CADERNOS BRASILEIROS DE
TERAPIA
OCUPACIONAL
BRAZILIAN JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Original Article

WhatsApp as a territory and an intervention tool in social occupational therapy

WhatsApp *como território e ferramenta de intervenção em terapia ocupacional social*

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Abstract

With the recent increase in migration in France, people in situation of social vulnerability are often isolated and with nearly or no social support networks, notably due to the asylum application administrative procedures, reception conditions, and lack of information and opportunity to access public places. The PRACTS program intervenes in this situation aiming to respond to the need of building social support networks and promote social participation for this population. Thus, a *WhatsApp* group was created to establish contact with people and inform them about the planned activities. From this experience, a hypothesis was formulated: this device favors the emergence of a dynamic that goes beyond the simple sharing of information. The aim is to understand whether and how this platform constitutes a new territory and can be used as an intervention tool in social occupational therapy. To this end, a sample of conversations and photos extracted from this *WhatsApp* group was analyzed. The analysis shows six types of messages, in addition to information, which suggest that the group has become a territory shared by professionals and users and can be used as an intervention tool to strengthen the feeling of belonging to a group and promote social participation, both in virtual and real spaces. Some limitations to this device are observed, as well as the interest in constant reflection to ensure the necessary practical and ethical adaptations of the professionals to the new realities and needs of their users.

Keywords: Human Migration, Social Networking, Social Participation, Sociocultural Territory.

Resumo

Com o recente aumento da migração na França, pessoas em situação de vulnerabilidade social encontram-se frequentemente isoladas e com uma frágil ou inexistente rede social de suporte, notadamente, por causa dos processos administrativos de pedido de refúgio, das condições de acolhimento e da falta de

informação e oportunidade de frequentar lugares públicos. O programa PRACTS intervém junto a essa população a fim de construir redes sociais de suporte e buscar meios para sua participação social. Assim, para manter contato com as pessoas, bem como para informá-las sobre as atividades planejadas, criou-se um grupo no aplicativo de mensagem instantânea *WhatsApp*. A partir dessa experiência, formulou-se a hipótese de que esse dispositivo favorece a emergência de uma dinâmica que vai além do simples compartilhamento de informação. Busca-se compreender se e como esse aplicativo constitui um novo território e se pode ser usado como ferramenta de intervenção em terapia ocupacional social. Para tanto, analisou-se uma amostra de conversas e fotos extraídas desse grupo. A análise mostra seis tipos de mensagens, com informações que sugerem que o grupo se tornou um território compartilhado por profissionais e usuários e que pode ser usado como ferramenta de intervenção para fortalecer o sentimento de pertencimento a um coletivo e favorecer a participação social, tanto no espaço virtual como no espaço real. Apontam-se alguns limites desse dispositivo e o interesse em uma reflexão constante a fim de garantir as necessárias adaptações práticas e éticas das profissionais às novas realidades e necessidades dos usuários.

Palavras-chave: Migração Humana, Rede Social, Participação Social, Território Sociocultural.

Introduction

The issue of migration, in Europe in general and in France in particular, has become a social issue that frequently occupies public debate and the political agenda[1]. The annual reports of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA; acronym in French for *Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides*) show an increase in the number of applications for international protection: until 2013, the numbers varied annually between 20 and 60 thousand requests, but as of 2013, the number of requests increased from 66 thousand to 86 thousand in 2015, and to 133 thousand in 2019. To these figures can be added all the others modalities of legal stay in the territory as: family reunification, the stay for health treatment not available in the country of origin, for study or for work.

However, "migrants" only have in common the fact that they left their country of origin to settle in another country[2]. Except for this, all their characteristics are very heterogeneous, whatever the criteria analyzed, such as reason for migration (war, sexual or gender identity, lack of employment, study and family); mode of transport for the trip (from traveling by plane directly from the country of origin with the family to crossing

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[1] One often sees on television scenes of militants saving people trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea in rubber dinghies or the police dismantling migrant camps on the outskirts of Paris. The situation of ships with migrant not accepted in any port reappears regularly. New laws appear regularly and the 2022 French presidential campaign was very busy on this subject.

