Capoeira and transnational culture: Investigating the social role of a globally mobile traditional cultural practice

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Abstract

*Capoeira* is a syncretic cultural system that simultaneously encompasses martial-art, dance, ritual, musical performance and theatre. It was forged by the interplay of diverse ethnicities in Brazil. Over the centuries, the practice served as a form of resistance to enslaved Africans, Amerindians, mestizos and exiled Europeans to counter slavery and an oppressive establishment. It has been argued that *Capoeira* functions ‘as a sign of history, preserving cultural patterns from former times, and as a sign in history evolving along with changes in the social order’ (Lewis, 1992: 9, italics in original). Despite its increasing popularity and multinational acceptance since the 1970s, the majority of the research done on *Capoeira* over the last few decades has been in the field of history. By contrast, applying theories of globalisation and transnational culture, this thesis addresses *Capoeira*’s process of transnationalisation and the matters of geographical and ethnic authenticity that are brought to the surface as *Capoeira* is practised throughout the world. The research also uses the example of *Capoeira* to study the application of transnationalised cultural practices in community development programmes promoting cultural understanding and social inclusion. The thesis draws on ethnographic data collected by the author, an experienced *Capoeira* teacher, during fieldwork conducted in Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Brazil, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Norway. A sample of 226 *Capoeira* practitioners (124 male and 102 female) from 43 countries, aged from 17 to 62 years (M = 27.64, SD = 6.623), and at variety of skill levels, voluntarily answered questionnaires containing demographic variables and *Capoeira* data. From these ten countries, and from within the same sample, 38 individuals voluntarily took part in in-depth interviews. A descriptive analysis was applied to statistical data gathered from questionnaires, and a Chi square test of proportions ($\chi^2$) was used to investigate proportional differences between Brazilians and non-Brazilians in regards to educational levels. A combination of qualitative and content data analysis was used to analyse data coming from in-depth interviews and secondary sources of data (online interviews and discussions, and social media websites) respectively. The position of the researcher as an insider in his field of research is also discussed in relation to the relevant literature corroborating
to the understanding of the advantages and challenges of such an approach (Bennett, 2002, 2003; Hodkinson, 2005).

The findings of the study reveal that in the case of transnationalised cultural practices, such as Capoeira, there is a dialectical relationship between the hegemonic type of globalisation (or globalisation from above) and the counter-hegemonic type (globalisation from below) influencing the global diffusion of culture. Moreover, the study of the transnationalisation of Capoeira corroborates with the argument that ‘globalisation from above’ carries in itself counter-hegemonic possibilities, as posed by Boaventura Santos (2006), Milton Santos (2008) and Giddens (1990). Such dialectic relations between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces allow for the birth of what Boaventura Santos (2006) calls ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’, a cosmopolitan identity that is developed bearing the counter-hegemonic values of globalisation from below (Santos, 2006: 397-398). This study also calls attention to the fact that the institutionalised organisational framework created to run Capoeira groups (for example, the creation of businesses, associations and NGOs to run classes and events), although aligned with the hegemonic type of globalisation, was the most efficient way for capoeristas to (re)create their groups and (re)produce, or emulate, Capoeira’s cultural principles, values and shared meanings within the new territories to which Capoeira was spreading. Such a framework continued to strengthen the monopoly of information (chiefly over teaching, organisational and promotional methods), a highly competitive attitude among different Capoeira groups and a rigidly hierarchical framework. All of these factors, I argue, are hindering the absorption of Capoeira’s interdisciplinary, intercultural and progressive legacy by our globalised societies. This study of the global diffusion of Capoeira thus exemplifies the shift that local practices undergo when their local function, meaning and ancestry are questioned by our current and often deterritorialised way of relating to each other and to the cultural practices in which we engage in a globalised world. In addition, this study argues that the use of social media, because it lowers the transaction costs of organising activities and bringing people together to practise, is challenging the
ubiquitousness of the institutionalised framework, allowing for different kinds of *Capoeira*-related
groups to evolve and for those involved in *Capoeira* to question ingrained notions of geographical
and ethnic authenticity and authority in their international community. Finally, the study argues that
the involvement of some *Capoeira* practitioners with social media and community development
projects is an attempt by these practitioners to connect with *Capoeira’s* historic legacy as a form of
resistance and as a progressive and inclusive art-form. This kind of engagement brings today’s
worldwide and deterritorialised practice closer to *Capoeira’s* early inclusive, intercultural and
cooperative principles.
Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)_____________________________

Eurico L.B. Vianna Neto
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For the last 27 years, *Capoeira* has taught me about myself and my country, as well as other people and their countries. The greatest lesson, however, has been about the interaction and emancipation we gain from engaging in *Capoeira*. When I began studying sociology, I realised that, to some extent and in many ways, I had already been trained in it. The pursuit of my doctorate was in many aspects a challenging and solitary project. Most people outside the academic realm (family and friends included) cannot relate to the difficulties, challenges and stresses a doctoral candidate goes through to accomplish such a project. The help of family, friends, colleagues and supervisors, however, whether large or small, was of fundamental importance for me as their support always came at the right time to keep me on track.

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Introduction

*Capoeira* is a Brazilian cultural system forged by the interaction of African-descendants, Brazilian Indians and exiled Europeans fighting against oppression, exploitation and acculturation during the slavery period in Brazil. As with many other cultural manifestations that evolved in places and epochs that preceded the ubiquitousness of the Western consumerist market’s logic, *Capoeira* simultaneously encompasses many features (fight, dance, music, theatre and game) and does not operate within the ‘winner or loser’ dichotomy that fosters a highly competitive ethos present in most post-industrial Western sports (Sodré, 1988; Queiroz, 2003). After centuries of organic development in many Brazilian states, most forms of *Capoeira* (as well as different connotations of the term) faded away. Only one form of *Capoeira* survived in Bahia, Brazil. It encompassed music and playfulness within a ritualised form of game.

The *jogo* (or game) is an interaction between two players in which elements of competition and cooperation are always present through the martial arts and the dance features respectively (see discussion about the *jogo* in Chapter 1). The embodied nature of the practice occasionally reveals incongruences between the groups’ adopted discourses and their praxis while often making the bridging and bonding potential of *Capoeira* within and across the same groups more evident.

Through a historical and etymological investigation as well as a review of literature focusing on the globalisation of culture, I present in this thesis the overall argument that both Brazilian and non-Brazilian ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ capoeristas (*Capoeira* practitioners) (Santos, 2006), are (re)interpreting *Capoeira*’s legacy as a weapon of resistance against slavery to (re)orient the way they practise and teach *Capoeira* within the transnational scenario. The institutionalisation of *Capoeira*, coupled with the growing Brazilian diaspora that began in the 1980s, rendered the practice a
globalised cultural manifestation with an ever-increasing number of *capoeristas* migrating to over 150 countries (Assunção, 2005).

Such fast diffusion highlights points of conflict among *capoeristas* from different *Capoeira* orientations and nationalities that enable *capoeristas* and scholars to understand how this transnationalisation process gave birth to ‘problems of livelihood’, to use a term coined by Appadurai (2000). This is because the institutionalisation of *Capoeira*, its fast diffusion and worldwide acceptance also generated different, and sometimes conflictive, ways of practising the art. As Appadurai explains it, today’s rapid movement of ‘ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques’ creates a world of flows and disjunctures, producing ‘fundamental problems of livelihood’ (Appadurai, 2000). According to Appadurai (2000: 1–6) this happens because the paths and vectors of these flowing concepts are rarely in harmony with ‘speed, axes, points of origins … nations, or societies’. The worldwide practice of *Capoeira* – the ways in which *capoeristas* interact with, (re)interpret and (re)orient it – is an example of this globalised context of flows and disjunctures. In addition, it also exemplifies Appadurai’s (2005) notion of how culture spreads in various ‘scapes’ (media-scapes, techno-scapes, finance-scapes, ethno-scapes and idea-scapes).

In the case of *Capoeira*, a globalised form of local culture from a peripheral country, it shows that ‘globalisation from above’ carries counter-hegemonic possibilities, as argued by Boaventura Santos (2006), Milton Santos (2008) and Giddens (1990). This is the second part of my overall argument and I also discuss this phenomenon in Chapter 4. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I explore these ‘counter-hegemonic’ possibilities *vis-à-vis* the practical examples of *capoeristas* searching and adopting alternative approaches to how classes and activities are organised (outside institutionalised *Capoeira* groups) and how *Capoeira* has increasingly been used as a tool to promote intercultural learning, social inclusion and psycho-social healing in community development programmes. All these
alternative initiatives to the corporate-like organisational framework are happening in the transnational Capoeira scenario. In Chapter 5, I broaden and deepen the literature review to discuss the ‘problems of livelihood’ presented in matters of authenticity and authority that evolved after Capoeira’s globalisation. In addition, in Chapters 6 and 7, I discuss how, after the advent of the internet, capoeristas worldwide began to engage with social media and community development to (re)interpret, (re)orient and (re)organise their art-form in ways that resemble Capoeira’s early socio-cultural and economic context.

Central to my overall argument is the fact that the easy and inexpensive ways in which capoeristas can now form online groups using social media and organise offline group activities relieve the pressure of having financial overheads to deal with in the first place. Such ease with regard to the organisation of groups, activities and endeavours allows for the multiplication of loosely coordinated groups – that is, groups that operate without the imperative of the profit motive. This easiness also allows for the multiplication of ‘communities of practice’, those kinds of groups within which people converse ‘about some shared task in order to get better at it’ (Shirky, 2008: 100). Shirky (2008) explains that communities of practice are inherently cooperative and importantly supported by social media because members can recruit one another or they can be easily found by like-minded people. Shirky further explains that because social media allows for inexpensive organisation of actions and cooperation within and across groups, not only is the number of group increasing rapidly, but different kinds of groups are emerging.

A related example is how community development oriented Capoeira groups and institutions are coming into existence in several countries. These groups usually operate as social companies or NGOs – that is, without a profit motive – and make broad use of social media to organise their activities and recruit teachers from different lineages and Capoeira orientations.¹ This is not common

¹ See Chapter 2 for a historical and conceptual explanation of why I use ‘orientations’ and not ‘styles’.
among those who organise their activities (classes, events and workshops) for profit. These community-oriented Capoeira groups also bring back cooperative and intercultural principles that were present before the worldwide diffusion of Capoeira.

In many ways, although the globalisation of Capoeira gave birth to complex and varied expressions of Capoeira, a close study of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic nexus corroborates the argument that ‘globalisation from above’ carries in itself counter-hegemonic possibilities. As a corollary, internet and social media (both resources created to underpin globalisation from above) can be and are being used to (re)establish socio-cultural and economic contexts that guided the practice of Capoeira before it began to be taught and practised within the Western consumerist market’s logic (with the provision of instruction as a commodity). The overall purpose of this thesis is thus to engage with historical analysis of Capoeira’s history and further the discussion on its global diffusion, in order to investigate its use in community development programmes and look at the socio-cultural implications of its practitioners’ involvement worldwide. I now provide a brief summary of the chapters that follow.

In Chapter 1, I situate Capoeira in relation to other subcultures and lifestyle sports in the field of youth studies. In addition, I introduce a discussion about Capoeira’s similarities and differences with other lifestyle sports and transnationalised cultural practices. The philosophical foundations of the jogo de Capoeira and the way in which capoeristas worldwide see the jogo as a universal body language are also discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter 2, I examine the historical origins of Capoeira in colonial Brazil, focusing on its intercultural formation and its resistance against slavery. I call attention to the fact that throughout Brazilian history, according to specific socio-cultural circumstances, the term ‘Capoeira’ denoted different substantives, adjectives and practices. Moreover, I demonstrate how pejorative generalisations of the term ‘Capoeira’ acted to bind together diverse criminal behaviours to attitudes
and practices contrary to the slavery system under the insignia of ‘Capoeira’. Subsequently, I address the transition from a term denoting marginality into its application as an interdisciplinary cultural practice. In highlighting the term’s nuances throughout history, I call attention to the dangers of attempting to understand both Capoeira’s legacy for today’s globalised societies and its socio-cultural and historical developments considering only its present interdisciplinary form. Finally, I explain how Capoeira was disseminated from Bahia to other Brazilian states (beginning in the 1970s) and then to other countries (beginning in the 1980s) as part of a larger migratory flux. There are historical records of Capoeira practitioners migrating from Bahia to other Brazilian states and from Brazil to other countries before the 1970s and 1980s. However, most historians adopt the 1970s and the 1980s as the main decades within which migration started to occur both inside Brazil and from Brazil to other countries. These migratory fluxes are still happening, and are influencing the global diffusion of Capoeira (e.g. see Araújo, 1997; Assunção, 2005; Downey, 2005).

In Chapter 3, I focus on the methodological aspects of the thesis. I discuss how the chosen fieldwork settings and data gathered for this research were both limited and facilitated by my network of friends, colleagues (both capoeristas and researchers) and other pre-existing contacts. In other words, I discuss how being an ‘insider researcher’ allowed me to travel to 10 different countries attending workshops, talks and regular classes, facilitating my observations of how capoeristas interact in their daily lives within the routine of their activities. I explain that such a perspective also facilitated my access to information that might have been concealed or difficult to access by outsider researchers. The difficulties of being an ‘insider research’ were that a few of the elder Mestres and some of the young instructors (in this case mostly Brazilians) began to see me as a traitor or outsider. In these cases, the data gathering was undermined by a few of my counterparts.

In Chapter 4, I expand on the history of Capoeira’s global diffusion, employing a theoretical framework based on concepts of cultural globalisation. I draw on in-depth interviews, a theoretical framework on cultural globalisation, and my 25-plus years of experience as a Capoeira Mestre to
discuss the dialectical relationship between the hegemonic (globalisation from above) and the counter-hegemonic (globalisation from below) forces underpinning it. I draw on interview data in this chapter to help further a debate about the internationalisation of *Capoeira* and create a wholesome image of *Capoeira*’s international growth and evolution as an important aspect of mapping its history and cultural significance. In this way, I demonstrate how the art-form still carries many of the customs, values, principles and meanings from its formational period, and its state and country of origin to the new territories to which it has been spreading, while it also absorbs new local influences. For these reasons, the practice of *Capoeira* supports the understanding of cultural globalisation both in Brazil and in the countries to which it is spreading (global flows of culture), as outlined by Giddens (2000), Boaventura Santos (2006), Milton Santos (2008), Featherstone (1990), Urry (1995) and Hannerz (1990). Furthermore, I discuss how such a dialectical relationship between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces allows the birth of what Boaventura Santos (2006) calls ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’.

Expanding on the discussions presented in Chapters 2 and 4, in Chapter 5 I bring together the existing literature on *Capoeira* and the interview data to effectively show the complex and shifting power struggles over who gets to define what ‘authentic’ *Capoeira* is in a transnational scenario. I lay down the foundation for the discussions and analysis of matters of authenticity and authority approached in Chapter 6, and to some extent in Chapter 7. Moreover, the literature review I present in Chapter 5 corroborates with the discussion on how the ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ (Santos, 2006) *capoeristas’ use of social media (Chapter 6) and engagement in community development programmes (Chapter 7) brings the global *Capoeira* community closer to its original cultural context and principles in Bahia, Brazil.

In Chapter 6, I illustrate how the international community of *capoeristas* is using social media. *C apoeristas* worldwide are making use of social media to network, learn about the history of
Capoeira and its techniques, market their products and classes, organise Capoeira group activities and keep practitioners updated with what is happening in various countries. More specifically, I explain how social media are being used to discuss more horizontally integrated issues such as authenticity, authority and authoritarianism. These issues are not commonly discussed during face-to-face classes and workshops due to notions of authority and hierarchy ingrained in Capoeira (and discussed in Chapter 5). I also discuss how groups, identities and attitudes forged and organised online are impacting behaviours, identities and interactions within and across Capoeira groups that take place offline.

In Chapter 7, I discuss how capoeristas all over the world relate to and interpret the art’s legacy as a weapon of resistance against oppression, exploitation and acculturation, setting up classes and programmes within the area of community development. First I discuss the various meanings and interpretations given to the concept of ‘community’ in relation to how capoeristas identify with and belong to an international Capoeira community, but also in relation to how some choose to make sense of their practice within the area of community development. Second, I discuss how Brazilian and (mostly) non-Brazilians are breaking away from the usual franchise-like organisational framework that underpinned Capoeira’s global diffusion in order to gain more latitude to incorporate influences from other groups or lineages in their classes as well as to choose with whom they work with as guest teachers within community development programmes. Such an approach, I argue, brings the global Capoeira community closer to its original cultural context and principles as these have been historically realised in Bahia, Brazil, which is now generally acknowledged as the ‘home’ of Capoeira.
Part I

The game of *Capoeira* in youth culture:
Historical background and methodology
Chapter 1

The philosophy behind the *Jogo de Capoeira*

To live the *Capoeira* philosophy requires sweat, mental discipline, sometimes pain, and always the magical experience of kneeling under the *berimbau* – the one string bow-shaped instrument that establishes the speed and style of the *jogo de Capoeira* [the game of *Capoeira*]. One must feel the philosophy from inside out because only his or her personal participation will make it real. (Almeida, 1986: 7)

In 1986, Bira Almeida, or Mestre Acordeon as he is known in *Capoeira*, wrote *Capoeira: A Brazilian Art-form – History, Philosophy and Practice*. The book was meant to be both a legacy that would go ‘beyond historical facts and techniques, to also reflect the spirit of the *Roda*, the attitude and cunning of the *capoeirista*, the *aché* and all the magical atmosphere that envelops and makes *Capoeira* so unique’, and ‘an attempt to give to [his] dedicated students the vision of a *Capoeira* master, a register of [his] experiences and beliefs with the power of its contradictions and complexities’ (Almeida, 1986: 6). At the time, Mestre Acordeon noted that a ‘few serious words have been previously written about the philosophy of *Capoeira*, a subject to be studied deeply by the Mestres, consolidated, and made more accessible to the students as an important chapter of the art’ (Almeida, 1986: 7).

Since then, many relevant books, theses and articles have been published. In an article titled ‘Recent Scholarly and Popular Works on *Capoeira*’ Rosenthal (2007) notes that ‘the last few years have seen a minor surge of books on *Capoeira*’. Rosenthal also explains that ‘this small boom follows decades of growth for the art’ and predicts that ‘[it] is likely the beginning of a steady stream of publications’ (2007: 262). In fact, since Mestre Acordeon published his book, there has been a profusion of theses,

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2. A circle formed by *capoeiristas* and lay audience, within which the *Capoeira* game takes place.
3. From the Iorubá *asé*, also written *axé*, meaning energy, power, strength. In the Afro-Brazilian religions it is the life force of everything that exists. ‘In Capoeira *axé* means the connection with the roots, a special energy to be developed by any *capoeirista*’ (Almeida, 1986: 6).
articles and books written. Some gravitated towards sociological and anthropological themes (P. Araújo, 1997; Downey, 2005; Delamont, Stephens & Campos, 2017; Griffith, 2017; Reis, 1998; Travassos, 2000), while the majority gravitated towards a historical focus (Abreu, n.d., 2003; Assunção, 2005; Essien, 2008; Taylor, 2005; Pires, 2005; Soares, n.d., 2002). A few approached philosophical aspects (Sodré, 1988, 2002; Queiroz, 2003; Filho, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c) as Mestre Acordeon had hoped. And fewer still investigated the increase use of Capoeira as a social tool in community development programmes (Kraft & Prytherch, 2016; Prytherch & Kraft, 2015) or ‘insurgent’ cosmopolitan movements, as the term is defined by Boaventura Santos (2006) (Wulfhorst & Vianna, 2012). This last concept is one of the main issues investigated in this research.

**Much more than a fight**

*Capoeira* is sorcery of slaves longing for liberty, its beginning has no method and its end is inconceivable to the wisest capoeirista. (Mestre Pastinha; Muricy, 1998; motion picture; author’s translation)

The first challenge one faces when teaching *Capoeira* out of Brazil or researching and writing about it in a language other than Brazilian Portuguese is to define it. Even though many people in Brazil do not know exactly what *Capoeira* is, most Brazilians have a visual memory of it. As an integral part of Brazilian history and culture, *Capoeira* underlies in most people’s imagery of the country. This does not mean most people in Brazil have a good grasp of what *Capoeira* is or how it evolved in Brazil. It means most people take for granted that they know what it is, and precisely because of this there is no need to explain what *Capoeira* is every time someone sees or hears of it. Before *Capoeira*’s diffusion from Bahia to other Brazilian estates, and especially before its international diffusion, *Capoeira* was not likened to a martial-art in Brazil. Quite the opposite: despite its mythological past as a weapon of resistance against slavery, it was largely called jogo (game), brinquedo (play) or vaidação (idleness or vagrancy), with the last two terms carrying a strong connotation of playfulness.
Outside of Brazil, *Capoeira* is largely known as ‘the Brazilian martial-art’, ‘an Afro-Brazilian art’, and ‘the fight-dance-game’. Despite the last of these being a more accurate description, all three are over-simplifications that attempt to explain what *Capoeira* is using what it most resembles (a martial-art) for those who have not seen it before. Yet, despite resemblances, and the fact that it contains combative features, *Capoeira* is not a martial-art. Second, *Capoeira* is not ‘Afro-Brazilian’. If an ethnic reference is to be used to define *Capoeira*, then it should encompass all of the Brazilian ethnic matrices (for example, ‘Afro-Indigenous-Luso-Brazilian’). Both the fact that there are very few similar manifestations that could be used to clarify what *Capoeira* is for the non-initiated and that the pace of life runs ever faster in the big centres to which *Capoeira* spreads make ‘martial-art’ a helpful metaphor for most people.

Brazilian and non-Brazilian scholars alike have also dwelled on the issue of how to define *Capoeira*. Queiroz (2003) who is an Professor of Architecture at the Federal University in Brasília and a *Capoeira* Mestre, argues in *A Capoeira Como Expressão – Chave – Simbólica de Brasilidade* [The *Capoeira* as a Symbolic – Key – Expression of Brazilianity] that the inseparability and simultaneity of the features forging *Capoeira*, its interdisciplinary and intercultural characteristics, position the art as a cultural system in the ‘territory of the between’, in the sense expressed by Buber (1974, as quoted in Queiroz; 2003). Lewis (1991), citing Geertz (1983), classifies *Capoeira* as a blurred genre, again considering the intricacies and inseparability of its forging elements, and Almeida (1986) defines *Capoeira* as a Brazilian art-form. Based on these scholars’ definitions of *Capoeira* and discussions around its classifications, I believe Queiroz’s assertion of the art as a cultural system is the most accurate, conveying a better grasp of the art’s wholeness. In this thesis, I therefore approach *Capoeira* chiefly as a cultural practice or system. However, for the sake of indicating how complex and profound the definition of a cultural practice might be, I end this section with a poetic definition of *Capoeira* written by Dias Gomes, a Brazilian playwright.
*Capoeira* is the fight of dancers. It is the dance of the gladiators. It is a comrades’ duel. It is a game, it is a dance, it is a perfect symbiotic-dispute between strength and rhythm, poetry and agility. Unique in the sense that the movements are ruled by the chanting.

It is rhythm subduing strength, melody subduing violence, it is the sublimation of antagonisms. In *Capoeira*, the contenders are not adversaries, they are ‘comrades’. They do not fight, they pretend to fight. They seek ingeniously to deliver the artistic vision of a combat. Beyond the competition spirit, there is in them a sense of beauty.

The *capoeirista* is an artist, an athlete, a player and a poet.

(Dias Gomes, Brazilian playwright; author’s translation)

**The Jogo de Capoeira as a universal body language**

In addition to indicating how complex a cultural practice can be, Dias Gomes’ poem also indicates the centrality of the game. The *jogo* remains a core activity in *Capoeira* despite all the conflicts that arise from matters of authenticity and authority, and from organisational frameworks (discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6). In the *jogo*, both players use kicks, head-butts, sweeps and other kinds of takedowns, as well as some rare hand and elbow strikes, as part of their game strategies. As they move, they variously use their feet, hands and heads as their points of support on the ground. While up to three points of support have to stay on the ground, at least one must remain free to strike or defend. Both players have to take the most out of each other’s resources, building a flow while managing strikes and strategies.

The *jogo de Capoeira* is also frequently mentioned by *capoeiristas* as a universal body language. The *jogo* is a ritualised interaction between two practitioners of any age, gender, weight or level of expertise that features fight-like, dance-like and acrobatic movements ruled by the music and a complex set of non-written and contextual principles that guarantee fair play. In a *jogo*, the outcome does not necessarily lead to a ‘winner or loser’ dichotomy. Unlike the Western approach to sport, the *jogo de Capoeira* is a game that, while challenging for both players due to its underlying combative
feature, is mostly based upon playfulness and cooperation. In *Capoeira Beyond Brazil*, Aniefre Essien (2008: 17–28) provides a discussion of how these unwritten rules support the notion of fair play.

The conceptual and embodied journey to master their game skills is what leads *capoeristas* all over the world to embrace values and principles from another place and time. It is in embracing the game principles and transcending them in their daily lives that *capoeristas* make use of *Capoeira* as a practical philosophy. Mestre Jogo de Dentro, a renowned international teacher from *Capoeira Angola*, explains that:

*Capoeira* has its own language. You can come to a Roda without knowing how to speak English, French or Italian, but in the *Capoeira* Roda you manage a conversation with the other person. The person will play with you there. This is a great richness that people still haven’t understood. The benefits *Capoeira* gives us are very strong. (Mestre Jogo de Dentro, personal communication, own translation, May 2010)

Mestre Jogo de Dentro’s statement corroborates other statements gathered in my fieldwork, in which *capoeristas* from different nationalities recognise in the *jogo* a universal body language. It is *jogo*, to some extent, that brings *capoeristas* together, facilitating an insurgent form of cosmopolitism and the use of *Capoeira* as a tool in community development programmes, among other nuances of this cultural practice in global diffusion. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapters 4, 6 and 7, where I deal with the application of *Capoeira* in community development programmes.

*Capoeira is for men, children and women*

An old quote famously attributed to Mestre Pastinha stated that ‘*Capoeira* is for men, child[ren] and women. The only ones who do not learn it are those who do not want to.’ The *jogo de Capoeira*, as stated above, is a ritualised interaction between two practitioners of any age, gender, weight or level of expertise, but the truth is that *Capoeira* evolved from other traditional cultures (see discussion in Chapter 2) in which men and women had different and often well defined roles. The reinforcement of traditional gender roles makes it difficult for women to be accepted as equal in the *Roda* (Assunção,
Queiroz – or Mestre Cláudio Danadinho as he is known in the Capoeira community – was one of the first Mestres to teach in Brasília, the capital of Brazil, in 1968. Mestre Danadinho was also the only capoeirista from outside of Bahia state to be hired by the City Council of Salvador (the state capital) to perform Capoeira in folkloric shows in that state in the late 1960s. Mestre Danadinho informed me that he was the first teacher to accept women into his classes. According to him:

A few girls came asking for classes at the Elefante Branco [White Elephant] High-School where I used to teach in the afternoons after school hours. I told them I would be happy to open a women’s class, but the girls said they would only train if they could train together with the men. I have travelled and played in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, and to my knowledge, I was the first to hold mixed [gender] classes, and this was in Brasília of all places. (Personal communication, February, 2010)

Mestre Danadinho also said that there is doubt Brazil evolved as a sexist society, but that the rough sparring that included galopantes [strong slaps in one’s face], kicks and takedowns were frequent at the end of classes and these might also have kept women out of Capoeira in the early days. There was also another element of physicality that might have played a role in keeping women marginalised in the early days. Mestre Danadinho explained that although some academias (Capoeira gyms) had already adopted uniforms, they were usually worn for exhibitions only. Coupled with rough sparring, there was the fact that men often trained only in shorts in very hot weather. ‘Although this might sound sexist today, those rough and sweaty class environments were not seen as fit for women … at least not until the late 1960s’ (Personal communication, February 2010).

Despite covering topics such as social inclusion, authority and authenticity in my research (see discussions in Chapters 4–7), and despite achieving great rapport as a male insider (see discussion in Chapter 3), only a small number of my informants brought up issues of gender equality in Capoeira. Although this might be explained by the fact that, despite me being an insider, most female informants might still have viewed me as an outsider due to my gender. My interviews were filled with conversations about power, authority, authenticity and inclusion/exclusion, as mentioned above. A
very few senior female instructors mentioned gender-related issues and discrimination as hindrances in their quest to become teachers in the early days of their careers, and one young female instructor shared that she frequently suffered sexual harassment while visiting Brazil. Onça, a female instructor who was one of the pioneers in the teaching of Capoeira in Sweden shared that:

This whole romanticised idea of the Mestre travelling the world alone with his berimbau is bullshit! In almost all cases there was a woman bringing the Mestre over to teach in Europe or a romance started soon after his arrival and a woman helped him run classes taking care of administration, paperwork and translating things for him. (Onça, personal communication, May 2010).

Essien (2008: 56–94) approaches the issue of gender equality in detail in a chapter ironically titled Capoeira as a Tool of Oppression. In The Little Capoeira Book (2007), Mestre Nestor Capoeira writes about women in Capoeira and gender-related issues. Mestre Nestor shares the story of Edna Lima, who began practising in 1974 with Mestre Tabosa in Brasília, and became the first female Mestre in 1981. Edna’s Capoeira journey is an example of how difficult it is for women to navigate a cultural practice that evolved in a sexist society (2007: 178-182). According to Edna, despite her mother’s support, there was ‘a strong reaction from the rest of the family and neighbours, who insisted that Capoeira was for men and even for bandits’ (2007: 179).

Lauren Griffith also performed research in Capoeira as an insider after five years as a student in the field. In her work In Search of Legitimacy: How Outsiders Become Part of the Afro-Brazilian Capoeira Tradition Griffith (2016: 117–28) dedicates a large section of a chapter to a discussion of gender equality. According to Griffith, ‘despite the fact that female capoeristas are growing in number, and many of them are becoming superb players, men continue to have a dominant place in the Capoeira hierarchy’, and despite Mestre Pastinha’s famous quote saying that Capoeira is for men, child and women (alluded to in the beginning of this section), ‘in everyday practice, female capoeristas are often marginalised in subtle ways’ (2016: 121).
Although social inclusion is an issue that appears regularly in my research, after analysing my interviews and fieldwork notes I realised that I did not have enough data to substantiate a full chapter, over even a larger section, on gender equality issues.

**Capoeira, lifestyle sports and youth culture**

Sport is fascinating – but not innocent. As a mirror of societal oppositions, sport is full of tensions: tensions between innovation and restoration, between the people and the dominating elites, between liberation and colonization. If one tries to harmonize these contradictions – and this is what large sports organizations normally do – crucial aspects of the significance of sport are ignored. (Eichberg, 2004: 1)

*Capoeira* is not the only manifestation of sport that was once practised in the streets or freely without a profit motive and virtually no organisational costs. Yoga, surfing and salsa are some other manifestations that predate Western notions of sport, how it is practised and why. Skateboarding, snowboarding and parkour are some more recent examples of how youth in the Western world are questioning competitive sports. While conventional Western notions of sport tend to focus on achievement and standardisation, the world of games and (pre-industrial society) sports is rich and extremely differentiated (Eichberg, 2004: 4). Some of these manifestations are also commonly termed ‘subcultures’, often in relation to extreme or lifestyle sports (see discussion about *Capoeira’s* similarities to and differences from other manifestations in Chapter 5).

There is much debate about whether or not subcultures and lifestyle sports pose a real threat to the dominant Western mainstream ideology of consumption, (competitive) sport and physical culture (Thornton, 1995; Gilchrist and Wheaton, 2011; Wheaton, 2013; Eichberg, 2004). Booth and Thorpe (2007) and Howell (2008), for example, note that young people in many countries are already choosing informal or lifestyle sports over traditional team sports (Gilchrist and Wheaton, 2011: 111).
Eichberg (2004: 5) explains that, ‘From the field of youth cultures, pop events like rock festivals, New Age esoteric masses, Love Parades, Dark Wave masses and role games have integrated elements of sport and movement culture, play and games.’ *Capoeira* had already evolved in a way that displayed elements of sport, play and games. Perhaps that is why while conventional forms of sport and culture are being redefined by young people across the globe, *Capoeira* is being rapidly embraced in so many countries. Eichberg (2004: 5) explains that: ‘In all this richness, one can recognize some common features. People are active in types of sport, which are essentially contributing to their social culture.’

The wealth of culture – and of sport is more than just multiplicity and more than the ‘freedom of choice’, which on the market is the choice between more and more channels of the same contents … [The wealth of culture] is diversity, and this means difference. It is difference that makes variety – and this demands recognition of the otherness of the other. While modern sport and gymnastics – in their different ways – always may imply certain tendencies of sameness and standardization, popular sports represent a way to peace by playing on difference. (2004: 17)

In the context of *Capoeira*, a transnationalised cultural practice with diverse nuances, but seen as a universal body language, ‘it is neither artificial nor threatening nor only a new expression of exoticism that one can experience *Capoeira* in Danish folk academies or among young Dutch in the streets of Amsterdam’ (Eichberg, 2004: 17). Yet, despite the many differences between *Capoeira* and other traditional sports or today’s lifestyle sports, there are also similarities. Here Eichberg singles out two main features that are central to this research. First, youth cultures all around the globe are developing new forms of sport, game and movement culture. They are also embracing cultural practices that either evolved prior to conventional Western competitive sports or that were born to question them. Despite their often progressive inclinations, these lifestyle sports or subcultures carry in them ‘tensions between innovation and restoration, between the people and the dominating elites, between liberation and colonization’ (Eichberg, 2004: 1). Second, despite these tensions, there have been
recommendations for (Thorpe, 2014), and increased use of, these lifestyle sports in community development projects, exactly because these sports and cultural practices ‘represent a way to peace by playing on difference’ (Eichberg, 2004: 17).
Chapter 2

*Capoeira: Origins, development and global dispersal of a Brazilian art-form*

**Introduction**

This chapter examines the historical origins of *Capoeira* in colonial Brazil as part of the larger socio-cultural process that created the Brazilian people and culture. It argues that, as an integral part of the Brazilian culture, *Capoeira* also evolved from intercultural and interdisciplinary processes (Ribeiro, 1995; Queiroz, 2003). This chapter’s narrative presents an alternative view of *Capoeira*’s history that goes beyond the nationalist (Brazilian) versus Africanist discussion. Focusing on *Capoeira*’s intercultural formation and its character of resistance against slavery, the chapter draws attention to the fact that throughout Brazilian history, according to specific socio-cultural circumstances, the term ‘*Capoeira*’ denoted different substantives, adjectives and practices. It also focuses on how pejorative generalisations bound diverse criminal behaviours to attitudes and practices that resisted the slavery system under the insignia of ‘*Capoeira*’. Subsequently, the transition of *Capoeira* from a term denoting marginality into its application as an interdisciplinary cultural practice is addressed. Finally, the chapter examines *Capoeira*’s multi-national dissemination, mostly after the 1970s. The chapter thus corroborates current academic discussions of *Capoeira* that shift the focus from an ‘exotic’ subject in itself to the study of an interdisciplinary art-form in the process of rapid global expansion, and its applications and pitfalls in relation to mass migration, multiculturalism and social exclusion – themes that will be explored in more depth in subsequent chapters.

It is worth noting that in exploring the intercultural origins of *Capoeira* in Brazil, this study does not intend to diminish the rich and contribution of different African ethnic groups. Indeed, my intention is quite the contrary. These African ethnicities had to overcome barriers among themselves. They had to overcome differences within and among groups of Brazilian indigenous peoples and criminal, political and religious *degradedos*\(^4\) in order to survive the deadly exploitation of slavery in Brazil.

\(^4\) An exiled convict.
The ability of these African ethnicities to overcome cultural barriers by bridging and bonding with other people, and to thrive in new territories without losing their ancestry, constitute one of their greatest contributions to Brazilian culture and provide a lesson today. The intention is to corroborate investigations of how these specific socio-historical circumstances enabled the birth of a syncretic ‘cultural system’, namely *Capoeira* (Queiroz, 2003), from a particular multi-ethnic interplay in Brazil. Furthermore, in highlighting the term’s nuances throughout history, this study notes the dangers of attempting to understand the socio-cultural and historical developments of *Capoeira* when considering only its present form.

**The early Capoeira practitioners as the first Brazilian political party: The history and etymology of the early resistance**

_Capoeira_ – as an authentic installation of resistance – was the first Brazilian political party.

(Jairo Bamberg, Mestre5 Angoleiro, personal communication, February 2010)

_Capoeira_, like the Brazilian people, was based upon the interplay of three major ethnic matrices: the African, the Amerindian and the European. The dialectic relationship between the institution of slavery and those opposing it largely strengthened the amalgam of the Brazilian ethnicity. Thrown into captivity, exploited until death and stripped of their humanity, Amerindians, Blacks and Mestizos constituted the majority of the population and saw each other as equals fighting the same oppressive forces. Consciously opposing the establishment, ‘the ‘_Capoeira_ Party’ had an undeniable socio-cultural and ethnic character, drawing most of its transcendence, cultural strength and philosophical purpose from centuries of intercultural resistance by minorities against slavery and a Euro-centric project of acculturation.

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5 Master, senior _Capoeira_ teacher.
The first historical records of *Capoeira* are controversial and entangled with etymological studies in an attempt to account for the origin of the term. In concluding his study on the origins of the word *Capoeira*, Rego (1968) notes that, with regard to the etymology of the term, most Brazilian scholars specialising in the Tupi language agreed that the word *Capoeira* derived from the etymon *caa* plus the preterit *puêra*, suggesting an indigenous origin. Such an assumption finds support in Father José de Anchieta’s work *Arte de Gramática da língua mais usada na costa do Brasil* (1595), a grammar and dictionary of the Old Tupi language. His grammar indicates that the term ‘*mijucápoéra*’ accounts for ‘*o fugidor canhêbôra*’ – the *canhembora* fugitive (Anchieta, 1595).

Araújo (1997) points to a 1626 reference to the term ‘*Capoeira*’ as possibly the oldest one. This document, a police report, was organised by a police force in Rio de Janeiro and applied the term as an adjective to individuals involved in public turmoil. The author explains, however, that it would be impossible to determine whether these individuals were Black or Amerindian due to the conceptual definition of *Capoeira* at the time and the common early generalisation of ethnicities, through which Guinean Blacks – Africans and Native Blacks – and Amerindians were called simply ‘Blacks’. These references are significant, as they conflate Amerindian and African people via attitudes of resistance against slavery to the practice of *Capoeira* in a premature epoch in Brazil. This was a rebellious practice against the establishment’s slavish regime and a straightforward fight for survival.

Over six million Africans were brought to Brazil between 1540 and 1860. The majority of these were from the *Yorubá, Dahomey* and *Fanti-Ashanti* nations from the Sudanese region; *Peuhl, Mandinga,* and *Haussa* from the Islamic nations in the north of Nigeria; and the *Bantu* tribes from Congo-Angolan origins (Ribeiro, 1995). These ethnic groups were the main influence on the formation of Brazilian ethnicity.
Together with approximately one million Amerindians, chiefly from the Tupi-Guarani nations, spread along the coast (Ribeiro, 1995: 31), these ancestor nations contributed to the Brazilian intercultural legacy in different ways. Both the indigenous and the African peoples overcame their own ethnic rivalries, producing within the hinterlands a new representation of their cultures. They traversed ethnic gulfs without losing their ancestry and learnt how to unite different principles and beliefs from various indigenous and African cultures and manifestations in order to resist an antagonistic colonial regime.

From canhembos and quilombos – respectively Tupi and Bantu terms for maroons – Africans and Amerindians installed an ‘animist alliance’ (Queiroz, 2003) among negríndios and caboclos. The ‘expression of continuous resistance’, installed from the hinterlands (Fausto, 1995) in a dialectical conflict with the colonial enterprise, became the foundation of Brazilian ethnicity. This ‘animist alliance’ upheld mythic, rhythmic, religious and cultural values from all its founding matrices. The presence of White people in quilombos, although rare, finds support among authors who study the history of these settlements in Brazil (Funari, 2005; Gomes, 2008). The presence of these ethnic matrices in quilombos and the hinterland reinforces the premature sense of alterity in those cultural and geographical areas.

The hybrid cultural practices and beliefs springing from this context were incarnated in the large number of Cabôclos, Negríndios, Amerindians and Africans inasmuch as the Brazilian people were forged by these ethnicities. An animist kinship arose from the free hinterlands, empowering nations of people of mixed descent and heightening the intercultural alternative as an outstanding ‘expression of continuous resistance’ (Fausto, 1995). Mestre Augusto, although a practitioner of Capoeira

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6 Individuals born from inter-ethnic relations between an African (or a Brazilian Black) and slave and an Amerindian.
7 A cabôclo (or caboco, from Tupi kaa'bo, ‘who came from forest’) is a term used in Brazil describing a person of mixed Brazilian Amerindian and European descent. In Brazil, a cabôclo is a specific type of mestizo.
8 Funari (2005) and Gomes (2008) point out the fact that the Dutch spy Bartholomew Lintz and his companions lived in Palmares long enough to provide an accurate account of its nine villages and number of inhabitants, which seems to indicate that the presence of white people in the quilombos was not a taboo.
Angola, an orientation in *Capoeira* that by and large adopts an Afro-centric narrative, argues for the Brazilian origin of *Capoeira* equally valuing the contribution of all ethnicities. Mestre Augusto’s argument hence supports the intercultural and socio-historical context presented in this chapter.

My grandparents had many origins. They were Black, Mulattoes, White and Amerindian. My father’s father was Cabôclo, pure Amerindian; my grandfather’s mother was a freed slave; my mother’s mother was an Italian’s daughter; my grandfather’s grandmother was Portuguese; and myself, what am I? I am Brazilian. I am cross-bred. Therefore, I stand for my Brazilian origin, and this is the origin of *Capoeira*. (Mestre Augusto Januário, statement at the documentary movie *Capoeiragem na Bahia* – IRDEB/TVE, 2000)

Assunção (2005: 23) notes, however, that despite the fact that most practitioners claim that *Capoeira* was invented by *quilombolas*, and that ‘[a]lmost every book on *Capoeira* history contains an initial chapter on slave resistance where the heroic *quilombos* … are always singled out for their fierce opposition to slave society’, such claims have no factual support. Araújo (1997), on the other hand, without directly arguing for such a claim, provides an account of the term *Capoeira* linking individuals with practices of resistance and empowerment in the hinterland forests in a way that underpins the construction of the cultural narrative of *Capoeira* as a rebel practice. Araújo explains his interpretation as follows:

In doing a more detailed analysis of dictionaries elaborated until the end of the 19th century, no reference of the term *Capoeira* is found designating the fugitive individual who lives hidden in the bush-woods, or to designate specific individual or group actions attempting against the ruling social order. However, the existent documentation in the early historical periods of Brazil is replete with examples regarding this popular use of the term. (Araújo, 1997: 64; translation mine)

Having noted such nuances of historical interpretation, what is pertinent to this study is the rebellious attitude contrary to slavery; the association of the term ‘*Capoeira*’ with cultural expressions of resistance throughout history (generally understood as crimes) preceding its use denoting a game; and the premature sense of alterity fostering the intercultural social architecture inherent in the *quilombos*. These concepts are more widely accepted, but nevertheless contribute to the anthropological
construction of the narrative that conflates the socio-cultural and political expression of enslaved minorities in the hinterlands, in the villages, towns and cities surrounding forests, and in marginalised urban areas, to the broader phenomenon called *Capoeira* today.

There are some historical facts that contributed to the formation of intercultural procedures in Brazil. These in turn led to ‘hybridisation processes’ that contributed to the birth of *Capoeira* and the cultural construction of the narrative linking the socio-cultural and political expression of enslaved minorities (in different marginalised geographical installations and periods of time) to the *Capoeira* phenomenon. I focus on these historical facts and cultural contexts below.

The Portuguese colonisers’ predisposition to ethnic mixing due to centuries of previous occupation and miscegenation of the Iberian Peninsula by Nordics, chiefly Arabians (Costa & Lacerda, 2007), allowed the practice of inter-ethnic and polygamous marriages in Brazil. Darcy Ribeiro named these practices *Cunhadismo*, ‘an old Amerindian way of incorporating strangers to their community’ via inter-ethnic marriage (Ribeiro, 1995: 81). *Cunhadismo* made an important contribution to the Brazilian intercultural ethos, as it was adopted by the Portuguese Crown and its colonists as their first system of exploitation. This method was dominant during almost the entire first century of colonisation. In Ribeiro’s words, ‘without the practice of *cunhadismo* the creation of Brazil would not be feasible … [as] … the function of *cunhadismo* within its new civilising insertion was to produce the rising of numerous layers of mixed people, that effectively occupied Brazil’ (Ribeiro, 1995: 83).

