FROM THE CHILEAN LABORATORY TO WORLD-COMMUNICATION

ARMAND MATTELART'S INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY

Mariano Zarowsky

Foreword by Peter Simonson

Translated by
William Quinn & Peter Simonson

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Contents

Preface to the English Translation - Mariano Zarowsky xi

Foreword to the English Translation - Peter Simonson xii

Prologue - Héctor Schmucler xliii

Introduction
The Intellectual Journey of a Multi-faceted Man 1

Chapter One
Armand Mattelart and Latin American Communication Studies . . 18

Chapter Two
The Chilean Laboratory: Configuration of an Intellectual Disposition 36

Chapter Three
The Years of Exile: From Popular Unity to the *Unité de la Gauche* 90

Chapter Four
The Connection-World, or the Cultural Networks of the Popular International of Communication 116

Chapter Five
Between the Mitterrand (Dis)enchantment and the Institutionalization of Communication Science 142

Interlude
From the Itinerary to the Cognitive Map 167

Chapter Six
Class Analysis of Communication, or the Critique of its Political Economy 170

Chapter Seven
World-Communication: Knowledge and Power in the Web of Global Hegemony 200

Final Words 230

Bibliography 237d

INTRODUCTION

The Intellectual Journey of a Multi-faceted Man

Belgian by birth, Latin American by adoption since 1962, exiled in France after 1973, a prominent figure known for his leading role in the emergence of communication studies in Latin America, Armand Mattelart might be most popular in our intellectual milieu for having written *Para leer al Pato Donald* [*How to Read Donald Duck*] together with Ariel Dorfman. Published in Chile in 1971, in the cauldron of events in which Mattelart fervently wanted to be involved—that political, social and cultural laboratory known as the *Chilean road to socialism*—the book quickly became a bestseller and a kind of "cultural decolonization manual" for the entire continent.

As the years passed, and the dreams that it expressed and that gave it meaning as an intervention came crashing down, *How to Read Donald Duck* began to be remembered as one more shining star in the firmament of the icons of the age: a critique of mass communication and a condemnation of what was known at the time as *cultural imperialism* were just some of the issues it discussed. Detached from the specific debates in which it emerged and took part, the book began to be read in a way that projected onto its authors the stereotypical image of the politicized Latin American intellectual of the time.

Perhaps due to the scope and popularity of that book, which by now has taken on a mythical status, Armand Mattelart's image as a "founding father" of communication studies is paradoxically and symptomatically accompanied by a series of gaps or misunderstandings with respect to the depth and richness of his work, his public profile, and his intellectual journey. We refer

first of all to certain silences or misunderstandings regarding the conditions in which his theoretical and epistemological perspective emerged within the framework of the political-cultural process that took place in Chile, especially under the Popular Unity government (1970–1973); secondly, to the lack of studies of his unique position and profile after his *exile* to France within the debates on politics, culture, and communication in France during the 1970s and '80s; and finally to the lack of an overall systematic look at his thinking and his contributions, particularly his contemporary views. It is common for critical Latin American accounts to overstate certain partial, situated aspects of his work—above all the stances he took in the 1970s and matters related to his book on Disney cartoons—thus committing a sin of omission that turns a part into the whole. The paradoxical thing is that a book that set out to demythologize the most popular cartoon of the time was subjected to certain textualist and ahistorical readings and became itself a new kind of myth.

In order to problematize this *selective tradition* that has lodged itself in the discipline's collective imaginary, what we aim to do here is to map out the main coordinates of Armand Mattelart's intellectual itinerary. By tracing his journey, we will revisit issues where the history of communication studies, intellectual history and the sociology of culture all intersect.

From the Chilean Laboratory to Exile in Paris

Armand Mattelart was a young law graduate from the University of Louvain (Belgium) with an advanced degree in demography from the University of Paris when, in 1962, at the tender age of 25, he moved to Latin America to teach at the Pontifical Catholic University of Santiago de Chile. The invitation to the "expert professor," at the urging of the Jesuit priest Roger Vekemans, can be understood within the framework of the institutionalization of sociology in Latin America and the active promotion of the social sciences undertaken by certain sectors of the Catholic Church, especially the Jesuits. The secular approach to modernization processes, particularly research into the phenomena of demographic growth and birth control, had drawn the attention of the highest levels of a Catholic hierarchy. They wanted to be a player in the continent's geopolitical debate, in critical dialogue with other "modernization" projects within the social sciences and the role they took on in the context of the Alliance for Progress project, which sought to

spark development and modernization while instrumentalizing empirical US-style sociology for its purposes.[1]

