

## **Social uses of ICTs in transnationalism dynamics and migrant networked communication: an approach to the Senegalese diaspora in South Brazil**

### **Usos sociais das TICs em dinâmicas de transnacionalismo e comunicação migrante em rede: uma aproximação à diáspora senegalesa no Sul do Brasil**

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**Abstract** *Although the relationship between Brazil and Africa has been established through many socio-historical processes, the continent still represents an unknown in the Brazilian context. The article starts from a discussion about the concepts of Black Atlantic and diaspora, in a more hybrid meaning of culture and identity, in order to reflect upon the migratory flows that reshape the relationship between both realms. The text is based on research on communication and migration dynamics between Senegal and Rio Grande do Sul, aiming to explore the process of consumption of information and communication technologies by Senegalese immigrants. The analysis values two central aspects assumed by ICTs in the migratory process: the role of transnational connection and the consolidation of network communication dynamics with intra- and inter-cultural implications.*

**Key-words:** *Network communication; Social uses of ICTs; Migration; Senegal*

**Resumo** *Mesmo que as relações entre Brasil e África tenham se estabelecido em meio a muitos processos sócio-históricos, o continente ainda representa um desconhecido no contexto brasileiro. O artigo parte de uma discussão sobre os conceitos de Atlântico Negro e diáspora, em sentidos mais híbridos de cultura e*

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*identidades, para pensar fluxos migratórios que reatualizam as relações entre os dois âmbitos. O texto integra pesquisa sobre comunicação e dinâmicas de migração entre Senegal e Rio Grande do Sul e tem o objetivo de explorar o processo de consumo das tecnologias da informação e comunicação por migrantes senegaleses em cidades gaúchas. A análise valoriza dois aspectos centrais assumidos pelas TICs no processo migratório: o papel de conexão transnacional e a consolidação de dinâmicas de comunicação em rede com implicações intra e interculturais.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Comunicação em rede; Usos sociais das TICs; Migração; Senegal*

## Introduction

It is a difficult time to study the issue of migration, the diaspora of identities and diversity, since according to Apadurai (2009) we live in an age marked by large-scale violence based on cultural reasons and fear related to social minorities. The civil war in Syria that leads thousands of people to seek refuge in different countries, migrants crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe, and the constant debate about hardening immigration policies in northern countries give strength to the association of an idea of crisis with migratory movements.

Although migrations between regions are not new in human history and, even though the absolute number of transnational migrants has not changed significantly in recent years<sup>2</sup>, the issue of contemporary migration, which until recently was somewhat invisible to the media and the Brazilian society, reaches other perspectives in the early twenty-first century, particularly by the expansion and diversification of migratory flows. Around here, also, new accents pop up in the streets of cities and towns, drawing attention to diversity and putting cultural differences, more forcefully, in contact.

While migration is in the core meaning of the Brazilian nation itself, since colonization, with particular emphasis on forced displacement of Africans brought as slaves when Brazil was a colony, until recently, when talking about migration in the Brazilian context, the social imaginary was fed by scenes of ships bringing Italians, Germans and other European migrants, inserted within a policy of population whitening in replacement of slave labor.

The arrival of migrants from African countries, mainly young, black, and Muslim, brings the opportunity of coexistence with other cultures. It also brings prejudice and fear of the other, in the reproduction of a xenophobic speech similar to what is observed in countries that have been living for a longer period, with the intensification of the presence of many migrant collectives.

<sup>2</sup> In 2014, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated at 214 million the number of transnational migrants in the world, or the equivalent of 3.1% of the world population.

This study, focus on the context of migration from African countries to Brazil in a South-South migrant flow (Blanco, 2006), which characterizes the panorama of human mobility in the last period. According to the Census of 2010, the number of transnational migrants living in Brazil increased 86.7% in ten years. Data from the Ministry of Justice of 2010 confirm the intensification of migration to the country, with 1.5 million legalized immigrants recorded. Numerous reasons are offered for this cycle. Among them, “the greater insertion of Brazil in market globalization, the recent global financial crisis in developed countries, Brazil’s socio-economic growth and large investments in the infrastructure of the economy” (ZAMBERLAM et al., 2013, p. 17).

