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An analysis of the campaign *#MyRefugeeFriend*: experiences of interculturality and cosmopolitanism on Christmas Eve

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Abstract¹

We propose a study of the campaign *Meu Amigo Refugiado (My Refugee Friend)* launched in December 2016 by Migraflix. It consisted of the reception of refugees by a Brazilian family for the Christmas dinner. After the meetings were held, we sent specific questionnaires to both the refugees and participating families by e-mail. The hypothesis is that the campaign's attention can be explained by the context of the so-called global refugee crisis, guided by the national and international media, and by the empathy that this theme can arouse. From the analysis of the answers, we realize that the commitment to the refugee cause is translated by the moral appeal to the atrocities propagated by the media as by the possibility of contact and exchange with foreigners possessing a civil history of struggle and overcoming.

Keywords

Media; Refugees; Cosmopolitanism; Empathy.

1 Paper presented in the Diaspora and Media working group, 2017 IAMCR, Cartagena, Colombia.

1 Introduction

This paper is tied to the post-doctorate research² on the Migraflix NGO (www.migraflix.com.br), a “nonprofit social action” which promotes the realization of “cultural workshops, food distribution services around the world, motivational lectures and events organized by migrants and refugees”. The events are shared via the website and aim to “economically “empower” the migrants, to integrate through the richness of life experiences and knowledge, to promote different cultures and world views”³. The investigation coordinated by the post-doctorate research group aimed to keep track of the events promoted by the collective, which were: workshops directed by migrants, aiming to build diversities, cultural consumption and inter-cultural exchanges, three events of the *Dream-makers Createathon: facilitando os sonhos para novos brasileiros*^{4*}, aiming to capacitate refugees who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs, and, lastly, the 2016 campaign #MeuAmigoRefugiado^{5*}.

To this paper, we propose a case study of the campaign “*Meu Amigo Refugiado*” that was released in December 2016 in the main cities of Brazil by Migraflix, with the support of the UNHCR⁶ and in a partnership with an advertising agency, the NBS⁷. The campaign consisted in a Brazilian family hosting refugees during their Christmas dinner. The interested family had to subscribe to the campaign website⁸ and would then choose the refugee from a list of the candidates’ profiles. Overall, the Migraflix campaign successfully organized 35 meetings between families and refugees, 23 of which were in São Paulo, 10 in Rio de Janeiro, one in Brasilia and one in Fortaleza. The campaign had an impressive reach: in two days after it’s publishing in the social media and in the national media, more than 550 Brazilian families had already subscribed to the website to host refugees in their Christmas dinner. The total number of subscribers was of 2.426 people interested in hosting refugees in their dinners. This number is explained by the media repercussion. The campaign generated around 135 news reports in different national and international media, according to the clipping provided by the organization. The website www.meuamigorefugiado.com.br had, from December 5,

2 Post-doctorate research group called “Migration, Communication Experiences, Interculturality and Cultural Consumption in São Paulo: a study of Migraflix”, made possible by the Post-grad Program in Communication and Consumption Practices, ESPM – SP, directed by professor Denise Cogo.

3 Information shared by Migraflix and made available to this researcher by the organization.

4 TN: literally, “facilitating dreams to new Brazilians”.

5 TN: literally, #MyRefugeeFriend.

6 UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for the Refugees. See www.acnur.org.br

7 Advertising Agency NBS – www.nobullshit.com.br

8 [Http://meuamigorefugiado.com.br/en/](http://meuamigorefugiado.com.br/en/)

2016 to January 5, 2017, 84.147 user accesses, while 21,6% of those have returned to the website later on.

After the meetings, specific questionnaires were sent, via e-mail, to the refugees who participated in the event, as well as to their hosting families, through a partnership between this research group and the Migraflix organization staff. Our hypothesis is that the attention attracted by the campaign, both because of its repercussion in the national media and because of the involvement of Brazilians who subscribed to the program, can be explained by the context of the so-called global crisis of refugees, repeatedly brought up by both the national and the international media, and by the empathy that this theme is capable of bringing up. The moral appeal of the atrocities shared by the media as well as the cosmopolitan experience made possible by the contact and exchange with foreigners who possess a personal history of fighting and overcoming explain the commitment to the refugees' cause.

