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***Gente da Nossa* - the production of a mediated “Portuguese discourse in Canada”.**

Abstract

Gente da nossa is the name of a TV show produced in Toronto, Canada, by a small team of second generation Portuguese/Azorean migrants. Mainly focused in the Portuguese migrant population residing in Canada but broadcasted to all North America and Bermuda and present in the Internet, this weekly TV show is currently being studied both as a window to the Portuguese migrants’ communal agendas in Canada and as a media tool that eventually to some extent represents, speaks for and contributes to the public positioning of the community. Although the research intends to address a considerable set of issues related to the shows’ reception and its audiences, this article is totally focused on the contents displayed and in the shows producers. The shows’ weekly episodes displayed in the internet were recorded during one year (2006/07) and submitted to a content analysis structured according to the main thematic emerging from the shows structure and agenda. Besides promoting a solid description of show, this methodological option reflects the intention of developing an ethnographic approach primarily focused on the main events, questionings and problems selected by the producers, as well as the ways those are addressed, displayed and discussed during the time period analyzed.

Introduction

According to David Morley (2003), it ‘s now a commonplace that the new networks of communication, in and through we live, are transforming our senses of locality/community and, on a wider geographical scale, our senses of “belonging” to either national and transnational communities.

In the field of the Anthropology of Media a relevant discussion is being held about the impacts of media productions conducted by migrants, indigenous populations

and other traditionally less “empowered” people, usually subjects of representation and not producers of contents. These media productions have been a significant vehicle for these groups to reach and appropriate the public space, especially for those who choose a kind of emancipator model as a way of resisting to cultural, economic and social domination (“indigenous media” in Ginsburg, 1991; “small media” in Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 1994; “ethnic minority media” in Riggins, 1992). Thru the use of mediated contents and productions, small groups are increasingly developing ways of intervene through the use of media technologies that were traditionally in the hands of the status quo, allowing the emergence of a global process of decentring and democratization in technological uses and appropriations. This phenomenon has produced major discussions about its complex and ambiguous results¹, especially about the way they strategically “appropriate” and “objectify” culture (Ginsburg, op cit; Marcus, 1996; Miller, 1995).

These media productions are particular significant to the understanding and discussion of migration processes, since all migrations usually imply relevant and permanent identity evaluations, positioning and (re)ordering activities, mediated and informed by a multiplicity of factors, agents, structural and contextual conditionings. Media, and especially “Minority Media”, may play central parts on these processes, in so far as they have the ability to mirror and simultaneously produce significant contents that can be incorporated in the identity revision processes.

This paper corresponds to one research line of a broader project focused on the constitution of a 'migrant Portuguese voice' in Canada through the production of an 'ethnic minority media' - the TV show *Gente da Nossa*. The show is created, produced and presented by a team of Portuguese migrants and is broadcasted to all Canadian territory, Bermuda and also in the internet (www.gentetv.com). It comprises some regular segments, namely Music (promotion of local Portuguese-Canadian artists), Community PSA's (promotion of the community local activities), Interviews (relevant people from the community are invited to talk about their life experiences) and “Streeters” (‘Feeling the pulse of the community by asking the question of the day’).

The internet, which is becoming a major medium for the "consolidation, strengthening and definition of collective identities" (Eriksen, 2006), was used as a

¹ For a discussion about the ‘digital divide’ see Ginsburg, F. (2007) “Rethinking the Digital Age” (http://www.media-anthropology.net/ginsburg_digital_age.pdf).

privileged channel to access *Gente da Nossa*. The main objectives of this research stage were to explore the constitution of an "imagined Portuguese audience community" through the understanding of the processes of establishing a "migrant discursive space" supported by a media production and to scrutinize the most visible representations and discourses about Portugal, the Portuguese culture and the Portuguese-Canadian community, particularly the rhetoric's of modernism and tradition but also the "sociotechnical frames" (Morley & Silverstone, 1990²) involved in this particular communication process. Technological issues, connected to literacy, economic and social empowerment are important dimensions to the study of the uses and appropriations of both media, TV as a more classical presence, and internet as a new mediation process, because, as Eriksen, (2006) states "examining the role of the Internet in building and maintaining national identities may enhance our understanding of the character and enduring power of national myths and symbols". Moreover, the internet can be also understood as an important space to the dialogue of two major dimensions in most migrant processes, intersecting both the territorialising forces of the nation-state and the deterritorialising ones that usually connect people to a nation that is spatially distant (Eriksen, 2006).

