Syne, the final song played at SCD events. On this day they would eat Haggis and do Scottish Country Dancing. The Haggis will be brought in on a large plate

³⁶ Interview with a SCD dancer, March 20 2016

³⁷ Interview with a former committee member of the RSCDS, March 16 2016

³⁸ Interview with two dancers from Aurora, April 3 2016

accompanied by bagpipe players. And after that they would do Scottish Country Dancing. Another event on which they dance is Hogmanay, the Scottish word for New Year's Eve. On this day they would also have a dance in the evening which begins with dancing then the counting and the singing of Auld Lang Syne until it is 12 o'clock. After the champagne and the good New Year's Eve wishes they would continue dancing.

Scottish country dancers generally experience a strong identification with Scotland. The participation in the SCD and the wearing of traditional Scottish cloths are an expression of this feeling. They all really enjoy the music accompanying the dance, and thought it was an important aspect of the dance and of their Scottish roots. In addition to this, they also feel that it has become an international dance as well and they think that you don't need to be Scottish to like or participate in the Scottish Country Dancing.

4. ‘A wee step forward and spin you bonnie partner as fast as you can’: ceilidh dancing in Aberdeen

More or less two hundred students sit at the round tables in the large, rectangular hall with the red curtains and chandeliers at the ceiling. Waiters walk up and down to provide the students with beer, wine and cocktails. The HipFlask ceilidh band appears on the stage at the back. “Hello there, are you guys up for a ceilidh?” asks one of the four members. The slender, small, bald man who is around the age of fifty wearing a drum harness, takes the microphone and walks up on the dancefloor. He introduces himself as Gary and the caller of the night. “I take you through the steps so please don’t hesitate to come to the dancefloor! Let’s have some fun.” The band gets ready by taking the sheet music and prepare the accordion, guitar and violin. Meanwhile the dancefloor runs full. The boys, dressed up in kilt or suit, ask a girl to dance and take her up to the dance floor. A girl in a long, red dress quickly takes off her high heels: “bare feet dances much better” she says smiling at her dance partner. “Let’s start with the Gay Gordons!” shouts Gary and the HipFlask band starts playing. The couples hold each other’s hands. “Up two three four, and back two three four” calls Gary. “Turn around, yes you too lassie in the back, and polk around. Hiyaaaa!” With a laugh on their faces, the couples dance around the overcrowded dancefloor. It is warm in the hall and drops of sweat sparkle down the red faces.³⁹

Student balls are a common and popular occasion for a ceilidh dance. The students usually have dinner and finish the night with ceilidh dancing. Besides student balls and events, ceilidh dances in Aberdeen are also organized in community halls or with the purpose to raise money for a charity. The ceilidh is then organized by an organization to give people a fun night and the money of the tickets and the drinks at the event go to the charity. Other common occasions for ceilidh dancing are weddings. A traditional Scottish wedding involves a ceilidh after the ceremony. This research focuses on public ceilidh events with visitor entrance, like ceilidhs organized by a theatre, student organization or charity. To get a complete picture of the importance of ceilidh for community and national community making, the first paragraph consists the background and motivations of the people who visit the ceilidh dances. The second paragraph discusses how ceilidh dancing leads to community making and how the dances can bond the dancers. The third paragraph is about how ceilidh dancing can contribute to the

³⁹ Observation, March 29, 2016

identification with a bigger community, the Scottish nation. Associations with Scottish nationality and ceilidh dancing as an expression of Scottish nationality are shown in this part.

4.1 Students, seniors and foreigners: the ceilidh dancers and musicians in Aberdeen

It is of interest to know who the ceilidh dancers and musicians are and what drives them to go to ceilidh dancing. The people who visit ceilidh dancing in Aberdeen are a variety of dancers and musicians. The dances are open for everyone, what results in that the people who come to a ceilidh can have many different backgrounds. Both the dancers as the musicians are part of the night and contribute to the atmosphere and outcome of the evening. This paragraph gives an insight in who these people are. In the first section, the motivations of dancers to go to ceilidh dancing will be discussed. Second, the opinions of the ceilidh band musicians are outlined.

4.1.1 The ceilidh dancers

There is not something like a typical ceilidh dancer. As the 25-year-old engineer Jane describes: “It is a complete mix and that is what is nice about it. There will be people a couple of years younger than me, but also people of my parent’s age, it would be a total mix.”⁴⁰ There is variety in ages, sex, backgrounds and professions. Different types of occasions suit different ceilidh dancers. In Aberdeen there are roughly three groups of dancers: the students and young adults, seniors and the newcomers which are people who have not been on a ceilidh dance before.

