Senegalese Diaspora and Technological Mediation: observation of Magal of Touba in between times and places

LILIANE DUTRA BRIGNOL
Professor Doctor at the Communication Sciences Department of the Santa Maria Federal University (UFSM), Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, where she is part of the faculty of the Graduate Program in Communication, working in the line of investigation Media and Contemporary Identities. Brazil. E-mail: lilianebrignol@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-7323-038X.

NATHÁLIA DREY COSTA
PhD student in Media Communication in the line of investigation on Media and Contemporary Identities at the Graduate Program in Communication (Poscom), Santa Maria Federal University (UFSM), Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. E-mail: nathaliadreycosta@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-6295-514X.

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Abstract

In this article we seek to discuss the entanglement between media and contemporary migration as a starting point for understanding how the dynamics of network communication permeate contemporary diasporic experiences. By means of an exploratory exercise situated in a context of diversification of migrant groups in Brazil, this paper aims to reflect on the relations between diasporic experience and the uses of social media by migrant subjects observing the religious practices of Senegalese migrants in Rio Grande do Sul state. We highlight the centrality of the appropriations of mobile technologies and the Internet for the formation of transnational and hybrid notions of time and place during the celebration of Magal of Touba.

Keywords

Introduction

From where can we observe the dynamics of transformation of the place of culture in our globalised societies? In his most recent texts, Jesús Martín-Barbero (2006; 2014; 2015) writes about two key aspects that impact our position in the world today: The revitalization of identities and the revolution of the technicalities. Like Milton Santos (2004), who considers the simultaneous possibilities and perversities of globalisation, Martín-Barbero sees cultural diversity as a place of resistance, negotiation, interaction and potential for transformation in light of the homogenizing globalization processes because, as the author states, "what reactivates identities as engine of struggle today is inseparable from the quest for recognition and meaning" (Martín-Barbero, 2014, p. 24).

This cultural diversity is a source of reflection and theoretical questioning throughout Martín-Barbero's trajectory, and is resumed as one of the main points from where to study the processes, practices and the media today. In this proposition, migrants and Internet users are two indicative categories of modes of being in the contemporary world and are much closer to each other than we can assume from a dualistic perspective that opposes displacements between territories and communication flows. This is the instance in which, according to the author, the *urbanias* and citizenships are intertwined:

> Every day the experience and narratives of immigrants mix more intensely with those of the Internet users. Thousands of displaced people and migrants – inside and outside of each country – make sense of the city they inhabit by writing about it in chat rooms and hypertext content across the web in which individuals and groups communicate with their families who remain on the other side of the world. That happens through circulation of stories and images that narrate (and are narrated) to continue their narrative among their people and to be taken into account by those who make decisions that affect them. (Martín-Barbero, 2015, p.27) [1]

In another attempt to understand the cultural dimensions of globalisation, Appadurai (2004) proposes to bring media and migration together as diacritical interconnected signs of a moment of rupture. According to the anthropologist, "electronic mediation and mass migration mark the world of the present not as technically new forces but as ones that seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination."(2004, p. 15) In the sense proposed by the author, people

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[1] Original text: Las experiencias y narrativas del inmigrante se entremezclan cada día más densamente con las de los cibernautas. Millones de desplazados y emigrantes – dentro y fuera de cada país– practican la ciudad que habitan escribiendo relatos en el chat o en hipertextos de la web, desde los que individuos y comunidades se comunican con sus familiares que quedan al otro lado del mundo. Y ello mediante la circulación de historias y de imágenes en las que cuentan, se cuentan, para seguir contando entre la gente y para ser tenidos en cuenta por los que sobre ellos toman decisiones que les afectan. (Martín-Barbero, 2015, p. 27).

and images in displacement and, therefore, outside the certainties of the local limits, act in deep and unpredictable ways in the reframing of modern subjectivity.

In our work, we seek to look at the entanglement between media and contemporary migration, to discuss how the logic and dynamics of network communication permeate and are permeated by diasporic experiences. Our starting point is the comprehension of diaspora as a metaphor to consider the multiple identity displacements and belongings in increasingly multicultural societies. As proposed by Hall (2003, p. 25-6), we believe that the issue of diaspora makes possible to shed light on the complexities, the multiple identities and temporalities that constitute us.