This hypothesis meets the discussion developed by M. Nussbaum (2002), who states that in the global connection era the cosmopolitan *ethos* became a moral necessity, since we can no longer be alien to the global humanitarian crises shared via the flows of image and information that circulate in the transnational communication media. As a consequence of the experience of contemporary international migrations, M. Agier (2016) pleads the idea of a common cosmopolitanism, which includes those whose daily experiences are situated in the border, both geographical and cultural. Both authors identify the media as a device capable of making the exchange of common experiences and sensations possible. Thus, the citizen of the contemporary world is linked to the advent of global media, which makes it possible for him/her to be aware of and follow real-time events and atrocities. The concept of cosmopolitanism in the contemporary context would lead, according to those two authors, to cultivate the good will of locals or nationals in order for them to become empathic to foreigners, thus cultivating a sense of responsibility, especially towards foreigners in a state of vulnerability, putting aside their own identity group or social distinction. In this scenario, the foreigner, in this case the migrant or refugee, is welcome, not so much as a foreigner, but more as a "cosmopolitan teacher" (Nussbaum, 2002), who teaches us through an experience as citizens of the world, an argument that is in tune with the proposal of the events promoted by Migraflix. This paper's general objective is to observe how these events are situated from the perspective of building diversity, of cultural consumption and that of the concept of cosmopolitanism. Our specific objective is to apprehend the meaning attributed to both the asylum and the refugee status by

the Brazilian participants, as well as the way in which the refugees build their involvement in the Migraflix events.

It is important to clarify that, in this paper, we will talk of “refugees” as defined by the idealization and development of the *#MeuAmigoRefugiado* campaign, even though we know that not all among the participants have the refugee status, some of them being applicants. The data concerning those who are in fact refugees recognized by the Brazilian government and those who are still applying for such a recognition was not shared with us by Migraflix. However, we should keep in mind that the invitation to participate in the campaign was distributed to the migrants through a partnership between UNHCR and Migraflix. Thus, we have chosen to use the general denomination “refugee”, since we believe that the differentiation stated above does not affect the aforementioned general objectives of this research.

2 Cosmopolitanism and global diversity

In order to start a discussion on cosmopolitanism, Martha C. Nussbaum (1999) refers to the Stoic philosophers and uses the concept of *Kosmou Politês* or world citizens to argue that in each of us there are two communities, the local one of our birth, and the human argument and aspiration, that is, the community of all human beings. Vertovec and Cohen (2010) also attribute the origin of the concept of cosmopolitanism to the Greeks, stating that there was a tension between the cosmopolitans, and their attraction towards exoticism, and the locals, who were attached to the familiar, that which is known and stable. To the authors, the cosmopolitans were perceived with mistrust by the locals, “figures of emulation, envy, hatred and fear”. In this same path, Merton and Gouldner point out the distinction between locals and cosmopolitans. To these authors, the influence of the locals is measured from the links and relations they build, while the cosmopolitans are influential because of the knowledge they bring, or that which they know:

“Cosmopolitans enter some local group as strangers, equipped with special knowledge, credentials and social status obtained elsewhere, outside the local group setting. What matters to them is not the *number* of people they meet, but the *kind* of people with whom they can share their knowledge about things. Cosmopolitans are accepted by the locals, because the locals credit that which they do not possess themselves, to develop their own neighbourhoods.” (Merton e Gouldner *apud* Ossewaarde, 2007, p. 371)

In this conception, which comes from classical sociology, the concept of cosmopolitanism is linked to an experience of class status of the bourgeoisie: the

cosmopolitan has a “commitment with grades, credentials, professions and career” (Ossewaarde, 2007, p. 371). To R. Sennet (2013), the epithet of contemporary cosmopolitanism would be linked to the World Economic Forum, representing the victory of global over local. Cohen and Vertovec concur with the idea that the cosmopolitan experience would only be available for an elite, for those who have resources to travel, to learn other languages and to absorb other cultures: “This, historically, has often been true. For the majority of the population, living their lives within the cultural space of their own nation or ethnicity, cosmopolitanism has not been an option.” (Cohen and Vertovec, 2010, p. 280). Furthermore, the authors point out the association between cosmopolitanism and cultural consumption, since they are both linked as habits of the elite, or of collectors of experiences and cultural artifacts around the world, the so-called “cosmopolitan tourists”:

“Cosmopolitan tourism includes the search for varied experiences, a delight in understanding contrasts between societies rather than a longing for uniformity or superiority, and the development of some skill at interpreting cultural meanings. It is a trend arguably based on exotism, commodification and consumer culture.” (Cohen and Vertovec, 2010, p. 282)