[2] People who leave their countries to live in another country are usually defined as migrants, regardless of the reason for the migration. The usual distinction in terms of refugee (forced migration) or migrant (chosen migration) is controversial (International Organization for Migration, 2019, p. 77, as cited in Doirre, 2023) and will not be used here for two main reasons. The term refugee can designate a person who has been forced to flee their country, even if they do not obtain legal refugee status. We reserve the term refugee here for people who have obtained a positive response to their asylum application. The second reason is the complexity of the situations that make people leave their countries and put their lives in danger, which makes it difficult to define the extent to which migration was chosen or forced.

the desert on foot or the Mediterranean Sea in a boat without anyone you know); mode of housing upon arrival (being housed by family members, in a government shelter or on the street). Several authors emphasize the diversity of situations, notably in terms of violence experienced in the country of origin, those that occurred during the journey to arrive in France and even those linked to the reception conditions in France (Baubet et al., 2004; D'Halluin, 2009; Jan, 2013; Chambon & Le Goff, 2016). We address here the situation of people that Chambon & Le Goff (2016) name "precarious migrants", characterized by three fundamental criteria: having migrated recently, having administrative problems to legalize their presence in the territory, and being in a situation of great precariousness in general.

The migratory route creates social vulnerability in many ways, including the fact that people experience this situation in a very individual and individualizing way. During the journey to reach France, and given the reception conditions in that country, people change places and way of life individually and very frequently. They are, thus, constantly separated from the people with whom they have eventually established a relationship. One of the great daily difficulties of the people who participate in the program in question is the fact that they do not know anyone, nor the place where they are, and that they are limited in their coming and going, even for those who speak French or English. Thus, many of them describe spending a lot of time in the bedroom (when sheltered) watching videos on their cell phones. In addition, once the refugee application has been sent to the authorities, people have little control over important aspects of their lives: where they will live, with whom, what days they can or cannot do activities, as the dates of calls for interviews and other administrative obligations can be set at any time and cannot be changed. Daily life can therefore be quite empty of meaningful activities and relationships, spaces of circulation very restricted and power over decisions relating to one's own life very limited.

These singular situations, which can be understood at the microsocial level, reflect the situation of social vulnerability (Castel, 1995) experienced by this population, as they have no economic belonging and no social support network, in a combination of factors that lead to difficulty in accessing information, housing, work, education, culture, health, public spaces, and services, resulting in little control over their daily lives.

It is in this dialectic between micro and macro social challenges that was created the program "Health PRevention and Promotion through Collective Activities in the Territories" (PRACTS, acronym in French for *PRévention et promotion de la santé par des Activités Collectivisantes sur les TerritoireS*)[3], based on social occupational therapy (Barros et al., 2002; Barros et al., 2005; Lopes & Malfitano, 2021).

The PRACTS Program

The PRACTS program was created in 2019, with the department of Seine-Saint-Denis, France, as its intervention territory[4], which comprises 40 cities with a total of

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[3] The contradiction of the name PRACTS is noted: a program guided by the theoretical-methodological references of Social Occupational Therapy (for example in its objectives, methods, definition of the population by the issue of social vulnerability and not by health problems), but which is financed by the Regional Health Agency (equivalent of the state health department), and which administratively belongs to a psychiatric hospital. It is noteworthy, however, that the program's funding source does not reflect its principles and objectives.

[4] France has four administrative spheres: national, regional, departmental, and municipal.

1,500,000 inhabitants. OFPRA's annual reports show that this department, adjacent to Paris, is one of those that has received the highest number of people requesting asylum for over ten years. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE, acronym in French for *Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques*), this department was configured as the second poorest in France in 2021.

Initially, the program had only two occupational therapists, working only one day a week each[5]. In 2021, the team was composed by three occupational therapists working part-time and, from 2022, it comprises seven occupational therapists (four part-time) in addition to the coordinator. The team works from Monday to Friday and, occasionally, at night or on weekends, depending on the activities proposed to users.

As previously described, users of the PRACTS program are people in situation of social vulnerability, mainly due to recent migration. They are mostly young men living in shelters and without family in France, in the process of applying for asylum[6], but we also find women, children, young people, adults and the elderly living in shelters or on the street, alone or with their families, in the process of applying for asylum, statutory refugees or in an irregular situation. People come from over 32 different countries, mainly from Afghanistan (97 people), Bangladesh (17 people) and Ivory Coast (16 people). Communication is done in French or English, but users help by also translating into Dari, Pashto, Arabic, Turkish and others, according to needs and possibilities. When necessary for conversations of particular content, the Program has specific funding to request a professional interpreter.

The team works in two modalities: the first, called "permanence", consists of the presence of two occupational therapists one afternoon a week in certain structures, such as shelters (two shelters for 180 isolated people each, one shelter for 50 families), or an association that proposes music workshops for the inhabitants of the city and neighboring cities, in addition to festive moments and world music shows. The team also intervenes in a device called "neighborhood house" (*maison de quartier*), which offers different workshops to residents and in association with a municipal health centre. A last type of device, called "daytime reception" (*accueil de jour*), mainly receives homeless people, migrants or not, offering coffee, a place to shower, washing machines, access to computers, etc. These permanencies and activities allow contact with users, individually or in groups, as well as with professionals from the structures that accompany them and with whom we work closely.