Particularly, in this article we start from the understanding of the role of the Internet and dynamics of network communication in the trajectory of migration and in the daily lives of migrants in general. This work falls within a context of diversification of migrant groups in Rio Grande do Sul - and migrants from Senegal among them. Among our goals, we seek to present part of an exploratory exercise of observation of religious practices of Senegalese migrants in Rio Grande do Sul, to identify relationships between diasporic experience and the social use of information and communication technologies by the migrant subjects.

The present work is part of the research project "Network Communication, difference and interculturality in social networks of Senegalese migrants in Rio Grande do Sul"[2], developed since 2014. This research focuses on new flows of transnational migration to southern Brazil, aiming to investigate social network of Senegalese migration through an ethnographic approach to their practices and processes of communication, built on uses of social media as well as interpersonal and intercultural communication

In this research framework, we follow the perspective of the social uses of media (Martín-Barbero, 2002), which leads to the construction of a methodological pathway based on a qualitative approach by focusing on participant observation, meeting with the migrant subjects, listening to their accounts, considering their everyday experiences and understanding their practices and processes.

As methodological procedures in the scope of the broader research project, we combine media monitoring, contact with the migration support network, observation online and participant observation in events and activities promoted by groups and associations of Senegalese in three cities of Rio Grande do Sul which are the focus of the research (Porto Alegre, Santa Maria e Caxias do Sul). On the second stage of the research, we conducted interviews with migrant subjects, as

well as informal conversations and group interviews, simultaneous to the observation procedures.

The municipalities were chosen because of the strong presence of the migrant group from 2010 onward, especially in Caxias do Sul (city located in the state's mountain range known for its industrial development) and in the capital Porto Alegre, where presence of Senegalese migrants recently increased. We chose Santa Maria, despite being a city where the presence of migrants is still small, because this is the location of the university where the research is being developed, besides some specificities for the field work such as the support networks existing there as well as religious and cultural events, such as the Magal.

For the purposes of this article, we focus on participant observation of the Magal of Touba party in 2016, held in the cities of Porto Alegre and Santa Maria. To complement the information obtained during the observation, we had informal conversations and conducted interviews with migrants during religious celebrations.

Experiences of diaspora and technological mediation

Proposed by Gilroy (2007) as a social ecology of identification, the diaspora is understood as a concept that transcends its original meaning of dispersion of peoples, breaking away from the fundamental power of territory in determining identities. It is a challenging idea for it highlights sub and supranational relations and dismisses the idea of primordial identities established by culture and by nature. "By joining the diaspora, identity can instead be driven to contingency, indeterminacy and conflict"(Gilroy, 2012, p. 19).

However, discussing diaspora does not mean taking this notion as a synonym for migration, as Grimson (2011) alerts, as we understand that displacements do not necessarily imply the existence of an identification or a sense of belonging, as well as migrations do not promote, necessarily, the encounter between cultures. These dynamics are more complex and conflicted than what we can assume from a hasty reading.

Diasporic experiences, in the way that we seek to formulate here, carry with them a sense of crossbreed of cultural exchanges, of the impossibility of pureness. Returning to Hall (2006), there is a false dilemma that permeates globalisation and the issue of identity: either we live a return to our roots (and strong local trends) or we are assimilated by homogenization. However, there are more than two points included in this questioning. There is also the element of *translation* (Hall, 2006), which points to the possibility of identity formations that go beyond national borders, formed by people scattered around the globe, in constant negotiation

between their culture of origin and the new cultural traits they are submitted, composing the translation (*idem*). Therefore, these identities are "(...) irrevocably, the product of several stories and cultures interconnected, which belong to one and, at the same time, several 'houses' (and not one ' house ' in particular)"(Hall, 2006, p. 89).

Thus, as Hall (2003) suggests, it is important to start from the diasporic perspective as subversion to the model of nation and nationalism – today, more supported by supranational neo-imperialist formations. Also, as Gilroy (2007) points out, diaspora "(...) is a especially valuable idea because it points to a more refined and more malleable sense of culture than the characteristic notions of rooting (...) It makes problematic the spatialization of identity and disrupts the ontologization of place"(Gilroy, 2007, p. 151).

