

# World challenges of the academic community in the Ibero-American space: Latin American Perspective<sup>1</sup>

---

José Marques de Melo  
Universidade Metodista de São Paulo (Brazil)  
[marquesmelo@uol.com.br](mailto:marquesmelo@uol.com.br)

## Abstract

The author locates the question of citizenship in the Lusophone space within Ibero-American world, and at the same time, reflects on the crisis and changes caused by the world order imposed in the wake of the Cold War. He also proposes strategies for strengthening national/regional identities and achieving sovereign participation in world community of communication sciences.

**Keywords:** Communication. Citizenship. Globalization. Lusophony. Scholarship

Submission date: January 15th 2011

Acceptance date: February 5th 2011

---

<sup>1</sup>This text was written at the request of the organizing committee of IAMCR 2010 Braga Conference, sponsored by the University of Minho (Portugal), for the plenary session on July 21, under the theme “Communication, Lusophony and Citizenship”.

## **1. Millennium crisis**

If the twentieth century, whose term runs from the First World War to the end of Cold War, or rather, from 1914 to 1991, symbolized the “age of extremes” (Hobsbawn, 1995: 13), the “multicivilizational age” (Huntington, 1997: 18) – immunized against the enigmatic twenty-first century – has been considered with skepticism and dismay.

The “lack of world institutions capable of managing the profound changes that are underway” has fueled relinquishment of cultural “values” of people, due to the loss of “confidence in the future” (SOARES, 1998).

Its main consequence is the “depoliticization” of national societies. “At the end of the century, a large number of citizens withdrew from politics”, weakening “collective identification with their country”, except through “national sports, teams and non-political symbols”. (Hobsbawn, 1995: 558)

## **2. Globalization**

Despite the popularity of the phenomenon, the concept of globalization is still likely to provoke disputes in the intellectual environment. Ortiz (1994:7) explains that the “emergence of a global society” has not yet found legitimacy in academic thinking because “the social sciences seem to be intimidated before an object of this magnitude.”

We cannot lose sight of the role played, in this process, by communication, whose “techniques and practices implant themselves gradually over the entire planet or almost, accompanying the spread of capitalism.” (...) It is worth insisting, as Miège does (1999: 13), that “communication, of course, corresponds to a movement largely transnational, and this is why we do not hesitate (...) in considering that it participates in the trend of globalization”.

But communication does not operate in a vacuum and does not reason abstractly. It is a spatially localized phenomenon, whose dynamics depend on geo-economic or socio-cultural aspects, which are local, regional or national.

At this point, a question imposes itself: how such variables can configure themselves across the Lusophone space?

### **3. Lusophony**

Lusophony is a polysemic concept that means “geo-linguistic space” or “memory of a common past”, but also embraces ideas such as “feeling”, “culture”, “shared history”, “symbolic heritage”. Strictly speaking, it is a “complex construction” (Martins, Sousa & Cabecinhas, 2007: 309), outlining a peculiar sense, with the appropriate label: “cultural community without physical borders”. (Marques de Melo, 1995: 22)

As an inheritance of post-colonialism, the idea of Lusophony refers to two distinct spheres: the *mythical* – setting up a “discursive phenomenon of social representation with a specific social logic” (Pim & Kristensen, 2007: 312) – or *pragmatic* – “subject to practical functions and oriented towards the production of social effects.” (Martins, Sousa & Cabecinhas, 2007: 308)

One cannot deny that we are living once again that Lusitanian-tropical utopia cherished by Brazilian, Portuguese and African intellectuals, since the beginning of last century.

Such projects provided the basis for the establishment of the CPLP – the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (1989) –, which is mobilizing the political will of national states. The evaluation of the first decade of activities highlights its “incipience” and “dispersion” as a result of “different ways” and “political maturation processes” in force in each member state. (Pim & Kristensen, 2007: 319)

Anyway, the movement triggered by CPLP motivated the creation of several institutions that are strengthening the Lusophone cultural (such as, for example, Camoes Institute)

and academic fronts (such as, for example, Lusophone Federation of Communication Sciences).

Besides the eight congresses that took place during the period from 1997 to 2009 – Lisbon (1987), Aracaju (1998), Braga (1999), St. Vincent (2000), Maputo (2002), Covilhã (2004), Santiago (2006) and Lisbon (2009) – our federation has been publishing regularly since 2004 the *Anuário Internacional de Comunicação Lusófona*, an impressive repository of the academic production in communication in the five most active countries of this cultural mega-region.

