

## 50 years of Folk Communication: the Beltranian Brazilianness knocks on the gatekeepers doors in the Mc Luchan village

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### RESUMO

Panorama retrospectivo do saber folkcomunicacional acumulado durante 50 anos. Marcos gnosiológico: o artigo de Luiz Beltrão sobre o ex-voto como veículo jornalístico (1965) e o fórum mundial de Pinheiros (2015). As tendências da pesquisa nessa área atestam a maturidade da disciplina, sugerindo que a Folkcomunicação ultrapassou a condição de *Brasileirismo acadêmico* para se integrar ao acervo mundial das Ciências da Comunicação.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVES

Ciências da comunicação. Folkcomunicação. História. Genealogia. Brasil.

### ABSTRACT

Up-to-date survey of academic knowledge produced in the field of Folk Communication in the last 50 years. Academic landmarks: 1965 Luiz Beltrão's article on the *ex-voto* (handcraft objects showing parts of the human body meaning that they were cured by the action of religious agents) as a news vehicle and the 2015 world forum on Folk Communication. Research findings on this subject confirm the Maturity of the Discipline. This means that Folk Communication surpassed the condition of Academic Brazilianness in order to be integrated to the field of Communication Sciences.

### KEY-WORDS

Communication Sciences. Folk Communication. History. Genealogy. Brazil.

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<sup>1</sup>Teacher-founder of the Communication and Arts School at São Paulo University (1966) where he achieved the titles of Doctor (1973), lecturer (1983) and full professor (1987), peaking his career as the Director of the institution (1989-1993) and being honored as Emeritus Professor (2003). Since his retirement as a civil servant, he has been linked to the São Paulo Methodist University, where he is the UNESCO Communication Chairman (1993-2015). He was the winner of the 2014 Jabuty Prize – granted by the Book Brazilian Chamber to the work *História do Jornalismo* (History of Journalism). He has published over a hundred books and collections. Recent works: *Teoria e Metodologia da Comunicação* (Communication Theory and Methodology) (Paulus, 2014), *Pragmatismo Utópico* (Utopian Pragmatism) (Metodista, 2014), *Pensamento Comunicacional Uspiano: Raizes e Matrizes* (USP Communicational Thought: Roots and Matrices) (ECA, 2015).

## **Folk Communication Maturity**

Being institutionalized as an academic subject, the Folk Communication scientific community reviews its half century of research in the area. This event is part of a program which is organized every three years by the Folkcom net to celebrate its anniversary. The first event was held in Portugal, in 2014, the second in São Paulo (2015) and the next is scheduled for 2016, in Valdivia (Chile), to be chaired by Dr. Christian Aguilar (University Austral).

This expansion of the Folk Communication universe has occurred virtually, since the State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG) hosted the *Revista Internacional de Folkcomunicação (Folk Communication International Magazine)*. It was precisely the editorial quality of this journal, which was directed by Karina Woitovicz, which led the *Fundação Araucária* to fund its web version.

*The Folk communication paradigm was disregarded by apocalyptic intellectuals who praised the third world programmed modernity in the globalization process. Those stated that this field of studies had its days numbered.* Such predictions were not confirmed. On the contrary, underdevelopment became even crueler, highlighting cognitive exclusion.

Not believing in those pessimist expectations, I raised a Folk Communication remark in 2005, observing the expanding trend generated by the internet in this area of studies. I measured these indicators again in 2015, and got impressed with the progression observed throughout the decade.

The Folk Communication field showed expressive growth, around 2,5/year jumping from 1,118 references (2005) to 28,300 (2015), which raised its position six times as much as that occupied by the subject in the university space, by receiving 823 references in 2005, which were expanded to 4,820 in 2015.

But, undoubtedly, the founder of this discipline – Luiz Beltrão, was the greatest beneficiary of the Folk Communication expansion in digitalized information networks. His world projection has experienced fast growth, around 1,745 times in a decade. In 2005 he was referred 295 times on the Internet, this number was raised to 515,000 references in 2015, revealing his true academic recognition.