In the first century of Brazilian colonisation, African women could not withstand the Atlantic–Ocean crossing in the slave boats’ inhumane conditions. Even in the following century, women were always outnumbered by men in the slave traffic. The subsequent scarcity within following periods also fostered intercultural processes and hybridism among African and European men, and Amerindian
women. Fausto (1995) notes that in 1855, approximately 30 years before abolition, Brazil was still importing four million African slaves, the great majority of whom were men. In addition, there was also the concomitant enslavement of Amerindians, Brazilian-borne Blacks, and Africans. Queiroz (2003) conflates historic and anthropological academic references on the history and formation of the Brazilian culture, revealing the concomitance, complementarity and intricacies of many Africans’ and Amerindians’ slavery over a period of 250 years. Ribeiro (1995) also calls attention to the fact that the Portuguese Crown frequently turned a blind eye to the enslavement of the indigenous people as it fostered its colonial enterprise.

The settlement of quilombos as ‘expressions of continuous resistance’ (Fausto, 1995: 51–2) against slavery and a Euro-centric acculturation enterprise in the hinterland areas embodied the early Brazilian cross-breeding ethos and appeased the ethnic interplay among different African nations, Ameridians and to a minor extent Europeans. According to Ribeiro (1995), inter-ethnic relationships were predominant in the early Brazilian settlements as Portuguese colonisers discovered that marrying indigenous women gave them a kinship-based status that allowed them to explore and trade. Still, according to Ribeiro (1995), each coloniser would marry dozens of indigenous women in different tribes as a way to broaden their trading network. In turn, the interplay of the above-mentioned ethic mixing processes (and their inherent socio-cultural contexts) and agendas later forged the marginal urban ethos. Whereas the colonial, and centuries later the republican, establishments strived to emulate Western European civilisation and cities, intercultural, hybrid and subversive processes evolved at the margins of the Brazilian important urban centres. These processes had a strong influence on the formation of the Brazilian people and culture (Ribeiro, 1995) and subsequently the Capoeira ethos.

There are other examples of how these processes and antagonistic tensions shaped the Brazilian culture. Samba and Choro, quintessential musical genres from Brazil, both rely on African rhythms
and European harmony. *Candomblé de Caboclo* and *Umbanda* are syncretic religions based upon Judaico-Christian, African and Amerindian matrices largely practised in Brazil. *Capoeira* was thus one of the many cultural responses to a specific context in Brazil when a multi-ethnic interplay of minorities antagonised oppressive and acculturative forces. The primary philosophical purpose of *Capoeira* was to empower a multitude of oppressed ethnicities from different origins against an ethnocentric project of colonisation driven by inhumane standards of exploitation. As the early rural context underpinned the foundations of the Brazilian people and *Capoeira* through intercultural procedures, the later marginal urban ethos, common to excluded minorities from all origins (mainly Brazilian Blacks, *Caboclos* and *Negríndios*), reinforced further urban developments of *Capoeira* and its syncretisms.

**Vagrant resistance: The playfulness and syncretism of a rebel culture**

The first definition of *Capoeira* as fight/game appears in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The term continued, however, to indicate a broad spectrum of activities acting against public security and/or private property, including escape attempts of slaves as a crime against their owners. In this way, not all criminal individuals were *capoeristas* (practitioners) in the sense of a fight/game, as Araújo emphasises, but all practitioners were outlaws (Araújo, 1997).

Thereby, after the early nineteenth century, the term that initially indicated the ‘continuous resistance’ of *canhembos* and *quilombos* also pointed to the marginal groups residing in the urban centres. This viewpoint strengthens the cultural construction of *Capoeira*’s narrative as a rebel instrument, as well as the argument for the term ‘*Capoeira*’ as an intercultural insignia binding together diverse ethnic minorities. Such a perspective also finds support in Araújo’s study:

> From these identities based upon attitudes and actions it is possible to attribute the first conceptual definition of the term, that initially described fugitives who hid themselves in the bush-woods, called *Capoeiras*, near the urban networks, and that afterwards were extended
not only to these [runaway slaves called *Capoeira* Blacks], but also to other marginal groups ... now residing in the urban centres. (Araújo, 1997: 64-65; translation mine)

In order to evade the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, the Portuguese royal family moved from Portugal to Brazil in 1808, reinforcing the tendency towards reproducing the Western European style of city and way of life in the tropics. In an exchange for protection during its evasion from Europe, upon arrival in Brazil the Portuguese Crown made legal the commerce between Brazil and England (and all allied nations). Despite the Portuguese allegiance to the British Empire, Britain supported the abolitionist movement in Brazil. Britain’s agenda was put forth primarily for pecuniary reasons. First, Britain did not want to compete with the Brazilian slave-subsidised sugar prices in the international trade. Second, Britain needed consumers, not slaves, to buy its processed products in the colonies and boost the industrial revolution’s momentum (Fausto, 1995). The Brazilian abolitionists, on the other hand, also lobbied for independence, threatening the Portuguese Crown through the undermining of its slave-based economic system.

Prince Dom João VI thus had to manage a multifaceted crisis, with the British lobbying for the abolition of slavery and unfavourable commercial agreements, the French invasion in Europe and the Brazilian abolitionist movement also pushing for independence. In addition, the numerous mass of Blacks (both Africans and Brazilians), *Negríndios* and *Caboclos* also began to threaten the establishment regularly through a series of uprisings. These revolts were inspired by the St Domingue rebellion (1791-1804) and the news that slavery had ended after many years of ruthless uprisings of slaves against the white ruling class (Taylor, 2005).

As a weapon of resistance empowering minorities, *Capoeira* represented a threat to the Euro-centric ruling class, and ‘it was considered a “social infirmity”’ (Almeida, 1986). For this reason, policies were written and special police forces were specifically assembled in an attempt to extirpate it from Brazilian society. This persecution persisted from the colonial to the republican period, and although
It succeeded in extirpating ancestral forms of *Capoeira* in some Brazilian states, it also fuelled the Blacks, *Negríndios* and *Caboclos*, who resisted first the colonial slavish agenda and then the Euro-centric model of civilisation and culture also adopted by the Republicans.

It was through police reports, newspaper articles and letters to the governing classes repudiating *Capoeira* as a practice of resistance that the terms *Capoeiragem* and *vadiação* were unveiled in the nineteenth century (Araújo, 1997). The first was coined in a police report in 1872 and did not add much to the previous description of the *Capoeira* type or transgressor, except for the reinforcement of its illegal character (Araújo, 1997). Conversely, the 1890 Brazilian Penal Code, despite singling out the practice as a crime, enhanced the understanding of the term *Capoeiragem* as a fight/game. Similarly, the term *vadiação*, regarded as a synonym for *Capoeiragem* in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco, was coined by practitioners, reinforcing the playfulness of the practice (Araújo, 1997).

Yet in the nineteenth century, regardless of its first etymological appearances as a fight/game, *Capoeira* remained a powerful tool in the hands of marginalised and excluded communities. This time, though, the landscape was urban, and the threats were more bluntly put against the establishment, once the Crown moved its governing centre from Salvador, on the northeast coast, to Rio de Janeiro, on the southeast coast. Throughout this period, both the development of *Capoeira* into a playful and hybrid art-form and the surviving memory of it as an instrument of resistance for minorities were relevant. The playful aspect allowed Blacks, *Negríndios* and *Caboclos* to express their culture in a syncretic way while the more belligerent aspect empowered them to fight the establishment’s oppressive agenda.

The troublesome years of transition from an Empire to a Republic in the late nineteenth century in Brazil highlighted the significance of *Capoeira* as a practice that was deeply related to the disadvantaged population. It was their weapon and means of expression against the ruling class (as
the ability to control this bellicose ethnic-mixed crowd was a crucial factor to rule effectively). The Republican Party movement and its intellectuals were severe critics of the Empire’s incompetence in extinguishing social problems related to Capoeira – usually public turmoil caused by Capoeira outfits. Conversely, the Monarchists had not only gained the Capoeira outfit’s sympathy by abolishing slavery in 1888; they had also assembled the first Capoeira military unit – A Guarda Negra [The Black Guard] (Soares, n.d.).

When the Republic was established in 1889, the connection of Capoeira with the previous Monarchic establishment, as well as with a large number of vagrant Blacks, Negrindios and Caboclos, threatened the Republican power (Soares, n.d.). For these reasons, the 1890 Brazilian Penal Code ‘was tailormade for complete repression of rodas de Capoeira, as well as afoxés and terreiros de Candomblé’ (Taylor, 2005: 419). More specifically, the code prohibited ‘practicing, in the streets and public squares, the exercise of agility and corporal dexterity known by the term Capoeiragem’ (Brazilian 1890 Penal Code, cited in Taylor, 2005: 419).

Subsequently, the practice of Capoeira was persecuted and repressed until its extinction, chiefly in Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco, states where Capoeira was deeply grounded in mobs, outfits and territorial disputes among Blacks and cross-ethnic minorities (Soares, n.d.). The only Capoeira that survived this period of persecution and repression was the one practised in Bahia, according to Queiroz (2003), because it evolved interdisciplinary and playful features. Abreu, a renowned historical expert and researcher on Capoeira, corroborates Queiroz’ assertion:

Historically speaking … the Capoeiras in Bahia made a surprise move by working directly for the preservation and continued existance of Capoeira as a form of enjoyment, artistic practice, as leisure and entertainment (harmless fun and games) without, however, doing away with its potential as self-defence. (Abreu, n.d.: 42)

For instance, a couple of decades after the 1890 Penal Code banned the practice of Capoeira and the establishment’s repression and persecution managed to extinguish it in other Brazilian states, the art had survived and was thriving among the poor classes in Bahia. It was practised mainly in poor
neighbourhoods, often removed or hidden from the city centre, but somehow openly as it was part of the populace’s daily lives and religious celebrations in public. It is thus the Bahian Capoeira, with its interdisciplinary and playful features, that is regarded as the ancestor of Capoeira today.

**The different orientations in Capoeira**

The great majority of capoeiristas worldwide classify Capoeira in three main ‘styles’ and subscribe to one of them. These styles are: Capoeira Regional, Capoeira Angola and Capoeira Contemporânea. After Mestre Bimba⁹ created the first method to teach Capoeira and named his establishment Centro de Cultura Física Regional Bahiana (Centre of Regional Culture from Bahia), in the 1930s the practice became known as Capoeira Regional. Capoeiristas who descended from other lineages reacted upon the rapid spreading of Mestre Bimba’s method and approach, and started claiming that their practice was ‘the traditional one from Angola’, hence coining the term Capoeira Angola for all other lineages.

While in the beginning there was not much rivalry among practitioners, regardless of which school they belonged to, and some frequented both environments, eventually competition for market and social recognition led to a schism between most of Mestre Bimba’s students and the majority of those from Capoeira Angola (descendants of all the other schools’ lineages). A few decades later, with Capoeira’s spread from Bahia to other Brazilian states during the 1970s, people interested in learning it began doing so without subscribing to any particular lineage and claiming to be interested in Capoeira as a whole, rather than in any particular variations. This trend or approach became known as Capoeira Contemporânea (contemporaneous Capoeira). These three approaches are now largely recognised as the main ‘styles’ to which capoeiristas subscribe. In this study, I regard these different takes as ‘orientations’ within the same practice as opposed to divergent ‘styles’.

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⁹ Manoel dos Reis Machado (1900-1974).
This is first because the term ‘orientations’ allows for diversity and thus difference to be perceived as integral parts of *Capoeira* as whole. Whereas the use of ‘style’ in the *Capoeira* community often indicates a ‘branching out’, a distancing process, that generally prevents a wider and deeper understanding of *Capoeira* as a cultural practice. Moreover, there are many more inherent similarities among different orientations than there are differences. Second, because given that all three ‘styles’ of *Capoeira* still coexist today they are all contemporary, they do not really allow a clear classification based on chronological time.

Cleverly avoiding the use of the term ‘*Capoeira*’ in his training centre, Mestre Bimba managed to teach it while *Capoeira* was still outlawed, as seen above. After decades of promoting the practice of *Capoeira* under illegal circumstances, but often quite overtly, in 1953 Mestre Bimba performed an exhibition for the Governor Juracy Magalhães and the President Getúlio Vargas. Having called attention to the art in a period influenced by fascist values (the *Estado Novo* or the New State), Mestre Bimba contributed with the adoption of *Capoeira* as a national ‘sport’, and its withdrawal from the Penal Code.

Folkloric groups could then perform more openly and many Mestres began holding regular performances in the tourist spots of Salvador and other cities within the Bahia de Todos os Santos (the Bay of All Saints). These folkloric troupes would give birth to *Capoeira* schools, influencing the beginnings of groups and lineages as they are known worldwide today. With the advent of the legalisation and subsequent increasing popularity of the regional orientation, with its method and more overt hybridism, the majority of practitioners and teachers from other *Capoeira* lineages started to claim a status of authenticity and ownership of *Capoeira*. This led the traditionalists to develop an Afro-centric discourse of authenticity. Hence the traditional style became known as *Capoeira de Angola* (or *Capoeira from Angola*), and later simply as *Capoeira Angola*. This style was personified
by Mestre Pastinha (1889-1981). The son of a Spaniard and a black Brazilian woman, Vicente Ferreira Pastinha became recognised for his artistic and philosophical approach to the art.

This tension between the Angola and Regional orientations of *Capoeira* remained embedded as it expanded, and remains a characteristic feature of the worldwide practice of *Capoeira* to this day, with varying degrees of cooperation and animosity depending on how leading Mestres of a given school/orientation deal with diversity when interacting with other schools/orientations. Moreover, the birth of *Capoeira Contemporânea* (contemporary *Capoeira*), a ‘holistic’ approach to the art in which practitioners claim to practise both styles, added even more heat to the discussions of authenticity. Different versions of the same cultural practice began to be understood as antagonistic. Since the division of *Capoeira* into two styles in the 1930s and the emergence of *Capoeira Contemporânea* in the 1980s, a few groups and their counterparts have always argued for *Capoeira* as being only one practice, but encompassing different rhythms. Usually today, these practitioners are dismissed as impure by those descending from Mestres Bimba and Pastinha lineages.

Mestre Bimba’s method played a primary role in the growth of *Capoeira* to other Brazilian states as for the first time there was a teaching method that could be used to train new *Capoeira* practitioners (Assunção, 2005; Goulart, 2005). Yet other factors also contributed significantly to such a phenomenon. The migratory flux of people leaving the subsistence agriculture-based northeast regions of Brazil and heading to the more industrialised southeast (chiefly to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro), seeking jobs and better living standards, also came into play as these interstate migrants brought their cultural practices with them. Among these practices was *Capoeira* (Assunção, 2005).

The interplay of pedagogic, socio-demographic and cultural factors propelled the initial expansion of *Capoeira* throughout Brazil. It also influenced the way it was practised. Despite having different pedagogic lines or cultural approaches, most groups would interact and eventually play together in
interstate encounters, public performances and casual *rodas*. Although they had their differences, and unique characteristics regarding their music, their movements and their techniques, the majority of them would still recognise each other as practitioners of the same art. In fact, in a study of cultural performance\(^\text{10}\) and the historical development of Capoeira in Bahia, J. Lowell Lewis (1992) predicted that the two main styles would eventually merge (see discussion about Lewis’s predictions in Chapter 3).

**The Volta do Mundo\(^\text{11}\) and the globalisation of *Capoeira***

Our *Capoeira* today is imported, after we exported the raw product, we bought it processed in return. Take note that Brazilian *Capoeira* today has a foreign connotation. (Mestre Augusto in Faria, 2006, motion picture)

Mestre Augusto’s statement stresses the exploitative relations between developed and developing countries, and how socio-economic and cultural factors are pervading the worldwide practice of *Capoeira*. He indicates changes influenced by intercultural and economic relations originating from Brazil. Such a statement is rare among *capoeiristas* because it acknowledges market-oriented changes in the practice of *Capoeira* in Brazil after the art-form underwent a process of global diffusion. This sort of acknowledgement is more unusual within *Capoeira Angola*, Mestre Augusto’s orientation in *Capoeira*. Regarded by many as the ‘traditional’ style, *Capoeira Angola* is usually based upon myths of purism and Afro-centrism.

With rare exceptions, *Capoeira Regional*, which originated in the 1930s, took a similar path. Too often today, its practice is based in mannerisms, nostalgia and traditionalism. However, in this case

\(^{10}\) In his book *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira* (1992), Lewis uses semiotics to explain how *jogar* – body play, *tocar* – musical play, and *brincar* – verbal play are integral parts of *Capoeira*. Lewis’s work made an important contribution to the understanding of *Capoeira* and its overlapping features as a cultural manifestation or a ‘blurred genre’, as he puts it.

\(^{11}\) The *Volta do Mundo* (the world’s turn) or *Volta ao Mundo* (the players’ turn around the world) is an expression that signifies the beginning of a new space-time that reinstalls itself for both *Capoeira* players after it takes place in a game (Queiroz, 2003). The *Volta do Mundo*, its significance, game context and philosophy are explained in detail in Chapter 3.
the sectarianism comes from Mestre Bimba’s legacy and a historical moment of nationalism in Brazil instead of from an Afro-centric perspective. *Capoeira Contemporânea*, on the other hand, is understood as a hybrid form forged by the pre-existing branches *Angola* and *Regional*. Practitioners of *Contemporânea*, often heavily criticised by their traditionalist counterparts, argue that in a time preceding the art’s ratification, there was only ‘*Capoeira*’; hence their practice would not subscribe to any other specific style. According to the *Regional* and *Angola* practitioners, any other branch forged by hybrid approaches would lack authenticity. All variations of *Capoeira*, however – whether conforming to or opposing the market’s logic inherent to the economic ruling system – are somehow being altered by such interplay.

This tension amongst *Capoeira* counterparts was intensified with the art’s internationalisation. This may help to explain why Lewis’s assertion (mentioned in the previous section) regarding how the distinctive styles of *Capoeira* would eventually merge was proven wrong (Lewis, 1992: 61–62). Furthermore, analysing the socio-cultural and economic factors of the diffusion of *Capoeira*, first in Brazil, then to other countries, may also provide key concepts enabling *capoeristas* and scholars to access the art’s development and conflicts.

**Capoeira and its early internationalisation**

Almeida (1986: 56), points out that the first record of a *Capoeira* excursion abroad was with Mestre Artur Emídio and the *Skindô* production during the 1950s. This was followed by the folkloric group *Olodún* winning international prizes in Peru, Ecuador and Argentina in the 1960s and, most importantly, the attendance of Mestre Pastinha’s group at the Premier Festival International des Arts Negres de Dakar (Africa) in 1966 (Almeida, 1986: 38).

Before the number of international excursions could increase significantly, the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s concentrated a large flux of interstate migrants, who helped to spread *Capoeira* from Bahia to
other Brazilian states. Throughout the same period, the first *Capoeira* excursions to other countries started to happen. After Professor Emilia Biancardi’s folklore group Viva Bahia performed in Europe, Asia, Africa and the UAE, some of these *capoeristas* remained in the visited countries, teaching and performing (Almeida, 1986; Faria, 2006). By the late 1980s and 1990s, the art had definitely achieved international status. By then, groups established in Brazil had branches not only in different Brazilian states, but also in various countries.

Almeida (1986), or Mestre Acordeon, who began teaching in the United States in 1979, accounts for how *Capoeira* spread to the United States and exemplifies the seminal interaction between folkloric troupes and *Capoeira* groups as follows:

One of the first recorded excursions was in the 1950s, through a production called *Skindô*, which starred the *capoeristas* Arthur Emídio and one of his students, Djalma Bandeira Lima. In 1968, under the direction of my student Beijoca (Francisco Muniz), the Grupo Folclórico da Bahia [the Bahian Folkloric Group] won international prizes in Argentina, Ecuador and Peru using the artistic name Olodum. Later, Camisa Rôxa put together some of the original members of this group to form the company Brasil Tropical, which has been performing in Europe since then. Jelon Vieira, affiliated with the *Grupo Senzala* in Rio de Janeiro, has pioneered the teaching of *Capoeira* in New York City since 1975. (Almeida, 1986: 56)

Mestre Nestor Capoeira, one of the pioneer teachers in Europe, shares his first experiences of teaching overseas in his book *Capoeira: Roots of the Dance-Fight-Game* (Capoeira, 2002). His account also sheds light on the intricate interaction between performance and *Capoeira* groups in Europe:

In 1971 I was very curious about the hippie movement in London and Amsterdam. I put my *berimbau* in a leather bag, and I bought a sleeping bag and a ticket to Europe.

Similar to the *capoeristas* who moved from Bahia to São Paulo in 1950s, I could not imagine it would be possible to make a living giving *Capoeira* classes in Europe. I thought I would have to do the hippie scene, playing *berimbau* in the metro. But I ended up staying three years in Europe, until 1974, and although I did many shows with small groups that I organised, my main activity was giving *Capoeira* classes in dance and martial-art academies.
I taught one year at the London School of Contemporary Dance in 1971, and more or less six months in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris and Ibiza. In all of these places Capoeira was completely unknown. But after giving a small presentation in a new academy, many times I managed to start the classes mostly at a base of 50/50% with the academy’s owner. I believe I was the first to teach Capoeira in Europe, although I knew that Arthur Emídio and Djalma Bandeira had been there for a couple of months with a Brazilian show some ten years before … In 1983 I returned to Paris for another year, and things were starting to grow very quickly. There were already some thirty malandros [capoeristas] dedicated exclusively to Capoeira in Western Europe … (Capoeira, 2002: 225-226).

Suffering from the severe socio-economic situation that existed in Brazil, these first settlers decided to stay in developed countries in search of recognition and a fair living as artists. Their success in establishing schools, thriving as artists and recruiting a large number of students worldwide would soon influence the practice of Capoeira in Brazil. This multi-national Capoeira scenario brought an intricate institutional, cultural and economic interplay among practitioners the world over, as indicated by Mestre Augusto: ‘Our Capoeira today is imported. After we exported the raw product, we bought it processed in return. Take note that Brazilian Capoeira today has a foreign connotation.’ (Mestre Augusto, statement at Mandinga em Manhattan; Faria, 2006, motion picture)

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented a historical account of Capoeira heavily grounded, in diverse proportions, in several different African, Brazilian indigenous and European cultures. In addition, I presented Capoeira as an accurate representation of Brazilian culture, functioning ‘as a sign of history, preserving cultural patterns from former times, and as a sign in history evolving along with changes in the social order’ (Lewis, 1992: 9, italics in original). In other words, I argue that as a historical product of Brazil, Capoeira was forged by diverse oppressed ethnicities as an intercultural manifestation.
Furthermore, due to its original context, I argue that as an art-form playing its role within Brazilian (and now the world’s) history, *Capoeira* was doomed to deal with both cross-cultural tensions and socio-cultural tensions within societies. Such a context clarifies that *Capoeira*’s insubordinate role and empowering means of expression within minorities made sense of its ‘biography’, convening a linear meaning to slightly different manifestations of rebellion grouped under the term *Capoeira* throughout history.

Moreover, in reviewing the literature used in this chapter, it became evident that academic references were more common in relation to the historical, ethnographic and anthropological contexts of *Capoeira*, whereas studies exploring the reasons why *Capoeira* has achieved such a high level of international acceptance after the first Mestres’ migration overseas were less common. The rapid increase in popularity, leading to a significant meaning and importance of *Capoeira* in the lives of different people across the globe, is part of the context that guided this chapter as well as the research as a whole. I further discuss the internationalisation (and commercialisation) of *Capoeira* in Chapter 3, where the international practice of *Capoeira* serves as an example to discuss and foster the understanding of globalisation theory as outlined by Giddens (2000), Boaventura Santos (2006), Milton Santos (2008), Featherstone (1990), Urry (1995) and Hannerz (1990).
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This study investigates the social interactions of Capoeira practitioners in their daily lives in Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Brazil, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Norway. A sample of 226 Capoeira practitioners (124 male and 102 female) from 43 countries, aged 17 to 62 years (M = 27.64, SD = 6.623), and of a variety of skill levels voluntarily answered questionnaires enquiring about demographic variables and Capoeira data. From these ten countries, and from within the same sample, 38 individuals voluntarily took part in in-depth interviews. A descriptive analysis was applied to statistical data gathered from questionnaires in order to delineate the sample’s profile. In addition, a Chi-square test of proportions ($\chi^2$) was used to investigate proportional differences between Brazilians and non-Brazilians with regard to educational levels. A combination of qualitative and content data analysis was used to analyse data coming from my experience as an insider, from field notes, in-depth interviews and secondary sources of data (online interviews and discussions, social media websites, and documentary movies) respectively.

The settings in which the data were gathered depended upon, and were both facilitated and limited by, my network of contacts, colleagues (both capoeristas and researchers) and other pre-existing contacts. Being a senior instructor, and therefore an insider, allowed me to travel to the ten above-named countries, giving and attending workshops, talks and regular classes. It also facilitated my observations of how capoeristas interacted among themselves in their daily lives within the routine of their activities. In addition, it gave me a particular perspective regarding the issues raised during the interview process. As pointed out by Hodkinson (2005; see also Bennett, 2002, 2003), who has written about the potentials and shortcomings of adopting an ‘insider research’ perspective, ‘this form of enquiry has become particularly prevalent in the study of youth cultures, not least at doctoral level’ (Hodkinson, 2005: 131). I further discuss the ‘insider’ dimension of my research below.
Potential participants were recruited after a brief introductory talk about my study that I gave in regular classes and workshops organised by Capoeira schools/groups in the various countries. On some occasions, after learning about the research, colleagues would invite me to come to their events or to pay them a visit during regular classes, further facilitating the recruitment procedures, and thus representing a convenience sampling method. In this way, my network allowed me to collect data among practitioners from different groups and Capoeira orientations (see discussion on orientations inside Capoeira in Chapters 2 and 5). Most of these data were collected in workshops. Some recruiting visits, however, were made during regular classes. In these cases, questionnaires were made available to be filled in by potential participants after a brief explanation of the research topic and methods, while a class was being held. After the class, I would schedule interviews with volunteers for the next day or two before moving on to the next Capoeira fieldwork setting in another city or country.

My career as an international Capoeira instructor gave me the ‘cultural competence’ to navigate the many Capoeira-related settings and situations, as well as providing me with easier access to interviewees than would have been the case had I been an outsider researcher. However, being an insider had its drawbacks in my fieldwork too. Bennett (2003), who has written informatively on youth cultures and ‘insider research’, notes how the advantages I mentioned above can only be fully beneficial to one’s research when they are combined with a variety of generic social and research skills. While my main interest was each interviewee’s social interactions and how they made sense of their practice in their lives, my interviewees tended to assume that I would simply understand what they were talking about in their statements because I was a senior instructor. Some of my interviewees pointed out that the interview was the first time ever in their time practising Capoeira that a senior instructor had been interested in their experience, their take on what happened in the practice and how they made sense of it all. In a sense, because I was listening to them and because most of them
knew my background as a progressive Capoeira instructor and practitioner involved in social programs, I became the ombudsman of Capoeira for them.

There were also difficulties approaching some of the Mestres, who have a different orientation than my own within Capoeira. Some of the older Mestres did not agree to giving me an interview without financial compensation (which ultimately meant that I could not interview them). A few simply did not show up for interviews after many attempts at rescheduling them to best suit their needs. On one occasion, a Mestre was very hostile and tried to dismiss my work and me, claiming that I was not trustworthy either as a researcher or a capoeirista. This same Mestre, making use of his position as an elder, blocked my attempts to secure two further interviews with common acquaintances (both also Mestres from a different orientation). I will elaborate further on such difficulties below.

The settings

While the setting was different in every city or country where I conducted my fieldwork, similarities could also be found in most situations. In workshops, as is the custom within the Capoeira community, members of the organising group would receive counterparts from other cities and countries, arranging transportation and accommodation, regardless of whether they were already good friends or acquaintances, or were meeting each other for the first time. In a custom that enhances the cultural exchange and learning process, capoeristas always try to accommodate their visiting counterparts in their homes. This custom, despite being based partly on Brazilian cultural notions of hospitality and generosity, began to take hold when, in 1982, Mestre Tabosa, a renowned and prominent Mestre, created the model of workshop events under which everyone in the cultural practice operates under today. Guests, Mestres and whole troupes had travelled interstate and internationally by then. But it was Mestre Tabosa who first invited a Mestre from another state – in this case, Mestre Peixinho (from the Senzala group in Rio) – to teach in his academy in Brasília,
launching the interstate and international workshop operational model under which the whole
*Capoeira* community operates today (Mestre Tabosa, personal communication, July 2010).

These workshop logistics involved receiving, accommodating, catering for and transporting guest
teachers and attendees, in addition to the organisation of classes, talks and performances. At some
events, the immersion character of the experience is fostered even further, and the organising school
hosts all participants in a camp or within the same venue. In Australia, New Zealand and Portugal,
for instance, a large number of questionnaires and interviews were gathered during camping events.
In New Zealand, I attended a workshop within a *Marae*. *Maraes* are the Māori sacred carved houses
that symbolise tribal identity and solidarity. Today, however, ‘all buildings associated with a
community facility are collectively known as *mārae*’ (Barlow, 1991: 73). Because it was organised
in a *mārae*, this event added even more to the already culturally diverse setting, as all *capoeiristas* had
to follow some of the Māori rituals and protocols in order to use the venue. In Västerås, Sweden, I
took part in an annual event where teaching guests and attendees were hosted in a youth centre for a
few days, sharing accommodation and meals. In this case, one of the youth centre’s amphitheatres
was turned into a camp, while the other, with all its chairs and tables taken out, was turned into a
training venue. In all these cases, interactions among practitioners were intensified by the immersion
character of the events.

Whether being hosted by counterparts in their homes, or immersed in *Capoeira* camping events or
large venues, the hectic schedule and intense level of activities (trainings, *Rodas* and talks) in these
settings provided a platform of interaction for *capoeiristas* from diverse cultures, of different genders
and with a wide age range. The regular class environment, although less intense, still catered for a
wide range of interactions, as practitioners from different walks of life and countries built up a strong
sense of community around their practice. During my fieldwork, even when I was not at an event,
people would still spend much time together outside classes in each other’s houses and in social
gatherings, talking about games, honing their musical skills by playing Capoeira instruments or rehearsing songs, watching videos, and sometimes doing extra training to master their movements and techniques.

Although I can tell from my own experience that the excitement and enthusiasm that pervade these 'extra-curricular' learning activities are common among my counterparts in all the countries in which I have taught or researched other than Brazil, these activities reinforce both an imagined journey to Brazil and an embodied sense of belonging to a Capoeira community and to Brazil in general. It is mostly in these social gatherings that non-Brazilian capoeristas learn Portuguese (when not actually traveling to Brazil), master their musical skills, educate themselves about Brazilian history and the history of Capoeira, and embody a vast array of attitudes (e.g. adopting a loose way of moving or a warmer and more tactile sense of interpersonal interaction) and skills (e.g. learning to dance Samba and Forró) related to Brazilian culture in general. Joseph, a Canadian scholar who has also researched in social-Capoeira settings as an insider, states:

One could argue that participation in any cultural pursuit might have the same effect, embedding participants in dense cross-border networks. Capoeira is unique, however, in that in addition to adopting language, social and cultural markers, the corporeal aspects allow capoeristas to embody Brazilianess. (Joseph, 2008: 203)

Besides the usual Capoeira settings (cultural centres, gyms, dance and music studios), I interviewed and observed Capoeira classes held as part of the Norfolk schools’ curriculum in the English countryside. A cluster of five public school principals in Norfolk, in partnership with the Children’s Service, decided to invest £17,000 per year to fund approximately two years of Capoeira programs in partnership with Capoeira Communities. In the third and fourth years, funds increased to £23,000 per year. The programmes, a mix of in-curricular and after-school provision averaged 6000

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12 Capoeira Communities ‘is an arts outreach organisation delivering training in this unique Brazilian art form to schools, institutions and partner organisations for young people and adults from all sectors of the community’. More information on these programs can be accessed in the ‘Case Studies’ session of Capoeira Communities website, http://www.capocoms.org.uk.
students per year, reaching 24,000 students in total in the area. According to Len Holman, a principal at one of the schools involved in the project, the Children’s Service made the funds available for the schools cluster to spend at its discretion (Len Holman, personal communication, June 2010). According to Len Holman, Tim Lawes, a school principal in Norwich, already had Jamie Lynch, the founder of Capoeira Communities, successfully working with Capoeira in an after-school programme, so together with Lynch, Lawes suggested that this programme could be scaled up. Holman told me that the school’s choice of Capoeira was based on convenience, as Jamie Lynch was already working in one of the schools, and as Capoeira was less demanding in terms of resources since it required only an empty hall, as opposed to other sports or activities that would require special equipment such as mats or training equipment (Len Holman, personal communication, June 2010).

Although it is already common to find Capoeira practice within the school environment in the United States and most Western European countries, most of these classes are either run as after-school programs or only use the school facilities as venues to run classes that are open to everyone. In Norfolk, however, Capoeira was fully incorporated into these schools’ curriculum, thus becoming compulsory for all students. Children were usually excited about these classes. There was a lot of chatter about which movements they could do or name (in Brazilian Portuguese), how skilled or ‘cool’ their instructors were, and what movements I could do since I was introduced to them as a Mestre. The interviews with capoeristas in this area revealed a great deal of community engagement and questioning of hierarchically rigid and profit-driven Capoeira groups gleaned from the local instructors, as their main framework to practise Capoeira was intertwined with their engagement with Capoeira as a community-development tool. In addition, a great deal of access to bureaucratic, managerial and educational information and feedback was given to me by the schools’ principals. More specific analysis and description of these settings and interviews is presented in Chapter 7, which focuses on Capoeira and community development.
Regardless of settings or age, much of the construction of meaning, learning, conflicts, bridging and bonding takes place while capoeristas are exchanging information in regular classes and trips, but also within the closer social networks they build for themselves. In this way, these customs and activities strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and the social networking, that occurs among capoeristas. They also reinforce Capoeira as the practitioners’ main platform of interaction, as the practice of the art and its social networks become central to their lifestyles. In turn, they increase tension wherein conflicting interests and antagonistic philosophies take place and each capoeirista holds dear their group’s understanding of what Capoeira is and how it should be practised (see discussion in Chapter 5 about authenticity and authority).

**Recruiting process**

The planning and budgeting of Capoeira workshops often rely on fees from students coming from other branches of the same group, as well as from other groups when the organising group is open to cross-group contact and interaction. They also depend on the organising group’s students and youngest instructors’ fees, as in most Capoeira groups there is a custom in which senior instructors (usually called Professor, Contra-Mestre or Mestre) are not charged when they travel to attend workshops. The logistics of these events are complex and rely almost exclusively on the work of volunteer students under their instructor’s coordination. Such a context made it difficult for the host instructors to fully support my recruitment procedures, regardless of their inclination and enthusiasm to do so. People were more likely to volunteer to answer questionnaires, as these took less time to complete. Mostly, after a brief explanation of my study at the beginning of the events, I could leave questionnaires at the event’s reception for potential participants to take, complete and hand back before the end of the event. Otherwise, I could set up a desk myself for the purpose of either making questionnaires available or conducting interviews with event participants.
Most commonly, *Capoeira* workshops take place during extended weekends (for example, public holidays and long weekends), characterising an environment of immersion, as mentioned above. In these cases, it was easier to reach potential interview participants. While immersed in workshops for a few days, *Capoeira* students had more time and inclination to volunteer. While attending regular classes, even though they may have been interested in the research, they had less time to dedicate to it. During regular classes, most potential participants were busy and less inclined to volunteer, probably because the time they had to train needed to fit in with their daily routines and giving an interview could mean missing out on training. In these cases, I made myself available for a few days longer after the event or workshop was over, scheduling interviews in *Capoeira academias*, gyms or halls where classes were held (either before or after classes), or even in the *capoeristas’* houses, local cafes and restaurants.

I faced further obstacles when attempting to interview my fellow instructors. Despite being very supportive during both events and regular classes, they could not offer much time due to the need to manage the workshops’ busy schedules while also keeping up their back-to-back routine of regular classes. These hindrances, however, did not prevent me from setting up three to five interviews per workshop that included Mestres and instructors as well as students in each setting I visited.

**Questionnaire, interviews and research procedures**

The research was conducted through convenience sampling, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, as well as content analysis from secondary data sources (statements from documentary movies and interviews and discussions available online). Convenience sampling is a method that consists of simply selecting people who are most readily at hand. Despite convenience sampling being ‘unlikely to provide a sample that accurately reflects the total population’ (Babbie, 2007: 187-189), it was the most appropriate and available method to gather statistical data and delineate a sample profile. Potential participants learned about both the research questionnaire and my desire to conduct
interviews through announcements I made before the commencement of classes and workshops. After reading the consent form explaining the aim and purpose of the study, as well as assuring participants’ confidentiality and anonymity, potential participants volunteered to answer the questionnaire and/or attend an interview.

The consent form also informed participants that they were free to contact me at any time and withdraw from the study before publication. Both the explanation and the information contained in the consent form were necessary for the project to gain ethical clearance, as in reflecting about their lives and involvement with the international Capoeira community, there was a slight risk of emotional and psychological disturbance for interview participants. In these cases, emotional and psychological distress might arise due to reflecting and thinking about a particular negative situation during the interview process. It might even happen after the interview process while one reflects upon the questions made and insights these questions brought up. At times, the response rate was difficult to trace for several reasons. During events the number of attendees often fluctuated on any given day or organisers would not be able, or refused, to provide me with the total number of participants attending the workshop. During regular classes, whenever I was recruiting participants to fill in questionnaires and give interviews, other students would leave before I could count everyone. Both questionnaires and interviews were presented and conducted in English.

While questionnaires were composed of closed questions, the fact that I was travelling from country to country, conducting interviews in events with guests from different countries and cities, and unlikely to come back to these places or meet the same people during my fieldwork to do follow-up interviews, led me to adopt a more flexible approach when applying my list of questions for interviews (see Appendix A for a detailed list of interview questions and questionnaire). For this reason, I allowed my interviewees to develop our conversations, from the main questions set out in the interview schedule to topics of their own interest. Sometimes, the dynamics of the interview
tended to become too personal, given my position as an insider. Whenever that happened, I made sure to re-establish rapport as a researcher, explaining that my main research interest was their views, their impressions and their feelings. Sometimes I asked them to explain their views to me as if I were not a capoeirista. I elaborate further on this issue in the discussion section below.

**Documentary and institutional movies**

Documentary and institutional films (that is, promotional films about a specific Capoeira groups or schools) proved to be an important source of secondary data as they featured Mestres, students and scholars who I could not have accessed during my fieldwork, due to access, time or financial constraints. Some of these movies tackled specific issues such as the Capoeira worldwide diaspora or the use of Capoeira as a social tool for intercultural learning and social inclusion. Here I provide a list of the films and documentaries to which I referred in my research, with brief commentaries on each of them.

- **Mandinga em Manhattan: Como a Capoeira se espalhou pelo mundo** (Sorcery in Manhattan: How Capoeira spread worldwide). Produced in 2006, this film features Emília Biancardi, the producer and director of one the first Brazilian folkloric troupes that went on a world tour as well as some of the first capoeristas/performers who decided to migrate to the United States. This film also features Brazilian and US anthropologists, sociologists and scholars, such as Professors Pedro Adib, Greg Downey and Daniel Dawson (Faria, 2006).
- **A Capoeira gem na Bahia** (The practice of Capoeira in Bahia). This film explores the history and origins of Capoeira through historic footage of old Mestres as well as statements from contemporary Mestres and scholars (Umberto, 2000).
- **Volta Por Cima: Capoeira, Educação e Cultura** (Bouncing back: Capoeira, education and culture). This was produced as an institutional film featuring Mestres, scholars, students and social workers discussing the role of Capoeira in community projects in Brazil and Sweden (Vianna & Mendes, 2005).
• Capoeira: Paz no Mundo (Capoeira: Peace in the world). A short documentary movie about Capoeira and its socio-educative roles in various communities around the world. The film was produced by the Ministry of Culture as a tribute to the Diplomat Sérgio Vieira de Mello, killed in a terrorist attack in the UN office in Bagdad in 2003 (Brazilian Ministry of Culture, 2007).

• Mestre Bimba: A Capoeira Iluminada (Mestre Bimba: The enlightened capoeira). This film features students, scholars, wives and contemporary artists who knew Mestre Bimba throughout his lifetime developing this teaching method, Capoeira Regional. In addition, this film’s statements provide access to socio-economic and historic contexts that deeply affected the history of Capoeira (Goulart, 2005).

Descriptive analysis (demographic and Capoeira data)

As mentioned above, I relied on convenience sampling to delineate my sample’s profile. This sampling method is generally criticised for potentially being biased, and therefore is not seen as representing the population accurately (Babbie, 2007: 188). Despite this methodological concern, this was the only method available to me to delineate a profile sample of the Capoeira population in the places I visited during my fieldwork, especially given the random and constant trips, the relatively short period of time for the fieldwork and the lack of opportunity to revisit most places for follow-up interviews. This descriptive data was used in a ‘data triangulation’ (Denzin, 1989, cited in Lofland et al., 2006: 21) with other data sources to better answer my research questions (see discussion on data triangulation below). The demographic sample was composed of 226 Capoeira practitioners (124 male and 102 female) from 43 nationalities, aged from 17 to 62 years (M = 27.64, SD = 6.623) and possessing a variety of skill levels. Questionnaires were administered and interviews conducted in ten countries (Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Brazil, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Norway) and the majority of the participants were from Brazil (n = 11.94%), Portugal (n = 11.06%), France (10.17%), Belgium (n = 7.52%), Germany (n = 6.19%), Finland (n = 5.30%), and New Zealand (n = 5.30%).
Most of the respondents were educated, with 22.56 per cent of them having finished high school, 49.99 per cent holding college or university degrees and 24.32 per cent holding postgraduate diplomas (Masters and Doctoral degrees). Although there were some differences between how Brazilians and non-Brazilians were distributed within the various levels of education, and although there were proportionally more non-Brazilians than Brazilians with higher levels of education (25 per cent and 14 per cent respectively), there was no significant difference between Brazilians and non-Brazilians at each of these levels (Levels 1–3; χ²: 0.54; p: 0.46), (Levels 4–5, χ²: 0.04; p: 0.9), (Levels 6–7, χ²: 0.9; p: 0.32).

This analysis was performed to investigate common speculations within the transnational Capoeira scenario that, to some extent, the conflicts and misunderstandings (concerning what teachers and students expect from each other) experienced between Brazilians and their non-Brazilian counterparts (sometimes seen as clashes of culture) are related to significant differences in education. Within this study’s sample, and within the countries in which my fieldwork was conducted, my analysis contradicted these speculations, showing (as mentioned above) no significant difference in educational levels between Brazilians and non-Brazilians that could account for conflicts or misunderstandings. As an illustration of the inherent transnational scenario in Capoeira today, 75 per cent of the participants did not practise in their original country, 48 per cent were attending events in cities other than the ones in which they practised and 16 per cent travelled to other countries to attend events.

The participants’ levels of graduation were categorised in six groups based upon the most common learning/practising stages in Capoeira: level 1 – aluno (student); level 2 – instrutor (instructor); level 3 – professor (teacher); level 4 – contra-Mestre (foreman); level 5 – Mestre (master); level 6 – grão-Mestre

13 Levels of education were classified as: no formal education; elementary; high school; technical school, college or university; Masters degree; Doctoral degree (PhD or equivalent) and Postdoctoral degree.
(grand-master). Even though 55 per cent of the sample had less than four years’ practice, the total time of practice varied from one to 39 years (M = 5.07, SD = 5.83). Brazilian participants had more time practising (10–12 years) compared with non-Brazilians (4.14–4.16 years). Concerning the participants’ level of graduation, the majority of the participants (93 per cent) declared themselves as beginners (Level 1: 190 capoeristas; Level 2: 16 capoeristas). When analysed separately, Brazilians held higher ranks of graduation compared with all other nationalities. For instance, from 27 Brazilian participants, six (22%) held graduations within levels 4–5 compared with only one non-Brazilian practitioner (0.04 per cent) on graduation level 5.

A General Linear Model (GLM) analysis showed that while Brazilians with approximately fifteen years of practice declared themselves as teachers (level 3), the test with participants from other nationalities showed no correlation (an indication that non-Brazilians took longer to declare themselves as teachers). This difference may indicate a discrepancy in how Brazilians and non-Brazilians assume teaching positions in Capoeira. It may also substantiate discussions on matters of authenticity and authority (see Chapter 5).

Qualitative analysis

During the process of analysing the interview transcripts and fieldwork notes, there were a few main streams of recurrent issues that concerned the interactions of capoeristas among themselves as well as with their practice. I grouped these issues into six categories and searched for patterns to discover whether these categories related to each other and whether they could make sense on their own, specifically describing a sub-set of context within the main topic. Some of these categories encompassed matters of interest to my investigation, while others surfaced during the interview process. These categories were further analysed regarding frequency (how often an issue or issues were recurrent), magnitude (how intense they were), structures (how they differed among themselves), processes (was there any order among the elements of structure), causes (what was causing such issues), and consequences (how did it affect the interviewee), as described by Lofland and Lofland (1995: 127–45; also see Babbie; 2007: 377–403). These six categories are described in detail below.