However, the same authors also point out that in the contemporary world, the experience of cultural and linguistic diversity is omnipresent and the ability to communicate with Others and to understand their cultures is available to all, at least potentially. The Global Tendencies report, published in June 20, 2017 by the UNHCR, attests that a total of 65.3 million people have been displaced because of wars or conflicts since the end of 2015. Still according to the report, this is the first time that the number of forced displacements has surpassed the number of 60 million people around the world⁹. In Brazil, the number of recognized refugees has grown by 12% in 2016, reaching the number of 9.552 people of 82 nationalities¹⁰. This reality leads to a wider diversity of people sharing experiences between locals and foreigners, from the work environment to the street corners, in the markets, in the neighbourhoods, in schools. In this context, Cohen and Vertovec work with the concept of cosmopolitanism as tied to the contemporary global experience, thus describing an *ethos* “of citizens of the world, a way of treating oneself and the Other”. To Ulf Hannerz (1990), cosmopolitanism means a desire to become involved with the Other, paired with the concern of being in contact with different cultures. Therefore, the concept of cosmopolitanism leads to different

9 See <http://www.acnur.org/portugues/noticias/noticia/deslocamento-forcado-atinge-recorde-global-e-afeta-uma-em-cada-113-pessoas-no-mundo/>. Last accessed June 23rd 2017.

10 See <http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/direitos-humanos/noticia/2017-06/numero-de-refugiados-reconhecidos-sobre-12-no-brasil-em-2016>. Last accessed June 23rd 2017.

interpretations, without being disconnected from its Greek root, that of the Stoics and of Odysseus, the traveling God interested in humanity, nor from the consumption habits of a globalized elite. However, today, the concept also incorporates the notion of a cosmopolitanism of those from below (see Matthews, Lins Ribeiro and Vega, 2012), brought to life by those marginal to the “elite” society.

It is in this manner that authors such as R. Cohen, S. Vertovec (2010) and M. Agier (2016) advocate a new meaning of cosmopolitanism: the everyday cosmopolitanism or ordinary cosmopolitanism, that we will call, in this paper, “common cosmopolitanism”. We have chosen to work with the particular conception of cosmopolitanism as developed by Agier.

2.1 Common Cosmopolitanism

Agier discusses the concept of cosmopolitanism in his work *Borderlands* (2016), in which he addresses the question of borders both physical and subjective as linked to the contemporary experience of migrants and refugees. The author agrees with the first meaning of the word cosmopolitanism, associated with a globalized experience of the elite, and made complex by different financial capital flows, technocrats, market leaders. He also points out that other senses of cosmopolitanism can be cited, such as those who travel without financial support from big corporations, but are called citizens of the world because of the fluidity with which they move and associate to social projects, often through volunteering. This last group is called by Agier the “cosmopoliticals”: “though they may call themselves ‘cosmopolitan’, what we observe in their case, is that this means setting out a political position about the world and its governance that is more or less representative, democratic or universalistic” (Agier, 2016, p. 75). From the ascension of international migrations and the so-called refugee crisis that is happening nowadays in both developed and developing countries, Agier introduces the idea of common cosmopolitanism in order to think the global experience of everyday encounters with otherness, or those who experience “border situations”.

“These three most common usages of the ‘cosmopolitan’ word and idea do not describe the cosmopolitan condition in the sense of a lived experience, everyday and ordinary, an experience of sharing the world, no matter how inegalitarian and violent this may be. My different conception of cosmopolitanism is drawn rather from the experience of border situations, in the broad sense in which I have used the term. But I can, I believe argue coherently that cosmopolitanism is the experience of those women and men who experience the concreteness and roughness of the world. This ordinary experience of the world is the experience of crossing borders, a situation that can extend in both time and space. And it is in border situations that the relationship with

the other is put to the test, with an unknown who is also the embodiment of what the world is for those who find themselves there, arriving at the border." (Agier, 2016, p. 76)

Agier adopts an amplified notion of border, that includes the crossing movement of formal limits, and the encounters with otherness in border situations, more clearly linked to the experience of international migration: "it is starting from this situation of double 'de-identification' of the migrant (who no longer corresponds to the identity of his society of origin, but equally not to that which the society of arrival assigns him)" (Agier, 2016, p. 77), but not only: "all those who, taking up and transforming the very languages that have confined them to the margins (rome, black, refugee, stateless, for example), claim or impose their 'presence in the world' because this world is both more accessible and more closed than ever before" (Agier, 2016, p. 8).