Compared to the colleagues of his generation, Luiz Beltrão occupies a much bigger space than that occupied by Decio Pignatari, Carlos Rizzini and Danton Jobim. It is a kind of acknowledgment that goes beyond the Folk Communication space, since Luiz Beltrão pioneer

action has affected significantly other subjects – journalism, literature, education and the communication theory – this fact explains his increasing projection in the digital space, and he is nowadays the most cited Brazilian intellectual on the Internet, regarding communication sciences.

## **Comparative History**

### **Recife, March 1965**

Founded in December 1963, the pioneer Information Sciences Institute – ICINFORM (Brazilian abbreviation) – clashed with the 1964 military coup facts, facing a troubled intellectual context. (Marques de Melo & Gobbi, 1999)

But Luiz Beltrão, being very persistent, was not beaten by the institutional crisis (Marques de Melo, 2012), offering three simultaneous events in the morning of 1965 at the Pernambuco Catholic University Campus: he organized the I Information Sciences Course and launched the magazine *Comunicações & Problemas* (Communication and Problems), in which he published his paradigmatic article “*O ex-voto como veículo jornalístico*” (“*Ex-voto as a news vehicle*”). ( Marques de Melo & Gurgel, 2014).

The institutionalization of Folk Communication as a subject has made History in the Communication Sciences scenery, generating this national entity.

### **São Paulo, March 2015**

After 50 years of the Folk Communication academic genesis, the demand for the formation of an international academic community in this cognitive area has become evident. The signals pointing to this trend have been captured and evaluated since the launch of the *Revista Internacional de Folkcomunicação* (Folk Communication International Magazine) and the creation of Folk Communication Panels in entities that have communication scientists in Latin America, in the Galician-Portuguese space and lately in the Iberian-American scenery (Castro & Marques de Melo, 2010, 2011,2012).

The adhesion of a hundred participants in the *Fórum de São Paulo* (São Paulo Forum) confirmed our cognitive aspiration, already expressed in *Maia* (Portugal, 2014), advancing

significantly in equating demands, however, some issues remain, which justifies the next Forum in Chile.

### **Valdivia, 2016**

The ambitious target of the 2016 Valdivia Forum is to answer questions such as: How was the discipline structured? What is the object of this discipline? What is researched in the area? Which methods are employed in this research? Why has the accumulated knowledge been transformed into teaching programs? When did the academic community articulation start? Where is this field of studies going? What results from the intermediation between erudite, massive and popular? Who is in love with and who is afraid of Folk Communication? Who monitors the Folk Communicational activism? Who legitimates cultural crossbreeding? Who empowers the popularization of knowledge? Who praises digital hybridization? Where? When? How? Why?

### **Conceptual Metamorphosis**

Despite preserving its condition of a socio-cultural process, situated on the border of Communication and Folklore, Folk Communication has tuned its conceptualization in time and space, reflecting naturally the tensions inherent in this kind of cognitive relationship. Initially, Luiz Beltrão focused exclusively on the object of his research. In his seminal text (1965) he pointed out:

“It is not only through orthodox means (...) that in a country as ours, with a high number of (...) uncultured people (...) the mass communicate and the public opinion is expressed”. (Beltrão, 1965, p. 43)

In his doctorate thesis, the creator of Folk Communication broadened the investigation focus to delineate the territory to be observed, establishing the borders of a differentiated methodology, able to configure a proper taxonomy to the comprehension of the facts under observation:

“The close bond between folklore and popular communication, registered throughout data collection (...) inspired the classification of this schismatic kind of news spread...” (Beltrão, 2001, p. 73)

Later on, Luiz Beltrão widened his investigation universe, establishing a field of studies which was explicitly shown in his doctorate thesis presented in 1967, but that faced difficulties to be published (1970), only circulating in its whole version after the turn of the millennium (2001). Meanwhile, he enlarged significantly the scope of this discipline to shelter the phenomena of social exclusion and ethnic-ideological marginality (1980), opening new ways for the innovation introduced after his death (1986) by a legion of followers that consolidated Folk Communication in the scenery of Communication Sciences.