According to Miller & Slater (2000), the first approaches to cyberspace were too rigid and did not promote a detailed picture of its contents and realms. According to both authors, social theory can overcome this limitation by approaching the different social and technical universes of possibilities that are developed in and thru the internet. That is why we should consider the Internet as a space that both incorporates and link various social contexts, that runs thru mundane social structures and has the ability to transform social relations, though not including them necessarily in a "self-enclosed cyberian apartness" (idem).

1. The Portuguese migration to Canada

All migration processes involve moments of "disruption", "suture" and "reordering" (Bhabha, 2002; Hall, 1997, 2003; Gardner, 2002; Fortier, 2000; Gilroy, 2003). Diverse

² For the authors 'people's interactions with media are embedded within "sociotechnical frames"' (cit in Spitulnik, 1998: 76). To Spitulnik these 'sociotechnical frames' include "a range of other mechanical apparatuses besides media technologies. Culturally-specific orientations to and evaluations of electronic media are shaped by this larger constellation of technologies" (Spitulnick, 1998: 76).

and particularly intense, the “reorganization of life” in another context can take many shapes, strategies and policies (Baumman, 2003; Gardner, 2002) that are strongly connected to a range of variables and dynamics such as the causes for migrating, the specificity and intensity of the migration fluxes between two cultural contexts, the social, demographic, economic and political characteristics of the new context, the existence of social networks of support between the migrants and the connections they held with origin, as well as the social, economic and cultural capitals of the migrants.

The Portuguese migration to Canada constitutes one of the most relevant chapters of the Portuguese Trans-oceanic migration movements during the XX century. Especially intense during the 60 and 70 this migration trend assumed original features (Jerónimo et al, 2000: 27) that contrasted with other Portuguese migration events occurring at the same period of time to other destinations (specially to Central and Northern European countries).

At its first stage (still in the 50’s) the migratory fluxes are mainly composed by men (Anderson e Davis cit in Jerónimo et al, 2000: 27) and their destinations are medium scale cities like Ottawa, Hull, Hamilton, Kitchener and Winnipeg. Later, in the 60’s, the family regrouping processes begin to take place and the Portuguese migrants start to settle predominantly in the East Coast cities, especially in Toronto and Montreal. A recent study (Noivo, 1999: 32) states that of the nearly 250,000 Canadian residents claiming to have “Portuguese ethnicity”, the highest concentration is found in Ontario (176,300), with 124,325 living in Toronto.

Due to a special set of political initiatives taken by the Canadian Government when a volcano erupted in the Azores and to the existence of relatively good (travel) connections between the archipelago and Canada, more than sixty percent of all migrants are from the Azores (specially from the islands of São Miguel and Terceira), and the rest came from the Continent and from the Madeira island.

The first generation of Portuguese migrants had poor levels of formal education (no more than four /five years) and did not speak any of the Canadian official languages. For that reason, most of them remained in the lowest ranks of the occupational structure, working in construction and also as welders, janitors, cleaners and factory workers. The ones with higher degrees of education and/or some economical capital started small family businesses such as Travel Agencies, Drugstores and Car Retailers (Jerónimo et al, 2000: 28, 29).

According to a recent study comparing the incomes of the eight major ethnic groups living in Toronto, the Portuguese are at the bottom end of the economical scale. Like other immigrant groups, they initially resided in low-rent city districts, until a relative upward mobility has allowed some of the second generation to move to the suburbs. Currently, this area is being taken by other migrant communities especially from the Asian region (China and Vietnam).