In the category Brazil and Abroad, for example, I grouped statements around the interactions between Brazilians and non-Brazilians. Investigating these statements furthers the understanding of how people across the world make sense of a foreign cultural practice in their daily lives. In the Social Inclusion category, I have grouped slightly different notions and contexts of what ‘social inclusion’ meant for interviewers. The ‘social inclusion’ topic was initially included in my interview script to investigate the use of Capoeira-related activities in social programmes. After a few interviews, however, it became evident that most of the non-Brazilian participants were actually concerned with their own inclusion within the worldwide Capoeira community.
The category *Biographical Material*, in addition, contained anecdotes that might illustrate how lessons, values and principles learned in *Capoeira* might transcend into one’s life. It is common among *capoeristas* to say that one is truly mastering the art when one’s combative and acrobatic lessons, fair play and camaraderie values, intercultural and playful principles begin to inform one’s life outside the practice context. Anecdotes or statements tapping into this issue, but lacking the biographical material, were grouped under the category *Transcendence of Values*.

**Social inclusion**

My initial motivation to research *Capoeira* was broadly related to the social applications of *Capoeira* and Brazilian-related cultural manifestations as tools of empowerment, social inclusion and intercultural learning within community development programs. The concept of ‘social inclusion’ emerged from my data in two slightly different forms. While my questions were directed towards the social applications of *Capoeira* when interviewing those involved with such programmes, most of my non-Brazilian interviewees were more concerned with their own inclusion within the international *Capoeira* community. Statements regarding such concepts, though often entangled with notions and questions of authenticity and inequality (favouring Brazilians over non-Brazilians), were organised within the ‘Social Inclusion’ category.

**Authenticity and market influences**

Matters of authenticity and market influences are revealed in the statements grouped into this category. Often the concept of genuineness comes up in statements, regardless of nationality, in relation to how market-driven some counterparts can be (implying a compromise in the quality and depth of their practice). The general trend in these comments is to criticise those who adopt mainstream marketing strategies and adapt their teachings, rituals and performances, conforming their practice to the demands of the consumerist society. Even though the worldwide practice of *Capoeira* can rarely be set apart from the commercial logic of the market, during interviews some of my research participants tended to judge their counterparts as ‘less authentic’ according to how much of their practice they were apparently willing
to adapt to the market’s logic. In other authenticity-related statements, however, non-Brazilians commented on how, regardless of their dedication and competence, there were still those who treated them as ‘second-class’ capoeristas due to their nationalities. Statements commenting on how the global scenario complicates interactions and the production of meaning within the worldwide Capoeira community were also present in the majority of my interviews. Such statements were used to illustrate discussions in Chapters 4 (on globalisation), Chapter 6 (on social media) and Chapter 7 (on community development).

**Biographical material**

During interviews, capoeristas shared personal anecdotes illustrating how they related their daily lives to the practice of Capoeira, and at other times how they were attracted to Capoeira or how the practice had changed their lives. Some interviewees used anecdotes to exemplify how they were drawn to the practice because of one of its features in particular (usually its musical or acrobatic aspects), but had continued to practise over the years because of another aspect of Capoeira (commonly the social one). Most of these anecdotes are somehow related to one or more of the other categories, but due to their more personal and individual character, they are grouped in a category of their own.

**Brazil and Abroad**

Capoeira’s global diffusion brought into the international scenario an art-form that has its roots in traditional Brazilian cultural practices. As with other commoditised manifestations, the contextualisation of Capoeira by its practitioners within the various globalisation processes brings to the surface diverse attitudes and approaches. The interactions between Brazilians and non-Brazilian capoeristas usually, although not always, happens between Brazilian Mestres (senior instructors) and Non-Brazilian instructors and students. In a global context in which market matters and cultural
customs come into play, much of what is considered ‘traditional’ by some can be seen as dogmatic, or even discriminatory, by others.

Looking at how capoeiristas interact among themselves and with their art-form within the various processes of globalisation helps to illustrate how Capoeira, as a transnationalised cultural practice, carries within itself many incongruences. There are incongruences between traditional and vanguard approaches in relation to how it is practised. There are global and local incongruences in relation to where it is practised. In relation to globalisation from above, there are incongruences between core and peripheral countries, but also relating to where Capoeira is being diffused. Finally, there are incongruences between genuine and fake in relation to who manages to be recognised as an authority to define what is authentic and what is not in the context of Capoeira. On the one hand, these statements reveal a blurred line between the Brazilians’ concern with upholding the philosophical values of Capoeira and their questioning of foreigner practitioners’ ability to wholly grasp it, and a hegemonic market strategy based on twisted notions of authenticity. On the other hand, practitioners from diverse countries state their concern about truly absorbing these core cultural concepts (as opposed to simply mimicking Brazilian stereotypes) while creating a local meaning and purpose for their practice. This category brings together statements describing the interactions between Brazilians and non-Brazilians within the global Capoeira setting as well as their relationship with a rapidly growing cultural practice all over the world.

Transcendence of values
Analogies of how one’s involvement with Capoeira’s micro-cosmos (with its values, attitudes, rituals and norms) can impact one’s broader sense of life are common within the Capoeira community. Explanations of how a long-term relationship with an activity can mould one’s character are not a novelty per se, or exclusive to the practice of Capoeira. The way Capoeira equips its practitioners through a wide range of interactions among different ages, genders and ethnicities, however, seems
to be peculiar and rare among the multitude of cultural practices. A set of ‘unwritten rules’ serves as a guide, influencing this wide range of interactions. Based upon diverse (and most often competing) traditions, these ‘unwritten’ rules may vary significantly from school to school, increasing both the practitioners’ skills in dealing with diversity as well as prejudices and intolerances according to their particular school’s agenda. This category draws on my interviewees’ elaborations of ‘how’ practising Capoeira has impacted on their lives in general; how values, principles and attitudes (positive and negative) developed and were acquired within the micro-cosmos of a particular manifestation transcends the macro-cosmos of one’s broader life. The bulk of the statements framed within this category appear within the data discussed in Chapter 7, where the discussion focuses on the factors fostering a practitioner’s decision to take on Capoeira as a social tool for use in the promotion of community development.

**Embodied dialogue**

Mestres, instructors and students from multiple nationalities stated that through Capoeira, they embodied codes, symbols and non-written rules in movements and attitudes that in turn equipped them with a body language, a communication tool. Many of my interviewees explained how the process of mastering a common set of movements (mannerisms, strikes, defences, acrobatics), principles (playfulness, fair-play, combativeness) and rituals (how to join a Roda, start and finish a game, swap roles while participating in a Roda) equipped them with the skills to engage in an embodied dialogue (the Capoeira game), which allows them to communicate with counterparts from other nationalities without (or through) the spoken language barrier. Moreover, they explained that these game-related skills give them entry to, and tools to navigate, different cultures – not just the Capoeira environment and the Brazilian culture from which it evolved. According to these statements, such common understanding of movements, principles and rituals brings them closer to people from myriad other cultures because they have a shared interest. These comments support the discussions and theory of globalisation of cultures within Chapter 4 (on globalisation), Chapter 5 (on
inclusion, authenticity and authority) and Chapter 6 (on social media). These statements also emphasise how capoeiras perceive notions of social inclusion, belonging, empowerment and intercultural learning (multi-ethnic and cross-cultural tolerance and understanding) as an important part of Capoeira’s global legacy.

**Secondary sources**

Statistical analysis from survey data revealed that the majority of this study’s sample belonged to Generation Y (that is people born between 1980 and 2000) and most were savvy users of computers and internet. In addition, the majority of the capoeiras, regardless of their age, made regular use of computer mediated communication (CMC) (Hine, 2000) to interact, learn and keep track of what was happening within the worldwide community of practitioners. Lofland and colleagues (2006: 20) suggest that ‘if electronic communication is a significant part of the social interaction among those you are studying, you should plan to incorporate it in some manner in your data collection’. For this reason, data were also taken from secondary sources, such as blog discussions, Facebook pages and documentary films. Content analysis was applied to statements from documentary films focusing on aspects of Capoeira’s history, its global diffusion and its socio-educative applications, as well as to posts, comments and mission statements retrieved from Capoeira-related blogs and social media networking websites (used to coordinate the sharing of information, promotion of classes and activities, and organisation of face-to-face interactions). Virtual ethnography was also used to conduct and analyse online interviews and virtual interactions (CMC). Part of these data came from discussions on my own blog (4CapoeiraThoughts.com), set up as an online platform that allows networking between socially engaged capoeiras collaborating on issues of education, social inclusion, intercultural learning and the philosophy of Capoeira.

To ‘gather the richest possible data using participant observation, intensive interviewing, or some combination of the two’, Lofland and colleagues (2006: 18) suggest the need to evaluate potential
data sites for ‘appropriateness, access, physical and emotional risks, ethics and personal consequences’. Of particular interest here is Lofland and colleagues’ (2006: 18-21) discussion of appropriateness. In other words, with which methods can one best gather data about one’s research questions and settings? Lofland and colleagues (2006: 20-21) explain that in some instances one ‘should not rule out ipso facto the appropriateness of collecting or using some quantitative data in conjunction with the data collected through participant observation and intensive interviewing’.

‘[T]his blending and mixing of different kinds of data has been referred to as data “triangulation”’ (Denzin, 1989, cited in Lofland et al., 2006: 21). Lofland and colleagues (2006: 21) explain that, ‘The use of some types of quantitative data may even be essential when conducting a “case study” – a holistic investigation of some space- and time-rooted phenomenon, such as … a small community, organisation, or social movement.’ This study’s use of statistical data, participant observation (as an insider), ethnography (intense interviewing), virtual ethnography and content analysis constitutes a ‘data triangulation’ devised to investigate the transnational Capoeira community. Such an approach allowed me to juxtapose statements from Mestres (mostly Brazilians), young instructors (from various nationalities) and students (chiefly non-Brazilians) taken from secondary data sources (as listed above) with material from in-depth interviews. In turn, it allowed me to not only search for and analyse discrepancies in relation to how these documentaries portray Capoeira, how capoeristas interact with each other online and how they experience Capoeira in their schools and groups, but also to perceive how capoeristas have been interacting, organising themselves and taking action regarding contentious issues (such as cross-group and orientations interaction, hierarchically rigid organisational frameworks, geographical and cultural authenticity, etc.) within the spaces provided by social media and websites (blog and forum discussions), which tend to be less constrained by the hierarchical mediation of teachers and organisational structures.

This approach also proved useful when looking for contrasting opinions regarding matters of global diffusion, hierarchy, authenticity, the social applications of Capoeira and the use of social media by
capoeristas. In these cases, the analysis combined the context in which the above issues were brought up during in-depth interviews with how practitioners ‘explore the making of boundaries and the making of connections, especially between the “virtual” and the “real”’ (Hine, 2000: 64).

The bulk of the material from blogs relates to interviews with socially engaged capoeristas who have been running social programs. These data fostered discussions reported in Chapter 7 on Capoeira and community development. Some of the data were coupled with data from social media websites supporting discussions relating to hierarchical and horizontal approaches to teaching and managing groups, and matters of authenticity between Brazilian and non-Brazilian capoeristas. In both cases, the secondary data offer an important source of information relating to places (or social programmes) that I could not visit during my fieldwork, due either to time or financial constraints.

Discussion

General considerations

As already mentioned, qualitative data analysis was used to deal with the majority of the raw data gathered for this study, but ‘data triangulation’ was also used, conflating data from in-depth interviews with quantitative data, content analysis and virtual ethnography. Some of the issues raised, and later categorised, during the interview process were substantiated by the quantitative and secondary data analysis. For instance, the multinational character of the sample and the practitioners’ patterns of mobility across countries and within the transnational scenario of practice14 (to train and attend events in cities or countries other than those in which they live) became evident through quantitative data analysis gathered from questionnaires. Such information corroborated the issues of global dissemination mentioned in the interviews. The capoeristas’ account of how authenticity and

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14 As stated in the quantitative analysis section, 75 per cent of the participants do not practise in their original country. 48 per cent were attending events in cities other than those in which they practice and 16 per cent travelled to other countries in order to attend events. In addition, most capoeristas also travel regularly to Brazil to train in their schools’ main branches.
hierarchy can be conflictive among the multinational community also found support in the content analysis of documentary films, and in the virtual ethnography of online data. In these cases, ‘data triangulation’ was crucial to provide further context to data gathered from in-depth interviews.

The categorisation of codes into six main issues (as outlined above) and further quantitative and qualitative data analysis helped with contextualising and clarifying capoeiristas’ interactions in their daily lives and understanding how they deal with tensions, conflicts and the (re)construction of meaning with regard to a cultural practice originally grounded in Brazil, but in a rapid process of global diffusion. After further analysis of these categories, as well as of the accompanying memos and ‘data triangulation’, the chapter structure of the thesis and writing process was designed.

This study does not exclude discussions on how imported cultural practices such as Capoeira impact on the lives of people within transnational scenarios. Rather, it brings important contributions to the field of cultural research by expanding the discussions on global/local, traditional/modern, authentic/syncretic, multicultural/intercultural and market/community-oriented dichotomies, exemplifying how the international community of capoeiristas deals with such issues.

The insider/outsider dilemma

I began my research and fieldwork ‘where I was’ and ‘driven by intellectual curiosity about [my] topic and access to settings and people from which [I could] collect appropriate data’, much in the sense described by Lofland and colleagues (2006). Being a capoeirista made it easier for me to navigate across settings and to attend different events organised by diverse groups, and this facilitated my fieldwork in relation to both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The insider perspective, however, also had its drawbacks. I discuss ‘the insider/outsider dilemma’ here as a practical issue that needs to be addressed and resolved, at least in what concerns the scope of this study, as I have spent over 25 years gaining knowledge of my field of research as an insider. In adopting a reflexive
approach to my methodological approach, my considerations in this chapter may therefore turn out to be useful for future ‘insider’ researchers.

Another consideration that I believe is relevant to my research as an insider is the over-simplification of *Capoeira* as a field of research. Inside *Capoeira*, there are a few different orientations,\(^{15}\) concerning traditions, political and ideological agendas, and embodied techniques and mannerisms (often also displayed as signs of belonging to a school or group). Even within the broader spectrum of the same *Capoeira* orientation, there is some school/group rivalry that might prevent an insider’s access exactly because the researcher is an insider, but from another group or orientation. Other scholars have also discussed how being an insider facilitates access to information, how the insider/outsider position as a researcher is often over-simplified (especially in studies of youth and sports culture) and how such research approaches bring forth methodological issues (Bennett, 2002, 2003; Wheaton, 2002, 2013; Hodkinson, 2005; Griffith, 2016).

Discussions about the insider/outsider dilemma usually sway between criticism regarding methodological issues and favouring arguments regarding facilitated access to data. Wheaton (2013), who has written extensively about lifestyle sports as both an insider and an outsider, comments on the difficulty of gaining access in these fields as an outsider:

I have no experience of doing parkour; I am an outsider to the culture and experience, which has presented numerous challenges, including initial difficulties gaining access to, and trust from, participants. I also witnessed resistance from insiders to academic non-practitioners like myself, whom they saw as unable to understand the activity (see debate in Wheaton, 2002).

(Wheaton, 2013: 18)

Wheaton (2013: 14) notes that ‘non-participant observers/enthusiasts often misunderstand, or ignore, what the sport culture means to its participants – they do not explain or understand the embodied

\(^{15}\) See discussion in Chapter 1 explaining why I approach the varied nuances with which Capoeira is practiced and performed (for example: *Regional*, *Angola* and *Contemporânea*) as orientations rather than ramifications or styles.
subjective experiences, such as pleasure, pain, fear and excitement, that make their lifestyles meaningful’. Zavella (1996: 79, cited in Lofland et al., 2006: 23-24) notes that:

Insiders are more likely to be cognizant and accepting of complexity and internal variation, are better able to understand the nuances of language use, will avoid being duped by informants who create cultural performances for their own purposes, and are less apt to be distrusted by those they study. Some assert that ethnic insiders often have an easier time gaining access to a community similar to their own, and they are most sensitive to framing questions in ways that respect community sensibilities.

On the other hand, Wheaton (2013: 14) explains that:

While debates about being a cultural insider are prolific in many subcultural fields, in sporting contexts they have taken a particular flavour, with accounts from those who have experienced the activities through their physical bodies seem to have a privileged and more ‘authentic’ view. In sport cultures, such as surfing, some still argue that participation in the activity is a prerequisite to understanding the sport’s meaning and aesthetic.

Such a validation of the insider’s knowledge and experience is not that recent. The historian and cricket journalist C.L.R. James (2005) wrote *Beyond a Boundary* (first published in 1963), which became one of the most important books on cricket ever written, motivated by a question he posed to himself: ‘What do they know of cricket, who only cricket know?’ James unintentionally furthered the insider approach in his book, arguing that in addition to embodying a game’s values, one had to embody the social and political context within which that game evolved and in which it is played to really understand it (James, 2005).

Writing as an insider in the field of *Capoeira*, Griffith (2016) argues in favour of such an approach, explaining that ‘embodied dimensions of behaviour are often obscured in conversations but displayed and experienced in practice’ (Pink, 2009: 84, cited in Griffith, 2016: 11). That is why, according to Griffith (2016: 11), ‘interviews or mere observations would not have sufficed to give [her] an
insider’s view of [Capoeira]’. My experience as an insider confirms Griffith’s observations. It I were not an insider, I would probably not have access to data from non-Brazilian capoeiristas in the way I did.

As an insider, however, my fieldwork was filled with tension caused by the ‘dilemma of distance’: two opposing orientations represented in Davis’s writing as ‘the Martian’, who ‘sees distance as a passageway to knowing’ and ‘the Convert’ who ‘views [distance] as a barrier’ (Davis, 1973, cited in Lofland et al., 2006: 22). These two orientations, or methodological preferences, symbolise a tension between problematising or bracketing social life (taking a distance stance) and acquiring intimate familiarity with social life (the convert stance). However, according to Lofland et al., 2006: 22):

   The sensitive investigator wishes not to be [distant] or [convert] but to be both or either as the research demands. This, of course, implies experiencing the contrasting tensions of surrender on the one hand and distance on the other. Experiencing these countervailing pulls is often distressing, but such discomfort can best be viewed as a ‘productive tension’ in the sense that it is likely to contribute to more nuanced understandings and a richer and more compelling field study.

The insider/outsider dichotomy created some difficulties for me while conducting the in-depth interviews for my research. It was hard with some of my interviewees to establish a good rapport as a researcher rather than as a counterpart. In these cases, my interviewees assumed that they did not have to elaborate on their comments and that they did not have to share their involvement with Capoeira and other counterparts in detail because I was an insider. The beginnings of such interviews were filled with statements like, ‘You know what I’m talkin’ about …’ So often, my concern was to distance myself and avoid leaving ‘relational processes implicit and unexamined’ (see Emerson, 2001, cited in Lofland et al., 2006: 24-25). This finds support in Hodkinson (2005: 139), who explains
that ‘the amount of perceived familiarity between respondent and interviewer results in too much being taken as given, whether in terms of questions not asked or information not volunteered.

As Hodkinson (2005: 139) notes, ‘insider researchers of youth cultures must, like all ethnographers, continually assess the way they are positioned by respondents and adjust their behaviour appropriately’. In these cases, I made sure to maintain a good rapport with respondents without breaking my connection as an insider. Often it was enough to just encourage them to talk to me as if I were a lay person (rather than a researcher). At other times, though, some of my respondents simply assumed I knew what they were talking about because of my position as an insider. In these situations, they would not elaborate on thoughts and answers, and important information was not volunteered because it was being taken as a given. In order to bypass this situation, I had to constantly tell my interviewees that I was not understanding their point, comments or answer so that they would elaborate more on their answers and comments.

Another strategy used to avoid this situation was to ask for their personal opinion about a particular situation or episode and use questions like, ‘How did you find yourself in this situation?’ or, ‘How did you feel about what you are describing?’ Those who were taking hidden meanings for granted because I was an insider would generally elaborate once I used these strategies. In Tricks of The Trade, the sociologist and symbolic interactionist Howard Becker (1998) explains that asking ‘why’ someone did something or felt the way they did is frequently understood as intimidating (as it asks for justification) while asking ‘how’ usually unveils information as respondents tend to answer by describing the process through which they came to their conclusions or opinions, or found themselves in a particular situation.

Ultimately, I came to understand that both intimacy (or the convert or insider approach) and distance (or the distant/outsider take) are equally necessary to build up a broader, but detailed, analytic
perspective of the cultural matters present in my fieldwork. In some instances, there were some difficulties that meant I could not apply the strategies described above. For instance, particularly because I was seen as a researcher by some capoeiristas – and hence an outsider – I had difficulties gaining access to a few of the elder capoeiristas, who categorically refused to give me an interview or evaded me until I had no more time left in that specific city or at a particular event to interview them. Despite establishing a good rapport with a few Capoeira Angola Mestres, and gaining access to important information, this type of difficulty happened more often with Mestres from the Angola orientation. I believe this happened because my ‘outsider’ status was doubled: I was both a researcher and a capoeirista from another orientation. This shows how my identity as an insider shifted in different contexts, going beyond the over-simplistic ‘insider/outsider’ dichotomy.

Griffith (2016: 22) went through similar situations as an insider in her fieldwork in Brazil. Because of her ‘White North American anthropologist and capoeirista’ identities, Griffith explains, her status was constantly slipping between that of insider and outsider. This ‘complex dynamics of identity, inclusion and exclusion’ usually surfaces ‘particularly in the context of discourses about being a ‘real surfer’ [read insider in a given field]’ (Wheaton, 2013: 20).

In one particular situation, I flew to a Capoeira Angola international encounter to interview three Mestres. I had known the Mestre who was holding the event for many years, and regarded him as a friend. Even so, I made sure to call him asking whether he agreed with me attending his event in my role as a researcher. I explained that I had to make the most out of my time at the event due to the time-consuming tasks of organising and conducting interviews, and distributing and collecting questionnaires, so it would be difficult to keep abreast of the expectations that fall onto a senior teacher during such an event. The host Mestre agreed to my trip and to participate in an interview.
I then contacted one of his guest Mestres before the event took place, explaining my research and asking for an interview. He too agreed. His answer pleased me, as he has been a prominent source of information for documentary movies on Capoeira with peculiar views about Capoeira Angola (his own orientation), the history of the art and the formation of the Brazilian ethnicity. The third Mestre was the oldest of the three and also known in the international Capoeira community for both his talent and volatile attitude, so I decided to approach him in person during the event.

It turned out that, despite the friendly attitude from the host Mestre and one of his guests (the progressive one), the main guest was quite rude at first contact and then professionally dismissive of my work. This Mestre kept saying out loud during his class that he was an academic and that he could discuss any Capoeira-related issue with scholars or capoeristas as an equal basis and at any time. He also made sure to make a few pejorative remarks about me (as a capoeirista) not attending any of the workshops or Rodas. His comments were directed to a very few of the higher ranked people around him, but always loudly enough so that I could hear them. Wheaton (2013) had a similar experience in one of her fieldwork settings. According to Wheaton, ‘authenticity discourses’ are often used by ‘self-identified core-members … to aggrandise and legitimise themselves, while marginalising other participants’ (Donnelly, 2006: 220, cited in Wheaton, 2013: 20). Wheaton further explains that such ‘insider–outsider dynamics are often underpinned by race and gender’ (Wheaton, 2013: 20).

The host Mestre did not show up for scheduled interviews with the progressive Mestre for three consecutive days. On each day that the host Mestre failed to turn up for interviews with his guest Mestres, I would call him on the telephone, and he would come up with an excuse and reschedule the interview for the next day. After three failed attempts, I gave up trying to interview them. As I mentioned above, I believe that in this instance my identity as an ‘outsider’ doubled, if not tripled, preventing me from gaining access to the information these Mestres could have shared with me. First, I belong to another Capoeira orientation; second, I was there chiefly as a researcher; and third, despite
the progressive guest Mestre identifying himself as a Brazilian *mulato* (a mestizo), the other two are Black, and I am not.

In a further episode with another *Capoeira Angola* Mestre, after many frustrated interview attempts during a week-long *Capoeira* camp on the coast of Portugal, he finally said he wanted to charge me a fee to give me an interview. He said it would be a contribution for a social programme he ran for ‘at risk’ children in his neighbourhood in Bahia, Brazil. When I explained to him that I had not designed my fieldwork to have access to information by paying for interviews, and that because of that I could not pay for his interview, his attitude changed. He said he would not give me an interview, and then said in an authoritative manner, ‘It’s funny, people want to learn from *Capoeira*, but do not want to support the *capoeristas*’ (Mestre X, personal communication, June 2010, author’s translation).

In both the episodes described above, there might have been a dimension of ethnicity, as these Mestres were all Black or had a skin colour that was darker than mine. But there were two other dimensions accounting for the slippage of my identity from an insider to an outsider that I believe added thicker layers of difference and distance between my potential informants and I. They were all from *Capoeira Angola* and saw me as belonging to *Capoeira Contemporânea*. They were all from Bahia, generally considered the focal point of the international *Capoeira* community, and I am not.

A few younger practitioners – particularly the non-Brazilian instructors – seemed to be reticent when I probed them about the notion of hierarchy within their group’s interactions. These cases were rare and in some cases I could still find ways (as described above) to make them feel safe about sharing data regarding patterns of hierarchy and power within the globally developing scenario of *Capoeira*. These cases constituted a minority of my fieldwork, however. There was another positive aspect to conducting my study as both a researcher interested in the social applications of *Capoeira* and a practitioner. This combination somehow led some to approach me as a kind of *Capoeira* ombudsman.
This gave me access to data that other researchers would probably have taken longer to access. In these cases, my interviewees overtly shared their discontent with their teachers, as well as with internal issues within their institutions, or with the global *Capoeira* community in general. Most non-Brazilian practitioners who took part in interviews, for instance, mentioned that our interview was the first time a Brazilian Mestre had taken the time to listen to them. These comments revealed how unbalanced interactions can be, and also revealed existing tensions created through pre-existing notions of hierarchy and authenticity among Brazilian and non-Brazilian *capoeiristas*.

Such experiences as an insider researcher confirm Wheaton’s (2013: 14) argument that ‘the distinction between “insider” and “outsider” is a misleading binary opposition rooted in an essentialist and fixed understanding of identities’. Furthermore, such a distinction between insider and outsider ‘fails to recognise the multiple ways in which difference or “otherness” is marked and measured … and it masks the more fluid and contingent nature of the researcher’s role and identity’ (Wheaton, 2002, cited in Wheaton, 2013: 14).

*Reflexive ethnography*

Despite being an insider, data from interviews brought to the surface the fact that in some instances I was still seen – at least to some extent and particularly when dealing with non-Brazilian *capoeiristas* – as the ‘other’. I was in this sense an ambivalent insider, as I am an experienced *capoeirista* but I do not teach or practise a cultural manifestation of *Capoeira* that originated in a country other than my own.

Being open-minded towards the accounts of my non-Brazilian counterparts, and sceptical about my closeness to ingrained notions of hierarchy, authority and loyalty as a Brazilian insider, led me to question attitudes and norms that generally stem from a Brazilian perspective of how *Capoeira* should be practised worldwide. Legitimated as the ‘epicentre’ of *Capoeira*’s global diffusion, and the ‘Mecca’ to which all practitioners must eventually go to deepen their knowledge of the practice of most *capoeiristas* the world over, these attitudes and norms are inculcated as overarching traditions.
within the international *Capoeira* community. I had good feedback about the extent to which I was being able to keep myself both open-minded (towards a non-Brazilian perspective of *Capoeira*) and sceptical about the overarching ‘traditions’ when I presented the paper ‘Communicating new forms of belonging in the transnational space of Capoeira’\(^{16}\) to a round-table at the Department of Sociology in the Federal University of Brasilia (Brazil). The round-table was organised by the Department of Sociology to bring together three scholars who were conducting research on *Capoeira*-related themes. The round-table’s topic was ‘*Capoeira*: discourses, spaces and corporealities’, and the presentations were followed by a debate. My paper addressed the transverse character of globalisation and social mediated interactions using the worldwide practice of *Capoeira* to examine the everyday effects of the overlaps between transnationalism, identity reconfiguration and the uses of social media.

Tackling the *capoeristas*’ use of social media, the paper addressed matters of authenticity/syncretism, local/global and hierarchy, questioning market and community-oriented approaches to their practice. The reception my paper received from young Brazilian instructors, scholars and other graduate students was controversial regarding to my paper’s investigations. Both my colleagues and the audience had divergent opinions regarding how notions of hierarchy and loyalty (towards teachers and the cultural lineages or schools) impacted the way they saw *Capoeira* and its role in a globalised context, and most were critical of the findings I was sharing. At that moment, I realised that I had largely encompassed the voices and opinions of my non-Brazilian counterparts into my study. I had achieved an analytical perspective encompassing both distance and proximity.

This realisation – despite being rewarding because it indicated the achievement of a satisfactory methodological approach – also brought up an uneasy feeling that, perhaps after the disclosure of my study’s discussion, I could be marginalised by some of my Brazilian counterparts as a traitor. This often happens when an insider disclosures information about a field in spite of its members’ disapproval, as described by Lofland et al. (2006: 59-60). While some academics and *capoeristas*

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\(^{16}\) The paper was co-authored with Cristina Wulfhorst as a chapter in the book *Diaspora, Communication Technologies and Identities*, published by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
were open to my paper’s discussions, the majority of the instructors who had never been exposed to the experience of living and teaching abroad – particularly those more inclined towards a traditionalist take – criticised both my paper’s argument and me. In their view, my paper’s questioning of hierarchy, for instance, disempowered or questioned the authority of knowledgeable elder Mestres regarding their teaching methods or interactions with non-Brazilian practitioners.

In an informal chat after the round-table, one young *capoeirista* came to me, saying, ‘As an academic, your approach may even be right, but as a *capoeirista*, you shouldn’t be doing that!’ (personal communication, September 2011). He meant I should not be revealing these tensions and incongruences in the international *Capoeira* scenario. The uneasy feeling that marginalisation could happen to me after becoming a researcher in my own field was confirmed to some extent. As mentioned above, however, most often during my fieldwork my insider status granted me access to information that made me feel like the international *Capoeira* community ombudsman. As my interviewees shared their stories of conflicts, disappointments, and sometimes even moral and sexual abuse, I felt anxious and sad. The heavy and negative emotional load of listening to their stories and having a deeper understanding of such issues within a community of which I had been a part for almost 30 years stayed with me even after the fieldwork was finished.

After a few years studying and teaching abroad, it seemed too late to step back. I felt I should honour those who had given me access to their lives (revealing how one’s life in *Capoeira* can be both very empowering and overwhelming) by discussing and writing about my findings in this thesis.

**Conclusion**

Being an insider researcher demanded both open-mindedness, in terms of understanding the perspective of those living and experiencing *Capoeira* in other countries, and critical objectivity towards norms, organisational procedures and traditions that once merged naturally into my cultural landscape. As mentioned earlier, the fact that I was a senior Brazilian instructor conducting research abroad led some of
my counterparts and interviewees (mostly the non-Brazilian capoeiras) to see me as a Capoeira ombudsman. In this case, I believe that my reputation as an international instructor using Capoeira in community development programmes also played an important role in establishing a good rapport and giving me access to information that would be typically be concealed from, or not obvious to other senior Brazilian instructors and possibly even to outsider researchers.

On the other hand, the fact that I was also still a relatively young Capoeira teacher (in my mid-thirties), from a non-traditionalist Capoeira background, and an academic researcher led a few of the elder Mestres and some of the young instructors (in this case, mostly Brazilians) to see me as a total outsider. This led these counterparts to deny me interviews, undermine my recruitment for interviews with other Mestres, try to charge me money to conduct interviews with them (which in this case did not happen) or even warn me that I should not be disclosing the sort of information my research was revealing, as noted above when a young instructor warned me not to discuss and write about these tensions and incongruences in the international Capoeira scenario after presenting my paper in the round-table in Brasília.

Consequently, the time spent with these counterparts in the daily routines of our community, and afterwards analysing their statements, somehow pushed my role as an insider researcher even further, as it brought me closer to lives, views, attitudes and feelings about the role they play in the transnational Capoeira community. The proximity I gained in the course of my fieldwork to non-Brazilian capoeiras deepened my role as an insider, as my respondents shared information and views that are not usually shared with Brazilian senior instructors, which added a twist of the ‘converted’ and marginalised researcher stigma to both my role as a researcher and to my position as a capoeirista.
Part II

Playing with authority and authenticity:

How capoeiristas around the world are creating alternative identities through social media and community development endeavours
Chapter 4

The globalisation of Capoeira

Introduction

They are blind to the grandeur of a game which, in lands far from that which gave it birth, could encompass so much of social reality and still remain a game. (James, 2005: 122)

It has become commonplace for people interested in participating in and learning about new cultural activities to engage in those practices that have originally developed in other countries. As observed in Chapter 2, this is the case with Capoeira, a Brazilian cultural practice that has its origins in the colonial era and then evolved as an interdisciplinary and intercultural cultural system in the countryside of Bahia state on the northeast coast of Brazil. Since the 1970s, Capoeira has reached over 150 countries (Annunciato, 2006). However, bearing much in the way of the customs, values and meanings from its formational period, state and country of origin in the new territories to which it has been spreading, while also absorbing new local influences, the practice of Capoeira supports the understanding of cultural globalisation (global flows of culture) as outlined by Giddens (2000), Boaventura Santos (2006), Milton Santos (2008), Featherstone (1990), Urry (1995) and Hannerz (1990), both in Brazil and in the countries to which it is spreading.

The institutionalisation of Capoeira coupled with the growing Brazilian diaspora that began in the 1980s rendered Capoeira a globalised cultural practice with an ever-increasing number of capoeristas migrating to developed countries (Assunção, 2005). To a great degree, however, the institutionalisation and worldwide acceptance also rendered different, and sometimes conflictive, ways of practising the art. As Appadurai (2000: 5) explains, today’s rapid movement of ‘ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques’ creates a world of flows and disjunctures, producing ‘fundamental problems of livelihood’. According to Appadurai
(2000: 1-6), this happens because the paths and vectors of these flowing concepts are rarely in harmony with ‘speed, axes, points of origins … nations, or societies’.

The worldwide practice of Capoeira, discussed in this chapter, exemplifies this globalised context of flows and disjunctures, demonstrating Appadurai’s (1996) notion of how culture spreads in various ‘scapes’ (media-scapes, techno-scapes, finance-scapes, ethno-scapes and idea-scapes). Thus, drawing on my own experience as a Capoeira Mestre, in-depth interviews, and a theoretical framework that utilises the concept of cultural globalisation, in this chapter I discuss the dialectical relationship between the hegemonic (globalisation from above) and the counter-hegemonic (globalisation from below) forces influencing the global diffusion of cultural practices within a framework of cultural globalisation. Such a dialectical relationship between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces allows the birth of what Boaventura Santos (2006) calls ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’.

**The global game**

Time would pass, old empires would fall and new ones take their place, the relations of countries and the relations of classes had to change before I discovered that it is not quality of goods and utility which matter, but movement; not where you are or what you have, but where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there. (James, 2005: 149)

Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist, describes globalisation as ‘the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’ (Giddens, 1990: 64). Giddens also proposes a distinction between a globalisation from below and globalisation from above. He argues that globalisation from above refers to the financial markets, trade and technological innovation, while globalisation from below includes the growth of NGOs, interest groups and pressure groups (Giddens, 1990).

Boaventura Santos, a prominent Portuguese scholar of globalisation, explains that there are two processes operating in conjunction to constitute ‘globalisation from above’. The first, ‘globalized
localism’ is ‘the process by which a particular phenomenon is successfully globalized … by the
winner of a struggle for … hegemonic recognition of a given cultural, racial, sexual, ethnic, religious,
or regional difference’ (Santos, 2006: 396). The second, ‘localized globalisms’, consists of the
specific impact on local conditions produced by transnational practices and imperatives that arise
from globalised localisms. Santos further explains that ‘the international division of the production
of globalisation tends to assume the following pattern: core countries specialize in globalized
localisms, while peripheral countries only have the choice of localized globalisms’ (2006: 396-397).
As discussed below, however, the global practice of Capoeira challenges the predominant trend of
globalised localisms originating from core countries, as it originated in Brazil, a developing country.

Milton Santos (2008), a Brazilian geographer renowned for his work on globalisation, explains that
globalisation (referring here to globalisation from above and its hegemonic agenda) can only be
grasped as a fabled story. Santos provides a few examples of how the hegemonic agenda constructs
such a fabled story. For Santos, the idea of a global village being equally and simultaneously covered
by news broadcast; the notion that time and space are now shortened due to technological
achievements supposedly accessible to all; and the idea that state boundaries are collapsing due to
multinational companies’ financial power are all forged by mainstream media to reinforce the
multinational companies’ ideology, or globalisation from above (Santos, 2008: 18-19).

Santos unveils how the scheme is structured, noting that news content is picked and manipulated
according to the multinational companies’ hidden agenda, and that time and space are shortened only
for that small percentage of the globe’s population who can experience the developed countries’
cosmopolitan centres and/or afford international travel. Moreover, even internet access – another
form of experiencing multiculturalism and globalisation at a local level – is a scarce resource for most
of the people living in developing countries. As for the weakening of our nation-states in the face of
the global financial markets, in Santos’s words, ‘what we see is its strengthening in order to attend
the financial market’s claims and other large international interests, instead of taking care of populations whose lives are turning more difficult’ (Santos, 2008: 19; translation mine):

A conqueror market, so called global, is presented as capable of homogenising the planet when, in fact the local differences are deepened. There is a search for unity, serving the hegemonic actors, but the world turns out to be less united, making more distant the dream of a truly universal citizenship. (Santos, 2008: 19; translation mine)

The social interactions of people engaged in the global practice of Capoeira and their conflicts can again be used to understand how, in serving hegemonic actors, this ‘search for unity’ causes more division than unity. This is discussed in more detail below.

In Appadurai’s (2005) view, the globalisation process is fundamentally underpinned by five different, but co-related, scapes as mentioned above. This multiple ‘scapes’ concept helps us to understand how the spread of cultural practices in the global scenario happens in varied and decentralised ways rather than through a simplified centre–periphery axis. Without denying that the neoliberal process of globalisation contains political and economic centres, Appadurai uses the poststructuralist ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), in particular their concept of rhizome-like processes, to explain how the spreading of culture through these multiple scapes might subvert hierarchical relations. In a rhizome-like process, flows of ‘ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques’ (Appadurai, 2005: 29) spread toward multiple directions encompassing multiple centres and peripheries. These systems can replicate themselves endlessly in a horizontal network with no particular centre to be defined or localised. Such a metaphor helps to challenge the idea that Capoeira flows out of Brazil through a one-way flux or axis. In fact, it helps to understand that culture in general does not evolve from one simple axis (bottom/up, local/global, traditional/modern, diasporic/transnational) but rather as rhizome-like fractal processes. As
Appadurai explains, ‘the global cultural economy does not spread from one centre but moves around in a chaotic and unpredictable pattern’ (2005: 29).

The worldwide community of capoeiristas exhibits complex patterns of mobility. Some of its participants – especially those from developed countries and those Brazilians residing abroad – live a cosmopolitan lifestyle, but one that can be defined, at least to some degree, as an insurgent one according to Boaventura Santos’s (2006) terms, as discussed below. First, though, let us discuss the more conventional notion of cosmopolitanism. Different authors have shed light on this concept. Cosmopolitanism is generally understood as a search for difference and a sense of distinction, most often achieved by the experience of different cultures and identities. Hannerz (1998) explains that the cosmopolitan is searching for contrasts, not uniformity, and that their engagement with other cultures happens through transnational networks, not through a connection with a territory. According to Hannerz (1998: 241), it is the ‘growth and proliferation of such cultures and social networks in the present period that generates more cosmopolitans now than ever before’.

Although cosmopolitanism is often associated with ‘elitist’ behaviours, Pnina Werbner (1999) notes that working-class migrants also engage with cosmopolitanism as a form of identification. Werbner’s work fosters my argument that those involved in the practice of what have become transnational cultural practices might be engaging in an alternative sense of cosmopolitanism. John Urry (2002) calls attention to the cosmopolitan tourist, who assumes a ‘natural right’ to travel the globe with the intention of consuming objects and experiences associated with different cultures and their urban and/or natural environments throughout the world.

Culture is a collective phenomenon that evolves chiefly from social interactions and relationships. Thus it does not need to be connected to particular areas in physical space. As argued by Hannerz (1999: 239), the less social relationships are confined within territorial boundaries, the less culture will be confined. The international Capoeira community that evolves from local/global dialectics
therefore allows capoeiristas to engage in both transnational and territorial cultures, creating a transnational kind of Capoeira practitioner similar to those intellectuals George Konrad (1984) describes as transnational. In his words:

We may describe as transnational those intellectuals [read capoeiristas] who are at home in the cultures of other people as well as their own. They keep track of what is happening in various places. They have special ties to those countries where they have lived, they have friends all over the world, they hop across the sea to discuss something with their colleagues; they fly to visit one another as easily as their counterparts two hundred years ago rode over to the next town to exchange ideas. (Konrad, 1984: 208-2099, cited in Hannerz, 1990: 244)

The case of capoeiristas and their cosmopolitan behaviour, however, diverges in many ways from the above definitions and conceptualisations of cosmopolitanism. The main difference is that they are not seeking to widen their cultural experience per se, as they do not see themselves as ‘tourists’ in Brazil or any other country to which they travel to practise and play Capoeira and interact with friends and colleagues. In fact, they are searching to deepen their experience of the Brazilian culture. They do so by becoming fluent in Brazilian Portuguese, learning and embodying dance and musical skills related to Capoeira and discovering Brazilian culture in general. In addition, and despite the conceptual differences I explained above, within the cosmopolitan capoeiristas there are those who can be classified as insurgent as explained by Boaventura Santos (2006). In Santos’s words, the ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’ consists of

the transnationally organized resistance against the unequal exchanges produced or intensified by globalized localisms and localized globalisms. This resistance is organized through local/global linkages between social organizations and movements representing those classes and social groups victimized by hegemonic globalization and united in concrete struggles against exclusion, subordinate inclusion, destruction of livelihoods and ecological destruction, political oppression, or cultural suppression, etc. (Santos, 2006: 397).

Furthermore, Boaventura Santos explains that ‘insurgent cosmopolitans take advantage of the possibilities of transnational interaction created by the world system in transition, including those
resulting from the revolution in information technology and communications and from the reduction of travel costs’ (Santos, 2006: 397). Among the activities with which insurgent cosmopolitans usually engage are

egalitarian transnational North–South and South–South networks of solidarity among social movements and progressive NGOs; the new working-class internationalism (dialogues between workers’ organizations in different regional blocs); transnational coalitions among workers of the same multinational corporation operating in different countries; coalitions of workers and citizenship groups in the struggle against sweatshops, discriminatory labor practices and slave labor; international networks of alternative legal aid; transnational human rights organizations; worldwide networks of feminist, indigenous, ecological or alternative development movements and associations; and literary, artistic and scientific movements on the periphery of the world system in search of alternative non-imperialist, counter-hegemonic cultural values, involved in studies using post-colonial or minority perspectives. (Santos, 2006: 397; italics mine)

In summary, not all cosmopolitan capoeiras are insurgents. But because of the progressive way in which some of the transnational capoeiras engage with local issues in Brazil and in other countries to which they travel in order to play Capoeira, their behaviour and attitudes constitute an ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’ (Santos, 2006). These ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ capoeiras usually organise themselves (both online and offline) through NGOs, social movements, and groups of people to promote social inclusion, intercultural learning, education and self-empowerment through Capoeira and Brazilian culture-related activities. Often, too, ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ capoeiras organise themselves on and offline to question highly competitive corporate-like or highly exclusive fundamentalist-like behaviours (see discussions in Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

From local community to transnational corporations

It is amazing to see the mandinga [magic] prediction in the ‘Volta do Mundo’, ‘Iê Volta do Mundo, Camará!’ [singing the expression as it is sung in the Capoeira Rodas] go around the
world, my comrade. It seems that the old *Caboclos* and Negroes already knew that one day, *Capoeira* would do a ‘Volta do Mundo’ (go around the world), and that is what has happened. So after this journey around the world, what will happen? (Mestre Cláudio Danadinho, personal communication, February 2010)

The *Volta do Mundo* is part of the players’ embodied communication within *Capoeira*. Both players can call for a *Volta do Mundo* after an unexpected movement or strike breaks the flow of the game. Each player can also call for a *Volta do Mundo* whenever they feel that the game is not flowing harmoniously or that their game strategy is not working well in relation to the other player’s strategy or the context of the *Roda* (the circle within which the game is played). Those who have practised *Capoeira* for a long time and adopted its guiding principles in their own lives, often make use of the term in a broader sense to indicate how time, epitomised in *Capoeira* by the *Volta do Mundo*, renders everything impermanent in both the game and life. In a game, for instance, a disadvantageous situation can be turned into a favourable one after a *Volta do Mundo*, or the reinstallation of a new space-time. Many elder Mestres also claim that *Volta do Mundo*, and what it epitomises, was somehow built into the *Capoeira* in its early days as an omen of its future rapid worldwide spread.