In the context of conceptual metamorphosis that characterized this field, it is unthinkable to disregard or postpone the inevitable genealogical disputes. They had been partially formulated by Luiz Beltrão who encouraged the review of cultural missions originated in São Paulo or the European missions that left from São Paulo to the semi-populated regions of North and Center-West.

### **National Precursors**

The syndrome of Pioneer, which marked Gilberto Freyre's personality, motivating him to claim explicit acknowledgment of such deeds (Dalmonte, 2009; Chacon, 1993), was stimulated by Luiz Beltrão, by inviting him to deliver a lecture at the I Information Sciences National Course.

And the "*solitário de Apipucos*" (the lone of Apipucos) did not hesitate: explained authorship demand, cleverly situating Folk Communication as dependent on *Anunciologia* (term coined by Freyre who studied advertisements under the light of social history), discipline or cognitive field that he outlined in the essay *O escravo nos anúncios de jornais brasileiros do século XIX* (1963) (The slave in the XIX century Brazilian newspapers advertisement).

This cognitive precedence that he clearly registered in the preamble of the reviewed 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the book (São Paulo, Global, 2010, p. 21-23), whose title "*Anunciologia: um Brasileirismo*" (*Anunciologia: a Brazilianness*) was conceived in such a style familiar to the privilege and protectionism granted to brands and patents in the South hemisphere.

In order to prevent any doubts about the paternity of this cognitive Brazilianness, presented in a lecture given in Rio de Janeiro, in 1934, Gilberto Freyre regrets the 'little interest of the audience', compensated by the presence, in the audience, of "specialists" such

as Roquete Pinto, able to recognize its “original and pioneer contribution to the human sciences”.

Such methodological boldness justified the proud register of several other Brazilian intellectual always recognized by their European peers, as it happened with Danton Jobim, the author who developed some work “demonstrative” of the “contemporaneity” of our journalism, who praised the “Brazilian Method” of analysis of printed advertisement” (Jobim, Paris, 1957).

### **Foreign radicals**

Conversely, other intellectuals scared by the mythical “mass rebellion” ghost, argued that, cognitively constrained, the post-colonial citizenship might bear the resurrection of “cultural barbarism”. These heralds of the post Gorbachev ‘apocalypse’ still believe that the “lonely crowd” (Riesman), by catalyzing “increasing frustration” (Lerner), might blow the hegemonic power and unbalance the new/old world order.

Echoing the radical media (Downing) liturgy, persist the trends that nurture the periphery vigilance to counter hegemonic movements able to provoke ‘short-circuits’ (Cardoso) potentially feeders of episodic ‘insurrections’ or even long lasting ‘revolutions’. The “marginal” profile of such stagnant societies was subtly described by Claude-Lévy Strauss in his ground-breaking memoir *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) (The Sad Tropics).

One of the bold remarks presented by the author, rescuing his Brazilian experience, focuses on the contempt that the green-yellow (reference to the colors that represent Brazil) elites show to the architectural traditions. The destruction of the urban memory revealed an attitude of ostensive disdain to the run down public buildings, justifying their demolition with the argument that this favored modernity.

The sad tropics!

### **Scholarly indigenous populations**

Folk Communication field of studies also has origins firmly rooted in Mario de Andrade’s mission. With his interest in disclosing the popular-erudite interaction in the Brazilian Culture, this intellectual from São Paulo, travelled through the States of Pernambuco, Paraíba, Ceará, Piauí, Maranhão and Pará, collecting over 30 hours of recorded music, around 600 photographs, 25 short videos and several musical instruments.

Luiz Beltrão highlights this hypothesis by emphasizing the motivating influence that the architect Luis Sayer, a member of Andrade's campaign, represented on his decision to study the *ex-votos* as promise payers' "news" vehicles.

This cognitive rooting can also be identified in the research on folklore or popular culture carried out by the USP social scientists first generation that had their attention caught by the foreign Masters who were recruited by the São Paulo government to implement USP. (Marques de Melo, 2015); In this scenario, the names that stood out, together with the already mentioned Levy-Strauss, the French Roger Bastide, the German Emilio Willems and the North-American Donald Pierson and their students, also, Antonio Candido, Egon Schaden and Florestan Fernandes.

