

Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa

Special Issue «Cultures of Combat: Body, Culture, Identity»

Introduction**1. The body problem of interpersonal physical conflict and cultures of combat**

In his work on the sociology of the body, Arthur Frank (1991, p. 48) proposed that a «structuration theory of the body and society» might usefully conceive of society and culture as «deriving from the body's own problems of its embodiment within a social context». This, he argued, is because, «the body is a problem for itself, which is an action problem...proceeding from a phenomenological orientation» (Ibid, p. 47). Stated simply, how we relate to our own and others' bodies in response to our inevitable social dealings with them becomes a central question. In addition, he suggested «the body becomes most conscious of itself when it encounters resistance» (Ibid, p. 51). While Frank exemplified resistance with the example of acting in social life, another possibly more profound form of resistance that poses body problems is interpersonal conflict and physical combat (see also Levine, 1991, 1994, 2007). In such circumstances, Frank argues, the body must pose itself (at least) four questions of object relatedness in relation to its actions and performances: First, bodily control (does the body need to be predictable or contingent?); second, desire (is bodily desire produced or lacking?); third,

relation to others (is the body monadic or dyadic?); and fourth, self-relatedness (is the body associated or dissociated with itself?).

Drawing on Weber's ideal types, Frank posits that «as the body responds to all four of the questions of its object relatedness [...], usage emerges» (Frank, 1991, p. 53), although the real-world practical manifestations of these object relations are more intertwined. Moreover, these types are characterised as having an ideal typical medium of usage. These elements are typified in the following body-self relationships seen in Figure 1 below.

	Disciplined body	Dominating body	Mirroring body	Communicative body
Medium	Regimentation	Force	Consumption	Recognition
Control (Predictable - contingent)	Predictable Body made predictable through regimentation - fears contingency	Contingent A strong sense of their own contingency through conflict	Predictable Body made predictable through reflecting (via consumption) that which is around it.	Contingent Contingency embraced as possibility
Desire (Lacking-producing)	Lacking Lack of desire forestalled through regimen	Lacking Lack of desire due to negativity of masculine self-identification	Producing Constantly producing desire to keep its sense of lack unconscious	Producing Dyadic sharing of expression and broader possibilities for realisation
Other relatedness (Monadic-dyadic)	Monadic Body as isolated in its own performance, lack of empathy	Dyadic Dominates others to counter its sense of lack and fear of contingency	Monadic Nothing it consumes challenges its own self-consciousness: body-for-self	Dyadic In expression of the world around it rather than in consumption for self.
Self relatedness (Associated - dissociated)	Dissociated Discipline used to dissociate pain, hunger, emotions as one's own. Strongly appropriated by institutional discourses and practices	Dissociated Must be dissociated in order to give and receive punishment.	Associated Fully associated with its own surface. Appropriated by institutional discourses and practices on how it should look for self	Associated The body produces itself recursively, does not get overly appropriated by institutional discourses and practices
Exemplars	Ascetic holy woman & Military training	The male soldier / warrior.	The consumer	More an ideal, No complete empirical exemplar? Found in praxis. Elements of communicative bodies found in dancers.

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Fig. 1 Typology of body use in action. Adapted from Frank, 1991

Frank's typology helps us to get closer to the deeper body-self-society relationships which might underpin particular reasons for, and responses to, conflict and interpersonal violence. It also contributes to the valuable work already started in this area (see Farrer, Whalen-Bridge, 2011). Indeed, Frank's own descriptions point to more than one form of interpersonal conflict and combat (from warriors and soldiers to Aikido). In particular, we contend that the communicative body occupies an intriguing and paradoxical status within cultures of combat. Frank argues that unlike the disciplined, dominating and mirroring body, the communicative body has no empirical exemplar and is «a body in process of creating itself» (Frank, 1991, p. 79). In Weber's terms it is more an *idealised*, than an ideal body type. That said, Frank does identify moments where communicative bodies may be briefly found in praxis such as the dancer reaching out to an audience, or interestingly, some cooperative practices in traditional martial arts such as Aikido (referencing Levine, 1991).