The Portuguese in Canada continue to evidence high rates of endogamy. Use and retention of their mother language is also relatively high and the Portuguese live, by and large, in residentially segregated groups (Noivo, 1999: 32). These two aspects explain why the Portuguese are generally regarded as one of the most cohesive ethnic groups in Canada. The overall picture drawn by most of the ethnographic work done by Anthropologists, Sociologists and Demographers concludes that the Portuguese Migrants have yet to achieve full or equal participation in the Canadian society. As it is argued by Noivo (1999: 32):

“(All) the empirical data confirms that after twenty-five or more years in “the land of opportunity” the overall socio-economic conditions of Portuguese immigrants remain well below the national average. Moreover, the longstanding situation does not appear to be changing, as this group is not represented in Canada’s political, cultural, or economic platforms, and shows minimal participation in mainstream society”.

2. Minority Media

As it was stated before, Anthropology of Media has recently been involved in a significant discussion about the impacts of media productions conducted by migrants, indigenous populations and other traditionally more powerless people, usually subjects of representation and not producers of contents.

According to some authors, we face currently the emergence of more and more media phenomena through which small groups are developing ways to intervene in the public sphere by using the technologies that were traditionally in the hands of the status quo. Although this new reality is the core of major academic, social and political discussions about its complexity and the ambiguity of its results, the fact is that they

seem to be allowing and at same time promoting a global process of crescent decentring and democratization in technological employments and appropriations.

In terms of classificatory models displayed by the majority of the authors, two significant approaches emerge. The first one divides the media in three groups (Ginsburg, et al, 2002): 1) large scale classic formations produced by public or private institutions whose main objective is the ideological creation of “modern citizens”; 2) in an intermediate level, media productions involved in more reflexive processes expressing powerless social and cultural worlds typical of the minorities and in Diaspora communities involved in different power relations (this should be our case study cluster); 3) more self-aware practices, usually connected to social movements, where the cultural and social matters are used in a more strategically political way. The second approach (Riggins, 1992), propose four “ethnic minority media” categories (‘traditional indigenous communities’; ‘integrated indigenous communities’, ‘volunteer minorities’ and ‘culturally closed migrant groups and refugees’).

According to the brief description presented before, the third category proposed by Riggins is the one that fits better our object of study: ‘volunteer minorities’, which means, economic or political immigrants whose culture and values are considered modern and are not in risk of some kind of ethnocide but aims for cultural legitimization in the welcome country.

3. *Gente da Nossa* – an ethnographic approach

The show *Gente da Nossa* was, from the beginning, created, produced and presented by a team of Portuguese migrants. It is a weekly TV Show, created in 1987 and presented in Portuguese language. During its first years, the program was broadcasted by the Graham Cable TV (city of York) and for the last ten years is part of the multicultural network CHIN TV (<http://www.chinradio.com>), one of the most visible signs of Canadian multicultural policies since it broadcasts a significant number of the most representative ethnic media productions.

The show is transmitted every Saturday mornings, between 8 am and 9 am at Citytv and is presented by a second generation migrant woman – Nellie Pedro. Her family is from the Azores, Terceira Island. It can be seen in all the Canadian territory, in

Bermuda and also in the internet (www.gentetv.com)³. The show comprises some regular segments, namely music (promotion of local Portuguese-Canadian artists), Community PSA's (promotion of the community local activities) and Interviews (relevant people from the community are invited to talk about their life experiences).

Gente da Nossa has a stable structure and agenda, organized around a set of regular topics: Community Agenda (memo of the major events organized by Portuguese migrant associations from the different Canadian regions); Interviews; Advertising (all products, services and commercial business advertised are directly related with the Portuguese migrant community and most are owned by Portuguese-Canadian subjects); Images of festivals, events and visits to the community inside and outside the Toronto area; Fund raising activities (to support various community' social and cultural activities); Presentation of Portuguese literature and music; Special activities to promote and finance the *Gente da Nossa* show (an annual picnic, a bullfight and "Açorianíssima", a traditional party celebrating the Azorean Culture); Organisation of collective vacation trips to Cuba, the Azores and the Madeira Islands.