We also need to add that this so-called "accessibility" and "proximity" is attributed by the author to the mediatization of contemporary society and to media events that go from those that connect international audiences, such as the World Soccer Cup and the Olympics, to situations that affect many parts of the world, that range from the avian flu/bird flu to terror attacks. Agier explains that the mediatized experiences of these events suddenly become symbols and give us, for a brief moment, the sensation of belonging to the same world. This happens, according to the author, through image and information flows, responsible for creating a cosmopolitan "consciousness".

"The common point of these forms of global society is their virtual aspect. The society seems to rest in nothing more than the perception of mediatized event, or even just a media one, which unites us. On a planetary scale, but just for a moment, and without this consciousness corresponding to any real shared experience." (Agier, 2016, p. 75)

Thus, the author argues that slowly a new condition is being formed around the world, which he calls "common cosmopolitanism", brought up from the encounters of the so-called "marginal lives". To Agier, in this globalized and hybrid world the experience with the unfamiliar is uncertain and shared daily, and this condition is born in the borders. "These are border landscapes, in which encounters and experiences bring into relation a here and elsewhere, a same and other, a 'local' fact and a 'global' context (simply meaning someone or something that comes from 'outside')" (Agier, 2016, p. 8). In this way, we aim to think the campaign *#MeuAmigoRefugiado* as an experience of common cosmopolitanism between people who cross borders, linguistic, cultural, geographical, and share a moment. This experience is fed by a media imaginary that exacerbates images and information of

the so-called refugee crisis, and turns the global spotlight on the refugees. Could there be a media production or mobilization of empathy? Or do these subjects who meet in Christmas dinner share that which Agier calls cosmopolitan consciousness?

3 Presenting Migrafix – intersections between media and entrepreneurship to refugees

Migrafix (www.migrafix.com.br) is introduced as a “nonprofit social action” which, through advertising in its own website or in social media, promotes the realization of “cultural workshops, food distribution services around the world, motivational lectures and events organized by migrants and refugees”. The events are advertised in their own website and aim to “economically “empower” the migrants, to integrate through the richness of life experiences and knowledge, to promote different cultures and world views”¹¹. The Migrafix services are offered both to people who subscribe to the workshops via the website and to companies. The communication media used by Migrafix are all located on the Internet, and the communication and content-sharing flows are key to propagating the events promoted by the NGO. It was only in the campaign analyzed by this paper that Migrafix has used the services of a press office, through a partnership with the advertising agency NBS. The Migrafix website informs that their team is composed of 16 members both Brazilian and foreign who live in São Paulo, and it was created during the first semester of 2015. At the head of the team is Jonathan Berezovsky, an Argentinian of Jewish origins who lives in Brazil. According to the team, 80% of the value obtained with each workshop goes to the migrant, and the rest goes to the maintenance of Migrafix, a nonprofit social project.

Our research aimed to understand how these experiences are developed from inter-cultural encounters between Brazilians and migrants and how these events are seen from the perspective of cultural consumption and building diversity. Ever since this research has started following the group, they have noticeably grown and, beyond the workshops, have developed new activities with new partners, such as the Impact Hub São Paulo¹², with which they organized the event *Dream-makers Createathon: facilitando o sonho de Novos Brasileiros*, with the

11 Information shared by Migrafix and made available to this researcher by the organization.

12 Global community of Impact entrepreneurs which, in São Paulo, reunites business and entrepreneurship projects, social investors, freelancers, activists, creative workers and consultants who aim to inspire and develop projects with a positive impact on society. It manages a platform with over 16.000 Impact entrepreneurs around the world. [Http://saopaulo.impacthub.com.br/](http://saopaulo.impacthub.com.br/). Last accessed August 7th 2016.

support of UNHCR, the UN agency for refugees, and of Sebrae^{13*}. The event aimed to “map problems and propose solutions beyond the reach of the State”, as explained by the material sent by the Migraflix team, as well as “to reunite new Brazilians – migrants and refugees – to the local community of creative minds, social entrepreneurs and *makers*, who will raise awareness, discuss and propose solutions to the challenges of integration of this population in the biggest metropolis of Latin America”. Migraflix is presented as an innovative project and, in 2016, won the United Nations Global Compact.