#### **4. Citizenship**

Favorite children of modernity, citizenship and utopia are concepts that sprang from the same historical juncture. They are the products of “urban freedoms” that Braudel (1989, p. 297-299) identifies as the responsible for the “first [European] developmentalist outbreak”.

Those in power in emerging national states tried to curb the momentum of citizenship, just as the guardians of the doctrine in the precursor of multinational state (Catholic Church) did not hesitate to halt the revolutionary power of the press.

In this context, Paulo Freire (1966, p. 66) deplors the “Brazilian mutism”, resulting from our democratic inexperience during the colonial regime, which applies also to the African Portuguese speaking peoples.

Deprived of media supports and devoid of symbolic references which would have allowed their entrance in the Gutenberg Galaxy, these peoples were creating their own media (artisanal, artful, creative). This is the embryo of citizen media, which would gain density, but not necessarily legitimacy, after national independencies. Luiz Beltrão (1967) called these popular manifestations a “system of folkcommunication”. In fact, they are still alive to this day, coexisting dialectically as the “system of mass communication”.

This simultaneity of media systems – one, massive (hegemonic), and the other, popular (counter-hegemonic) – configures the paradox that challenges researchers in the field of communication in the Lusophone space.

## **5. Academy**

Such references to the academic world raise the question of our insertion in world community of communication sciences as a block culturally identified.

The process of formation of a world academic community in our field of knowledge only emerges in the period after Second World War, resulting in the founding of IAMCR (International Association for Media and Communication Research), in Paris, in 1957.

The Lusophone world was represented by the Brazilian Danton Jobim, who belonged to the circle of foreign researches acknowledged by Press French Institute, whose director, Fernand Terrou, became IAMCR first chairman.

However, the first international congresses reported a limited Lusophone participation, due to the escalation of dictatorships in Brazil and Portugal. This presence of researches would only be strengthened in the wake of the democratization of both countries.

Barcelona congress (1988) is an impressive mark of the Lusophone participation in IAMCR, just when Spanish became an official language, besides English and French. Little more than a dozen Brazilian investigators attended the event. The next congress – Bled (1990) – received 25 papers from Brazilian researchers (Marques de Melo, 1991), accrediting Brazil to host the next congress (Guarujá, 1992). Until that time, the Portuguese participation was residual or null, due to the recent nature of communication studies at Portuguese universities.

The world community in our field of knowledge has already gathered three times in the Lusophone space. After the congress in Guarujá, IAMCR returned to Brazil, in 2004, to

carry out the congress in Porto Alegre. Today, Braga becomes the scene of the 2010 congress.

Thus were created, under the international sphere, conducive conditions to the exchange of Lusophone researchers with their foreign counterparts interested in comparative or cooperative studies. But soon we realize that it is a very narrow bridge, slightly favoring the two-way traffic.

Having experienced “within” the community dynamics and complexity of an international congress, it was not difficult to notice the wall represented by the Anglophone hegemony within this international academic community. It is not a premeditated or ostentatious behavior, but an attitude in a sense organic, almost dissimulated.

Despite the projection of Brazil in the international academic scene, in the rankings of Guarujá, Sydney and Glasgow, as the second country with the highest volume of selected papers, the dialogue with our peers from other geographies does not flow satisfactorily. Regardless of the fact that a large share of Brazilian and Portuguese papers are submitted in English, the *lingua franca* of the academic community.

We continue to encourage the presence of Brazilian delegations on the biennial congresses of IAMCR, but realize that the space is limited, increasingly, to the researches who are also fluent in English. More than that: motivated by the issues of an agenda in tune with the dominant perspective of the world, an avant-garde that revolves around the Anglo-American orbit.

Symptomatic evidence may be found in the literature legitimized internationally, for example, in the acclaimed manual “Theory of Mass Communication”, by Dennis McQuail. The authors mentioned are exclusively Anglophones and the authors consulted are restricted to five nations from the North hemisphere that established the Western paradigm of scientific knowledge – England, Germany, France, Italy and United States (Santos, 2007) –, blatantly ignoring the contributions from the South. Thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Antonio Pasquali, Martín Barbero, Verón, Beltrán or Kaplun are omitted or excluded.