The most represented thematics found in this first approach to the programs' contents constituted the foundations for the design of the research protocol. An ethnographic approach to media contents should privilege a close and intense dialogue with the contents being subjected to analysis. As Altheide states:

"Ethnographic content analysis is (...) oriented to documenting and understanding the communication of meaning, as well as verifying theoretical relationships. A major difference, however, is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection and analysis"(Altheide, 1996: 16).

Ethnographic content analysis follows a movement between concept development-sampling data, collection-data, coding-data, and analysis-interpretation. The aim is *"to be systematic and analytic but not rigid"* (Altheide, 1996: 18), allowing the emergence of categories during the study and promoting a constant comparison of situations, settings, images and meanings.

Based on these assumptions, the main goal of the first research stage was, besides promoting a detailed description of the programs' contents, to identify and draw attention to a restricted though significant set of assumptions transversal to the thematics enounced.

³ The web page is written in English.

. The first content analysis of the program resulted in the setting up of two main guidelines that appear to be significant to our research. The first guideline calls our attention to the importance assumed by Nelly Pedro (the program hostess), both to the show and to the Portuguese migrant community. The second relevant guideline points to the fact that the show's expected audience is limited to the Portuguese migrants living in Canada, although the Internet web-site formally creates the possibility of a wider Portuguese migrant audience. The hostess receives letters and calls from Portuguese migrants residing outside Canada. These contacts are almost always very enthusiastic and, besides thanking Nelly from her "wonderful show", constitute a significant source of new contents for the show since they often carry CD's of local artists from the migrant communities. Being a prove of the existence of alternative channels and paths for the circulation and promotion of cultural products between different Portuguese migrant communities, this statement deserves to be further investigated and, in special, confronted with the communities' connections to the origin as its main source for cultural productions and artefacts.

a) Nellie Pedro: a key element of *Gente da Nossa*

Being both the producer and the hostess of the show during the last twenty years, Nelly Pedro is directly responsible for most of the choices made concerning its contents and internal dynamics.

Addressing the Portuguese migrant community as "our community", Nellie tends to juxtapose the program's audience to a notion of "us" that often assumes various meanings and scales, ranging from "us, the Portuguese migrants" to "us, the Azorean Portuguese migrants" or to "us the Portuguese". Although relatively stable and bounded, the concept of "imagined Portuguese audience community" employed in the show can take a variety of meanings and, therefore, strategically include and exclude significant parts of its expected audience. This fact is made clear in the formulas used to address the public like in the welcome message in the beginning of every show but also in other occasions:

"(...) Good morning once again to all the spectators that make me company in Canada, from coast to coast, and in Bermuda through CPTV, but also to our spectators from all over the world that see us through our website gentetv.com. Welcome to *Gente da Nossa* show of ... (all shows)".

“Ours is a family program that presents what is happening within the Portuguese community here in the city of Toronto, its surroundings and some other places”. (Nellie, 23/12/06).

“This Program, *Gente da Nossa* [Our People], is exactly this, a Program that belongs to people, Portuguese people from all regions and obviously from Portugal in general who live in Canada”. (25/11/06)

In a TV report about the Centre for Disabled People built by the “Portuguese community” Nellie, who is promoting a fund raising for this initiative, describes it as “the first to be a 100% built by our community to our community”, giving particular relevance to the exceptional character of this last feature.

On the 10th of June, the official day of Portugal and of the Portuguese Communities, the national symbols are exhibited in a much more emphatic way. In one of the Program exhibitions, at 9th of June of 2007, in the eve of the Portuguese festive day, Nellie, wearing a blouse with the Portuguese flag as pattern, sitting in front of a Portuguese shield, hanged in the TV studio wall, wishes for a “Good Portugal Day” to all the audience, assuring that this day is frequently celebrated with more emotion by the Portuguese communities abroad than in Portugal. Later, in the program, she also states that “Our fatherland is where we were born but Canada is our country”, adding that she wouldn’t like to live in another country and thanking for “this great country that Canada is (and that) had welcomed us so many years ago”. The fact that the Canadian society supports and acknowledges these festivities of the Portuguese Community as a way of promoting and celebrating “our roots and our culture” is also mentioned.