The second modality is the activities organized in the territory. Thus, users are put in contact with the structures and activities that already exist in the territory. There are activities like walking around the city, visits to monuments and exhibitions, dance, theater

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[5] According to the ANFE - Association Nationale Française d'Ergothérapie (2021), on January 1, 2021, there were 14,548 occupational therapists practicing in France, 87% of whom were women. The profession was officially created in 1974. Currently, there are 28 public or private education institutes in the country. The discipline of social occupational therapy does not officially exist in the curriculum, but since 2021, the occupational therapists of the PRACTS program began to teach social occupational therapy in five institutes (hourly load varying between 4 and 15 hours). In October 2020, the magazine Ergothérapies, a local journal in the field of occupational therapy, published a special issue with the title: Social and community occupational therapy. In 2022, the Union Nationale des Associations d'Etudiants en Ergothérapie (UNAEE) chose the theme of social occupational therapy for its annual meeting. Organized by the PRACTS Program and supported by ANFE, the First International Meeting of Social Occupational Therapy in France: principles, practices, teaching and research (Première rencontre internationale de l'Ergothérapie Sociale en France: principes, pratiques, enseignement et recherche) was held on August 25 and 27, 2022. Such facts demonstrate the recent growth of discussions on social occupational therapy in French territory.

[6] In 2022, there were 278 users, 56 of whom were women. Many are seen only a few times; others participate weekly in the proposed activities. The median age is 30 years (median 32).

or music shows, cinema, theater workshops, picnics, and shared meals, as well as sports activities or even preparation of classes for occupational therapy students or congresses and participation in these events.

These intervention modalities make it possible to build a relationship between professionals from different teams and users with professionals, with activities and places, with other users and with the collective. These relationships provide new life experiences for users, favor the creation of a social support network, and a collective as well as the feeling of belonging to this collective and the appropriation of a more extensive territory.

The objective of the work is based on social occupational therapy (Barros et al., 2002; Lopes & Malfitano, 2021) in the understanding that it addresses an economic and macrosocial phenomenon, migration, through microsocial actions such as building coexistence and of support networks, so that it enables "the collective perspective of apprehending the reality of population groups and the connection between the micro and macro social (...) [with] emphasis on everyday life and the promotion of spaces for coexistence" (Malfitano, 2016, p. 125).

In the midst of these activities, in order to facilitate communication with users, a *WhatsApp* group was created that was quickly used for other functions in addition to transmitting information. *WhatsApp* is the third most used social network in the world[7], one of the most used in France, and is well known to that audience specifically. Several articles show, without analyzing this procedure, the common use of *WhatsApp* by people in a recent migration situation, to keep in touch with family and friends who stayed in the country of origin (Appelt, 2021; Piccoli et al., 2019; Reveyrand-Coulon & Daure, 2020), as a trip journal, as a data collection method for research (Marmié, 2022), as a way of circulating information among members of a diaspora (Poudiougou, 2018; Steinhilper, 2019) or even for participation in funeral rituals at a distance (Kobelinsky & Le Courant, 2020).

The use of social networks has been little studied in occupational therapy. This situation has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic, with an increase in the use of digital tools by several professionals, including occupational therapists. Barreiro (2019) addresses the virtual space as an important vector of information for young people and analyzes the impact of digital influencers on the values and ways of life of young people who "follow" them through social networks. Silva et al. (2015) discuss the use of a blog in the development of social participation of young people in situations of social vulnerability. Pan et al. (2021) describe experiences of conducting workshops via *WhatsApp*, in the pandemic context, defending social protection as a category to be prioritized. The intention of this article is to present the experience of the *WhatsApp* group "The Residents" as a tool for action in social occupational therapy.

The Residents: A WhatsApp Group

At the beginning of the PRACTS program, occupational therapists did not use the telephone to communicate with users. It was in March 2020, during the first confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that the telephone began to be used to communicate with people, who were all confined to their rooms. The occupational therapist called or

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[7] Statista (2023).

sent messages to users who had requested or accepted this proposal. For some of them, this was their only human contact for the week. Distance activities were proposed, through writing, drawing, audio (Marques & Morestin, 2020).

In October 2020, one of our partner institutions created The Residents *WhatsApp* group to transmit information to participants about music workshops. Since then, the habit of sending messages to this group in French and English, in writing and audio, has been created. Sometimes messages were translated into other languages (Arabic, Pashto, Dari) by the users themselves. Photos or emojis were also used so that everyone could express themselves and understand the content of the messages, regardless of their level of French or knowledge of writing.