A few years later, the erstwhile young demographer would become one of Latin America's main promoters and public faces of communication studies, which at that time were in the process of emerging and consolidating as an academic discipline. The crisis of the project undertaken by Eduardo Frei's Christian Democracy (1964–1970) and the impact on the intellectual world of the educational reforms implemented in Chile's universities between 1967 and 1969 (specifically, the creation at the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile of the Center for Studies of the National Reality, known by its Spanish acronym CEREN, of which Mattelart was one of the founders, together with Jacques Chonchol) precipitated a sudden change in direction in Mattelart's trajectory: a shift toward communication studies in his academic field, toward Marxism in his ideology, and toward the so-called "New Left" in his politics.

Mattelart's reading of some of the works that Eliseo Verón had published in Buenos Aires and his trip to Paris in 1969 (Chonchol had sent him to buy books and journals for CEREN) put him in contact with the latest developments of early French semiology and efforts to articulate structuralism with Marxism. With the materials he brought back from France, Mattelart participated in the first Latin American circle of readers of works by Roland Barthes and Algirdas Greimas (not yet translated into Spanish or translated only partially, in fragments) and critically appropriated structural semiology and its way of reading implicit meanings. He then tried to develop a theoretical articulation with Marxist accounts of ideology, modulating what Eliseo Verón had called *ideological analysis* of the messages of mass culture. Hand-in-hand with this theoretical advance, i.e., with the *modernizing* character of his intervention, would come certain effects that would cement Mattelart's status as a pillar of an emerging academic discipline that was then working on delimiting its object of study and developing theoretical-methodological perspectives.

The political, social and cultural laboratory known as the *democratic road to socialism* (1970–1973) took place in a context of a high level of development, institutionalization, and autonomy of the social sciences in Chile (Beigel, 2010). At the same time, cultural issues took noteworthy

[1] For more information about this moment in Mattelart's journey, a useful source is the work of Fernanda Beigel (2011) about the Jesuit academic world and the networks of international Catholic cooperation that emerged in Santiago de Chile between the late 1950s and 1973.

prominence in the country: The forces on the left proposed creating a "new culture" that would contribute to the consolidation of a socialist transition within the framework of a cultural and communicational apparatus that to a significant degree remained in the hands of the traditional classes. In this sense, the Chilean laboratory was unprecedented with respect to other twentieth-century socialist experiences: On the one hand, it attempted to create a new culture with the materials of an inherited and highly developed cultural industry (unlike what had happened in Russia, China, or Cuba, for example); on the other hand, the dominant classes tried new destabilizing counterinsurgency strategies that were more about wielding communication and information than military force. These two phenomena—the high level of development of the social sciences in Chile, and the novelty and centrality of the debate about culture and communication in the socialist transition—are key to understanding where Mattelart's reflections came from and how they contributed to new ways of thinking about communication. In the context of the radicalization of the political process, his analytical perspective, his renown, and his intellectual profile were built on a capacity for inhabiting diverse social spaces. Mattelart was a keen participant in the political-cultural debates of the Chilean left and an eager collaborator in some of its initiatives, especially in his role as advisor and researcher in the state-run Quimantú National Publishing House and, more circumspectly, his intellectual dialogue and collaboration with the leaders of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Leftist Movement, known by its Spanish acronym MIR). Mattelart quickly became a prominent intellectual spokesperson for a sector of the New Left that was exploring political, social, and cultural alternatives. Thus, in times when, in the words of Oscar Terán (1993 [1991]: 12), "Politics in the region was the source of meaning for different practices, including theory," Mattelart's intellectual intervention helped to legitimize his academic standing, while at the same time this legitimacy allowed him to procure credentials for his public intervention. In the background, the cultural hegemony was reorganizing itself and the intellectual field was being rearranged. Differently put, the tensions resulting from the cultural modernization of the previous decades were being updated—in a different political register—with respect to the new role assigned to social scientists as guides of the process of change. In this sense, the figure of Mattelart points to the existence at the time of a series of *cultural formations and intellectual networks with an international scope*, one of them linked to the work of the "Argentinian Gramscians" (Burgos, 2004). Mattelart had become familiar with them by reading the *Cuadernos Pasado y Presente*

[*Notebooks Past and Present*], circulated in Chile by a group of Cordobans (such as his collaborator Mabel Piccini and Carlos Sempat Assadourian), as well as the journal *Los Libros*, edited by Héctor Schmucler, who had contacted him at the urging of Santiago Funes to ask him to collaborate on a special edition about Chile (*Los Libros*, No. 15–16, 1971). Building on these initial contacts, Mattelart cultivated closer intellectual relations with Schmucler and, later, with the Brazilian Hugo Assman, started publishing the journal *Comunicación y Cultura* (1973–1985), with a Gramscian leaning and Latin American focus. By then, Schmucler had already become Mattelart's editor for Argentinian editions of Siglo XXI (beginning with the Argentinian edition of *How to Read Donald Duck*), which contributed to the circulation of Mattelart's work throughout Latin America and his consecration as a leading light of the discipline.