The Fan Mail in the website constitutes also a relevant source of data to the analysis of the uses of the word “community” by the Program audiences:

“I wish to thank you for the recent coverage that *Gente da Nossa* did on the opening ceremony of my art show in the Consulate General of Portugal in Toronto. Actually it is always with great pleasure that we watch your show, because we find very it very enjoyable, while providing excellent information. I consider it a great service to our community. You have news and information of constant interest and many of my friends and members of our association watch your program every week. But I did not realize how popular you are, until I started receiving calls about this event, because they had seen it on TV. Please keep it up. It is now part of the Saturday morning's routine in our community!”

Another spectator, from Guinea Bissau, that identifies himself as “an afro-lusophone” who lives in Canada and since he left Africa had “the desire of being associated with the lusophone life abroad”, strongly emphasizes the relevance of the Show in his daily life:

“I love the lusophone world, the way of living, our culture and our way of being! I’ve been watching the Gente da Nossa show for many years, since it is the only TV program that connects me to the lusophone tradition. Thank you very much for all the work you are doing to keep the Portuguese language alive in Canada and for making the Portuguese community more vibrant”.

This spectator enlarge the concept of “Portuguese community” by including people from the Portuguese speaking countries and the designated lusophony⁴, using the website as an interface to reach the Program producers. This “virtual” space does not allow an immediately interaction between producers and audiences as well as a change of roles between them, since it is a website and not a chat-room or some other fluid communicative interface. Even so, the more direct contacts between audience and producers are establish through the Fan Mail although the website also allows a permanent access to the actual and previous week show, biographic information about Nellie, visual advertising of the show permanent sponsors and of most of the activities promoted. And even if the answers to the Fan Mail answers are not displayed in the website, the e-mails thanking them prove that communication channel works and is actively used to promote the website, not only as a tool to access the TV contents but also as a forum that upholds the constituency and maintenance of the idea of “community”.

Despite an apparent cohesion, there are multiple divisions within the “Canadian-Portuguese” community⁵ and in the TV show, the emphasis conferred to the Azorean culture tends to reinforce the visibility of one of its most significant trends, providing the group access to public space and promoting a representation of it as one of the most significant within the community. This could represent an indication of internal tensions and negotiations going on inside the community. Although there is no data available

⁴ On this question of the relationship between the different Portuguese speaking people living in Ontario, mainly from Portugal, Brazil and Portuguese speaking African countries, see (Pacheco: 2004).

⁵ According to Giles, (2002), it not the working class (the largest class in number, mostly constituted by Azorean migrants), but the low media class of small business owners that is frequently associated to the mainstream Portuguese representation in Toronto. This issue calls our attention to the significance of discussing the migrants’ politics of visibility both internally and externally, within the public sphere. Dimensions like class, gender, ethnicity/race are some of the variables that play a relevant part in these processes.

that could allow a more detailed discussion of this matter, it is significant to mention that the show seems to assume the existence of different positioning strategies within the community and heterogeneity in its composition but also tends to reinforce them in fact thru both the agenda setting and the activities promoted.

Although not entirely disconnected from the Canadian Agenda, Nelly is particularly focused in the Portuguese festive calendar in general, and in the Azorean in particular, in the associative activities (music and dance shows, recitals, and meetings) promoted by Portuguese clubs and institutional visits of politicians and other Portuguese public figures. Moreover, she often actively participates in many of the events she reports in the program. Due to this double participation in many of the most significant happenings of the community, Nellie seems to represent herself as one of its most visible and recognised members. Using a discursive repertoire that explicitly tends to reproduce, respect and cherish “*our traditions*” and “*the culture of our community*”, Nellie takes up a positioning strategy similar to a “cultural activism role” within the community which is probably related with her political experience as “School Public Trustee” candidate for the democrat party.

Most of Nellie’s activities are quite exceptional inside the Portuguese community, and so she is in a particularly good position to play the role of “cultural authority”. That is made clear by her comments and analysis of the cultural activities organised by most of the migrants associations in terms of their cultural contents, of “*what is missing and of how things should be organised in order to represent correctly our cultural traditions*”.