Among the new migratory flows to Brazil, the increased presence of African migrants, including the Senegalese, is highlighted. Data from the Federal Police (PF), released by the Efe news agency, point out that between 2000 and 2012 the number of African residents and refugees in Brazil increased more than thirty fold, from 1.054 to 31.866 African nationals settled in the country<sup>3</sup>.

The data are approximate, because of the difficulty of registering a flow that often fails to compose the official statistics. However, the presence of Senegalese is already changing the setting of different parts of Brazil, where the Wolof language starts to be heard among many other urban sounds. In Rio Grande do Sul, the arrival of Senegalese gained traction since 2008. Some cities, especially on the Sierra and North-Central region became a destination for these migrants from across the Atlantic, attracted mainly by the hitherto growing employment opportunities in the food, metal mechanics and construction industry, a setting that started to change in 2015, with the reduction of job posts in the local labor market. The cities of Caxias do Sul, Bento Gonçalves, Garibaldi, Passo Fundo and, more recently, Porto Alegre, among other cities, stand out with an estimated population of about four thousand Senegalese.

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <<http://oestrageiro.org/2014/05/12/brasil-novo-destino-da-imigracao-africana/>>.

Based on this context, this article reports part of the ideas developed under an ongoing research project<sup>4</sup>, which aims to investigate the migratory social networks of this group in the state, focusing in the cities of Porto Alegre, Caxias do Sul and Passo Fundo, through an ethnographic approximation of their communication practices and processes built between the social uses of media and interpersonal and intercultural communication.

In this article, emphasis is given to the account of experiences of the social uses of media by Senegalese migrants, in a process of consumption and multiple significations built by information and communication technologies (ICTs). Based on what was observed in previous research, it is known that the means of communication, especially the Internet and other ICTs play an important role in the consolidation of transnational relations, a characteristic of migratory dynamics, with an increased possibility of contact between migrants and their family and friends, assembling of migration projects, keeping ties with the country of birth, learning the language of the country to which they migrated, assimilating knowledge and participating in the local culture, social organization and mobilization through the participation in migrant organizations among other possibilities of uses related to the migratory experience (Brignol, 2010). In this study, we start from the assumption that ICTs, due to characteristics of low cost and relative ease of access (including public places and wireless networks, since we do not ignore issues related to inequalities and digital exclusion, that still exist), are appropriated in multiple ways by migrants, as transnational connection elements which are responsible for network communication dynamics, as we discuss in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Research project supported by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul - Edital FAPERGS n. 02/2014 Programa Pesquisador Gaúcho – PqG. Collaborators: Laura Roratto Foletto and Nathália Drey Costa, Masters students at PPG in Communication UFSM; Paola Portella de Bittencourt, scholarship of scientific initiation (FIPE UFSM); Germano Rama Molardi and Maritcheli Vieira, undergraduate students in Social Communication – Journalism and Editorial Production, respectively.

## **Black Atlantic and diaspora - understanding transnational relations**

As noted by Kaly, “the migrations of Africans to the Americas began in the sixteenth century and continued until the nineteenth century, with the the abolition of slavery” (2001, p. 110). According to the researcher, these forced migrations established a bridge that not only shortened the transatlantic distance between these two parts of the world, but above all made their histories overlapping and complementary. Despite of that, the relations between the two contexts did not happen continuously:

Relations between Brazil and much of Africa were established amid various socio-historical processes. The first, which lasted for three centuries, was slavery. The second began with the return of some former slaves to their “homeland” or their ancestors’ homeland - today, their descendants are found more frequently in Benin. After the abolition of slavery in Brazil, there was a hiatus in the relations between the country and sub-Saharan Africa. Brazil developed and maintained trade relations with the North African countries and South Africa. Only in the sixties the Brazilian diplomacy changed its policy towards Black Africa. (KALY, 2001, p. 111)

Thus, even if the black diaspora is constitutive of the very meaning of Brazil, in general, we have a profound departure from the history and relations with African countries. We can think about an unknown continent, “despite Africa being the nearest continent to Brazil, of the immense human and natural similarities between them, of the strong interaction throughout history, and the people of African descent comprising about one third of our population” (VISENTINI, 2014, p.11).