Today, Migraflix offers different activities with migrants and refugees in São Paulo, aiming to consolidate itself as a “nonprofit social business” whose aim is to “empower the migrants economically”. Aside from the activities that aim to facilitate inter-cultural exchanges, Migraflix has been noted for its promotion of entrepreneurship as a way of promoting the refugees’ financial independence. Thus, an alliance is made and diversity becomes a means of cultural, personal and economic enrichment, while the appropriation of media channels is used for promotion, propagation and mobilization of affects. In this context, the cosmopolitan is both the refugee who teaches and the Brazilian who seeks that interaction.

4 #MeuAmigoRefugiado – introducing the campaign and the methodology employed

The campaign #MeuAmigoRefugiado was released by Migraflix in December 5, 2016. A total of 2.426 Brazilians have applied to host refugees during their Christmas dinner or during their Christmas lunch with their families. The campaign was released via social media, in a page of the social media network Facebook¹⁴, and through a website created especially to the event: <http://meuamigorefugiado.com.br/inicio>. The campaign consisted in the reception of refugees by a Brazilian family during their Christmas dinner. An interested family could subscribe to the campaign’s website and choose the refugee from a profile list presented in the website (see the link above). After the encounters, semi-structured questionnaires were sent to the refugee participants and to the families that hosted them via e-mail, in a partnership between the Migraflix team and our research team.

Both questionnaires were sent via e-mail, to refugees and host-families. The

13 TN: SEBRAE – *Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas* (lit.: Brazilian service of assistance to micro and small enterprises).

14 <https://www.facebook.com/meuamigorefugiado/>.

general objective was to understand what motivated the refugee to participate in the campaign, as well as what motivated the family to host a refugee. Our specific objectives were to generate a socio-economic profile of the refugees and of the host-families, to understand the reasons for their involvement in the event, as well as how they heard of the campaign. The questions sent to the host-families aimed to understand the type of commitment they had with the project and how they were informed of the theme. Concerning the refugees, however, the idea was to map what motivated them to participate in this kind of event, how they felt during the experience and if they had the intention of participating again. The questionnaires were as follows:

Meu Amigo Refugiado

Post-event questionnaire (to be sent via e-mail to the refugees)

Identification:

Age:

Gender:

Country of origin/Nationality:

Religion:

Where do you live?

With how many people do you live?

Do you have any higher education? What level of education?

Are you employed/What is your occupation today?

Do you have any Brazilian friends?

Do you frequently meet Brazilian friends?

Do you think it is important to have contact with Brazilians? Why?

Questionnaire about the experience:

What did you think of the idea of the project?

What motivated you to participate?

How do you describe the experience?

How did you feel in the house?

What did you talk about?

Do you think you will keep in touch with these people outside of the project?

Would you repeat the experience with other Brazilian families, in other occasions?

Meu Amigo Refugiado

Post-event questionnaire (to be sent *via* e-mail to the families)

Identification:

How many people are there in your family?

In what neighbourhood do you live?

How many people from your family/friends have participated in the event?

Questions about the experience:

How did you learn about the campaign?

Why did you decide to participate?

Did you know the difference between refugee and migrant?

How do you stay informed about the subject of asylum/refugees?

What opinions concerning the refugees did you have beforehand?

Explain what motivated the refugee's choice

What did you think of the experience?

Do you plan to keep in touch with the person who visited you outside of the project?

Would you recommend the experience to someone else? Why?

The questionnaires were sent via e-mail to all of the participants, both migrants and Brazilians. Out of a total of 35 meetings, 23 happened in São Paulo, 10 in Rio de Janeiro, 1 in Brasilia and 1 in Fortaleza. Out of all 70 questionnaires sent, we have received answers from 17 refugees who participated in the event (three of them live in Rio de Janeiro, 14 in São Paulo), and from 6 members of the Brazilian families (all of them from São Paulo and all answered by women). We know that this kind of research often meets with difficulties concerning the number of answers. However, due to the short span of time available to us, as well as the difficulties of distance, vacation periods during which many leave their homes, which would, for instance, make it hard for us to make proper interviews, this method has showed itself to be the most reliable. The final data processing work consisted in structuring the results into elements of theorization that reveal something about the focus point chosen in the initial problematization phase of this research. In our case, the questionnaires allowed us to assert the influence of the media in the decision of participating in this campaign and, at the same time, to identify the complex process of negotiation of multiple belongings in the society of which the migrant is now a part, the inter-cultural process.