According to Ginsburg (1997), as a starting point, we should focus on cultural activists rather than on the media productions. Articulating the cultural dimension of activism involves an inquiry into how actors situate their participation as a meaningful part of a collective struggle. That is why a focus on cultural activists allows one to see the media as a dynamic aspect of social relations, a vehicle through which mediations take place (see also Riggins, 1992; Downmunt, 1993). This is an important alternative to the paradigms in media studies that, until recently, have tended to focus on the film/video, text, media institutions or the technology itself, rather than on the social relations inscribed in their production, circulation, and consumption, a perspective that has recently gained strength.

Likewise, the selection and presentation of the activities displayed in the show, specially the ones with a strong folk culture trend, contribute in a certain way to validate or not the “authenticity” of those same cultural manifestations. That is to say, that the constitution of “cultural authenticity” (Klimt & Leal, 2005) can assume various forms in the different contexts of the Lusophone World, being one of these forms, according to the authors, rhetorically similar to the one promoted in the *Gente da Nossa* show:

“the authority for deciding what constitutes the ‘culture of the folk’ is vested in the homeland and the validity of identity claims in the diaspora rest on demonstrations of continued connection to and cultural similarity with the place of origin” (Klimt & Leal, 2005: 11).

This perspective calls our attention to the significance of the “unbroken links to time-honoured traditions of the homeland as the underpinning of collective identity”. The materialization of this strategy can often be observed during the shows, and sometimes take on very strong manifestations, like in the comments made to a popular festivity organised by an Azorean association that, in Nellie’s opinion, lacked most of the mandatory activities in order to be considered a “proper Azorean festivity”:

“In my opinion they [some Portuguese artists] should have also participated in what was called “The Azorean Culture Day” in Ontario Place (...) I saw several artists performing but unfortunately what I didn’t see was much of the Azorean culture. I know that the people from Casa dos Açores (Azorean Association) don’t like these comments, but that is why I say it on television so everybody can know my opinion about it. What I didn’t saw of the Azorean Culture, and we have so much of it here in our community and it is so easy to do and to organize, we didn’t have “cantigas ao desafio”, “desgarrada”, “velhas”, “pézinhos”, “chamarita”, traditional folksongs, the performance of someone playing the traditional guitar: an excellent instrument from S. Miguel Island. There wasn’t also a “folia do Espírito Santo”, just a few ideas of things missing, or a group of traditional folksongs from there. It lacked fried fish, boiled potatoes and many other things that should have been made. And it didn’t happen because there is no possibility of find it here, because we have all these talents here in our community. So, I am offering our services of *Gente da Nossa* to help out next time.” (Nellie, 26/08/06)

The same line of argumentation is used during the tours organised by *Gente da Nossa* to Azores and Madeira. Usually the trips take place in special times of the year in order to coincide with the most relevant religious festivities of these regions. These are the moments of the year when all the Portuguese migrants from all over the world travel to their original home-places in order to visit their relatives that never left and meet the ones that have migrated to other destinations. The fact that these activities are actively

promoted during the all year indicates that, like many other Portuguese-Canadian travelling agencies, the show is involved in a “migrant oriented” tourism business activity. It is important to note that these business activities are playing a very significant role in the ways that the Portuguese migrant communities from North America are managing their relations with their origins. It is quite usual to find amongst these groups of travellers people that is visiting their hometown for the very first time in a long period and state for Nellie’s camera that if it wasn’t for the show and Nellie’s organising skills probably they would never have made it.

The presence and participation of the migrants in the religious festivities are also noteworthy for the people back home and usually their presence is officially acknowledged and celebrated. In several occasions, the organizing commissions from the Azorean festivities travel to Canada to promote them within the Portuguese communities.

B) A TV show for the Portuguese community

The second guideline calls our attention to the fact that the show seems to assume quite explicitly that its audience is limited to the Portuguese migrant community in Canada in general terms and, specially, to some of its subgroups namely the ones with an Azorean origin.