The most organized and popular ceilidhs in Aberdeen are ceilidhs organized by students for student balls or charity. This group of students is high educated and usually the girls are a bit more represented than boys. Most of the time boys and girls dance together, but girls with girls and boys with boys is not uncommon either. The student life is a period of time in which the ceilidh dancing becomes popular again. Every child in Scotland learns the ceilidh dances at primary school. In a coffee house, the 25-year-old Christina who grew up in a small village near Aberdeen tells about those lessons: “We got lessons in primary school and had social dances every single year. At that time you don’t want to dance, it is embarrassing to dance with the boys.”⁴¹ In the period after primary school most people do not dance ceilidhs, but this changes at university. Christina goes on to say: “But when you get older it’s a good laugh. It is

⁴⁰ Interview, April 8, 2016

⁴¹ Interview, April 11, 2016

easy to remember the rules and gets you hyped up. It is cheery, happy and excitable.”⁴² During their student life students affirm that they really like the ceilidh dancing.

Besides the students there are also seniors presented on ceilidh dancing. These people are not represented much on general ceilidhs in the Music Hall, but sometimes ceilidhs are especially organized for this group. On a ceilidh in a community hall organized for people in the age of fifty years and up, a lot of marriage couples come together to have a dance. The sixty-seven-year-old Mary, dressed in a purple skirt and a tartan brooch on her blouse, looks forward to this night. With a smile on her face she tells: “The dances make me thinking when I was younger and could dance very well. Nowadays I am not that quick anymore, but that is not a problem with all these people of my age. It is nice to have a Scottish night. I like to hear the Scottish music and during the break we get stovies. Do not forget to taste some, it is delicious!”⁴³ As Mary demonstrates, a lot of older people like to go to ceilidh dances because it makes them think about their youth and they see it as practicing an old tradition.

On every ceilidh there is a small percentage of what can be called the newcomers. This covers a group of mostly foreign people who have not been to a ceilidh before. These people came to Aberdeen for work or studies and are interested in ceilidh dancing to experience Scottish culture. The 23-year-old Norwegian Eva who studies Gaelic at Aberdeen University and we met during the Gaelic Student Society ceilidh, which was her very first ceilidh: “I haven’t seen ceilidh dances before so the whole experience was just completely new. I didn’t know what I was going to do, but it was really nice. Also, I never see people wearing a kilt like in daily life walking around. So that was nice to see that is being used as well. So it is just not a myth in a way.”⁴⁴

4.1.2 The ceilidh band musicians

An impression of ceilidh dancing is not complete without the other people present on a ceilidh, namely the ceilidh band musicians. They play the music and thus have a major impact on the course of the night. Therefore backgrounds and motivations of the musicians are also important to sketch. The majority of the members are male, but in some bands females play along as well. Most of the members of ceilidh bands are middle aged. The musicians have a job at the side because they cannot make enough money with the band to make a living out of it. There is not

⁴² Interview, April 11, 2016

⁴³ Conversation, February 20, 2016

⁴⁴ Interview, March 30, 2016

common denominator within the jobs: people teach music lessons, are gardeners or work at a bank for example. What they have in common is their love for folk music. The musicians grew up with folk music and play their instruments since their childhood. Not all musicians of the ceilidh bands are Scottish. The folk music has similarities with for example Irish folk music and you find Irish people in the bands as well.

All ceilidh bands have a personal way of playing the music and can distinguish themselves from other bands in that way. The influences in the music, the instruments they use and the way of performing and presenting themselves are examples of this. The ceilidh music has a specific character. It consists of sets of tunes and melodies which are repeated during the song. The consistent rhythm and the repetition makes it better for dancing. The band can play it easily for a longer or shorter while what makes the music easy to adapt to the circumstances. There are a number of commonly used rhythms which fit a specific type of dancing, but there is enough space to be creative and improvise or incorporate other music influences. In that way bands bring in a more poppy sound, Irish influences or even Jimmy Hendrix and distinguish themselves.

