The mobilization of the 'Lusophony' concept.

The case of RTP International channels •

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Abstract

This article discusses the role Portuguese television international channels (*RTP Internacional* and *RTP África*) have played in the reconfiguration of an highly dispersed multi-continental cultural area – the Lusophone Space (Brazil[1], Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, S. Tomé and Príncipe[2], East-Timor[3]). According to some authors (e.g. Lourenço, 1993; Baptista 2000), this post-colonial reconstruct fulfils an imaginary space of imperial nostalgia so the Portuguese can fell less isolated and more visible in the world. Eventually, it could be a term to abandon. Martins believes however that Lusophony is a territory of cultural archetypes, a mythic basis which nourishes collective dreams (2004). If myth is a discursive phenomenon and if language defines reality, it might be argued that Lusophony is fundamentally an operational classification which has practical functions and it is designed to produce social effects. In this paper we will try to demonstrate that political actors, from different party affiliations, assumed that - through the daily representation of a Lusophone linguistic and cultural area, *RTP International* and *RTP África* would play a significant role in the recognition of this cultural area and would contribute to the formal constitution and further development of a Lusophone Community. Though it is still early to assess the full relevance of RTP (Portuguese public service television operator) international channels to the political process which led to the formal foundation of the Portuguese Language Countries Community (CPLP, *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*) in 1996, we are convinced that attention should be given to these international channels.

Keywords:
RTP International Channels, RTP Internacional, RTP África, International Broadcasts, Lusophony, Lusophone Cultural Area

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[1] The sheer size of Brazil makes it the most powerful member of Lusophone space. Brazil gained its independence from Portugal in 1822, and - despite close relations with Latin America and the US - it has been an important defender of the Portuguese language and the Lusophone community.

[2] Lusophone Africa comprises these five countries whose official language is Portuguese. Angola and Mozambique are the most important for their dimension, strategic localisation and potential in natural resources. Due to its enormous wealth, Angola used to be considered the jewel of the Portuguese Empire, but Mozambique has also considerable natural resources. Both countries were involved in long-standing civil wars after the decolonization process in 1975. Guinea-Bissau is a relatively small country which lies on the West coast of Africa. Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries and it has ha highly unstable political regimes. Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe are tiny islands in the Atlantic Ocean. In spite of their economic difficulties, both have political stability and a great potential for tourism. In spite of the huge differences between these African countries, they have in common a colonial past, one-party systems from their independence, in 1975, up until the early 1990's, and, of course, the Portuguese as official language. However, contrary to Brazil, other languages are widely spoken in these African countries. In Angola, the most common vernacular languages are Ovimbundo, Kimbundu, Bakongo and Chokwe while in Mozambique the most common are Ronga, Shangaan and Muchope. In Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe, most people speak Portuguese and Creole. Amongst these countries, Guinea-Bissau is the only one with a low percentage of Portuguese speakers (around 20%). Creole is also official language and it is widely spoken (Sousa, 1992: vii-viii).

[3] East-Timor became a CPLP member after its formal independence in May 2002. Being a Portuguese colony, East-Timor was invaded by Indonesia in 1974.

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Lusophony: the building up of an intricate concept

The concept of Lusophony gained intellectual and political relevance from the mid-1980's onwards. Just like Francophony and Anglophony, it might be perceived as a post-colonial concept which incorporates geographically dispersed regions sharing the same language. The concept of Lusophony takes us to the Portuguese language domain: a Lusophone is a Portuguese speaker. But, according to Léonard, beyond the purely linguistic meaning, Lusophony has at least three inter-related interpretations. Firstly, Lusophony is a geo-linguistic space, that is, a number of highly dispersed regions, countries and societies whose official and/or maternal language is Portuguese. Secondly, Lusophony is a sentiment, a memory of a common past, a partition of common culture and history. Thirdly, it is a set of political and cultural institutions attempting to develop the Portuguese language and culture in Portuguese speaking spaces and *fora* (1999: 438).