Therefore, thinking about how contemporary identities articulate in a world of constant exchanges and flows is a challenge. It is important to understand that these exchanges produce spaces in which identities can relate to, merge or even reject one another. What previously seemed to offer solid ground for thinking the identity (nationality, class, gender, race, ethnicity, for example), undergoes structural changes, producing senses of fragmentation of these always plural identities. Hall (2006) argues that these changes also affect our conception of ourselves, in a movement of displacement of the subject. Talking about identity, therefore, meant "(...) talking about roots, i.e. customs and territory (...)." However, talking about identity nowadays also requires to understand it as networks and flows, migration and mobility (Martín-Barbero, 2006), elements that, in relation, produce less fixed senses of existence and belonging in the world.

It is important, as we have said, that we do not fall into the vague argument that migrants carry with them a genuine and untouchable "culture" (Grimson, 2011) that convey continents. Migratory experience involves a series of negotiations – starting from the customs and culture of migrant subjects which also involve the new associations developed by them during their migration experience. Diasporic communities online, for example, not necessarily carry the same culture or prevail in maintaining a continuous identity, as Matellart points out (2009). Thus, diasporic experiences around the world (permeated also by the uses of the Internet) work in maintaining and sharing common identity elements, but also create conflicts and contradictions, as well as blend and modify other elements put into circulation through the social uses of internet.

The search for information, as well as the process of interaction and network relations, characterise this quest for identity and community bonds by migrants. Through the notion of mediations (Martín-Barbero, 2001), we understand that the

ways the individual interacts with the medium – and with messages – permeates all meanings apprehended by he or she, the personal experience and the social context, in "the way subject and technology relate" (Brignol, 2013, p. 83). Thus, new elements are added to those constituent of the mediations. Such new elements make possible to realize the importance of daily life in the subjects' communication experience.

To understand the cultural aspects of the Internet, we need to understand the concept of social uses of the media. This communicational model of interpretation of the relationships between individual and culture, which starts from a methodological displacement, is one point of view of our research. The uses are thought, from the perspective of mediations, as appropriations and the subjects' very own notions that interfere and reconfigure their communication experience. Regarding mediation of technicity, we base our reflections on Martín-Barbero's ideas (2014), for whom the place of the subject's own culture is displaced within society from the moment technological mediation turns from a tool to structure because,"(…) the technology refers today not only, and not so much, to the novelty of the apparatus, but also new models of perception and language, the new sensitivities and scriptures"(Martín-Barbero, 2014, p. 25).

Communication technologies have an important role in migrants' daily lives. Despite technological limitations and socioeconomic inequality, the diversity of social uses of these technologies, from the mediations point of view, demonstrate the variety and capacity to produce meaning marked by the relationship with identities – or, according to Brignol (2013), that such social uses are "demanded by identity experiences" (Brignol, 2013, p. 83). It is the very migrant condition that produces particular modes of consumption and media uses, centered mainly in relations with the country of origin and the creation of networks of sharing and conviviality between migrants who share a migrant experience (Cogo; Gutiérrez; Huertas, 2008). As part of the active audience they are, migrants interpret information and appropriate it according to the uses they intend to make of the media in their context.

Concerning the issue of migration, the concept of transnationalism also helps to consider the multiple relationships with places of birth and of passage, as well as their interactions with the flows. The use of ICTs in the migratory context from transnationalism "allows links, connections and interactions that somehow transcend the territorial limits" (Brignol, 2010, p. 37). The appropriations of technologies by the migrant community may vary widely, from identity affirmation to the common use of basic communication services, among people who share the same nationality (Elhajji; Escudero, 2015). These uses are also important part of

the migratory experience, mainly because they allow individuals to organize cultural and political networks, acquiring a sense of belonging and citizenship - be it local, transnational and global - through various appropriations (*idem*).

The very concept of diaspora can be a starting point for understanding the identity relationships of those subjects who experience migration: these same relationships are being reframed through communication network environments. So, the very migrant condition is part of the configuration and reconfiguration of modes of routine/temporalities of Internet access patterns, as well as appropriations and social uses of the media with the specificities of "places and spaces of dwelling (shared to a greater or lesser extent), duration of working hours, the modes of migration (individually, in family, etc.), purchasing power, language skills and their own media culture developed by immigrants in their countries of origin"(Cogo, 2007, p. 68). Thus, a series of identity elements are put in circulation - traversed by different conditions of use, temporalities of appropriations and negotiations of identity meaning - , from the social uses of media (and, more specifically, the Internet). Living the diaspora today - their constant exchanges and flows between there and here - means to consider another element inside this experience: the dynamics of uses and appropriations of the spaces of communication on the internet by entire communities or individuals in diasporic experience.