This lack of knowledge of Brazilians regarding the socio-cultural wealth, natural resources, history, ethnic diversity and strategic position in the world of the African continent is reflected in the speech of migrants born in Senegal and living in Brazil. An initial approximation, even in informal talks held in the exploratory phase of the research indicate some disappointment or dissatisfaction with the identification of Senegal as “Africa”, perceived as a monolithic, undifferentiated bloc of countries, associated most often with misery and violence. In this

context, Senegal is not the Africa of the Brazilian imaginary, especially because maybe this Africa does not exist. According to Visentini:

Africa or African culture, as a historical totality, does not exist abstractly in itself as it represents, in a way, the answer of a European creation. African culture is a transatlantic reactive anti-slavery and anti-racist movement, emerged in the late nineteenth century. (VISENTINI, 2014, p.11)

The idea of a black culture built from the diaspora<sup>5</sup> is developed by Gilroy (2012), while introducing the notion of a Black Atlantic, as an intercultural and transnational creation, which breaks with nationalistic paradigms, opposes and denounces racism and ethnocentrism. The diaspora is key to this discussion, because it points to a more hybrid and flexible meaning of culture and identity, understood by the author as a social ecology of identification:

As an alternative to the metaphysics of “race”, of a nation and culture defined and coded in a body, the diaspora is a concept that questions the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disturbs the fundamental power of the territory in definition of an identity as it breaks the simple sequence of exploratory links between place, location and awareness. (GILROY, 2007, p. 151)

Hall also considers a broadening of the concept of diaspora, in a process that is not based on a binary conception of difference, but requires, in the author’s words, “veiled borders that do not ultimately separate, but that are also *places of passage*, and meanings that are positional and relational, always sliding along a spectrum with no beginning or end”

<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that the understanding of the diaspora in the context of this study, differs itself from migrations, because we acknowledge the broader and complex character of the diaspora, different from the literal meaning of the word, related to the idea of forced dispersion of populations caused by intolerance or persecution. Migration represents the displacement movements characteristic of the dynamics of human mobility, a phenomenon present in all of human history. Metaphorically, the diaspora allows the assumption of elements to think about increasingly fluid identities, marked by differences, by the confrontation between an imagined past and present increasingly shared (HALL, 2003). In this perspective, due to its transnational and intercultural character, the diaspora is seen not only as synonymous with displacement through different territories, but as an “immediate alternative to the harsh discipline of the primordial kinship and rooted belonging” (GILROY, 2007, p.151).

(Hall, 2003, p.33). When talking about the Caribbean diaspora, the author highlights, once again, the hybrid character of their routes, “We know that the term “Africa” is, in any case, a modern construct, which refers to a variety of people, tribes, cultures, and languages whose main common point of origin is related to the slave trade” (Hall, 2003, p. 31)

Similarly, Gilroy thinks of the Black Atlantic not in terms of a cultural unity ensured by a common African heritage, but as a multiplicity of transnational and cross-cultural experiences. In this process, the colonial issue can be thought of as an aspect of convergence, implying the shared experience of slavery, racial discrimination and the rise of a national awareness impregnated with denial of its own colonialism (GILROY, 2012, p.365).

### **Migratory networks between Brazil and Senegal**

The diaspora is also important to Senegal’s constitution. The country located in West Africa, a French colony until 1960, has its history marked by the movement of displacement of its population, especially towards France and other European countries such as Spain and Italy, and later to the United States, identified as synonymous with progress. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, with hardening immigration policies, the destinations have diversified, and South America, especially Argentina and Brazil, became the most frequent.

According to Dialo (2011, p.18), the Republic of Senegal, formerly part of Senegambia, is considered as a reference in Africa on the issue of democracy, “with a democratic preservation of a multi-party system since independence and the effective creation of a strong state due to the consolidation of the institutions that legitimize the monopoly on the use of force throughout its territory.”