One of the band members is the caller. He or she explains the upcoming dance. There are many ways to explain the same thing so it is the trick to explain the steps in a way that people easily understand. To get this done, experience helps a lot. The dancers are different every night so the caller has to use his intuition, see how well people dance, and see what the best way of explaining is. Because of this, it might be helpful if the caller has experience with dancing ceilidh. Allie, who plays keyboard in a ceilidh band and teaches ceilidh and highland dancing lessons, explains: "If you cannot dance or do not know what is involved in dances it is harder to give the right instructions. Like for example a lot of dances require one person to turn another person. How long does that take. Do you do it slowly, do you do it quickly. There is a right speed for everything. And if you do not dance, how do you know that speed? If you can dance you see the signals."⁴⁵ If you have experienced the dances you can easier understand how to explain things and what rhythms work for a dance.

This opinion is not shared with every ceilidh band musician. Some ceilidh band musicians think it is fine without dancing. The 41-year-old Ben, dressed up in black tie, plays accordion at a student ball and jokes about this: "We cannot dance that is why we play in the band of course. We know by experience which music works for a crowd and try to get people up by making them feel comfortable. Like making a fool of ourselves, than you lower the

⁴⁵ Interview, April 13, 2016

threshold to get people on the dancefloor.”⁴⁶ The purpose of the band is to find a way to get people up to the dance floor and dancing and all ceilidh bands thus have their own ways to do that.

To sum up, the group of ceilidh dancers as well as the group of musicians is versatile and heterogenic. Overall the dancers are young adults and the musicians middle-aged, but for the rest these people backgrounds in for example professions are not the same. Now we know who the ceilidh dancers and musicians are, in the following paragraph we can have a look at how ceilidh dancing plays a role in connecting these people to each other.

4.2 Community aspect of ceilidh dance

Dancing is an active kind of social interaction which can make people feel connected to each other. This paragraph concerns the question how ceilidh dancing foster a feeling of shared community at a local level. The people who attend a ceilidh form a group for that night. They might know some of the dancers, but this is usually not the case. By dancing with each other a feeling of group bonding might occur. The experience of group bonding does vary among the ceilidh dancers and musicians. Also the depth of the bonding influences how much people feel connected or not. These aspects of community making and how community making is seen and experienced will be illustrated in the following sections.

4.2.1 Perspectives on community making among ceilidh dancers

During a ceilidh event all people dance together. Most of the dances start with a set of couples, but during the dance people switch partners every now and then. This means that during a dance the dancers dance with a lot of people. This includes a lot of people they have never seen before. This mixing makes it easier to talk with new people. The 27-year-old John tells me about his experience whilst talking about ceilidh dancing in a coffee house: “It is definitely easy to kind of start a conversation. You feel more comfortable around the people than if you are in a kind of random bar or something. If you have danced together you can have a chat afterwards and easy talk about the dancing. Like saying sorry I stepped on your foot and there you go.”⁴⁷ The dancing thus lowers the threshold for a chat. In this way people get to know each other which can result in a feeling of community.

⁴⁶ Interview, March 19, 2016

⁴⁷ Interview, March 31, 2016

Anderson describes that singing and hearing a national anthem gives people a feeling of simultaneity, because the imagined sound can connect people (Anderson 2006: 145). This idea of simultaneity is seen at ceilidh dancing as well. As Jane mentions: “Everyone is doing the same dancing and have a great time together which can give a community feeling.”⁴⁸ The dancers may not know the other people, but the idea of doing the same dances on same sounds can bond people.

Other dancers are more skeptical towards ceilidh dancing as a bonding practice of community. As Daniels says: “I think you get more of a group during ceilidh dances, but not more in the same sense like any other occasion like a night club or so.”⁴⁹ The extent to which this bonding applies can depend on the kind of ceilidh, how many people are involved and how many people the dancers know beforehand. On smaller ceilidhs that are for example organized by a student society, the dancers attempt to say that it can encourage a feeling of a shared community. From the beginning onwards there is already a bigger common denominator because you are part of a society and probably have seen a lot of the other dancers before. Dancing a ceilidh together is a way to get closer to each other. Larger ceilidh events are seen as more individualistic and less bonding ones. The large amount of unknown people lowers the feeling of a shared community.

On a student ceilidh organized by the Gaelic Society, just after a dance one of the board members Aileen tells me what she thinks about the difference between where a ceilidh is held. Aileen grew up on the Isle of Skye which is situated at the West Coast of Scotland. According to her ceilidh dancing over there is not the same as in Aberdeen: “I prefer the ceilidh back home to those here. It's partly to do with the music being more West Coast back home and my friends back home enjoy ceilidh dancing more than they do here. It certainly encourages the feeling of a community back home but I don't feel it does as much here. I go to the annual Club Gàidhlig Obar Dheathain ceilidh (Aberdeen's Gaelic Club) and that feels very community based because most folk there are from the islands and highlands, all Gaels and it is a wee Gaelic community in Aberdeen. It certainly feels a lot more homely to me being with them than being at a random huge ceilidh in the city.”⁵⁰ The aspect of knowing people plays a major role according to Aileen. In addition, to notion is that she believes the music and dance is related to home and thus related to a certain place.