Being an ambiguous concept, Reis (1997: 23) draws one's attention to the fact that Lusophony might be perceived as Luso(Portuguese)centric notion. And, in order to clarify this complex term, he characterises Lusophony according to three main principles: inter-disciplinary, diversity and relativity. By *inter-disciplinary*, Reis means that, although Lusophony is a linguistic community, its identity and strength goes far beyond the linguistic question. Lusophony involves states and civil societies alike and it is expressed simultaneously by institutions, writers, entrepreneurs, teachers, economists, sociologists, journalists, etc. Lusophony has different, inter-disciplinary discourses. Reis' *diversity* principle might be understood in the following terms: the Lusophone space or community is diversified and should not have a Luso centre. The Portuguese-centred analysis has no room in the identification and resolution of problems in the Lusophone space. A Lusophone community has to recognise non-Portuguese cultural realities and trends such as the strong Japanese, Italian and German communities in Brazil as well as the Brazilian integration in the Latin-American market (Mercosur). Portuguese speaking African countries also have strong cultural and institutional links with Francophone and Anglophone countries. Lastly, the principle of *relativity* means that, given the enormous geographical, economic and cultural asymmetries between countries and communities within the Lusophone space, one should revise a number of general assumptions. Indeed, when the word 'community' is used, it does not necessarily mean

that its members form a homogenous group. Brazil, for example, has 150 million inhabitants whilst S. Tomé and Príncipe has a population of 132 thousand people. Portugal has a per capita income of 10.900 US dollars; in Guinea-Bissau, the per capita income is 160 US dollars per year[4]

As presented by Léonard and Reis, the concept of Lusophony goes well beyond the definition of a language-based community. The concept incorporates the notion of a cultural and political society. Inescapably, Lusophony brings also back colonial memories as, in geographical terms, at least, it is a reconstruct (from the Americas, to Africa and Asia) of former Portuguese colonies. Still, the concept of Lusophone Space or Lusophone cultural area is well entrenched in Portuguese society and it widely used by academics and by the cultural, economic and political elites.

Baptista (2002) has nevertheless strongly argued that Lusophony is a good concept to abandon because it is a notion that has 'The Lusiads[5]'' and 'Lusus' at its centre-stage. According to Baptista, despite the official rhetoric, the concept of Lusophony cannot be perceived as 'innocent'. And she quotes one of the most important contemporary Portuguese philosophers, Eduardo Lourenço: 'We cannot be neither hypocritical nor voluntarily blind: the dream of a Portuguese language community, finely or poorly dreamed, is by nature – which is above all history and mythology – a dream whose root, structure and purpose is related with the *Lusiad* amplitude' (in Baptista, 2000: 1).

For Lourenço, there are two fundamental aspects which cannot be ignored when discussing the concept of Lusophony: language and culture. In relation to language, it is fundamental to recognise the extreme diversity of the Portuguese language in the diverse countries whose official language is Portuguese. In countries such as Brazil, for example, Portuguese is the maternal language. In other countries, such as East-Timor, Angola and Mozambique, there are significant segments of the populations for whom Portuguese is an unknown foreign language. In a symbolic (here perceived as cultural) perspective, Lourenço believes that for the Portuguese people, it fulfils an imaginary space of imperial nostalgia so 'we can feel less isolated and more visible in the world, given that the imperial cycle is definitely over' (Lourenço, 1993).

According to Martins (2004), Lourenço's perception of Lusophony as an imaginary refuge or as a nostalgic sanctuary does not fully account for the comprehensiveness of the 'Lusophone dream'. Martins believes that in present-day global world the most fundamental social infrastructures are not markets or technologies but 'cosa mentale', deep social imaginings. This is why he sees

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[4] Data from http://alea.ine.pt/html/lusofonos/html/lusofonos.html (access in 15 July 2005).
[5] 'Os Lusíadas' (Lusiads) is directly connected with Lusus. Lusiads is considered the finest work in Portuguese literature. Written by Luís de Camões in the Homeric fashion and printed in 1572, this epic poem focuses on a fantastic interpretation of the Portuguese overseas discoveries. In the Lusiads, Camões presents the Portuguese people as descendent from Lusus, the progenitor of his tribe (the 'Lusiads') and founder of Lusitania, the Roman province that roughly corresponds to modern Portugal.

Lusophony as fundamentally a cultural space. 'As a cultural space, Lusophony take us to the fundamental anthropological reality, to the human indicator that is the imaginary of territorial landscapes, traditions and language' (2004: 2). In this sense, Lusophony is the territory of cultural archetypes, a mythic basis which nourishes collective dreams. Looking Lusophony as a cultural space, Martins concentrates his analysis on the mythic, symbolic and imaginary dimensions. In this sense, the Lusophone space has a mythological foundation and an unconscious basis.

Talking this understanding of culture, myth shapes history. 'It is the myth that fulfils history with concrete reality, with memory and human meaning. Understood as myth and symbolic imaginary, culture is imagined collective life and a common route (…). Is it by sharing imaginings and visions of the future that hypothesis are put in place for the choices which are to be made' (Martins, 2004: 4).