Maybe the most significant case was Florestan Fernandes, because he was a young man with origins in the subordinate class. Moved by the lack of knowledge of the São Paulo Folklore in the academy, Florestan started his field work in 1941, collecting data on child folklore in the social change of the city of São Paulo. Later on, he would direct his cognitive weapons to fight those 'office folklorists' who tried to censor popular culture, preventing its contact with the agents backed up by the university or the State apparatus, naming themselves the guardians of "folklore purity" (Fernandes, 1978).

This folklore can still be identified in the rich collection that Alceu Maynard Araújo gathered, edited and exhibited with the title "Folklore on TV", for over four years (1950 to 1954) in the newly inaugurated TV Tupi. According to a survey carried out by prof. Antonio de Andrade (UMESP), it was a "program about the national folklore within the broadcast programming of a TV channel since the beginning of its operations". This cognitive fortune became a reference source for later edition for the production of a wider picture of the *Brazilian Popular Culture* (São Paulo, Melhoramentos, 1973) funded by the *Instituto Nacional do Livro* (National Book Institute)

### **Institutionalization**

However, the Folk Communication field only reached academic recognition with the research on the Brazilian *ex-votos* journalistic function developed by Luiz Beltrão (1965) and the insertion of Mexican *retablitos* in the cultural fronts conceived by Jorge González (1980, 1986).

Being institutionalized as an academic subject, in the communication sciences environment, as a consequence of the unifying force developed by Luiz Beltrão, the Folk Communication reunited, half a century later, over a hundred researchers belonging to several communities of the Iberian Europe (Spain, Galicia, Portugal) and Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Equator, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) to evaluate the development of half a century of research in the area.

The São Paulo World Forum focused on the Beltranian paradigm, whose roots (Beltrão, 1960; 1964; 1965) are fixed in the North East territory, but whose matrices (Beltrão, 1967;1971; 1972; 1977; 1980) sprouted in the Central Plateau, emphasizing theoretical advances, which confirmed the Latin-American academic identity of the Folk Communication field (Benjamin, 1998).

The event naturally projected the Brazilian singularities claimed by the historical folklorists such as Renato Almeida (1957; 1969), Rossini Tavares de Lima (1978), Manuel Diégues Junior (1969), Alceu Maynard de Araújo (1973), Vicente Salles (1969) and Edison Carneiro(1936, 1950, 1974). These singularities were problematized in the methodological approaches of Florestan Fernandes (1978, 1979) or Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz (1969, 1973) and the gnosiological arguments disseminated by Vale & Queiroz (1979) and Renato Ortiz (1992), such matrices were critically assimilated by the empirical registers on the strategies of knowledge of Brazilian popular culture typical phenomena such as the carnival (Eco, Ivanov and Rector, 1984) and Christmas (Marques de Melo & Kunsch, 1998).

### **Critical Reading**

As an initiative of the UNESCO and the Social Communication Post-Graduation Program at the São Paulo Methodist University, in partnership with the Folk Communication Research Network – FOLKCOM – and the sponsorship of the Brazilian Society of Communication Interdisciplinary Studies - INTERCOM – the second Folk Communication world forum was held in the *Centro Cultural Marques de Melo* (Cultural Center Marques de Melo) on 27, 28 and 29 March, in São Paulo, to discuss the advancement of research in the area.

The event also had the strategic support of SOCICOM – Brazilian federation – and CONFIBERCOM – Communication Sciences Iberian-American Confederation, as well as three



international organizations legitimated by the national/regional community: ALAIC, AssIBERCOM and LUSOCOM.

This event, as previously mentioned, was part of a program organized by the Folkcom network every three years to celebrate the 50 years of foundation of the academic subject as projected by the Brazilian journalist Luiz Beltrão (1918-1986) in the Iberian-American space. It is not a mistake, then, to reaffirm that this itinerary of enlargement of the folk communication universe has been occurring virtually, since UEPG hosted the *Revista Internacional de Folkcomunicação* (Folk Communication International Magazine), directed by Karina Woitowicz.