Despite a localized conflict in the Casamance region, between Gambia and Guinea Bissau, lasting since 1981, this does not seem to be the main reason for migration. Kleidermacher (2013) analyzes the context of Senegalese migration to Argentina since the 1990s, and explains that during the twentieth century the displacements were mainly stimulated

by the French colonizing action. “*Durante este período, la administración colonial enviaba a la metrópoli a civilizar a las elites senegalesas colaboracionistas, lo que generaba en la población la imagen de que la riqueza y el poder había que buscarlos fuera de Senegal*” (KLEIDERMACHER, 2013, p. 112).

The presence of migratory projects as part of the personal trajectories of Senegalese residents in Buenos Aires is important on the analysis of Kleidermacher (2013). The same thing is seen in the reports of respondents in southern Brazil, where among the motivations to migrate, are the search for better working conditions and the possibility of sending money to relatives in Senegal, in an extended family dynamics, through which the connections in this transnational context are reconfigured.

Brazil, however, has not always appeared as a first choice among the migrants contacted in the survey. Some of them emphasized relationships with relatives and friends living in the United States and Spain, but commented on the current difficulty to enter these countries. The initial contact with other Senegalese in Brazil, consolidating support networks, is common ground in the experiences of respondents. These networks (informal, but which are starting to consolidate organized associations) are related to community and religious ties built between migrants from a Muslim majority and articulated in religious brotherhoods linked to the “Mouride” Islamic order<sup>6</sup>.

Still analyzing the Argentinean context, Chevalier-Beaumel and Morales (2012) cast a glance at what they define as the production of singular knowledge (a *savoir migrer*), anchored on social networks - not only religious, but of kinship, friendship, ethnic and labor - essential to understand the migratory dynamics and experienced transnational relations.

<sup>6</sup> According to Moreno Maestro (2006 apud KLEIDERMACHER, 2013) THE Mouride brotherhood comprises a majority in Senegal and was founded by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba in the late nineteenth century. It is of Sufi inspiration and their religious center is in the holy city of Touba.

Networks, oriented in terms of factors such as location, regionalization, friendship and inter-knowledge, can also be understood as channels that produce and feed the migratory flows according to Tedesco and Grzybowski (2013), in an analysis of the migratory dynamics in northern Rio Grande do Sul based on exploratory research data gathered in Passo Fundo between 2009 and 2011. Researchers identified a migrant profile comprised of a majority of males between 25 and 40 years, coming from small towns in Senegal, besides the capital Dakar, which now hold job posts, especially in poultry slaughterhouses and construction.

The network logic is perceived as a movement associated with the migratory process (PASCUAL DE SANS, 2007), which can be observed since the construction of the migration project, namely the decision to migrate promoted by the example and encouragement of relatives, friends and acquaintances that have already undergone the experience. Migratory networks, as shown by numerous research, are also present in the joint interactions that operate in the process of settlement in the country of destination, and in the maintenance of ties with the country of birth through the contact with migrants of the same nationality and participation in common coexistence environments.

### **Ethnographic perspective to approach the Senegalese migratory networks**

Ethnography in its triple meaning as approach, method and text (GUBER, 2001), has been adopted as a major perspective in the field of study of contemporary migrations. In this study, we seek to approach the Senegalese migratory networks through a combination of procedures that are less directive and that seek to include the reflectivity of the researchers, in order to align long-term observation and listening of the subjects reported.

As Guber (2001) highlights, ethnography brings together a set of “fieldwork” activities, the result of which is used as evidence for description and interpretation. It is an open research method that combines primarily, participant observation and non-directive interviews, plus an

extended approach to the subjects comprising the study, noting that the research is not done *about* a social group, but *with* and *starting from* it.

As a delimitation for the field work, we sought to understand, through techniques of simple observation, participant observation, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews (GIL, 2008), the context of Senegalese migratory social networks in Rio Grande do Sul. Simple observation and participant observation start by approaching migrant support organizations in the state, in addition to the migrant associations and organizations<sup>7</sup>.

The ethnographic option also leads to a more open and interpretive writing, in a search for an approach to the complexity of the social and cultural context and multiple identity developments built in the relationship between Brazil and Senegal in the context of migration. Throughout the observation process, we sought to understand the dynamics of Senegalese migrant networks in their associative practices such as meetings, gatherings, demonstrations, parties, and religious activities. This process occurs both by accompanying presential activities related to the Senegalese diaspora and through on-line social networks, pages, communities and Facebook profiles, for example, through which we can monitor and participate in actions organized by the collective, in addition to establishing an initial contact with the migrants themselves.