⁴⁸ Interview, April 8, 2016

⁴⁹ Interview, April 14, 2016

⁵⁰ Conversation, March 18, 2016

4.2.2 Perspectives on community making among ceilidh musicians

Like the ceilidh dancers, among the musicians of ceilidh bands there is also inequality of opinions on ceilidh dancing as community strengthening. The ceilidh dancers share the music and dance that night and in that way they connect with each other. Ben tells: “We want to get the good atmosphere, let people interact with each other and also interaction between us and the crowd.”⁵¹ He and his band have the aim to let people interact as much as possible to create a group. They do this by changing dances a bit to add more interaction between the dancers.

Where Ben is positive towards the idea that ceilidh dancing can stimulate the feeling of a shared community, others are more negative. The illustrated difference between ceilidhs in a city and the country side in the previous section is also shared by musicians. According to the 58-year-old musician Calum, especially at the country side the ceilidh dance is a gathering of local people.⁵² The people know each other and the ceilidh dance is a way to meet up, to speak to each other and get to know each other better. In that way the ceilidh is an opportunity to strengthen a community feeling. Comparing this to a more ‘random’ ceilidh where people do not know most of the people beforehand, this community strengthening emerges less. Although you dance together, you still do not get to know the people in one night and do not feel that very connected. The dancers have fun together, but will probably not see each other again on another ceilidh.

4.2.3 Practice of community making during ceilidh dance

It becomes clear that community making is ambiguous. Many aspects are involved and there are also levels of group connectedness. What someone sees as a community, is by someone else experienced as just a group. Ceilidh dancing does create a group, but the depth of this bonding is not a strong one. As said before, it is easy to join a ceilidh dance because people do not have to be able to know the dances and just buy a ticket. The combination of low commitment, a short duration of the people being together and not a perspective on seeing the people again might be a reason why a deep connection does not evolve soon. The people form a community for that period of time, but this community is a temporary one. This is a perfect example of what Bauman (Bauman 2000: 200) describes as a cloakroom community. A cloakroom community is a temporal, fleeting community. People come together because of a so called

⁵¹ Interview, March 29, 2016

⁵² Interview, April 13, 2016

'spectacle' caused by a same interest, but the gathering is on an individual basis. Also, the degree of bonding is limited: "Spectacles as the occasion for the brief existence of a cloakroom community do not fuse and blend individual concerns into 'group interest': (...) the illusion of sharing which the spectacle may generate would not last much longer than the excitement of the performance" (Bauman 2000: 200). That is exactly what happens on a ceilidh dance night: people come together, form a group for a while and share the night, and each go their own ways after the gathering is finished.

4.3 Views on Scottish national identity and belonging

We have seen that ceilidh dancing can contribute to group bonding and community feeling, although it is on a low scale. Looking at the bigger picture, this Scottish dance could also be a way to foster a feeling of being part of the national community. In this paragraph we will have a look at the perspectives of ceilidh dancers and musicians on ceilidh dancing as an expression of Scottish nationality. The first section describes the associations that the ceilidh dancers and musicians have with Scotland as a nation. The second section discusses ceilidh dancing as an expression of Scottish nationality. The third section focuses on ceilidh dancing as a tradition and how this should be continued.

4.3.1 Defining Scottish nationality

Both dancers and musicians agree with the opinion that Scotland has a strong identity and that they are proud of it. Common descriptions from both ceilidh dancers and musicians proudly state that Scottish people are open and friendly people who are straightforward. Being Scottish means being part of a people with a rich history and culture which is based on Celtic culture as well. Music and dance play a large role in this Scottish nationality. Also supporting national sport teams and celebrating national Scottish days like St. Andrews day and Burn's night are associations with Scottish nationality.

Besides to national symbols and Scottish national days, the kilt is important for the Scottish identity. The 21-year-old Jamie is half Italian, half Scottish. He grew up in Italy and now studies in Aberdeen to discover his Scottish identity. On the student ball we met, he wore a kilt: "I always wear a kilt if I can. It is unique and show the pattern of my family. I am very

proud to wear it.”⁵³ With regard to ceilidh dancing the kilt is also a way to show your dance level. During a student ball the twenty-two years old James wears a kilt with a tartan of his own family, watch his fellow students dancing and taps the music rhythm with his foot. He tells me about a connection between dance level and clothing: “I know about 5 or 6 dances very well, that’s why I wear a kilt. This shows that I can dance proper ceilidh dances. If I did not know the dance yet I would not wear this kilt”. The boys thus can show their dance experience with their clothes.