The participation of users in the *WhatsApp* group The Residents was not automatic; on the contrary, it was necessary to use different strategies to mobilize this participation, just as an important work of mobilization was necessary for face-to-face participation in the activities. Thus, in the beginning, the messages came mainly from the professionals: from PRACTS, from partner institutions or from the musicians who organized the workshops. Although most of the messages had the objective of informing or reminding the schedules of the workshops or events, they were also a way of evoking, in the virtual space, the presence of the users in the physical space. The occupational therapist also sent YouTube video links, to be present to the users, as a virtual permanence, but also to create a dynamic in the group, to provoke the reaction of the users: send another song, a comment, an emoji, in return, seeking to produce regular interactions in the group[8]. Gradually, users began to respond and even initiate message exchanges.

Since then, the group has evolved. Today, it is made up of around 55 users of the PRACTS program, including those who do not participate in the music workshops, and the subjects dealt with relate to all PRACTS activities. After discussion between users, professionals and partners, the group was called The Residents. This name is a double reference to the artistic residency of the workshop participants in this association and to the fact that they seek to become legally resident in France. In this process of choosing participants and naming the group, acknowledgment and belonging to a collective were favored. The importance of this act is recognized by Ghliss & Jahjah (2019, p. 41, free translation): "Once the participants have been selected, it is necessary to choose a name for the group. Naming the group means giving it an identity that allows it to be distinguished from other created groups".

Currently, several WhatsApp groups are used by PRACTS, one of them being, for example, only for professionals and interns and others of more or less ephemeral duration for specific activities (theater group, swimming pool group, etc.). In addition, WhatsApp is used for conversations only between two people, for example, a professional and a user.

Path of Experience

In order to analyze The Residents group materials, two conversation periods were printed and analyzed, each lasting two months: the first from 10/31/2021 to 01/07/2022 and the second from 05/08/2022 to 07/08/2022. The choice of these periods aims to vary the people present in the group, as well as the times of the year that supposedly trigger

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[8] Ghliss et Jahjah (2019) discuss the ability a user needs to start a conversation or elicit a reaction from other users in a WhatsApp group.

interactions between participants: seasons, parties such as Christmas and New Year, holidays or events held by the group itself. Figure 1 illustrates the type of material.
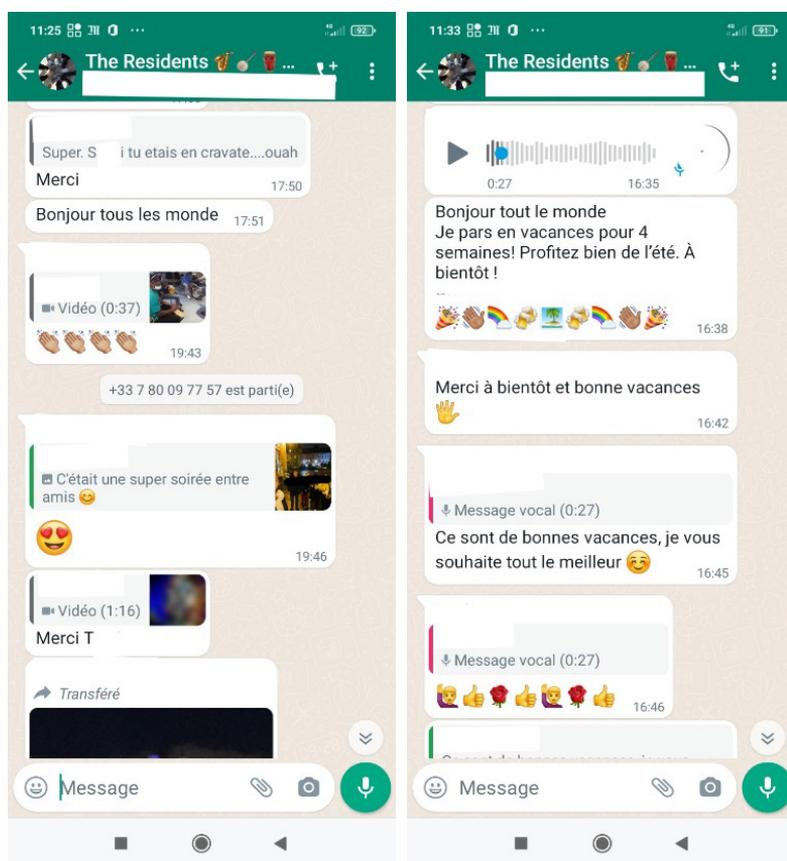

Figure 1. Screenshot of The Residents *WhatsApp* group illustrating different forms of communication[9].