These, however, are qualified as not empirical exemplars as there other elements more aligned with the disciplined, mirroring and even dominating bodies also combined in the overall configuration of body-self relationships of dancers and martial artists - due to the powerful constraining (and enabling) institutional practices and discourses practitioners are also subjected to (see for example Wainwright *et al.*, 2006). Nevertheless, it highlights how many practices in cultures of combat may foster elements of communicative body-self-society relationships. For example, many cultures of combat use partner practices in which one's body is used as a vehicle for a partner's body to learn and develop (e.g. controlled sparring, Aikido's Nage / Uke Kata, Wing

Chun's Chi Sau, Tai Chi's Tai Shou, Capoeira's Jogo and the Muay Thai circle to name a few). Similarly, many traditional cultures of combat emphasise elements of chivalry, modesty, self-sacrifice and creativity which all indicate at least some space is made for an idealised communicative body type in practice.

The purpose of discussing Frank's ideas here is to highlight how cultures of combat might be better understood through a broadly structurationist agenda in which the active agentic body is placed at the centre:

Theory needs to apprehend the body as both medium and outcome of social 'body techniques,' and society as both medium and outcome of the sum of these techniques. Body techniques are socially given - individuals may improvise on them but rarely make up any for themselves - but these techniques are only instantiated in their practical use by bodies, on bodies. Moreover, these techniques are as much resources for bodies as they are constraints on them; constraints enable as much as they restrict (Frank, 1991, p. 48).

Conflict takes many forms, ranging from the symbolic to actual physical confrontation and is an uncomfortable constant of human history, society and culture (Collins, 2008). Frank's work on body problems highlights how the body is a significant driver in shaping conflict.

We are reminded of this omnipresent body problem of our ancestors dealing with conflictual relations during visits to museums. Museums, [such as the Pitt Rivers](#) in Oxford, provide testimonies to the way in which interpersonal conflict has shaped human history. They exhibit the countless tools and techniques of interpersonal conflict that human cultures have developed and refined, and how these are embedded in the cultural identities of ethnic groups and even entire countries. The fist, knife, sword, spear, bow, armour and of course, gun, recur across histories and cultures, but each culture finds differing ways of making and using them depending on their material

conditions of existence, values and beliefs. We might usefully view these as sociocultural (as well as historical) ‘artefacts’ which takes on a slightly different meaning as Burkitt (1999, p. 36) articulates:

A created object in which human activity is embodied because it has been fashioned for some use within human practices... artefacts support and reproduce types of transformative practices through their use. In the process, people develop ‘techniques of the body’ through the appropriation of activity from artefacts, which is to say that certain forms of bodily carriage and movement appear, or ways of handling objects and manipulating them...Thus, our ‘way of being in the world’, of acting, knowing and thinking, is largely dependent on artefacts and how they re-form embodiment.

Following Burkitt, “artefacts of conflict” are easy to observe in their material form (as mentioned, fists, spears, swords, guns, etc.) developed to provide particular culturally and historically located solutions to the problem of interpersonal physical conflict. Conversely, these artefacts of conflict also give rise to cultural forms of identification through their use and development (for example the Zulu shield and spear, and the AK-47 have become icons of symbolic resistance to colonialism, while the samurai, sword, armour and Western medieval knight represent chivalry through / in violent physical confrontation). Less obvious here, though, are the knowledges and practices that accompany these material objects and how they shape our way of being in the world (see Domaneschi, 2018). A fist, sword, bow and even gun, all require artefacts of knowledge for effective use in different contexts, and these artefacts have produced a truly vast array of distinctive, idiosyncratic solutions to what is a universal relational body-in-conflict problem. Therefore, this problem helps us identify what we term *cultures of combat*.

Cultures of combat can be read as a cultural phenomenon containing particular culturally relevant responses to the ongoing, lived body problems created by interpersonal human conflict and incorporate a myriad of styles of bodily usage involving mixes of dominating, disciplined, mirroring and communicative bodies.

Cultures of combat may be diverse but have a common, phenomenologically orientated, embodied stimulus which simultaneously absorbs, reflects and actively creates culture.

They are, in essence, movement cultures adapted to provide appropriate tactics and techniques to best deal with interpersonal conflict. Finally, cultures of combat have a history as long as human civilisation, which warrants their place in the museum (typically -but not always-representing deceased, static bodies and dormant artifacts).

Yet outside of the museum, cultures of combat are anything but temporally static exhibits. Rather, they remain a contemporary lived bodily problematic phenomenon, constantly evolving through the ways in which the moving, sensing bodies of their practitioners experience interpersonal conflict and the body problems posed by these movements. In agreement with Ryan (2016), whether these may be located on dangerous urban streets, political rallies, in or beside sporting arenas or on the modern battlefield, cultures of combat remain significant because they are prescient, lived, evolving, moving cultures which interconnect with broader understandings and definitions of body / physical cultures and cultural identities.