Eleven years after his arrival in Chile, in September 1973, just days after the installation of the dictatorship that overthrew Salvador Allende's government, Mattelart—who had decided to "expatriate" himself permanently in Latin America—was thrown out of the country along with his family. His experience in Chile will allow us to interpret his development and consecration as a Latin American author and the significant effects of the link between knowledge production and practical politics on his intellectual journey. Exile, meanwhile, seen as both a lived experience and also, as Edward Said (1996 [1994]) proposes, a *metaphor* for thinking about an intellectual disposition, will enable us to grasp the development of a heterodox, hard-to-classify profile that will leave a mark both on his position in the French intellectual and academic field, and on his theoretical production.[2] Being exiled paradoxically opened up the possibility for Mattelart to be received in France, based on the intellectual and political links he had forged in Chile and on the networks of solidarity with Chilean exiles that proliferated among members of the French left, full of indignation but also alert and wary to what could happen in their own country. His writing about the political-cultural "lessons" to be learned from the socialist experience shook up the French intellectual and political sector in 1973–1974 (especially in light of the scenario opened up by the unity program between the French Socialist

[2] While the metaphor of the "exiled intellectual" will prove useful for interpreting a way of undertaking intellectual work, it is worth anticipating that a *sociological* gaze (as opposed to a *metaphysical* and *normative* focus as proposed by Said) will enable us to situate Mattelart in the French intellectual field and show the specific configurations in which he became a participant and creator of a series of academic, intellectual, and political socialization networks, international in scope, which underlie his intellectual perspective and position.

Party [PSF], and the French Communist Party [PCF]) and served as Mattelart's letter of introduction to France. In this context, as a recent exile, he directed a documentary about the Chilean experience, *La Spirale* [*The Spiral*] (1976), with the collaboration of the Cuban Cinematography Institute and Chris Marker (who, like a long line of French filmmakers and intellectuals, had visited Chile and established ties with the progressive sectors). Beginning in 1974, he also wrote for publications such as *Le Monde diplomatique, Les Temps modernes,* and journals of the so-called New Left, such as *Politique Hebdo* and *Politique aujourd'hui.* Mattelart reflected on the vicissitudes of the Chilean experience and the lessons to be drawn for the French context, but also on what was then a novelty in France, which was deregulating its public media monopoly and accelerating the process of concentration, commercialization, and internationalization of cultural production. Unlike their Latin American or US colleagues, who were more familiar with these dynamics, European social scientists were having their first contacts with North American-style mass culture. At the time, Mattelart was one of the first social scientists in France to draw attention to the notion of *cultural imperialism.* In December 1974, he invited the US economist Herbert Schiller (whom he had met in Santiago de Chile) to publish an article on the topic in *Le Monde diplomatique.* Schiller, a specialist in the analysis of the links between monopoly capital and US cultural and military power, had at the time not been published in France (in fact, his books would never be translated).

While Mattelart's status as an exile opened doors for him in France, we must understand the metaphor of exile in its full dimension, and his own position in all of its ambiguity, because if we look beyond his prompt integration into the wide-ranging world of French left-wing culture, we can see that in the early years of his exile, Mattelart positioned himself as a heterodox and somewhat marginalized intellectual in an intellectual and academic world where communication studies had hardly developed beyond their semiological version, and—in a scientific field with rigid disciplinary hierarchies—enjoyed little institutional prestige next to traditional sociology or human sciences. With several published books to his name and years of experience in research and teaching, Mattelart did not secure a stable job at a French university until ten years after his arrival in the country. And when he finally did, in 1983, it was at a provincial university, in Rennes, where he worked as a professor for fourteen years. One of his texts at the time reproached researchers who grumbled about the "third-worlding of the First World" by those who were identifying new forms of cultural imperialism emerging in Western Europe, thus debunking the idea of its "ex-

ceptionality"; these reproaches provide insights into Mattelart's perception of his own stance with respect to the academic and intellectual world. His perception was not groundless: The late 1970s marked the beginning of a "cultural counterrevolution"—spearheaded by the intellectual avant-garde known as "the new philosophers"—who directed their barbs against any vestige of 1968, against all forms of revolutionary left-wing activity that persisted France, and against Marxist theory in general, which was summarily dismissed as an apology for the Soviet gulag and totalitarianism. It was a counterrevolution that cast aspersions on all theoretical and critical activity, and above all, on the figure of the intellectual.