From the reading of this material, categories emerged grouping a coherent set of messages allowing to describe and analyze the meaning of these messages and their use by the different participants, according to the methodology of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Then, the number of messages belonging to each category were counted. The different messages or photos sent by the same person on the same subject were considered as a single occurrence. Six categories were obtained and named in order to be understandable and synthetic: "simple reactions", "sharing an experience", "interpersonal relationships", "transmission of information", "expression of feelings" and "collective notion", in decreasing order of the number of occurrences.

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[9] Translation of Figure 1:

"- You were wearing a tie… wow!

- Thanks! Good morning everybody.

- Thank you, T.

- Good morning everybody. I'm going on vacation for four weeks! Enjoy the summer. See you later!

- Thank you, see you later and happy holidays.

- Happy holidays, I wish you all the best."

Results

The "simple reactions" category is the one that appears most frequently, with 230 occurrences. It is characterized by a non-specific reaction to a message in the conversation, which can take the form of a thumb emoji or an "ok", for example, as shown in Figure 1. Simple reactions represent a user's participation in the conversation without seeking an answer or attempting to continue it. Furthermore, they do not fall into any of the following categories.

The second category, with 169 occurrences, is "sharing an experience", which is presented in the form of emojis, written messages, audios, photos or videos, allowing the user to share with the group an activity that he performs in his daily life and that has meaning for him: visits to tourist places, parties, meals, exhibitions, professional and health situations, etc., carried out with or without other members of the group. Figure 2 exemplifies this category, where a user sends a photo of the dish he prepared and, in the second photo, he is in his room with his friends, who are also part of this *WhatsApp* group, getting ready to taste it. It is important to note that the user is illiterate and does not speak any language other than Dari.

Figura 2. Screenshot of The Residents WhatsApp group illustrating the "sharing an experiences" category.

Then comes the category "interpersonal relationships", with 133 occurrences. They are messages between two or more people around a common subject. Note the presence of the names of other users or specific answers to a question. These messages are mainly exchanged between a professional and a user. Figure 1 shows a professional indicating that she would go on vacation and the reaction of users wishing her a good vacation. Or in the example below:

A: If you can't come, that's okay. Just let us know 😉. You are always welcome.

B: No, I just want to say that I have a hard time singing.

A: Oh, okay! But of course you sing well!

This interpersonal message exchange, even if initiated by a professional, allows the rest of the group to see that this virtual space is a place where this type of interaction is possible. Thus, professionals, being aware of this aspect, can choose to request or respond to participants in the *WhatsApp* group and not in individual conversation, with the aim of evoking the appearance of these relationships. It is also possible to find messages of this category only among users, but this did not appear in the analyzed messages.

The category "transmission of information" appears 93 times. It consists of messages related to the organization of activities, such as content, time, and location: "We are organizing a lunch before [the show]! We meet at 12:30/13:00 in the same place as the workshops". This type of message is mostly sent by professionals. They appear much less than expected, considering that the group was initially created to transmit information. Thus, it was expected that they would represent a larger proportion of the messages.

The category "expression of feelings", with 36 occurrences, is defined by the expression of experienced feelings. Participants tell the group what they thought of an activity or how they felt about it: "it was great!" or as in Figure 1, "It was a super night with friends!".

With 30 occurrences, the messages classified as "collective notion" are addressed to the group that is recognized as such. Participants express recognition of the existence of the collective in the virtual or in-person group. In the example above, "It was a great night with friends", a user's reaction to a photo showing that users and professionals went to a concert indicates at the same time the expression of feelings ("It was a great night"), as indicated above, and the part "between friends" shows the reference to the collective and a form of belonging to it. In effect, the user indicates that, for him, the people present with him at the event were friends. It is also frequently observed the use of the word "family" in messages of this category, for example: "Thank you, thank you to all the family. I love you so much <3 <3 […] long live the family!", indicating that the user considers himself part of the virtual group. The Table 1 below shows all the categories, the number of occurences and the exemples for each one:

Table 1. Message categories in the *WhatsApp group The Residents*.

Categories	Occurrences	Examples
Simple reaction	230	Okay
Sharing an experience	169	Photograph sent in Figure 2.
Interpersonal relations	133	A: If you can't come, that's okay. Just let us know 😉. You are always welcome.
		B: No, I just want to say that I have a hard time singing.
		A: Oh, okay! But of course you sing well!
Transmission of information	93	We organized a pre-show lunch! We meet at 12:30/13:00 at the same place as the workshops: 4 avenue de la division Leclerc à Fort d'Aubervilliers
Expression of feelings	36	"It was great!", "I love you so much", "It was a super night with friends"
Notion of collectiveness	30	Thank you, thank you to the whole family! I love you so much <3<3 (…) long live the family!