Moreover, language gives a strong association with the Scottish nation. The rolling ‘r’ and harder ‘g’ distinguish the Scottish accent from British English and make people feel connected to Scotland. Hearing the Scottish accent and talking this way make ceilidh dancers and musicians feel part of the nation. The Scottish accent is manifested in songs. Therefore, listening to Scottish songs and singing the songs together makes people aware of their nation. This feeling has, apart from the language, also to do with the content of the songs. Scottish songs mainly are about the past, the landscapes and symbols of Scotland. The Scottish 24-year-old Management student Daniel has lived all of his life in Aberdeen. He mentions the songs as well “I do not get patriotic often, but when I hear Loch Lomond [Scottish folk song], then I do.”⁵⁴ Listening to these songs with their familiar sound makes people feel proud of Scotland. Daniels carries on “All the emotions are linked to history. A lot of this music is influenced by songs that existed for many years. The sort of references in the songs and the music is very unique. So it is quite clear you identify it to Scottish patriotism”⁵⁵ The Scottish folk music as a link to history can in that way provide a way to express Scottish nationality.

4.3.2 Ceilidh dance as expression of Scottish nationality and belonging

From the perceptions of Scottish nationality we move on to see how ceilidh dancing is seen as an expression of Scottish nationality. Where ceilidh dancers and musicians agree on the link between music and Scottish-ness, the heterogeneity of this group is clearly reflected when looking at the views on dancing in this context. While drinking a cup of coffee the Gaelic student Maggie says she perceives ceilidh dancing as Scottish: “I do not know what it is with ceilidhs. Maybe the fact that some people wear a kilt or they are dancing traditional Scottish dances or the music. But it is like, this is where we are. I think you do not have to be patriotic

⁵³ Interview, April 1, 2016

⁵⁴ Interview, April 14, 2016

⁵⁵ Ibid

or from here to enjoy it”⁵⁶ The Norwegian student Eva, who is a fellow Gaelic student, agrees. As she says: “You can buy a poppet of a man in a kilt, but you cannot buy a ceilidh. So it is more a community experience in that matter. It is really inclusive, you are part of the thing. There are no obligations. I think it is really showing hospitality which is part of the Scottish culture in my experience.”⁵⁷ This openness and the possibility to be part of a Scottish cultural experience with a noncommittal character is why many international people like to join a ceilidh. Other dancers say these dances are not necessary an expression of Scottish nationality but just a way to have fun. Like Jane says: “I associate it with having fun and it happens to be a Scottish tradition.”⁵⁸

Among the ceilidh musicians, ceilidh dancing is seen as a way to continue a Scottish tradition, but not as a way to feel Scottish. A difference with the ceilidh dancers is that the musicians play the music that might make them feel more connected to Scottish national identity. However, musicians emphasize that playing folk music is a way to feel connected to a history of folk tunes of Scotland rather than encouraging the feeling of a Scottish nationality. The music played on ceilidh dances are folk tunes that are partly made up by themselves and they add certain influences to the music. Because of the influences it is not to say that the music is ‘exactly’ Scottish folk music. The music is seen more as Celtic and a way to continue the Celtic heritage.

Something that is repeatedly said by the ceilidh dancers and musicians in Aberdeen, is that the dance, the music and their perceptions of Scottish nationality all have to do with a link to history. Namely, the history of the Scottish culture and landscape and family roots. Ceilidh dancers like, among other things, to do the dances because Scottish people have done it before for many years. The tunes of the music sound like home and the fact that their grandparents have danced to the same before is important. Interesting is that many dancers like to dance it because it is seen as part of Scottish culture, but they do not all see the dances as expressions of Scottish nationality. This ambiguity reflects the versatility but also the struggle and difficulty with national feelings.