The first article, in this special issue highlights a number of these elements and develops the area of wrestling and identity of work by Alter (1992); Entitled “Symbols and Belonging” by Dario Nardini and Aurelie Eupron. It features the little-known Breton wrestling art of *gouren*. Taking a novel historical-ethnographic approach by blending

two projects of a historian and an anthropologist, the authors highlight the symbolic element of *gouren* martial arts culture that expresses the specific regional identity of Brittany (such as the flag) and the imagined Celtic and peasant past – one that is positioned as being distinct from that of contemporary France, but not resulting from a separatist faction. The authors use Elias's (1986) concept of *sportization* to stress how some traditional games do not inevitably transform into fully-fledged sports, although this process began for *gouren* in the 1920s.

As indicated in Nardini and Epron's analysis of symbolism of *gouren* rituals, cultures of combat seem to recognise the need to construct a representative "superstructure" of some sort (Marx, Engels, 1970); or, following Giddens, "symbolic tokens", which he describes as «media of change, which have value, and are thus interchangeable across a plurality of contexts» (Giddens, 1991, p. 18). This is clearly visible, in combat sports where the number of fights, wins (and those by KO, draws and losses) are part of a symbolic system of valuing elite performing bodies. In more traditional martial arts, symbolic tokens are differently configured. Following Barthes (1957, p. 113), we might read the «black belt» (or black sash, etc.) as an important cultural signifier - a civilised symbolic proxy signifying a person's superior knowledge about a fighting art and potential for engaging in dangerous interpersonal combat. In what Sartre (1968) refers to as a *totalisation*, the black belt signifies a whole martial arts history and what expert (black belt) martial arts practitioners are capable of. It re-animates this signification each and every time the black belt is worn or given, re-constructing a representation of the bodily capacity for creative violence of the wearer and past wearers. It organises contemporary practice, where people line up in a training hall and what is expected

from their bodies. The symbol is now near universally recognised with the signifier and signified becoming fused to create what Barthes (1957) refers to as «mythology». Another important symbolic token is that of “Master”: a human being with such knowledge and skills as to be consecrated as someone with the highest authority in a given martial art and taken to have (or have had) superordinate ability. Of course, these representations of competency may or may not translate in the contingencies of real-world conflict and actual combat. A “20 and 0” fighting record, black belt or the title of master, does not determine the outcome of a fight. This contingency is one of the body-problem paradoxes of cultures of combat which drives so much of the action, bodily dispositions and cultural signification. While we are not suggesting these symbolic tokens are not devoid of merit or meaning in establishing identities or legitimacies - all cultures of combat and its practitioners are acutely aware that these meanings can be undermined and lost in an instant in real or sporting combat: a body problem of contingency with the most typical response being to respond as a dominating body. As Frank puts it, the world of the «dominating body» is a world of warfare, «which is always contingent» (Frank, 1991, p. 72). This is part of the paradox of gaining an identity through a culture of combat because when it is based on efficacy in such a contingent realm, one’s identity is also always contingent. Nevertheless, the practice of adding semiotic layers within cultures of combat may provide some sense of ontological security to the existential anxiety that arises in the face of interpersonal conflict, but these can never completely allay the contingency and immanence of threat of conflict as it unfolds in real time.

In addition, cultures of combat make us reflect on life politics as well because they relate closely to Giddens' (1991, p. 227) important discussion on the space afforded to the dimension of interpersonal conflict in his existential categories of «survival, finitude, individual and communal life and self identity». As Giddens (1991, p. 218) reminds us, «reflexive appropriation of bodily processes and development is a fundamental element of life-political debates and struggles». Re-connecting with the problems of bodily action, which for Frank (1991) drives, at least in part, human agency, we might come to see cultures of combat as something of an almost universal life-political response (whether corporeal, visceral, codified or symbolic) to the existential needs of surviving conflict, facing one's finitude in/through/after confrontation, promoting, protecting and representing communal life and building and maintaining self-identity in face of the potential threats that surround us. Cultures of combat might help us better understand people's responses to life-political dimensions of existential threat, angst and ontological insecurity, both in the practices of these cultures and in extrapolation, the significance of this dimension in social life more broadly. For example, some cultures of combat, particularly, what are referred to as the "soft" arts, have sought less adversarial ways of solving the body problem of conflict and appear to inculcate what might seem closer to a communicative body type, which extends beyond physical conflict to include elements such as psychological and spiritual conflict (Levine 2007).