At the current stage of research, in addition to informal talks, six semi-structured interviews were performed, based on a script of approach which aims to understand, through the narratives of migrants, issues related to social uses of media and networked communication dynamics, and its relations with identity and intercultural aspects (Grimson, 2001). Among the respondents, are leaders and coordinators

<sup>7</sup> Associativism is a practice in many cases, connected to the migratory phenomenon. Associations (as well as clubs, NGOs, cultural groups, social movements, religious organizations, etc.) act as part of migration support networks within the contexts to which they migrated and integrated collective movements of diverse characters around the migratory experience. A categorization of migratory associations typologies is detailed by Cogo (2012), based on other studies. Regarding the Senegalese, we identified associations in the cities of Caxias do Sul, Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo, in addition to a process of organization in Rio Grande. All created and managed by the migrants themselves.

of formal associations and also of the dynamics in informal networks, and migrants with different profiles and migration trajectories (regarding age, education level, professional activities and migration time).

The observations and informal conversations are held within the context of the cities where the collective is present, mainly Caxias do Sul and Porto Alegre, and during activities promoted by the migrant collective itself, as in a meeting of the Association of Senegalese in Porto Alegre in June 2015 and the 1st Senegalese Ball, sponsored by the Association of Senegalese in Caxias do Sul, in August 2015.

### **Social uses of ICTs in transnational dynamics and networked communication**

In our research, mainly through participant observation in activities organized by the Senegalese, informal conversations and interviews, we identified a profile of young subjects, between 20 and 30 years, mostly men, and with varied education, some with complete degrees, and others with the equivalent of a high school or technical education from Senegal. In the observed dynamics, we found only five Senegalese women.

Wolof is the main language spoken, which is used in meetings and conversations between the Senegalese, for example, while some also speak French, the official language of Senegal, and Arabic. A basic knowledge of Spanish helped some migrants to learn Portuguese, spoken without difficulty by the Senegalese living for a longer time in the country, but which still poses a communication problem for the more recent migrants, who must rely on the help of interpreters, among their own acquaintances.

All migrants who we spoke with are Muslims and participate in meetings and religious activities in the cities studied. In Caxias do Sul, in addition to work in the association, migrants participate in the *Dahira*, a religious association related to the Mouride network, which operates in a rented house downtown. Their arrival to the State has intensified

since 2008, but we also registered some newcomers, some entering Brazil through Acre, coming from Ecuador, others coming directly by plane to São Paulo and then by bus to Rio Grande do Sul.

Professional integration has been changing in recent years, with layoffs in food companies and the metal-mechanic sector, many migrants work in informal trade, selling products such as jewelry, watches and clothes in downtown city streets. Others combine formal employment with a formal contract, with street sales activities as a way to increase income, or even start their own businesses in service providing. Among the six respondents, we identified a mechanic (also a street vendor during the weekends, at Redenção Park in Porto Alegre, where we met him), a production employee at a slaughterhouse in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, a street vendor who studies technical business administration on the night shift, a painter and two businessmen, both in Caxias do Sul, one an owner of an international calling company and other, who worked with graphics design in Senegal and opened its own printing shop.

Migrant associations occupy a center role in the migration dynamics of the contexts studied. As a part of the support networks, the associations work in the migrant organization, welcoming the newcomers, assisting in the job search and accommodation (usually shared with other Senegalese), helping with the language or with the many procedures involved in formalizing their legal status in the country. They are also spaces of sociability and recognition in the diaspora, and they also provide for cultural activities as a form of approaching the local communities.

Founded in 2013, the Senegalese Association of Caxias do Sul promoted in 2015, for example, a participation in the traditional Pilgrimage of Our Lady of Caravaggio, with about thirty Senegalese traveling more than 20 kilometers from Caxias do Sul to the city of Farroupilha, carrying a message of peace and reconciliation between the different religions. The Senegalese Ball, held at Ponto de Cultura of the Neighborhood Associations of Caxias do Sul, in addition to promoting a cultural experience through music and dance, sought to raise funds to finance the costs

associated with the house rented by the Association for the migrants recently arrived.