5 Analysis and Results of the Questionnaires

As we have said before, out of the total of questionnaires sent, 17 refugees and 6 Brazilian families that participated in the event have answered the

questionnaires. We have decided to use two methods of data tabulation. The first was a quantitative method, aiming to establish the profile of the participants with the categories of gender, country of origin, age, studies, if they are employed/unemployed and what they work with. The second method chosen was qualitative, it was done by reading the individual questionnaires and by comparing the answers. The same procedure was followed for the questionnaires answered by the Brazilian host-families. In order to optimize the analysis, we will focus, on this paper, in the qualitative aspects of the research and in the analysis of the answers provided for the open questions of the questionnaire.

5.1 Refugees' profiles

From the quantitative analysis of the questionnaires, we have obtained data concerning the nationality, gender, age, level of education, current occupation and the city where he/she lives. Out of the 17 answered questionnaires, the most common nationalities were Syrian and Colombian, with 3 migrants each. They were followed by the countries of Haiti, Cuba and Congo, with 2 migrants each. The rest of the countries, with one migrant from each, were Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Morocco and Venezuela. In respects to the gender, 7 migrants have identified themselves as female, and 10 as male. Most of them live in São Paulo, 14, and 3 of them in Rio de Janeiro. The ages vary from 23, the youngest, to 44, the oldest. Four of them are unemployed, 3 teach their own languages, two work as salesmen/women, and four of them sell food of their own home country, from which three own their own business. Out of the 17 questionnaires answered, 11 stated that the migrant had higher education, 2 that he/she had vocational education, 1 that had a high school level, while 3 migrants have not answered this question.

5.1.1 Analysis of the refugees' answers

The first aspect we will emphasize is the fact that the experience of participating in the Christmas event *Meu Amigo Refugiado* is pointed out as a positive experience by all those involved, including refugees and Brazilians. Among the refugees, all of them claim that not only they appreciated the experience, but that they also recommend it and would participate again in a similar experience. The second aspect concerns that which motivated the refugees to participate in the event. Most answers point out the possibility of exchanging with others, of meeting others or of amplifying their contact network as their main motivational force. To

ease their loneliness, to express their own ideas and to get to know the local culture also figure as motives for their participation. Two of the migrants, who have already participated in other Migraflix events, point out that they would participate in any event promoted by the NGO.

The third aspect that we will emphasize in the analysis of the answers of the refugees is the fact that the meeting with the Brazilian families, both on Christmas dinner and lunch, is narrated as a moment for the refugee to own their own speech, that is, he/she has a personal and political story to tell, his/her life story which, most of the times, is also linked to the story of their own country of origin. One of the refugees interviewed, born in the Ivory Coast, says *"I was motivated to participate in order to teach the Brazilians that we did not live in the woods, eating wild fruit to survive, that we have a life just like them, except in a less developed way"*. And she concludes: *"It is a very important project because it is important to bring people from different cultures together, besides the fact that the Brazilian people is already very mixed (many are African-Brazilian) and it will allow them to know a bit more about their roots"*. The refugees say that they feel happy simply for being able to tell their story to people who want to listen to them, and that they also transform this occasion into an opportunity to demystify prejudices or to nurture an interest for certain cultural aspects of their countries. Beyond the idea of putting cultural prejudice into perspective, one of the answers emphasizes the importance of deconstructing stereotypes surrounding the concept of asylum: *"I think that we have to come up with other philosophies for the matter of the central idea of REFUGEE. It is necessary for there to be more debates, meetings, ideologically sensitive campaigns, etc. in order to unlock the concept of refugee"*. Lastly, we can point out that in general the refugees see the experience as an opportunity to build ties, to build *networks*, in order to, maybe, get a job, to be pointed to a job opportunity or simply to amplify their social networks, as stated by one of the interviewed, who came from Haiti: *"It is nice because that way we can infiltrate further"*.

5.2 The Brazilians' profiles

Only 6 questionnaires were answered by Brazilians. All of them were answered by women from São Paulo. Only one of them shared her age, 29 years old, and they all lived in different areas of the city, such as *Pinheiros, Morumbi, Centro, Vila Andrade, Vila Silvia*, while one of them did not answer.