A Cosmopolitan Intellectual in the Popular International of Communication

Since the nineteenth century, international travel and contact—grand tours, migration, exile—served to establish intense, long-lasting transnational ties among Latin American thinkers and left deep marks on the development of their intellectual profiles and the worldviews they projected onto the political and cultural scene. These international exchanges helped to forge certain types of intellectual profiles (of, say, *patriots, revolutionaries,* or *modernists; militants, experts,* or *the committed*) that were defined and worked out in particular national spaces in Latin America.[3] This fact might explain the scant attention paid in our intellectual history to the biographies and intellectual journeys of those who took the opposite route, going from the center to the periphery, and then from there, having been "Latin-Americanized," returned to the center.[4] This is clearly the experience of a small minority, but all the same it suggests a productive area for studying the social conditions for the international circulation of ideas. In this sense, Mattelart's journey represents a unique and appealing case. If on the one hand he could never shake a certain stigma as a "European" during his time in Chile (especially for his adversaries in the cultural debates), on his return to France in 1973 people looked

[3] For more on this topic, see the two-volume history of Latin American intellectuals compiled by Carlos Altamirano (2008, 2010).

[4] A precedent and exception to this tendency can be found in the study made by Jeremy Adelman (2010: 652–681) of the case of the German economist Albert Hirschman (1915–2012). The author looks at the influence that Hirschman's experience of "Latin-Americanization" in Colombia had on his intellectual journey, and the impact it had, after Hirschman left for the United States, on the theoretical positions of certain networks of US economists.

askance at the marks of "Latin-Americanization" and "cosmopolitanism," the fruits of his experience in the Andean nation, that colored his profile, his activity, and his intellectual production. Mattelart's cosmopolitanism was linked not only to his thematic focus on internationalization processes in cultural production, but also to his international connections, which had either been established directly in the "Chilean laboratory" (or as Fernanda Beigel called it, "the Santiago connection," underscoring its international character) or else drew repeatedly on this experience: directing the journal *Comunicación y Cultura* (1973–1985), which had a continental scope; his research, formation, and advisory work in socialist Mozambique (in 1978 and 1980) and in Sandinista Nicaragua (in 1986); his work as editor and compiler of anthologies in different languages, which often grew out of the time he spent in these countries; or the key role he played in organizing the International Conference on Cultural Imperialism held in Algiers in 1977. These were just some of the international connections that Mattelart helped promote.

All of these interventions bear witness to the existence at the time of networks *and spaces of multiple cross-linking*[5] at the international level, where cutting-edge knowledge was produced about social issues, but also where the possibility of a *popular international public sphere* was negotiated in which Mattelart played a leading role. He was a mentor and organizer of what we will call the *Popular International of Communication*, a space where cultural formations and institutions linked to emerging social subjects could interact.[6] We will refer of course to an intellectual profile forged in collective processes rather than to an individual quality. Mattelart, like many of his generation—although he unquestionably stood out—brought together in his life and in his intellectual practice diverse social worlds and spaces of cultural production (where politics clearly had pride of place). He also brought intellectual traditions from different national spaces (which assume, to be sure, tendencies and ways of reading universal thought traditions), especially with respect to his conception and practice of Marxism. Producing

[5] Federico Neiburg and Mariano Plotkin (2004) propose the notion of *places of multiple cross-linking* after analyzing a series of intellectual endeavors developed in Argentina. They argue that knowledge about the social sphere is produced at the intersection of diverse activity spaces.

[6] As we will see, the idea of a *popular international public sphere* assumes, by definition, the existence of a motley, unstable, hard-to-map zone—partly due to its hybridity, as it is made of reciprocal cross-pollination and borrowings involving institutions and materials from the mainstream culture—that works from subordinated positions and at the crossroads of national intellectual spaces.

an account of the many tasks he worked on simultaneously—as a university professor, researcher, editor, advisor for a wide variety of international and state bodies, and activist engaged with revolutionary experiences in different capacities—will enable us to illustrate an intellectual profile that was heterodox, multiple, and cosmopolitan. In those years Mattelart was a sort of translator, a *cultural mediator* or *go-between*, engaged in connecting heterogenous spheres of social practice and intellectual traditions as well as cultural formations from diverse national spaces.[7] His work as editor is a practically unexplored facet of his journey and, as we will see, perhaps one of the most productive examples for understanding his profile and intellectual project.