### **Retrospective**

When launching the first communication scientific journal in Brazil, published by the Information Sciences Institute (ICINFORM, Brazilian abbreviation), linked to the Pernambuco Catholic University, Luiz Beltrão triggered, maybe without being aware of that, a new field of studies, later on called Folk Communication.

Circulating in the city of Recife, in March 1965, the magazine *Comunicações & Problemas* (Communication and Problems), included the article “*O Ex-Voto como Veículo Jornalístico*”, (The *ex-voto* as a news vehicle), authored by the magazine editor Luiz Beltrão, which had great repercussion in the academic community.

Stimulated by the emphatic manifestations received from intellectuals as relevant as the ethnographer Luis Câmara Cascudo and Umberto Eco, the researcher from Pernambuco proceeded with his field work, seeking empirical evidence to support theoretically his research hypothesis. Based on the “folklore dynamics” by Edison Carneiro, a Gramscian variety of “subordinate class culture” which enabled a “critical reading” of the Lazarsfeldian paradigm – “*two-step-flow-of-communication*”- Luiz Beltrão presented in 1967 his doctorate thesis to the Brasilia University, titled: Folk Communication: a study on the agents and popular means of fact information and expression of ideas”.

### **Paradox**

This new knowledge spread provoked unexpected reactions in the academic community, in such a way that the book *Communication and Folklore* (São Paulo, Melhoramentos, 1971) only published the empirical study. The theoretical reflection only

appeared at the end of the decade, when Luiz Beltrão reported the new field research carried out in the periphery of Brasilia, particularly in marginal communities formed by *candangos* (civil construction workers coming from several Brazilian regions that had lost their jobs soon after the construction of the buildings projected in the “pilot plan” conceived by the architect Oscar Niemeyer had been finished).

Such field studies were gathered in the book *Folkcomunicação, a comunicação dos marginalizados* (Folk Communication, the marginalized people’s communication) (São Paulo, Cortez, 1980), in which Luiz Beltrão demonstrated interpretive sensitiveness, reestablishing the historical background of this seminal work and more deeply analyzing the relationship between communication and civilization. He somehow incorporated the referential based on the “*teoria das brechas*” (gap theory), one of the founding matrices of the Latin-American Communication Thought. (Marques de Melo, 2007, 2014)

The Folk Communication was shown clearly in the memory of Communication Sciences Brazilian Congresses in 1979 (subordinate classes), 1980 (populism) and 1981 (counter-information).

### **Perplexity**

This fact, however, did not stop the appearance of obstacles that hampered the discipline expansion. These were based on two kinds of arguments:

- 1) Precariousness of the popular culture, identified with the symbolic referential of the poor and illiterate. It was assumed that the phenomena nurtured by underdevelopment would soon disappear, in the capitalist modernity expansion process, whose cultural industry would become hegemonic, assimilating inexorably those traditional groups;
- 2) Decline of national/regional borders. These would be automatically eliminated by the digital society, becoming obsolete or anachronistic to the cultural formation generated in the world periphery.

These predictions were not confirmed, on the contrary, underdevelopment became even crueler, emphasizing cognitive exclusion. Geographical borders, in turn, were recycled, favoring the North-South interchange, in addition to converting academic relations into deafening unilateral registers, given the source of noise cultivated.

## **Global Village**

Not believing in the pessimist expectations announced by the academic representatives situated opposite the Beltranian project of Folk Communication observation, Marques de Melo (2005) had notice an expansion trend generated by the Internet in this field of studies. In the 2015 forum opening conference he informed having measured indicators that served as a reference of that diagnosis again and had been impressed with the progression verified throughout the decade 2005-2015.

Searching on Google the key-word **Folk Communication** revealed cognitive advances of the following nature: the **field** Folk Communication showed significant growth, around 2,5/year, jumping from 1,118 references (2005) to 28,300 (2015). Such expansion in the *social field* (as Bourdieu's followers have chosen to label it), multiplied by 25 in the decade, opened ways for the development of the academic study on the phenomena within it, which raised 6 times the level occupied by the discipline in the university space, having registered 823 references in 2005 which were increased to 4,820 in 2015.

