

## **CAPOEIRA GOING GLOBAL: THE APPROPRIATION OF THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN PRACTICE THROUGH TV ADVERTISEMENTS IN FRANCE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM<sup>12</sup>**

### **A GLOBALIZAÇÃO DA CAPOEIRA A APROPRIAÇÃO DA PRÁTICA AFRO-BRASILEIRA ATRAVÉS DE PUBLICIDADES DE TELEVISÃO NA FRANÇA E NO REINO UNIDO**

Daniel Granada da Silva Ferreira<sup>3</sup>

#### **ABSTRACT**

This article analyze two advertisements using capoeira narratives and seek to understand how they are constructed to sell products or 'images' in different national contexts. The objective is to understand the processes of adaptation of the practice of capoeira to the local market. The methodology employed was the exploratory research, with the analyses of visual narratives, research in local newspapers, multisited ethnography and free flowing interviews with capoeira practitioners in France and in the UK. The first part introduces the debate about the globalization and glocalization in the case of the capoeira. Then, are presented the studies about the transnationalization of capoeira practice and the emigration of Brazilians. Further is analyzed the advertisement of the deodorant 'Ushuaia' in France and the way it shows the representations of capoeira, 'Brazil', 'Brazilianess', followed by the analyze of the BBC 'idents' and the debate generated by this campaign in the national medias. Through articles published in the British press, we will discuss the insertion of capoeira in British society in a context of debate regarding local multiculturalism. The

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<sup>3</sup> Doutor em etnologia e história pela Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense e University of Essex. Professor de antropologia e sociologia na Universidade do Vale do Taquari - Univates – RS. E-mail: dangranada@gmail.com.

conclusions point to the understanding that to be used by advertisers in different national contexts, capoeira needs to be transformed in local versions, far from its original meanings.

**Keywords:** Capoeira. Globalization. Multiculturalism. Medias.

**RESUMO**

Este artigo analisa duas propagandas usando narrativas sobre a capoeira e procura entender como elas são construídas para vender produtos ou "imagens" em diferentes contextos nacionais. O objetivo é de compreender os processos de adaptação da prática da capoeira ao mercado local. A metodologia empregada foi a pesquisa exploratória, com a análise de narrativas visuais, pesquisa em jornais locais, etnografia multisituada e entrevistas de fluxo livre com os praticantes de capoeira na França e no Reino Unido. A primeira parte introduz o debate sobre a globalização e a glocalização no caso da capoeira, depois são apresentados os estudos sobre a transnacionalização da prática da capoeira e a emigração dos brasileiros. Além disso, é introduzida a propaganda do desodorante 'Ushuaia' na França e a forma como ele mostra as representações de 'Brasil', 'brasilidade' e capoeira. Finalmente, há a análise sobre os spots de tv da BBC TV chamado 'idents' e o debate gerado por esta campanha nos jornais do Reino Unido. Através de artigos publicados na imprensa britânica, discutiremos a inserção da capoeira na sociedade britânica num contexto de debate no multiculturalismo local. As conclusões apontam para o entendimento de que, para ser usado por anunciantes em diferentes contextos nacionais, a capoeira precisa ser transformada em versões locais, afastando-se de seus significados originais.

**Palavras-chaves:** Capoeira. Globalização. Multiculturalismo. Mídia.

## Introduction

This article analyzes some features of the processes of globalization of the practice of capoeira, a martial art of "Afro-Brazilian" origin that spread in several countries of the world from the late 1970s. Its expansion accompanies emigration of Brazilians in search of better living and working conditions abroad and is increasingly dependent on appropriation and adaptation by "local" practitioners. The methodology employed was the exploratory research, with the analyze of visual narratives, research in local newspapers, multisited ethnography (MARCUS, 1995; 2002), and free flowing interviews (THOMPSON, 2000) with capoeira practitioners in France and in the UK. The main objective is the understanding of the transformations of the capoeira's practices in the process of globalization through TV advertisements that have circulated in France and in the UK. The conclusions points to the existence of "cultural intermediaries" who appropriate capoeira and transform it in local version, fitted to local representations associated to health, freedom, well-being, etc.