In short, if we refer to Mattelart's somewhat peripheral and marginal situation in the French intellectual and university field and point to his status as an exile as a way of referring to his decentered position, we will do so while highlighting his full participation in the paradox of his historical situation. His precarious university employment up to 1983 took place within the framework of a teaching and research system that still—in an echo of the events of May 1968—allowed for the appearance of cracks and contradictions within it, and where politicization could end up being a source of intellectual prestige. In this sense, Mattelart belonged heart and soul to a dense cultural fabric where subaltern positions (we insist on emphasizing this aspect) succeeded in braiding together cultural formations and spaces of intellectual socialization linked to the cultural world of the French left, a left that in 1981 had its historical opportunity to take power even though, as we will see, it had already been overthrown "culturally" in the previous years. The same paradoxical reading must be made of his membership in international cultural formations and intellectual exchange and socialization networks that looked to France for a wide variety of mentors and that at the global level point to the existence of a vibrant and fairly well-developed

[7] In a wide-ranging overview of his trajectory, the French cultural historian Diana Cooper-Richet refers to Mattelart as a *double man,* or more precisely, a *multiple man*. Taking the notion from the historian Christophe Charle, she states that a double man is one who finds himself at the crossroads of different national cultures and/or at the intersection of diverse spheres of social activity. In the author's eyes, it was above all Mattelart's Chilean experience, which involved contact with both cultural and social otherness, that imprinted his intellectual profile with the seal of internationalism and an insistent vocation of openness. In a setting like the French intellectual field, known for its "stubborn tradition of intellectual isolationism" (Cusset, 2005 [2003]) and its rigid boundaries between cultural and disciplinary spheres, Cooper-Richet (2008) situates Mattelart's "atypical" and marginal position and characterizes [him][?] as a cultural *go-between* or "mediator." We will take a critical look at this characterization later in this book.

popular international public sphere, albeit one that was always unfinished, patchwork, and subordinated.

Between Intellectual History and Cultural Sociology: Toward a Theoretical-Political Reading

Having traced its main lines, we now turn our attention to some brief considerations of the theoretical-epistemological coordinates that have guided the research. Rather than a theoretical problematization (although we will certainly try out certain emphases and articulations) we seek to offer an explanation of some of the assumptions from which we have constructed our object-problem.

Intellectual history has undergone a noticeable development in recent years. At the intersection of disciplines, it has been defined as a field of knowledge that set out to fill in certain gaps opened by the epistemic displacements that have taken place in the social and human sciences since the last quarter of the twentieth century. It differs from the history of ideas because intellectual history is not interested in just producing an inventory or commentary of texts; as Carlos Altamirano (2005: 10) states, what it looks at is "the work of thinking at the heart of historical experiences." The historian Roger Chartier, building bridges between intellectual history and the history of mentalities [*histoire de mentalités*], goes further in this sense by affirming that, in view of the fact that cultural space is made of multiple articulations with the whole of social life, intellectual history is about thinking the specificity of idea production both in its relation to other contemporary cultural productions and in its connections to different reference points situated in other fields of society at large. "Reading a text or deciphering a thought system," writes Chartier (2001: 42), "consists then of jointly considering these different questions that constitute the very object of intellectual history." It is thus about situating a biographical trajectory and the meanings that its interventions produce in wider contexts, inasmuch as these meanings "are not produced nor do they circulate in a social vacuum." Or put another way: "Texts have implications, and they are enmeshed in networks of problems that must be reconstituted" (Altamirano, 2005: 12).

In this way, intellectual history in its contemporary formulations rejects the classic polarizations (externalism/contextualism vs. internalism/textualism) that characterized the debates about the history of ideas over the course of its development (Sazbón, 2000). François Dosse (2007 [2003]) observes

that intellectual history strives to make works, their authors, and the context in which they emerged all speak at the same time "in a way that rejects the impoverishing alternative between an internal reading of works and an external approach that gives exclusive priority to networks of socialization" (14). Intellectual history thus seeks to give an account of works, of the ground covered and of the journeys beyond disciplinary boundaries, "to revive the entanglement of these essentially different dimensions and, therefore, to integrate intellectual life into broader social and cultural dynamics," in order to get closer, Dosse goes on, to that "meeting point between the world of ideas and the social world" (144, 152).