In Porto Alegre, according to its president, the main objective of the association is promoting union among the Senegalese, the discussion of the main demands and difficulties with the city, as well as to take action against prejudices regarding the migrants. A news report broadcast in June 2015 on *Jornal do Almoço*, on the RBS TV network, affiliated to Globo TV, which showed interviews with migrants, including the president of the association, was celebrated among migrants as an opportunity to show to the gauchos a part of the daily lives and culture of the Senegalese, in order to break the still prevalent stereotypes (often reinforced by the media coverage on the issue of migration).

In this context of consolidation of migratory networks and the organization of entities of associative, cultural and religious characteristics, ICTs play a central role in the articulation of the Senegalese. The approach on the social uses of media - a perspective related to Latin American cultural studies (Martín-Barbero, 2002), helps to build the theoretical-methodological path of the study, in which the analysis relies on social practices of multiple appropriations and resignifications in the process of relations with the media which is always mediated.

In our observation, cell phone use was the most important means of communication for migrants. Among the respondents, even though three of them reportedly owned a computer, mobile technologies constitute the main form of Internet access. They all stressed the importance of arriving in the country and purchasing a chip from a local telephone company. One emphasized it by showing the device, which had been his first acquired object in Brazil as a gift from a friend, his only contact in the country before migrating. The reports also show the use of different carriers, in order to take advantage of promotions and cheaper calls. When requesting the phone number of respondents for future contacts, there were several times when we were asked about our numbers and carrier to register it in the device's contact list.

Coupled with access to 3G Internet, the phone offers a possibility of constant connection and facilitated communication with relatives

and friends. For this, the instant messaging applications that allow free phone calls like Whatsapp, Viber and Imo, are fundamental. It is, based on our observation, the main way by which those in Brazil keep in contact with relatives in Senegal.

In the activities of the associations where we were present, the cellphone, usually a smartphone with many features, was still used for the production of photos and videos that were then posted on social networking sites, especially Facebook. We also note the practice of *selfies*, pictures of themselves, shared on these sites, understood in this context as communication and sociability environments increasingly important among migrants.

In addition to personal profiles, the Facebook social networking site is appropriated through the use of pages, which allow the management and sharing of content among those who follow them. In our observation, migrant associations will gain visibility and their actions will be disclosed in these pages created and managed by the Senegalese themselves. Generally, with content in Wolof and French, sometimes translated into Portuguese, the pages are an invitation for the activities of the associations, share photos and videos of these actions, disclose issues of interest to migrants, and show materials published in the local and national media on the topic of Senegalese migration. At times, we were able to identify references against racial prejudice, messages about the integration between Brazil and Senegal and for the enhancement of Senegalese culture.

Another observation space of this research is the telecommunication service shop belonging to one of the respondents, who is a central character in the migratory dynamics in the context of Rio Grande do Sul, since he is also the president of the Senegalese association of Caxias do Sul, with a strong networked operation with other associations and migrant support organizations. The shop is located in a shopping mall downtown and is appropriated in similar terms to what Peñaranda Cólera (2005) refers as a transnational social space, where more than providing access to low-cost ICTs, the dynamics of social networks among migrant

communities and with their country of origin are consolidated through technological mediation. There we find, besides hangers for national and international phone calls, room rental ads in shared houses, posters and pictures related to the Senegalese culture and Muslim religion, and typical clothing for sale to the Senegalese. The room also functions as a meeting point for migrants.

Based on these initial approaches, we highlight two central axes to reflect upon the consumption of technology by the Senegalese migrants. First, the appropriation of ICTs becomes important to maintain the ties with their country of origin and places of residence of relatives and migrant friends.

As proposed by Portes (2004, p. 74) transnationalism is a new perspective, but not a new phenomenon to think about the migratory practices. Undoubtedly, as the author reminds us, although relations between the country of origin and that of migration have always existed, the emergence of technologies both of transport as of telecommunications, allows for fast communications that crosses national borders.