Discussion

The analysis of the use of The Residents *WhatsApp* group through the previously described categories confirms that it is not just a way of transmitting information, and that it can be used, for example, to express feelings or share experiences. These other categories of messages seem to indicate that the *WhatsApp* group is, above all, a tool for creating strategies aimed at promoting different forms of participation both in the virtual and physical space. However, to what extent can participation in a virtual group be considered a form of social participation?

In line with a previously mentioned study (Silva et al., 2015), the virtual space can be considered an intervention resource in social occupational therapy, as it favors collective experiences, the constitution and strengthening of social support networks and reflections on roles and identities, thus enhancing possibilities for social participation. For example, the most subtle expression of a form of participation in the group, which is the "simple reaction", already represents a way of taking part, which is the definition of participation according to the dictionary Robert (2007, p. 1815): "action of taking part directly or indirectly in something".

More subtly than the simple reaction, some people participate in the group… without participating. They consult the group but do not post anything; follow the PRACTS activities through The Residents *WhatsApp* group without physically coming to the proposed activities and without reacting to the posts, but we know that they follow the group, as they are well informed of what we do and, when we meet them physically, they tell us that they have seen such photo or video, or that they know such a person from group photos and videos.

This idea of participation only by reading the content of the *WhatsApp* group The Residents explains a possible contradiction of the demonstration, as this would be almost the opposite of the social participation that is expected to be promoted. It cannot be denied that, for some people, the fact of consulting the group is already a form of engagement in it, as others have not yet been able to mobilize even for this type of participation. But if we generalize this idea, it can be imagined by analogy that, for example, the simple fact of watching television is a form of social participation, insofar as one has information about what is happening in the world, and this action of watching television and seeking information could indicate the feeling of belonging to society. This is not the idea defended here. The social participation to which he refers is that which promotes changes in people's daily lives and in their relationships with others. Thus, if the fact of watching television allows you to discuss what you saw with other people, participate in debates, write, call other people, meet them to talk about what you saw on television, then television can be considered not a form of social participation, but a tool that can enable some level of social participation. Thus, it can be considered that it is the link between virtual and real space that can make television, *WhatsApp*, blog or social networks a tool of technical action, with the purpose, even if distant, of social participation.

Gonçalves & Malfitano (2020) discuss social participation, also based on social occupational therapy, of young residents of Rio de Janeiro's favelas. As the sense of social participation is distant in that reality, they view the expansion of mobility as a previous stage objectified through actions in social occupational therapy. A parallel

can be drawn with the actions of PRACTS and point out that the creation of spaces for coexistence, in person and virtual, are stages with a view to social participation, and social occupational therapy offers theoretical resources (in the macro-social understanding of this reality) and methodological (of professional action, as discussed by Lopes et al., 2021) for this achievement.

But after all, what is it about when we talk about social participation? According to Silva & Oliver (2019), the notion of social participation has very different definitions, which can lead to misunderstandings. It is defined as "the involvement of subjects in social groups and/or in public and community spaces to transform daily life and living conditions" (p.859), and this definition can be completed by "access and involvement in activities of the everyday life and citizenship, such as study, work, leisure and cultural activities, political activities, among others; as well as the establishment of social relationships, whether within the family, friends or affective relationships." (Ferreira & Oliver, 2018, p.746). It is therefore possible to focus here on three aspects found in the study of the *WhatsApp* group The Residents: access to activities, the transformation of everyday life and the establishment of social relationships.

First of all, The Residents *WhatsApp* group facilitates access to activities that were previously inaccessible to its participants thanks to the sending of messages of the "transmission of information" type. Such messages, sent in a shared virtual space, constitute a facilitating step in the engagement of group members in activities in the physical space. A set of strategies was developed so that the information was effective: messages are sent in French and English, written and audio, with a map to get to the place and photos of the place and landmarks, video or other information about the place or event. However, although they are characterized as essential messages, of access to information, they are not enough to build the social participation of users.

Thus, in a preponderant and unexpected way, messages such as "sharing an experience" are found, through which the participants exchange messages related to their daily lives. These messages allow them to show other members of the group what you do and, thus, exist in the group, creating meanings and belonging. The reasons for this sharing can be diverse, but they allow "building a common identity and history" (O'Hara et al., 2014, p. 1140). The occupational therapists are also attentive to the regular sending, by the professionals or if possible, by the users present, of photos and videos of the activities carried out with the collective in the physical space so that all members of the *WhatsApp* group The Residents can take part directly or indirectly from these activities. Thus, the hypothesis is formulated that viewing photos, videos and other messages could facilitate future participation in concrete activities. The desire to participate and concrete participation could, therefore, indicate a transformation in people's daily lives, as they begin to frequent new places, circulate in other spaces, meet other people, and establish new relationships, experiencing new emotions or reliving lost emotions, building new social roles or recovering lost social roles, as one user says:

> *The memory I will keep forever is that thanks to this activity, I went to Villette for the first time. And the most beautiful memory for me is that I went to the cinema*

for the first time in my life, which I had never done in my country, because I didn't have the means to do so, and the most beautiful thing was being outdoors. I will never forget this film (message sent to comment on a photo and prepare a lesson, outside the messages analyzed here).