Posing the question of the meaning of the history of ideas thus presupposes a meticulous job of recovering its foundations, the social conditions in which it emerged, but also, as Horacio Tarcus (2007: 53) argues alluding to a definition by Juan Marichal, looking at its "historical incarnations and its biographical contexts," i.e., at the ideas but also at the *bearers* of those ideas, the subjects. In this sense, it can be productive to apply the notion of *intellectual journey* that gives direction to this research and to the story presented here. Its implications also prepare us to resist the deceiving images that would have us believe that summaries of thought are finished, closed systems, or that biographical histories consist of clear-cut periods and developmental processes that are only visible in the light of retrospective illusion. Instead we set out to "encounter what the biographical subject's present was, in its indetermination and obscurity" (Dosse, 2007 [2003]:46).

In line with these considerations, we have paid special attention to the role played by networks of intellectual production and those prime *spaces of intellectual socialization* known as *journals.* These journals, as Dosse points out, are among the essential foundations of intellectual life, elemental structures of socialization and essential observatories for analyzing both the evolution of ideas—inasmuch as they are places of intellectual ferment where political dimensions and theoretical stances converge—and the emergence of "the affective and emotional part of all collective life" (51, 55).

Now that these principles have been laid out, it is important to highlight the "frontier" character of intellectual history. Altamirano (2005: 10) prefers the denomination "field of study" over discipline or sub-discipline, and argues that, while he places this field under the heading of historiography, intellectual history "is located on the edge of this territory, and sometimes […] it falls outside the boundary and bleeds into other disciplines." Intellectual history in short takes shape at a place where the classic history of ideas comes up against the history of philosophy, the history of mentalities,

and cultural history (Dosse, 2007 [2003]: 14). This is why critics have never stopped pointing to the difficulty of demarcating the scope of this way of carving up the field, as they observe the theoretical dispersion and the pluralization of criteria for delimiting the field's objects (Altamirano, 2005: 13).[8]

For our part, we have defined our perspective as a *cross between intellectual history and the sociology of culture*,[9] not just because of the possible points in common we find between the theoretical positions that uphold the two fields of knowledge, or because of the difficulties we have already mentioned in demarcating the limits of intellectual history, but also because of the distinctive emphasis that a certain tradition of cultural sociology—and within that, the sociology of intellectuals—places when it comes to intellectual history: the inquiry into the social function of these specialized producers of worldviews that are intellectuals.

Indeed, one of the indispensable authorities, Pierre Bourdieu, offers some clues that we have drawn on to formulate our problematical field. Criticizing both the immanent analysis of intellectual works and a certain sociological deductivism, Bourdieu insisted that the study of a given work makes no sense unless it is linked to two sets of relations: first, the relations between the work and the the other works it is related to, "pursuant to the principle of intertextuality," i.e., the principle that affirms that any *text* remits the reader to multiple writings, to a network of textual relations or dialogues that produce the work in question and in which it acquires its value and meaning. The second set of relations that a work must be linked to is that of the *social space*, "within which its relevant symbolic properties are defined" (Bourdieu, 2008 [1984]: 296). And this implies situating an author's position in the objective structure of a *field* (academic, literary, intellectual, etc.) while also delimiting their functional relation with the field of power. In other words, Bourdieu (1999 [1971]) highlighted the role of intellectuals as specialized producers of worldviews, of discourses and knowledge that legitimize the social order. This last dimension is often downplayed by many of Bourdieu's followers, who dedicate themselves exclusively to scrutinizing trajectories and systems of positions in a specific field as a way of understanding its dynamics.

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[8] In this line of thinking, Martin Jay (2003 [1993]): 15–16) observes the difficulties that this multifocal approach can entail in the face of the gaze—and the hierarchical weight—of the established disciplines.

[9] I follow Fernanda Beigel's lead in the formulation of this phrase in her work on the editorial networks of José Carlos Mariátegui (Beigel, 2006b: 34).

Raymond Williams's work has many points in common with this position and constitutes an essential reference point for addressing the issue of intellectuals and the social conditions that influence the social production of ideas from a perspective that Williams (1994 [1981]) has called "cultural materialism." In his *Sociology of Culture*, he observed that the concerns of intellectuals—even in the modern, specialized sense of the word—are produced and reproduced in the whole social and cultural fabric, sometimes as "ideas and concepts, but also, in a broader sense, in the form of institutions that shape them, of signified social relations, of social and religious occurrences, of modes of work and realization" (202–203). The Marxist critic highlighted the full array of social practices as producers of knowledge and, more specifically, of processes configured from a relative distance, historically and socially produced, that joins and separates an intellectual or academic field (in the Bourdieusian terms that Williams himself cites) from the social space in a broader sense. Williams borrows a phrase from Bakhtin and Medvedev that condenses, in its precision and its metaphorical character, his conception of cultural materialism and the points it shares with the program of intellectual history as we have defined it here. Bakhtin and Medvedev maintain, "[W]orks can only enter into real contact as inseparable elements of social intercourse… It is not works that come into contact, but people, who however, come into contact through the medium of works" (in Williams, 1997 [1986]: 213). This approach, as opposed to textualism, assigns a leading role to the notion of *intertextuality* that we have been referring to. This involves, Williams insists, remembering that the route opened up by Bakhtin, Voloshinov, and Medvedev has highlighted "the specific relations through which works are made and moved."