As seen in Chapter 1, even though *Capoeira* draws its intercultural and libertarian principles from its origins as a weapon of resistance against the slave-based Brazilian society in the colonial era, the game as it is globally known today (with its rituals, principles and codes) has its origins in the turn of the twentieth in the state of Bahia. Mestre Cláudio Danadinho’s statement (above) shares a common interpretation among many Mestres that the global spread of *Capoeira* was somehow inbuilt in the art and foreseen by the expression *Volta do Mundo*. But what happened was that the global spread of the art created a diverse and multifaceted international community of practitioners full of contradictions and incongruences. The socio-historic, cultural and economic movements that led *Capoeira* from a local to a global culture provoked many inversions in cultural values, technical principles and social and cultural attitudes. The global spread of cultures, because it is aligned
primarily with ‘globalisation from above’, usually creates a shift in attitudes. After the global spread of *Capoeira*, for instance, some common shifts were from secrecy (of techniques, knowledge and information) to exposure, from local (communities of practice) to global (corporate-like institutions) and from diasporic to transnational.

The global *Capoeira* community is generally divided between diasporic and transnational narratives. The diasporic narrative, with its inherent notions of ethnic or geographic authenticity (discussed in Chapter 5), is largely being questioned – especially by the non-Brazilian *capoeristas* (but also by some Brazilians) – in a way that corroborates with Hannerz’s (1990) assumption, mentioned above, that the social relationships confinement within or freedom from territorial boundaries have a direct correlation with how culture is diffused globally. Today, many of the international *capoeristas* make sense of their role and connection to *Capoeira* through the practice’s intercultural origins in Brazil.

Canarinho, a German who started training in his home country and then went to Brazil to hone his skills, is such an example. As a participant in my fieldwork, Canarinho – who was at that time teaching in New Zealand – made the following observation:

> If you look at where *Capoeira* comes from, it’s not Black African, it’s not índio [Brazilian Indian], it’s not Brazilian, it’s part of all of those and nowadays you get the foreigners as well, they have an input as well. If they don’t help carrying it, who does? (Canarinho, personal communication, March 2010)

Calado, an Israeli *capoeirista* who started the first *Capoeira* school in New Caledonia, also expressed similar views on the way he connects to *Capoeira*’s early history:

> That’s the thing with *Capoeira*, there is this thing. It comes from Brazil, but it’s a mix of different cultures at the start. So once you understand this, you know where it’s come from. Then you realise that okay, it’s not something that one race has created, it’s a mix of races that made this thing, so it’s only normal that once it’s growing, it keeps its roots, and it keeps those different cultures as the base of the whole thing. (Calado, personal communication, March 2010)
However, in addition to the large flux of migrants searching for better lives in the developed countries, *Capoeira* also gained a lot of momentum for its global spread from socio-economic, cultural and political agendas aligned with ‘globalisation from above’, a phenomenon springing largely from the developed countries.

Cascão, a 37-year-old British instructor who founded a social enterprise to run community-oriented *Capoeira* programs in Norfolk, England, comments on how the entertainment and media industries influenced his beginnings in *Capoeira*:

> My interest stemmed from the media, films and computer games and their portrayal of acrobatic martial arts. As a kid I was always a fan of Bruce Lee, I liked the stealth, fight sequences, mysticism and skill. I liked a fighting game on the Sony PlayStation called *Tekken 3*. It has a character called Eddy Gordo, who as we all know was a CGI, body mapped from Mestre Marcelo Caveirinha, from CDO [Cordão de Ouro Group]. I really loved the character but thought he was a break-dancer using his moves as a fantasy fighter … then, by chance I saw *Capoeira* in the flesh at a street demonstration in Austria and realised that it actually existed as a real fighting art. I was desperate to try it, and eventually heard of a group in my area. (Jim ‘Cascão’, English *Capoeira* teacher and social entrepreneur, personal communication, June 2010)

Cascão’s statement is corroborated by many other non-Brazilian *capoeristas* in my fieldwork, who stated that if it had not been because of a specific movie, TV advertisement or video-game, they would not be practising *Capoeira*. Mariola, a 28-year-old Bolivian-Swedish instructor who was already involved with other Brazilian cultural practices, first saw *Capoeira* in a circus performance in Sweden. His main resources to enable him to start practising *Capoeira*, however, were courses available on the internet and as DVDs:

> One day they showed *Capoeira* in a circus in town, where I was with my brothers, and then I fell in love with it! With the music and everything. I was just catching it … I didn’t have enough money to get into any group, so my brothers and I decided to buy a DVD from the internet and we started training from the DVD. We’re also learning from internet videos. Only
later on I got introduced to this group in the place I was living at that time and then I started training. (Mariola, personal communication, March 2010)

This exposure to different entertainment and media industries (e.g. movies, video games and TV advertisements) contributed to the increasing global diffusion of Capoeira (Assunção, 2005). Other scholars in the area of youth culture have studied the mainstream media appropriation and its role in promoting and transnationalising cultural practices, subcultures and lifestyle sports (Thornton, 1995; Wilson, 2008; Wheaton, 2013; Thorpe, 2014a). Both the similarities and distinctions between Capoeira and the other manifestations approached by these scholars were mentioned in Chapter 1. Some of these studies tackle how mainstream media portray lifestyle sports chiefly as a white and male scene (MacKay & Dallaire, 2012, 2014; Thorpe, 2014), often with a focus on consumption (Wheaton, 2013). The majority of these studies, however, acknowledge that despite the appropriation and often biased depictions, the main vehicle of global diffusion of these activities has been the mainstream media (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011, 2013). There is a parallel between these studies and the history of Capoeira’s global diffusion illustrated by data gathered in my research.

Whereas most non-Brazilian capoeristas state that their first contact with Capoeira was through the mainstream media, in its original context in Brazil, Capoeira was part of the cultural landscape and had a legacy of empowerment for those involved in it. In Chapter 2, I discussed the origins of Capoeira as a practice of resistance and how this led Capoeira to be forbidden by the establishment in 1890. By the early to mid-1900s, although it was openly practised in religions festivities in the neighbourhoods of Salvador and small towns in the Bahia de Todos os Santos (the Bay of All Saints), Capoeira had been persecuted for centuries and outlawed for decades. Such a marginal position caused the huge mass of former Black and mestizo slaves and their descendants to face oppression and discrimination by the official powers, but it also served to strengthen their cultural practices and networks. The description provided by Mestre Angoleiro shows how the practice of Capoeira was integrated within and served the local communities in Bahia:
The *Gengibirra* was an open-air club whose reference language was *Capoeira*. There, you could find workers, craftsmen, artisans, workers of all kinds, including housewives, kids, and the priest … In the end, there was everyone together for the whole Sunday, Saturday, or holiday, to participate in this event that brought together people to do a million things. It would begin in the morning with a [church] mass and continue until the end of the Roda,\(^{17}\) after which everyone would go home to go to work on Monday. The majority was people of lower classes, but there were also people from different social statuses, and they were all integrated there. And would be reintegrated after the event, when they would be recognised as being part of a bigger group regulated by *Capoeira*. It wasn’t street kids’ stuff, or vagrants’ stuff, it wasn’t that stupid thing that we eventually listen around. (Mestre Angoleiro, personal communication, February 2010)

Until the 1970s, the majority of the *capoeristas* organised themselves and their activities in much the same ways as in the *Gengibirra*. Clay Shirky (2008), a writer and teacher on the social and economic effects of internet technologies, calls these ‘loosely coordinated groups’ – that is, groups without the institutional imperatives of precise planning or the profit motive. Relying on their counterparts’ availability in these areas, on the closeness of life in community and on a shared cultural background with a specific set of skills, *capoeristas* could operate within a cooperative, egalitarian and inclusive framework. These ‘loosely coordinated groups’, assembled to play *Capoeira* in the streets or to perform professionally in folkloric troupes on a temporary basis, coexisted with a smaller number of *academias* (*Capoeira* training centres).

The few *academias* that existed distinguished those who taught, learned and performed within institutionalised schools from those who still taught, performed and learned via *oitiva* (by watching it) in the streets and backyards. Those involved in loosely coordinated groups had a particular set of skills that enabled them to eventually come together and perform in formal exhibitions, temporarily achieving a professional status. But those who organised their activities (classes, *Rodas*, rehearsals

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\(^{17}\) The circle at which people play the Capoeira games. This circle is composed of *capoeiristas* taking turns at many different functions at any given time. Provided all participants have the necessary skills, they all swap roles in the *Roda*, at times playing the game in the centre, as a singing audience composing the circle or leading the songs being performed by those playing traditional instruments.
and performances) within the institutionalized space of academias marked the birth of a professional class of capoeristas.

Brazil was (and still is) undergoing a process of westernisation, and new kinds of jobs and a different pace of life were (and still are) have placed severe constraints on the social life and cultural expression of the population. Prior to this process of westernisation and industrialisation, people’s activities were more related to subsistence agriculture, activities and jobs within the informal economy, such as subsistence fishing, informal food and small goods market stalls, and home-based food catering. These kinds of activities and jobs were orientated around the seasons, tides and (syncretic) religious calendar, allowing people more free time to engage in their local cultural practices. They were still heavily influenced by customs that were forged in the early stages of Brazilian society and culture. The westernisation and industrialisation process drove people towards industrialised jobs and activities within the formal economy. These, in turn, often demanded that people work over 40 hours a week in full-time commerce or factory jobs. These constraints made it virtually impossible for most capoeristas to organise their activities through and within loosely coordinated groups that operated without the profit motive (but demanded more free time). Those who succeeded in managing the transaction costs of bringing people together, rehearsing and teaching them were those adopting the capitalist institutional framework – that is, those who began to provide a service (Capoeira instruction) in exchange for money to run classes, performances and workshops.

Nonetheless, until the late 1970s in Bahia, Capoeira could still be learned by oitiva and could still be practised spontaneously, and many Rodas still followed a cultural and spontaneous calendar (most often related to religious festivities). The balanced interplay between ‘loosely coordinated groups’ and institutional frameworks resulted in a diverse scenario, within which cooperation among and across Capoeira groups and orientations was practised widely. This rationale, even though already
partially integrating *Capoeira* into the consumerist market’s logic, allowed people more freedom of expression to play and engage in *Capoeira*, placing their allegiances within a broader cultural context.

Those adopting the institutionalised framework began to match and eventually outnumber those who learned and taught informally, with the result that the professional *capoeiristas* gradually began to exert more influence over the *Capoeira* community. Soon the professional class of Mestres and not the majority of the practitioners, who simply practised *Capoeira*, began to enforce the norms – for example, determining the *Capoeira* groups’ operational and organisational framework, teaching methods, and how students should behave in and across the institutions where they learned. These professionals also began to decide ‘how’ *Capoeira* should be taught and practised, and also to determine what ‘a good *capoeirista*’ should be like. The *Capoeira* profession would become, for its members, a way of reinterpreting their practice as well as creating and giving meaning to new developments (in rituals, movements, techniques and teaching methods). *Capoeiristas* began to (re)interpret and evolve their practice through the interplay of the professional approach with the historic and cultural background that preceded the institutionalisation of the practice. The professional approach therefore assumed more weight in relation to how the practice of *Capoeira* would evolve from that point onwards. This is why it is important to understand how the institutional framework became prevalent in the worldwide *Capoeira* community.

The constraints imposed by the westernisation process made it virtually impossible for people to keep traditional cultural practices alive in their streets and communities as part of their everyday lifestyle. Tying traditional cultural practices to the capitalist mode of production would offer them a better chance of surviving. In the case of *Capoeira*, it meant that it would no longer be an ubiquitous traditional practice from a local region, but largely a cultural product that would be accessible to those who could afford formal classes.
Mestre Bimba launched the first academia in the 1930s, adopting an institutional framework to overcome this hurdle (see Chapter 1). Mestre Bimba was rapidly followed by Mestre Pastinha in the 1940s. By the 1960s, more Mestres were teaching in academias in Bahia (Mestres Canjiquinha, Paulo dos Anjos, Caiçara), in Brasília (Mestres Tabosa and Adilson), in São Paulo (Mestres Suassuna, Brasília, Limão, Joel, Paulo Gomes) and in Rio de Janeiro (Mestres Artur Emídio, Agenor ‘Sinhosinho’ Sampaio, Gato, Paulo, Rafael, Cláudio Danadinho e Peixinho).18

These few institutions gave birth to a professional kind of capoeiristas who, for the first time in the history of the practice, could make a regular living as teachers. Approaching Capoeira’s history and its teachings as a key as to elucidate how Capoeira became a commodity, Benedito Araújo (2008), a capoeirista and scholar from Bahia, explains that despite already operating within the market’s logic, academias did not encompass the franchise-like model so ubiquitously adopted today. Araújo (2008) points out that academias marked the shift from a strictly organic and non-commercial ethos to a situation in which Capoeira teaching became commercialised. Benedito Araújo (2008) further explains that it was the advent and subsequent predominance of Capoeira groups with franchise-like frameworks and exploitative relations between teachers and students from the 1960s onwards that marked Capoeira’s full transition into a capitalist mode of production.

Capoeiristas needed to develop an efficient strategy to support their task of teaching and practising Capoeira in the face of limiting constraints imposed by westernisation. Furthermore, they also needed to find ways of teaching and practising outside of their own state and, eventually, outside of their country of origin. The strengthening of the institutional framework thus worked first as an escape from persecution (aligning the populace’s practice to the ruling Western system’s industrialising agenda, eventually leading

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18 This list of Mestres is simply a sample of the most renowned Mestres in their states during this period. It is by no means a complete list, but rather an illustration of how academias were already becoming the predominant form of Capoeira instruction by the 1960s.
to the legalisation of *Capoeira* as discussed in Chapter 1), and then as a strategy to increase the viability of teaching and performing ventures at a professional level.

The setting up of an organisation to teach, as part of the institutionalisation of *Capoeira* instruction means putting economic, legal, and physical structures in place. As Clay Shirky (2008: 29) points out, this is exactly why ‘no institution can pull all its energies into pursuing its mission’. Shirky (2008: 29-30) explains that any institution ‘must expend considerable effort on maintaining discipline and structure, simply to keep itself viable’ before pursuing its mission. According to Shirkey (TED, 2005), ‘One of the first things that happens when you institutionalize a problem is that the first goal of the institution immediately shifts from whatever the nominal goal was to self-preservation, and the actual goal of the institution goes to through to end.’

‘The problem’ for most *capoeristas* living in an era of rapid economic, cultural and social changes was how to teach and practise *Capoeira* in the face of limiting constraints (as explained above) and also out of its place of origin. The solution was to institutionalise the teaching of *Capoeira* – that is, to create institutions (for profit or not) to promote, teach and diffuse the practice. This solution caused some contradictions that still reverberate as ‘fundamental problems of livelihood’ (Appadurai, 2000: 5) within the international *Capoeira* community today (see also Chapters 5 and 5 for a detailed discussion). First, there was the adaptation of a cultural manifestation that evolved in Brazil prior to its industrialisation to suit Western notions of sport and cultural performance. Second, although most *Capoeira* groups stated that their mission was to promote and teach *Capoeira* in different Brazilian states or in other countries, these groups first needed to keep themselves financially viable. The contradiction in this last case is that, although most *capoeristas* identify themselves with *Capoeira*’s legacy as a weapon of resistance against oppression and acculturation, they had to experience *Capoeira* (and the adaptations it was suffering) through hierarchical institutions (the *Capoeira* groups) that needed first to be profitable to then fulfil their mission.
By the late 1980s, the corporatist approach to groups with franchise-like organisation models had already became predominant over academias. Furthermore, in the late 1980s and early 1990s Capoeira’s process of internationalisation increased rapidly. The initial processes of internationalisation that sprang from larger migration movements were boosted by the entertainment industries (TV advertisements, video games, action movies), generally aligned with globalisation from above. The corporatist approach to groups with franchise-like organisational models was, then, both a necessity and a consequence. It was a necessity because capoeiristas needed efficient ways to overcome the transaction costs of bringing people together and educating them in an art-form that originated elsewhere. And it was a consequence because once the first capoeiristas established themselves in the developed countries their practice and organisational framework began to be influenced by these countries’ prevailing neo-liberal ideologies. As might have been expected, this process of internationalisation did not happen without side-effects.

The constraints imposed by the industrialisation process in the area of Brazil from which Capoeira originated, and its diffusion to other states and countries, dictated that capoeiristas could not rely on the closeness of a live-in-community and on a shared cultural background as much as had previously been the case. This was mainly because its place of origin, loosely coordinated networks were being disarticulated, and in new places Capoeira was unknown by locals. It also meant that it was difficult for capoeiristas to rely on official support, policies or grants in Brazil or other countries. In the case of Brazil, this was because the support for folk cultural practices in community development or entrepreneurial programmes was virtually non-existent, and official countrywide policies would only be implemented in 2003.19 In the case of developed countries, it was simply because Capoeira was not sufficiently well established and known to be used in local community development programmes. Thus capoeiristas had to rely on the strengthening of the institutional and entrepreneurial organisational framework in order to (re)create their ethos and (re)produce or emulate the practice’s cultural meanings in these new places.

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The increasing demand for classes and the number of students in different countries led to concern among senior Mestres. In order to cope with Capoeira’s process of internationalisation, these Mestres began to standardise how groups would operate globally. Part of the standardisation of international groups of Capoeira had to do with a legitimate concern that too many young (and very often self-proclaimed) instructors were not properly upholding Capoeira’s values, principles, techniques and traditions. Another part of this process had to do with market reserve, as some teachers found the growing number of young instructors (and flux of information) challenging to their established position and way of life. In both cases, however, the solution was still generally the enforcement of rules and regulations through the groups’ by-laws, covert peer pressure and the groups’ historic narratives (often conveying rules as ‘traditions’).

Such rules and regulations often ensure that young instructors will not hold events (workshops and seminars) without the presence of their head-teacher or Mestre, will buy uniform supplies from their Mestre, and will hold at least one event every year with their teacher (which generally involves travelling arrangements plus a teaching salary). Similarly, it typically means that Capoeira students will be required to pay an annual membership fee to be part of a specific school and, in some cases, will be forbidden to visit other Capoeira groups to train and play. Peer pressure is often used – for instance, to prevent a student adopting another group’s techniques or way of performing a movement. In this case, the technique is discredited and the student is openly criticised and sometimes their loyalty is challenged for attempting to use another group’s techniques. The groups’ narratives often also present these rules as ‘traditions’, simply stating that a group’s operational modes ‘have always been like that’. In most cases, this actually means that such modes have only been like that ever since the head-teacher (usually a Brazilian Mestre) had to figure out how to protect his livelihood in the face of constant changes imposed by the process of globalisation from above (commonly, his international students’ easy access to information and contact with other schools through the use of internet and travel).
In this way, the senior teachers began to delineate the professional class of *capoeristas* and how it would manage the delivery of information and training. Communication and organisational planning among the different branches of a given school or group, the reproduction of the school’s historical narratives and ideology, and the teaching of musical skills and movement techniques that would educate the future *capoeristas* generally became standardised procedures.

To a large extent, these imperatives initially aligned with *Capoeira*’s global diffusion of the values of ‘globalisation from above’ (Giddens, 1990). This brought the immediate side-effect of having to prioritise the self-preservation of the institution (that is, the *Capoeira* schools or groups) over the goal of (re)creating and (re)producing *Capoeira*’s expressions and meanings. This, in turn, created conflicts between *capoeristas* who engaged with the art because they identified with the ideas and ideologies conveyed by *Capoeira*’s historical narratives, and the institutions in which they were learning. Canarinho, for instance, notes the contradictions in *Capoeira*’s transnational scenario:

> The problem with the spreading of *Capoeira* is the contradictions and [Brazilian] Mestres or people teaching foreigners but not allowing foreigners to be a voice in it because they’re not genuine [feigning a startled look in his eyes and nodding his head]. (Canarinho, personal communication, March 2010)

Calado has also experienced these contradictions and conflicts within the *Capoeira* community:

> There is a cultural thing where, you know, Brazilians will be always friendly in a way. And their first approach is, ‘Yeah, it’s awesome you’re doing *Capoeira*’, but, you know, that’s *mandinga* [cunningness], maybe they think something else in their head. So I can’t really tell, but I have experienced both. I have experienced, you know, [Brazilian] guys that told me, you know, ‘You’re nothing! I come from a very big group and have a lot of groups everywhere and, you know, you’re just nothing. I don’t care about you!’ And I’ve got other [Brazilian] guys that really appreciate what I do [teaching *Capoeira*] … yeah, there is lots of different people. (Calado, personal communication, March 2010)
It is not just the non-Brazilian capoeiras who are concerned with the consequences of a heavily institutionalised and transnational scenario of the practice. Mestre Cláudio Danadinho, who performed professionally in Bahia in the 1960s and was an influential Capoeira pioneer in Rio de Janeiro and Brasília, says that he is worried today with this ‘condition of people who in practising Capoeira understand it as something that they can make a living out of’ (Mestre Cláudio Danadinho, personal communication, February 2010). His statement hints at the negative side of such a heavily institutionalised and professionalised global scenario.

Mestre Marco Antônio, who has been teaching Capoeira and other Brazilian cultural practices in Portugal for over 15 years, shares similar views. According to him:

The whole problem is money. When the money part comes in, the exploitation part, this kind of interest, then hierarchy is prejudicial because everyone wants to become a Mestre so that they don’t have to pay toll to no one. They don’t realise that being a ‘Mestre’ is more than this. A Mestre needs to live off it [Capoeira], but to be a Mestre is not just about that. (Mestre Marco Antônio, personal communication, June 2010)

Issues of authenticity and authority in Capoeira are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. In the context of this chapter’s discussion, however, what is critically pertinent is that both Mestre Marco Antônio’s and Mestre Cláudio Danadinho’s statements convey the point that the Capoeira groups’ organisational mode and profit motive are, to some extent, negatively influencing the practice of the art and exacerbating conflicts.

Mestre Fantasma, one of the first non-Brazilian capoeiras to be bestowed with a Mestre title in England, shares similar views. However, his remarks go further, directly comparing the ‘big famous groups’ and their hegemonic agenda with global corporate franchises and highlighting their ubiquity.

In Mestre Fantasma’s view:

Sometimes everyone wants to be linked with the big famous group. You know, if they’re good capoeiras … they don’t need to be linked to that group, they’re good capoeiras. Being
linked with that group doesn’t make them any better. I think it’s just a bit like the whole world, isn’t it? It’s like … these franchises and corporates and Sainsburys and Tescos … there are Tescos being built everywhere at the moment. And it’s like a rash, so then you lose the local fish market and the local butcher and the local baker … they go out of business. And I think that in *Capoeira* I’ve seen that, the big groups … someone is a student of this [group] but he doesn’t get on anymore with [it], someone is pulling the wrong strings and he doesn’t get on with his Mestre anymore, so he leaves and he becomes part of another group. And that group … it just seems better because it’s famous or they just buy the names, they’re left alone, they can do what they want after that. It’s easier. You get more money because the group is famous, you can use their logo … They’re like McDonald’s or something. (Mestre Fantasma, personal communication, June 2010)

As pointed out by Santos (2008: 19), and already mentioned above, globalisation as it is being portrayed by the neoliberal agenda can only be grasped as a fabled story with concepts forged by the mainstream media in an attempt to reinforce the multinational companies’ ideology. In *Capoeira*, when groups align themselves with the values and practices of globalisation from above, it is no different. Rules are created, traditions are invented, hegemonic practices are adopted and *capoeiristas* are led to believe that such an organisational framework (with its obvious consequences) is ‘the only way forward’. In this case, the ‘externalities’ of such a corporatist and profit-driven approach, as pointed out by Mestre Fantasma, are the breakdown of the social fabric, the bankruptcy of autonomous and local initiatives and the narrative or widespread belief that for a *capoeirista* to be acknowledged for their skills, they need to be part of a McDonald’s-like ‘big famous group’.

Some of the consequences of this ubiquitiously used corporate-like organisational approach to transnationalised cultural practices are twofold. On one hand, the marketing of *Capoeira* classes tends to turn the art into an over-simplified product in the shelves of the ‘neo-liberal supermarket’, as if there were no other option to sustain its transnational practice. On the other hand, confronting individualism, social instabilities, loneliness and the fate of purposeless and meaningless lives, as side-effects of globalisation from above, people who engage in *Capoeira* (as a transnationalised
cultural practice) often behave like fundamentalist congregations. These groups of people become intolerant of diversity and underpin their take on and practice of Capoeira (or whatever other cultural practice) with myths of purism. In this way, without reflecting on Capoeira’s legacy, principles and social role, the majority of the Capoeira groups, whether adopting corporate or fundamentalist-like approaches, end up following segregationist global trends imposed by the economic ruling system.

Canarinho, who has practised and taught in several countries including Brazil, comments on the impacts of such an organisational approach to Capoeira:

> Because I’ve seen a lot that belonging to a group is really important. And the way in which I mean is that ‘our group’s teaching, our philosophy, our logo … is the right one and everyone else is treated with a little bit of suspicion: ‘Yeah, they do Capoeira, but they do it differently … they call that movement differently’ or ‘Hey, they’re not doing that right!’, and I’ve seen that judgmental [attitude] way too often. So the group label is preventing people from looking outside their group and looking in the Capoeira world in general and acknowledging the diversity in it. (Canarinho, personal communication, March 2010)

Mestre Fantasma created the Urban Ritual, a monthly Roda, organised and promoted through a blog and a Facebook page (discussed further in Chapter 6) to bring back diverse interactions in Capoeira games. The Urban Ritual encourages capoeristas to downplay their group allegiances and focus more on their own skills, values and morals when playing their Capoeira counterparts from other groups.

Conforming to transnationalised cultural practices that embrace the values of top-down globalisation or using these practices to provide a fundamentalist-like life-purpose for their practitioners (be it upholding traditions, lineages or a sense of belonging) are the two extremes of a spectrum of options offered by the global diffusion of these cultural practices. These extreme options also impact these cultural practices’ countries of origin. In Brazil, for instance, Capoeira used to be practised locally and as part of the local communities’ ancestry. Today, in many of these places, one can only
experience *Capoeira* staged for tourists or foreign counterparts. Monica, who went to Salvador (Brazil) – considered by most to be ‘the Mecca of all *Capoeira* practitioners’ (Mestre Pedro Adib in Faria, 2006) – searching for the essence of *Capoeira*, relates her experience:

I found in a lot of ways going to Salvador broke the magic for me because that was ‘Coca-Cola *Capoeira*’ in a way, there was just so much of it everywhere and everyone is selling *Capoeira* T-shirts and souvenirs … I imagined that going to Salvador and training there I would feel most intensely linked to *Capoeira*, but it was opposite, I felt least connected … I got more out of it when I was in Chile and when I was in New Zealand. (Monica, personal communication, November 2010)

However, even though absorbing some of the values and institutional patterns of ‘globalisation from above’ in its process of global diffusion, *Capoeira* questions the dominant trend of globalised localisms (as a phenomenon springing from core countries) due to its origins in a peripheral country. The case of *Capoeira*, a globalised form of local culture from a peripheral country, shows that ‘globalisation from above’ carries in itself counter-hegemonic possibilities, as argued by Boaventura Santos (2006), Milton Santos (2008) and Giddens (1990). Such dialectic relations between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces allow the birth of what Boaventura Santos (2006) calls ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’ within the universe of transnationalised cultural practices when people engage with ‘globalised localisms’ (cultural practices that originated in peripheral countries and were transnationalised).

Another controversial or ironic aspect of ‘globalisation from above’, carrying inherent counter-hegemonic possibilities, is that many non-Brazilians’ first contact with *Capoeira* might have been through mainstream media and entertainment industries, but when some of them adopt an ‘insurgent’ form of cosmopolitanism, they usually face conflicts generated by notions of authenticity reinforced by marketing practices aligned with the top-down approach of globalisation.
Because of what cosmopolitanism implies, an ‘insurgent’ form of cosmopolitanism is to some extent limited to those who progressively engage with these cultural practices in the developed countries, and to those in the developing countries who are able to travel overseas. Those who cannot travel, but who make use of the internet to connect with other progressive practitioners involved with social movements and NGOs aligned with globalisation from below in other countries, might also be seen as insurgents. While non-Brazilian capoeiras might choose a lifestyle of ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’ by engaging with progressive cultural values, practices, movements and agendas, for the majority of the capoeiras in Brazil, the more widely available option is to adopt an insurgent attitude that might not be as cosmopolitan as the one adopted by their foreign counterparts. This might explain why the great majority of ‘insurgent cosmopolitan capoeiras’ engaging with counter-hegemonic NGOs, social movements and alternative and progressive practices in the worldwide Capoeira scene are often non-Brazilians. There are many more Brazilians and non-Brazilians, however, who simply choose to teach and practise a cosmopolitan take of Capoeira that is not insurgent.

So, when Mestre Augusto states that the Capoeira that is practised in Brazil today is an imported and processed product with foreign connotations, implying that Capoeira is absorbing values and attitudes from other cultures (Mestre Augusto in Faria, 2006), he is revealing that while globalisation from above might carry within itself counter-hegemonic possibilities, it is also certainly twisting local practice’s inclusive and progressive principles and attitudes to better suit the core countries’ hegemonic agenda. For Capoeira and other transnationalised cultural practices springing from peripheral countries to hold sway, supporting an ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’ – one that can subvert the cosmopolitanism established by ‘globalisation from above’ – another paradigm shift in how these cultural practices are fomented to be practised transnationally must take place.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how the conformity of *Capoeira* to the logic of the global market in many ways opposes its philosophical principles – perhaps as much as it did when it was first taught to white middle-class students with the advent of Mestre Bimba’s method and provision of services within the consumerist market logic. Counterparts resisting such trends today are, however, often sharpening fundamentalist approaches of the art more than their predecessors have done in the past. Taken to extreme actions, these fundamentalist approaches are fostering sectarianism within *Capoeira*, an attitude dissonant with *Capoeira*’s original intercultural principles.

The examination of the global diffusion of *Capoeira* presented in this chapter thus exemplifies the shift that local practices suffer when their local function, meaning and ancestry are questioned by our current and often deterritorialised (Lull, 1995) way of relating to each other and to the cultural practices in which we engage. It also exemplifies another shift that takes place in globalised cultural practices, a shift from practices loosely coordinated by groups without the institutional imperatives of precise planning or the profit motive in local areas, to a situation in which transnational practices are heavily institutionalised, generally practised in closed and diversity intolerant groups, and full of contradictions for the international community of practitioners.

The institutionalised framework was, as seen above, the most efficient way for *capoeiristas* to (re)create their groups and (re)produce, or emulate *Capoeira*’s cultural principles, values and shared meanings within the new territories to which it was spreading. As a drawback, however, such a framework continued to strengthen the monopoly of information (chiefly over teaching, organisational and promotional methods), a highly competitive attitude among different groups and a rigidly hierarchical framework.
This institutionalised and franchise-like framework was created by, and empowered, the emergence and spread of a professional class of Capoeira instructors. However, as ‘professionals see the world through a lens created by other [previous] members of their profession’, and as these professionals ‘[pay] as much or more attention to the judgment of [their] peers as to the judgment of [their] costumers when figuring out how to do their job’ (Shirky, 2008: 58), subsequent generations of instructors continued to strengthen corporate-like institutional patterns in spite of the conflicts this brought between Brazilian teachers and international students and young instructors.

For capoeristas, this heavily institutionalised environment of practice meant that their goal of teaching and practising the art had to be given a lesser emphasis than the overall survival of their institutions. In other words, the process of institutionalisation began to limit the capoeristas’ sense of belonging to a wider community and began to disarticulate the loosely coordinated networks in favour of institutionalised places of practice. While the former were guided by early intercultural principles and fostered a heightened sense of otherness and belonging to a wider local community, the latter began to reinforce closed networks and also to reinforce differences rather than similarities between Capoeira groups and a narrower sense of belonging to one’s group or school (instead of to a larger community or culture). Such an approach, however, no longer seems to be capable of dealing with the multifaceted and decentralised interplay of cultural practices and globalisation processes.

The global flow of cultures – or, rather, their transnational interplay – reveals contexts, contradictions and frictions (among their participants) that go beyond the local/global, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic and diasporic/transnational dichotomies. This transnational interplay of cultures brings forth new questions regarding how we create, express, interpret and engage in cultural practices, and how we deal with cultural differences. At any rate, the corollary of people in developed countries experiencing cultural practices in an ever more deterritorialised fashion seems to be the questioning
of their authenticity by the ever increasing number of those whose depressed socio-economic circumstances mean they are unable to travel and assume a more cosmopolitan and resistant lifestyle.
Chapter 5
Authority and authenticity in Capoeira

Introduction

Chapters 2 and 4 discussed and analysed the history and explored the socio-cultural and economic factors underpinning the increasingly wider diffusion of Capoeira. This diffusion happened first in Brazil, then in other countries. The previous two chapters provided key concepts enabling capoeiras and scholars to understand how such process of diffusion brought about ‘problems of livelihood’ (as the term is explained by Appadurai, 2000) that are related to today’s rapid movement of ‘ideas ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques’ flowing through different paths and vectors and having different points of origin, speed and axes (Appadurai, 2000: 1-6). Appadurai’s (2005) notion of how culture spreads in media-scapes, techno-scapes, finance-scapes, ethno-scapes and idea-scapes corroborates with the arguments presented in Chapters 2 and 4 and also adds to the discussion presented in this chapter.

This chapter lays the foundation for the discussion and analysis of matters of authenticity and authority approached in this second part of this thesis (including Chapters 6 and 7). Moreover, it explains how these matters were brought up by Capoeira’s rapid global diffusion. The literature review I present in this chapter, however, also establishes the foundation for a discussion of the ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ (Santos, 2006) capoeiras’ use of social media (Chapter 6) and how engagement in community development programmes (Chapter 7) brings the global Capoeira community closer to its original cultural context and principles as these were historically established in Bahia, Brazil, while other capoeiras adhere to practices and attitudes aligned with globalisation from above, and yet others adopt fundamentalist-like behaviour to counter the actions, values and attitudes fostered by globalisation from above.
From traditional authority to global authenticity

Questions of authenticity and legitimacy often surface when cultural practices that originated in a specific place and time become transnational. Issues of authenticity become even more contentious when the globalised cultural practice in discussion precedes the industrialised society’s rationale – that is, when it was not associated with the profit motive, had no organisational costs and was embedded in local meaning (for example, indigenous and traditional cultures). *Capoeira* is one of these manifestations. Yoga, surf and salsa also had a local origin and cultural function that predated the industrialised society’s service provision rationale. Lifestyle sports, such as skateboarding, snowboarding and parkour, are more recent phenomena, but nonetheless bear a resemblance to these cultural manifestations, as they evolved to question Western notions of competitive sports.

Despite some similarities, *Capoeira* stands alone in the sense that is the only manifestation that simultaneously blends martial-arts, dance and game (see discussion in Chapter 2). There are other differences too. Despite their transnational acceptance, and often mainstream co-optation, *Capoeira*, yoga and surfing come from peripheral countries, while skateboarding, snowboarding (both derived from surf) and parkour come from core countries. *Capoeira* has its origins in colonial Brazil and evolved as part of the Brazilian culture-scape. Yoga was once an Indian spiritual discipline practised almost exclusively in ashrams and by sages who took vows of poverty. Surfing, which has its origins disputed chiefly among Pacific Island nations, was once a non-competitive form of play and communion with nature. Lifestyle sports evolved mostly from affluent societies from the late nineteenth century to mid- and late twentieth century. The questioning of people’s authenticity and legitimacy by these sports and their manifestations after they have been transnationalised, however, is common to all of them.

In her book *The Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports*, Belinda Wheaton (2013) examines the changing place and meaning of lifestyle sports – parkour, surfing, skateboarding, kite-surfing and others – and asks whether they continue to pose a challenge to the dominant meanings and experience of ‘sport’

Broadly speaking, as discussed in Chapter 2, the worldwide practice of Capoeira divides itself into three main orientations: Capoeira Angola, Capoeira Regional and Capoeira Contemporânea. While some schools, regardless of their orientations, unknowingly follow or eagerly adapt to the Western consumerist market’s demand for ‘exoticism’ and provide services based on these expectations (Urry, 2002), other schools tend to emphasise an overly traditionalist approach to oppose those who adapt to the Western consumerist market. The irony, however, is that both are responding to the consumerist market. Furthermore, both ideologies are expressed within the market’s logic arena, because most schools today rely on the provision of a service (Capoeira instruction) in exchange for money to run classes, performances and workshops. Furthermore, most schools worldwide operate under a franchise-like hierarchical framework that hinders more horizontal and non-hegemonic interactions within and across schools (Araújo, 2008).

This tension among Capoeira counterparts and their quest for authority to define who is authentic and who is not was already present in the first phase of the art’s commoditisation within Brazil (e.g. see Araújo, 2008). The search for authority, however, was intensified with the art’s internationalisation and the Capoeira groups’ – that is, schools’ – subsequent dispute over hegemony in new markets. This may help to explain why the assertion of Lewis (1992), an anthropologist specialising in performance, ritual and play theories, that the divergent approaches would eventually merge was proven wrong despite his significant contribution to the academic understanding of Capoeira (1992: 61-62; see also Chapter 1). Lewis’s fieldwork and research in Brazil, however, was conducted in a period when other authors and capoeristas such as Filho, (1997a, 1997b, 1997c) and

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20 In Chapter 2, I discuss both their historical origins and the reasons why I approach them as ‘orientations’.
Almeida (1986) were major academic and cultural references in the field, and approached the different orientations within Capoeira as diverse expressions within Capoeira as whole. Filho, known in the Capoeira community as Dr Decânio, and Almeida, also known as Mestre Acordeon, were both lifelong students of Mestre Bimba. Despite having ‘being born in a noble lineage’, Filho (who died in 2012) and Almeida have always maintained their inclusive views of Capoeira as one manifestation with multiple orientations, rather than one manifestation with multiple ramifications, as some purist capoeristas approach it.

**Authenticity and authority**

The authenticity of Capoeira outside Brazil must be upheld by the knowledge of its history, respect for its traditions and rituals, understanding of its philosophy, and the appropriate use of its movements. (Almeida, 1986: 4)

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, there are various and intricate social, cultural and economic patterns and processes understood generically as globalisation. These phenomena made it possible for people interested in participating in and learning about cultural activities – for example, Jiu-jitsu, Judo, yoga, salsa, parkour and not least Capoeira – to engage in such practices, which were originally developed in other countries.

Despite its global diffusion and large acceptance today, Capoeira originated in different socio-cultural and economic contexts, and was practised, learned and enjoyed outside the consumerist market’s logic. That is to say, Capoeira was not originally seen as a commodity. Abreu (2003), Almeida (1986), Araújo (2008), Assunção (2005), Filho (1997a, 1997b, 1997c) and Sodré (1988) are some of the scholars who have written about or mentioned the historical period in which Capoeira was practised outside the market’s logic (for a historical account of this, see Chapter 2), a period that the majority of capoeristas in the global community regard as the zeitgeist of the art.
However, in order to survive outside its original indigenous, pre-industrial and pre-commoditised context, Capoeira had to undergo a process of institutionalisation and commoditisation (see Chapter 3). Such processes have brought up questions of geographical and ethnic authenticity among those engaging in Capoeira in countries other than Brazil. These processes have also intensified hierarchy and authority matters that might already have been present in Capoeira, but within different social and cultural contexts (e.g. before the commoditisation and globalisation of these cultural practices).

For instance, part of my research began as an investigation of Capoeira’s role in promoting social inclusion in community development programmes worldwide. My fieldwork quickly revealed, however, that non-Brazilian capoeristas often did not feel properly ‘included’ in Capoeira by their Brazilian counterparts, and sometimes felt as if they were being treated as ‘second-class’ capoeristas because of their nationality. These matters are discussed in more detail below, but were also noted by Griffith (2016), an anthropologist and capoeirista who researched Capoeira as an insider for her book *In Search of Legitimacy: How Outsiders Become Part of the Afro-Brazilian Capoeira Tradition*. Griffith (2016) argues that ‘much of the anxiety non-Brazilian capoeristas feel regarding their own standing [regarding their authenticity] is rooted in larger debates over who has the authority to present themselves as a Mestre’ (Griffith, 2016: 49).

Although often viewed and accessed from different standpoints, tensions brought up by notions of geographical and ethnic authenticity and authority between Brazilian and non-Brazilian capoeristas are not new in the practice’s transnational scenario. For instance, Travassos (2000) wrote her PhD thesis on ‘The Cultural Diffusion and Metamorphosis Between Brazil and the USA using the practice of Capoeira’. According to Travassos (2000), capoeristas and those interested in Capoeira struggle between the individual/collective and equality/hierarchy pairs. Travassos states that although the current discourses in the Capoeira world always mention the equality of all participants and the
predominance of collectives over individuals, her research revealed that there is a permanent tension between being an individual and belonging to a collective, and being equal to others while also establishing hierarchies.

Griffith’s (2016) experience as an insider researcher in Capoeira encountered similar incongruences. Griffith (2016: 22) points out that ‘although discourse within the Capoeira community focuses on equality and inclusivity, the reality often falls short of this stated goal. Women in particular represent a class of individuals who have struggled for recognition within the field’. Although gender equality in Capoeira is a discussion that falls outside my scope of study for this thesis, it is worth noting that some of my female interviewees confirmed Griffith’s assertion. Onça, a senior instructor and pioneer of Capoeira in Sweden, for instance, told me that in her experience, no matter how good a woman is at playing the instruments or the game, if a Mestre is meant to take someone out of the bateria (Capoeira orchestra) or to interrupt or put an end to a game, it is almost always the woman who is taken out of whatever role she is performing before a man is removed (Onça, personal communication, May 2010).

Simone P. Vassalo (2001, 2003) studied a particular group of French capoeristas for her doctorate in social anthropology between 1997 and 1999. According to Vassalo, a group of French capoeristas set up the Maíra Association, a not-for-profit body with the largest number of members at the time of her research, to teach and practise Capoeira. However, the Maíra Association was different from all the other groups in Paris at the time for one reason: the association was founded by French people and it did not accept Brazilian students or teachers in its cohort. Maíra’s participants stated that their association was born out of a desire to emancipate themselves from their Brazilian counterparts. Vassalo’s study revealed that Maíra’s participants were opposing the model of social and institutional organisation imposed and practised by Brazilians. For Maíra’s capoeristas, the Brazilian model was extremely rigid, hierarchical and oppressive (Vassalo, 2001; 2003).
Focusing on Capoeira schools in the United Kingdom, Delamont (2006), Delamont and Stephens (2006) and Delamont and colleagues (2010) also approached authenticity and authority matters between Brazilian and non-Brazilian capoeristas. According to Delamont, Brazilian teachers use specific strategies to exercise, assert and exert authority:

The specific strategies used by teachers in the UK to exercise, assert and exert their authority … are: naming students, bodily performance (the demonstration of superior skills), clothing, race, nationality and authenticity, dance, danger and making explicit statements about the mores of Capoeira, (Delamont, 2006: 165)

Delamont (2006: 165) explains further that the teachers’ physical superiority over their students is the ultimate source of authority. However, she also points out the mandatory use of uniforms by the majority of the Capoeira groups, with notions of race and nationality also playing important roles in establishing authority. As Delamont explains, ‘Unlike school teachers and lecturers in higher education, however, the Capoeira teacher has to build loyalty and assert authority in a precarious financial situation’ (2006: 164). Delamont’s arguments are largely correct, but some relativisation is needed in order to understand the full scope of the phenomenon to which she calls attention. For example, Delamont (2006) lists the naming of students as one of the strategies Capoeira teachers use to exert their authority. However, she does not explain that the renaming of ‘Capoeira initiates’ or the adoption of ‘war-names’ were part of a rite of passage when a young student played experienced capoeristas for the first time in a Roda and were welcomed into the Capoeira community. Furthermore, Delamont (2006) does not explain that the adoption of ‘war-names’ was a strategy used by capoeristas to avoid being identified by the authorities when the practice of Capoeira was still forbidden by law in Brazil. The adoption of ‘war-names’ is thus one of Capoeira’s historic legacies. There is also a cultural inheritance from Brazilian Indians that causes Brazilians to adopt nicknames broadly for people and places.
Delamont’s (2006) argument about the use of uniforms as a device to impose authority also calls for a comment. Uniforms are indeed an inheritance from the first folkloric groups (and thus from the first wave of commoditisation), and they are used in a similar way to corporate branding, but for most schools they are also part of their history and identity. Finally, the teachers’ physical superiority as the most effective way of imposing authority also needs relativisation. For instance, physical superiority does not explain why elder Mestres long past their physical prime in Brazil still remain the highest authorities. Again, coming from both the different African and Brazilian indigenous nations, there is a culture of respect towards elders that Delamont does not acknowledge in her arguments about how teachers exert their (physical) authority.