As mentioned before, all rubrics, themes, interviews and activities are planed to match up with the community everyday routines and regular events. Moreover, the strong link to the Portuguese cultural identity is emphasized by the constant use of cultural signs such as the national Portuguese flag, the musical video clips displayed and the presence of decorative objects allusive to the original home country and to Catholicism. A fine example of the importance attributed to the Portuguese cultural tradition can be found in the winter journey to Cuba organized every year. Under Nellie’s leadership the group, fully constituted by Portuguese migrants, is accompanied by several artists that travel to Cuba to entertain them with Portuguese singing and dancing moments.

During the tours the show is recorded and broadcasted from the places visited, some times entirely others in the form of clips that will be presented during the following weeks. In one of those examples, Nellie states in the TV report (25/08/07),

how important the Azorean festivities are for the migrants and how the migrants are important for the Azorean festivities. Being frequently the reason that encourages the voyage, the festivities are also stimulated by visiting migrants' presence. In the year in question (2007) the mayor of one of the places visited offered a festive lunch to the different groups of migrants, mainly coming from the US and Canada. Interviewed by Nellie, this local politician calls the migrants "non residents" instead of migrants and cherishes both their participation in the local festivities and the way they are promoted abroad.

In another occasion, during a trip to the Madeira Island (2007) the group travelling with Nellie is formally welcomed by the local (regional) government, who offered them a commemorative inscription at the same time that exalts the TV show for promoting these initiatives. The group is also invited to a festive meal and, in return, offers a Canadian flag to the local government. In this particular trip, the migrants are also invited to participate in several political events integrated in the local campaign for regional elections. This invitation clearly shows the political relevance of the migrants since they represent an electoral cluster that should not be discharged by the local forces. Their presence is noticed in the local press and Nellie is even invited to an interview on a local radio station. These activities promoted by the local media and fully reported in the *Gente da Nossa* show clearly assume a self-referential status.

One last example that reinforces the cases presented above refers to the episode of a trip to an Azorean Island in 2007. Nellie's group is also welcomed by the local mayor and invited to a festive meal, this time specially promoted to the migrants arriving to the Island to participate in the most important religious festivities of the region: the *Festas do Espírito Santo*. This time, the local authorities associate themselves to the celebrations of the Canadian Day, promoted by the visiting migrants. Nellie is the hostess of this public ceremony that happened for the first time in the Azores and was broadcasted in at least one of the national Portuguese TV channels. In order to organize this event in the forthcoming years, a Canadian-Azorean Friendship Association was created by the initiative of a local deputy.

Another relevant element of the show concerns its advertising scenery. A first observation of the commercial breaks of *Gente da Nossa* allows one to observe that they are fully in line with the programs' internal logic. All products and services advertised are targeted to the migrant population and, therefore, directly and indirectly linked to

Portugal and/or to the Azorean Islands. Likewise, *Boletim Comunitário*, the local community news presented in every show, is sponsored by the PCCU (Portuguese Canadian Credit Union). This feature tends also to apply to other Portuguese migrant media in Toronto. For instance, *Sol Português*, a local newspaper, has a similar advertising policy, which can be indicative of one of the attributes of the community strategic identity display. Not only the advertised products and institutions are connected to a supposed “Portugueseness”, but the promoting message in itself uses frequently that specific identity resource, as can be seen in the advertising spot of the *Banco Comercial dos Açores* (an Azorean Bank) in Toronto: “Our land is our home”.

The use of a referential cultural pattern that clearly establishes a differentiation between the program’s audience and the Canadian society seems to obey to a set of reasons that are clearly beyond a positive evaluation of the Portuguese cultural identity and its strategic maintenance. Besides this central task, the programs’ contents suggest the use of what is called the “commercialization of nostalgia”, founded and sustained by an intense call to ethnic consumption practices, including the TV show in itself. Nellie, for example, urge the community clubs and associations to participate in the shows’ birthday celebration, an Azorean Party, using a rhetoric that stresses the services the Program offers them:

“*Gente da Nossa* usually has the support of many of our clubs and associations in its anniversary celebration. Buy a table, is the only thing we expect you to do at least once a year! Become part of our celebration; share a table with your directors, partners, friends and family. It’s easy! Only ten persons per table! If a club can’t fill up a table with ten people, then it should close its doors. You should do this [buy the tickets], especially for *Gente da Nossa* (the program that) supports and promotes, for the last 19 years, every week, the activities of our clubs and associations. So, we are expecting your presence on our anniversary”.
(7/10/06)

Finally, we would like to direct our attention to a topic that addresses the fact of an implied tendency in the shows’ contents to reify some of the traditions and cultural trends of the Portuguese living in Canada. As it was pointed up before by the different episodes reported, the show carries some characteristics that are described by Bendix (2005: 200) as potentially forming or contributing to processes of cultural reification: “exhibition” and “staging” observed in the Shows’ celebrations, the use made of the Internet as a channel for “harnessing and shaping the look and nature of a folk practice”, the use of the show as an agent for the mobilization of the community and the sale of

merchandise directly related to the show both on the Internet and on TV. This last aspect gives evidence to the fact that these media productions work also as a privileged location to the promotion of ethnic commerce, of the program's products (mostly trip videos) and of a variety of other services offered by the production team (mostly wedding, christening and other festivities videos):

“The images of the excursions that *Gente da Nossa* has been recording in the islands of S. Miguel, Terceira, Faial, Pico and Madeira are very, very popular. People love to watch them: some because they are homesick and others simply to beware of the islands for the very first time. Occasionally, some of them get in touch with *Gente da Nossa* Tours and order tickets to travel with our TV team. That is fantastic, since we enjoy very much your presence during our excursions!” (Nellie, 2/09/06).

Again, Bendix calls our attention to the significance of the cultural roles played by subjects she defines as “entrepreneurs”, particularly due to the “power of the economics of folk culture” (Bendix, 2005: 202). A particularly good example of that significance can be found in the promotion of the party for the celebration the show 20th anniversary, that is justified as a way of promoting: “Portugal, our roots, our culture, and our different regions (...)” (14/07/07).

Final remarks

Described by most authors as “invisible” and “closed”, the Portuguese community seems to be, according to the show, interested in participating like many other migrant communities in the multicultural “*mediascape*”. This fact leads to a series of interrogations like how to evaluate this “Portuguese” participation. Moreover, if the programs' contents seem to suggest the display of a strategy of cultural reification, it also uses new information technologies, such as the internet, as a new mediation channel, that can be regarded as an indication of a possible repositioning process both within the Canadian and the Portuguese migrant collective contexts of belonging.

As stated by Miller & Slater (2000) and Eriksen (2006)⁶, the internet has many times proved to be a “*reembedding*” technology, in the sense that it is able to strengthen

⁶ According to the author “*In countries with large diaspora populations, one might even imagine the development of state sponsored virtual nations on the Internet, ensuring the continued loyalty and identification of citizens or ex-citizens living abroad. In terms of economics and strategic interests, such an enlarging of the national interest makes perfect sense*” (Eriksen, 2006). In Portugal there are two TV

identities that can both take innovative features or reinforce normative models linked to older identities and anchored in *emic* representations of community, belonging, religion, gender and cultural traditions. As Ginsburg also points out, it is significant to understand and discuss how several “cultural activists” are, in a self-conscious manner, “using the production of media and other expressive forms as a way not only to sustain and build their communities but also as a means to help transform them through what one might call a “strategic traditionalism”” (Ginsburg, 2007: 19).

At this stage, our main research goal is to depict, analyse and discuss the processes used by the people directly involved in the production of this particular show to generate, put forward and disseminate a significant ideological array of representations and discourses about collective identity, community and nation. As Mahon (2000) affirms, regardless of the channels used, all cultural producers and mediators have cultural and ideological impact both in their community and in the global public sphere. It is our conviction that ethnographic approaches to these media phenomena could, based on the production of detailed descriptions, also play a significant role in measuring and acknowledging its major impacts in the global public sphere.

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channels that are produced by the governmental TV totally directed to the Portuguese Migrants abroad (RTP International) and to the Portuguese speaking countries in Africa (RTP Africa). Both have Web pages and are broadcasted in the Internet.

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