The use of the concept of globalization makes it possible to understand and highlight certain aspects of the process of expansion of capoeira outside Brazil. In general, globalization is seen as a process in which the acceleration of international trade is gaining momentum as it is mainly associated with the integration of the world economy. As Abélès says (2008, p. 134), the term refers to accelerated interdependence, the shrinking of the world with the erosion of geographical boundaries to socio-economic activities, remote action and the compression of space and time. For the author, its use refers to a conception of globalization marked by the magnitude and intensity of scale changes and interregional exchanges.

For Robertson, it is possible to identify five phases of this process of globalization, which he seeks to classify from a historical perspective. From an "embryonic phase" in the 15th century, this process would extend into the 18th century through three other phases until it reached the period of the 1960s, called by Robertson the "phase of uncertainty". The latter is characterized, among other things, by the consolidation of the global media and the multiplication of problems associated with multinationality (ROBERTSON, 1992, p. 27).

In the case of capoeira, Assunção (2005) points out the complexity of the application of this concept. There is no doubt that the recent process of trade flows and interactions at the international level has a remarkable impact on Brazil's capoeira and its expansion to other countries. However, as Assunção explains, capoeira emerged from an even more complex process of inter-regional social interaction:

The term globalization is commonly used to suggest that the process is a recent, late twentieth-century development. In fact, one can hardly imagine a more momentous process of dislocation of peoples and cultures than the one produced by the slave trade for almost four centuries. The difference is that it happened outside Europe in distant colonies; metropolitan cultures only superficially acknowledged the social and cultural impact of the slave trade. They were not directly involved in the way they are now, when the metropolises themselves have become multicultural societies. That is why metropolitan cultures now need diasporic forms such as capoeira, which have accumulated a long experience of how to accommodate cultural diversity whilst still preserving a core identity, (ASSUNÇÃO, 2005, p. 208).

The formation of capoeira in Brazil would be crossed by this idea, as a delocalised practice of the original land, relocated and recreated in Brazil, and from the 1970s, reappropriated and relocated again in various countries of the world. When we think of capoeira, we have always been led to think of multi-locality in order to grasp this practice in all its complexity, resulting from innumerable displacements, encounters and changes that are at the basis of its formation and reproduction. We are also obliged to take capoeira into account in all its diversity, as it varies according to the different regions of Brazil, depending on the appropriation of the groups, and the conflicting relationships maintained by certain groups and capoeira modalities, in a context where these divisions are reproduced in the expansion of practice outside Brazil (ASSUNÇÃO, 2005, p. 201). These innovative processes of re-semantization of capoeira may in some cases be explained by the notion of glocalization, to use Robertson's (1992) term. This notion, which points out the impact of globalization on locality and the "localization" of global contents, can be used to highlight certain aspects of the adaptation and re-semantization processes of capoeira in groups and associations outside Brazil.

The concept of globalization in this article is to refer to broader processes, exchanges and flows between nations, associated with the circulation of capoeira images broadcast by the media, the Internet or by films. These appropriations, intended for a wider audience, show adaptations of capoeira where ideas about Brazil and Brazilians are manipulated and reinterpreted according to local representations.

### **The transnationalization and the capoeira's expansion**

The notion of transnationalization is important for the studies on capoeira outside Brazil because it is not anymore about understanding the expansion of the practice being exclusively associated with migration, but also the existence of complex social networks that have been established over the last years between Brazilians and non-Brazilians, in Brazil as elsewhere. This notion has been used in studies about capoeira outside Brazil to designate phenomena associated with the immigration of Brazilians and the consequent movement of goods and ideas across national borders. These studies highlight the relations between the "cultural" and the "political" field within different national contexts, as well as the identity implications and power relations occurring from the meeting between Brazilian practitioners and local practitioners in Canada (JOSEPH, 2008, 2008a), France (FERREIRA, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2015; GRAVINA, 2010) and Spain (GUIZARDI, 2011, 2013), in the United Kingdom (FERREIRA, 2015). Another recent study analyzes the impact of the transnationalization of this practice in Brazil, with increasing requirements about the legitimacy and professionalization of teachers and *mestres* of capoeira (WESOLOWSKI, 2012).