Janelle Joseph (2008), a Canadian capoeirista and therefore also an insider researcher in Capoeira, studied matters of authenticity in social-Capoeira settings in Canada. For Joseph (2008: 498), Capoeira ‘offers a sport–tourism nexus in which to study authenticity discourses’:

[Brazilian] teachers market what they know is neither original nor pure as ‘authentic’ to take advantage of the expectations, desires, and economic resources of their Canadian students. In turn, students negotiate and accept sometimes contradictory descriptions of real Capoeira, fuelled by their desire for fun, fitness, and proximity to a culture that is of another time and place. (Joseph, 2008: 498. Italics mine)

In addition, Joseph (2008: 498) argues that ‘authenticity discourses are critical to notions of multiculturalism in Canada, and are necessary components of the commoditisation of culture’. Brazilian teachers, Joseph (2008: 499) explains, use authenticity discourses in a paradoxical way. Brazilian teachers ‘fulfil their economic imperative to maintain their greatest commodity – authentic Afro-Brazilian cultural practices – while simultaneously transforming the cultural practice to respond to the preferences of Canadian students’. On the other hand, ‘much of the anxiety non-Brazilian capoeristas feel regarding their own standing [regarding their authenticity] is rooted in larger debates over who has the authority to present themselves as a Mestre’ (Griffith, 2016: 49)
Cristina Wulfhorst (2013), who researched multicultural Australian-Brazilian couples in Sydney, argued that ‘the sense of community is the basis for Capoeira’s existence, regardless of the place it is being formed’ (2013: 36). However, Wulfhorst’s fieldwork, similarly to that of Travassos, revealed ‘a community’ traversed with tensions between the dialectic pairs collective/individual and equality/hierarchy. Another phenomenon to which Wulfhorst called attention, and that has also been noticed by other researchers (Travassos, 2000; Vassalo, 2003; Joseph, 2008), is that:

If in Capoeira the hierarchy is a foundational stone, it will be an inverted hierarchy. That is, it is not those who are in an upper social class, or possess higher formal education, economic capital that will be the ‘heads’ of hierarchy. The status lies rather on other characteristics, such as the years of practice, lineage, relation and connection within and without the Capoeira world, etc. That is also precisely part of an ‘authenticity’ displayed overseas, in which the poor background and Afro-Brazilian background will be part of a legitimisation of Capoeira overseas. (Wulfhorst, 2013: 36)

In Chapter 2, I argued that once Capoeira was commoditised and began to spread from its place of origin, those operating under institutionalised frameworks began to exert more influence over the Capoeira community. Those Mestres making a living out of teaching the art began to enforce the norms and decide ‘how’ Capoeira should be taught and practised, and to determine what ‘a good capoeirista’ should be like. In fact, ‘prior to Capoeira being taken abroad’, Griffith suggests that ‘there was little reason to ask whether or not non-Brazilians would be seen as legitimate tradition bearers. However, now that Capoeira is practised worldwide, Brazilians and others have begun to question who has the credentials to be called a capoeirista’ (Griffith, 2016: 23).

Travassos (2000) provides further evidence of how one determines what ‘a good capoeirista’ – or, rather, an authentic one – is through authoritative and hierarchical systems, both in Brazil and abroad.

According to Travassos, different Mestres and groups teach Capoeira and try to (re)build its history in ways that are convenient to their own teaching and marketing agendas. Although all Mestres try to do this, in Travassos’s view not all of them can or should be in this business of trying to achieve that end. Thus, argues Travassos (200: 41), ‘Capoeira has its hierarchies … which allows some
individuals to have more power than others to [exert] influence and be listened to.’ Travassos (2000: 41–42; translation mine) further adds that:

To be on top of these hierarchies … although a fundamental requisite, does not suffice for one to be listened to in debates involving Capoeira’s past … Other means are also necessary to that, such as financial resources, a minimal network of supportive Capoeira allies, close relationships with important capoeristas from the past, good relationships with editors, cultural entrepreneurs, schools and gym owners, journalists, clergymen, politicians, etc. If, in addition, academic endorsement can be obtained through a thesis or dissertation about Capoeira defended by a Mestre or one of his students in a graduate level, all the better.

Travassos’s explanation of how Mestres establish themselves as authorities in Capoeira corroborates my own thesis. Emerging from Capoeira’s original context, the institutional framework allowed the birth of a professional class of capoeristas that provided the necessary means (as explained above by Travassos) and could be used to (re)interpret and (re)build the content, the teaching methods and the history of Capoeira to suit their agenda. This first happened when capoeristas started to provide Capoeira instruction as a paid service in the early decades of the twentieth century in Bahia. It intensified when capoeristas moved from Bahia to other industrialised states in the central and southeast states of the country, where Capoeira was at that time unknown (as discussed in Chapter 1). This phenomenon repeated itself on a much larger scale when Capoeira spread from Brazil to other countries with the advent of globalisation (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Mestres Bimba and Pastinha, patrons of Capoeira Regional and Angola respectively, were the first ones to teach Capoeira in academias (gyms). They established themselves as authorities, (re)interpreting and (re)building the content, the teaching methods and the history of Capoeira to suit their agendas. To a large extent, their agenda was the adaptation of methods and rituals in order to teach, practise and play Capoeira indoors as the provision of a service inside the consumerist market’s logic (Assunção, 2005).
Mestres Bimba and Pastinha were both innovators, and they changed *Capoeira* in many ways. Interestingly, however, drawing on Hobsbawm’s (1983) notion of invented traditions, Reis (1998) argues that those who are authorities in *Capoeira* chose to (re)invent the art-form strictly as an Afro-Brazilian practice particularly connected to Bahia and thus reinforcing the notion of *Capoeira* as a diasporic phenomenon. Such a notion creates a hierarchy of authenticity in which Afro-Brazilians and Bahians (specially from the traditionalist approaches) would be ‘more authentic’ \ than practitioners from other Brazilian states (particularly non-Blacks from the non-traditionalist approaches).

Hall (1993), one of the founding scholars of the cultural studies tradition, draws on Hobsbawm’s ideas to explain how ‘traditions’ that are often no more than a few decades old are often represented as much older, and thus used as a way of building a sense of continuity with a historical (and sometimes also imagined) past. Reis (1998) approaches the same phenomenon, relating it to how *capoeristas* (re)invent and (re)interpret their practice in order to establish themselves as authorities in the transnational *Capoeira* community. In Chapter 2, I explained how diverse criminal behaviours, attitudes and practices contrary to the slavery system were pejoratively bound together under the insignia of ‘*Capoeira*’ during the colonial era in Brazil. Due to the way the historical narrative is presented in most *Capoeira* groups today, most people believe, for instance, that *Capoeira* was already well evolved during the early Brazilian colonial era as a game and with its present rituals. The mandatory use of uniforms and graduation systems is another example of how ‘invented traditions’ (often omitting that they are in fact relatively new trends) link present-day practice to a historical past. These examples provide evidence of how *Capoeira* is actually in a constant state of change. Nevertheless, the approaches of Mestres Bimba and Pastinha became a snapshot in time, setting up the standards for what is authentic and what is not. It is this typical association of the concept of authenticity with stasis that renders it so problematic according to Griffith (2016: 49): ‘When “authentic” is taken to mean unchanged or uncorrupted, protecting the authenticity of that
item or practice often involves artificial preservation. The protectorates of authenticity can thus inadvertently stall the natural development of a cultural practice.’

The first professional *capoeiras* in the transnational scene were all Brazilians. As discussed above, because they came from a developing country and were mostly poor people of Afro-Brazilian descent, they subverted common notions of hierarchy (usually established by White upper-class people). While some Brazilian and non-Brazilian Mestres and students chose to engage with the transnational scenario as ‘insurgent cosmopolitans’ (Santos, 2006), aligning their actions, attitude and professional endeavours with globalisation from below, many Brazilian teachers chose to use their position of authority to (re)define what, or who, is authentic in *Capoeira* as a market and power reserve practice. As described by Joseph (2008: 499), these Brazilian teachers secure their financial viability by defining what is authentic in Afro-Brazilian cultural practices and using it as their ‘greatest commodity’. The irony, as Joseph (2008: 499) explains, is that Brazilian teachers define what (and who) is authentic while simultaneously adapting *Capoeira* to the preferences of international students. It is ironic that those who are deciding what or who is authentic are the same people with the authority to alter or (re)invent the practice to please (or counter) a global market.

Reis (1998) explains that, particularly within the transnational scenario of *Capoeira*, ideas of authenticity legitimise *Capoeira* as an essentially diasporic practice. In many ways, legitimising *Capoeira* as diasporic values the exhibition and consumption of ethnic manifestations as exotic goods to be consumed in the developed countries’ multicultural milieu (Urry, 2002). To some extent, it also makes *capoeiras* embrace the values of the hegemonic type of globalisation: ‘Most *Capoeiras* overseas present *Capoeira* strategically as a diasporic and ethnic art, conveying ideas of exoticism and authenticity, which provides them with a legitimate market reserve within the art’s global diffusion’ (Wulfhorst & Vianna, 2012: 13).
People involved in other lifestyle sports and transnationalised cultural practices experience the same conundrum that *capoeiristas* do in the worldwide *Capoeira* scenario. That is, many other art-forms, sports and subcultures that evolved from contexts that lacked the profit motive and the competitive rationale, and that expressed local meanings and functions, are often rapidly co-opted by Western consumerist models (see Thornton, 1995; Urquía, 2005; Atencio et al., 2009). Again, there are both similarities and differences between *Capoeira* and these other lifestyle sports, subcultures and cultural practices studied in the field of youth culture. Thornton (1995) drew on Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of symbolic capital, and more specifically cultural capital, to coin the term ‘subcultural capital’ (1995: 11). Thornton (1995: 10; *italics* in the original) develops an argument likening subcultural capital to Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of distinction to call attention to the fact that ‘distinctions are never just assertions of equal difference; they usually entail some claim to authority and presume the inferiority of others’. ‘Subcultural capital’, Thornton explains:

> confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder … Subcultural capital can be *objectified* or *embodied*. Just as books and paintings display cultural capital in the family home, so subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record collections … Just as cultural capital is personified in ‘good’ manners and urbane conversation, so subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being ‘in the know’, using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles. Both cultural and subcultural capital put a premium on the ‘second nature’ of their knowledges. Nothing depletes capital more than the sight of someone trying too hard. (Thornton, 1995: 11-12; *italics* in original)

In the case of *Capoeira*’s transnationalisation, as noted by Urquía (2005) with the dancing of salsa in London, ethnicity becomes an added ‘marker’ to the concept of subcultural capital. While subcultural capital can be acquired in the global *Capoeira* scene, somehow levelling the dispute for authority, ethnicity is contentious ‘plus’ that cannot be bought. And that is precisely why narratives of *Capoeira* as a diasporic or intercultural art-form are central to the discussion of authenticity in a global community of practitioners. While the former is an ethnic bounded form of subcultural capital, the latter is an embodied skills and knowledge form of subcultural capital. The ethnically bound
subcultural capital perspective creates and protects a market reserve for Brazilian teachers and Mestres (as discussed by Delamont, 2006; Delamont and Stephen, 2008; Delamont et al., 2010; Joseph, 2008a, 2008b; Wulfhorst and Vianna, 2012), whereas the Brazilian intercultural origins narrative leaves non-Brazilians with more latitude to build their subcultural capital in a less biased global scenario.

So, on the one hand, we have Capoeira Mestres who subscribe to Capoeira as a diasporic art-form. These Mestres put forward notions of geographical/ethnic/national authenticity to assert and exert their authority, guaranteeing that they have a legitimate place of power in the transnational scenario to define ‘authenticity’ in their field (Reis, 1998). On the other hand, we have the developed countries’ inclination to not merely consume, but to appropriate and (re)present other non-developed countries’ cultures as ‘exotic’ and ‘authentic’, as objects of cosmopolitan consumption (Urry, 2002). Although what defines capital as capital is its ‘convertibility’ into economic capital (Garnham & Williams, 1986: 123, cited in Thornton, 1995: 12), a variety of occupations and income can be derived from subcultural capital distinction, and in many circumstances ‘people in these professions often enjoy a lot of respect not only because of their high volume of subcultural capital, but also from their role in defining and creating it’ (Thornton, 1995: 12). Hence this phenomenon opens up significant possibilities for Brazilian Mestres to present themselves and their classes and activities in ways that exploit these notions of exoticism and authenticity.

Pererê, a talented young Capoeira teacher who spent 10 years teaching in New Zealand and established schools in Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington, summarises the pervasive and often unquestioned assumptions of geographical and ethnic authenticity among Brazilians as follows:

Before I moved out of Brazil I used to think: ‘Oh no, foreigners cannot play Capoeira, Capoeira is just for Brazilians. They can do it, but it’s not the same, it’s not the same!’ But, being outside [of Brazil] and seeing them doing it, singing, playing instruments … I was amazed! ‘Oh my god, they can do it really well! They’re really good!’ Man, Brazil is missing out in something. (Professor Pererê, personal communication, February 2010)
Canarinho, a German *capoeirista* who taught in New Zealand from 2005 to 2008, points to the fact that many non-Brazilian students are also demanding the provision of ‘authentic’ instruction – that is, *Capoeira* instruction from Brazilian teachers:

As a German … a European, it’s interesting to teach an art from from other people, but it also brings up problems because there are many foreigners who believe that *Capoeira* can only be learnt from Brazilians. I saw this prejudice many times coming from students who say ‘German? I don’t like this … I only trust Brazilians to teach me. (Canarinho, personal communication, May 2010)

Olive, or ‘Teimosa’ (meaning stubborn) as she is known in *Capoeira* circles, is a New Zealander who has been to Brazil many times, speaks fluent Portuguese and, in addition to playing *Capoeira*, teaches Brazilian-Afro dance. Her experience in *Capoeira* illustrates why foreign students sometimes may find it easier not to question authority and authenticity in *Capoeira*:

It’s not always easy for people who live outside of Brazil to find a local point of reference or a way to relate *Capoeira* to where they live. Sometimes it’s easier just to follow everything that the Brazilian instructor teaches and just keep it within a Brazilian, kind of sphere. (Olive ‘Teimosa’, personal communication, February 2010)

In Chapter 3, I quoted Canarinho and Calado, providing evidence of how the intercultural origins of *Capoeira* are being used by non-Brazilian *capoeiristas* to support a transnational understanding of the art. This transnational approach escapes notions of authenticity brought about by the diasporic approach. Another statement from Canarinho corroborates Travassos’s and my own arguments about how some Brazilians Mestres and teachers deliberately prevent non-Brazilians from having a voice in the international community of *Capoeira*. Many of these contradictions, as described by Canarinho, or paradoxes, as described by Joseph (2008a), although not practised exclusively by them, are part of the Brazilian teachers’ market and power reserve strategies. As discussed above, these practices are usually put in place to protect the teachers’ main source of income: the instruction of ‘authentic’ Brazilian or Afro-Brazilian (as some prefer to adopt) *Capoeira*. They are also part of *capoeiristas’
struggle for power or the authority to (re)interpret and (re)build the content, the teaching methods and
the history of *Capoeira* to suit their agenda (Travassos, 2000).

This is not limited to the transnational scenario, as it was already present in *Capoeira* in a time where it
was only practised in Brazil; nor it is limited to different schools and orientations. However, in general,
the concept of authenticity in the global scenario of *Capoeira* is put forward by those who subscribe to
*Capoeira* as a diasporic art-form. Cascão, an English *capoeirista* and social entrepreneur\(^{21}\) who had great
success in implementing *Capoeira* classes and activities in the state school curricula and in establishing
*Capoeira*-related community development programmes in Norfolk, England told me how he is sometimes
overly questioned as a *Capoeira* instructor:

> When people ask me: ‘Are you Brazilian?’ they probably think I’m a bit pale/white! Obviously the general public value ‘authentic’ teachers in any walk of life. In those moments, I have to be self-assured and confident that it does not matter. My teacher gives me a lot of confidence as he reminds me that I have spent more social time and training time with famous *Capoeira* masters than 99 per cent of Brazilian *Capoeristas*. It is simple for people to accept you as authentic if you are Brazilian or teaching in your own country of origin. I think if you are English and then start to teach Brazilian *Capoeira* in a completely different country, the public may doubt your ability. Of course, in real terms, this means very little. What is respected is to be taught by a person who is honest about how much they have to give, and their intentions for teaching. Nationality is of no value or significance if the teacher is simply an idiot. If you were to teach in cities like London, the bulk of your students are not from the UK and cultures are very integrated in every facet of daily life anyway. (Jim ‘Cascão’, retrieved June 2011 from www.4CapoeiraThoughts.com).

The questioning of the non-Brazilians’ legitimacy or authenticity, when it comes from Brazilian
Mestres, however, is frequently concealed and disguised in ambivalent concepts and rules. For
example, many Brazilian *capoeristas* believe that foreigners cannot fully embody and master
*Capoeira* as a whole because *Capoeira* is not part of their ancestry or culture. Most *Capoeira* groups

\(^{21}\) Cascão runs *Capoeira*-related classes and activities in community development programmes in schools, youth
detention centres and prisons in and around Norfolk through his not-for-profit Capoeira Communities.
also have rules that favour Brazilian branches and teachers over the international ones. Erika shares her experience with this concealed form of questioning:

> Nobody says anything straight, like, ‘Why are you teaching?’ So, it’s not that kind of pressure it’s more … you just sense it in the attitude. Sometimes, I also think the pressure that is coming from the outside, from other people is a kind of insecurity on their behalf, especially if they’re Brazilians … insecurity maybe because they don’t know me and they don’t know what my aims are and what I’m doing with Capoeira, and they want to keep it, you know, close to the roots. Or maybe they think that just because I’m not Brazilian I can’t respect the history and the traditions of it, which I think it’s wrong. And sometimes it’s an insecurity within themselves that maybe they’re scared that eventually people from outside of Brazil will be doing it better than people from Brazil.
> (Erika, personal communication, February 2010)

Ironically, Mestre Skisito, who acknowledges the intercultural and syncretic origins of Capoeira, expresses concerns that might help us understand some of the insecurities mentioned by Erika:

> I always believed that Capoeira was a syncretic thing … I believed no, everyone knows it. The syncretism behind Capoeira is an African cultural heritage that has transformed Saint George in Ogun, that transformed Jesus Christ in Oxalá [Candomblé Deities], so on and so forth. So, this relationship with syncretism is implicit in Capoeira. Now, think about it, what sort of influence, of lessons, of nomenclature someone who lives in Finland is unavoidably importing [to Capoeira]? (Mestre Skisito, personal communication, February 2010)

Cascão has also experienced concealed discrimination and questioning of his authenticity by some Brazilian teachers. He shares the episode as follows:

> The funny thing is, Brazilians really respect me for what I do. It’s only Brazilian Capoeristas that can be a bit threatened or dismissive that don’t. There have been some incidents of Brazilians coming to work for me, who obviously used to train in Capoeira but had no idea how to teach at all, and were just using it as an excuse to make money. They tried to get schools to contact them directly after I had organised the work for them. They apparently tried to say to people that a non-Brazilian could not teach it [Capoeira] properly and that I would be a poor substitute. The fact is whether or not they cared about me, they just wanted to make money, were very naive and tried to be malandros in England which just doesn’t work. The

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22 Ogun is the War Orixá in the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé.
23 Used in this pejorative context, malandro means an insincere or corrupt person, a con artist often making a living in dishonest ways.
council, including a Brazilian women working for race relations, all refused to help them unless they worked through my organisation! So it all back-fired on them and soon after they disappeared back to London. (Jim ‘Cascão’, personal communication, June 2011)

Mestre Fantasma, who was one of the first non-Brazilians in *Capoeira Angola* to be bestowed with a Mestre title, and who runs the Urban Ritual (a monthly *Roda* in which group allegiances are downplayed to favour diverse interaction both in games and in social life – see Chapter 6) between *capoeristas* from different schools and orientations), has a different take on authenticity. His views bring yet another layer of complexity to the subject:

We don’t see that you need to be Brazilian to play *Capoeira*. We don’t feel like this isn’t authentic, we feel as authentic as anyone. We learn from certain people in Brazil, you know, the direction and we’ve [got] links to Brazil. I’ve got links with Marinheiro, with Marrom, [Brazilian Mestres] but others also. Because I don’t feel that we’re not authentic, they [the students] don’t feel that. My students often feel what I feel. I don’t feel like there’s a legitimacy issue because I have strong links with Brazilian people. (Mestre Fantasma, personal communication, June 2010)

Mestre Fantasma feels as authentic as anyone else; however, he underpins his authenticity though emphasising his learning relationship with Brazilians and his connection to Brazilian culture. Explaining that it is complicate to attribute authenticity to a person or practice because the process is laden with emotion and often lacks criteria, Griffith (2016) focuses on legitimacy and proposes that one approach *Capoeira* ‘with contested standards of authenticity, from the position of legitimacy within an economy of authenticity’. According to her, ‘this approach involves identifying the different kinds of legitimacy markers that are valued in the community and asking how these categories relate to one another’. Griffith (2016: 48-49) then ‘articulates a four-stage process by which *capoeristas* achieve legitimacy within this social field’ that resonates with Mestre Fantasmas’s rationale. Griffith’s four-stage process works in a reinforcing loop as follows: ‘commitment to *Capoeira* drives one to seek legitimacy’; ‘accumulation of capital leads to learning opportunities’; ‘working closely with the
Mestre facilitates learning proper form’; and ‘the legitimacy that comes from successful performances bolsters commitment’ which brings one back to the first stage of the process (Griffith, 2016: 49).

This process of legitimising one’s involvement to Capoeira through a strong connection with Brazilian(s) Mestre(s) is common among non-Brazilian teachers. This is so regardless of whether they adhere to a diasporic or a transnational narrative of Capoeira. Mestre Fantasma also confirms that the questioning of authenticity by Brazilians and non-Brazilians is usually done in a concealed manner. According to him:

Most of the discrimination about not being Brazilian is behind your back and you don’t get to hear it, but, you know, I’ve got one student, a big Black girl, and she’s good at Capoeira and she’s never trained anywhere else, just with me, and she loves Capoeira, she identifies with my teaching and she’s good. So we visit sometimes different places, and this day she visited and someone came along to her and said: ‘You’re good you know? Who do you train with?’, and she said ‘I train with Simon’ and he said: ‘You shouldn’t train with him, he’s white!’ and so she said, ‘Oh, but if I’m good and he’s my teacher why should I leave someone that’s making me good or at least in your view?’, and he didn’t know what to say. And so she then said, ‘Why don’t you come, because I don’t think you’re so good, and train with us?’, and she’s like that. But I’m lucky that my students are very loyal and strong. (Mestre Fantasma, personal communication, June 2010)

At the end of his statement, Mestre Fantasma touches upon the matter of ‘loyalty’, a complex issue in Capoeira that is also entangled with issues of authority. Capoeira teachers do demand loyalty and obedience from their students to impart their knowledge and recognise a student as a legitimate representative of this lineage as explained by Lewis (1992) and Downey (2005). However, this matter cannot be explained fully in the terms posed by Delamont (2006) and Joseph (2008) as if all matters of loyalty could be explained as or related to exploitation of students and market reserve strategies. Indeed, the extent to which that authority is exerted and loyalty is demanded as a market reserve or as a strategy to preserve a lineage’s knowhow, core principles and techniques through generations is difficult to ascertain. This is because in most complex art-forms (for example, painting, sculpture,
martial arts) a long apprenticeship is needed for knowledge to be imparted and for techniques to be mastered and embodied. During this period, when a teacher is sharing their knowledge and a student is mastering specific techniques, teachers are often worried that their legacy will be diluted or mixed with others in a way that would decharacterise it. However, it is also true that loyalty is demanded so that secrets of a given craft are not leaked and a marketing edge lost. This multifaceted context makes it difficult to explain why loyalty is demanded using a single reason or perspective.

In the early days of *Capoeira*, for instance, lessons needed to be secret. Even after *Capoeira* was being more overtly practised (in some cases, still without the profit motive), Mestres would not teach students who were known to attend other Mestres’ classes. So the extent to which authority is exerted and loyalty demanded may stem from a sense of having the student as a canvas on which the Mestre is painting their masterpiece, as well as from old rivalries, traditions and customs.

In a world of transnationalised cultural practices, in which the Western academy has established its authority and most Brazilians teaching abroad do have a vested interest in securing their position of authority (in *Capoeira*), it becomes easy to over-simplify all matters of loyalty and obedience as being driven by pecuniary interests. Indeed, my own experience of learning and teaching *Capoeira* has demonstrated that in some cases one learns much better when fully trusting, and therefore unquestionably obeying, the Mestre. This might be because at a certain point in their learning process, the student cannot see any logical reason to practise a particular set of skills (technical, musical or ritualistic) they are being told to practice. The Mestre, on the other hand, having developed their sensibility and critical judgement through years of teaching, might know better that that set of skills will set the foundations and allow for many other skills to evolve naturally. If the student questions the Mestre’s decision, the Mestre might then decide not to teach that particular set of skills in that way or at all. If the student follows the instruction, regardless of whether it makes sense to them, in hindsight they will have a better understanding of why the Mestre demanded what they did. The
students who took the latter path will also have acquired better discernment to teach that particular set of skills when they begin to teach themselves.

Freire (2005), a Brazilian educator and philosopher who led the critical pedagogy moment worldwide, also makes a distinction between the teacher’s natural authority that is based on their knowledge and ability to facilitate the student’s learning process, and an authoritarian attitude that imposes the teacher’s will (and selected content) on the students. Mestre Skisito offers a further explanation of the student–teacher relationship. For Mestre Skisito, ‘the student–teacher relationship in Capoeira is very different from the class-room relationship’. He notes that he cannot remember ‘the most important of all teachers in college or in any other place’, but says his Mestre had a profound and lifelong impact in his life (Mestre Skisito, personal communication, February 2010). For Mestre Skisito:

The student–teacher relationship in Capoeira is very different from the classroom relationship … this depth in the teacher–student relationship is something that represents an ethical responsibility that the majority of the capoeiristas still aren’t aware of. [The capoeirista is] conscious about technique, eventually he becomes conscious about the ritual, he’s got the training, pedagogic part and all that. When he himself must be assessed by the ethical viewpoint, of what he’s doing, then the ethics often falls in disgrace. This is the contents’ risk. Because you’re the content. In the matter of Capoeira, what you teach is what you are. It’s completely different from any other learning relationship; so far, I haven’t seen anything like it. So, the content that you teach is yourself. This is a lot of risk! It’s very serious, it’s a very big mission. You would have to have a whole preoccupation with your coherence, your gestures, your examples, with your attitudes, with your judgements in relation to other people. So, these are extremely complex dimensions that we usually deal with in our daily lives [in Capoeira] without any notion of what we’re doing because unfortunately the ethical dimension is not the dimension of a simple apprenticeship. There is no ethics manual in the world. (Mestre Skisito, personal communication, February 2010)

The extent to which authority is being used in the practice of transnationalised (and commoditised) cultural practices as a market reserve practice or as a teaching strategy is difficult to ascertain. In fact,
these two things sometimes happen simultaneously, as in the case of ‘the paradigm of the first inclusion’ (as discussed in Chapter 7), when a teacher inculcates diversity intolerance upon their students through the selection of content and attitudes. These ambivalences are brought up and, as seen above, sharpened by the practice of transnationalisation of cultural practices that were once local and have evolved organically in a specific area within different socio-cultural and economic context.

Considering the modifications Capoeira might undergo in the process of being globally diffused and practised from the perspective of someone who has been researching and practising Capoeira in the United States, Downey (cited in Faria, 2006) notes that despite suffering influences from different countries, ‘Capoeira is so strong that it continues to be the same’. Downey highlights that ‘they [Capoeira students] start with Capoeira and end up wanting to learn more about sociology and the entire country (Brazil). But they do that through entering the Roda’ (Downey, in Faria, 2006, motion picture).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have considered how the capoeristas’ quest for authority is to a great extent related to their quest for power to keep (re)interpreting and (re)building the content, the teaching methods and the history of Capoeira to suit their agenda. In the transnational Capoeira scene, Brazilians can usually secure authority positions more easily than non-Brazilians, which allows them to define who is authentic as a teacher and who is not. The power to define who and what is authentic in Capoeira creates a market reserve for these capoeristas. To establish notions of authenticity based on geography or ethnicity in the transnational Capoeira community is contradictory and conflictive. This is because, despite Capoeira having its origins in Brazil, and despite the predominant diasporic take on the art-form, the participation of non-Brazilian capoeristas in this transnational community is increasing rapidly and significantly.

Together, non-Brazilian and Brazilian capoeristas (who do not subscribe to notions of geographical authenticity) are questioning notions of authenticity in the art based on ethnicity. For these
questioning capoeiras, authenticity lies in the understanding and embodiment of Capoeira’s (and Brazil’s) early inclusive cultural concepts and principles. Those questioning the diasporic narrative therefore do so to a great extent based on Capoeira’s historical legacy as an intercultural practice of resistance. Such phenomena also corroborates Urquía’s (2005) research on salsa, in which most non-Latin dancers found a way to legitimise their involvement and subcultural capital valuing a de-ethnicised approach to salsa. Griffith (2016) shifted the discussion from authenticity to legitimisation also in part because of difficulties in separating notions of authenticity based in ethnicity. For Griffith, it is learning Portuguese, embodying the social and cultural markers of Capoeira (and Brazilian-ness), mastering form and excelling at play/performing the art that brings legitimacy to non-Brazilians’ involvement in Capoeira.

The tension between those who subscribe to geographical authenticity and those who do not, however, brings with it yet another dialectic tension to add to the collective/individual and equality/hierarchy dichotomies presented by Travassos (2000) – that is, a diasporic/transnational tension. On the one hand, there are the Brazilian Mestres who have managed to secure positions of authority by putting forward notions of geographical/ethnic/national authenticity that are widely accepted by capoeiras worldwide. On the other hand, there are the Brazilians and non-Brazilian capoeiras who, in adopting an ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ identity, question these notions of authenticity based on Capoeira’s early history and intercultural legacy.

Although accepting the Brazilian teachers’ authority to teach Capoeira and impart cultural principles and behaviours, those adhering to the transnational narrative concur with Freire (2005). For them, the teachers’ natural authority lies in their ethical ability and knowledge to facilitate the students’ learning process. In this sense, the Brazilian teachers facilitate the embodiment, adoption and worldwide articulation of inclusive and intercultural values. It is the authoritarian attitude of some (mostly
Brazilian, but also non-Brazilian) teachers in imposing their will and selected content to favour notions of authenticity for pecuniary gains that should be (and often is) questioned.

In Chapter 6, I approach the issue of how the international community of capoeiristas is using social media to network, learn about the history of Capoeira and its techniques, market their products and classes, organise Capoeira group activities and keep practitioners updated on developments in Capoeira and forthcoming events in various countries. I also discuss how social media are used to discuss more horizontally issues such as authenticity, authority and authoritarianism that were discussed in this chapter.

Subsequently, in Chapter 7 I discuss how many Brazilians, but mostly non-Brazilians, are making use of Capoeira within community development programmes in various countries. I explain how Brazilian and (mostly) non-Brazilians using Brazilian cultural practices and Capoeira-related activities break away from the usual franchise-like organisational framework in order to have more latitude to adjust their classes and those with whom they work as guest teachers within community development programmes.
Chapter 6
Social media and the global Capoeira community

Introduction

Despite caution warnings not to ‘overstate the impact of the internet on social life’ (Wilson, 2008: 141), studies of the internet have already revealed its centrality to a range of contemporary youth cultural practices (Bennett, 2004; Wilson, 2008; Gilchrist and Wheaton, 2013; Bennett and Robards, 2014). Young people worldwide lead and are the most affected by the use of social media and the more trans-locally connected identity shifts it allows. Young people are also the greatest cohort of Capoeira practitioners worldwide (see Chapter 4). It is in the context of youth culture that we can see very rapid and profound changes in our contemporary society (Martín-Barbero, 1995). Young people are more prone to notice, experience and embrace the current rapid changes in technology. Once these technologies become ubiquitous, young users often also find uses for them that were not necessarily envisaged when they were designed (Shirky, 2008). This makes the new forms of communication and organisation a suitable case study to address how globalisation impacts identity formation, belonging, cultural exchange and transformation. As expressed by Martín-Barbero (1995), this happens due to the fact that networks and flows (of information, people and finance) undermine national and regional boundaries as they also transform places into points of access and transmission, of activation and transformation of the meaning of communication. Despite being affected by the transnational flow of media and global commercial cultures, the local remains influenced and constructed mainly by notions of proximity and solidarity between and across people and communities. Such a nexus is evident in the transnational Capoeira community and the ways in which its participants network.

24 Computer mediated communication (CMC) (Hine, 2000) allows for what Shirky (2008) calls many-to-many patterns of communication using social media (email, instant messaging, blogs, Facebook, etc.). Social media in turn facilitate the formation of groups, allowing new and different groups to be formed (see Shirky, 2008).
The global spread of *Capoeira* (as seen in Chapters 2 and 3) is propelled by various processes of globalisation. Yet, despite now participating in a transnational practice, *Capoeira* practitioners value (and often rely upon) the local to build notions of authenticity (see Chapter 5) as well as an ‘insurgent cosmopolitism’ (Santos, 2006) (see Chapter 3). Thus, in many ways, the capoeristas’ identities, belonging and understanding of their practice are built upon a dialogue between the local and the global. In fact, Martín-Barbero (2004) argues that cultures live while they communicate among themselves, and this communication entails a dense exchange of symbols and meanings. This in turn challenges the idea that ‘traditional cultures’ should be preserved, that authenticity is present in past times only and that any cultural exchange (for example, capoeristas experimenting and experiencing other countries’ cultural manifestations within their academias, events and workshops) results in the dilution or weakening of these practices. Still, according to Martín-Barbero (2004), it is not possible to wholeheartedly take part in a culture without transforming it, without embracing the conflicts evoked by all profound communication that entails a dense exchange of symbols and meanings.

Drawing attention to how traditional cultures are surviving globalisation, Martín-Barbero (2004) argues that we are going through a deep reconfiguration of cultures (e.g. Afro, peasant and indigenous), first, in relation to how these cultures respond to the evolution of the strategies of the hegemonic type of globalisation, and second, in relation to how they respond to the intensification of their communication and interaction with other cultures at both the local and global level. Martín-Barbero’s argument can also be made in relation to *Capoeira*. In *Capoeira* (as in the other cultures mentioned above), this exchange of communication and interaction is perceived simultaneously as a threat to the survival of traditional cultures and as an inclusive strategy.

What Castells defines as the ‘network society’ is characterised by this juxtaposition of face-to-face encounters and virtual communication so common in our globalised society. For Castells (1996: 500):
[The] new morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture. While the networking form of social organization has existed in other times and spaces, the new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure.

The ubiquitous use of the internet is in many ways what renders our society the ‘network society’ (Castells, 1996). As a corollary, the ubiquitous use of social media is changing how we communicate and organise our collaborative efforts. For many of us in the Western world, such a revolution in how we communicate happened so fast and has become so ubiquitous that it may be useful to recall the differences in as well as the evolution of how we have been communicating, in order to better understand the impact of social media. Communications media (e.g. telegrams, phone calls and faxes) are designed to facilitate two-way conversations in a one-to-one pattern. In this pattern, one person talks and the other listens and vice versa. Broadcast media (e.g. radio, television and newspaper) are designed to facilitate the transmission of information in a one-to-many pattern. In this case, one person (or media outlet) talks or sends information and all the others can do is to choose whether or not to listen or pay attention. David Morley and Ien Ang (1989), discussing active audience theory, point out that audience reception plays a big part in how such media information is interpreted. The critical distinction between broadcast and social media is the added capacity the latter gives for interaction between broadcast(er) and audience. Nevertheless, what we call social media is the most recent kind of media, and it is rapidly becoming the dominant media format. Social media were designed to allow communication in a many-to-many pattern. This pattern allows for group conversation in such a way that enables many people to communicate at the same time (Shirky, 2008; 86-87).

This recent shift in the way we communicate is important because, as Shirky (2008: 17) puts it, ‘when we change the way we communicate, we change society’. The research into Capoeira, like that into other similar subcultural manifestations and lifestyle sports (see discussion of how I situate Capoeira...
The many-to-many communication pattern enabled by social media has yet another important influence on our current society. Social media makes group-formation easy, and this ability resonates with our desire to be part of a group that shares and cooperates. Prior to the advent of social media, however, our ability to form groups was always constrained by transaction costs. Indeed, as Shirky (2008: 54) explains, ‘Now that group-forming has gone from hard to ridiculously easy we are seeing an explosion of experiments with groups and new kinds of groups.’ Social media have thus changed how people communicate within and across *Capoeira* groups (or any other interest groups for that matter). Social media are also changing people’s notions of what they understand by the terms ‘group’ and ‘community’.

The global spread of *Capoeira* thus renders it an interesting phenomenon through which to investigate the daily and practical effects of social media use in transnationalism, identity formation and belonging. I argue in this chapter that the advent of the internet and social media, as by-products of ‘globalisation from above’, have caused many inversions in attitudes, behaviours and beliefs in the practice of *Capoeira*. In addition, and ironically, it also causes an inversion in the *capoeristas*’ organisational framework that might be bringing *Capoeira* closer to the ways it was practised in its early days in Bahia, Brazil.
For the purpose of this chapter, I delineate social media as the use of technology combined with social interaction. I am referring, consequently, to online publishing techniques that allow participants to engage in multi-directional conversations around the world. I also make a distinction between the online ‘spaces’ created by the internet and social media use and the physical ‘places’ where face-to-face interactions such as classes and Rodas take place. It is important to bear in mind that the boundary between the online spaces and offline places is often blurred (e.g. see Wilson, 2008; Robards & Bennett, 2011) and that the sense of identity and belonging forged in both spaces and places constantly affects the other.

**From secrecy to exposure**

One of the most readily noticeable inversions caused by the advent of the internet and social media in *Capoeira* for those who have been practising it since before the mid-1990s is what could be referred to as the transition from secrecy to exposure. The practice of secrecy in *Capoeira*, of hiding one’s best and most efficient movements for a ‘life and death situation’, served capoeristas well during the days when *Capoeira* was a weapon of resistance. It was once again useful when *Capoeira* began to be taught illegally in urban areas in the early decades of the twentieth century (see discussion in Chapter 1). During this time, the practice of secrecy also had an influence on the various lineages’ or schools’ search for supremacy, while simultaneously enabling practitioners to remain under the authorities’ radar since the practice of *Capoeira* was forbidden by law in Brazil until the 1930s. This earlier practice of secrecy still had some influence during the 1990s, when I was first learning the art of *Capoeira* in Brazil. However, from the time the internet became a ubiquitous means of communication (and social media) among capoeristas, there was a shift from the practice of secrecy to one of exposure. Knowledge of history, movements, techniques and music that was once treated as secret within a given lineage, or a Mestre and disciple relationship, began to be shared widely over the internet.
Throughout the 1990s, I would seize every opportunity to exchange or buy a VHS tape of other Capoeira groups’ workshops and Rodas that was not ‘officially’ for sale as a way to see and train in the techniques other Capoeira groups were using. My collection of tapes was highly regarded among my friends, due to the diverse range of schools and people it portrayed. Often we would gather in my house to watch these tapes and study people’s games, and learn movements and songs. Such an approach to learning Capoeira in the pre-internet era was forbidden. In most schools, exposing the school’s footage infringed allegiance standards. This was based upon a mixture of ‘traditional secrecy’ (practised in the early days) and the fact that most schools were seeking supremacy, and since this often implied showing better combative skills whenever Capoeira games happened between players from different schools, it was deemed that training and game footage should be kept within one’s own school.

Despite still bearing some of attitudes of secrecy based on the early historical context of a cultural practice outlawed by the slavery based establishment, the 1990s was really marked by the schools’ search for hegemonic control as they expanded their branches to many Brazilian states and other countries. In the particular context of the 1990s, Capoeira groups demanded loyalty from their students as a part of their striving for hegemonic control (see Chapter 2). This fostered a highly competitive attitude that often led to violence among the groups throughout this decade. Capoeira groups in my city (Brasília, Brazil), and in most of the main cities in Brazil, were already organised in a franchise-like manner, and their competition led to violent conflicts in Rodas and even street fighting (when Capoeira groups behaved like, or would turn into, street-fighting gangs). While most of us students and young instructors at the time thought that it was all about proving whose school was the best, for much of the time the real issue was the market-conquering agenda of the head Mestres of the main groups.
As most capoeiristas can easily identify another’s school or teacher by their choice and mannerisms of movements and techniques, to a great degree one’s range of movements and mannerisms had a lot to do with the group’s embodied ‘branding’. The exchange and selling of a school’s footage, often discovered by senior teachers as their young students explored movements and techniques that did not come from that teacher’s classes, could easily mean a tough beating in a Roda and its consequences, which could include physical injuries, embarrassment and loss of status. If a student insisted in experimenting with other groups’ movements and techniques, and in learning from other group’s events and workshops footage, they could be expelled from their own group. This practice of exchanging and selling a group’s footage was viewed very much like a forbidden ‘black market’ that only (deviant) practitioners with networks across different schools could sustain and participate in.

Despite some scholars’ warnings about the dangers of overstating the impacts of the internet and social media on sports, subcultures and lifestyle sports (e.g. see Wilson, 2008; Gilchrist and Wheaton, 2013; Dartnell, 2006), the changes in these areas of human performance and interaction are palpable. Wilson (2008), Bennet (2004) and Martin (2004), for instance, argue that the current notion of subculture need to be updated to keep abreast with the era of internet communication. Wilson (2008: 141) explains that, ‘Perhaps the most extraordinary impact of the Internet medium [of communication], is that it fundamentally alters how we think about subcultural life – it offers new possibilities for subcultural groups to communicate and connect on a global level.’

Today, with the advent of smartphones with internet access, it is almost impossible to prevent people from filming Rodas, exhibitions and workshops, and posting them online quickly, if not immediately. Clay Shirky (2008) argues that nearly everybody today can be a media outlet, and coins the term ‘mass amateurisation’ (chiefly in the context of journalism) to explain how such a phenomenon inverts how information is shared. It has became so easy and cheap to share information online that, that the barrier between media and people has largely been broken down.
Today, people often share information relating to their interests without the filters, transaction costs and political agendas of an editorial body. As a corollary, media outlets often find themselves covering issues and events that their editorial bodies previously judged not worth publishing, but that have trended after being mediated by ordinary people. For example, newspapers and TV news programmes today often cover news that has been broadcast, followed and discussed by ordinary people within social media channels. The pattern before was filter, then publish. Now, with ‘mass amateurisation’ (Shirky, 2008), the pattern has changed to one of publish and let people’s interests filter it.

Gilchrist and Wheaton (2013) discuss how new media technologies impact lifestyle sports such as climbing, surfing and parkour. They call attention, for instance, to how climbers began to take more risk in their performances because they were being filmed. This tendency ‘to go beyond one’s physical limits when photographed or filmed is known as “Kodak courage”’ (Gasperini, 1999, cited in Wilson, 2008). Gilchrist and Wheaton (2013), Thorpe and Ahmad (2015) and Thorpe (2014a) explain that the use of digital media was essential to the development of parkour, the youngsters’ engagement with it and its transnational diffusion.

A similar phenomenon is happening in the transnational Capoeira community. It has become so easy and cheap to broadcast and share content online that most people prefer to trade secrecy for exposure. Such a trade is often made in the hope that (over-)exposure may bring popularity (to themselves or their schools), and teachers can usually increase profits with the increased social capital created through social media exposure. In this way, some schools already broadcast their events live on the internet and most schools already make use of video-streaming websites as promotional tools to recruit new students and increase their popularity among their counterparts. This inversion of attitude, from a policy of secrecy to total exposure, in how schools handle their information (still pictures, footage, and music files) is one of the many changes in values and behaviour in Capoeira practice caused by the influence of the various globalisation processes, their agendas and the means they use to spread their message – social media being one of them.
Gilchrist and Wheaton (2013), Thorpe and Ahmad (2015) and Thorpe (2014a) point out that despite digital media being credited as central to the development of lifestyle sports such as surf, parkour and skating, in some cases it was mainstream media that brought a wider audience and transformed these sports into ubiquitous cultural commodities. That is another similarity with Capoeira. Despite the increasing importance of social media in the worldwide Capoeira community, the art-form’s underground history and often progressive narrative remain much the same.

**Social media, the game changer**

In my fieldwork notes, I have an episode that took place in Brasília, Brazil that exemplifies this inversion of values, from secrecy to exposure, and how the use of social media is changing the way that people in general interact through their cultural practices worldwide. In September 2011, I was invited to the launch of Mestre Jogo de Dentro’s biography, *Jogo de Angola: Vida e Obra* (2010) in a local pub. A Roda was arranged to celebrate the launch of the book, but also to promote Mestre Jogo de Dentro’s group branch in Brasília. For this reason, the Roda was announced as a cultural performance and there were probably just under a hundred people between the ‘lay’ audience and the pub’s regular patrons (a significant turnout for a small pub). I realised that there was a person on a Skype call videoing the Roda through their laptop camera. I later approached that person and asked who was she talking to. The young lady was French and spoke very good Brazilian Portuguese. She told me that she did not play Capoeira, but that she was talking to a Brazilian friend who was living in Paris and that he belonged to Mestre Jogo de Dentro’s group in Brazil.