Context of migration in Rio Grande do Sul

The coming of Senegalese people to Brazil has impacted the panorama of contemporary migration. EFE Agency, with information provided by federal police, reported that by 2012 the number of African migrants in Brazilian territory (including countries other than Senegal) increased by 30 times. Rio Grande do Sul is one of the Brazilian states that receives most of these migrants. Recent calculations by the International Observatory of Migration (OBMigra), under the Ministry of Labour in Brazil, showed that, from 2015, more than 800 temporary job positions were granted in Rio Grande do Sul to migrants who lived/live in the country. A report by the National Council of Immigration (CNIg) informed that more than 200 temporary and permanent work permits were granted to Senegalese in Brazil in the first quarter of 2016. Authorizations are granted by the Ministry of Labour, which acts in conjunction with the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Relations on policies for access and residence of migrants [3]in Brazil.

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[3]According to the OBMigra, migrant is the "typology for the group of individuals whose specification of classification indicates longer stay of foreigners in Brazilian territory or the departure of those who

We know that such numbers indicate only official statistics and are far from indicating the effective presence of this migrant group in the state. Information gathered by organs and institutions that support migrants in the country, for example, indicate other elements on the presence of Senegalese people. The Centre for Assistance to Migrants (CAM), based in Caxias do Sul (Rio Grande do Sul), recorded over 1,900 migrants served by the center. This is 2014 data and, since then, the presence of Senegalese in these cities changed according to migration flows, increasing and dispersing as migrants adapt to the country. Biggest city in the mountain range of Rio Grande do Sul state, Caxias do Sul has a strong presence of Senegalese,a local association and a *dahira* or religious centre, as well as support groups [4]for migrants who promote traditional parties and religious celebrations.

Other municipalities also receive Senegalese people often. Passo Fundo, for example, a municipality situated in the northwest of the state, receives groups of Senegalese migrants since 2000 (Herédia; Pandolfi, 2015). Porto Alegre, capital of the state, also has strong presence of Senegalese, so much so that it holds traditional parties, religious and cultural celebrations organized by the migrants for at least three years now. The Association of Senegalese of Porto Alegre has several members and is in high demand by Senegalese who live in the country and also Brazilians who act as collaborators, as well as by the media in serving as a source of information.

Herédia and Pandolfi (2015) indicate a profile of Senegalese migrants residing in the region (this profile is observed also in other municipalities mentioned previously): in general, this migrant is male, young and single, and the majority is committed to send remittances of money to families that remained in Senegal (in various areas of the country); their strongest motivation is to seek work, heavily influenced by the economic aspect; most of them are Muslim (tied to the Mouride brotherhood[5]) and most of their work experience is in trade (Herédia; Pandolfi, 2015). A similar profile was found in our field research.

One of the most noticeable observations among researchers and observers of the phenomenon of Senegalese migration in Brazil is the large formation of

remained for a longer period of time. It encompasses asylum; deported , expelled or extradited foreigners; refugees; refuge applicants; diplomats and their families; foreigners with visas or in the process of residence permit; family reunification; Portuguese with equality of civil and political rights; foreigners covered by the Agreement of Residence of the Mercosur and Programa Mais Médicos (More Doctors Programme)" (Complete 2016 Annual Report available at: http://obmigra.mte.gov.br/index.php/relatorio-anual).

[4]Besides CAM, Caxias do Sul has the group "Senegal, Ser Negão, Ser Legal" (Senegal, Being Black, Being Cool), founded by a Senegalese residing in Brazil since 2010. Besides this one, other members (Brazilian and Senegalese) assist in actions organized by the group.

[5]In Senegal, the practice of Islam takes the form of religious confraternity (Moreno Maestro, 2005). The Mouride brotherhood is the majority in the country and was founded by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba at the end of the 19th century. It is Sufi-inspired and its religious center is in the holy city of Touba. We explain better about Mouridism in the following pages of this article.

networks and intercommunication flows among these migrants. These networks are built from factors such as localization, regionalization, friendship and interconnections. They work in a circular format, allowing formal and informal exchanges (at work and in the religious aspect, for example), displacing and incorporating the migrants' relationship with Senegal while living and working in another country (Tedesco; Grzybovski, 2013). In addition to providing guidelines for staying in the new territory, these networks offer spaces for creation of associations and to promote their national culture (a small space in which Senegalese values, roots and cultural attributes may continue to be respected, valued and appreciated, even though they are no longer geographically in the same space).