It refers to an open-air film festival, which is free and takes place every year between July and August. It is hoped that he can continue to attend the festival for years to come.

In the light of social occupational therapy, it is thus observed that the creation of spaces for coexistence allows for new experiences and access, such as cinematographic art, which can create microsocial meanings in a unknown place and not limiting himself to places and activities related to the migrant condition. It is in the composition of the macrosocial understanding and in the microsocial action that the work is woven.

Messages related to the categories "expression of feelings", "notion of the collective" and "mobilization of solidarity" occurred more occasionally. However, the presence of these types of messages informs about the role of this group in establishing affective relationships between its members. O'Hara et al. (2014) indicate that the virtual exchange space can favor the maintenance of bonds between people from the same family group or friends, especially among young adults.

The PRACTS occupational therapists work with the hypothesis that when people see themselves in the photos or when users who are not present at the activities see that people in the group had fun together, then, even if they are absent, this shared image of a "us" can contribute to reinforce the feeling of belonging to the collective. This is yet another reason why professionals post photos and videos. In addition to eliciting user participation by sending messages, at least of the "simple reaction" type, these posts can create this "we" effect.

The use of the word "family", as it appears in the category "notion of the collective", was discussed with several users on different occasions. And, each time, they explain this idea of belonging, of feeling part of a group, of knowing that they are expected and wanted to participate in activities, of being recognized by the group when they arrive. For example, one user explained to the students of the undergraduate occupational therapy course, during a class he was teaching with us, that he felt very lonely before participating in the PRACTS activities, and that was terrible, but now, even when he is alone, he does not feel bad, because he feels that he belongs to something.

Not being present alongside users when they consult The Residents WhatsApp group, it is not easy to assess the effect of its use. It would be necessary to integrate interviews into these analyzes in order to have more elements in this regard. However, the messages analyzed here, as well as the users' reports to the team, offer evidence of collective construction for belonging and sharing. For example, when an absent user comments on a photo sent in the group saying: "too bad I couldn't be with you"; or even when someone says he was moved by images of the group even if he hardly appears in them.

It is inferred, then, that this experience has contributed to the construction of social support networks – the central objective of social occupational therapy.

Through different tools, such as the use of a WhatsApp group, situations of belonging that contribute to collectivization and social participation have been sought.

Another issue that arises is the possible preponderance of physical space over virtual space. It is known that the co-presence of users during an activity in the physical space does not guarantee the construction of relationships between them and the constitution of a collective, or of a "turf", in the terms of Magnani (1992). In fact, it is observed that people can leave the same shelter to go to the theater and return to the shelter without talking, without even identifying that they live in the same place. They can have a strong connection with the professionals and activities, even with the theater. This can be a stage of the work, but the professionals develop specific actions to mediate processes that aim to build a collective, for example: drink something together in the theater cafeteria to talk, take advantage of the journey back, on the subway, to continue to talk. Thus, both the virtual space of the group and the physical space require specific mediation by professionals who, starting from social occupational therapy, make use of different tools and technical actions to work between the macro-social dimensions of what is experienced and the daily texture of social support.

Another characteristic that has been observed is the possibility for people to change their physical territory without leaving the virtual territory of the group. Thus, some continue to send messages in the group even after having left French territory for months. In the same way that some people stop coming to activities and return periodically. This suggests, once again, a relationship between physical space and virtual space, as it seems that users can intermittently invest both in one and the other. Furthermore, those who can no longer physically participate in the real spaces can continue to participate in the virtual space.

The existing continuity between the virtual and the physical allows the circulation of the effect of the construction of social participation from one space to another. Thus, the actions carried out by occupational therapists take into account the articulation between these two types of spaces, seeking to enhance participation in one by participating in the other. The messages analyzed in the WhatsApp group The Residents show how users react in virtual space to interpellations from virtual space, but also to those from physical space, represented in virtual space by photos and videos, as illustrated in Figure 1.

However, the use of WhatsApp in the PRACTS program has some particularities and raises questions. First, contrary to the analyzes by Ghliss et Jahjah (2019), this group is not made up of people who had a previous and relatively strong personal relationship, such as a group of family or friends. When a new person joins the group, she/he does not share the common codes and history of the group, like people who have been part of the group for weeks, even if time is not the only criterion for a feeling of belonging to the collective. The *WhatsApp* group The Residents is also not public, as the blog analyzed by Silva et al. (2015). The half-private, half-public feature allows to contextualize user participation. In fact, some are or feel more belonging to the group, know more people in the group, users or professionals, and therefore feel more comfortable posting messages or reacting to others, which is a hypothesis that links participation and feeling of belonging to the collective. Others are not as comfortable sharing experiences or expressing feelings in a group with so many strangers.