So, in many ways, social media is impacting how capoeiristas shape their identities, how they embody the art’s principles and make sense of their practice, and how they interact with each other worldwide. As seen above, the practice of secrecy was first about hiding one’s skills and involvement in Capoeira, and then about the schools’ search for supremacy as leaders in the field of Capoeira practise and provide instruction. The exposure, on the other hand, is about sharing as much
information as possible about a given person’s or group’s background. Only that which is shared is an idealised version of that person or group, one in which that person or group chooses what to reveal and what to hide, and one in which a person or a group’s image is tailored by covering or displaying signs to suit an agenda. The goal of this agenda (as seen in Chapter 4) is to acquire the means to dictate who is authentic and who is not, and who has authority and who does not. In turn, those who achieve the rank of an authority figure and acquire the necessary means to dictate who has the ‘authentic’ right to be teaching and who does not ends up validating a market reserve for themselves. This market reserve is based on these notions of authority and authenticity for those who acquire the necessary means to dictate who should be teaching and who should not.

The anecdote from my fieldwork above points to the fact that social media change one’s sense of belonging. In a globalised world, Capoeristas interact with each other and make sense of their practice in the physical place of schools and academias, but also on the virtual spaces of the internet, with its forums and social media and video-streaming websites. The close relationships through which capoeristas learn Brazilian Portuguese and the jogo’s rules and contexts, and embody a different way of being, happen in the physical places, through face-to-face interactions. The capoeristas’ learning and sense of belonging to a worldwide Capoeira community (see Chapter 7), however, is also fostered by the virtual spaces of the internet in what Castells (1996) calls the ‘network society’. To a great extent, my research found that, for capoeristas, the distinctions between ‘virtual’ and ‘real’ are much less important than they are to scholars interested in theorising cyberspace and lived experience. Their transitions across the apparent online–offline divide are also much more seamless and frequent – in the same way that Wilson (2008: 135) observes about people involved in other subcultures and lifestyle sports.
Digital belonging and ‘real-life’ actions

As seen above (and also in Chapter 3), the interplay of globalisation from above, globalisation from below and the use of social media have inverted how information is made available. To some extent, social media also invert Capoeira’s heavily institutionalised scenario to one in which capoeiristas, regardless of which school they practise in, loosely organise themselves over the internet to play people from other schools in Capoeira Rodas.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, up until the 1970s the majority of the capoeiristas organised themselves and their activities in what Shirky (2008) calls ‘loosely coordinated groups’ – that is, groups without the institutional imperatives of precise planning or the profit motive. This was possible because there were a large number of capoeiristas in Bahia, the region of Brazil where Capoeira is commonly said to have originated, taking part in the same festive calendar of religious and other cultural activities. The spreading of Capoeira to other Brazilian states and countries often meant that those practising it could no longer rely on large numbers of their counterparts in the new regions. Nor could they rely on a shared cultural background. So, to a great extent, the institutionalisation of Capoeira – for example, the creation of schools, associations and legal structures – was an answer to a problem: how to bring people with similar interests together. For decades, then, to formally create groups to teach, practise and play Capoeira in the form of not-for-profits or companies was the most effective way to offset the high overheads of bringing people together (see discussion of this topic in Chapter 3).

The advent of the internet and various social media platforms has provided capoeiristas with the chance to find and bring together their counterparts in different countries. In fact, social media are also used to bring like-minded people from different Capoeira schools together as a way to contest their schools’ attitudes and agendas. Other scholars have made similar arguments when studying online–offline relationship in sports-related activism. Wilson (2008: 141), for instance, explains that ‘the internet is especially effective for transnational advocacy networks’ (2008: 141) because as a medium
of communication the internet allow activists ‘to bypass governmental laws and domestic media sources that could screen, repress and censure communication unflattering to powerful elites’ (Sage, 1999, cited in Wilson, 2008: 141). Assessing the political and transnational capabilities of cultures communicated through the internet, and hence with global reach, Wilson (2008: 147) suggests that internet communities seeking cultural change might be considered forms of ‘new social movements’. Wilson uses the term ‘new social movements’ in the context provided by Harvey and Houle (1994: 347, cited in Wilson, 2008: 147), which implies ‘a loose network of groups that are often active at local, national and transnational levels, and as groups that ‘are not linked to specific economic interests’, and that ‘work toward change in society’s values’ and ‘for the collective value’.

These ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ capoeristas (Santos, 2006) also use social media to coordinate efforts across schools. Within the institutional framework of schools and groups, it was difficult to question one’s school’s attitudes and agenda because of its often highly hierarchised environment (see the discussion presented on this theme in Chapter 4). Outside one’s school or group, it was also difficult because of the high transaction costs involved in bringing like-minded people together (for example, long distance calls, travel and the organisation of meetings). This meant that people had to first come together in order to share content, discuss issues and pursue their common goals.

Social media can drastically lower the cost of bringing people together as they facilitate learning of history, language, movements, techniques and even cultural concepts through forums and video-casting websites. Social media also facilitate the organisation of online and physical meetings, therefore questioning the ubiquitousness of the institutionalised paradigm as the most effective way to bring people together. Social media thus equips capoeristas to break from hierarchical group structures imposed by their teachers and schools, and to engage in discussions and projects (such as Rodas, training sessions and crowdfunding) that are organised by interest groups online. These discussions and projects, although localised, also take place within their transnational Capoeira
community. In many ways, social media impact the *capoeiristas’* notions of space and places, and how they interact within local and global scenarios, allowing them to relate to their cultural practice from the perspective of an ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’ (Santos, 2006) that implies a ‘new form of social movement’ (Wilson, 2008) within the *Capoeira* community and society as a whole – in other words, allowing them to develop a perspective or a cultural identity that aligns them with the values of globalisation from below (Santos, 2006; Giddens, 1990).

*Capoeiristas* worldwide belong to different *Capoeira*-related groups on various social media websites and mobile phone applications (e.g. Facebook, Meetup, WhatsApp). They use these websites and applications to keep track of each other’s actions and commitments in other countries as well as to engage with *Capoeira*-related activities when travelling to other cities and countries. Some *capoeristas* use these websites and applications to bring like-minded people from different schools together – something that would rarely happen within the physical spaces of schools, given their more institutional character. To an extent, the ways in which some *capoeristas* create these virtual communities with specific goals, agendas and etiquette have a direct impact on their identities and sense of belonging. Moreover, as I demonstrate in the example that follows, this also impacts on the face-to-face interactions that happen as a consequence of their online communities.

In Sweden, a Facebook page was created to bring people from different *Capoeira* schools together to train, organise informal *Rodas* and play *Capoeira* during the summer time. The page is called *SCS – Sommarträna Capoeira Capoeira i Stockholm* (*Capoeira Summer Training in Stockholm*). This is just one example of how social media lowers the transaction costs of bringing people together, communicating and organising activities. As discussed above and in Chapter 4, as *Capoeira* spread to regions and countries other than its state of origin in Brazil, one of the main challenges people faced when wishing to train in and play *Capoeira* was the transaction costs involved. Today, social media are helping *capoeristas* to bring back to *Capoeira* the ‘loosely coordinated groups’ without the
profit motive as an imperative that was originally present when *Capoeira* was a local cultural practice in Bahia, Brazil, but became lost as *Capoeira* became more globalised and institutionalised. This is SCS’ page description:

> A group for everyone that loves *Capoeira* in and around Stockholm. Doesn’t matter if you’re a beginner or Mestre, you’re invited to use this group to find friends that wants [sic] to play *Capoeira* right at the day [sic] you feel like playing. Are you more than two people? Write when and where you want to play and people can join you. Hope you all get a nice and developing summer!

In Turku, Finland, a Facebook page, *Capoeira Happenings in Turku*, is dedicated to bringing people together to train and play *Capoeira*. The page description states that: ‘*Capoeira Happenings in Turku* is an open group where *capoeristas* living or visiting Turku can share information about Rodas, shows, workshops, etc. The only criteria is that it should happen in Turku.’ In Finland, another Facebook page, *Capoeira Kalenteri*, has been created to promote workshops in different cities and to prevent the clash of dates for these workshops. The *capoeristas* behind the *Capoeira Kalenteri* Facebook page also made sure that an online annual calendar would be available to all schools so that *capoeristas* from different cities could travel to attend and support each other’s events. The page description states:

> The *Capoeira Kalenteri* intention is to allow more collaboration between different groups, as well as avoiding double bookings of dates with visiting Mestres and teachers. This way all *capoeristas* in Finland will have the best chance to attend diverse workshops. Away with group introversion and welcome YYA (Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Assistance).

Let’s promote camps and workshops directly related to *Capoeira* here in Finland as we live here. For events around Europe and the world there are other Facebook groups.

In other words, *Capoeira Kalenteri*’s progressive agenda is a response to the attitude of group closeness and diversity intolerance often taught and reinforced as ‘traditions’ by corporate- and

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26 YYA, or The Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was signed between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1948 and became a Finish expression for interactions ruled by friendship (*ystävyyys*), collaboration (*yhteistyö*) and mutual assistance (*avunanto*).
fundamentalist-like Capoeira groups (see Chapter 2). Capoeira Kalenteri aims to optimise the Finnish students’ access to diverse knowledge, training and contact with guests as well as the financial viability of all Finish schools’ endeavours, bringing together guest teachers and developing and promoting their art-form in Finland.

Capoeira Kalenteri etiquette is clear, however, and states that capoeristas should only post and promote workshops and events. While I was in Finland as part of my fieldwork, a Brazilian teacher was reprimanded for using Capoeira Kalenteri to promote his own regular classes. After he insisted on promoting his classes through the page, the administrators started to delete his posts (about his own classes) and reinforced the non-hierarchical and cooperative etiquette of the page to all its members.

A similar episode happened in Sweden during my fieldwork. A Black Mestre from Guinea-Bissau who lives and teaches in Sweden promoted a batizado (a grading festival) featuring senior Brazilian Mestres via a post at SCS (Capoeira Summer Training in Stockholm). As a reaction to his post, a teacher from Portugal, who also lives and teaches in Sweden, openly questioned whether SCS was the right place for the Mestre to be promoting a for-profit workshop. The Mestre posted a few angry replies and some members interpreted his attitude as a rude imposition of hierarchy. For a short time, the Mestre, the protesting teacher and a few members argued online about whether or not SCS was the right place for that kind of promotion. The creator of the Facebook group, a Swedish capoeirista, reinforced the goals and etiquette of SCS and subsequently created SCF – the Swedish Capoeira Forum, which rapidly became the main online channel for the promotion of paid events and workshops in Sweden, in much the same way Capoeira Kalenteri did in Finland.

Another progressive feature common to all the groups mentioned above is that there are no titles or hierarchical positions per se, and any member can post a call for a Roda, an informal training section
or an event. The Stockholm group, especially, makes sure that the same etiquette guiding SCS applies to the Rodas and informal training sessions – that is, interactions are not guided by hierarchical positions or titles. This is one example of how identities are being forged in a more progressive and egalitarian way within online spaces, and then affecting the usually more hierarchical physical places where ordinary classes take place.

In the United Kingdom, Mestre Fantasma, one of the first non-Brazilian Mestres to be bestowed with a Mestre title, set up the Urban Ritual, a monthly Roda with a progressive and inclusive agenda that takes place in a pub in London. Urban Ritual also has a Facebook group page and a blog, and uses both to promote their activities and agenda. Mestre Fantasma’s first blog post about the Urban Ritual explains its aims:

*Capoeira* night out, down the pub for a game if I’m not too late. That’s Urban Ritual, no uniform required, no cost and leave politics at home and that’s the plan. These Rodas aim to assist development and growth of *Capoeira*. I think that street Rodas often feel quite different from the academy Rodas, … so let’s do a Roda in a bar and try to get the feeling that it’s a street Roda. Why not? Where was *Capoeira* played before academies [*Capoeira schools*] existed? … Over the past fifteen years I’ve watched *Capoeira* grow and most students seem keen to visit other *Capoeira* Rodas so they can assess their own *Capoeira* ability or style. If or when we go to a class often the main time is spent in the class, after all people have paid and are there to learn … After five successful nights I’m inclined to believe I’m not alone in thinking that the time was right to start such a ritual. I have had great pleasure watching the games meeting the masters and feeling the axé. (‘Urban Ritual *Capoeira*’, 2007).

Despite Mestre Fantasma’s mild tone on his first blog post (in 2007), stating that no uniform is required, that there is no cost and that politics should be left at home, Urban Ritual became renowned for a progressive approach that questioned corporate-like and fundamentalist-like groups’ policies and procedures. It is also renowned for bringing together people from different *Capoeira* groups and orientations to play in its Roda. Mestre Fantasma’s current website is more direct, stating that:

This ritual is about people rather than groups. People that like *Capoeira* and sharing it with others. We meet to make music and play fight *Capoeira*. It’s a time for people that enjoy this
culture to come together. Occurring only once a month – it’s a special ritual for those that
attend! ‘Open Rodas must have many capoeiristas from different levels, plus guests from
friendly and rival schools. This combination will create the natural tension needed for the
development of strong and lively jogos. The formalities of a regular class should be avoided
and despite the adherence to tradition and ritual, open Rodas must allow spontaneity,
creativity and the free spirit of capoeiristas.’ [quote by] Mestre Acordeon) … Urban Ritual
intends to offer a place to play ‘your’ Capoeira with players from other styles. (‘Urban Ritual’,
retrieved from: http://www.Capoeira.co.uk/urban-ritual/ on 31/10/2016)

Mestre Fantasma also shares how Urban Ritual’s attitudes and policies, as stated online, are passed
on to participants in its Rodas:

There is a ‘no uniform’ policy. So if people come from another school with their uniform, I’ll tell
them, ‘Next time you come, don’t wear your uniform, because we don’t wanna know which group
you’re from. We wanna be able to tell by the way you play, not by your uniform.’ So, sometimes
I get like 5 people come from a school that I know and they all come with their uniform, so often
I say ‘Guys, there is a rule here, and there is no uniform! Next time you come don’t wear your
uniform!’ If they don’t come back it’s good, because they’re obviously not ready for that kind of
way of thinking and if they like it, they come back without their uniform, because that’s the day
they can be themselves. I think uniforms prevent people from being themselves. (Mestre
Fantasma, personal communication, June 2010)

Mestre Fantasma is one of the few Capoeira Angola Mestres (if not the only one) to invite Mestres
from Capoeira Regional to teach in his workshops. As seen from his statements, website and attitude,
Mestre Fantasma’s approach is actually quite political and progressive in the sense that it challenges
how capoeristas behave within and across groups and orientations. Again, the tone and dress-code
(no uniform policy) of the face-to-face interactions and games that take place at Urban Ritual’s
monthly Roda are set prior to the event within the virtual space of its Facebook group page and
website. This reinforces my argument that social media spaces provide a more egalitarian platform
for interaction, in which horizontally integrated communication among participants fosters the
formation of insurgent cosmopolitan identities and a wider sense of belonging – in this case, to a
transnational community of insurgent Capoeira cosmopolitans. As I mentioned above, these identities and sense of belonging greatly impact capoeristas’ daily face-to-face interactions (conversations, games and organisational frameworks).

Several other examples of how the internet and social media have been impacting the transnational Capoeira community have emerged from the Middle East. VAM – Volta ao Mundo is an NGO dedicated to community development through the practice of Capoeira and broader cultural exchange between Lebanon and Brazil. Similarly, Capoeira4Refugees is an NGO that has specialised in the provision of Capoeira classes in areas of conflict in and around Syria. Capoeira4Refugees was relocated to England due to increasing violence and uncertainty in the region, but in addition to its activities in refugee camps around Syria, it now also offers classes in countries to which Syrian refugees have migrated or that are experiencing conflicts. At the time of writing, Capoeira4Refugees is running programmes in countries such as Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, South Africa, Germany and Sweden (see Chapter 7 for more information on these NGOs).

Both VAM and Capoeira4Refugees operate independently from Brazilian Capoeira groups and hire teachers regardless of their Capoeira orientation. These procedures and attitudes are not common, and are often scrutinised by Brazilian and non-Brazilian capoeristas who question the authenticity of other capoeristas and their activities if they are not formally linked to a senior Brazilian teacher and group (see Chapter 4). Their fundraising campaigns, events, regular activities and positive feedback from local partner institutions on their Capoeira-related programmes are widely shared over social media. This popularity makes it easier for VAM and Capoeira4Refugees to recruit volunteer teachers from around the world to teach in their programs via their websites and Facebook pages.

The growth of corporate-like groups is at one end of the commercial spectrum of how Capoeira is marketed globally. At the other end there is an increase in fundamentalist-like groups. This is a phenomenon propelled by the interplay of globalisation from above and globalisation from below, as
discussed in Chapter 2. Globalisation from above tends to encourage a consumerist attitude in the way people engage with transnationalised cultural practices. Globalisation from below, on the other hand, despite generally being aligned with a progressive agenda, often also allows for the radicalisation of cultural groups and practices. In these cases, it is usually in response to the lack of meaning and purpose engendered by lifestyles that evolve from globalisation from above.

In the process of becoming a transnational cultural practice, Capoeira encompasses subordinate or counter-hegemonic social groups, interests and ideologies as well as hegemonic ones. Transnational cultural practices, such as Capoeira, undergo complex and multifaceted influences, ranging across many seemingly antagonistic nexuses such as the local/global, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic and traditional/modern (Appadurai, 2000; Boaventura Santos, 2006; Milton Santos, 2008; García-Canclini, 2008). Another conundrum posed by the various globalisation processes is that they allow people to engage with and embrace different cultures, while constantly demanding the ‘normalisation’ of cultural practices and values from the core countries. Cultural contributions from peripheral countries are more commonly embraced, particularly when they corroborate the neoliberal agenda of core countries. The recognition of what is different in other people as a potential contribution to one’s own cultural identification; therefore, it is not always encouraged or seen as positive by the core countries that drive globalisation from above as a hegemonic force.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the interplay of neoliberal globalisation from above and globalisation from below has a multilayered and multidirectional impact on those practising Capoeira – or any other local culture that has been globalised, for that matter. The impact is multilayered because globalisation from above carries in itself counter-hegemonic resources to oppose it, with social media being one of them (Santos, 2008; Santos, 2006). It is a multidirectional impact because, to some extent, it displaces Brazil as the epicentre of all Capoeira activities in the world, with a one-way flow vector, as I discuss in the next section.
Social media allow capoeristas to bring to the transnational scenario of Capoeira some of the art-form’s early sense of belonging to a wider cultural community and a loosely coordinated form of cooperation – aspects that were present in Capoeira before its global diffusion – as opposed to the sense of belonging to closed groups that operate chiefly with profit motives. Social media allow capoeristas to embrace an insurgent cosmopolitism (Santos, 2006) to deal with and make sense of the seemingly contradictory local and global, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, traditional and modern conundrums brought about by the various globalisation forces. Because these insurgent cosmopolitans make use of social media to contest corporate values and practices or fundamentalist-like attitudes in the global Capoeira community, they can be seen as a ‘new social movement’ (Wilson, 2008: 146).

The adoption of an insurgent cosmopolitism in Capoeira does not, however, occur in an unproblematic fashion. On one hand, there are those who run their schools according to the values of globalisation ‘from above’ – chiefly within corporatist-like groups. There are also those who oppose this kind of globalisation with a purist or diversity-intolerant approach in fundamentalist-like groups and lineages. Despite being seemingly antagonistic takes on globalisation, these two trends are both an adaptation to and a response against globalisation from above. On the other hand there are the progressive or insurgent cosmopolitans who, regardless of their lineages and orientations, build their identities in relation to a transnationalised cultural practice that originated in a peripheral country. Their identities in many ways question the predominant trend of globalised localisms originating from mainstream countries, as they value and embrace what is different in others – for example, embracing Capoeira as a lifestyle – as a contribution to their cultural identification.

Insurgent cosmopolitan capoeristas identify themselves with progressive issues and attitudes in various places (with face-to-face interactions) and spaces (online), and have a sense of belonging to a transnational community that transcends group labels and or diversity intolerant lineages (usually
based on myths of purism). Insurgent cosmopolitan capoeiristas embody Capoeira’s early context of resistance and intercultural acceptance in order to navigate today’s world of seemingly contradictory pairings (local/global, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic, traditional/modern). As discussed below, the many ways in which the global affects the local and vice-versa, however, remain a conundrum for the transnational Capoeira community.

Social media and the local/global game

Wulfhorst (2008) and Wulfhorst and Vianna (2012) argue that cultural practices that have been transnationalised, such as Capoeira, include socio-cultural and economic fluxes around the world that go beyond the back and forth between their place of origin and other countries: ‘That is, to exist overseas as a transnational social space, Capoeira requires a constant circulation of Brazilian and foreign capoeiristas, ideas, commodities, investment in new schools, and feelings of belonging and identities’ (Wulfhorst & Vianna, 2012: 88).

As argued in Chapter 2, Capoeira’s rapid globalisation process after the 1970s allowed a spread of its intercultural, interdisciplinary and emancipatory principles to other countries, especially to the Western developed countries. As conceptualised by Appadurai (2000), and discussed previously, the process of the transnationalisation of cultures is influenced by and happens through many ‘scapes’.

As further discussed in Chapter 2, Capoeira’s diffusion and learning, the capoeiristas’ embodiment of its principles and the capoeiristas’ interactions with each other within and across their groups happen through media-scapes, techno-scapes, finance-scapes, ethno-scapes and idea-scapes. Moreover, globalised cultural practices spread through these scapes in a rhizome-like pattern that questions simplified notions of centres of origin (Appadurai, 2000). Above all, social media is becoming an important ‘scape’, within and across which notions of local and global are (re)created.

Young instructors keep track of what happens in the international circuit of events (for example, who

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27 Cosmopolitan capoeiristas as well as Brazilian instructors living outside of Brazil often exchange and send information, music, books, movies and money to each other.
the teaching guests are in the international circuit of workshops, what they are teaching and how they are playing) through social media. Furthermore, insurgent cosmopolitans in Capoeira engage (online and offline) with progressive activities in local communities of diverse countries (see the discussion of the social Capoeira activists in Chapter 7).

Despite being both an outcome and a tool of globalisation from above, social media are currently also being used as a resource to oppose the more hegemonic types of globalisation. In the transnational Capoeira community, for example, Mestre Fantasma organised and promoted the Urban Ritual, discussed earlier in this chapter. Facebook group pages in Sweden and Finland are also used to organise Rodas and training sessions without the profit motive, as well as to question notions of authority (for example, that only Capoeira teachers, and chiefly the Brazilian ones, can organise activities such as Rodas). Social media are one of the means by which capoeristas can learn, discuss and engage with Capoeira’s early history of resistance in their daily practice. For some, the discourse of Capoeira as a resistance practice against the establishment is simply a marketing strategy, that is often also unfolded through social media. For others, Capoeira’s historical past and principles of practice work as a moral compass in community development endeavours (see Chapter 7). In both cases, there is a tension between the agenda of hegemonic globalisation trying to strip Capoeira of its original inclusive and intercultural values and principles to sell it more easily, and a global trend among Brazilian and non-Brazilian capoeristas to connect with Capoeira’s subversive past. Because social media allow for communication to take place in a non-hierarchical way, they are the tool at the core of this tension.

Such a tension between globalisation from above trying to strip Capoeira’s values and principles to better align it with the market’s logic and the capoeristas who embrace the early principles and history to resist this kind of globalisation creates ‘fundamental problems of livelihood’ among capoeristas (Appadurai, 2000: 1; see discussion in Chapters 2 and 4). Fernando da Luz, a Portuguese instructor
living in Stockholm, used the blog 4CapoeiraThoughts to comment on such problems of livelihood between Brazilians and non-Brazilians teaching overseas:

As one of the non-Brazilians teaching Capoeira the usual first reaction I get is one of distance, sometimes arrogance and an attempt at some sort of ‘superiority’ or ‘seniority’ by many Brazilian instructors when I meet them, regardless of knowledge or ability. This is opposed by the usual reaction on the part of non-Brazilian instructors: ‘I’m going to show them that I can/am’ (the law of causality?) These last ones either confront the Brazilians violently in the Roda and arrogantly outside or attempt to become one of them, trying to separate his/herself from the gringos. On a more extreme note of this behaviour, Mestre Russo once told me of a Roda in France where he wouldn’t be able to participate since Brazilians were not allowed. In the end it works like any other division: black/white, man/woman, us/them. It makes us more poor [sic]. (Fernando da Luz, statement retrieved from a discussion posted over 4CapoeiraThoughts on 30/05/2011).

Fernando’s statement and the French school he mentions that does not allow Brazilians to take part in its activities are related to perceptions of authenticity in Capoeira (see also Chapter 4). However, Fernando made his statement using an online platform, as the physical spaces of classes and workshops rarely leave room for this sort of straightforward criticism or questioning, especially in the presence of elder Brazilian Mestres.

These matters of authenticity and authority, as discussed in Chapter 4, are intricate and contradictory opinions that spring from Brazilians and non-Brazilians alike. On the other hand, Sandro ‘Vovô’, a 64-year-old Italian capoeirista who started training in New Zealand in the early 2000s and then began teaching in 2009, believes that non-Brazilians teaching without the guidance of Brazilians might dilute Capoeira’s values and principles. Vovô posted a comment on a blog post sharing the story of Canguru, a British social entrepreneur who uses Capoeira in his community development projects. Canguru became disillusioned with his former Brazilian teacher due to an exploitative relationship, and decided to keep running both his Capoeira academia and social programmes as an independent teacher (without a formal connection to a Brazilian teacher). Thus, observes Vovô:
I’m wandering [sic] what’s happening to the ‘specific weight’ of our art. I’m just concerned about what kind of preparation and how deep knowledge of Capoeira there would be in the future, at the base of such Capoeira centres without the supervision of some Mestre or, if you don’t like it, someone else with the appropriate background. Here in New Zealand, people are mainly interested in the movements and the acrobatics, but when I ask them to sing in Portuguese, to play the berimbau, to clap, to try to understand the meaning of the songs the interest collapses. And the same happens to me: I don’t like to teach to someone who clearly shows his/her partial interest. Capoeira is demanding! Why!? Because there is the African Diaspora behind [it]. And it is impossible to teach Capoeira and forget the huge load of values within it. How can we help the suffering people, the war orphans, the motherless children without being a rebel, fighting against the modern face of the nowadays/ future slavery? I don’t want to forget where Capoeira comes from. I like also to play with fun and laughter. But I wouldn’t like to play with an empty egg shell. (Sandro ‘Vovô’, statement retrieved from a discussion posted over 4CapoeiraThoughts on 29/5/2011)

Vovô clearly believes that Capoeira’s past as a tool of resistance against oppression is one of its legacies in relation to our society’s current problems. In addition, he also adheres to the diasporic narrative. Such a narrative and hierarchical approach to authenticity, however, brings about segregation and exclusion (as seen in Chapter 4). Vovô clearly equates what he calls an ‘appropriate background’ with the guidance of a Brazilian and the cultural weight of Capoeira with a diasporic narrative. His statement exemplifies the complexity and incongruence inherent in social groups organising their identities in relation to transnationalised cultural practices. But similarly to Fernando’s statement, the content and tone of Vovô’s statement is more often seen in the virtual spaces of the internet than in the face-to-face interactions that happen where classes and workshops take place.

As mentioned above, Capoeira exists overseas as a transnational cultural practice, demanding a constant circulation of Brazilian and foreign capoeristas (Wulfhorst & Vianna, 2012). Most of these capoeristas stay updated about what happens in different countries in terms of how their counterparts are organising events, who are they inviting to teach, which movements and styles of games are trending up, and so on through the virtual spaces of social media, video-streaming websites and
mobile phone apps. Virtual space also complements the display and embodiment of alternative identities within the international community of *capoeiristas*. As I discussed in Chapter 3, many *capoeiristas* choose to adopt an ‘insurgent cosmopolitism’ (Santos, 2006), and engage with progressive views, actions and attitudes wherever they live or visit. To a great extent, such a progressive approach builds an ‘insurgent cosmopolitism’, attaching views, actions and attitudes to local people and places. In *Capoeira*, these local people and places are usually Brazilian schools and communities.

Although Brazil is generally regarded as the epicentre of *Capoeira*’s international community, and the flux of information is usually believed to be a one-way vector flowing out of Brazil, the *capoeiristas*’ use of social media both in Brazil and in other countries brings evidence that within different mediascapes, this flow happens in a two-way flux of information, ideas and resources. The use of social media allows people in different countries to establish themselves as authorities inside the transnational *Capoeira* scenario. This happens through the sharing (and broadcasting) of their games, classes, activities, choice and style of movements and songs.

The irony is that in becoming transnational, or global, *Capoeira* suffered changes that took place within very local and small communities and groups of people in Brazil. That is, in order to include, embrace and sometimes exploit the foreign *capoeiristas* visiting Brazil, particular teaching methods and attitudes to *Capoeira* were adapted. Teaching approaches and attitudes once accepted as ‘traditional’ were focused not so much on efficiency, embodiment of style and mannerisms or groups’ embodied branding. In addition, the Mestres would choose what and how to teach each student, with individual attention and according to what the Mestre thought would suit a specific student. *Academias* that were once a training space for local students, whenever possible, were refurbished to become bed and breakfast (B&B) establishments to receive foreign *capoeiristas*. Often these *academias* evolved into corporate-like international groups. *Capoeira* groups from diverse political inclinations and different orientations organised immersion events in camps, farms and historical
tourist places, focusing primarily on the foreign capoeiristas’ participation and what they perceived to be an authentic Brazilian cultural experience.

The level of reliance placed by these Capoeira centres and their local community businesses upon the participation of international students is also evident from the above description. All these ‘international’ events taking place in Brazil are organised via the internet. Descriptions on their websites provide further evidence of how local communities in Brazil are being transformed by the global Capoeira community. There is, however, a significant element of reciprocity here in that, while international students often seek roots, legitimisation and meaning for their sense of belonging through participation in their particular Capoeira groups’ events and classes in Brazil, Brazilian capoeristas and local communities often become proud of their ‘international popularity’. These changes in how Capoeira is taught in Brazil and abroad, as well as in how both Brazilians and non-Brazilians participate in it, have come about because of the internet and the advent of social media. The global/local nexus that is to a great extent mediated by the use of internet and social media thus has a multilayered impact everywhere it takes place.

**Conclusion**

As seen from the discussion in this chapter, the use of social media can have a rhizomatic character (Appadurai, 2000) that challenges the capoeristas’ predominantly diasporic narrative of Capoeira as well as Brazil as the only place from which Capoeira-related knowledge and influence flow. As a material outcome from top-down processes of globalisation, social media propel Capoeira’s global diffusion. They also allow capoeristas to forge ideas and ideologies as well as to organise actions and activities that spring from diverse spaces and places. These actions and activities, despite springing from diverse spaces and places, also move in a multidirectional way, affecting the transnational Capoeira community in both its local and global aspects.
It is clear that even though some activities happen more often in virtual spaces and others in ‘real’ places, there is no clear division for these activities and they often take place in both virtual and offline environments. Social media therefore allow for the overlap of places and spaces, also blurring boundaries between schools, groups, communities and ultimately countries. In both physical places and online spaces, capoeristas learn, play Capoeira and embody its values and principles, question matters of hierarchy and matters of authenticity, promote and sell their classes and events, and articulate their identities.

The ways in which the Capoeira groups and NGOs mentioned in this chapter use social media minimise organisational and transactional costs of group formation, project management, events and activities. This has major implications for the ways capoeristas forge their identities and a sense of belonging, which are usually overseen by the capoeristas themselves, but chiefly by those clinging to the overarching institutionalised framework in Capoeira. As pointed out by Shirky (2008: 20), social media’s ‘simple ways of creating groups lead to new groups, lots of new groups, and not just more groups but more kinds of groups’.

On one hand, there is an institutional framework that was once the most efficient strategy to support the global spread of Capoeira. Such a framework was adopted by most senior teachers organising transnational groups, and created the corporate and franchise-like operational mode that is so ubiquitous today. The institutional framework also fostered the fundamentalist-like behaviour and attitude adopted by some purism-based traditionalist Mestres in Capoeira. In both cases, the institutional framework encourages isolation, exclusion, intolerance of diversity, competitiveness and even violence. On the other hand, capoeristas organising their activities through social media tend to adopt a collaborative approach within which loosely coordinated groups operate with extremely low overheads and therefore without the imperative motive of profit. Contrary to the former, the latter encourages intercultural learning, diversity (of participants, groups and actions), inclusion and cooperation (across a varied range of groups and lineages). Moreover, when insurgent cosmopolitans make use of the internet to contest corporate or fundamentalist-like attitudes, they form a ‘new social movement’ (Wilson, 2008: 147).
Online and offline Capoeira-related groups (and here I refer to groups as institutions, informal groups of people and virtual groups), because they are used as a learning resource as well as an organisational tool, can be seen as what the sociologist Etienne Wenger (cited in Shirky, 2008: 100) calls a *community of practice* – that is, ‘a group of people who converse about some shared task in order to get better at it’. This conceptualisation of *Capoeira* as community of practice finds support in the work of anthropologist Lauren Griffith, who also conducted research in *Capoeira* as an insider (Griffith, 2016: 48-49). Shirky (2008) explains that communities of practice are inherently cooperative and effectively supported by social media because members can recruit one another or can easily be found by like-minded people. The use of social media by capoeristas worldwide therefore also allows for a broader sense of belonging (to a wider *community of practice* instead of closed groups and orientations). In sum, social media fosters new forms of interaction, enables more cooperation within and across groups, and enables new forms of group formation and more kinds of groups to be formed. This, in turn, allows for a diverse sense of belonging (as people can participate in a multitude of social groups) and more complex identities to evolve. The insurgent cosmopolitanism and its trans-localised sense of connection and progressive engagement, for instance, evolve in part from these new possibilities opened up by the use of social media. Insurgent cosmopolitans learn, keep track of and interact with issues, actions and projects occurring in various places. Through the use of social media, insurgent cosmopolitans deepen their knowledge and embodiment of *Capoeira*’s cultural principles, connect with *Capoeira*’s legacy as a weapon of resistance and organise progressive actions and activities aligned with their interpretation (of such a legacy) and local agenda.
Chapter 7

Capoeira and community development

Introduction

Capoeira’s popularity and international acceptance have increased significantly since the 1970s (as discussed in Chapter 3). Even though in one way or another its history has always been linked to resistance movements (see Chapter 3), explorations of Capoeira within the area of community development are far more recent. Nevertheless, an ever-increasing number of Brazilians and non-Brazilians worldwide appear to be making a connection between the early capoeiristas’ search for dignity and their use of Capoeira to resist oppression, acculturation and exclusion, and the current use of Capoeira as a tool in community development programmes. Capoeira’s core philosophy and early principles seem to be compatible with community development/recreation principles worldwide (Kraft & Prytherch, 2016; Prytherch & Kraft, 2015; Ismail, 2016). Other scholars have made similar claims about the role of lifestyle sports (also called action, alternative or extreme sports), such as parkour, skateboarding and snowboarding, in furthering the agenda of the United Nations’ Sport for Development and Peace movement launched by Kofi Annan in 2001 (Annan, 2010, cited in Thorpe 2014b; see also Thorpe, 2014b; Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015). On the other hand, when it comes to the evaluation of these programmes’ efficiency ‘there is a lack of understanding of what processes produce what effects, for which participants, in what circumstances’ (Coalter, 2007). The case studies presented below explore these issues and consider the implementation of Capoeira in different countries and social contexts.

In Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese streets and refugee camps, Capoeira has been helping children, youngsters and even entire families. In these countries, Capoeira’s playfulness and interactiveness is being used in rehabilitation programs designed to combat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by the experience of war (Kraft & Prytherch, 2016; Prytherch & Kraft, 2015; Ismail, 2016). In Brazil, South Africa, Haiti and East Timor, for instance, Capoeira offers an interdisciplinary
platform supporting recreation, social inclusion, intercultural education and community development programs. In Norfolk, England, besides taking part in self-empowerment and community development programs, *Capoeira*’s success in engaging challenging students in after-school programmes led some primary schools to adopt its practice in their curriculum. In partnership with *Capoeira Communities*, an arts outreach organisation delivering *Capoeira* training to schools, institutions and partner organisations, these schools developed a cross-curricular approach within which *Capoeira* is taught in physical education, history and geography classes as well as after-school programmes.

In this chapter, I draw on data from my fieldwork and material covered in the literature review, as well as on my own experience as a *Capoeira* instructor, to review and discuss definitions of ‘community’ in *Capoeira* and in the field of community development. I argue that *capoeristas* worldwide create, belong to and articulate a transnational *Capoeira* community of sentiment, as described by Clark (1973). Clark’s definition also corroborates Pedlar’s and Haworth’s (2006) definition of community as a collectivity of people with a common interest, and Etienne Wenger’s *community of practice* (cited in Shirky, 2008: 100).

In addition, I discuss the value of *Capoeira* as a medium for ‘social inclusion’, intercultural learning and psychosocial healing as an important part of its historical legacy in our globalised society. I also discuss what I call the ‘paradigm of the first inclusion’: a phenomenon that takes place when a person’s inclusion in a social group prevents their inclusion in the wider society because of the group’s beliefs, agenda or social inclusion. In the case of *Capoeira*, an inherently inclusive art-form, for instance, inclusion in a highly competitive or in a fundamentalist-like *Capoeira* group will certainly hinder a person’s ability to network, and therefore be included in the wider *Capoeira* community. Such a tendency is a potential hindrance in the use of *Capoeira* as a tool to promote

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28 More information on these programmes can be accessed in the ‘Case Studies’ session of the Capoeira Communities website, http://www.capocoms.org.uk.
social inclusion in a wider sense. Finally, I also discuss the perspective and approach of social Capoeira activists – that is, instructors who choose to teach exclusively or partially within community development programmes, relating their action, activities and professional orientations to Capoeira’s legacy as a form of resistance against oppression and exploitation.

**Defining ‘community’ in a transnational cultural practice**

There are many interpretations of the concept of community, something compounded by the various ways in which the term has been applied in work by academics across a range of disciplines. In this section of the chapter, the concept of community interconnects two different, though related, fields: the worldwide Capoeira community and the discipline of community development (also encompassing community recreation). The understanding of ‘community’ as a concept thus becomes a key element in the understanding of how capoeristas from different walks of life and nationalities create, belong to and articulate their transnational community of practitioners. Understanding what ‘community’ means is also central to understanding how capoeristas worldwide make sense of Capoeira’s history as a cultural practice of resistance, and use it in community development programmes today.

In 1973, David B. Clark re-examined the concept of community, drawing conclusions that are relevant to this study. For Clark, the concept of community might be used to describe where people live, how they live and the ways in which one community might differ from another. According to Clark, the concept of community might then be understood through locality, social activity, social structure or sentiment. Hence, Clark is calling attention to the complexity of the term ‘community’ and the various meanings it may convey. After discussing the usefulness and limitations of perceiving community as locality, social activity and social structure, Clark favours the notion of community as sentiment as being most useful. A community, according to Clark, is defined by the presence of two foundational sentiments: solidarity and significance (1973: 404-407). Clark (1973: 408) argues that:
No person can feel a sense of belonging to a group without thereby gaining some sense of significance. To the outsider it may seem that in certain situations (as monastic order, an army regiment or a totalitarian state) individuality is completely lost in the whole. That is by no means always the case … no person can experience a sense of significance without feeling some sense of solidarity with those who make this possible … Whatever role is played some sense of attachment to the rest of the cast is virtually inevitable. This close relationship between solidarity and significance merely emphasises the fact that community, though made up of a complex of sentiments, is a phenomenon which, however analysed, must in the end be treated as an entity.

Clark (1973: 408-409) further explains that ‘the strength of community within any given group is determined by the degree to which its members experience both a sense of solidarity and a sense of significance within it’. More recently, Pedlar and Haworth (2006: 518-519, citing Wood & Judikis) suggested five different categories of community: nuclear, tribal, collaborative, geopolitical and life communities. Drawing from these types, Pedlar and Haworth (2006: 519) choose to adopt community from the ‘spatial and social perspective, so that community refers to a city, a neighbourhood, or a collectivity of people with a common interest’.

In this chapter, I discuss the concept of ‘community’ and its implications for the global Capoeira scene. First, though, it is worth noting that other scholars have found various conceptualisations of similar sports or cultural activities equally useful to further the understanding of these manifestations in sociology, cultural studies, youth studies, community development and globalisation of cultures. Concepts such as subculture (Thorton, 1995), lifestyle sport (Wheaton, 2004; Thorpe, 2014) and neo-tribe (Bennett, 1999), for example, are conceptualisations of similar manifestations that have been used successfully, and sometimes interchangeably, by other scholars. Depending on how one approaches the concept of community, it might favour the understanding of how capoeristas from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds forge a worldwide community of practitioners, and how some of these practitioners apply Capoeira-related activities to the area of community development.
Pedlar’s and Haworth’s (2006) definition of community as a collectivity of people with a common interest is useful in this study of the transnational Capoeira scene, within which capoeiristas forge a community and also belong to it on the basis of their common interest (learning and practising Capoeira). The idea of a transnational Capoeira community as a collectivity of people with a common interest finds support in yet another definition of ‘community’. The Capoeira-related virtual groups that are used as a learning resource, as well as an organisational tool, can be seen as a community of practice, as defined by sociologist Etienne Wenger, whose community of practice is constituted by ‘a group of people who converse about some shared task in order to get better at it’ (cited in Shirky, 2008: 100). For a more detailed discussion of how these virtual communities are affecting the daily and offline interactions of capoeiristas in their transnational community, see the discussion presented in Chapter 6.

Pedlar’s and Haworth’s (2006) and Wenger’s (2008) definitions of community are useful to describe the transnational Capoeira community, but it is Clark’s (1973) definition that reveals a link between the strength of the community and the extent to which that community can be effective in the social inclusion of new members. The degree to which one feels included, according to Clark, is determined by one’s sense of solidarity and significance in the community. Defining community as a ‘collectivity of people with a common interest’ or as a ‘community of practice’, in addition to defining the concept of community for this chapter’s purpose also enhances the understanding of how capoeiristas worldwide can appropriate the cultural values of a smaller, traditional community (of Brazilian capoeiristas) and transpose them onto to a larger trans-local and more complex community. The definition of ‘community as sentiment’, however, enhances the understanding of how Capoeira can be used worldwide to promote social inclusion within community development programmes.
Many capoeirstas in my fieldwork, for instance, stated that their involvement with Capoeira in the field of community development was related to the way they understood the art-form’s historical past as a practice of resistance and how it could act as an efficient tool to provide sport, culture, entertainment and a sense of community in the places where they lived. Feliz, an English Capoeira instructor who also teaches the art-form in social programmes, stated:

There is this phenomenon, which is Capoeira that is just a folk activity. As in the sense that it’s just a people thing and if you really show it well to them you can show that anyone can do it and it’s for anyone and you don’t have to be an acrobat, you don’t have to be a musician, you don’t have to be a really tough fighter, but it has all those things in it. So it’s amazing, really! So I think the more and more people we [Capoeira Communities] meet and share this with, it’s very positive. Even if they just do it for one day and don’t do it again, it’s okay. You’ve broadened their minds a bit, because they’ve met you and they have learnt about something different. And, you know, that’s good enough for them, I think. So that needs to part of that community building that we’re trying to do (Feliz, personal communication, June 2010).

Feliz’s statement demonstrates how solidarity and significance go hand in hand in Capoeira, supporting the conceptualisation of the transnational Capoeira scenario as a community of sentiment, common interest, and practice, simultaneously. The birth of Capoeira Sobreviventes in Lebanon, Capoeira in Syria, Capoeira Communities in England, and Capoeira Centre São Salomão (CCSS) in Brazil are examples of how Capoeira, as a community of sentiment (Clark, 1973), is being used within the area of community development.

In order to better discuss and analyse ‘community’ as a link between the transnational practice of Capoeira and its use in social programmes, it also becomes necessary to situate community development as a field encompassing community recreation. In general terms, community development stands for the adoption of actions taken by local communities, with or without the help of official policies and the support of community workers, empowering and enabling its participants to generate positive sustainable changes in their (local) communities. Usually, such communities are
left out of the society’s mainstream policies and service delivery, demanding autonomous measures assuring their needs and rights. In the specific context of this study, such exclusion relates to these communities’ rights to leisure, encompassing arts, sports, culture and entertainment.

Conceptualising and presenting guidelines to community development, in his book *Community Development: Community-based Alternatives in an Age of Globalisation*, Ife (2002) alerts local community leaders and community workers to the dangers of applying a ‘colonialist’ approach to local communities by imposing policies and programmes like general prescriptions instead of carefully and locally addressing the different social contexts. Nevertheless, Ife (2002: 201-225) presents five principles – *ecological, social justice, valuing the local, process,* and finally *global and local principles* – as ‘principles of community development which transcend local conditions and contexts and therefore can guide one’s practice at a more general level’.