Besides history, ceilidh dancing is also connected to a certain place. The way a ceilidh is danced differs per region. Ceilidh dances are written down in a book, but it is not quite standardized as it is the case with SCD. The 80-year-old Scottish radio maker Alan, who is much concerned with Scottish dance and music, takes a sip of his whiskey in the local pub and

⁵⁶ Interview, April 11, 2016

⁵⁷ Interview, March 30, 2016

⁵⁸ Interview, April 8, 2016

tells: “On the Orkney Isles some dances are for example danced with an extra twist which is not danced that way in the North East of Scotland.”⁵⁹ This also applies to the music tunes which are played on ceilidhs. The manner in which an instrument is, the tunes and the rhythms can slightly differ per area. These tunes and melodies can make people feel at home because they associate the tunes with the place where they grew up. The tunes give a feeling of belonging. The ceilidh band can play with the influence they like, but like Calum says “the way a fiddle is played often differs per area in Scotland. Here in the North East it sounds different from a way of playing at the Westcoast. You can hear that.”⁶⁰ So the music provides a connection with the place and creates local uniqueness as Eriksen (2007) describes as re-embedding.

To sum up, the music and dance is for some ceilidh dancers and musicians an expression of Scottish nationality, for others less. Some dancers perceive ceilidh dancing and tunes as a link to their history or to a specific area of Scotland. Folk dances, songs and tunes are often about the area, for example a particular mountain or river. Because of that the dance and music are connected to that actual place as well and listening and dancing to the local tunes connect people to the place. It is a tangible way to feel connected to a place.

4.3.3 Continuing a Scottish tradition

Despite a disagreement about ceilidh dancing as an expression of Scottish nationality, all ceilidh dancers and musicians agree on that they think it is important to keep the ceilidh dance and music alive. It is seen as a part of the Scottish heritage and culture, or even bigger as part of the Celtic culture. Because it has been done for so many years and especially because the music has history, people think it is important to maintain.

The practicing of ceilidh dancing can be seen as a way to continue a part of Scottish culture. The dance has a flexible character that makes it easy to adapt to contemporary society and time. Because there are no set rules in ceilidh dancing, it is free to dance the dances in any way you like which makes it easy to mold the traditional dance in a modern shape. Though the dance lends itself for pursuing a tradition in a self-chosen way, not everyone agrees that this should happen. Alan does not agree: “Traditions exist to continue. The dances should be danced in the way they are conceived, otherwise the tradition will be lost.”⁶¹ In his opinion traditions like a traditional Scottish dance should be maintained in this specific way. If not it devaluates

⁵⁹ Conversation, April 8, 2016

⁶⁰ Interview, April 13, 2016

⁶¹ Conversation, April 8, 2016

the Scottish heritage and culture. Nevertheless, many people like the flexibility and possibility to shape a traditional dance. The musicians see the music and dance as a fluid tradition which should not be seen as a closed box, but as an open one. As Calum says during an informal music session: “Everything changes over time. Traditions have to be continued but adapted to the time we live in. You cannot keep things the way they are because the rest of the society changes too.”⁶² In his opinion, people should be allowed to do with it what they want and adapt the music and dance in the way they like it. This is an example of Giddens view on the developing of traditions. He believes that traditions should be kept alive in a way that it is valuable for people nowadays. To do this traditions could slightly change to be able to adapt to new circumstances.

Chapter written by: Berber

⁶² Interview, April 13, 2016

5. Conclusions and discussion

In the former chapters we have discussed what the perceptions of Scottish Country Dancers and Ceilidh dancers are regarding national identity, community feeling and the way in which they practice this feelings of a shared community. In this paragraph an overview of the similarities and differences regarding SCD and Ceilidh dancing will be described. Secondly, we will outline the answer of our main question of our research which is: How does folk dance contributes to the experience of community making and nationhood among Scottish Country Dancers and ceilidh dancers?

The SCD and ceilidh dancers

The first group that will be discussed are the Scottish Country Dancers. The majority of this group contained of people aged between their fifties till eighty. This is in contrast with the average age of the Ceilidh dancers, which is between their twenties and thirties. Partly, because of this age gap and partly because of the differences in the structure of the organisations, we have found some interesting differences between the ceilidh dancers and the SCD dancers.

Because there exists a difference in age between the two groups, dancers from both dances had different reasons for going to a dance. Most of the Scottish Country Dancers are retired and SCD is one of their main social activities. Therefore they practice this dance more often during the week then Ceilidh dancers do. Besides the dancing, ceilidh dancers are also busy with working and taking care of children. Dancing on a Ceilidh is seen as going out for a night with friends, more on a temporally basis instead of a regular one. Scottish Country Dancers in contrast dance many times a week and at the dances you would see the same faces quite often. At Ceilidhs, people would go there when they have the time, and it is always a different group of people.