Therefore, we can formulate the hypothesis that the group would be more than a place, a virtual space, but rather a territory, understood in the articulation of its spatial aspects, albeit virtual, and its relational aspects, shared codes, belonging (Magnani, 1992). In this sense, in the multiple spaces of action in social occupational therapy, the territory stands out, in the approximation to the concept of community, belonging and the possibility of solidarity supports (Bianchi & Malfitano, 2022). Once again, it deals with the principles of social occupational therapy in the configuration of an intermediary space between the most restricted private space (the home, the family) and the public.

Finally, it is also verified that the group favors social participation insofar as it contributes to the establishment, reinforcement and expansion of relationships between users and the transformation of everyday life, such as, for example: no longer staying in the room all day ; going to different places and not limiting themselves to places and activities related to the condition of "migrant"; engaging in activities that interest them and that allow them to play social roles other than that of a "migrant" (they can be a musician, friend, user of public facilities such as a swimming pool or library, teacher, professional, etc.); create, consolidate and expand support networks; discuss issues such as "migration", "racism" and "social participation". The fact of sharing daily activities by posting photos and videos allows building a common history and thus arousing a sense of belonging, which are also aspects that favor social participation.

Conclusion

The content analysis of the *WhatsApp* group The Residents indicates that it was configured as an intervention tool in social occupational therapy, favoring the social participation of users, not only in the virtual space, but also in activities in the physical space. It is explicit as a tool insofar as the professionals were able to use it with precise actions (sending invitations and posts, requesting users' opinions) in order to achieve objectives such as strengthening social support networks and creating spaces for coexistence, resulting in feelings of belonging and collectivity. The users' participation is expressed in different ways in the group – simple reactions, sharing experiences, expressing feelings, information, interpersonal relationships, the notion of collective, and even simply reading the group's content.

One of the results of this reflection was to understand the continuity between the actions carried out in the virtual space and in the physical space, and their use in the field of social occupational therapy. Considering the continuity between physical space and virtual space, the analysis shows that the *WhatsApp* group The Residents is a place of intervention, even if virtual, like the room where the music workshops take place, or the spaces used by the team in the shelters. One can even advance the idea that, more than a place, it is a territory, in the sense that in addition to being a virtual space where information can be transmitted, a network of relationships is also developed in it, with shared codes and construction of a common history and identities (O'Hara et al., 2014).

However, such microsocial action tools cannot be disjointed from the other social needs of people in a situation of migration, for example, their exercise of citizenship, the effective guarantee of their rights, which, deterritorialized, in a country with cultural

distances and of their ways of life, often have no prospect of returning to "exist" as citizens. Therefore, the feeling of belonging to a group, to a territory becomes fundamental to build some forms of social participation.

Finally, some contradictions that also make up this experience are highlighted. Contrary to a practice in physical space, the cell phone is always with its owner, whether a professional or a user. At the end of the work day or on weekends, what do professionals do with these phones that they take home, as if they potentially took all users with them? Although the PRACTS occupational therapists have a professional telephone, which must be turned off outside working hours, the fact of having it with them seems to have an effect of permanence of the work context in their private lives. They often testify to the difficulty in turning off the professional phone and not consulting it during weekends or on the way to work. Also, what about the use of WhatsApp by professionals who don't have a professional phone? How to preserve the context of private life? In our case, in the current state of reflection and experience, the interns are not part of the *WhatsApp* The Residents group, nor do they use the telephone to contact users, as they do not have a professional telephone.

In addition, some users left the group claiming a very large number of messages, which leads us to question the feeling of invasion of private space that this virtual group can generate, both among users and professionals.

Two aspects that we could not deal with in this article, but which are considered in the daily use of the *WhatsApp* group The Residents: the question of moderating the group's content and the right to the image. There was, for the time being, no need for moderation, not even for rules to be explained, with the exception of one time, when images of a political leader were posted. The user was asked to remove the content, which he did without any problems. The second aspect is, from an ethical point of view, the question of the right to an image deserves another discussion. A form for authorizing the use of the image is offered to users, but not systematically. Anyway, before posting an image in the group, the professionals verbally ask for the users' authorization.

Despite the highlighted questions and the provisional nature of the reflections shared here, one can consider the potential of using *WhatsApp* groups as a tool and intervention territory for social occupational therapy with the aim of developing actions that may favor the social participation of users.

Acknowledgements

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