In the sub-sections below, I discuss data gathered from many different countries in relation to the community concepts and community development principles presented above. CCSS was the only group founded by a Brazilian Mestre, but all *capoeristas* and the NGOs they run that are discussed in this chapter are operated independently from their (international) *Capoeira* groups. This demonstrates that many of these programmes’ approaches are already applying some of these community development principles to deliver regular lessons and activities in diverse communities worldwide. Instead of relying strictly on corporate-like institutionalised frameworks to finance, organise and run their programmes, these NGOs rely upon a wider sense of belonging to *Capoeira* as a community of sentiment as well as upon *Capoeira*’s progressive cultural and historical legacy to make sense of and find significance in their work and mission in a globalised society.

**The birth of social-Capoeira**

The term ‘social-Capoeira’ is often used among *capoeristas* working with *Capoeira* within community development programmes. Even though *Capoeira*-related social programmes already
existed in several countries, it was in East Timor that the term ‘social-Capoeira’ was coined by a group of youngsters in the early 2000s. These youngsters created a community centre to oppose family and gang violence, to promote education and inclusion for children, and to develop professionalisation for teenagers and young adults within the local community. Attesting to their success, the centre still exists and many youngsters have found jobs through the programmes they attended and the network provided by the centre. According to Ruth ‘Aquarela’, a former UNICEF Child Protection and Youth Development Advisor at MAC (Adolescents’ and Children’s Movement):

A group of concerned children and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 14 years old, living in Liquintai, Dili, began to meet regularly in Taibessi with a Brazilian volunteer to discuss the needs of conflict affected children and adolescents living in East Timor. (Ruth ‘Aquarela’, personal communication, January 2011)

In 2011, due to MAC’s success, the youngsters were invited to perform at a national event celebrating East Timor’s independence and campaigning against violence in Dili. Capoeira was included in the festivities and, with the government’s support, these youngsters met and interacted with instructors from some of the largest international Capoeira groups for the first time. As seen in Chapters 3 and 5, these large international groups are often organised in a franchise-like framework and adopt hierarchically rigid approaches to decision-making and interpersonal interactions. During the time spent with instructors from some of the main international Capoeira groups, the youngsters from MAC experienced peer-pressure in the form of statements like ‘the work you’re doing is amazing, but you have to belong to a proper (sic) [Capoeira] group’ (Ruth Aquarela, personal communication, June 2011). Having to belong to a ‘proper’ Capoeira group or have a respectable lineage are, in fact, common expectations within the international Capoeira community. Often, those who begin training and organising themselves without a formal connection to a Mestre and a group (most often a Brazilian teacher with the main branch of the group located in Brazil) are eventually encouraged (and indeed sometimes pressed) to do so by those who have secured authority positions in the Capoeira community. However, while a close connection with Brazilian culture and belonging to a group often
facilitate learning, providing cultural context to those learning Capoeira and thus a better grasp of Capoeira’s principles, economic and power-related agendas are also present in this context. The response from the youngsters of MAC to these expectations was summarised as follows: ‘This is not the kind of Capoeira we practise, we practise social-Capoeira’ (Ruth ‘Aquarela’, personal communication, January 2011).

Aquarela explained that due to the organic nature of MAC’s creation, the youngster involved in the project made an early connection with Capoeira history as a resistance tool. The youngsters’ feeling of empowerment and freedom generated by the practice of Capoeira was often boosted by a narrative of volunteer teachers that fomented the youngsters’ development while travelling through East Timor (Ruth ‘Aquarela’, personal communication, January 2011). Because these teachers did not have the agenda of recruiting the MAC youngsters to their Capoeira groups, those involved in Capoeira in East Timor could learn about Capoeira’s history and fundamentals without the corporate or fundamentalist-like lenses that are so ubiquitous today.

The paradigm of the first inclusion

Capoeira is being used in diverse community development endeavours around the world today. Those using it within these programmes claim that Capoeira is an efficient tool to promote social inclusion, intercultural learning, community building and even psychological healing of therapeutic experiences (Kraft & Prytherch, 2016; Prytherch & Kraft, 2015; Ismail, 2016). Fred Coalter, a Professor of Sports Policy at the University of Stirling in the United Kingdom who was ‘commissioned to produce several policy-oriented literature reviews to identify evidence for the presumed social and economic impacts of sport’, explains that to the disappointment of the commissioning clients, ‘all reviews have produced rather ambiguous and inconclusive conclusions – equivalent to the Scottish legal verdict of “not proven”’ (Coalter, 2007: 1).
My experience as a teacher using *Capoeira* within community development programmes also confirms the ambiguity mentioned by Coalter. As I discuss below, when one engages with a *Capoeira* group, in addition to absorbing historic and cultural concepts, embodying attitudes and developing a sense of belonging, one also absorbs that group’s values. Often these values are imbued in corporate or fundamentalist-like practices, and very often disguised as traditions (see discussion in Chapter 5).

Whenever someone engages in *Capoeira*, because of the nature of the practice, that person is already included in a social group. This happens because one can only play *Capoeira* with a group of people. Having joined this group, as the person acquires and hones more skills, they will be able to perform a variety of roles within the ritual of the *Roda* and to interact with people from various backgrounds. For instance, in a *Roda*, one can participate in leading the songs or the ritual, playing the game or being part of the ‘audience’ that forms the circle and helps to hold the songs (singing back) and the rhythm (with clapping). Other Mestres, teachers and students in *Capoeira* share this view. For example, Mestre Vila Isabel, who runs social programmes in the poor neighbourhoods of Brasília, Brazil, comments on *Capoeira*’s inclusiveness as follows:

*Capoeira* is the most democratic thing that exists. In a *Capoeira Roda* you have a judge, a deputy, a homeless person, a shoe shiner, a mechanic, all social classes [are] in there. And inside the *Capoeira Roda* you have a dialogue and you have to start to make people see their values inside this art. That moment in the *Capoeira Roda* is the most important part and suggests to the kids, youths or people who participate in these social projects that *Capoeira*, as well as being a group sport, is a sport where one plays *with* the other rather than *against* one another. (Mestre Vila Isabel, personal communication, February 2010; translation and italics mine)

Erika, a Swedish-Finnish *capoeirista* with over 10 years’ experience teaching in Europe and visiting Brazil, has a similar view. Her statement focuses on the importance of *Capoeira* in helping people bridge cultural differences, but similarly to Mestre Vila Isabel’s statement above, Erika’s statement points to how inclusive *Capoeira* can be and why this is the case:

Through *Capoeira* when you travel or meet people from other places you have this new interface where you know you have different cultures coming from somewhere in the
background, but in *Capoeira* you meet on equal terms. (Erika, personal communication, February 2010)

Feliz, one of the oldest and more experienced instructors involved with Capoeira Communities’ community development programmes in Norfolk, England, also corroborates my views on *Capoeira*’s inclusiveness. Feliz explains that when one joins *Capoeira*:

You’re instantly in a group, in a band … You’re next to someone, you can have a joke with them, you know, with the instruments, you play with the rhythm, you sing together. It’s like instantly you got that as fun. And the activity … You’re using your body and getting fitter, you’re feeling good about yourself. (*Feliz*, personal communication, June 2010)

Coalter (2007) explains that much of the supposition pervading sports policy today springs from the nineteenth-century British rationale:

The supposed efficacy of sports was strengthened by being regarded as a ‘neutral’ social space where all citizens, or sport people, met as equals in an environment regarded as ‘unambiguously wholesome and healthy’ in both a physical and moral sense. (Smith and Waddington, 2004: 281, cited in Coalter, 2007: 8-9)

The worldwide practice of *Capoeira* is pervaded by ambiguities related to matters of authenticity and authority, as seen in Chapter 5. What Mestre Vila Isabel, Erika and Feliz describe above, however, reinforces that in some occasions there might be interfaces in which people indeed meet on equal terms – or at least on a more level playing field. *Capoeira* seems to be one of these interfaces, because it allows participants to express different talents and inclinations (singing, playing an instrument, playing the game), and because it provides a level ground for interactions – for example, the Roda de *Capoeira* contains rituals, non-written rules and a fair-play context that allow people from different genders, levels of expertise, age and sizes to play each other – is inclusive in its nature. But once one is included in a *Capoeira* group, this group might narrow or broaden one’s connection with other *Capoeira* groups and society in general, according to its agenda, beliefs and social inclination. This
is what I call the ‘paradigm of the first inclusion’, a situation in which one’s inclusion in a given social group and its activities hinders one’s deeper sense of inclusion in the larger society in general.

Other Mestres and scholars have realised this conundrum in the process of working with *Capoeira* within community development programmes as well. Discussing diversity intolerance in Chapter 3, I quoted Mestre Fantasma, the founder of the Urban Ritual.\(^2\) Below, I quote him again, this time calling attention to the ‘paradigm of the first inclusion’:

> [We] create our own world in *Capoeira*, you know. We’re Cordão de Ouro! [one of the biggest international groups], and they don’t wanna go anywhere else because they’ve got their world. And then you go in the room and everyone in the room is Cordão de Ouro … My best ally is Paulo, one of the closest if not the closest friends in *Capoeira*. And he teaches and he’s got a big room. I feel very welcomed when I visit there, and he makes me welcome and we have good games and my students go too. So I’m not saying their group doesn’t work, but I do think that they’re very Cordão de Ouro. They’re the Cordão de Ouro brand, and there is the blá-blá-blá brand [alluding to another mainstream international group – group Abadá], and we’re the Simon Fantasma brand, you know?! And I believe that *Capoeira* would benefit a lot from breaking those brands down and having people playing *Capoeira* more with people that they don’t know. I find the games get much more interesting when you get someone from Cordão de Ouro and someone from another group, and when they play the whole thing is different. (Mestre Fantasma, personal communication, June 2010)

Mestre Fantasma’s statement resonates deeply with my own experience as a Mestre of running social programmes and activities to foster intercultural learning and diversity in *Capoeira*. Drawing on my experience as an insider, my observations resonate with Mestre Fantasma’s for at least two reasons. The first is because I belong to the *Cordão de Ouro* group and experienced what he describes with all my students, but especially with those from the social programmes. Often students develop a strong sense of belonging to their *Capoeira* group that is accompanied by an equally strong sense of

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\(^2\) Urban Ritual is a monthly *Roda* that happens in a pub in London. It is organised and promoted through a blog and a Facebook page to bring back diversity of interactions in *Capoeira* games. The Urban Ritual encourages *capoeiristas* to downplay their group allegiances and focus more on their own skills, values and morals when playing counterparts from other groups in their monthly *Roda*.
pride. This combination causes students to over-focus on differences rather than similarities, and the lessons to be learnt when interacting (socially or in a *Capoeira* game). The second reason is because, akin to Mestre Fantasma’s mission of bringing diversity back to the games with the Urban Ritual, my mission was to promote social inclusion and intercultural learning. Neither of our missions can be successful, however, without teaching the students how to embrace diversity.

In Mestre Fantasma’s case, as with every other *Capoeira* Mestre whose aim is to teach their students how to master and embody movement and improvisation techniques and game strategies in order to be able to deal better with diversity (for example, how to play people from different schools, different styles, body constitution, different *Capoeira* rhythms), it is necessary to create and foster diverse interactions (both socially and in *Capoeira*). In my case, as my goal was to promote social inclusion (in the programmes I run in Brazil) and intercultural learning (in the programmes I run overseas), the initial lack of exposure to other *Capoeira* schools coupled with the excessive sense of belonging and pride to our own *Capoeira* group, was causing my students to develop a closed sense of cultural identity. As with Mestre Fantasma’s experience with Urban Ritual, my approach was to promote *Rodas, Capoeira* and social encounters in which people from different schools would attend classes and *Rodas* together with my students from the *academia* and the social programmes in the same activities. This way my students had to deal with different people (for example, from different schools but also social classes and professions) and I had the chance to call attention to how diversity of interactions can enrich one’s learning process in *Capoeira* and life, while also enhancing and broadening one’s social networking. These were important lessons that underpinned the success of the *Capoeira*-related programmes I ran to promote social inclusion in Brazil.

Mestre Skisito, a sociologist and *Capoeira* author who runs branches of his school in many Brazilian states and other countries, also shares similar views on how capoeiristas have difficulties dealing with
diversity. This tendency is symptomatic of the paradigm of the first inclusion, as described above.

Mestre Skisito explains:

*Capoeira* has this ideology of union, only that this is something that the more one’s knowledge grows, the more difficult it is to simply mix, combine, associate, create partnerships with everyone. Because as [the student] goes along, he (sic) goes creating his own criteria, that eventually distance himself from whom for some reason follows another trend. Because even though diversity is one of *Capoeira*’s assumptions, it’s not a simple truth. As it’s not that simple in any other cultural terrain. So, this apprenticeship of diversity is the greatest of all missions of all *Capoeira* pedagogues. And it’s hard as hell. And it’s damn difficult. And it demands changes in our own patterns … Hence, for you to change your worldview in relation to diversity, and this I believe it to be maybe the greatest mission of the *Capoeira* Mestres and teachers, it’s very difficult. So, the greatest mission maybe would be to learn diversity with sincerity, with honesty, and manage to apply diversity. Because, it’s the history of xenophobia, the ‘outfits’ syndrome’ … ‘Dude, my outfit, my group, my space … is the best ever!’ So, when someone appears with an influence … Be it so bad that it’s too ugly for me to pay attention to I say ‘What a horrible *ginga* that is!’ When that dude is very good you also close yourself, why? Because ‘that guy will get my students, will change my [*Capoeira*] house, will interfere in my work, will create an animosity between my students and I’. Which means this xenophobia has diverse perceptions, it lumps together from every side, And then the person who presents himself with a pedagogic mission inside *Capoeira*, that is the Mestre, the teacher, he can do whatever, but he cannot change in relation to these values. Because these values are grounded in his soul, in the cultural marrow that moves inside him. That’s it! The guy won’t be able to get rid of this. And maybe this is the most important of all missions for those who are pedagogues, who’re teachers, who’re responsible for *Capoeira*. (Mestre Skisito, personal communication, 10 February 2010).

Mestre Skisito’s statement explains the reasons why *Capoeira*, although inclusive in its features, principles and first instance (as it includes people in a group), often ends up forging diversity-intolerant attitudes and beliefs. The process of self-esteem recovery, the sense of personal empowerment that evolves from mastering movements and techniques and managing the risks of combative situations, and the social bonding that takes place when one joins *Capoeira* are all inherent to the practice. This is so because of the way it is practised and played, demanding discipline, allowing
for social interaction, giving a sense of purpose, upholding a lineage within a cultural practice and so on. That is the reason why *Capoeira* is becoming a popular tool for community development worldwide. When *Capoeira* groups are used to promote social inclusion, however, the evidence points to fact that one needs to be aware of the fact that the values practised in those groups might be broadening or in fact narrowing the student’s ability to not only cope but embrace the opportunities that come from living in culturally diverse environments. The narrowing of one’s ability to embrace diversity in the wider *Capoeira* community and in society in general after being included in a specific *Capoeira* group is one facet of the paradigm of the first inclusion.

Mestre Skisito’s statement above also mentions how identities are forged in *Capoeira* so as to prioritise the group’s survival over the individual students’ wellbeing. Franchise-like groups became the main organisational framework for those carrying out *Capoeira*-related activities worldwide. How *Capoeira* groups organise their activities worldwide is central to the matters discussed in this thesis. In Chapter 3, I discussed the organisational framework of *Capoeira* in relation to how the art-form may bring messages and values from another country and period in history, while it is also influenced at the same time by globalisation from above and globalisation from below (Santos, 2006; Santos, 2008; Giddens 1990). In Chapter 5, I discussed how the predominant organisational framework in *Capoeira* (institutionalised for profit and not-for-profit groups) is positioned in relation to matters of authenticity and authority in the global *Capoeira* community. Such matters, brought up in my research chiefly by non-Brazilian *capoeristas*, tended to favour Brazilians rather than an egalitarian global community. And in Chapter 6, I approached the organisational framework again, pointing out how, to some extent, *capoeristas* around the world have been using social media to escape corporate or fundamentalist-like organisational frameworks or create alternatives that can be used in parallel with these organisational frameworks. In the next section, I discuss ‘the spectre of exclusion’ in relation to *Capoeira*’s legacy as an inherently inclusive and progressive art-form.
The spectre of exclusion and the role played by *Capoeira*

One’s lack of social capital generally leads to social exclusion and consequently non-participation in social and political life (Putnam, 2000). Bauman and Vecchi (2004) observe that ‘men and women of our times are haunted by the *spectre of exclusion*’ (2004: 46-47; italics in original). This statement has significant implications for the practice and culture of *Capoeira* in contemporary times. Indeed, as seen earlier in this chapter, *Capoeira* groups – regardless of their orientation – do provide a sense of belonging and purpose, or solidarity and significance (Clark, 1973) to a community (for example, a neighbourhood or a social group) that are rarely present in our society today. But this comes at a cost, as more and more cultural practices, such as *Capoeira*, try to oppose the effects of globalisation from above (as discussed in Chapter 3) and compensate for the deterritorialisation it causes. In the case of *Capoeira*, the effects of globalisation from above are usually opposed by adopting approaches, attitudes and practices that are highly competitive (among *capoeristas* with the same orientation), diversity-intolerant (among different orientations) and/or based upon myths of purism. Bauman and Vecchi (2004: 47) explain that ‘these congregations pick up tasks and duties abandoned by the retreating social state. They also offer the most painfully missing ingredient of a decent human life, refused to them by society at large: a sense of purpose, of meaningful life (or meaningful death).’ In this sense, ‘being born again’ into a new warm and secure family-like home is a temptation they find hard to resist’ (2004: 87).

Hall (1993: 360) also warns about the risks of securing identities through the adoption of closed versions of culture or community that refuse to engage with problems arising from difference:

> Since cultural diversity is, increasingly, the fate of the modern world, and ethnic absolutism a regressive feature of late-modernity, the greatest danger now arises from forms of national and cultural identity – new and old – which attempt to secure their identity by adopting closed versions of culture or community and by refusal to engage … with the difficult problems that arise from trying to live with difference.
What Hall, together with Bauman and Vecchi, calls attention to is ‘the paradigm of the first inclusion’: the danger of cultural identities and a sense of belonging that refuses to engage with problems brought about by one’s exposure to diversity in globalised societies. The discussions in Chapters 3, 5 and 6 corroborates Hall’s concern about the evidence and the nuances of ‘the problems of livelihood’ (Appadurai, 2000) that arise from one’s engagement with a transnationalised cultural practice. However, the paradigm of the first inclusion tends to happen more frequently when capoeristas rely almost exclusively on the institutionalised framework. When capoeristas focus on the historical lessons and game principles, they seem to overcome this problem. This is because while those adopting institutional frameworks tend to become highly competitive (as institutions often have expensive overheads and need to guarantee their survival in the first place), those guiding their actions, attitudes and projects by the historical lessons and game principles tend to adopt and develop collaborative frameworks that embrace diversity. I discuss these different approaches below.

The anthropologist Daniel Dawson (2006) argues for the importance of Capoeira Angola’s role in the United States, and describes Capoeira in a context that hints at the risks pointed out by Bauman and Vecchi (2004), and by Hall (1993). For Dawson:

It’s very important for African-Americans to look at Capoeira as being a tradition. And just looking at João Grande and Cobrinha together, we are talking about traditions, we are talking about a grandfather and a grandson, we are talking about a lineage that is always remembered in Capoeira. And it’s a sense of connection with history. So, as João Grande was taught by Mestre Pastinha, and as he taught Moraes and Moraes taught Cobrinha, you look at a lineage, we look at a tradition. And I think to African-Americans to have that kind of connectiveness, to see that kind of tradition that goes back hundreds of years gives people here a foundation, a sense of belonging to a longer line and say you were born yesterday and you live today, you know … It’s not this. It goes back centuries for you to understand and appreciate a tradition like Capoeira. (Daniel Dawson in Mandinga in Manhattan, motion picture; Faria, 2006)

The idea of Capoeira as a ‘tradition that goes back hundreds of years’, giving people in the United States and in Capoeira in general ‘a foundation’, is often a fabricated one, as discussed in Chapter 4.
(see Reis, 1998 and Travassos, 2000 for a discussion of Eric Hobsbawm’s concept of invented traditions in *Capoeira*). For example, today people the world over can choose to become part of any ‘lineage’ of prestige virtually in any country by signing up for classes under an instructor/branch descending from that lineage. As a consequence, sometimes people who have trained for decades with one Mestre from one lineage ‘buy in’ to another lineage and build a narrative that denies their participation in the previous (usually less prestigious) one. In the early days of *Capoeira* in Bahia, one would rarely change from one teacher to another, and even if one did this was commonly acknowledged and one would carry both lineages as a reference for a lifetime. Another great difference was that before the institutionalisation of *Capoeira* (the use of associations and companies to organise their classes and activities), one would train only for a few years under a Mestre, and would only be acknowledged as a ‘Mestre’ by his community if he held classes or a frequent *Roda* in his neighbourhood. Today, most people need to train for at least about 20 years before being bestowed with a Mestre title by their teacher. This shows clearly that the notion of ‘traditional lineages’ in a globalised world cannot convey the same meaning as it once did.

Nevertheless, Dawson not only points out that it is important to African-Americans to see *Capoeira* as a tradition, as he also describes the relationship between Mestres and their students using family tie terms – a common custom in *Capoeira*. Hence Dawson explains how, through these family-like ties, a sense of belonging (to a cohesive social group) and purpose (upholding traditions) is built in the practice of *Capoeira*. Dawson’s statement corroborates Bauman’s and Vecchi’s (2004) and Hall’s (1993) claims in the sense that it explains the importance of rescuing a sense of belonging, of significance and restoring a sense of solidarity to a community (be it local and community based or one of practice, whether intermediated by social media or not). However, Dawson’s statement focuses solely on the positive aspects of belonging and the important role *Capoeira* might play in community development endeavours, while Bauman and Vecchi (2004) and Hall (1993) call our attention to the dangers of securing identities through the adoption of closed versions of culture or community (for
example, fundamentalist-like or highly competitive behaviours) that refuse to engage with problems arising from difference.

Len Holman, a primary school principal in the Norfolk area of England, said that ‘the most unlikely children, who would avoid sports and activity, and who were hesitant about having a go, just very quickly got into [Capoeira’. According to Holman the ‘drumming and the singing … just capture their imagination, and it isn’t like other sports and activities you can try but you won’t be very good at’. Holman further explains that Capoeira:

> gives everybody of mixed abilities a moment of start, I mean, they can shine no matter what their abilities. And they’re not singled out or feeling bad about the fact that perhaps they’re large or they can’t move too well … Interestingly, of everything that we run, children really like Capoeira, so whenever we run a course, we run it in school and after-school, we never have any problems filling the spaces. And that’s just interesting because lots of things that we put on that we think they will really like, they just don’t take to, and stop going to. Like street-dance, we thought they would like street-dance. We thought they would love cheerleading, and we got [a] very poor response, you know, they tried it, then quickly dropped out. Capoeira they consistently keep going to. (Len Holman, personal communication, June 2010)

As a historical aspect of Brazil, Capoeira was forged as an intercultural and interdisciplinary practice (see discussion in Chapter 3) that attracts people with diverse musical, combative or cultural inclinations (due to its composing and overlapping features), as also stated by Holman. As an art playing its role within Brazilian (and now the world’s) history, Capoeira seems to have evolved to deal with both cross-cultural and socio-cultural tensions within and across societies. Heavily grounded, in diverse proportions, in several different African, Brazilian indigenous and, to some extent, European cultures, Capoeira served as a token of the Brazilian culture, embodying cultural patterns from past the country’s past history while at the same time affecting the country’s history as it played a role in how its social order changed. Echoing this observation, Cascão, the founder of Capoeira Communities in Norfolk, England, explains how instructors and students relate to Capoeira’s historical legacy:
I think [Capoeira] is quite pure and free from many social barriers, and yet references a past of immense suffering of enslaved people. Many people in the world today, especially economically exploited countries can still relate to that exploitation, and need for self-expression to explore their experience of life. Capoeira is a vehicle, a platform for learning to interact with another person [in the Roda] in a dynamic way, to be part of a local group, part of a national group, to travel or meet travelling Capoeira players from other countries and share the same hobby or interest. I use Capoeira history to open conversations about globalisation, slavery, free-trade, social migration and related exclusion, with school kids, prisoners, excluded teenagers, and I have always been stunned at the level of response and interest. Many young people are so interested and open to cultural history. It amazes me that they give it as much appreciation as they give to the movement itself. (Jim ‘Cascão’, personal communication, June 2011)

Capoeira still carries with it many of its original inclusive and intercultural values. The jogo de Capoeira (game of Capoeira) is an example, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Capoeristas frequently mention the jogo as a universal body language in which the interaction between two practitioners of any age, gender, weight or level of expertise does not necessarily lead to a ‘winner or loser’ dichotomy. The jogo overlaps combative, playful and cooperative features, creating a context that is at the same time challenging and inclusive. Canarinho’s statement below demonstrates that, given enough exposure and training, non-Brazilians may also embody the jogo’s principles:

If you go in there to win, then you’ll be defeated. If you go in there to engage, and maybe still show off, but not to win, then I think you won’t be defeated, and you can’t win. (Canarinho, personal communication, March 2010)

Capoeristas all over the world are embracing values and principles from another place and time in order to master their game skills. This is, as I stated in Chapter 1, a conceptual but embodied journey. I also explained that the jogo de Capoeira remains central to one’s understanding of the cultural practice’s philosophy. It is embodying the game’s principles and transcending them in to their daily lives that capoeristas make use of Capoeira as a practical philosophy. André ‘Bexiga’ (2005), a prominent Capoeira teacher in Brazil, explains how, after acquiring the necessary skills to play in the Roda, children might transcend the lessons learnt in the practice in their daily lives:
The *Capoeira Roda* itself has a protocol of conduct. There are things you can do, and there are things you can’t do. There are things you should do, and there are things you shouldn’t. And the children begin to learn that. They begin to notice who should they respect, respect everybody, but there is a hierarchy and if they want to join the *Roda*, they need to respect the rites, and ask permission. That is when one begins to educate. And [the students] will notice what they should or should not do. That is when you transfer the education from the training and the *Roda* to their homes and school, the way they respect the teachers and how they should respect the older people, their mothers and their teachers. (André ‘Bexiga’ on *Volta Por Cima: Capoeira Educação e Cultura*, 2005; motion picture, author’s translation)

André’s description of how children learn and approach the game of *Capoeira* finds support in Lewis’s (1992) semiotic explanations about how, from the domain of microstructures, game hierarchies are extended into macrostructures of Bahian and Brazilian social interactions and cultural beliefs. In addition, Lewis explains that because in Brazil a child grows into adulthood playing and mastering *Capoeira’s* playfulness and techniques, the game combines both youthful and mature approaches to playfulness. Today, however, these *Capoeira* principles, playfulness, cultural values and concepts are being embodied by *capoeristas* wherever the practice takes place.

Jon ‘Leite Quente’, a young teacher in Christchurch, New Zealand, who in addition to running the oldest *Capoeira* school in his city has also been using *Capoeira* in community development programmes, also explains how lessons learnt in practice might transfer into one’s daily life:

When you’re playing with someone sometimes you find that your game doesn’t fit, you know? And you have to change, you have to adapt and so you get good at that and that equips you to go into a situation [outside *Capoeira*] … You know you walk into a room you got no idea what’s going on, what the protocols are and this kind of thing. Same thing, you turn up to a *Roda* and you kind of get there and you have a look around and you notice what is going on, you notice some similarities and you quickly have to work out who’s in charge, who’s the person that I have to talk to first, so on and so forth. And it’s the same thing in life. *Capoeira* equips you to come into a situation where you don’t speak the language, you don’t know what the social norms are, you don’t know what’s going on, you know? And you get better at noticing these things. (Leite Quente, personal communication, August 2010)
André’s, Lewis’s and Leite’s related statements above explain how *Capoeira* impacts one’s character, and therefore behaviour, attitudes and world-views, through a process of self-empowerment that happens as one develops, hones, masters and embodies the interdisciplinary features of *Capoeira*. The statements above also indicate that the *capoeiristas*’ embodiment of these skills and values is not limited to an early age, as well as illustrating how the lessons learnt in practice might transfer into one’s everyday life. And it is this embodiment of skills and values that make it possible for *capoeiristas* all over the world to communicate through the *jogo* as a universal language.

Such a context begins to clarify how *Capoeira*’s insubordinate role and empowering means of expression within ethnic minority groups made sense of its ‘biography’, convening a linear meaning to slightly different manifestations of rebellion under the term *Capoeira* throughout history. Overcoming more than 300 years of oppression, by the turn of the twentieth century *Capoeira* had come to appear as an intercultural folk practice, serving as a social platform for leisure and mutual help and one of the few manifestations of a cultural practice purposefully enabling under-privileged Brazilians to express themselves. Today, the same platform is being used by people from diverse nationalities to promote social inclusion, intercultural learning and wellbeing in community development programmes. Those focusing on *Capoeira*’s historical legacy and game principles (see discussions in Chapters 1 and 2) are the ones overcoming the barriers and limitations brought about by the overarching use of the institutional framework (see discussions on Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

One of the devices *capoeiristas* use to overcome these barriers and limitations is the *jogo* as a universal body language. As explained by Mestre Jogo de Dentro (see Chapter 1), ‘[One] can come to a Roda without knowing how to speak English, French or Italian, but in the *Capoeira Roda* you manage a conversation with the other person’ (personal communication, author’s translation, May 2010). And ‘while modern sport and gymnastics – in their different ways – always may imply certain
tendencies of sameness and standardisation’ (Eichberg, 2004: 17), in part because of their overarching institutional framework and in part because of the hegemonic ideology from which they evolved, ‘popular sports represent a way to peace by playing on difference’ (Eichberg, 2004: 17). This discussion on barriers brought about the use of institutional frameworks was presented in Chapter 6 and it is elaborated further below.

*Capoeira* and community development: Past and present perspectives

There is a common expectation from the international *Capoeira* community that those who begin training and organising themselves without a formal connection to a Mestre and a group (most often a Brazilian teacher with the main branch of the group located in Brazil) will eventually do so. Such expectation lies partly in the belief that we need formal institutions to surmount problems that require collective action in order to be tackled and solved (Putnam, 1993). While a close connection with Brazilian culture and belonging to a group often facilitates learning, providing cultural context to those learning *Capoeira*, there are also economic and power-related agendas involved in this ‘expectation’, as seen in Chapters 5 and 6.

As seen above, many *capoeristas* choose to use the art-form in community development projects. The great majority of these *capoeristas* also choose to organise their programmes through NGOs or social enterprises that are run independently from their *Capoeira* groups. The great majority of the *capoeristas* starting these programmes also chose to do so before they were formally recognised as instructors by their *Capoeira* groups. Such trends are a consequence of these ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ *capoeristas’ connection with *Capoeira’s* historical legacy as a resistance practice. The sense of support (solidarity) and significance in the transnational *Capoeira* community as a community of sentiment (Clark, 1973) seems to be empowering these *capoeristas* to break from the predominant corporate group-oriented and hierarchically based framework in favour of practices that are more aligned with community development principles (Ife, 2002; Pedlar and Haworth, 2006), as I discuss below. This trend and its progressive agenda are in harmony with the insurgent cosmopolitan
capoeristas’ use of social media as a ‘new social movement’ (Wilson, 2008, as discussed in Chapter 6), but it is also deeply related to Putnam’s concept of social capital and how it fosters spontaneous cooperation and social organisation through trust, norms (of reciprocity) and networks (Putnam, 1993, 2000).

To some extent, it is these social-activist capoeristas’ social capital, with its inherent trust, that allows them to break from rigid and ingrained hierarchical institutional models in Capoeira. It is precisely because their networks of civic engagement are more horizontally ordered that their alternative institutions (NGOs) have better success than their hierarchically ordered Capoeira groups in solving dilemmas of collective action (Putnam, 1993). Due to their goals of community development, their social capital and the trust it imparts in their networks, these capoeristas are able to operate in alternative ways, often breaking rules or norms of conduct within the mostly hierarchical and rigid international Capoeira community. Putnam (1993: 174) explains that when people everywhere face problems requiring collective resolution, they look to their past for solutions. In the specific challenging context of applying Capoeira to community development programmes, these ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ capoeristas in various countries look to Capoeira’s historical legacy as a resistance practice to tackle their present local challenges.

For example, Tarek started Bidna Capoeira (then renamed Capoeira4Refugees) as a social venture independent from Brazilian groups. At the time, he was not formally acknowledged as a Capoeira instructor by his group, as he moved from Germany back to Syria before spending enough time training to be graduated as an instructor. Tarek ‘Laranja’s initiative illustrates how there are close synergies between Ife’s (2002) five community principles and the way capoeristas have been organising their activities and using the art-form. Tarek’s statement discusses the ‘pros and cons’ of establishing an independent initiative to establish socio-cultural programmes at a time when belonging to one of the major groups or lineages, regardless of styles, seems to be the only legitimate avenue (as discussed in Chapter 5). In Tarek’s words:
I’m doing what I’ve got to do to get *Capoeira* established here. I remember the time when I started teaching in parks and on roofs in the old city just to get started. If I hadn’t made this step, it might have been decades before a school was established in Syria … and they love it here. The pros of setting up your own school are that you are liberated from the political issues in *Capoeira*; free to show your respect for the art in your own way. The cons … it’s a lot of work, starting with just 2 or 3 students and one *berimbau*. … For me *Capoeira* is a very powerful tool of education for youth and this is why we focus on them. *Capoeira* is my family, in every country I feel at home. And when I see all the kids and the refugees who are in need of some joy in their lives, it’s no longer a choice to help them; it’s an obligation. (Tarek ‘Laranja’, personal communication, February 2010)

Ife’s (2002: 201-225) principles relate to most, if not all, of the *Capoeira*-related social programmes mentioned in this chapter. As seen with *Capoeira*4Refugees, among other important features, many of the teachers and the social programmes mentioned in my study created local solutions for local demands, connecting community recreation to ethical, sustainable, holistic, diverse and inclusive principles. For instance, while the social and *Capoeira* interactions within and among *Capoeira* groups tend to over-focus on loyalty as a way to protect the groups as institutions and fund their teachers and overheads, in the programmes mentioned in this chapter, the social-activist *capoeristas* tended to focus on collaborative solutions (among *Capoeira* groups, NGOs and local governments). Moreover, while most *Capoeira* groups adopted a corporate-like organisational framework, the social-activist *capoeristas* mentioned in this chapter found alternative ways to fund and run their programmes in more sustainable ways (often without the profit motive as an imperative). Finally, while most corporate or fundamentalist-like *Capoeira* groups tend to over-emphasise the value of Brazilian culture in all countries where they operate, often disregarding the potential contribution or value of local cultural practices, those operating within community development programmes find ways to value both the *Capoeira*-related practices (and Brazilian culture in general), and the local cultural practices as a way to foster intercultural learning, social inclusion and psycho-social healing. Whenever and wherever head-teachers and instructors have a tendency to over-emphasise the value
of Brazilian culture, conflicts based on ambivalent notions of authority and authenticity also tend to happen more often (as seen in Chapter 5).

Arborio ‘Papagaio’ Sarkissian, who pioneered the teaching of Capoeira in Lebanon, told me he ‘started the group out of necessity’, and before being acknowledged as an instructor, given that during the time when he began offering Capoeira classes there were no other Capoeira groups around Lebanon to train with. According to him:

*Capoeira Sobreviventess* [survivors] was formed in Lebanon shortly after the 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel … The name was inspired by the fact that core members of the group continued training in our little studio in the Hamra district of Beirut despite frequent blackouts during the 34-day war, (Arborio ‘Papagaio’, personal communication, December 2010)

The birth of the Sobreviventess group and its development into the Volta ao Mundo (VAM) NGO, as well as of Capoeira4Refugees, are examples of how Capoeira’s principles and narrative as a libertarian practice might guide one’s life and a group’s actions towards emancipation from individualism and competitiveness (which tears the social fabric of small, locally based communities) and the general well-being of their local communities. Aligned with such principles, the core members of Sobreviventess launched Volta ao Mundo, an NGO dedicated to community development through the practice of Capoeira and broader cultural exchange between Lebanon and Brazil. Although VAM is chiefly geared towards the practice and diffusion of Capoeira as a tool for social inclusion and personal empowerment, it also offers Brazilian Portuguese and Brazilian dance classes to its members and assisted students. VAM’s programmes, exhibitions and events in general are based upon the strong bond between Lebanon and Brazil. The bond between Lebanon and Brazil dates back to 1880, when the Brazilian Emperor Pedro II visited Lebanon and encouraged a large migratory flux between the two countries. Maybe because of this early bond with Brazil and its culture, Lebanon

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shows great appreciation for Brazilian music, dance and soccer. Brazil, on the other hand, is home to over six million Lebanese descendants and has broadly encompassed parts of the Lebanese and Middle-Eastern cuisine in its culture today.

One of Volta ao Mundo’s main goals is to assist a wide range of marginalised communities. As Papagaio and Basma ‘Alegria’ Barakat, the head instructor and the most active member of VAM respectively, explained to me:

VAM was born out of the desire to work with underprivileged children in Lebanon, especially from marginalised communities such as Palestinian refugees in the camps, poor children in Dahiyeh and Ashrafieh (neighbourhoods in Beirut), and at-risk and challenged youth throughout (e.g. mentally and/or physically challenged, or victims of drug abuse, domestic violence, etc.). (Arborio ‘Papagaio’ and Basma ‘Alegria’, personal communication, December 2010)

As mentioned above, those engaging with Capoeira in community development programmes tend to show great synergy between their actions, agenda and organisational framework, and Ife’s (2002) principles. VAM, for instance, chose to use Capoeira-related cultural practices to tackle local social problems cause by conflicts and situations particular to the Middle East, such as the Palestinian refugee camps or the at-risk situation of children from migrant families (from other local countries) who live in the Lebanese streets. Ife (2002: 201), in fact, warns about the interdependence of these ecological, social justice, valuing the local, process, and global and local principles. Ife affirms that even when a single concept or a group (of principles) overcomes another concept or group, they all need to work harmoniously without competing or attacking one another. In other words, if a specific situation or context demands, for instance, the predominant use of the valuing the local principle, the actions, policies and programmes emphasising such principle should not go against the ecological principle. Likewise, the implementation of a community development/recreation approach requires awareness about discourses of power when addressing local demands in relation to leisure, social interaction and intercultural learning, assuring that the services delivered and activities proposed and encouraged are in accordance with the principles of community development.

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Despite Papagaio’s lineage linking the Sobreviventes group to one of the most famous Capoeira Mestres on the international scene, like other social-activists in Capoeira, he also chose to operate VAM as an NGO independently from his group. This common thread among the Capoeira groups running social programmes shows that, perhaps instinctively, they have been adapting their operational framework and guiding principles to match community development principles, as Ife (2002) describes them. Steering from rigidly and hierarchically ordered Capoeira groups and keeping their networks more horizontally ordered through their NGOs, these social-activist capoeristas also assure that their civic endeavours will more easily overcome dilemmas of collective action (Putnam, 1993, 2000). Alegria, who started training a couple of months after the ‘One Month War’ in Lebanon, states:

Since then, my life has changed on both the personal and professional level; even my personality and the way I approach life and obstacles are now different. Monitor31 Papagaio was not only teaching the movements, but he was introducing us to a brand new world and culture. I was one of the founding members of Volta ao Mundo because I wanted to reach out to the youth in Lebanon. I want them to experience and go through the same transformation that I went through when I found Capoeira. (Basma ‘Alegria’, personal communication, December 2010)

In addition to the personal transformation that Alegria went through after joining Capoeira, I want to call attention to the fact that she and her instructors (and all the others involved in the launching of VAM) had no formal connections to any Capoeira group or Mestre, nor had they obtained a certificate or a teaching graduation32 to teach Capoeira. In ordinary circumstances within the international Capoeira community, they might have suffered prejudice, discrimination and even persecution for

31 ‘Monitor’ is a graduation in Capoeira that in most groups precedes one’s recognition as an instructor. The distinction in this case is that a ‘monitor’ usually teaches under the close supervision of their teacher while the ‘instructor’ can teach more independently.

32 Different capoeira lineages and groups will use different graduation systems. Some use cords, akin to other martial-arts belts, and some use certificates to mark their students’ progress and make sure they have been ‘officially’ allowed to teach by their group.
doing the same outside the community development rationale. Alegria shares the profile and background of the programmes’ students and explains why VAM decided to use Capoeira to address their reality as follows:

The Lebanese civil war in the 1970s is the main reason some segregation exists in our schools. There was a physical distance that prevented the youth of different religious groups to mingle with each other. Therefore, we are targeting special needs students from the 13 religious sects in Lebanon in order for us to eventually merge them into one Capoeira group. Our selection extends to include the following: (1) at-risk youth (i.e. drugs, crime, etc.); (2) post-war trauma youth; (3) youth with learning difficulties/disabilities; (4) youth facing social and socio-economic difficulties; (5) Refugees from Sudan, Iraq and Palestine. (Alegria, personal communication, December 2010)

Reinforcing the link made between the concept of a transnational Capoeira community and community development in this chapter, Haywood (1994: 29) states that a community development perspective ‘will allow individuals and groups to participate in, or be consulted about, policies affecting their everyday lives’, and that, although ‘leisure and recreation have not featured strongly in such an approach … where community development is interpreted more widely – literally as the development of a sense of community, or belonging – then it becomes an important medium for growth’. Alegria’s and Papagaio’s personal stories using Capoeira to foster social development are also in tune with Thorpe’s (2014) and Thorpe and Ahmad’s (2015) recommendations for those developing the implementation policies for the UN’s Sport for Development and Peace programmes.

The story of how Laranja started his organisation provides a good example of group participation and consultation in the provision of a service directly affecting their lives. According to Laranja:

The idea for Bidna Capoeira came recently, after coming home from an amazing few days at the Al Tanf refugee camp. The kids and community at the camp wanted more and more Capoeira; in fact after just one session they started a Roda, playing, clapping and singing Capoeira songs completely by themselves – no one from our Capoeira team was even there. They chanted ‘Bidna Capoeria, Bidna Capoeira’; ‘We want Capoeira’. It’s a pretty clear message, which gave us our name … The attention to and involvement in Capoeira really
grew after we worked in the Palestinian refugee camp Al Tanf, between the Iraqi/Syrian border. The impact on the people there was amazing; [Capoeira] lifted the spirits of the whole camp. The psychologists at the camp encouraged people to join our training. Children with serious psychological problems started playing with us and began to express themselves. They began to see a beautiful side of life. Their social confidence grew in the classes and the Roda. Many kids are almost unrecognisable from before; they are so light and happy. (Tarek ‘Laranja’, personal communication, February 2010)

The programmes mentioned above show that the role of ‘community recreation’ is an integral part of any ‘community development’ programme, as it not only complements community development, but also strengthens its principles, once its concern is ‘to meet leisure needs of specific interest groups, especially those that have not benefited from traditional [read official] forms of facility provision’ (Haywood, 1994: 27). The Capoeira-related programmes mentioned in this chapter, for instance, met the needs of refugees in camps and at-risk children and adolescents practically living on the streets of Lebanon in alternative ways and often within non-conventional facilities (for example, in improvised squares in refugee camps, in parks and on patios of buildings where partner NGOs have their offices). These Capoeira-related programmes were also implemented ‘encouraging youth-focused … initiatives to move beyond the “deficit model” and toward more collaborative projects that provide space for local voices and acknowledge youth agency’ (Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015: 678).

Haywood (1994: 32-38) classifies methods of service delivery and relates them to community development principles as follows:

‘Top Down’ approach – heavily criticised by community workers though indispensable in some cases; ‘Client-led approaches’ – encompassing most community recreation-oriented endeavours; and ‘Partnership approaches’ – common feature linking voluntary groups and the public sector.

None of the social-activist capoeiristas I interviewed for my research operated using the ‘top down’ approach. They all operated combining ‘client-led’ and ‘partnership’ approaches to tackle local needs and problems in partnership with local NGOs, businesses and government. In 2010, for instance,
*Capoeira* Refugee (formerly Bidna) programmes involved 1200 community members and 150 staff members, with the support from institutions such as the Brazilian Embassy in Syria; the European Union; UNICEF; Terre des Hommes; and other local institutions. This was an impressive introduction to *Capoeira*, a Brazilian cultural practice, to areas with little, if any, common cultural background. In this case, the provision of *Capoeira*-related activities was delivered through a combination of the ‘client-led’ and ‘partnership’ approaches, as explained by Haywood (1994).