Assunção (2005) was one of the first to show the breadth of the phenomenon of the expansion of capoeira outside Brazil and to problematize the contact between Brazilians and non-Brazilians. This issue is also dealt in a systematic way by Delamont (2006), Delamont and Stephens (2007; 2008), Delamont *et al.* (2010) regarding capoeira groups in the United Kingdom. These authors looked for innovative written forms about the practice of capoeira. Aceti (2011) also discusses the realization of a multi-sited ethnography in the study of capoeira and develops the reflections presented in his thesis regarding the tensions

between the local and the global, as well as the challenges associated with the dispossession and relocation of capoeira in Europe (ACETI 2011, p. 238-9).

As explains Capone (2010), it will be in the 1990s that the transnational focus begins to be stated in the study of transnational migration. This new approach to migration studies highlights a perspective of the migrants, a perspective "from below", where the family and friendship networks of these migrants receive visibility. Unlike the perspective of international migration, which highlights, among others, the exchanges between nation-states and the flows of persons between different nations, the term "transnational" defines all activities initiated and promoted by non-institutional actors, being individuals or groups crossing the boundaries of the Nation-State (CAPONE, 2010, p. 237). The notion of transnationalization expanded on Anthropological studies due to the growing interest of researchers regarding trade and flows of people and cultural elements across borders (BASCH *et al.*, 1994, p. 50).

### **First studies on capoeira outside Brazil**

The first studies to have indicated the expansion of capoeira outside the country were those who treated about Brazilian immigration in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Often associating the practice of capoeira with the samba and *batucada* these studies have shown, however, that the capoeira was a manifestation of Brazilianess rarely practiced by Brazilians. The groups were mainly composed of local practitioners, where only the *mestre* and a few students were Brazilians (MARGOLIS, 1994, p.307). Then, the pioneer studies of Travassos (2000) about capoeira in the United States and Vassallo (2001) about capoeira in France were exclusively dedicated to the practice of capoeira and its appropriation outside Brazil.

The expansion of capoeira outside Brazil can be classified into three stages, without a strictly defined temporality between them. First, the members of folkloric groups with relative or little knowledge of

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<sup>4</sup> See Margolis, 1994; Martes, 1999; Ribeiro, 1999; Penha, 2001.

capoeira decides to launch abroad and finds in capoeira a form of insertion through the positive appreciation of the original country's identity<sup>5</sup>. Then, the second stage can be characterized by the *capoeirista* who now belongs to a group or a capoeira school in Brazil and go abroad knowing that there is a possibility to survive through the practice of capoeira, these *capoeiristas* remain generally connected to the source group in Brazil. The third stage of the transnationalization of capoeira is characterized by the appropriation of the local capoeira practitioner, non-Brazilian, who appropriates the practice and operates a real adaptation to the local context.

### **Brazilian emigration and the widespread of capoeira around the world**

The first to notice the growth of capoeira outside Brazil were those who have studied the emigration of Brazilians to the United States (see Margolis 1994, Ribeiro 1999, Penha 2001, Martes 2003). Many Brazilians who emigrated in search of better living and working conditions between the 1980s and the 2000s took the practice of capoeira with them. They saw in this practice a way to survive while remaining in contact with Brazil.

The economic crisis of the 1980s in Brazil, called the "lost decade", is seen as the decisive milestone that triggered the emigration of Brazilians. Sales (1999, p. 28) adds the political factor associated mainly with the hopes and disillusionments of the period of re-democratization of the country through the failure of various economic plans, increased unemployment and inflation. Patarra (2005) explores the heterogeneity of migratory movements from Brazil and to Brazil, and points to the existence of various phenomena and social groups that immigrate. The author observes the need to take into account in the explanation of the migratory phenomena of contemporary Brazil the importance of the circularity of these movements as well as the social networks that are

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<sup>5</sup> Developing a debate on the use of the notion of "identity" in my thesis (cf. FERREIRA, 2013 p.54-57), as used herein the use of the term referring to unfinished processes of "identity construction" rather than something fixed and immutable, understood as flexible and pliable relationship processes.



formed and reinforced (PATARRA, 2005, p. 25-26).