This point sheds light on Williams's interest in *institutions* and *cultural formations* as a way to grasp the inherent materiality of cultural production and its conflictive dynamics. At the same time Williams (1994 [1981]: 28–30) insistently points out—and here we wish to underscore the focus that distinguishes Williams's conception from other ways of understanding intellectual history—the function of these social constructs in producing and reproducing *hegemony*. The Gramscian lineage of this position with its focus on the figure of the *intellectual* is a key element of our perspective. The sociology of intellectuals—within the larger field to which it belongs, the sociology of culture—is, at least since Gramsci, an indispensable element for exploring the ties between politics and culture: Intellectuals create spaces for socializing technical resources, they wield institutions for setting political-moral direction, and they produce worldviews or representations of the

social order. In the terms the Italian thinker used, their mediating function is constitutive of the processes of producing and reproducing hegemony. This leads Williams to argue, although he never fails to point out the need to consider their specificity with respect to the concrete form they take in history, that the differential functions of cultural producers—and that of intellectuals among them—can never be regarded in isolation from the conflictive dynamics surrounding the overall production and reproduction of the social order. In Williams's eyes, this is an essential point for a sociology of culture and intellectuals (Williams, 1994 [1981]: 202–212).

Finally, the attention we wish to pay to the link between politics, culture, and knowledge production calls for greater precision: What is the link that connects these dimensions of social activity? Is it a relation of exteriority (even though they may be mutually instrumentalized), or rather an immanent, productive link? And if that is the case, can we assume an immediate, spontaneous nexus among these dimensions? The *theoretical-political reading* that we are trying out here—following the formula proposed by Christine Buci-Glucksmann, not coincidentally in her classic work on Gramsci—does not supplant the theoretical work, the analysis of content, but rather addresses, precisely, the productive character of the relation between knowledge and politics. Buci-Glucksmann (1978 [1975]) saw in the way Gramsci understood this link a foundational characteristic of his epistemology. His *gnoseology of politics*, as he called it, points to the twofold link that articulates the productive character of politics in the production of knowledge with the role of "philosophy" in its superstructural vocation. [10]

In our part of the world, José Aricó went down this same path when he proposed a sort of "inversion of terms" to think about the circulation of Gramsci's thinking in Latin America. He argued that if we were dealing with a phenomenon that was not just theoretical but also political, then it was necessary to formulate a geography that would situate "in their true place as subject of research these movements, organizations or actors" who found in Gramsci "that which gave them access to theory and allowed them to measure themselves with the historical world." The "inversion of terms" with respect to the history of ideas proposed by José Aricó (2005 [1988]: 43) implied working on a reconstruction that could show—in spite of the

[10] For the author, it was Gramsci who developed a new conception of the nature of philosophy by going down the path opened by Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach but applying the analysis to its role in modern superstructures: Gramsci taught that philosophical stances have an impact on all practices and, at the same time, all practices imply effects of knowledge (Buci-Glucksmann, 1978 [1975]: 28, 427).

precautions he took [11] —"the existing connections between processes of reality and processes of elaborating theory." And these processes of reality, in Aricó's thinking, are shot through with constitutive politicity.

Finally, it may be that this approach, which aims to reflect on the complex articulation between political practice and knowledge production, has not enjoyed much popularity in the development of the social sciences in recent years. It is within this theoretical, historiographical, and epistemological debate that this book wishes to stake out a position.

