

Letter of Clarification addressing the members of the community directly affected by the 7/7/05 events.

REGARDING: TangoCommute – bringing compassion and connection to London’s commuters.

This letter attempts to inform, not to persuade, and its author does not pretend to know what it means to lose a loved one at the hands of terror or how it feels to suffer from trauma, whether physically or psychologically. This letter has the sole intention of clarifying the nature of the TangoCommute project by addressing the members of the community directly affected by the events of 7/7/05 and also other victims who have been subjected to acts of terror or disasters resident in the UK and to answer any questions they may have.

My name is Thomas Lindner, I was born in Germany in 1975 and I have lived in the UK since 1998. I am a trained carpenter, who travelled and worked in this occupation worldwide. I completed my education at University College London to become an architect. I am presently working in a practice as architectural assistant building health care facilities mainly for the NHS. I have been living in London for the last 10 years because I love London; for its openness, diversity, culture of debate, adventure and liveliness.

Following the above introduction I will state the purpose of this document, and then give you an account of experiences which form my personal background of my relatedness to the events of 7th July 2005. This is followed by considerations which have led to the conception of the TangoCommute project. I will further clarify the project’s aims and objectives and finally describe the way TangoCommute is being managed and implemented.

It is my ambition to install this document in order to clarify what TangoCommute is and what it is not about so that a well-informed judgement can be formed in this present moment and a yard stick is established with which any future development of the project can be measured. In this process you are being invited to monitor the development of the project, to express your concerns at any point in time, and it will be my responsibility to respond to any query which has not already been addressed in the following text. I am committed to considering and respecting any informed inquiry into the nature of the TangoCommute project.

On 7th July 2005 I was a UCL student at Wates House, 22 Gordon Street, 1000 feet away from the British Medical Association, which I often passed on my way to dinner in nearby Brunswick Centre. Also, I was intimately familiar with the route 30 bus because I had been living in Hackney ever since I moved to London. On 7th July I had worked overnight in the college and when I left the building for breakfast the following morning I found the world outside in disarray. The first explanation for the turmoil amongst commuters streaming across the streets was that of a power surge. What later transpired we all know today, and will not be subject of my letter.

What I want to clarify at the outset of my communication to you is that I was only indirectly impacted by the incident. As I was present, I have personal recollections not of the event itself, which I did not witness, nor did I see or meet people directly affected but what I directly experienced was the impact the events had on the general public, their voices, facial and bodily expressions of distrust, emotional stress and anxiety. These sensations the terrorists wanted to generate in order to reach their aims and objectives. The killing of innocent people was a means to an end in bringing terror and anxiety to the general public of Great Britain.

Letter of Clarification addressing the members of the community directly affected by the 7/7/05 events.

It is therefore the indirect impact on the general public which terror is causing and TangoCommute is targeting and it is neither this specific event nor the people directly affected who are being addressed. TangoCommute is held on precisely this date because for a large number of people in the UK population this date marks the day where the sensations of distrust, emotional stress and anxiety, in fact the presence of terror, culminates every year.

As a matter of fact, TangoCommute follows precisely the opposite aims and objectives counteracting the presence of terror amongst the general public. TangoCommuting is a positive but subtle movement reconciling the past with the world we are living in today.

Before attempting to clarify the precise nature and implementation of the event I would like to pay respect to the people I am writing to here. While I will never be able to comprehend your situation I will try my utmost to be sensitive towards your views and I will engage with your queries should you wish to respond to my letter.

Further, I wanted to be clear that TangoCommute is a non-for-profit endeavor and that a foundation is being created to govern future TangoCommutes worldwide, with the sole aim of bringing compassion and connection to the commuters of the world through the dance of Tango.

I have also never done an event of this kind before and I have grown in my ability to communicate powerfully in the process over the course of the last two months and in the face of criticism. I was touched, moved and dispirited in 2005 and I found an opportunity to develop an inspired expression for my concern and in response to my own fears in 2008, hoping to touch, move and empower the people this project will reach.

What I am ultimately most afraid of in life is to live amongst a population marked by distrust, emotional stress and anxiety. People who were only indirectly affected by the event, but who still find themselves at the mercy of terror by the way they have come to be living their lives, with constant security alerts in train stations, CCTV recordings following every step and little plastic bags in airports – you name it - effectively with restrictions on self-expression and limitations on living a life we love to live.

Argentine Tango for me personally is a dance of compassionate leadership which gives the follower free access to full self-expression: At the beginning of the movement an invitation by the torso of the leader is answered by the partner with a step, which in return is then followed by the leader's step. This simple sequence continues with a new invitation and so forth. In effect, Tango is a form of non-verbal communication, free from statements, free from opinions or judgments. Therefore, TangoCommute does not commemorate and does not console. If individual dancers wish to add any meaning, they are entitled to do so but the dance movement has no meaning on its own.

TangoCommuting creates a contrast between the rushing of commuters and a simple caring embrace of two people, which may move, touch and inspire the general public during their evening commute and target the feelings of unease which may be caused by regular commuter stress, memories of last week's urban violence or the terror attacks three years ago. Since TangoCommute will be held at the hearts of the public transport system, it will bring compassion and connection to millions of commuters. Tango not as a show or performance or display of acrobatic dance skill but as a service to society in order to balance sensations of distrust, emotional stress and anxiety with compassion and connection.

TangoCommuting is not about having fun, TangoCommuting is about generating joy and empowerment.

Letter of Clarification addressing the members of the community directly affected by the 7/7/05 events.

TangoCommuting will not draw attention away from people directly affected by the events in 2005. On the contrary, it will more likely encourage all commuters who come into contact with TangoCommuters to themselves become compassionate and connected in creating the possibility of taking a stand for the victims and their families and of supporting them in their grievance and process of recovery.

TangoCommuting is not about promoting oblivion and ignorance. Instead it creates a new context of togetherness between Londoners indirectly affected in which the anniversary can be regarded; while TangoCommuting does not change or dismiss the content of what happened.

TangoCommute will 'commute' London by transforming our current position of living in fear without changing the significance of memories related to the 3rd anniversary.

TangoCommuters will dance with two sets of headphones and shared portable music player.

TangoCommuting is noiseless, the music is expressed in the movement of the bodies. TangoCommuters are encouraged to dance as a distributed, compassionate, connected and considered social network across 14 locations in London. They have been asked to give way to passing commuters, circulate and dissipate at all times. Participating tango schools or other parties have been strongly discouraged to use this event for promotional purposes, which would require separate permission from local authorities and if not granted, is prohibited by law. The responsibility and liability lies with every individual participating couple because of the distributed nature of the event, which is not applicable to any known group event format. TangoCommute stewards, wearing BigDance T-shirts will be available in all 14 locations to inform, guide and match single TangoCommuters but they have neither powers to marshal nor liability in case of accidents. TangoCommute has received unprecedented levels of support from network rail and local authorities and all their suggestions with regard to safety concerns were heard and taken into consideration.

TangoCommuting is ultimately a caring hug accompanied by music which is heard in private but expressed in public. With hundreds of TangoCommuters in 14 locations across London, the entire UK capital itself will be the subject of a musical hug for the duration of one hour, expressing a caring for London and amongst Londoners on an unprecedented scale reconciling the effect of terrorism. It is my conviction that as long as we express ourselves freely, in a considerate, connected and compassionate manner, we will no longer be at the mercy of terrorism and it will eventually lose its grip on us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Lindner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T'.

Thomas Lindner, founder of the TangoCommute movement
4th July 2008, London, United Kingdom