Furthermore Scottish Country Dancers have a long history of dance experience, dancing for twenty or thirty years is very common among the dancers. Ceilidh dancers have less experience with the dancing. This is partly because they are younger and partly because less experience is required for ceilidh dancing in contrast to SCD. The steps during a ceilidh are not taking that seriously. At a SCD event people would do their best to dance according to the rules. And it is not recommended to go to a SCD event without taking classes first.

Perception of community

These differences between SCD and Ceilidh dancers, have influences on the way Scottish Country Dancers and Ceilidh Dancers perceive the sense of a community through the dancing. Scottish Country Dancers experienced a strong sense of community and regarded the other dancers as their friends. Besides that they know most of the dancers already for a long period of time. Ceilidh dancers usually go together with friends to a dance evening, they also would meet new people there as well. Most of them experienced less of a community feeling among the dancers in contrast to Scottish Country Dancing. This is because the SCD know each other by name and face, which the ceilidh dancers, besides their friends, normally do not.

In both communities participation in the dancing is of significant importance. We have experienced this ourselves as well. By participating at the dancing, you connect with other dancers. This connection makes it easier to make contact afterwards. People also described this themselves that dancing is a good way of social interaction by which friends are easily made. This is also shown in the literature, Pegg (2001: 5) argues that dancing is a form of communication that takes place on an even deeper level than just spoken words. By this communication people feel connected to each other and become aware of a collective identity (Marrion, 2006). This is especially necessary in the modern times, where people feel disconnected to each other and are longing for ways to reconnect. As Eriksen (2007: 5) describes processes of disembeddedness contributes to the feeling of being lonely and the loss of feeling part of a wider community. Dancing is one of the main activities by which people can re-embed, especially because of the communicative aspect of dancing together.

Perceptions of a national community

Their feelings of being part of a wider community is also translated in their experience of sharing a national community. Here we also found some interesting differences between SCD dancers and Ceilidh dancers. In general, Scottish Country Dancers perceived a stronger feeling of being connected to their national identity in contrast to the ceilidh dancers. Most of the male SCD dressed up in a 'traditional' Scottish kilt. Some males at ceilidh dancers did this, but it was not as common as it was at SCD. Besides that every SCD event ended with the song 'Auld Lang Syne', which can be seen as a national song that creates feelings of togetherness. As Anderson describes. By singing the same words on the melody, people feel connected and it helps in their creation of an 'imaginary community'. Music and dance can contribute to their experience of

being Scottish. Ceilidh dancers to a certain extent felt being part of a national community, although they did not want to admit it, to a certain degree they see ceilidh dancing as part of their Scottish traditions. Here hidden signs of a national identity are coming to the surface. Generally speaking they identify less with Scotland, as SCD do, but both regard the dancing as part of 'their' tradition and feel very proud of it as well.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Scottish Country Dancers and Ceilidh dancers perceive to a certain extent the feeling of being part of a community. There was a stronger experience of a community seen among the Scottish Country Dancers, but the ceilidh dancers also felt that dancing made them feel connected with each other. In our research the main question is: How folk dance contributes to the experience of community making and nationhood among Scottish Country Dancers and ceilidh dancers?

We have found during our literature study that dancing is a strong element for the making of a community. This is because connecting through bodily movements arise feelings of connectedness among a group of people. Whether this group of people is already familiar with each other or see each other for the first time, dancing is a way to connect. This was also seen during our research, where the dancers felt strong connections with each other. This also contributed to a strong sense of a community among the Scottish Country Dancers and the enjoyment of the evening during a ceilidh dance.

This community making process is also seen in their experience of a national identity. Because Scottish Country Dancing and Ceilidh dancing are considered to be Scottish 'traditions' it is a way to connect with their national cultural heritage. Therefore it can reinforce feelings of a national identity. This is strengthened by the fact that cultural elements such as the wearing of the kilt, the eating of Scottish food during events and the singing of 'Auld lang Syne' are practiced within such night.

Whether people consciously are aware of this or not and experience this temporally or also on the longer term. Dancing definitely contributes to the feeling of a shared community or a sense of belonging among a group of people.

(Luca & Berber)

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Appendix 1: Summary

This thesis contains the results of anthropological fieldwork among Scottish folk dancers and musicians in Aberdeen, Scotland. Our aim was to investigate how folk dancers and musicians perceive Scottish dance and music as a way to express and construct community on local and national level. The research question is: *How does folk dance contribute to the experience construction of community and nationhood among Scottish Country Dancers and ceilidh dancers?* In order to answer the question we focused on who the dancers are, how these dances are perceived and practiced as constructions of community and finally we look at the bigger perspective and see how these dances can contribute to nationhood.