The transactional aspect of Senegalese migration enables the creation of networks also heavily influenced by the religious aspect. The Senegalese who migrate to Brazil identify themselves, in their majority, as followers of the Muslim religion. Islam was developed at the center of Arab culture, in the Arabian Peninsula (where is nowadays Saudi Arabia) and the term *Islam* (from the verb *aslama,* submit) means "submission", while the word *muslim* means "submissive".

Its main prophet is Muhammad (translated into Western culture as Mohammed), and Islamic religion spread from *the Quran*, revealed and dictated by Mohammed around the years 600 AD (according to the Christian calendar). The *jihad* (translated as "holy war") is one of the fundamentals of the religion in the work of convincing followers. It is, along with Judaism and Christianism, one of the major monotheistic religions in the world (having *Allah* as its only God and Muhammad as main prophet). In Africa, the religion spread, until the 18th century, mainly through trade and immigration (Gonçalves; Koakoski, 2015). Even though trade caused the "Islamisation" of many countries in West Africa, Senegal as a country of Islamic religion has a more specific characteristic: the Muslim brotherhoods, which had a peaceful and syncretic tone and adapted to some characteristics of African societies (Gonçalves; Koakoski, 2015) (Gonçalves; Koakoski, 2015).

The Mouride brotherhood , one of the most popular in the country, was founded at the end of the 19th century by Cheick Amadou Bamba. As Maestro (2006) states, members of the Senegalese brotherhoods agreed to make vows of obedience to their *marabouts* (spiritual leaders), considered heirs of the *baraka* (divine tolerance). Thus, Senegalese brotherhoods classify themselves as elements of belonging among the population, being the Mouride the more active between

Senegalese. Inspired by the Sufi[6], this brotherhood represents, as Maestro (2006*)* points out, a response to the disruption of wolof society[7]. For Senegalese people, the Islamic practice is associated to a quest for freedom from French imperialism (and colonialism). Therefore, the descendants of the Cheick Amadou Bamba are the marabouts and the holy city to the Senegalese Muslims is the city of Touba, which represents the continuity of Bamba's doctrine. "In Senegal, the mourides are elements of a civil society whose autonomy is measured by the urban dynamics of Touba, which is today the second in population after the agglomeration Dakar-Pikine-Guédiawaye"(Maestro, 2006, p. 32). [8]

According to Romero (2017), the Mouride Brotherhood is the latest among those created in the African Islam universe. However, as the author explains, it is considered "the religious brotherhood of greater impact in West Africa and in a context of the diaspora of this religious organization in Europe, United States, Asia and Latin America"(Romero, 2017, p. 277). The author also stresses the understanding of Islam as a social phenomenon related to historical, cultural, social, economic, political and symbolic dynamics. The marabouts phenomenon, for example, is considered an archaic element, "related to the realm of 'tradition' of an 'exotic' Africa which, at all costs, tried to reinvent itself from modern values taken as universal." (Romero, 2017, p. 279) It was from Cheick Amadou Bamba's actions that the relationships established between "islamised" Africa, starting from Senegal, were bind also to the movement of transnational migration known as "Islam mouride circuit"(Romero, 2017). Such element is surrounded by social and historical tensions originated from colonial and colonialist policies that are part of the Senegalese context. Therefore, as Romero (2017) stresses, "the interpretive relevance of Mouridism comes from the context emerged from the relationships between Islam and colonialism as social phenomena, providing an analytical key to understand the complexity of migration, by the religious point of view" (Romero, 2017, p. 280).

Observation of the Magal of Touba in southern Brazil

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[6]The predominant religion in Senegal is the Islamic religion, originating of the Muslims in the country and which have Sufi origin (like the Mouride brotherhood, exemplified in this article). The special feature of the expansion of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa was the development of Sufism, a doctrine which is characterised by the introspection and the esoteric, with the aim of approach to God through the education of the soul and transformation of the ego, as described by Reiter (2017). It is defined as a system of beliefs with particular methods of learning and understanding how to control the ego and the soul, as Babou (2007) defines.