The expansion of capoeira outside Brazil, despite the singular stories of each individual journey of the *capoeiristas*, can be characterized by three distinct moments of the process of transnationalization of the practice: first, the circulation of *capoeiristas* and Brazilian masters, associated thereafter the emigration of Brazilians in search of better living conditions outside Brazil. Secondly, the installation of Brazilians on the spot in various countries, thirdly, the appropriation of capoeira by local practitioners. These three moments show that the process of transnationalization, in the case of capoeira, is itself constantly reconfiguring and that the link to a place and the identification with a group or *mestre* of capoeira is essential as the central control of the expansion of groups. However, this classification is not restricted to a strictly determined periodicity. Indeed, the three moments of the transnationalization of capoeira, identified here, seek to highlight specificities that are not strictly divided temporally.

### **The three moments of capoeira's expansion abroad**

The first moment of this process is embodied by the Brazilian *capoeirista* who goes abroad for folklore shows (ASSUNÇÃO, 2005, p. 186-189) and who then decides to reside in the countries of the North in search of better conditions of life and work. This phase may be associated with the period from the late 1970s to the late 1990s. It was during the 1980s and 1990s that, due to the economic crisis in Brazil, many Brazilians emigrated seeking better living and working conditions outside of Brazil. In this way, several individuals, including some accompanying folklore groups, have discovered in capoeira, more than a source of income, means of integration through the positive valorization of the identity of the country of origin. Thus, during this first phase of the expansion of practice, people with little or no knowledge of capoeira have sometimes proclaimed themselves capoeira teachers.

During this phase, *capoeiristas* frequently had to learn or perfect the practice of capoeira once there, their main capital being their Brazilian nationality, the mastery of the Portuguese language and a basic

knowledge of capoeira. On the other hand, the low level of information available at the time on capoeira allowed a practitioner starting in Brazil to be able, once abroad, to easily assert his legitimacy vis-à-vis other competitors in this market, Because of his nationality and the weak control exercised by his peers.

The other characteristic of this first phase of the transnationalization process is the control of newcomers by other competitors. This characteristic began to develop as practice began the first steps of its expansion outside Brazil. When capoeira began to gather many groups and teachers in metropolises like Paris and London, it was increasingly difficult for unknown "adventurers" to get a place on this market, given the control exercised by the *capoeiristas* themselves. The presence of *mestres* on the spot and their circulation, the influence of new technologies such as access to the internet and capoeira videos, the travels to Brazil and intergroup relations have considerably increased the level of knowledge and control of capoeira outside of Brazil, making it more difficult to appoint "adventurers", with little or no knowledge, as group leaders. If at this point peer control begins to be exercised, it should be noted that during this initial period there is the desire to discover the practice. Thus the *capoeiristas* meet to make *rodas* together and cooperate when another practitioner who is part of the network of *capoeiristas* arrives on the spot.

This leads us to the second phase of the process of transnationalization of capoeira, also linked to the immigration of Brazilians. The difference in this second wave of capoeira expansion is that they are already more experienced capoeira practitioners, and these newcomers are now linked to groups or masters in Brazil who validate their practice by offering support and legitimacy to continue their activity vis-à-vis other groups on the market. In most cases, the *capoeiristas* of this second wave are aware of the success of other *capoeiristas* on the spot. Once settled in the host country, they discover that capoeira can become a profession that will eventually force them to become professional. The practice of these masters and their groups is characterized by a corporate action: once established with their groups, they bring from Brazil their masters and other *capoeiristas* of the same lineage to give placements and, when possible, to create other groups. In this way they gain symbolic capital in Brazil, since they nourish the link with the *capoeiristas* of their group of origin. In addition, they are more valued and gain visibility in relation

to other competitors in the local market for cultural goods. Alliances and cooperation between groups exist, but there are also divisions between the lineages and schools that reproduce from Brazil transnationally.

This moment of the transnationalization process of capoeira is marked by a quest for "tradition" and by the affirmation of the authenticity of the groups hoping to bring more students together. On the other hand, this moment is also marked by the questioning of the legitimacy of the practitioners who do not possess a group or *mestre*, as well as that of the "*mestres or capoeiristas do avião*".