5.2.1 Analysis of the Brazilians' answers

Out of the six questionnaires that have been answered by the Brazilians who subscribed to the event, all of them were unanimous in asserting that the experience was a positive one, and that they would repeat it in other holidays and would recommend it to others. Two of the questions were how the participants heard of the campaign and how they received information concerning matters linked to asylum or refugees. The campaign page in the social network Facebook¹⁵ figures as the answer in five of the six questionnaires returned to us concerning the question of how they heard of the campaign. Other media were pointed out aside from the Internet: two mentioned the radio, without specifying the station, one of them the TV, again without mentioning the station, and another one specifically mentioned the news website of the Globo Group, G1. According to the report made available to us by the Migraflix organization and done by the advertising agency NBS, partner of the NGO for the organization and promotion of the event, the Facebook page created for the event figures as the third most visited medium, with as much as 16.508 views. The social network page loses only to the website created for the event, with 21.201 visitors, and to the Google search, with 20.117 searches. It is interesting to point out that, in spite of the fact that the G1 is the most accessed news page in Brazil, according to the Alexa ranking, the Estadão, a news website owned by the Estado Group, has had 5.914 views of its news report concerning the campaign, whereas the G1 report had only 2.248 visitors.

Concerning the "asylum" and their idea of "refugee", most answers emphasize the idea that these are "*people who need help*", since they left behind their family and their possessions. Concerning the matter of how they receive information on matters linked to the refugees, the answer was unanimous: they all get information through the media, through news reports on television, in newspapers and in on-line websites. One of the answers mentioned the experience in a project called "*Portas Abertas*"¹⁶, organized by a Christian organization that helps victims of religious persecution, and the book *I am Malala* as a source of information and as a means to approach the subject of asylum/refugees. We have to point out that both the book and the story of Malala were widely broadcasted by both national and international media. Concerning what motivated these people to receiving refugees in their homes, the answers are associated to the idea of what a refugee is, since all of the answers emphasize their need for help, for hospitality, for amplifying their contact networks in a city "*as hostile as São Paulo*", as well as the bringing together of different cultures, while one of the answers mentions their own experience as a migrant in Brazil as a factor of empathy with the refugees.

15 See: <https://www.Facebook.com/meuamigorefugiado/?fref=ts>

16 TN: literally, Open Doors.

Concerning the experience itself, it is interesting to notice a difference in the tone of the answers provided by the Brazilian participants, since five out of six answers referred to their personal beliefs and expectations. We will emphasize three of them: *"Maybe I won't become a super hero, nor will I win the Nobel Peace Prize, but I know that I can help, that I can love, that I can adopt, and if I do that to someone, it will be way more rewarding than a trophy in my cupboard"*, reveals one of the interviewed. Another states that *"it was amazing to be able to share our Christmas with people from another nationality. We have learned some words of their dialect, we have cherished the food that they brought, as well as the integration moment. It was a way of restart a personal effort of helping those in need"*, or, as stated by another participant, *"For me, it was the best experience of my life, something I will never forget, it was an experience that really touched me, that brought out the best of me"*.

Therefore, according to these excerpts, the experience seems to unravel a sort of self-discovery, enabling the participants to learn something about themselves more than about their guests. If we compare the points of view shared by the refugees, who emphasize the fact that their story is intertwined with that of their countries, or who perceive the experience as a way of broadening their networks, the Brazilians seem to see the event as a means to feel better about themselves and to ease their conscience, that is, as a morally positive attitude, and, why not, quite narcissistic, since it seems to be an experience that elevates them in their own eyes, as well as in those of their families, and that reverberates in their social circles. All six of the Brazilian participants who answered the questionnaires have chosen the refugee that they would host in their homes based on the profiles listed in the campaign's website, while one of them seems to criticize the methodology established by Migraflit: *"I haven't chosen Xxxx. I sent a message to him and a few others, saying that it didn't matter who I would host. In fact, I find it very strange that we can choose a person in what is almost a dinner menu. Either we are open to receiving anyone with love and care, or we are not."*

6 Global Media and Common Cosmopolitanism

Martha C. Nussbaum (2002) argues that in the era of global connection, the cosmopolitan *ethos* has become a moral necessity. With the globalized media, corporations and governments can no longer keep atrocities a secret, they can no longer bet on the ignorance of people as they have in the past, ignorance is no longer an alibi. To maintain a clean conscience, cosmopolitanism would mean, following Nussbaum, to cultivate the good will of locals and nationals so as to make

them more empathic of foreigners, so as to cultivate a sense of responsibility towards foreigners in need, in spite of their identity or belonging or social distinction. In this case, to Nussbaum, the foreigner, the migrant or the refugee will be welcomed, not as a foreigner, a stranger, but as a cosmopolitan teacher who teaches others how to be citizens of the world, who manages to detach him/herself from any identity, such as Jew, *bourgeois* or black, and who reconstructs him/herself as a cosmopolitan citizen. "The foreigner teaches the locals, in their intent of becoming citizens of the world, in order to establish a critical distance towards their own local group and to open themselves to the foreign and its difference" (Nussbaum, 2002).