If one takes Lusophony as a memory-based construct steered by visions of the future, it becomes less pertinent as a Luso(Portuguese)-centric concept. Considering the profoundness of geographical, economic, political and social differences between countries sharing the same official language, it can be argued that there is not a single Lusophone imaginary but multiple Lusophone imaginaries. Despite the vagueness of the concept, what the Portuguese might perceive as Lusophony, will only partly coincide with what Brazilians, East-Timores, Mozambicans or Angolan, for example, identify with this notion. Lourenço states that the Lusophone imaginary is the imaginary of *plurality* and *difference* (1999, 1999: 112). The utopic unity can only make sense if grounded in the recognition of difference and in the understanding of the fragmentation of this cultural space.

Media policy and the mobilization of 'Lusophony'

Just like Bourdieu (1980), the concept of myth put forward by Martins (2004) is a discursive phenomenon, a form of social representation. As language defines reality, it expresses social di/visions which in term reinforce the concretization of divisions. With its symbolic/mythic weight, Lusophony integrates a set of words which expresses the relationship between the self and the other. It is used to convey identities, belongings and frontiers. According to Martins, Lusophony is therefore an operational/practical classification which states a given di/vision of the world. Being an operational classification, Lusophony has practical functions and it is designed to produce social effects. Lusophony is a piece in the world symbolic ordination battlefield. Lusophony expresses a given ordination which (by being said) contributes to that specific disposition of the world (Martins, 2004: 5).

Despite the numerous perceptions and representations of Lusophony, the Portuguese political elite has certainly mobilized the concept to produce effects both internally and externally. The contribution to the development of a Lusophone community (in a global but highly fragmented and unstable world) has been understood as a crucial (and simultaneously obvious) dimension of Portuguese external policy. The relevance of a multi-continental affiliation based on a common language is perceived as 'natural' given the (supposed at least) cultural and affective proximity. According to Alexandre (in Castelo, 1998: 5), the Portuguese still see themselves as having a special capability to relate with other people, particularly with those from tropical regions: unlike other European nations, they did not have racial prejudices and miscegenation was socially accepted. Considering these perceived characteristics, the Portuguese believed they had a special ability to serve as a bridge between highly diversified regions.

This Lusophone imaginary (which might be quite distinct from other Lusophone imaginaries), is not – in Lourenço's words – an identity problem but an 'hyper-identity problem' (1994a: 10). Lourenço believes that there is a national fixation with the *difference* that distinguishes (or it is perceived as distinguishing) the Portuguese from other people, nations and cultures. Though we shall not discuss the roots of such perception not the validity of this statement, there is – at least – a common understanding that Portugal has the necessary conditions to develop strong links with all Lusophone regions and, furthermore, it is also particularly capable of serving as a constructive bridge between Lusophone countries themselves. The role Portugal has played in the Lusophone world and the role it intends to continue playing in this arena corresponds, according to Lourenço, to the country's imaginary that it is bigger than its geographical frontiers (1994a: 10). Lourenço believes that the country's Messiah is his own past (1994a:10). Still, being a memory-based construct it clearly contributes to the Portuguese vision of what a Lusophone community might and/or should be in the future.

Although the political Lusophone community (CPLP - Community of Portuguese Language Countries) was constituted merely in 1996, it was preceded by a significant discursive instrument that has partly contributed to the setting up of CPLP: the Public service international Lusophone channel – *RTPInternacional*. If one goes back to Bourdier (1980) and Martins (2004), it might be argued that the operational/practical classification of Lusophony plus its daily representation in *RTPInternacional* contributed to the symbolic ordination of the Lusophone cultural area. The expression of a given classification/division of the world might have contributed to its effectiveness.

However, we do not mean that *RTPInternational* is at the centre-stage of the constitution of CPLP. Indeed, several other reasons are behind the setting up of this political community on the 17 July 1996, when the heads of state and heads of government of the Portuguese Language Countries signed, in Lisbon, the Constitutive Declaration of the *Comunidade dos Países de*

Língua Portuguesa (CPLP). Indeed, as Wise put it, from the early 1960's up until the Portuguese 1974 Revolution, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau were at war with Portugal. Twenty years after the Revolution, the wounds of the independence wars have healed and a new relationship could be built. The Marxist one-party systems which run the Portuguese-speaking African countries for two decades have given way to multi-party systems. Brazil, which accounts for more than three-quarters of the world's Portuguese speakers, wanted to 'use the CPLP to strengthen the position of the language - and its own influence - in Latin America' (in *Financial Times*, July 26 1995: 3). Obviously, at that time, Portugal also expected to assert its cultural influence that was increasingly under threat in its former colonies.