[7]The population of Senegal is divided into a few main ethnic groups (wolofs, peuls, serer, mandingue, diolas, soninkés, for example) and other smaller groups. Among this diversity, the ethnic group *wolof* is the most present, with majority of the population of Senegal identifying themselves with them.

[8]"En Senegal, los mourides son elementos de una sociedad civil cuya autonomía se mide por la dinámica urbana de Touba, que es hoy la segunda en población después de la aglomeración Dakar-Pikine-Guédiawaye" (Maestro, 2006, p.32).

Young black migrants born in Senegal roam the streets of Porto Alegre (RS) chanting in Arabic, carrying images of the religious leader Cheick Ahmadou Bamba, leaving the city market towards the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii, in the center of the southern capital. They distribute food and coffee for those who watch from the sidewalk. The meeting for prayer and thanksgiving happens also, in a very similar format (although with a smaller number of participants), in Santa Maria, a municipality in the central region of Rio Grande do Sul state. It is 19 November 2016 and these two cities connect with devotees all over the world on this day of religious celebration of the Muslim Mouride brotherhood. It is the *Magal of Touba*, or Grand Touba party, which takes thousands of followers to the holy city of Touba, located in Senegal, but also gains importance in many other cities around the world, marked by the presence of the Senegalese migration.

In common between the celebrations held in those places, we see the importance of mobile technologies, mainly for production of images of themselves and sharing on social networking sites, as well as the monitoring of the rituals with the cell phone and the transmission of the party through network communication. The same religious celebration also generates content for pages produced in Brazil that function as migration media. They integrate the experience of the Senegalese webdiáspora [9] and expand discussions and migratory experiences on websites and pages on social networking sites.

In that context, we observe two channels of communication created and managed by Senegalese migrants residing in Brazil during the coverage of the Magal of Touba: SeneBrasil TV [10] and ToubaBrasil TV Rio Grande do Sul[11]. Both channels are host on the social networking site Facebook, referred to as the most used among the Senegalese migrants interviewed for this research, along with mobile messaging apps such as Whatsapp and Imo. Both function as vehicles of production and dissemination of content related to migration. The observation of these channels allows us to assess that the senses that the Senegalese seek to build are related to discussions on the migration issue, to issues involving citizenship, political and social participation, to moments of integration and celebration of their culture, and, mainly, to the production of content related to Mouridism and religiousness. For this reason, the two channels have followed, transmitted and reported the realization of the Grand Magal.

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[9]We developed this concept in previous work. It recognises the importance of ICTs and the Internet in the experience of mobility and approaching the logic of network communications to dynamics of migration, with the production, circulation and consumption of a set of communication environments that put in conflict, in tensioning and approach a series of identity elements in a globalised world.
[10]Facebook page: www.facebook.com/Sene-Brasil - tv-1544172842544055. Official website: www.senebrasil.com.br
[11]Page URL on social network site Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010155188464&fref=ts

Magal, in Wolof language, means "to honor", "to commemorate", "to celebrate". According to Maestro (2006), there are different types of *magal* in the mouride community. However, the most important one is the "Grand Magal of Touba" that basically represents every year the pilgrimage of the mourides to the holy city of Touba (second largest town after Dakar, located in the central region of the country). It is estimated that, each year, more than three million followers of Mouridism participate in pilgrimage to Touba.

Even though the city of Touba is the central spot for the celebration, it also happens in Senegalese communities dispersed throughout the world. This day makes reference to the exile of Cheick Ahmadou Bamba in Gabon, during the conflict against imperialism and French colonialism in the region. The Grand Magal is, basically, a day of gratitude. So, all the followers to the Islamic religion are welcomed in the holy city of Touba with party and celebration. One can find homes with open doors for pilgrims to rest, families offering free food on the streets, and the different forms and ways of celebrating the religion in the country. Similarly, the other mouride communities dispersed around the world, that aren't going to Touba, also carry out their celebrations with collective prayers and chants, and distribution of food.

Since Brazil is the country that has received the greatest amount of Senegalese migrants in the last decade, their main religious celebration also happen here. In Rio Grande do Sul state, the Magal has happened in several cities with strong presence of Senegalese, like in the already mentioned examples of Porto Alegre and Santa Maria.