The research has been conducted among Scottish Country Dancers (SCD) and ceilidh dancers. These folk dances are the most popular and practiced dances in Aberdeen. Moreover, the different attitudes and ways of dancing provide an interesting comparison to different ways of community making. Aberdeen is a useful fieldwork context since both dances are practiced a lot in this city. Furthermore the relatively high amount of foreign workers and students living in the city provides an interesting context. Influential anthropological authors as Barth and Anderson argue that the presence of 'other' people and groups makes people aware and shape their own identity.

Where SCD is performed in societies, has standardized dances and is gentile, ceilidh dance is uncontrolled and looser of nature. Ceilidhs are open to everyone. People do not have to know any dances, but just buy a ticket to join the dance night. SCD are also open to new people, but the dance nights are more a gathering of people of the society. The SCD are mostly in the age of fifty and up and are member of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. They come together for dance classes and SCD events every two or three times a week. Ceilidh dances are attended by a more diverse group of people, but the majority are young adults. Both type of dancers come to a dance night to have fun, but the approach of the night is not entirely the same. The SCD is a bit more formal with set dances and a specific dress code. A ceilidh dancing is less formal because the only condition is to buy a ticket. Clothing and knowing the dances play a less big role.

SCD and ceilidh dancing appeared to be effective for the construction of community. The way this is perceived and practiced varies within the groups. On the one hand there is the SCD where the dancers know each other quite well. They say that it feels like a group of friends who are dancing together. They see each other during lessons and some of the dancers even go together on other activities like hill walking. This shows that there is a strong connection

between the SCD. Also the fact that all the dancers are member of the RSCDS plays a part in this community feeling. For example, SCD say that if they would go on their own to a SCD night in another city, people would take them by hand to include in the group because that person belongs to the same, bigger dance society.

On the other hand we have ceilidh dancing. As mentioned before, these people come together for just one night. They form a community with those people for the night but this is not the same kind of community as the SCD. People go mostly to a ceilidh with a group of friends and do not know the other dancers. The dancers are not united within a ceilidh organization, because these do not exist in Aberdeen. This means that the ceilidh nights are open to everyone. The people do not know each other and the goal of the dance is not to dance very well, but to dance together and enjoy the energy. Ceildih dancing is more individual than SCD in the sense that the bigger picture of the dance is not of major importance. Having fun with the people you dance is central as well as the informal atmosphere in which you drink a beer, must absolutely not feel embarrassed and feel free to go crazy.

Besides community forming on a local level, we have seen that folk dancing can also be seen as an expression of national feeling and thus a way to contribute to community forming on a national level. The dissimilar levels of community making were also present in the way people linked dancing to ideas of nationhood. SCD and ceilidh dance are Scottish dances, but the SCD see their dancing more often as an expression of a Scottish tradition than ceilidh dancers do.

In SCD the connection between dancing and Scottish-ness is considerably present. The song which people sing at the end of a SCD night, the Auld Lang Syne, is an old Scottish song. Singing this song together make the dancers feel proud on Scotland and on being Scottish. Furthermore, the clothing plays an important role because the kilts symbolize Scottish belonging and the commonality of kind of clothes can bond the group. Also the fact that SCD is practiced on international level is a reason why these dancers feel more connected with Scottish nationality. It makes them feel proud, because it is a Scottish dance which is danced on international level and the contact with other groups stimulates shaping their own identities.

Looking at ceilidh dancing, for some dancers and musicians a sense of national feelings arise too. Wearing a kilt and the Scottish music and the dance made some of them feel proud on being Scottish. This was not the case for all ceilidh dancers. Other ceilidh dancers said that they just go out for a fun night and that this has nothing to do with the fact that the dances are Scottish. Interesting is that all ceilidh dancers and musicians see the dancing as a Scottish

tradition. It is thus seen as a Scottish event, but part of them do not attempt to say that dancing the ceilidh make them feel more Scottish or proud to be Scottish.

Concluding, the SCD and ceilidh dancers in Aberdeen helped to get a comprehensive understanding of the practice of forming a local community and nationhood. The level of connectedness between people is not the same in both dances. This has among others to do with the fact that SCD share the membership of the SCD society whether the ceilidh dancers are not united in an association. The SCD form a close group and the ceilidh dancers form a temporary and not strongly bonded group.

(Berber)