Following years of diplomatic efforts, the Lusophone space gained a formal community, that was defined as a 'privileged multi-lateral forum to deepen mutual friendship, to co-ordinate political and diplomatic strategies and to develop Cooperation amongst its members' (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, 1996, Article 1). According to CPLP's statutes, the general objectives of the community were: a) the co-ordination of political and diplomatic efforts amongst its members in the international arena in order to reinforce the presence of Lusophone countries in international fora; b) the co-operation, mainly in the economic, social, cultural, legal and scientific domains; c) the materialisation of projects regarding the promotion and diffusion of the Portuguese language (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, 1996, Article 3).

Undisputed universal principles like peace, freedom, human rights, democracy, social justice, parity amongst members were put forward as CPLP's underlying objectives. Despite initial scepticism and difficulties, and notwithstanding its infancy, it is possible to identify growing governmental commitment and signs that a language community is gradually being absorbed by civil societies in CPLP countries. The media in general, and not only *RTP Internacional*, have been an awareness catalyst for Lusophone issues well before the formal constitution of the Lusophone Community. Even in periods of more tense political/diplomatic relations, the media have maintained what could be described as a minimum connection. Information, films, series, sports programmes, and *telenovelas*, faced no cultural resistance in all Lusophone countries.

Being strongly engaged in the idea of setting up a Lusophone community, the Portuguese authorities believed that an international television channel would foster its development and contribute to the visibility of both Portugal and the Portuguese language in the world. In this paper we are framing the setting up and development of *RTP Internacional* (and its ulterior sub-division in *RTP Internacional* and *RTP África*) within a wider attempt to impose a particular vision of the world in which volatile non-material dimensions such as sentiments, dreams, language and culture play a significant role. A common language and culture might also contribute to the development of economic relations but, independently from the formal constitution of CPLP, Lusophone countries already had their privileged economic partners and in some cases they

were even formally integrated in wider economic/political communities (e.g.: Portugal in the European Union, Brazil in Mercosur and Mozambique in the Commonwealth). Moreover, due to the economic underdevelopment of Lusophone countries such as Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Prince, external investments and business opportunities are extremely limited.

Discursive justifications for new media instruments

As we have just seen, the Lusophone cultural area might be understood as a construct cemented by the perceived positive traits of the Portuguese colonisation which has started nearly 600 years ago. But unlike other European colonial powers, the Portuguese decolonization only took place in the mid-1970's. The long overdue decolonization process, subsequent to independence wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, transformed the political relationship between Portuguese speaking African countries and the new democratic Portuguese authorities tense an uneasy. In this context, amongst other tools, the media were seen as having the capability of facilitating the difficult approaching between these countries. A quick look at the government programmes since the mid-1980's gives some insights about the relationship between the affirmation of Lusophony and media policy options.

In 1987, one year after the Portugal's accession to the European Union, the first majority government since the 1974 Revolution, led by Cavaco Silva, considered Brazil and Portuguese speaking African countries worthy of utmost attention. Though the concept of Lusophony was never used, the media were already perceived as being useful (though no specifications were given as to how) to the Portuguese assertion in the world. In the government's programme section concerning the media, it was discreetly argued that attention should be given to the 'necessary reinforcement of linkages between the various spaces of (…) the Portuguese presence in the world' (*Assembleia da República*, 1987, Part IV, point 4).

However, it was just four years later, that conditions were in place for a vigorous defence of the strategic relevance of an international Portuguese television channel. Confident and comfortable with its second parliamentary majority, the social democrats - still led by Cavaco Silva - affirmed in their government programme that it was an essential strategic wager the production and broadcasting of national programming for the Portuguese citizens living in foreign countries and for the Portuguese speaking African countries 'in order to strengthen cooperation links, to reinforce our universal matrix and to give added value, defend and project our language and culture in the world' (*Assembleia da República*, 1992, Part III, point 7).

In line with the previous social democrat government, but going into greater detailed, the António Guterres' socialist government (1995-1999) reaffirmed the relevance of the Portuguese media in the Lusophone context. This significance was justified in the following terms: 'The pursuit of a language policy, aiming an enhanced implementation of Portuguese in the Lusophone Space, is a key priority which is articulated with ever-increasing cooperation with the Portuguese speaking African countries. It is a major objective the improvement of media infrastructures, professional training, as well as the setting up of a wide open space for distributing Portuguese language programmes that might reinforce the affective and economic links with Africa and Brazil' (*Assembleia da República*, 1995, Part I, point 8.3, d).