In the capital, the religious celebration gained repercussion in the local and state media with the production of a report aired on Jornal do Almoço, RBS TV newscast, affiliate of Rede Globo Television of Rio Grande do Sul. We also observed the presence of photographers from other media groups. The reports gained prominence on SeneBrasil TV web page on the day following the event. On the same day, the event was covered by SeneBrasil TV team, which made a live broadcast of the walk, from the Public Market to Pompeia Church in downtown Porto Alegre through its coordinator's page on Facebook. The same video was then presented in full during the party, which last all night in the church hall, with the *Khassidas*[12] performance. A lunch was served shortly after, along with speeches from authorities of the migrant community and guests, ending with a dinner for migrants and guests who packed the place.

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[12]In the *dahira* (space for mouride celebrations), as Romero (2017) explains, the recitals of *Khassidas* are performed with the *Kourel Khassida*, a group of singers who recite the teachings written by Cheikh Amadou Bamba.

A Brazilian photographer, collaborator of the Association of Senegalese of Porto Alegre, participated in the event, making photographs that were then published on SeneBrasil TV web page. In addition, producers of SeneBrasil TV channel covered the event and made interviews, videos and pictures, with details of both the religious ceremony and the party backstage featuring security, cleaning and organization teams.

Besides the channel's coverage, many of the people present used smartphones to record the event, especially in most exciting moments of celebration. The production of *selfies* and sharing of content produced in social networking sites are part of the very dynamics of the party, expanding it from the dynamics of network communication, allowing migrants in other cities - and even family members, friends and fellow countrymen in Senegal - to follow and share the religious experiences.

Figure 1

Arrival of the procession of the Magal of Touba to street Barros Cassol, downtown Porto Alegre (Photo: Liliane Dutra Brignol)

In Santa Maria, Magal differed a little from the same party held in other cities because of the small presence of Senegalese in the city. Today, there are few Senegalese residing and living in Santa Maria. They all know each other and share similar experiences of work, routine and religious practices. The celebration of culture during the Magal was pretty strong: they all dressed in traditional festive robes and looked excited during the *Khassidas* recital.

Figure 2

The Senegalese organise the Magal and invite the Brazilians to celebrate in Santa Maria (RS) (Photo: Alessandra Jungs of Almeida -- MIGRAIDH UFSM)

The party took place in the Centre for Solidarity Economy (in Medianeira neighborhood) and was attended by a smaller group of people (in comparison to the same event held in Porto Alegre). The party was prepared by the Senegalese, but they had the support of the research group "Network communication, identities and citizenship" (UFSM, CNPq). At the end, there was distribution of food to all attendees, similar to what happens during the party held in Touba and in all places where the Mouride brotherhood is present.

Early on, Brazilian visitors received a simple notebook made by the organizers containing the most important details about the religious festival. On the notebook, there were also explanations on the emergence of the festive date, of the Mouride Brotherhood, and the teachings and stories of and about Cheick Amadou Bamba. Everyone could sit and read the material and talk among themselves, until the moment that the *Khassidas* were distributed for the beginning of the recital. In this moment, the non-practitioners of the religion remain in respectful silence, observing the expressions of the followers of Bamba. Each member took their turn to perform the recital of *Khassidas* and all followed paying attention to the other's readings. Many recorded videos of the moment, and many photos were made with cell phones. The photos were shared online at the exact moment in which they were made. Most Senegalese also talked to other mourides (in Senegal or in other countries), through their cell phones, throughout the celebration.

After the recital of the *Khassidas*, the organizers presented a video about the seven dimensions of the Magal, from culture to religion, from work to the economy. A representative among the Senegalese explained the video step by step, not only translating it (the video was in French), but also explaining the aspects that

underlie the Magal. The seven dimensions explained on the video are: the spiritual dimension; the festive; the social; cultural; economic and the international dimension.

After the video with images of the celebration in the city of Touba, the organizers received questions from Brazilians about the celebration, the religion and its practice, answered by the Senegalese. At the same time they were performing their celebration in Santa Maria, the cell phones of the Senegalese received messages from several other areas of the planet where other Senegalese performed the same celebration.