The second phase will stimulate the efforts of cultural translation of the Brazilian *capoeirista*, with the objective of understanding the stakes and the local demands to adapt its practice. From this ability of translation, from its creativity to making an adaptation understandable to local practitioners, will depend on its success or failure in this market. To do this, they must have personal skills to identify the demands and put in place the transformations necessary for its insertion. This will inexorably lead to breaks with the form of which capoeira is practiced in Brazil. *Capoeiristas* need to re-evaluate their requirements in relation to the student's commitment, from wearing the uniform to submission to the whims of a *mestre*. They will especially need to "professionalize", as in the case of certain groups where the concern to turn capoeira into a product better suited to local practitioners requires real change. In this second phase, the Brazilian *capoeiristas* see themselves in the need to negotiate with the needs of the local market and to impose a greater rigor on their practice, for example, respecting the schedules, the organization and the regularity of the courses. Establishing and having sustainable plans on site can be seen as an asset from the point of view of European students. Other qualities, such as proficiency in the local language, are seen as important for integration.

Consequently, the third phase of the expansion of capoeira outside Brazil is that of the *capoeirista* "local" who appropriates capoeira and adapts it in its own way, making a real "translation" of capoeira to the local context. The practitioners are not Brazilians, but they have practiced and taught capoeira for over ten years in London and Paris. These practitioners and their groups have close ties with Brazil and stayed there for varying periods of time. They were allowed to teach capoeira and their respective groups were validated by their Brazilian

masters. In this phase we can notice the appropriation of capoeira's narratives for local creatives who uses the images of capoeira to associate it to products and brands in the way to offer to local people representations of exoticism, beauty, freedom and so on. In this phase it does exist a real process of ressemantization of the practice and consequent translation to a larger public as part of the process of globalization in the medias. In this way new meanings are imputed to the practice and others become less evident. Original context features are replaced for others most fitted to local market.

### **Discovering capoeira abroad**

This article has been written during my period of PhD joint supervision in the UK in 2008/2009 while I was doing my field research about the capoeira practice appropriated by British practitioners. Upon my arrival at the University of Essex in October 2008, I took the course 'Approaches to Cultural and Social History'. On the first day, I had to introduce myself and present the subject of my thesis. I tried to explain to the professor and my colleagues that my interest was the transformations of capoeira practice in Brazil and in Europe. Professor John Walter, who taught the course, tried to help me by making an effort to familiarize the students with capoeira and said: 'Do you know what capoeira is?' As the students kept a perplex expression, he carried on: 'Capoeira is that practice you have seen every evening on your television some years ago, with athletics men doing incredible corporal movements in the BBC1 advertisements'. Only then did everybody shook their heads affirmatively, showing that they knew capoeira through a TV advertisement.

I was really impressed with the definition of capoeira that I had just heard, and I asked myself – How could capoeira practice be transformed into a widely recognized UK TV spot in the twenty-first century? What has changed in this practice? And how it was possible to take a originally Afro-Brazilian martial art form in a widely recognized TV ads in the UK<sup>6</sup>?

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<sup>6</sup> In my thesis and in the book derived from it, I present a chapter about Mestre Poncianinho from the Grupo de Capoeira Cordão de Ouro. Poncianinho is one the BBC

These interrogations guided my attention to understand how capoeira has been translated to a large audience outside of Brazil, in different national contexts. In many countries, images of capoeira are being appropriated by ‘advertising creatives’ and translated into stories used in ads with a wide range of meanings, such as ‘masculinity’, ‘well-being’, ‘sensuality’, ‘agility’, ‘exoticism’, ‘power’, ‘dynamism’ and ‘primitiveness’. Capoeira narratives are being used to sell products and/or ‘construct identities’.

The advertisements using capoeira narratives are selling water, cigars, cars, video games, cellular phones, shampoo, deodorants, watches, and sanitary pads. Capoeira images can be appropriated to sell a wide range of products. Advertisers need to understand local social representations to adapt capoeira and to associate it to commodities and/or identities. The advertising companies have to reinterpret this practice and ‘translate’ it into a local and desirable version associated with collective representations of ‘beauty’, ‘freedom’, or ‘health’, among others.