To implement this objective, the government put forward specific policy measures. The government stated that it would improve coordination of RDP[6], RTP[7] and Lusa[8] international services in order to benefit from economies of scale and synergies' and it would 'introduce changes in *RTP Internacional* objectives and characteristics to guarantee plural and impartial information, to increase direct participation of the Portuguese communities, to reinforce the diffusion of Portuguese language and culture and to pay particular attention to the liaison with Portuguese speaking African countries' (*Assembleia da República*, 1995, Part I, point 8.3, d). These very same concerns regarding the media and Lusophone countries were expressed in the following government programme (second António Guterres' mandate) basically in the very same terms (see Assembleia da República, 1999, Part I). Furthermore, just like his previous government, António Guterres wanted to go further in the internationalization of Portuguese values, cultural works and national artists and, in addition to a number of cultural actions which 'might project Portugal in the world', it was also established the 'creation of a regular programme of Lusophone itinerancies' (*Assembleia da República*, 1999, Part I)

The next two short-lived centre-right governments (led by Durão Barroso and by Santana Lopes, from 2002 to 2004 and from 2004 to 2005, respectively) followed the very same line. The Lusophone space, namely Brazil, Portuguese speaking African countries and East-Timor, was at the very heart of these governments external policy and the affirmation of the Portuguese Language and culture was extremely high on the agenda (see, for instance, *Assembleia da República*, 2002, Part I, 2). At this stage, the purpose was not merely to reinforce the relationship with these countries but to 'reinforce the *privileged* relationship' with the Lusophone space (*Assembleia da República*, 2002, Part I, 2, our emphasis). In addition to these general 'Lusophony-related objectives', the Durão Barroso XV Constitutional government argued for a 'creative engagement' to develop a new dynamic within the CPLP context. This new dynamic (which would henceforward integrate the youngest independent country in the world, East-Timor)

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[6] Rádiodifusão Portuguesa (RDP) is the public service radio broadcasting company
[7] RTP is the public service television broadcasting company, at that time called 'Radiotelevisão Portuguesa'
[8] Lusa is the national news agency

would imply the approbation of the 'Lusophone citizen statute' and would serve an 'improved coordination of the Lusophone-8 in the international *fora*' (*Assembleia da República*, 2002, Part I, 2). In the media sphere, Barroso's government intended to change *RTP Internacional* and *RTP África* in order to transform these international channels in 'true instruments of national identity building, in relation to *RTP Internacional*, and of cooperation in relation to *RTP África*'. To achieve these major objectives, the government decided to review the entire content production structure which should no longer be exclusively RTP's production (*Assembleia da República*, 2002, Part III, 5).

The recently-elected (2005) socialist government, led by José Sócrates, does not deviate from previous discourses and Lusophony and international television broadcasts are once again a priority (see *Assembleia da República*, 2005). The documents we have just mentioned revealed a profound political convergence regarding the strategic political relevance of a 'coordinated Lusophone world'. It is interesting to note that since the mid-1980's all governments, independently from their parliamentary composition, gradually recognized the significance of Lusophony and the media, in general, and the international RTP channels, in particular, were perceived as crucial instruments to promote Lusophony amongst 'Lusophone citizens' and as a cultural and linguistic area which deserves world's visibility and recognition. The affirmation of Portugal in the world seems to be somehow related with what Lourenço referred as 'the country's imaginary that it is bigger than its geographical frontiers' (1994a: 10). Whatever the imaginary and/or the unconscious basis for this consensus, it seems clear that Lusophony (as a concept) and RTP's international channels (as tools) were integrant part of a consistent transversal external policy. Lusophony has clearly had a mobilizing power and *RTP International* and *RTP África* have contributed to the permanent reconstruction of these highly dispersed regions into a conceptual unit which in turn contributed to its increasing implementation and recognition.

The setting up and development of RTP international channels

Taking for granted the Portuguese special ability to serve as a bridge between highly diversified regions (see Castelo, 1998), the setting up of Portuguese language global television channels was in accordance with the role Portugal should play in the global stage. Satellite and cable developments made it technologically possible to go ahead since the 1980's. But it was just in the early 1990's, more precisely in 1992, that political conditions were in place. For symbolic reasons, the first *RTP International* broadcasting was aired on the 10th of June, a bank holiday to celebrate Portugal, Camões and the (Portuguese) Communities.

Over the very first months, *RTP Internacional* broadcasted six hours per day and it was distributed in Europe, Africa, Middle East and parts of Asia through Eutelsat 2F3 and Stationar 12. In addition to satellite dishes reception, RTP International was also distributed by cable in European areas where there was a significant concentration of Portuguese immigrant communities (Switzerland, France, Belgium and Luxemburg) (in http://rtpi.pt/hist/index.htm, 07.09.99 in Sousa, 2000). With Galaxy 3, by the end of 2002, *RTP Internacional* could be received in North and Central America and the first retransmission systems were put in place in Mozambique, Angola and Cape Verde (http://rtpi.pt/hist/hist2.htm, 07.09.99 in Sousa, 2000).