Strong evidence is the creation of a “Hispanic ghetto” in the biennial IAMCR congresses. Those responsible for programming activities segment the papers submitted in each section or working group, isolating at the end of the round those written in Spanish language. After the interval, when the groups return to the rooms where they are assembling, we see that only Spanish speaking researchers remain in the room. The others leave quietly.

## **6. Strategies**

It becomes clear, therefore, the need for more spaces where researchers who have cultural affinities can meet and talk about the progress of communication knowledge. The most interesting example is the Nordic countries. They formed NORDICOM, making use of English as a *lingua franca*.

In the Iberian case, we do not even need to use a “language-bridge”, keeping in mind that Spanish and Portuguese languages are easily understood by reading and what we call “Portunhol” (a mix of Spanish and Portuguese) works naturally as a device to communicate orally.

Stronger than the argument of the operation of the communication is the symbolic contiguity, because we live in societies that have closer economic, political and cultural relationships. Why not leverage these convergent factors to form an Ibero-American community of communication sciences?

The winds are blowing favorably, showing a number of synergistic factors.

The bicentennial celebration of national independence in the countries in America dominated by Lusitanian and Spaniards before is a propitious time to heal the wounds remaining from the colonial period. It is time to shake the dust of history, halting the sorrows of the past to cherish the joys of the future.

Latin America suffered the typical marginality of underdevelopment generated by colonial pact, while Iberian Peninsula embittered the ostracism to which the decadent empires are doomed, converted into satellites of the hegemonic powers.

This condition of mutual subordination during the twentieth century, reconnected us in a certain way. We were able to overcome historical grievances and contemporary resentments, engendering new forms of partnership.

And now that we face the imperative of economic globalization, nothing more plausible than the formation of strategic alliance to ensure our own space in the geography of the planet.

The multicultural face of the globalization process requires the union of “peoples related” to preserve “identities” to ensure the occupation of spaces in the geography of the New World. To overcome the hatreds and prejudices rooted in the past is the first step towards long-term cooperation.

Academically speaking, the correlation of forces is in favor of the formation of an Ibero-American academic community. Some evidence is glaring.

The overcoming of regional antagonisms that alienated communities in Hispanic and Lusitanian spaces allowed us, in the beginning of the new century, to establish national academic communities, as was occurring, since the middle of last century, in Venezuela, Mexico and Brazil.

Portugal is ahead, notably due to the lack of the linguistic component that persists in Spain. The fact that Portuguese language dominates the entire national territory facilitated the creation and consolidation of SOPCOM. Gathering researchers from the capital and the provinces, this new entity gained legitimacy in the process of exchange with Brazil and the African countries of Lusitanian expression. Then, it renewed the ties with neighboring Spain, promoting Iberian seminars.

The Spanish case is more complex, not only because it is a constellation of autonomous communities, where exists multi-lingualism, but because of political tension, a legacy of Civil War, that even the democratic regime was unable to bury. However, political



realism prevailed in due course, leading to the pact in Seville, when the deans of the community of communication sciences have agreed to structure the Asociación Española para la Investigación de Comunicación / AE-IC.

Therefore, the minimum conditions for the formation of an Ibero-American confederation of communication sciences are created, capitalizing on the legacy accumulated by our pioneers. The integration of European universities to the Bologna Protocol requires international cooperation with the “related countries” and with “neighbors near and far.”

As a strategy to occupy space in the world community it is essential that the academic avant-gardes master English to communicate fluently. Meanwhile, the entire community can gather to exchange knowledge in CONFIBERCOM without pretensions to hegemony of either party.

From there, we can get to a safe harbor, providing a significant presence in global geography and widely communicating the richness of our cultural diversity.

An important step was taken in Madeira Island, from 16 to 19 April, 2006, where the integration of all national and regional associations in an Ibero-American federation of communication sciences was promoted, creating synergy to defend our common interests within the world community.

Aiming to act consistently in the global arena, is being organized the First World Congress of the Ibero-American Communication, in Sao Paulo, from 3 to 6 August, 2011. This is the initiative of CONFIBERCOM, whose board recently held a meeting in Porto, in order to define strategies to academic strengthening and political action, occupying the institutional spaces that we legitimately aspire to.