Another example of *Capoeira*-related activities being delivered through a combination of the ‘client-led’ and ‘partnership’ approaches within community development programmes is *Capoeira* Centre São Salamão. Founded in June 1997 by Mestre Mago and his students, in the neighbourhood of Pina (Recife), the CCSS engages in activities that strengthen cultural belonging, a culture of peace, the access to physical exercise and leisure, as well as personal development and health through the practice of *Capoeira*. According to Mestre Mago:

> In 2008, CCSS made a quantum leap in the quality of its initiatives when it won the ‘Prêmio Ludicidade’ [Playfulness Award] – for organisations that help develop children – in the government grant folder ‘Pontinhos de Cultura’ (Little Spots of Culture – for programs fostering cultural activities such as drama, literature, music, painting, digital media, etc. for children and youth – translation mine). CCSS also won the ‘Pontos de Cultura’ prize (Points of Culture – for cultural programmes in general). Both are initiatives of the Ministry of Culture to boost groups that are recognised as working with culture in a citizen-forming way in underprivileged areas. In light of that achievement it was possible for CCSS to realise the dream of extending some initiatives and launching others … One of those other initiatives is the Cinema Club called Cine Mandinga, which takes place every second Wednesday of the month. On that day we show movies and documentaries to the community. Topics include local life and cultural issues. Most movies give priority to productions from the state of Pernambuco, hence enabling the presence of the filmmaker for dialogues … To give continuity to CCSS’s social projects, they went on to create the ‘Digital Illusion Workshop’ for the participants in the Caxinguelês Project. They believe in the thought that the so-called digital culture goes beyond learning IT skills and gives youngsters a wider and necessary outlook on the IT world, providing them with instructions for an intelligent use of IT tools and preparing them for the workforce. (Mestre Mago, personal communication, April 2012)
These methods for delivering recreation in community development programmes, as explained by Haywood (1994: 32), are inseparable and their interplay is constant, as seen in the above examples. In addition, the constant focus on the abovementioned community development principles when planning and implementing principles of empowerment and leisure delivery should never be abandoned if the policies and activities proposed are to meet the needs of specific interest groups, such as those seen above, which have not benefited from official forms of service provision. Haywood’s (1994) discussion of top-down or bottom-up delivery suits this case study with Capoeira in the sense that the global Capoeira community experiences this polarity due to the way most Mestres have organised their groups in a corporate-like organisational framework, while others have fought this tendency with the use of the internet and social media (see Chapter 6), and choosing to practise and teach Capoeira within community development programmes. Haywood’s discussion and this study case also find correlation in Thorpe’s and Ahmad’s (2015) critique of the ‘deficit mode’, as I discuss below.

Precisely because these actions target specific interest groups (for example, refugees and children of illegal migrants at social risk) that have not benefited from official forms of service provision, these communities need a creative combination of development-orientated principles and service-delivery methods empowering them to subvert the Western mainstream social order (which sees all non-White ethnicities as minorities). Such a combination thus assures not only the smaller communities’ right to leisure and recreation, but also their right to express their cultural values within the global and local realms of our current societies when engaging with these activities. After many applications and struggles to try to secure funds from aid agencies to support VAM’s programmes, Alegria became suspicious of such funds. She believes that reliance on such funds may compromise the NGO’s ability to be self-sustaining in its programmes and activities. According to Alegria, ‘patience and self-funding’ are needed as:
Local communities are not always cooperative and new ideas are usually mistrusted. We felt that the best way to sell the idea of Capoeira was by performing Capoeira. We learned the hard way that before sending any party our proposal, we need to first reach out by forming a Roda and giving them a great show filled with energy in order for us to get them interested and hooked on the idea. We follow up on this with our proposal and a meeting to explain our vision. I feel now that Capoeira is best explained in the showing of the game. (Alegria, personal communication, December 2010)

The adoption of community development principles empowering the cultural expression of local communities through leisure is likely to play a big role in forging identities and ways of life more capable of dealing with cultural diversity. Moreover, the implementation of programmes within the community development and recreation perspective described above enables communities to choose recreational activities in accordance with their local cultural, personal inclinations and political agenda. Furthermore, it allows local/minority communities to use these programmes to respond to their needs and to untangle discourses of power engendered in the service delivery of leisure by the ‘traditional’ mainstream politics. VAM, once again, might serve as a best practice example of principles valuing the local culture and agenda although teaching an art-form from another country.

The way the provision of Capoeira-related activities is delivered by VAM also subverts the dominant cultural exchange trends in Capoeira. Generally speaking, the cultural exchange that takes place in Capoeira is predominantly about sharing Capoeira and other Brazilian cultural practices in countries other than Brazil. What VAM does instead is to encourage its non-Brazilian students to present and perform practices from their own backgrounds. Although in VAM’s case these cultural manifestations are presented and performed separately, VAM is still at the vanguard of such practices, as the great majority of Capoeira groups and institutions vary rarely feature non-Brazilian cultural practices in their events, workshops and performances. Disguised as strategies to preserve Capoeira, often these attitudes are adopted and reinforced to portray and maintain positions of power (generally favouring Brazilian Mestres) and vectors of cultural flow (with Brazil as a focal point). In Alegria’s
perspective, however, such an approach, instead of weakening Capoeira’s traditions, strengthens the children’s self-esteem:

The show … was made up of two parts, a Capoeira performance by our group and the kids and a Lebanese/Iraqi/Palestinian performance by the kids themselves. This exchange of culture acted as a sort of empowerment for the youth and recognition by their school teachers and parents. It did boost their confidence and showed them that they can be proud of their background. It was a new way of communicating and these are all part of the project’s aims. (Alegria, personal communication, December 2010)

According to the concepts presented above, the meaning of leisure and its features – art, sports, culture and entertainment – should be re-evaluated and located within a community development and recreation framework fostering not the inclusion of multicultural minorities within the mainstream society, but rather the adoption of a new inclusive paradigm empowering the expression of diverse local communities’ cultural values through arts, sports and entertainment, forging an intercultural society. Policies and actions encouraging the inclusion of multicultural minorities within mainstream society imply that these minorities need to conform to values forged by the mainstream. An intercultural approach, however, begins by acknowledging the contribution of all cultures in a new paradigm forged by all cultures participating in it.

Another important concern of community development and recreation when delivering leisure services is the integration of such services with other forms of service provision. Chiefly, integration between community recreation, education and training is important, as this kind of integrative approach values the use of indigenous resources, responds to local demands and offers locally based solutions. The ways in which CCSS, Capoeira Communities, VAM and Capoeira4Refugees are operating with diverse activities (for example, Capoeira, language, culinary and IT classes) and training (for example, training local people to deliver their activities) provide examples of how this integration between community recreation, education and training might happen in a practical, local and client-centred way while still honouring community development principles and delivery methods as proposed by Ife (2002) and Haywood (1994).
The way the above-mentioned NGOs deliver their activities and fulfil their community development missions is also in tune with Thorpe and Ahmad’s (2015) critique of the ‘deficit mode’ (Sapaaij, 2011, cited in Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015). Such an approach ‘assumes [that] poor youth in developing or war-torn contexts are victims needing “our” version of sport for their empowerment’ (Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015: 699). Moreover, these scholars encourage SDP programmes to move away from top-down models ‘in which sports [and other cultural activities] are delivered to those “in need” with little consultation with potential participants, and towards a greater recognition of grassroots sports already being practised and developed by children and youth in local contexts’ (Thorpe & Ahmad, 2015: 699). In other words, Thorpe and Ahmad ‘advocate greater consideration for youth agency, and more space for their voices in SDP program development and implementation’, and call attention to other scholars concurring with their views (Evers, 2010; McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Nicholls, 2009; Nicholls et al., 2011, cited in Thorpe and Ahmad, 2015: 699).

Haywood (1994: 30-31) explains that although the ‘corporate management is intended to ensure inter-department liaison within local government in order to meet such goals [efficient service delivery and holistic view of people’s needs]’, the reality is that only a few initiatives since the 1970s have succeeded in establishing such a level of liaison between community recreation, and education and training demands. Once again, some of the concepts and contexts within community development and Capoeira overlap. As discussed in Chapter 4, the adoption of corporate-like management in Capoeira was necessary to lower overheads and support the spreading of Capoeira to new territories. This managerial approach, however, also concentrated power (see in relation to the matters of authority and authenticity discussed in Chapter 5) in the hands of a few international Capoeira groups’ leaders (usually Brazilian Mestres). Furthermore, such an approach also hinders the adoption and development of an inclusive and intercultural paradigm originally inherent in Capoeira (as seen in Chapter 2) by those practising Capoeira in the transnational scenario today. According to Haywood, such failure lies partly in the fact that:
A community orientation to service delivery … demands decentralization of power, collective approaches to problems and a holistic view of the needs of certain groups, all of which imply a necessity to abandon narrow definitions of the professional roles of teacher, recreation manager, youth worker and so on, and a redefinition of the skills and knowledge of such professionals. (1994: 30-31)

So, on the one hand the theoretical definitions, concepts and principles of community recreation demand integration with other community needs – for instance, the integration of recreation with education and training under a client-led approach. On the other hand, there is a narrow definition of the professional roles of teacher, recreation manager and youth worker stemming from official (mainstream) forms of service delivery hindering the adoption of such concepts and principles in the area of community development.

**Conclusion**

As discussed in Chapter 2, since its beginning *Capoeira* has been forged by intercultural interactions as an instrument against oppression, culminating through its evolution within the context of Brazilian society in a complex interdisciplinary art-form. Within such a context, it becomes evident that the understanding of *Capoeira*’s history as an art-form born of struggles and conflict in Brazil influences how ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ *capoeristas* (Santos, 2006) engage with *Capoeira* today and use it in social programmes to bring about inclusion, community development and personal empowerment (which in turn offers people the resilience to face personal, social and cultural challenges). As international people now belonging the worldwide *Capoeira* community, it is also evident through these NGOs’ ubiquitous use of an alternative *modus operandi* and horizontally ordered networks that they are looking at *Capoeira*’s past function as an instrument of resistance against oppression to overcome current dilemmas of collective action and to achieve social development (Putnam, 1993, 2000). Moreover, these intercultural and progressive lessons from *Capoeira*’s past seem to be important not only to overcome hierarchical and rigid structures, behaviours and attitudes inside the
worldwide *Capoeira* community, but also to foster trust, norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement in *Capoeira*-related community development programmes (Putnam, 1993, 2000).

The use of *Capoeira* in community development programmes might be hindered by ‘the paradigm of the first inclusion’, as seen in this chapter. The paradigm of the first inclusion is fostered by teachers when they adopt either a profit-driven corporate-like organisational framework or a diversity-intolerant fundamentalist-like behaviour. In this case, one’s inclusion in a (*Capoeira*) group leads to the narrowing of one’s social network and a diversity intolerant attitude.

However, as observed by Queiroz (2005), *Capoeira* is built upon the understanding of each other, and it can only be consummated within a sense of alterity. Functioning in opposition to exploitation practices and colonial drives to homogenise non-European cultures for over three centuries, *Capoeira* has developed effective methods of empowerment against, and subversion of, competitive, individualist and consumption values that inherently cause exclusion. These methods and narratives are still present in *Capoeira*, and might be used in community development endeavours.

The cases studied in this chapter provide evidence that *Capoeira* is already largely being used in community development programmes worldwide. They also provide evidence that the social-activist *capoeristas* breaking from the corporate-like organisational framework and embracing *Capoeira*’s early principles in community development endeavours are succeeding in promoting social inclusion and intercultural learning in ways that surpass the paradigm of the first inclusion. Moreover, the success of the case studies presented in this chapter in using *Capoeira* to promote social inclusion, psycho-social healing and intercultural learning point to the fact that those working within community development programmes are bringing today’s practice of the art closer to the way it was practised in its early days in Bahia, Brazil.
Chapter 8
Final considerations

The main aim of this study has been to investigate whether or not Capoeira could be an efficient tool to promote social inclusion and intercultural learning within community development programmes. Additionally, the study also has had two further objectives: to discuss Capoeira’s intercultural origins in relation to the current debates, usually polarised between a ‘nationalist’ (Brazilian) and an ‘Afro-centric’ (diasporic) view of its origins; and to investigate and unveil underlying socio-cultural tensions within the practice of Capoeira with regard to such applications and matters of geographical or ethnic authenticity in a global context. My research methods involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. A descriptive analysis was applied to statistical data gathered from questionnaires, and a combination of ethnography, virtual ethnography and content analysis dealt with data coming from in-depth interviews and secondary sources of data (online interviews and discussions, and social media websites) respectively (see Chapter 3).

The historical overview provided in Chapter 2 presents an account of Capoeira’s origins that is heavily grounded (in diverse proportions) in several different African, Brazilian Indigenous, and European cultures coexisting in Brazilian territory and sprawling from the beginning of the colonial era in the 1500s to current times. The historical overview provided in Chapter 2 also presented Capoeira as an accurate representation of Brazilian culture, functioning ‘as a sign of history, preserving cultural patterns from former times, and as a sign in history evolving along with changes in the social order’ (Lewis, 1992: 9, italics in original). In the same sense, as a transnationalised cultural practice, Capoeira now plays a role in the world’s history, evolving along with changes in the social order, but also preserving cultural patterns from former times that carry lessons for today’s cross-cultural, socio-cultural and economic tensions within societies. As I argued in Chapter 2, different manifestations of rebellion were grouped under the term Capoeira throughout history, characterising Capoeira as an empowering tool used by ethnic minorities to resist acculturation,
oppression and exploitation. Being an interdisciplinary and intercultural manifestation that originated in Brazil, rather than a Brazilian or a diasporic cultural practice, is a great part of *Capoeira*’s legacy. It is also how an ever-increasing number of people worldwide make sense of their connection with *Capoeira* and how it defines their identities, belonging and embodied cultural values.

In Chapter 3, I outlined the methods used in this study, explored the intricacies and complexities of my fieldwork and also discussed my position as an insider in my field of research in relation to the relevant literature corroborating the understanding of the advantages and challenges of such an approach (Bennett, 2002, 2003; Hodkinson, 2005). The fact that I was a senior Brazilian instructor conducting research abroad has led some of my counterparts and interviewees (mostly the non-Brazilian *capoeiras*) to see me as a *Capoeira* ombudsman. Being perceived in this way by my interviewees gave me access to information that would often be concealed from other senior Brazilian instructors and even unavailable to outside researchers. Because I was a relatively young *Capoeira* teacher (in my mid-thirties) and a researcher, however, some of the elder Mestres and younger instructors (usually Brazilians) saw me as an outsider. They denied me interviews, undermined my recruitment for interviews with other Mestres and attempted to charge me a fee for their interviews (an offer I declined). On one specific occasion, a *Capoeira* colleague warned me not to disclose the kind of information my research was revealing because it could undermine the worldwide practice of *Capoeira*. Throughout the course of my fieldwork, the fact that I was seen as both a researcher and a *Capoeira* teacher brought me closer to my respondents, especially the non-Brazilian interviewees, allowing them to share information not usually shared with Brazilian Mestres.

My position as an insider researcher, however, brought with it a few shortcomings. Some of these were related to the complexities of the transnational social settings of *Capoeira*. What is generally seen and understood as the international *Capoeira* community is actually composed of a few different orientations (as discussed in Chapter 2), each with a myriad of groups and schools. Such diversity of *Capoeira* orientations and groups creates an imbricated scenario that sometimes rendered my insider
role more or less efficient according to how close to my own orientation or group the potential participants were. For similar reasons, my role as an insider researcher also impacted my sampling methods and recruitment of interviewees. Despite acting carefully as a researcher to maintain a neutral position regarding the diverse Capoeira orientations and groups (with their agendas and attitudes), I was always more successful in finding volunteers to fill in questionnaires and attend interviews in those groups and events that had views that were similar to my own in Capoeira. The opposite is also true. The environments and episodes in which the recruitment process for questionnaires failed completely or was not as successful were those in which the participants’ orientation or group did not resonate with my own orientation or group network in Capoeira. These shortcomings are likely to repeat themselves in other social settings whenever the researcher is an insider. Being aware of these shortcomings might be helpful for future researchers conducting empirical work on Capoeira in the planning and designing of their own fieldwork. The difficulties of gaining access to data or in overcoming network limitations when adopting an insider approach to ethnographic research might still be challenging for the researcher, even when the researcher is aware of them.

The way the global flow of cultures – or, rather, their transnational interplay – reveals contexts, contradictions and frictions (among their participants) that go beyond the local/global, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic, diasporic/transnational dichotomies is discussed in Chapter 4. Approaching the worldwide practice of Capoeira as a practical example of the globalisation of cultures, I presented a theoretical background arguing that what is generally known as globalisation today is actually a complex and multilayered interplay of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. This study of the global diffusion of Capoeira thus exemplifies the shift local practices undergo when their function, meaning and ancestry are questioned by our current globalised and often deterritorialised way of relating to each other and to the cultural practices in which we engage. For example, within the transnational Capoeira community, capoeiras who reside in one specific country often meet, train, play and participate in workshops in various other countries. This happens especially in the United States and Europe, but increasingly in Australasia as well. Another way
capoeristas experience deterritorialised (Lull, 1995) interactions is through their engagement with various social media groups (as discussed in Chapter 6).

The study of the transnationalisation of Capoeira supports the argument that ‘globalisation from above’ carries in itself counter-hegemonic possibilities, as posed by Boaventura Santos (2006), Milton Santos (2008) and Giddens (1990). Both historically and organisationally speaking, the case of Capoeira provides evidence that, although occurring infrequently, the hegemonic type of globalisation also allows for ‘globalised localisms’ (Santos, 2006) coming from peripheral countries. As a cultural manifestation that originated in a peripheral country, Capoeira is one example of how ‘globalised localisms’ can provide counter-hegemonic possibilities aligned with its progressive historical legacy.

Yet another example provided by the study of the transnationalisation of Capoeira relates to how the relationship between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces allowed the birth of what Boaventura Santos (2006) calls ‘insurgent cosmopolitism’ within the international community of Capoeira. This transnational interplay of cultures, exemplified in Chapter 4’s discussion of the transnationalisation of Capoeira, brings forth new questions regarding how we create, express, interpret and engage with cultural practices while also dealing with cultural differences. Insurgent cosmopolitan capoeristas, I argue, are not searching to widen their cultural experience per se, as they do not see themselves as ‘tourists’ in Brazil or any other country to which they travel to practice and play Capoeira and interact with friends and colleagues. Insurgent cosmopolitan capoeristas connect with Capoeira’s historical legacy as a resistance practice to engage in and guide their progressive agenda and actions (for example, the questioning of authoritarianism or of corporate or fundamentalist-like behaviour and attitudes in Capoeira) in the places where they live and those to which they travel and migrate. They create a sense of support (solidarity) and significance in the transnational Capoeira community as a community of sentiment (Clark, 1973) that breaks from the predominant corporate-group-oriented
and hierarchically based framework in favour of practices that are more aligned with community development principles.

The final point discussed in Chapter 4 is how the institutionalised framework, although aligned with the hegemonic type of globalisation, was the most efficient way for capoeiristas to (re)create their groups and (re)produce, or emulate, Capoeira’s cultural principles, values and shared meanings within the new territories to which it has spread. I called attention, however, to the fact that such a framework continued to strengthen the monopoly of information (chiefly over teaching, organisational and promotional methods), a highly competitive attitude among different groups and a rigidly hierarchical framework. All these factors, I argue, are hindering the absorption of Capoeira’s interdisciplinary, intercultural and progressive legacy by our globalised societies. This process of the institutionalisation of Capoeira groups, as I explained in Chapter 4, began to limit the capoeiristas’ sense of belonging to a wider community and also to disarticulate the loosely coordinated networks in favour of institutionalized places of practice.

While loosely coordinated networks were guided by early intercultural principles and fostered a heightened sense of otherness, the institutionalised places of practice (or Capoeira groups that needed precise planning and profit motive to keep themselves viable) began to reinforce closed networks and also reinforce the acknowledgement of differences rather than similarities between Capoeira groups and a narrower sense of belonging to one’s group or school instead of to a larger community or culture. This institutionalised framework, although still dominant, no longer seems to be capable of dealing with the multifaceted and decentralised interplay of cultural practices in a globalised context heavily mediated by the use of the internet and particularly social media. For capoeiristas, this heavily institutionalised environment of practice meant that their goal of teaching and practising the art had to be given a lesser emphasis than the overall survival of their institutions. This institutionalised approach to Capoeira groups,
however, no longer seems to be capable of dealing with the multifaceted and decentralised interplay of cultural practices and globalisation processes.

I presented literature more specific to matters of authenticity and authority in the global Capoeira community in Chapter 5. Together with Chapter 4, this chapter set out the theoretical background to support the analysis in Chapters 6 and 7. I argued in Chapter 5 that the Brazilians’ questioning of the non-Brazilian’s authenticity (which is sometimes absorbed by non-Brazilians as well) is a consequence of having to stay put locally due to the inequalities imposed by globalisation from above. I also reviewed and presented literature that explained how and why in the international Capoeira community generally the poor Brazilian immigrants occupy the higher positions on the hierarchical ladder. Most importantly, I provided evidence that in addition to presenting notions of exoticism and geographical authenticity (underpinned by the diasporic narrative) as a market reserve strategy, these notions are also used to claim authority. As I explained in Chapter 5, it is the power of authority that allows some to (re)interpret and (re)build the content, the teaching methods and the history of Capoeira, as well as to define what is authentic and what is not, to suit their agenda (Travassos, 2000).

Furthermore, I pointed out that this search for authority is not always about pecuniary gains, as some teachers have a legitimate concern with the dilution of cultural concepts, principles and techniques that follow the rapid global diffusion of Capoeira.

Another finding discussed in Chapter 5 is the way some non-Brazilian capoeiristas are beginning to counter the diasporic narrative and favour an intercultural origin in Brazil. The diasporic narrative carries with it some limitations as a conceptual tool to explain Capoeira’s origins. First, while it recognises the important contribution of African ethnicities, it rarely does the same for the Brazilian indigenous ones. Second, it also underpins notions of geographical and ethnic authenticity used to justify the unequal way in which non-Brazilians are often regarded by some of their Capoeira counterparts. The intercultural narrative that argues for a Brazilian origin of Capoeira, on the other
hand, tends to acknowledge more equally the importance of all cultures and ethnicities that contributed to the development of Capoeira as it is today. It also values an inclusive legacy that helps non-Brazilians to make sense of their participation and contribution to Capoeira as a transnationalised cultural practice. How capoeiristas around the world counter these notions of authenticity, fight discrimination, organise their activities and put forward their own agendas is central to Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Although created and maintained to serve the purposes and hegemonic agenda of the ruling classes, the internet is another example of how material conditions created by globalisation from above might also serve counter-hegemonic possibilities. In the international Capoeira community, for instance, the internet is allowing people to communicate better within and across social groups, and to organise groups, actions, projects and events without the institutional imperatives of precise planning or the profit motive. In Chapter 6, I explained how the internet provides a questioning space, a modern Quilombo, for matters of geographical and ethnic authenticity ingrained in the art-form that often seeks to render non-Brazilians as less legitimate than their Brazilian counterparts in the global Capoeira scene. In addition, I explain how capoeiristas are making use of social media to oppose corporate and fundamentalist-like behaviour, foster intercultural learning and diversity of social and Capoeira game interactions, and organise group actions, activities and projects in ways that resemble the way Capoeira was organised by loosely coordinated groups (Shirky, 2008) in its early days in Bahia, Brazil.

Chapter 6 suggested that the use of social media can have a rhizomatic character (Appadurai, 2001) that challenges both the capoeiristas’ predominantly diasporic narrative of Capoeira as well as the notion of Brazil as the only place from which Capoeira-related knowledge and influence flow. The discussion in Chapter 6 presented social media as a platform of interaction enabled by the advent of the internet (a material outcome – technology – from globalisation from above) and the main driver
of *Capoeira*’s global diffusion. Social media has become the main resource that *capoeristas* use to forge ideas and ideologies as well as to organise actions and activities in diverse (online) *spaces* and (physical) *places*. Overlapping *spaces* and *places*, social media also blurs boundaries between *Capoeira* schools, social groups, communities and ultimately countries. In such an overlapping context of *spaces* and *places*, *capoeristas* learn, play *Capoeira* and embody its values and principles, question hierarchies and matters of authenticity, promote and sell their classes and events, and articulate their identities. These actions and activities, organised and propelled by social media, also move in a multidirectional way that affects the transnational *Capoeira* community in its local and global aspects.

Moreover, Chapter 6 argued that social media allow *capoeristas* to adopt a more collaborative approach within which loosely coordinated groups can operate with extremely low overheads. Without the institutional imperatives of precise planning or the profit motive, these loosely coordinated groups can more efficiently challenge the predominantly institutionalised and rigidly hierarchical *Capoeira* groups. The evidence provided in Chapter 6 demonstrates that social media encourage intercultural learning, diversity (of participants, groups and actions), inclusion and cooperation across a varied range of groups and lineages. Social media also foster new forms of interaction, new forms of group formation and the formation of a greater diversity of groups. For instance, I discussed in this chapter how Mestre Fantasma, the first non-Brazilian to be bestowed with a Mestre title in *Capoeira*, has used social media to organise and promote the Urban Ritual monthly *Roda*. The Urban Ritual’s agenda is to oppose corporate-like behaviour in *Capoeira* and to bring back diversity of interaction to the *Capoeira* games. A series of guidelines and the Urban Ritual dress-code are shared online so that like-minded and curious *capoeristas* can attend the *Roda* and enjoy their *Capoeira* games and social interactions with counterparts from other groups, lineages and orientations.
This chapter also included a discussion of SCS – Sommarträna Capoeira i Stockholm (Capoeira Summer Training in Stockholm), a Facebook page created to bring people together to train and play Capoeira during the Swedish summer. SCS also has progressive and anti-authoritarian guidelines. In fact, on its Facebook page it asks all participants to disregard their Capoeira titles or graduations when attending training sessions and Rodas organised through SCS (for more examples, see Chapter 6). The outcome is that social media allows for a diverse sense of belonging, as capoeristas originally from different lineages, groups and orientations can belong to the same online groups. This, in turn, broadens their sense of belonging, brings them to more diverse face-to-face interactions and allows more complex identities to evolve around cultural practices. The insurgent cosmopolitism and its trans-localised sense of connection and progressive engagement, for instance, evolve in part from these new possibilities opened up by the use of social media.

Finally, in Chapter 7 I explained how capoeristas engaged with Capoeira-related activities in community development programmes relate to and organise their programmes according to the time when Capoeira was evolving organically and locally in Bahia before its first wave of internationalisation in the 1970s (see Chapter 2). This was a time when people organised their activities without the institutional imperatives of precise planning or the profit motive. These socially engaged capoeristas also make use of the internet to network and promote their progressive programmes. I demonstrated that Capoeira’s development throughout history as an interdisciplinary and intercultural practice that functioned as an instrument of resistance and personal empowerment against oppression and acculturation has become an important part of its global legacy today. I also argued that the understanding of Capoeira’s history as an art-form born of struggles and conflict in Brazil influences how ‘insurgent cosmopolitan’ capoeristas (Santos, 2006) engage with Capoeira today and use it in social programmes to bring about inclusion, community development and personal empowerment (which in turn offers people involved in Capoeira a level of resilience to cope with life’s personal, social and cultural challenges).
Subsequently, I argued that the use of Capoeira in community development programmes might be hindered by ‘the paradigm of the first inclusion’ – a phenomenon that takes place when one’s inclusion in a social group prevents their inclusion in the wider society (this is explained in detail in Chapter 7). I further argued that those operating their classes either in a profit-driven corporate-like or a diversity-intolerant fundamentalist-like organisational framework will be fostering the paradigm of the first inclusion. While a few Capoeira groups and schools have managed to steer away from both of these extremes, most groups today operate closely at one of these two ends of the spectrum. Those (re)interpreting and (re)creating the meaning and social function of Capoeira according to its legacy as a weapon of resistance tend to find new organisational tools (for example not-for-profit legal structures, and social media). These tools, in turn, allow them to operate under a cooperative mode that brings the current practice of Capoeira (in their community development programmes and personal lives) closer to Capoeira’s early intercultural and inclusive principles surpassing the ‘paradigm of the first inclusion’ and making their programmes more efficient in their mission. These tools and approaches also align their Capoeira practice (and social programme activities) with the principles of community development (Pedlar & Haworth, 2006; Clark, 1973; Ife, 2002).

In summary, I presented in this thesis the journey of Capoeira from its early origins, formats and purposes in Brazil to its current form as an interdisciplinary and intercultural manifestation practised worldwide. I argued that since Capoeira’s first diffusion from Bahia to other Brazilian states, and then from Brazil to other countries, capoeristas have had to rely on the strengthening of the institutional and entrepreneurial framework in order to (re)create their ethos and (re)produce, or emulate, the art’s cultural meanings in these new places. The rapid growth of Capoeira in many countries led the older Mestres to standardise how groups would operate globally. Such standardisation of international Capoeira groups happened due to a legitimate concern about the quality of classes and dilution of cultural essence, as well as due to market reserve strategies. As a
market reserve strategy, the standardisation of *Capoeira* had to do with the fact that some teachers found the growing number of young instructors (and the flux of information) challenging to their established position and way of living. In both cases, however, the solution found was generally the enforcement of rules and regulations through the groups’ or associations’ by-laws, covert peer pressure and the historic narratives (often conveying these new rules as ancient ‘traditions’).

The study of the global flow of cultures, as it is the case with the transnationalisation of *Capoeira*, reveals contexts, contradictions and frictions (among those who participate in these globalised cultural practices and across the social groups they take part in) that go beyond the local/global, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic, diasporic/transnational dichotomies. The authenticity of cosmopolitans – insurgent or not – engaging in a given cultural practice comes to be questioned by those who have to stay put locally (where the cultural practice originated). This happens due to the inequalities imposed by ‘globalisation from above’, as explained by Giddens (1990), Appadurai (2001), Bauman and Vecchi (2004), Featherstone, (1990), Hall (1993), Hannerz (1990) and Urry (1995). In fact, notions of geographical, ethnic and national authenticity also relate largely to the global scenario, as my research has demonstrated. However, in these contexts the questioning of authenticity is made by those who have either established an international teaching career or have migrated to a developed country to teach. In all cases, the questioning of the authenticity of ‘internationals’ by ‘locals’ appears as a corollary of having an increasing number of internationals engaging in a once-local cultural practice in ways (and with resources) rarely available for those who cannot engage in cosmopolitanism (insurgent or not).

With *Capoeira*, as with other transnationalised cultural practices, people worldwide are interested in embodying cultural values, principles and lessons that evolved in different places and at different times. *Capoeira*, as I have argued, carries values, principles and attitudes from its original context as much as it seems to absorb new influences. As I have also demonstrated, *Capoeira* was never static, and there was never a time when it was not being altered by those engaging in it. As explained by
Martín-Barbero (2004), it is not possible to wholeheartedly take part in a culture without transforming it, without embracing the conflicts evoked by all profound communication. In this sense, Capoeira is an example of how traditional cultures are surviving globalisation from above. It does this by going through a deep reconfiguration to respond to both the evolution of the devices of domination (for example, the mainstream media, advertising, the movie and entertainment industries) and the intensification of the communication and interaction those engaging with traditional cultures have with other cultures at both the local and global levels (Martín-Barbero, 2004). In Capoeira, I argue, this exchange of communication and interaction is perceived simultaneously as a threat to Capoeira’s survival and as an inclusive strategy to embrace the participation of people from other countries.

This pattern of increasing institutionalisation, aggressive competitiveness and polarisation between the local/global, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic and diasporic/transnational into rigid dichotomies began to change with the popularisation of the internet and social media. Social media, as I have argued, blurred the boundaries between online and face-to-face groups, communities and countries. They allowed for a revival of organisational paradigms that relied more on the spontaneity and closeness of interaction among people with a common interest without the institutional imperatives of precise planning or the profit motive. The online spaces fostered the questioning of existing paradigms (for example, of notions of authenticity based on geography, ethnicity, nationality or diasporic narratives), the birth of new forms of identity and belonging, and the formation of more groups, more kinds of group and ‘communities of practice’ (as defined by Wenger, 1998).

The use of the internet lowered the transaction costs involved in organising activities, bringing people together and facilitating learning. This, in turn, facilitated people’s engagement with projects and activities that were not directly related to the survival of the institution to which they originally belonged. Capoeira-related social programmes, or simply new forms of practising and playing Capoeira, which to a great extent relied on volunteers and more cooperative (online) frameworks, began to increase in number all over the world. These Capoeira social-activists’ approaches to the
practice of *Capoeira* and its role in community development, similarly to the internet, are bringing *Capoeira* closer to the ways it was practised in its early days in Bahia – that is, through the interaction of loosely coordinated groups of people with a common interest and without the profit motive. This change in the corporate-like or fundamentalist-like paradigms strengthens the intercultural principles and values carried by *Capoeira* in its global diffusion and weakens the impact of the consumerist society in its practice. Although I believe these findings can be extrapolated to other cultural manifestations, I also believe that *Capoeira*’s interdisciplinary and intercultural legacy as a tool of resistance render it a good match for both the anarchist-like online environment and the progressive approach to cultural practices in community development.

The impact of social media on transnationalised cultural practices, as well as how these cultural practices can be used in community development programmes worldwide, are central to this research’s contribution to future studies. More specifically, the research has, among other things, provided for the first time a detailed, empirical account of the way social media make it easier to bring people together around communities of practice (Shirky, 2008; Wenger, 1998) in the context of *Capoeira*. As has been illustrated by the research, social media allow for the creation of alternatives to organise *Capoeira* (and other) groups and activities without the institutional imperative of precise planning and a profit motive. It allows participants to relate to and engage with *Capoeira*’s historic legacy as a form of resistance against oppression and acculturation. It also provides a platform of interaction and learning to question notions of authority and authenticity that were sharpened by the globalisation process that *Capoeira* has undergone since the late 1970s. All these possibilities open up a new and innovative field of research for those social scientists interested in studying the impact of social media in trans-nationalised cultural practices.

The study of *Capoeira* as a community development tool (addressing its potentials and shortcomings) and the formulation of the paradigm of the first inclusion are also contributions made by this project that are likely to inspire further research. The analysis of how capoeristas in various countries are
relating to Capoeira’s historic legacy as an inclusive and progressive intercultural and interdisciplinary art-form, and using it in various community development contexts (for example, with at-risk youth, refugees and inmates) is another field in which social scientists and activists might develop further research. Although many other authors have alluded to Capoeira as a form of resistance against oppressive establishments (see discussion in Chapter 2), this research provided a deeper focus on how Capoeira’s principles might match community development principles. Moreover, it provided a thorough analysis of how the participants’ involvement in social media and community development programmes allow them to engage with Capoeira in ways (and with goals and meanings) that bring their practice closer the values and context in which Capoeira was practised before its process of internationalisation in the early twentieth century in Bahia. Such a perspective on the role of cultural practices within community development programmes also calls for further research developments, as other trans-nationalised cultural practices (and not only Capoeira) might carry with them useful principles and values to counter the effects of globalisation from above.

Finally, the paradigm of the first inclusion gives future researchers working in the areas of community development and the globalisation of cultures a place from which to engage in further studies on the role of cultural practices to promote intercultural learning, social inclusion and community development. In the same way, Professor Coalter’s (2007: 1) report on the social and economic impacts of sport presented ‘rather ambiguous and inconclusive conclusions’, the paradigm of the first inclusion renders Capoeira an ambiguous tool for community development. The acknowledgement of such a paradigm allows researchers and social activists to question the depth and reliability of the social inclusion and belonging one experiences when engaging in cultural practices in global contexts that might be corporate-like, and therefore too competitive or fundamentalist-like and consequently averse to cultural diversity.

The worldwide practice of Capoeira, as seen in this research, is pervaded by ambiguities related to matters of authenticity and authority, of inclusion and exclusion, of the local and global. However, as also seen in this research, the philosophy of the jogo as a universal body language and of the Roda as a platform of
interaction where people from different genders, levels of expertise, age and sizes can play with each other are inherently inclusive. As explained by Eichberg (2004: 17; italics in original), ‘The *folkelig* aspect of sport and culture lies in the bodily expression of the *right to be different.*’ In other words, ‘popular sports represent a way to peace by playing on difference’ (2004: 17).
Appendix 1
Consent form, questionnaire and interview questions

Capoeira and Social Inclusion Processes in non-Brazilian Cosmopolitan Centres

INFORMATION SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief Investigator</th>
<th>Student Investigator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor Andy Bennett</td>
<td>Eurico Vianna</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why is the research being conducted?

This research is investigating the effectiveness of *Capoeira* as an instrument towards social inclusion and diversity tolerance within the multinational community of practitioners in cosmopolitan centres. This study is part of a doctorate research programme undertaken by the student Eurico Vianna at the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, Griffith University (Queensland, Australia).

What you will be asked to do

You are being asked to fulfil a questionnaire and give an interview. After reading the information sheet, answering both should take you approximately 1.30 hours. Alternatively, you may choose to answer only one or another.

The expected benefits of the research

This project aims to contribute with academic references to the study and practice of *Capoeira* as an instrument towards inter-cultural learning and social inclusion in multicultural centres. Studying *Capoeira’s* socio-cultural conflicts, as well as its potentialities and shortcomings towards group and personal empowerment, may contribute to the understanding of social inclusion/exclusion processes within and via its practice. Moreover, this knowledge is likely to foster the development of cultural policies in the area of community development.

Risks to you

There is a small risk of becoming upset about reflecting over issues of social inclusion/exclusion, prejudice and discrimination in regards to your ethnic and cultural background, and your engagement in *Capoeira* within non-Brazilian cosmopolitan contexts. If such thing happen, please contact the Chief Investigator (details above) and he will assist you in regards to potential problems caused by this inconvenience and how to deal with them.
Your confidentiality

The data collected will be accessed exclusively by the Chief and the Student Investigators, and used for research purposes only. Once all the data is analysed, a report of the findings may be submitted for publication. Only group-level results will be reported and it will not be possible to identify any individuals in the report. All information you provide will remain confidential. After the analysis, all material will be destroyed/erased. In case you would like to have your name acknowledged in this study, a separate consent form will be given to you.

Your participation is voluntary

Participation is completely voluntary. Answering both the questionnaire and the interview should take you approximately 1.30 hours. Alternatively, you may choose to answer only one or another. Please, note that you can refuse to answer any one or more of the questions, and you can also withdraw from the study without any explanation. To withdraw your information, simply contact the Student Investigator (details above) and your information will be destroyed at any point up to the time of the first research report is submitted for publication.

Questions/further information

Should you have any further questions about the aim of this study, please contact the Research Team (contacts above). If you have questions about the result, we will be pleased to answer them at the end of the study.

The ethical conduct of this research

This research is part of a PhD candidature on Sociology at the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research at Griffith University, and is in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you

A summary copy of the research results will be sent to all participants. In addition, a copy of your interview transcript may be sent to you free of charge, on request.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3735 5585.
Capoeira and Social Inclusion Processes in non-Brazilian Cosmopolitan Centres.

CONSENT FORM

Research Team
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School of Arts / Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research
Contact Phone: +61 (0)7 3735 4131

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

I understand that my involvement in this research will include the completion of a questionnaire and/or an interview concerning my experience in Capoeira;

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

I understand the risks involved (see ‘Risks to you’ above);

I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;

I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;

I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;

I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

I agree to participate in the project.

Name

Preferred Pseudonym

E-mail

Signature

Date
Capoeira and social inclusion processes in non-Brazilian cosmopolitan centres.

Questionnaire

1. Sex (please tick one of the boxes): ( ) Male ( ) Female
2. Age: ________years (as of your last birthday)
3. Marital status: ( ) single
   ( ) married/stable union
   ( ) separated/divorced
   ( ) widowed
4. What is the highest level of education you have obtained?
   ( ) No formal education completed
   ( ) Elementary
   ( ) High school
   ( ) Some technical school, college, or university
   ( ) Bachelors degree
   ( ) Masters degree
   ( ) Doctoral (PhD) degree or equivalent
   ( ) Post-doctoral
5. Where were you born? City: __________________________
   State/Province: __________________
   Country: _______________________
6. City where you practice: ____________
7. City in which you are attending this event (if not in where you live): __________
8. Your Capoeira name: ______________
9. Capoeira Group name: ______________
10. How many people train with you (provide only one number): _____
11. Colour of String/Cord: (Type the colours separated with bars): ___________________________
12. Your Level of Graduation:
   ( ) Student/Aluno
   ( ) Instructor/Treinêl
   ( ) Foreman/ContraMestre
   ( ) Teacher
   ( ) Master/Mestre
   ( ) Grand-master
13. How long have you been training Capoeira? ________
14. How many times have you visited Brazil before studying Capoeira? ____ times.
15. How many times have you visited Brazil after studying Capoeira? ____ times.
16. In which country were your parents born?
   Father: _____________________
   Father’s mother: _____________________
   Father’s father: _____________________
   Mother: _____________________
   Mother’s mother: _____________________
   Mother’s father: _____________________
Capoeira and social inclusion processes in non-Brazilian cosmopolitan centres.

Interview Guideline Sheet

Brazilian students: List of potential questions

- How did you first get interested in Capoeira?
- Tell me about what the practice of Capoeira represents in your life.
- What do you think Capoeira represents to non-Brazilian practitioners?
- How was your social life before start practising Capoeira and how is it now?
- Does the practice of Capoeira affect your contact with other cultures? How?
- How it is for you to learn and practise part of your culture out of your own country?
- How do you see the increasing number of non-Brazilian instructors?
- How is your relationship with non-Brazilian instructors?
- Do you think non-Brazilian instructors are regarded as competent as Brazilian teachers in Capoeira?
- What do you think of online resources like blogs, forums and video-sharing as a way to learn Capoeira?
Non-Brazilian students: List of potential questions

- How did you first get interested in Capoeira?
- Tell me about what the practice of Capoeira represents in your life.
- What do you think it represents to Brazilian practitioners?
- How was your social life before you started practising Capoeira and how is it now?
- Does the practice of Capoeira affect your contact with other cultures? How?
- How it is for you to learn and practise an ‘alien’ culture?
- How do you see the increasing number of non-Brazilians teaching Capoeira? Are they welcomed within the Capoeira community?
- How is your relationship with Brazilian instructors?
- In general, do you believe they are prepared to teach a cultural practice in developed countries?
- Do you think non-Brazilian instructors are regarded as competent as Brazilians teachers in Capoeira?
- What do you think of online resources like blogs, forums and video-sharing as a way to learn Capoeira?
Non-Brazilian instructors: List of potential questions

- How did you first get interested in Capoeira?
- When did you decide to teach?
- How is it for you to teach a cultural practice from another country?
- Do you think there is a difference in the way Brazilians and non-Brazilians realise Capoeira in their lives?
- What characteristics of Capoeira do you think are contributing to its multinational acceptance today?
- Would you say that there are some ‘universal particularities’ in Capoeira allowing its application as a socio-educative tool in different cultures and diverse contexts (globalisation, social exclusion, diversity intolerance, corporatism)?
- What is the message Capoeira can deliver the world over today?
- What could be jeopardising this message, given the actual context of constant internationalisation?
- What do you believe to be the Mestre’s (senior instructor’s) and teacher’s role within this context?
- What about the Capoeira group’s role?
- What do you think is the role of Capoeira in the formation of the student’s character?
- Do you think Capoeira can contribute within the formal educational system? How?
- How was your social life before you started practising Capoeira? And how is it now?
- Does the practice of Capoeira affect your contact with other cultures? How?
- How do you see the increasing number of non-Brazilians teaching Capoeira? Are they welcomed within the Capoeira community?
- How is your relationship with Brazilian instructors?
- In general, do you believe they are prepared to teach a cultural practice in developed countries?
- What can you tell me about hierarchy and the relationships between Brazilian and non-Brazilian instructors?
- What do you think of online resources like blogs, forums, and video-sharing as a way to learn Capoeira?
**Brazilian instructors: List of potential questions**

- How it is for you to teach your culture in another country?
- Do you think there is a difference in the way Brazilians and non-Brazilians realise *Capoeira* in their lives?
- What characteristics of *Capoeira* do you think are contributing to its multinational acceptance today?
- With regard to the actual multitude of social programmes utilising *Capoeira* in diverse countries and social contexts, what characteristics are allowing such a wide range of applicability?
- What is the message *Capoeira* can deliver the world over today?
- What could be jeopardising this message, given the actual context of constant internationalisation?
- What do you believe to be the Mestre’s (senior instructor’s) and teacher’s role within this context?
- What about the *Capoeira* group’s role?
- What do you think is the role of *Capoeira* in the formation of the student’s character?
- Do you think *Capoeira* can contribute within the formal educational system? How?
- How was your social life before you started practising *Capoeira*? And how is it now?
- Does the practice of *Capoeira* affect your contact with other cultures? How?
- How do you see the increasing number of non-Brazilians teaching *Capoeira*? Are they welcomed within the *Capoeira* community?
- How is your relationship with Brazilian instructors?
- In general, do you believe they are prepared to be teaching and performing *Capoeira*, as well as to be representing the Brazilian cultural identity in developed countries?
- What can you tell me about hierarchy and the relationships between Brazilian and non-Brazilian instructors?
- What do you think of online resources like blogs, forums and video-sharing as a way to learn *Capoeira*?
References


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