In the following years, *RTP Internacional* tried to consolidate itself. Terrestrial retransmission systems were developed in Cape Verde, S. Tomé and Prince and Guinea Bissau due to a close collaboration with existing national television stations. On January 1995, daily broadcasting time has increased to 10 hours per say and significantly on the 10th July of the very same year *RTP Internacional* became a 24 hours television channel. In 1996, with the support of five satellites (Eutelsat 2F2, Express 2, Telstar 302, Stationar 12 and Asiasat 2), *RTP Internacional* had a truly global coverage (see, inter alia, *Diário de Notícias*, 29.08.94; *Público*, 11.11.94: 21; *Público*, 20.03.95: 31; *Público*, 28.01.96: 43).

 According to a former channel's director, Afonso Rato, the *RTP Internacional* initial strategy was to make the channel available to the widest possible audience (http://rtpi.rtp.pt.gerh.htm, 07.09.99 in Sousa, 2000). More than a serious investment in specific programming for an international channel, *RTP Internacional* combined programmes from existing RTP channels. Its focus was clearly in reaching the five continents and the mythic two hundred million worldwide Portuguese speakers. In 2005, *RTP Internacional* uses a global satellites network and diversified cable and satellite redistribution digital systems[9]

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[9] **RTPInternational Global Satellite Network:**
Africa
Rede Base
Satélite INTELSAT 605 - (Digital*) - Posição Orbital 332.5º Este, Frequência 3856,5 MHz, Polarização Circular - (dir.), Transmission Rate 8349 Mbps, FEC 2/3, Symbol Rate 6261.65 - Ksymbol/s, Transponder 22/22, MPEG 2
Pacotes Digitais
PANAMSAT 4 (Digital) Distribuidor: DSTV Multichoice, África do Sul - Banda C
PANAMSAT 7 (Digital) Distribuidor: DSTV Multichoice, África do Sul - Banda Ku *SATÉLITE EUTELSAT W4* (Digital) Distribuidor: DSTV Multichoice, África do Sul - Banda Ku
America
Rede Base
Satélite PANAMSAT 9 - (Digital) - 58º Oeste - 4000 MHz Pol. Horizontal - FEC 7/8 - Transponder 16C, - Symb. Rate 27.69 - DVB/MPEG 2
Pacotes Digitais
Satélite ECHOSTAR 3 (Digital) - Distribuidor: Dish Network
Satélite G 8I (Digital) - Distribuidor: Galaxy Latin America Network
Satélite INTELSAT 709 (Digital) - Distribuidor: TECSAT
Satélite G 8I (Digital) - Distribuidor: DirecTV Network
PANAMSAT 6B (Digital) - Distribuidor: SKY NET Brasil
PANAMSAT 6B (Digital) - Distribuidor: Sky Latin America
Asia/Australia
Rede Base

RTP Internacional has a generalist programming combining the channel's own production, other RTP channels' content, and - in accordance with a protocol with private Portuguese television channels signed in 2003 – national commercial channel programmes (see *Público*, 13.01.2004, on-line access in 04.07.2005). *RTP International* programming combines news bulletins, documentaries, fiction (films, series, *telenovelas*), children programmes and sports (particularly Portuguese football).

This Portuguese language global channel was perceived a fundamental policy measure. This responsible for the Media tutelage during the two majority social democrat governments (1987-1995), Marques Mendes has said to the daily newspaper *Público* that RTP Internacional was the project in which he was most engaged: 'In Portugal people might not have a clear idea about how fundamental *RTP Internacional* is but it really is an extremely important project for the national assertion' (20.03.1995:31). Indeed, in the previous year, Marques Mendes had already stated to *África Hoje* newspaper that during his governance, its most important political action was the setting up of *RTP Internacional* because 'we are emphasizing the universalism of the Lusitan soul; we have always been an universalistic country that has opened up new worlds, with a grand inter-cultural dialogue capability' (*África Hoje*, September, 1994: 12). Being a universalistic country, the argument flows, we are able to act as a bridge between various worlds: 'Today we are confined to out frontiers, but we have a strong desire to communicate and to cooperate. Portugal can be the 'ambassador' of Lusophone countries' interests and designs in the European Union' (*África Hoje*, September, 1994: 12).