### **About the advertisements**

The commercials were collected from some well-known internet web sites such as Youtube (for the BBC) and Dailymotion (for the French advertisement)<sup>78</sup>. In my understanding the narratives of the capoeira in these advertisements say more about our time, and the social contexts where they are produced, than about capoeira itself. What we see in the advertisements are representations about capoeira and not capoeira.<sup>9</sup>

I would like to make a few comments here on the use of media sources. The material I am using is originally a TV advertisement from a

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idents capoeiristas playing on the roof top. His testimony, his students’ declarations and the interview with the manager of the space where he performs his classes prove the importance that these advertisements had for the expansion of his group. What appears in their narratives is that there was a before and an after the idents, that highlights the importance of the TV ads in the expansion of capoeira in the UK during that period. (See FERREIRA, 2013; 2015).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB6dZX4fE9Y&feature=related>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x18zp6\\_pub-ushuaia\\_sport](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x18zp6_pub-ushuaia_sport)

<sup>9</sup> About representations of violence in media, see Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”, 1981.

campaign during a specific period. Today anyone can have access to these advertisements through internet web sites, so they became some kind of memory of the capoeira process of globalization. To become recognized through a TV ads, capoeira practice needs the agency of the advertisers. They do the mediation of the capoeira representations and the narratives adapted to local context and presented as TV ads. I mean that to be presented as a TV advertisement there is the necessity of the participation of the called ‘new cultural intermediaries’ (FEATHERSTONE, 2005, p. 38-39), or just ‘cultural intermediaries’ or in our case the ‘advertising creatives’ (NIXON, 2003, p. 27-28). These advertisers are some kind of translators who capt international ethnicized practices and transform it in local commercialized versions.

In Featherstone’s vision these cultural intermediaries and experts are able to search various traditions and cultures to produce new symbolic goods, in addition to providing the necessary interpretations on their use. These intermediaries also have contradictory feelings: on the one hand support the cultural prestige of the cultural strongholds and on the other, to popularize them and make them more accessible to wider audiences.

### **The capoeira in a French advertisement**

I saw the Ushuaia advertisement for the first time in France in February 2006. I was impressed by the scenario in which the *roda* was taking place. In this commercial, capoeira is shown on a beach with young men playing in a *roda*. The main objective of this advertisement is to promote a deodorant made from the energizing ‘*guaraná du Brésil*’. According to the narrator, the deodorant fragrance has energetic properties acting like a ‘whip to revitalize you’. The scenario showing the *roda*, some *capoeiristas* in a circle, and the music, invite us to a trip not to *Brasil*, but to a French ‘*Brésil*’ close to the ‘primitiveness’ with fire torches, a sensual woman and the opponent, a black Rasta men. The one who makes this travel and uses the ‘magic power’ of the deodorant is a white, blond and blue eyed Frenchman able to master perfectly the capoeira techniques and, at the end of the film, to seduce the Brazilian girl who is watching him from outside of the *roda*.

To understand the representations of ‘Brazil’ in France through this

advertisement we need to look closely to the internal context of France and its relationship with Brazil. 2005 was the year of the Brazil in France, and for this occasion a number of cultural activities were organized all over the country. Music, *batucada* and capoeira were well represented during the festivities. Amselle considers that the crisis of political representation in France is due to the erosion of class consciousness, which was made possible by the weakening of parties and unions. According to the author, the weakening of old forms of identification has offered a field of identification in terms of communities to individuals (AMSELLE, 2001, p. 171). The fragmentation of social groups in the form of communities indicates, according to the author, "the transformation of a nation-state endowed with social classes into a 'Community State' (AMSELLE, 2001, p. 172). The intellectual production on the theme of racism in France begins to highlight certain inequalities and to ask whether they can be explained exclusively by economic and social reasons (see N'DIAYE, 2007, FASSIN and FASSIN, 2006; AGIER, 2016).

The cultural French exception, with the deny of the recognizing of the ethnic, suggest some specific challenges for the adaptation of capoeira to the local context. Instead of a discourse highlighting the African origins of capoeira, there is a reinforcement of Brazil as the place of origin of capoeira practice, and representations of Brazil associated to the *métissage* (miscegenation), 'primitiveness' and of Brazilians as closer to 'nature' and a 'natural and spontaneous' way of being.

During my research in France, I questioned capoeira practitioners several times about what they thought about Brazilians, and Brazil, and I received very similar answers from different people. The members of the capoeira association that I studied have representations of Brazil as a country where 'people have nothing and are happy', where, despite poverty and social problems, people like to party and are more spontaneous, unlike the French people that they believe are 'grouzers', dissatisfied, 'always in a bad mood'. In short, they have everything physically to be happy but they just can't be. The French members of this group of capoeira also criticize the lack of spontaneity and warmth of their compatriots.