The debate about how we might protect ourselves and what we permitted to do to others goes to the heart of body problems, not only for individuals but whole societies, and even inter-societal agreements, as evidenced by the Geneva Convention on Human

Rights. One contemporary example of this lies in the practice of people becoming involved in cultures of combat in order to give themselves a fighting chance of defend themselves from the threat (perceived or otherwise) stemming from the consequences of urban social decay and disorder. Such decay and disorder are largely an unintended consequence of modernity. Giddens (1990) is surely right to claim that late (or post) modernity is “Janus faced” (i.e., offering many benefits, but also new risks). For those (of us?) lucky enough to reside in relatively affluent first world countries, modernity has brought with it ever-increased standards of living and ontological security. However, in this late capitalist, individuated, neo-liberal moment, which Beck (1999) characterises as «global risk society», increasing numbers of people face increasing numbers of existential threats in the form of 1) climate change; 2) inequality and poverty created by global capitalism; and 3) diseases caused by modern sedentary lifestyles. The first two threats increase the potential for interpersonal conflict from social struggles over diminishing societal resources, while the third is an internal threat emerging from our way of life, which undermines our body’s ability to respond to external threat. In such circumstances, is it surprising that millions of people across the world sense a real-and-present existential threat as sufficiently prescient to stimulate them to explore ways to defend themselves by becoming involved in a martial art or combat sport? The corollary to this is that recent times have also witnessed something of an explosion and diversification of cultures of combat across the world, a point returned to later.

The emergence of new cultures of combat in response to personal and social threats in exemplified by Lorenzo Pedrini’s article, «The Sparring Dispositif» which initiates us into the world of *boxe popolare*, an emergent combat culture which is part of the wider

approach to physical culture known as *sport popolare* – a left-wing political activist movement, using a grass roots sporting approach which avoid governmental and commercial sports structures, often taking place in squatted establishments. Pedrini, like Wacquant (2004) before him, became an apprentice in a respected people's boxing gym (known as *palestra popolare*) to learn the specific craft of this incarnation of the art and science of pugilism. His article brings together Foucault's concept of *dispositif*, with a Bourdieusian framework (see Pedrini, 2018) in order to understand not only the social logic of boxing (Wacquant, 1992) in this context, but also its place in people's biographies and development. Pedrini illuminates the distinct features of this left-wing code of boxing which has evolved to provide self-defense for its activist membership. In the Italian context, this contrasts the fascist ethos of boxing, which promotes a dominating body type (and more specifically a dominating masculine "fascist physicality"). Placing the body at the centre of the analysis, Pedrini shows how boxing practices in *boxe popolare* are re-appropriated to emphasise multiple implicit and explicit aspects embedded in the training, and how sparring responds to the body problem of interpersonal conflict in ways which are intended to trigger processes of self-reinvention, resistance and sociocultural change in a collectivist direction.

Many cultures of combat do appear to have followed what Dunning (1999, p. 44), following Elias, describes as a civilising process characterised by, "an advancing threshold of repugnance regarding engaging in and even witnessing violent acts". Professional and amateur boxing, kickboxing, Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), Karate and Olympic combat sports such as Taekwondo and Judo and their internationally affiliated federations, have, over time, revised their policies and practices to make their sports less

damaging to the bodies of the participants by reducing level of violence endured in competition. Shorter bouts, safer gloves, head protection and ongoing medical checks are some examples (see, Sanchez-García, Malcom, 2010; Vertonghen *et al.*, 2014; Haudenhuyse, 2014; Van Van Gastel, 2017). Elsewhere, many more traditional martial arts have removed or significantly diminished the level of violence used in their instruction to a point where it is now possible to become an advanced practitioner in some martial arts without ever experiencing "real" combat or its consequences in class situations. However, this civilising process has always been uneven in its development, as partly acknowledged by Elias and Dunning's (1986) thesis in the *Quest For Excitement*. By the late 1990's Dunning (1999, p. 64) suggests:

There is some evidence that in present-day Britain, we may be in the early stages of a civilising downswing - a de-civilising process of some as yet indeterminable moment and duration and which is taking place in sport and society at large.