Road Map

Tracing Armand Mattelart's intellectual trajectory is highly suggestive from a number of viewpoints. First of all, from the perspective of the intellectual history of studies of communication and culture in Latin America, given the prominent role Mattelart played in their emergence, consolidation, and institutionalization by framing novel problems and addressing them in an original way within the framework of the social sciences. In this sense, Mattelart's trajectory serves to highlight the dense fabric from which a field of knowledge is cut out and asserts its autonomy from other pre-existing fields. In this case, Mattelart shifted from demography and population sociology to issues related to communication, culture, and meaning-making. In opposition to any sort of romantic view of the creative genius or myth of the founding father that detaches knowledge production from the conditions in which such knowledge emerges, but also keeping a distance from abstract, generalizing contextualism that disregards any sense of mediation, here we will try to emphasize the particular conditions of emergence of this field of knowledge, inextricably linked to the Chilean political-cultural process

[11] Both Aricó and Buci-Gluksmann saw the existence of a link between political practice and knowledge production as evidence of a condition of possibility for the emergence of a provisional truth rather than a linear or spontaneous adjustment between thought and reality, between theory and political practice. Thus, Aricó understood that the oft-trumpeted "crisis of Marxism" was a constitutive dimension of its philosophy rather than a characteristic of the times: Marxist thought points to a "radical caesura in the existing connections between processes of theoretical formulation and real processes," he wrote in *Marx y América Latina* [*Marx and Latin America*]. This caesura assumes—Aricó went on (1988[1980]: 207)—that "between theory and movement there was never a linear relation and the reconversion of theory into politics represented a problematical field of contradictory resolution. If theory cannot be assumed as an actual fact, nor is it a spontaneous product of the historical process, then its relation to movement cannot be other than problematical, conflicted, ambiguous, fragmented by discontinuities and ruptures. And it could even be argued that brief indeed are the moments when theory and movement maintain a relation of full expressivity or correspondence."

and the specific dynamics of its social sciences and its cultural field. We are therefore interested in highlighting the fact that Mattelart's participation in a series of spaces of *multiple cross-linking* in the laboratory provides insight into processes by which a field of knowledge emerges as well as a novel way of approaching cultural and communication processes. Thus, from the point of view of contemporary debates in intellectual history and cultural sociology that aim to tease out the links and complex relations that established themselves on the continent in the '60s and '70s among intellectuals, culture, and politics, reconstructing Mattelart's journey in the Chilean laboratory offers an opportunity to shed light on the unique way knowledge production in his career was tied to political practice and the rise of emerging social subjects. In this sense, this book sets out to bring to the fore certain under-examined aspects of the way the politicization of the cultural and academic field made itself felt in Latin America in the '60s and '70s and the different ways alternative approaches of conceiving intellectual intervention, cultural practice, and also the production of scientific knowledge were debated and created.

On another level, Mattelart's intellectual journey after his exile in France offers a window into certain overlooked phenomena, because the processes of the international circulation of ideas have usually been approached by following a route that goes from the center to the periphery, especially when the focus is on the cases of Latin American intellectuals who undertook formative experiences abroad, particularly in Europe. Mattelart's case reveals a movement in the opposite direction, from the periphery to the center: a Belgian who studied in France and then spent a long period abroad in Chile (where he acquired a full-fledged intellectual and professional *habitus*) and who then, wearing the hat of a "Latin-Americanized" intellectual, proceeded to introduce, from the position of his exile, novel topics and under-explored perspectives into the French cultural and academic debate. We speak of a "Latin-Americanized" profile because, as we will see, Mattelart in France maintained a heterodox way of living intellectual and scientific practice, characterized by openness, cosmopolitanism, and an ongoing tension in relation to politics. This way of engaging in intellectual work was affirmed against the background of a series of international intellectual formations that his trajectory serves to highlight: We are referring to the existence of a *"Popular International of Communication"* that developed as part of a *popular international public sphere* for which Mattelart was one of the leading mentors and organizers. Reconstructing the mode of existence of this space of mul-

tiple international cross-linking is a worthwhile undertaking in two senses. On the one hand, it offers insight into one of the conditions of possibility for production, in an age of growing interconnection and internationalization of cultural production, of scientific knowledge that can contribute to understanding these processes. At the same time, it helps to highlight the specific ways in which in one zone of the intellectual world the reproduction of global hegemony was questioned.

Finally, from a perspective linked to the history of social and communication theory, we argue that Mattelart's thinking is highly suggestive for understanding contemporary society. If Mattelart is an actor with an especially privileged capacity for articulating intellectual production networks across different national spaces but also mediations between spaces of political activism, alternative cultural formations, and more institutionalized knowledge production spaces, then we must say that this intellectual praxis is undoubtedly nourished by his own specific knowledge production which at the same time is enhanced and made unique by the praxis. As we will see, the notions of *class analysis of communication* (or the *critique of its political economy*) and of *communication-world* represent two distinct but articulated moments of Mattelart's intellectual journey that condense and precipitate theoretical and epistemological nuclei. These notions will enable us to organize the reading of his thinking and highlight the unique and productive elements it offers for understanding social organization today through the critique of culture and communication.