In relationship to Africans and Africa, I realized during the research that there is a certain discomfort, which I interpreted as linked to the colonial

past of France and immigration of Africans in particular in Paris. The members of the capoeira group says that Africa is not very interesting because 'Africa is here' and they have in their daily lives to struggle with Africans and African descendants, and this relationship is not always very friendly.

To sell the deodorant Ushuaia, the 'cultural intermediates' who created this advertisement have to understand what '*le Brésil*' means to the French young men who will buy this deodorant, and in this way, they were right in putting together some clichés: the wild beach, the sensual Brazillian girl, the song, the 'energetic capoeira' and finally the white man able to be there.

### Capoeira on British BBC

The capoeira was used by the TV channel BBC One in the UK to promote its 'multicultural' image. In Britain, the 'politically correct' multiculturalism (MODOOD, 2007, p. 11) requires another kind of approach to capoeira practice. On multiculturalism, Tariq Modood says that it has become established in Europe, and in particular in the United Kingdom, more because of the migration of non-white people in countries with mainly white populations than through action of political movements (MODOOD, 2007, p. 2-5). Stuart Hall analyzes the issue of multiculturalism in Britain and points to the recent phenomenon of visibility given to immigrant populations, which he calls "margins in the center" (HALL, 2000, p. 217-221). In Britain 'ethnic' classification is frequently solicited, this is evident when we need to answer some of the surveys at the university or when registering at the Health Center.

Not only capoeira, but eight new 'idents' were made in 2002 including basketball players in wheelchairs, break-dance, salsa, ballet, rugby players performing the Haka (a New Zealand typical dance), girls in a rave concert and acrobats.<sup>10</sup> All were used to translate the BBC 1's new image and substitute the old-fashion globe that symbolized BBC One

<sup>10</sup> LEONARD, T. The end of the world is nigh as BBC One change its image. Telegraph, London Available at: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1388930/End-of-the-world-is-nigh-as-BBC1-changes-its-image.html>>.[Accessed 10 March 2009].



for almost forty years. The new 'idents' were presented 40 times a day from March 2002 until August 2005. We need to note that in 2002 BBC One reached an audience of 81 percent of the people living in the UK.<sup>11</sup>

This campaign should be understood in a broader national political context with the New Labor Government from 1997 highlighting that Britain was a plural and dynamic society. Members of the government talked about 'Cool Britannia', 'rebranding Britain' or Britain as being a young country, a 'mongrel' nation, and the chicken tikka masala was upgraded to the status of national dish (MODOOD, 2007, p. 10)

To understand the use of the capoeira by BBC1 I will use the debate that took place in the UK newspapers in order to identify in these narratives what BBC meant and what kind of critic they received.

Tom Leonard, the media editor of the Telegraph quotes the testimony of BBC1's controller Lorraine Heggeseey, who highlights the BBC's new agenda of inclusion:

She wanted to reflect the 'diversity and totality' of her audience, adding 'and that includes the nations and regions as well as different ethnic groups and the disabled'. There are various sections of society that tend to be shut out and I don't want to shut people out. We felt it was through people that we would now reflect the BBC's internationalism and Britain's multiculturalism<sup>12</sup>.

This campaign was launched a few weeks after the declarations of BBC1 chairman Gavyn Davies caused a lot of protest when he accused 'southern, white and middle class' viewers of attempting to "hijack" the corporation written by the director of ITV Jim Hytner shows some criticizes the new 'idents' and questions the necessity for BBC 1 to change its image.<sup>13 14</sup> He suggests a contradiction between this

<sup>11</sup>HODGESON, Jessica. 'BBC1 drops globe in multicultural rebranding exercise'. The Guardian 26<sup>th</sup> March 2002.

<sup>12</sup> LEONARD, T. The end of the world is nigh as BBC One change its image. *Telegraph*, London, 27<sup>th</sup> mar. 2002. in: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1388930/End-of-the-world-is-nigh-as-BBC1-changes-its-image.html>>. Access March 10<sup>th</sup> 2009.

<sup>13</sup> HODGESON, Jessica. 'BBC One drops the globe in multicultural rebranding exercise.' In *The Guardian*. Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2002.