Dunning could have been commenting on MMA directly here as MMA appears to have been "reinvented" by privately owned combat sports promotion companies such as the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), Bellator, Invicta, One Championship and most recently the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championships, actively focused on commodifying and spectacularising (in a Debordian sense) violent confrontation between persons. However, even these extreme cultures of combat have evolved rules in ways that seek to limit the worst damage to fighters and the most extreme kinds of violent techniques and behaviour that might otherwise take place. It seems, therefore, that both civilising and de-civilising processes work simultaneously as dialectical processes of change. At the heart of this tension are the culturally "acceptable" limits of sanctioned interpersonal

combat and consented violence and any given historical juncture (which is the source of much debate, see: Bottenburg, Heilbron, 2006; Spencer, 2009; Weimer, 2017; Abramson, Modzelewski 2011). That said, these sports are still a long way from the brutal realities of ancient Pankration, medieval duels to the death, street violence such as knife crime, modern warfare and terrorist attacks.

These (de)civilising processes are a reminder that cultures of combat shift to accommodate the zeitgeist as well as influence that zeitgeist. Our era is one of the mediatisation of extreme, unsanctioned, *real* violence. In the end, applying Frank's notion of body problems to cultures of combat helps us interpret (de)civilising processes and ask further questions around, for example, how conflictual and harmful interactions are meaningfully and purposefully organized, how the social organisation of conflicting physical interactions reveals a particular human ethos, and how power relations within broader societies and social groups operate beyond those specific cultures of combat.

2. Cultures of combat as physical-body culture

The idea of cultures of combat as a heterogeneous phenomenon emerging from a universal body problem of interpersonal conflict interconnects strongly with two co-existing literatures in the social sciences and humanities of human movement studies; The literature on *physical culture* (of the English-language literature) and *body culture* (of the German and Danish scholarship) respectively. Cultures of combat occupy a significant place within notions of physical culture (Brown, 2019), which Hargreaves and Vertinsky (2007, p. 1) articulate as «referring to those activities where the body

itself – its anatomy, its physicality, and importantly its forms of movement – is the very purpose, the *raison d'être*, of the activity». Physical cultures assist us in assessing the ethnographic *what*: the great diversity of cultures of combat that include traditional martial arts, combat sports and civilian and military self-defence systems (Channon, Jennings, 2014).

The second framework, that cultures of combat exemplify, is what Eichberg (2008, p. 82) refers to as «bottom-up processes of social-bodily practice» or «body culture», something Eichberg and Kosiewicz (2016, p. 71) define as including:

sport alongside with dance, play and games, meditative activities, outdoor activities, and rituals. Eichberg placed the concept of body culture side by side with material culture (artifacts and technology) and intellectual culture (arts and values). Philosophically leaning towards Karl Marx, Eichberg grounded the concept of body culture on a materialist understanding of bodily practice as the basis beneath the superstructure of ideologies and institutions.

When used in a methodological sense as a meta-framework, the body cultures model is a non-dualistic approach to study multiple contrasting physical cultures through consideration of their history and culture. It helps address the ethnographic *how*: the way in which we can frame cultures as different as Afro-Brazilian Capoeira and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, taught in cultures very different to those of their origins, or boxe popolare and Muay Thai both practised in the city of Milan. What is interesting here is that notions of physical culture and body culture are extremely broadly theorised across the academe; ranging from the anthropological, historical, philosophical and Marxist to interpretive, poststructuralist and postmodern approaches. In spite of their seemingly irreconcilable differences, these approaches appear to share similar preoccupations with the importance of the «sub-superstructural level», that is, emergent embodied ontologies

stemming from experience and physicality occurring through distinctively organised and interpreted forms of combative human movement. This connects coherently with Frank's (1991) "body up" structurationist vision discussed above. Furthermore, it makes cultures of combat especially pertinent for body culture focused ethnographic research – an approach advocated by Eichberg and those that follow his model – such as Chinese body cultures as a whole (Brownell, 1995), Kenyan running (Bale, Sang, 1996) or the little-known Mexican martial art of Xilam (Jennings, 2018).

The special edition brings these ideas together and highlights the utility of drawing together notions of physical culture / body culture in the study of cultures of combat. Eichberg consistently argued that «the clash between body cultures» makes culture as well as cultural diversity more visible (Eichberg 2008, p. 80):

What was neglected was the body as a field of dynamic human interaction, of movement – and movement cultures in plural. In movement, human subjectivity develops through bodily dialogue with others. This is where sports, dances and games have their special place. Body culture, thus, emerges as a field where recognition and non-recognition are in conflict. (Eichberg 2008, p. 85).