The utmost relevance attributed to this project became also clear when Marques Mendes said that *RTP Internacional* was the most important policy measure during his decade in government because '*RTP Internacional* makes possible the connection with all Portuguese speaking African countries and with the Portuguese communities around the world' (*África Hoje*, Setembro, 1994:10). This relevance might also be better understood if one takes into consideration that the social democrat majority governments undertook profound media reforms, namely the privatization of state newspapers, the opening up of the radio sector with the attribution of around three hundred radio licences and breaking up of the public service television operator (RTP) monopoly with the attribution of two national TV licences to private operators.

Satélite ASIASAT 2 - (Digital) - 100.5 Este - 4000 MHz Pol. Horizontal - Symbol Rate 28.125 Msymbols - FEC ¾
Transponder 10 B - DVB/MPEG 2
Europe Rede base
Satélite HOTBIRD 2 (analógico) - Pos. Orbital 13º Este Frequência 11.727 GHz - Polarização Vertical -
Transponder 50
Pacotes digitais
Satélite ASTRA 1 E (Digital) - 19.2 Este, 11 567.5 MHz, Vertical - Symbol Rate 22.000 symbols/s/QPSK; FEC
5/6; Standard DVB - Distribuidor: CanalSatellite Numerique
(France) - CanalSatelite Digital **(Spain)**
Source: http://www.rtp.pt/web/empresa/rtp_i.shtm# (access: 18 July 2005)

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The setting up of *RTP África* is a more recent development. In the context of the formal constitution of the Lusophone community (CPLP) in 1996, a Communications Forum took place (10-12 July 1996) in Lisbon under the patronage of RTP, RDP and Lusa. The top management of the main Lusophone media companies[10] participated in the Forum which published a Final Declaration emphasising the very unique[11] responsibility the media should to assume in order to consecrate the new Community in their respective countries, in their respective *diasporas* and in the overall global village (*Fórum da Comunicação*, 1996). Amongst numerous media initiatives (see Sousa, 2000), one stood out: the launching of *RTP África*. The then socialist media minister, Jorge Coelho, stated at the time that cooperation between Lusophone countries could only be possible and effective if media companies strengthened their relations: 'This immense community based on a common language will not be more then rhetoric unless the people is involved. In this perspective, the media have a decisive role' (*Público*, 11.06.1996: 41; *Público*, 17.07. 1996:20). For Jorge Coelho, the setting up of *RTP África* is a complement to the work already developed by *RTP International* described as 'the most important medium available to Portugal' (*Público*, 11. 07.1996:41; *Público*, 17.07.1996: 20).

Despite the announcement of *RTP África* in 1996, it was only on the 7 January 1998 that *RTP África* was established as an independent international television channel. Differently from *RTP International*, its target-audience is the 25 million inhabitants of Lusophone African countries. This 24 hours television channel has also a different distribution system: the broadcasting in received in Lusophone capitals and it is distributed by hertzien terrestrial distribution means. In Portugal, *RTP África* is distributed by cable television (http://www.rtp.pt/web/empresa/rtp_africa.shtm#, access: 18.07. 2005).

In terms of programming, *RTP África* combines RTP generalist channels programmes, its own production, programmes produced by public service televisions from Angola, Mozambique, S. Tomé and Prince, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, and – since recently – content (mainly fiction) from private Portuguese television channels Even if the programming strategies and the editorial processes are based in Lisbon RTP headquarters, it has been argued that *RTP África* is not a TV channel from Portugal to Africa but, as Jorge Coelho, put it: 'It is an interactive channel from Portugal to Africa and from Africa to Portugal. This channel has content from all countries (...). It is a channel produced on a daily basis in six different countries' (*Público*, 07.01.1998: 3).

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[10] *Televisão Popular de Angola (TPA), Rádio nacional de Angola (RNA), Agência Noticiosa de Angola (ANGOP), Radiobrás (Brasil), Rádio e TV Cultura (Brasil), TV Abril (Brasil), TV Educativa (Brasil), Televisão Nacional de Cabo Verde (TNCV), Rádio Nacional de Cabo Verde (RNCV), Agência Nacional de Cabo Verde (CaboPress), Rádio-Televisão da Guiné-Bissau (RTGB), Agência Noticiosa da Guiné-Bissau (ANG), Televisão de Moçambique (TVM), Rádio Moçambique (RM), Agência de Informação de Moçambique (AIM), Televisão de S. Tomé e Príncipe (TVS), Rádio Nacional de S. Tomé e Príncipe (RNSTP), Agência Noticiosa de S. Tomé e Príncipe (STP-Press), Rádiotelevisão Portuguesa (RTP), Rádiodifusão Portuguesa (RDP), Agência LUSA de Informação.*
[11] The Portuguese word is 'insubstituível' meaning that cannot be substituted.