As part of the migratory dynamics, access and mastery of the use of ICTs, centered now on the mobile phone, allow the configuration of transnational relations that provide much more than economic remittances to Senegal. Transnational ties are also present in emotional relationships, family and kinship. In the case of transnational families, we find, for example, the story of two migrants married to women living in Senegal. One of them, although he had already met the woman many years ago, had still not seen her since the wedding, but kept in constant communication with her through the exchange of instant messages and calls through smartphone applications.

Transnational relations also trigger cultural issues and, as we are finding, among the Senegalese community, especially religious issues. The establishment of associations created around the Muslim religion and the Mouride brotherhood and is one of the aspects that deserve consideration to understand the organization of the Senegalese migratory networks concentrated in a few cities. Through this organization

the Quran reading practices and the celebration of religious days are maintained, and there have been visits from the leaders of Senegal to religious activities promoted in the city of Caxias do Sul, for example.

As a second axis of analysis, we highlight that the migratory dynamics are organized around social support networks, for which the technological mediation promotes a very important articulation. The logics of networked communication, articulated between unmediated interpersonal communication and multiple appropriations of ICTs, reconfigure the experience of displacement and expand the possibilities of connection between migrants themselves.

The telephone shop as a transnational environment is an important signal for the importance of communication between the Senegalese themselves and between them and their families and friends living in Senegal. ICTs are also suitable for the organization of associations, drawing together, as we are finding, entities of organizational character and acknowledgement. In the field work, for example, we learned about a group on the Whatsapp application, shared between the leaders of associations of different Brazilian cities, which is used to facilitate communication and action planning among migrants.

Networked communication assumes an important role in the process of approximation between the migrant and local communities' cultures, in cities with a strong Senegalese presence. Therefore, pages and groups on social networking sites constitute spaces for disclosure of less discussed aspects of the Senegalese culture and contributions of migrant collectives in the cities of Rio Grande do Sul. They serve also to share information published in the local media, in addition to promote mobilization and approximation between migrants and, still at early stages, the local communities.

## **Final considerations**

The study of the logics of communication of migratory networks, in a context of changes of the very phenomenon of migration, in the Brazilian context, brings new insights to the relations between media, networks

and identities. In this article, based on an analytical approach to social uses of ICTs in communication dynamics by Senegalese migrants in Rio Grande do Sul, we analyzed elements that help to understand a setting of new articulations between Brazil and Africa, united by numerous socio-historical relations, including the experience of colonialism and the diaspora, as constitutive elements of cultures and identities in constant transformation.

In this path, we highlight the role of ICTs for organizing the logics of networked communication among migrants. Mobile technologies, through cell phone use coupled with the 3G Internet or wireless connection, gain importance as the primary means of communication between migrants. Maintaining ties with family, sending financial remittances, the search of information for the migration project, the consolidation of communicative practices in support networks for the migration phenomenon and the articulation of associative, cultural and religious organizations appear as common senses in the relation of Senegalese and technologies.

Based on the social uses of ICTs, the consolidation of transnational relationships and network dynamics between migrants constitute a broader process with new configurations of transnational migration flows, in which Brazil stands out as a country of migration to various collectives, different from those who already comprise its population. Thus, we can show some paths through which the transnational relations between Brazil and Senegal are being constituted, in interaction and communication practices mediated by multiple appropriations of ICTs between the migrant subjects themselves, between those and their family network in Senegal, and between the collectives and the local community.

Regarding the Senegalese migration, ignorance about Senegal and its cultures, the language barrier, religious and ethnic identity issues may lead to episodes of prejudice and xenophobia. In this regard, support networks built around the religious issue and cultural associations, mediated by distinct appropriation of ICTs, as we analyzed, become

important for the migration dynamics, especially for allowing the approach and collaboration between migrants, strengthening ties with the identities and cultures of Senegal, as well as for the visibility process for difficulties within the migratory experience and disputes for migrant recognition policies.

The analysis of the Senegalese migration, from the perspective of the subjects and their multiple paths, allows to understand the coordinating role of ICTs. More than integrating its dynamics, networked communication is constitutive of the very migratory experience, resulting in the dynamic and complex character of a diaspora that is built from transnational experiences traversed by technological mediation.

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