Each of the papers in this special edition reinforce our view that the diversity of technical variation across the performance of the martial arts, combat sports, and self-defence systems does not merely suggest random variation of style, but rather ontologically important subjective difference formed through bodily interaction in culturally distinctive socio-temporal and socio-spatial contexts. This distinctiveness includes particularly attuned aspects of the senses which are important because as Howes and Classen (2014, p. 4) consider, «cultures differ in the emphases they place on different senses and the meanings they give to different sensory acts». Moreover,

Edensor (2010) - building on Lefebvre's idea that «everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm» (Lefebvre 2004, cited in Edensor 2010, p. 3) - points out that it is important to account for «rhythms of people, bodies, mobilities and nature» (Ibid)¹. The idea of rhythm is pertinently illustrated by Muay Thai - although as Yiannakis (2014) asserts by no means unique to it - which often takes a rhythmic approach to training attacking combinations, which is thought to give a fighter an advantage by using their rhythm to control the tempo of the fight and disrupt their opponent's rhythm.

Therefore, as specific forms of physical body cultures, cultures of combat show a particular form of sensory and rhythmic bodily interaction (see also McGuire 2015). The African-Brazilian dance-fight-game *capoeira* is celebrated for its cultural rhythm. Capoeira is recognised as a form of patrimony with its place on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list for its relative inclusivity of people from different social backgrounds and genders (see Owen, Ugolotti, 2017). In this special issue, another output from the longstanding collaboration by Sara Delamont and Neil Stephens is presented with their article entitled, «Capoeira is Everything to Me», it contains an analysis of the specific features that allow for British and European practitioners' deep sense of affinity for the art in the UK. Delamont and Stephens' ongoing 15-year ethnography involves a development of their theoretical approach to habitus. Using theories of tacit and explicit knowledge (Jamous, Peloille, 1970), the paper explores recent interview data collected with long-term *discipulos*. The analysis highlights the

¹ For a more detailed and comprehensive ethnographic insight into rhythm and sensemaking in embodied experience, see *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa* 2015/3, special issue "Rhythm in Social Interaction" (Bassetti, Bottazzi, 2015).

specific practices that makes *capoeira* unique: its circle (*roda*), the music and language, among other features that add to its appeal among non-Brazilians not descended from the African slaves who first developed the art.

In this special edition also, Lorenzo Domaneschi develops the important element of material culture in his article entitled «Dressed to Fight». Domaneschi explores the specific combat sports and Eastern movement forms (Brown, Leledaki, 2008) of *Muay Thai* (Thai boxing) and *Tuishou* (“pushing hands” in *Taijiquan*) as diffused, (re)invented traditions in this Western. Using these contrastive examples -consistent with the physical body cultures approach- Domaneschi focuses on the clothing used, such as the arm and head bands used in the opening ritual of a Thai boxing match and the minimalist approach to equipment in pushing hands, which is performed in various styles of clothing. Domaneschi’s analysis makes use of a practice-based approach that considers materiality alongside embodiment. Adopting an appropriate historical and cultural sensitivity, Domaneschi draws on field notes from his five-year immersion in one traditional martial arts association as a practitioner and cornerman to consider the meanings behind the bodily movements in conjunction with the essential materials – so often overlooked through the paradigm of embodiment that hitherto considers mainly the individual body-self and the bodies of others (see also Domaneschi, 2016).

By introducing the lens of cultures of combat as a specific form of physical - body cultures, this special edition sidesteps the frequent bifurcation of studying martial arts cultures and combat sport cultures separately. This bifurcation is problematic because it overlooks important aspects that unites them analytically; namely, the response to the

problem of interpersonal conflict and specific material conditions of the culture in which these cultures of combat are located.

3. The diffusion of cultures of combat: Mobility, Globalisation, glocalisation and reinvention

Approaching cultures of combat as physical - body culture helps to better highlight and distinguish cultural diversity and also examine the emergent solutions to the body problems of interpersonal conflict these cultures present. However, we also need to account for the phenomenon of how these cultures of combat and their embedded ideal typical solutions and dispositions are adopted and adapted in a global context, *and* at the same time, how these practices show evidence of local diversification and identity formation. To explore this, we need to turn to the interrelated ideas of mobility, globalisation, glocalisation and, finally, the process of reinvention. Many cultures of combat have globalised in so far as they have become «(transnational) processes beyond the level of the nation state» (Sklair, 2006, p. 76). Combat sport promotion companies such as the UFC and international federations of martial arts such as the International Taekwondo Federation (ITF) / World Taekwondo (WT) are obvious examples, but we should also not forget to include the myriad individual migrating teachers, coaches and practitioners, whose actions have led to the global diffusion of their cultures and associations. Following Southwood and Delamont (2018), we are reminded of Urry's (2007) notion of *mobilities*, in which Urry argues attention should be paid to the movement of not just bodies but also, transfer points, liminal places, virtual movements,

imagined movements, past movements, moving places and the movement of objects. In this respect, cultures of combat are *mobile* responding to the body problem of interpersonal combat in various locales. These are practice and agency enabling, as Urry (2000, p. 78) reminds:

This agency is achieved in the forming and reforming of chains or networks of humans and non-humans. The human and the material intersect in various combinations and networks, which in turn vary greatly in their degree of stabilisation over time and across space.

What is particularly striking about such a view though is how through such movements of artefacts and bodies increase the «cosmopolitanisation of taste» (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 208). For example, the “taste” for a particular culture of combat is increasingly disembedded from their location of origin. In this regard, the mobility of bodies and artefacts in cultures of combat are of particular importance for the way in which we can understand them (Southwood, Delamont, 2018). Configurations of body-self-society relationships and sensual sensitivities -and in particular senses of body, self, ritual, order, place, time (Vannini *et al.*, 2014)- are carried and passed on via the bodies of increasingly mobile practitioners and their artefacts. In support of this idea, Giddens (1994, p. 96) considers, «Globalization is essentially “action at distance”». Thus, for example as Villamon *et al.* (2004) show when an organisation such as the International Judo Federation made a rule change to its sporting contests to add penalties for “non-combativity”, this change quickly rippled through the federation across the globe, made its way into *Dojos* around the world forcing an alteration of embodied orientation towards engaging in combative contests, moving it from a cautious, defensive approach to one which favours a more attacking and dominating body culture within sports Judo.

Similarly, when ideas and practices of remarkable martial artists such as Bruce Lee and Ed Parker were disseminated globally via their films, clubs, books, teaching and demonstrations, the idea that "real" combat required a broader skill set that involved combining techniques from many martial arts, the seeds for a "new" mixed martial arts physical-body culture were sown. Lastly, Taekwondo's founder, military general Choi Hong Hi, embedded some key principles or tenets, that guide practitioners: courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit. These words are learned in *Dojangs* across the world and attempt to frame the spirit with which both sporting and real combat is engaged in, in ways that soften the dominating body and calls for other body-self relationships to come to the fore.

These few examples of cultural mobility pertain to what Giddens (1990, p. 21) terms disembedding, which he defines as the «"lifting out" of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space». In many cases, the history of particular cultures of combat and the solutions they pose to the problem of interpersonal conflict is one of their disembedding from the localities of their emergence and their re-embedding in new contexts across the globe. However, as Giddens (1990, p. 20) also points out, disembedding creates «manifold possibilities of change by breaking free from the constraints of local habits and practices». This is because once re-embedded in new contexts, cultures of combat tend to be adopted and adapted to fit that environment without the impediment of tradition and the physical body cultures of its recipients become blended. Once re-embedded, the process of local transformation of cultures of combat can be interpreted through the lens of glocalisation which for Giulianotti and Robertson (2007, p. 134) «highlights the simultaneity or co-

presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in globalization; that is, the commonly interconnected processes of homogenization and heterogenization».

If early ideas of globalisation suggested the dominance of transnational social structures, comprising of complex expert systems and media of interchange, then glocalisation attests to the continuing and important role of embodied human agency, which is an important theme here:

Glocalization...registers the agency of quotidian social actors in critically engaging with and transforming global cultural phenomena in accordance with perceived local cultural needs as well as values and beliefs (Giulianotti, Robertson, 2006, p. 173).

Thus, for example, when Jigoro Kano's Judoka arrived in Brazil with the express intention to disseminate the art of Judo, the art was adopted as Judo, but also adapted into what became Brazilian Jujitsu by members of the Gracie family (amongst notable others) and in particular by Helio Gracie who focused on the principle of using the art to help people of smaller stature defeat larger antagonists (similar to Judo) through taking a fight to the ground and using the mechanics of joint locks and strangleholds to defeat otherwise bigger and stronger opponents (a significant strategic development of Judo). At the core of this transformation, we can see the agency of an individual encountering the body problem of interpersonal conflict (i.e., smaller bodies encountering larger bodies) and adapting the art accordingly. Another example is that the spread of *Taijiquan* across China and the globe has been characterised by a de-emphasis, particularly in the West and post-revolutionary China on the functional martial aspects of the art and a shift towards a focus on health and spirituality. Russo (2017) and A. Ryan (2009) highlight, the little known stories of Gerda Geddes (a Norwegian dancer