Thus, it is interesting to point out that the experience of the *#MeuAmigoRefugiado* campaign has the potential to transform the refugee into this "cosmopolitan teacher" mentioned above, since their personal story intertwined to that of their country becomes a sort of class taught to the Brazilians who host them in their homes for Christmas dinner. This impression is emphasized when we observe the answers given by the refugees concerning their motives for participating in the event. Demystifying prejudices, informing others of the culture of their countries of origin were among the reasons stated. Likewise, the migrants' desire of amplify their contact network with the locals is in harmony with the argument presented above, stating that by sharing their life stories, the encounter between migrants and locals can be facilitated. This brings us back to Agier's arguments (2016), since he identifies the migrants and refugees as borderland beings, who, in the daily practice of a marginal life, live the experience of a common cosmopolitanism.

On the other hand, in their involvement in the event *Meu Amigo Refugiado*, the Brazilians have had the opportunity to make peace with the moral predicament of responsibility towards the refugees suggested by the contemporary media. The media figures as the entity that orchestrates this debate to the Brazilians, as stated by all of the answers to the questionnaires. The media is also used by Migraflix to publicize events such as *Meu Amigo Refugiado*. As suggested by the media, the answers of the Brazilian participants have identified the refugee as "someone who needs help". Their involvement is also the result of a media mobilization of empathy, and hosting these people in such a specific date as Christmas Eve thus becomes the key to a moral commitment to humanitarian international causes, that is: to the exercise of common cosmopolitanism. Therefore, the fundamental question is: can the contact with people from other cultures represent something close to what Agier calls *cosmopolitan consciousness*, which would signify a genuine interest in the Other, resulting in a change of attitudes? Or would it be only a superficial and

fleeting involvement as an answer to media stimuli?

7 Final considerations

In the Brazilians' answers to the questionnaires sent, we have found a mixture of personal necessity and of a desire to get involved in a humanitarian cause that is currently on-trend. We would risk to state that there is a certain ambiguity in the relation between the Brazilians and the refugees in the event that we analyzed. Both personal interest and sensibility are involved, and it would be naive to assert the opposite. However, we have observed that the very presentation of the campaign in the website might suggest the fading or generalization of individualities, of cultural particularities in a "dinner menu" of people and of personal stories of suffering. Thus, under the tab "Get to know Olga/José/Hussein", all personalities fade behind the "refugees" stereotype, and Congolese, Cubans, Colombians, Haitians, etc. are all blended together to become artifacts, powers of an experience linked to tourist's cosmopolitanism, and linked, therefore, to cultural consumption, as explained by the authors Cohen and Vertovec: "the massive transfer of foodstuffs, artworks, music, literature and fashion. Such processes represent a multiculturalization of society, but also the advanced globalization of capitalism" (Cohen and Vertovec, 2010, p. 284).

To Nussbaum, taken as an *ethos* of global citizenship, cosmopolitanism can be described as an intellectual attempt to understand the common denominator – humanity – dispersed in a world of chaos and cultural diversity. In our specific case, from the appreciation of cultural diversity as an element of distinction and sophistication, the refugee and the migrant are come to being perceived through and for their cultural specifications, their exoticism, of the knowledge that differentiates them and that they carry with them, bringing us closer to the capitalist experience of cultural consumption, or, because they grant humanity, originality and bring with them the possibility of exercising empathy to social causes. Thus, initiatives such as *#MeuAmigoRefugiado* may be seen as new mechanisms of negotiating belonging. That is how we can qualify Migraflix and events such as *#MeuAmigoRefugiado*, since they transform the refugees into teachers of experiences and personal stories, further making them owners of their own stories, capable of touching and of being role models. Experiences of interculturality and cosmopolitanism in the sense of exchange and contact with human argument and aspiration, as thought the Stoics.

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