<sup>14</sup>HYTHNER, Jim. 'The Old Lady gets a makeover'. *The Guardian*. Monday 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2002.

campaign and the channel's strategy of 'servicing media audiences only'. Moreover, he questions if the British appreciate 'being lumped into these distinctive little tribes'.

In the narrative used to express the 'multicultural Britain' of the 'idents' of the BBC1, capoeira is used with no clear references to Brazil. There are two guys doing movements with a soft music, on a smooth and shiny roof top overlooking London. This capoeira played in an alternative place is suggesting ideas of freedom and beauty related to local adaptation of capoeira.

What can we learn from the use of capoeira by BBC 1 to represent their compromise with 'British multiculturalism'? To be able to embody 'Cool Britannia', capoeira has to move away from its Afro-Brazilians references having an evident shift of meaning while displaced from the Brazilian national context. In this way, capoeira practice become some kind of dance, distant from its homeland origin.

Gilroy already highlighted the use of subaltern political cultures' by the corporate multiculturalism:

The citation and simulation of these cultures do not reproduce their extensive ethical investment in face-to-face, body-to-body, real-time interaction. (...) This loosening of proprietary claims has also given the advertisers and iconizers an additional license to plunder and appropriate the vigor of racialized counter cultures'. (GILROY, 2001, p. 252)

The announcement of the end of the diffusion of the BBC One 'Idents' was also noted by British journals. With some kind of curious sarcastic gloat the media editor of The Independent Ian Burrell published on August 2005 an article entitled 'Strictly Done Dancing: BBC1 boss hints show is over for ballet company and friends' and he tried to explain the audience reception to the 'Idents' of BBC1:

They were meant to be symbols of BBC1's commitment to multiculturalism, sports and the arts; there was the dreadlocked basketball player in his Paralympics wheelchair, the white guys doing capoeira on the roof and the ballet dancers in their Lycra. The trouble was that instead of encouraging inclusivity, the only feeling of unity

produced by these BBC1 "idents" seemed to be an almost universal sense of annoyance among the viewing public'.<sup>15</sup>

So capoeira 'white guys' and the others were not able to translate correctly the ideal of a 'multicultural Britain'. If we look more closely at the British social context that precedes the withdrawal of the 'Idents' we can get a more comprehensive context to explain this decision.

In 2004 it was common to hear critics about the problems of the multiculturalism in Britain (MODOOD, 2007, p. 10-11), and the way in which it has nurtured a kind of fetish of difference, and has not encouraged minorities to be really British. This critique has been particularly strong after found its apogee with the London bombings of the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2005 and the aborted bombings of July 21st. The commentaries on the British media linked the bomb attacks to problems associated with a 'misguided and catastrophic pursuit of the multiculturalism' (MODOOD, p. 12) and some claimed that multiculturalism has failed.

Now we can return to the BBC 'Idents' and understand the malaise and the bitter taste that follows the final stage end of this campaign, and why the announcement of its end just one month later from the London bombing attacks. Thus we could suggest, that this campaign exemplifies the tension present in Britain, between in one side the possibility to renegotiate the 'national identity' and on the other the proliferation of the excluding binarism based on racialized 'cultural differences' (HALL, 2003, p. 90).

## Conclusion

As I tried to show in this article capoeira practice, in the process of globalization have been appropriated and translated to embody different meanings in distinct national contexts. The use of the capoeira in TV advertisements will be associated to the local representations, and the

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<sup>15</sup>BURRELL, I. Strictly Done Dancing: BBC1 boss hints show is over for ballet company and friends. The Independent, London, 25 ago. 2005 Available at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/strictly-done-dancing-bbc1-boss-hints-show-is-over-for-ballet-company-and-friends-504729.html>>. [Acesso: 15 mar. 2009].

translation made by the ‘cultural intermediaries’ to appropriate this practice and to ‘acclimatize’ this practice, transforming it into local versions, acceptable and easy to understand for the local people.

The examples of the use of capoeira narratives in commercial advertisements in France and in Britain show how the dissemination of these stories is connected to specific and contextual conjunctures. But capoeira narratives are once more in a storm of signs and images frequently incoherent, meaningless and difficult to identify, thrown out by the mass medias. However sometimes it can say something interesting more about the local contexts in which they were produced and diffused.

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