and psychotherapist) and Sophia Delza (an American dancer and choreographer) revealing how these women had separately travelled to China in the 1940's, discovered and practiced *Taijiquan* with masters and returned to begin teaching the art in the USA and England respectively with an emphasis on holistic health promotion - which provided solutions to body problems they encountered in their practice of dance. Driving these transformations, we can see actions of individuals encountering a body problem in a sense much closer to that of Frank's original usage, which relates to how the body encounters problems of health and wellbeing in a social context of modernity. The use of a martial art to 'defend' oneself against problems of health and the «malaise of modernity» (Kohn 2003) is a very current narrative running through "softer" arts such as *Taijiquan* and *Aikido*.

These brief examples also implicitly highlight another important consideration about cultures of combat which the de-territorialisation of locality. Agreeing with Robertson and Giulianotti (2006, p. 174) that, «it makes more sociological sense now to consider the local in non-territorial terms». Cultures of combat are now widely de-territorialised or alternatively put, following Roudometof (2005, p. 123), «glocalised», as their status is well articulated by this term which offers, «an accurate linguistic representation of their blending in real life».

These glocalised physical - body cultures of combat increasingly form de-territorialised communities spanning the globe, with the previous example of *Brazilian Jujitsu* (BJJ) a good case in point. Brazilian Jujitsu is a martial art/combat sport which emerged through the globalisation of Judo, became adapted and localised as *Brazilian Jujitsu* and subsequently then globalised in this reinvented form. In this special edition, D. S.

Farrer's study of *Brazilian Jujitsu* on the island of Guam in the Pacific Ocean illustrates a number of these aspects. In «BJJ is therapy», Farrer adopts Ingold's (2011) strategy to follow the materials of his data (including a poster with this bold claim) to explore the lifeworlds of the practitioners and instructors of BJJ on this colonised and militarised island, in which the local Chamorro people train alongside US marines and other veteran fighters. Using Spinoza's practical philosophy, Farrer examines specific characters central to the art of BJJ, which has an established base on Guam. He highlights how the practice of this art is central to the identity of (mainly male) fighters and their sense of warrior masculinity that connects their warrior chieftom past with the colonised present and a future of increased militarisation with an influx of highly disciplined yet dominating fighters onto the island. Farrer's article reveals mobilities and glocalisation and offers a critical perspective on continued colonisation of peoples and their potential resistive agencies through martial arts training.

This leads us, finally, to the notion of reinvention which is consistent with Giulianotti and Robertson's (2006, p. 172) understanding that glocalisation processes «are analogous to such conceptions as the “invention of culture”, the “invention of tradition” or the creation of “imagined communities”». In the global context of cultures of combat, we would argue that reinvention pre-supposes glocalisation. Moreover, Elliot's (2013) poignant synopsis suggests that reinvention is a significant feature of our era, in which, «reinvented identity practices, spawned in conditions of advanced globalization, increasingly come to the fore in these early years of the twenty first-century» (Elliot 2013, p. 94). Therefore, we see the idea of reinvention as helpful to give meaning to how to cultures of combat, via the mobilities accelerated by globalisation process of

disembedding, re-embedding and subsequent glocalisation, might be interpreted. As Elliot (2013, p. 92) puts it, «reality within the culture of reinvention culture is endlessly pliable».

However, unless we subscribe to the idea that reinvention is simply done for its own sake (which we don't), to understand why this might be the case, we need to return to the notion of Frank's body problems which provides something of a stimulus for why, in the eyes of local practitioners, such practices "need" reinventing in the first place. At this point, the idea that practitioners engage in re-invention of practices within cultures of combat in order to satisfy a fundamental body problem - that of how to 'resist' interpersonal conflict or increasingly to solve other body problems such as those created by psychological stress, secularism or sedentary lifestyles - becomes a compelling one.

This brief discussion has sought to highlight how the qualitative and ethnographic study of cultures of combat is neither a prosaic nor esoteric academic exercise, but rather an acutely pertinent and fecund topic in enhancing our understanding of cultural forms and their diversities. As such the study of cultures of combat and what they reveal about relationship between body, culture and identity contribute strongly to the emerging field of martial arts studies (Bowman, 2015) and also, more broadly to the sociological, anthropological and historical study of the embodied dimensions of interpersonal conflict in human life.

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