All researchers from Ibero-American countries and Ibero-Americanists investigators around the world will be welcomed, particularly those interested in communicational and cultural phenomena.

## 7. References

- Andrade, M. (2002). *Globalização e identidade nacional*. Recife: Bagaço.
- Balsemão, F. P. (1996). Desordem informativa mundial. In: Ledo, Margarita, org. – *Comunicación na Periferia Atlântica*. Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, p. 30-46
- Beltrão, L. (1980). *Folkcomunicação, a comunicação dos marginalizados*. São Paulo: Cortez.
- Bolaño, C. (1999). Economia política, globalização e comunicação, In: Bolaño, César, org. – *Globalização e Regionalização das Comunicações*. São Paulo: EDUC, p. 73-96
- Braudel, F. (1989). *Gramática das Civilizações*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- Cardoso, F. and Soares, M. (1998). *O mundo em português*. Rio: Paz e Terra.
- Chacon, V. (2005). *A Grande Ibéria*. São Paulo: Edunesp.
- Chacon, V. (2002). *O futuro político da Lusofonia*. Lisboa: Verbo.
- Cervo, A. (2000). *Depois das Caravelas*. Brasília: EdUnB.
- Freyre, G. (1975). *O Brasileiro entre os outros hispanos*. Rio: José Olympio.
- Freyre, G. (1973). *Além do apenas moderno*. Rio: José Olympio.
- Freyre, G. (1971). *Novo mundo nos trópicos*. São Paulo: Nacional.
- Hachten, W. (1989). *El prisma mundial de las noticias*. Mexico: Prisma.
- Hobsbawn, E. (1995). *Era dos extremos*. São Paulo: Cia. das Letras.
- Huntington, S. (1997). *O choque de civilizações*. São Paulo: Objetiva.
- Ianni, O. (1995). *Teorias da globalização*. Rio: Civilização Brasileira.

- Marques de Melo, J. (2010). *Comunicación Multicultural en Iberoamérica*. São Paulo: Confibercom.
- Marques de Melo, J. (2009). *Entre El saber y El poder*. Sevilla: CS.
- Marques de Melo, J. (2008). *História Política das Ciências da Comunicação*. Rio: Mauad.
- Marques de Melo, J. (2003). *História do Pensamento Comunicacional*. São Paulo: Paulus.
- Marques de Melo, J., (1999). Indústria cultural lusófona, In: Bolaño, César, org. – *Globalização e Regionalização das Comunicações*. São Paulo: EDUC, p. 98-114
- Marques de Melo, J., (1995). Uma comunidade cultural sem fronteiras físicas ou tecendo a identidade cultural luso-afro-brasileira. *Comunicação & Sociedade*, 23, p. 9-24
- Marques de Melo, J. (1993). *Communication for a New World*. São Paulo: ECA-USP.
- Marques de Melo, J. (1991). *Communication and Democracy*. São Paulo: ECA-USP.
- Martins, M., Sousa, H. and Cabecinhas, R. (2007). Lusocom: estudo das políticas de comunicação e discursos no espaço lusófono, In: Ledo Andión, Margarita, org. – *Comunicación local no espazo lusófono*. Santiago de Compostela: Agacom, p. 301-310
- Mattelart, A. (2005). *Diversidade Cultural e Mundialização*. São Paulo: Parábola.
- McLuhan, M., (1972). *A galáxia de Gutenberg*. São Paulo: Nacional.
- Miége, B., (1999). A multidimensionalidade da comunicação. In: Bolaño, C. *Globalização e Regionalização das Comunicações*. São Paulo: EDUC, p. 13-28
- Ortiz, R., (1994). *Mundialização e Cultura*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- Pares i Maicas, M. (1988). *Comunicació Social i identitat cultural*. Barcelona: UAB.

Pim, J. and Kristensen, B. (2007). Comunicação Lusófona: conceitos, atores e estratégias, In: Ledo Andión, M. *Comunicación local no espazo lusófono*. Santiago de Compostela: Agacom, p. 311-336

Rocha, P. and Sousa, J. (2008). *Rumos do Jornalismo na Sociedade Digital: Brasil e Portugal*. Porto: Edições UFP.

Tremblay, G. (1996). La sociedad de la información. In: Ledo, Margarita, org. – *Comunicación na Periferia Atlântica*. Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, p.31-38