In between times and places in the Magal of Touba

The exploratory exercise we made, walking the streets with the Senegalese migrants, in an effort to approach and share part of the rituals and symbolism of the Mouride brotherhood during the Magal of Touba, provided us insights for challenging the notion of diaspora, its mediatic entanglements in the various social uses of communication technologies as well as its implications, on Bhabha's terms (1998), on the in-between of migrant cultures.

In the eyes of Brazilians who saw the group of Senegalese from a distance during the walk in the streets of Porto Alegre one could see estrangement, curiosity, solidarity, sympathy, prejudice. In part, the reactions and comments, as well as the approach of journalistic reports made by the local press, reproduced what Hall (2016) examined as naturalization of difference and of the construction of a racialized Other. They were clearly trying to understand what the images meant or how the prayers could be translated. It was possible to hear comments like: "Who is that in the picture?","I like them, I feel sorry for these people" or "It must be something about the Black Consciousness". We even witnessed shouting insults from someone who observed from the sidewalk and repeated: "It'll sink the ship", in an association to the images of slave ships that marked part of the forced black diaspora and the story of colonization that constitutes our country.

Among the Senegalese, especially those responsible for the activity such as the presidents of the associations and those responsible for the *dahiras*, we noticed an attempt to bring the Brazilians who participated in the celebration closer throughout the day. On the other hand, inside the hall where the party was organised, in Porto Alegre, the Brazilian visitors were welcomed by a team who explained about the importance of Magal, received an ID badge and a specific place where to sit. The care with the translation of the video and the fraternization environment between Senegalese and Brazilians also marked the activity in Santa

Maria. It is interesting to observe that the location chosen to perform the celebrations in both cases belong to the Catholic Church.

The presence of mobile technologies and the live broadcast of the Magal of Touba in the context observed, as well as the circulation of images of the celebration around the world, refer to the notions of co-presence and mobility, highlighting the transnational nature of Mouridism itself and its resignifications from the colonial past of Senegal and its diasporic dimension. The exile of Ahmadou Bamba and the role of religion as resistance in light of the French rule is remembered, while the ceremony is renovated as a mark of the migrant presence in the Brazilian context and in other countries of migration.

Therefore, the Magal can be considered a transnational event for it carries a sense of sharing – the same practices, recitals, and customs are experienced in different cities around the world, on the same day, with the sharing of information and photographs over the internet. Not only those who were physically present participated in the recital of *Khassidas* in Santa Maria and Porto Alegre, but also those connected via Internet, for example by sending audios with the recordings , usually over Whatsapp, to other fellow Senegalese who performed the Magal in these and in other cities.

The technological mediation in the religious experience of Senegalese migrants brings implications also for the senses of multiple temporalities. The Magal of Touba refers to Mouride tradition, to the return to the city of Touba and the occupation of a symbolic and territorial place in the cities that receive the Senegalese migration. Walking the streets, sharing food, and propagating the memory of Bamba are all parts of the ritual, which goes through adaptations in each city the Magal is experienced, at the same time it is expanded or resignified by the sharing of common meanings in the dynamics of network communication.

The migration media, such as SeneBrasil and Touba Brazil TV, integrated to a network articulation with other mouride communication channels, expand the circulation of images of the Senegalese diaspora. These refer to flows and timeless time of the digital networks of communication (Castells, 2015). The space of flows, of which Castells speaks, does not exist without a fixed location. "It is made of knots and nets; that is, places connected by networks of electronic communications in which information flows interact and circulate, ensuring the sharing of time and practices processed in space" (Castells, 2015, p. 80).

Thus, Magal of Touba cannot be analysed from the notions of originary or initial subjectivities, but, in Bhabha's terms (1998), as articulation of cultural differences. As the author states, "This side of the psychosis of patriotic fervor, I like to think, there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and

translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities" (Bahbha, 1998, p.24) Senegalese migrants transit between the time of religious tradition and the time of the networks, between an imagined return to the city of Touba and an appropriation of the place in the cities of Santa Maria and Porto Alegre.

This is a moment of gathering deeply marked by the notion of a diasporic experience and aesthetic, in which the traditional robes and images of the marabouts mix to digital images and the presence of smartphones. In this process, one is neither there, nor here. It is a new, like an "insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present"(Bhabha, 1998, p. 27). It becomes unproductive and, even, impossible to search for an original authenticity. The power of the Magal of Touba is precisely in its hybrid, transnational, and diasporic nature.

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