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Conclusive remarks

From what we have just put forward, the relevance attributed to RTP international channels by politicians from different party affiliations is very significant indeed. From the mid-1980s up to present-day all governments have recognized that international Portuguese language television channels would somehow contribute to the development of the Lusophone community idea and eventually to the constitution of a formal political entity which became, in fact, a reality in 1996. The social democrats which from the mid-1980s to the mid 1990s have implemented the most profound reforms in the Portuguese media system since the 1974 revolution have argued that the setting up of *RTP International* was their most important media policy. In the second half of 1990's, the socialists have referred to *RTP International* as the most important Portuguese mass medium.

The profound political consensus around the setting up of *RTP Internacional* and *RTP África* deserves in our view serious attention. This incipient article will not provide conclusive explanations as to the fundamental reasons for this convergence. Nevertheless, we believe that some working hypothesis might be drawn from what has been said so far.

Going back to Lourenço (1993) it could be argued that 'Lusophony' in general and these global media in particular fulfilled an imaginary space of imperial nostalgia. The Portuguese political elite – in symphony with the general population – would feel less isolated in the world given that the imperial cycle was definitely over and that the Portuguese political weight in the European Union has been perceived as minute, despite the recent election of the former Portuguese Prime-minister, Durão Barroso, to the Presidency of the EU Commission.

Lourenço also argued that (1994a) that Portugal had an 'hyper-identity problem', a national fixation that makes the Portuguese believe that they are different from other people in the sense that they have a superlative comprehension of *difference* itself. According to Lourenço, this national perception makes the Portuguese believe they are particularly able to relate with other cultures and nations. If one follows this line of though, it might be said that the Lusophone construction - in which RTP media channels are involved – corresponds fundamentally to the country's imaginary that it is bigger than its geographical frontiers and that it can and should perform an important role in today's world (as it had performed in the past since the Discoveries.

Lourenço's sharp perspective of a post-colonial reconstruct does not however, as Martins emphasises (2004), fully account for the comprehensiveness of the Lusophone dream. The imaginary, the myth, fulfils history with concrete reality, with memory and human meaning. If one takes Lusophony merely as a Luso(Portuguese)-centric concept, it is difficult to understand different cultural perceptions of Lusophony and it is even more difficult to explain the progressive

Lusophone construct in which the setting up of a formal political Lusophone entity or the penetration of Portuguese-language information and fiction in national and trans-national media systems cannot be ignored.

Martins believes that the highly differentiated Lusophone space has a mythological foundation which, despite the plurality of Lusophone representations, sets a basis for visions of the future that incorporate, amongst other dimensions, the constitution of a supra-national political such as CPLP or as the Durão Barroso government has called it, the 'Lusophone-8'. What is particularly interesting in Martins' view regarding Lusophony, it is its 'mythic', that is, 'discursive' dimension. As a discursive phenomenon, it conveys identities, belongs and frontiers. Therefore Lusophony is essentially an operational (meaning practical) classification designed and expressed to produce social effects.

In this sense, Lusophony expresses fundamentally a linguistic and a cultural division of the world. The geographical fragmentation and the extreme economic differences between these eight countries, makes the Lusophone space irrelevant in economic terms. Thus, linguistic and cultural dynamics are mobilized to impose a competing world di/vision and to produce effects at both national and international levels.

Lusophony as a concept and CPLP as a political entity could be understood as corresponding to a specified symbolic struggle to organize of the world and RTP International channels could be interpreted as Portuguese-based transnational tools that reinforce and permanently reshape the Lusophone construct, as the Portuguese political elites perceive it. Due to the daily representation (through news and fiction) of Portuguese speaking countries, *RTP Internacional* and *RTP África* contribute to the viewer's perception of the Lusophone space and to the permanent reconstruct of a meaningful community which might in turn become increasingly visible in the world.

Basically, in this paper we have only attempted to interrogate Lusophony as a cultural area and the perceived role of international television channels in the symbolic construct in an increasingly global (an unstable) world. As the Portuguese language is the essential common element connecting these highly dispersed countries and as it has facilitated the distribution and consumption of Lusophone media products (both information and fiction), we considered that language and cultural policies policies (which has contemplated mass media and other cultural products such as books and music) should also be considered from a Political Economy perspective. We believe that a deeper understanding of the Lusophone construct in its unity and diversity will contribute to the complexification of existing theory and might in due course contribute to inform both macro-level perspectives such as globalisation, dependency and inter-dependency and micro-level national, regional and local phenomena and trends.

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