But, undoubtedly, the founder of this discipline – Luiz Beltrão, was the greatest beneficiary of the Folk Communication expansion in digitalized information networks. His world projection has experienced fast growth, around 1,745 times in a decade. In 2005 he was referred 295 times on the Internet, this number was raised to 515,000 references in 2015, revealing his true academic recognition.

It is a kind of acknowledgment that goes beyond the Folk Communication space, since Luiz Beltrão pioneer action has affected significantly other subjects – journalism, literature, education and the communication theory – this fact explains his increasing projection in the digital space, and he is nowadays the most cited Brazilian intellectual on the Internet, regarding communication sciences.

When compared to other colleagues of his generation, Luiz Beltrão occupies a space 5,35 times larger than that occupied by Decio Pignatari, 5,85 times larger than that of Carlos Rizzini and 16,70 times larger than that of Danton Jobim.

He also leaders the vanguard represented by the current generation – 1,75 times more than Muniz Sodré; 15,27 more than Antonio Holfeldt and 16,70 more than Sérgio Caparelli. In the Folk Communication field he naturally enjoys a privileged place: 1,55 positions ahead of Benjamin, 3,93 ahead of Luyten and 13,95 ahead of Trigueiro.

The preference of people who look for Folk Communication themes on the Internet has not changed much when data from 2005 and 2015 is compared.

The most cultivated themes are those that integrate the universe of contemporary formats – tattoo, *carioca* (from Rio de Janeiro) funk, *Paulista* (from São Paulo) rap, Northeastern *farró* (a local style of music), rodeos – leaving to a secondary plan the traditional genres, working chants, legend or *Cordel* (string) literature.

### **Typology**

All that point out the hypothesis that the hegemonic Folk Communication types reflect the traces of our “modern tradition” (Ortiz, 1988), determining the new face of the Brazilian Society, nowadays more influenced by the cultural currents ‘made in USA’.

The Folk Communication researchers, reunited in São Paulo, got to the conclusion that there are better conditions for the dynamic update of this discipline, as it was implicit in the *metamorphosis* mapped by Marques de Melo & Fernandes (2014), although the awareness that the computer world network has been increasing the cognitive access of marginalized groups and expanded the cultural background of the excluded groups is not generalized.

Such issues were exhaustively analyzed by the young participants in the thematic panels. Likewise, senior researchers whose experience was discussed in the methodology workshop at the end of the event undertook to send explanatory texts. These will be remembered in connection to the meeting proceedings, as professor Maria Erica, president of the Folkcom Network, stated in the last session of the 2015 forum.

Praised and stimulated by the leaders of the ALAIC, LUSOCOM and CONFIBERCOM the Folk Communication discipline achieved the credibility needed to consolidate its presence in the world scenery of communication sciences.

It was particularly significant the speech given by Francisco Sierra, current director of CIESPAL, recognizing the singularity of green and yellow (colors that represent Brazil) contributions to the Latin-American Communication Thought. Having committed to “speak Portuguese” in Quito, he was not only valuing the “Brazilian way of speaking”, but also the “Brazilian way of producing (research), reproducing (teaching) and popularizing (extension) the communication knowledge. He is an intellectual from the South of Europe inserted in the context of South America, aware of his responsibility of speaking **with** Brazilians and not **to** Brazilians.

It is worth to repeat here that basic lesson of Paulo Freire's dialogic communication: "the good educator is the one who first is reeducated with his/her pupils in order to be able to educate them effectively, without frustrating their expectations, but identified with their aspirations".

By doing so, the CIESPAL can be proud of its Latin-American identity, speaking with its interlocutors according to the cognitive universe bequeathed by Jorge Fernandez, Luiz Beltrão, Mário Kaplun, Hector Mujica, Octavio de la Suarée and many others overshadowed by the "colonized complex" which haunts our intellectual vanguards.

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