FROM THE CHILEAN LABORATORY TO WORLD-COMMUNICATION

ARMAND MATTELART'S INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY

Mariano Zarowsky

Foreword by Peter Simonson

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CHAPTER ONE

Armand Mattelart and Latin American Communication Studies

Pierre Bourdieu teaches that the point of departure for scientific knowledge of social phenomena requires "taking as the object of study the social work of constructing the preconstituted object" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2008 [1992]: 283). In the same sense, and for the field we are considering, Roger Chartier (2001) rightly recalls that after Foucault—i.e., after his question about *what is an author*—cultural objects can no longer be considered something given (in this case, the object-author Armand Mattelart), because they in themselves are "objectivizations that are always constructing an original figure" (42). From the perspective of cultural history, it has thus been observed that, if the author is not the key to a text's exclusive meaning, this is also due to the fact that the text is configured in a series of reading practices. Chartier proposes looking at "the text's relation to the individual or collective readings that construct it each time it is read (in other words, that take it apart to be put back together again)" (39). Approaching a text in this way involves providing an account of a series of attribution operations that posited an author function and an author image and marked out an *oeuvre* from a discursive series. To be more specific, in Mattelart's case, we will refer to the critical approaches and the disciplinary assessments that took his figure as an object and that precede any contact with his work. These constitute a corpus that does not so much give an account of a given object—

the author in question—as it produces him. Or to put it more precisely: It produces an author image and function that presents a preconstituted object as a natural object. This production is not transparent; on the contrary, it takes place within the framework of certain conditions of possibility that guide what can be said or read at each moment. Thus the need to start by problematizing the ways the assessments of Latin American communication studies produced this function-author. What has been said about Mattelart's figure and work in Latin American communication studies? What had been read—and what had not—and how was it read? Has this reading varied from the 1970s to today? Has Mattelart been consecrated as a thinker and social scientist, or on the contrary, has his figure been cast aside? How to explain these variations?

As Raymond Williams (2009 [1977]) argues, every tradition is a *selective tradition* resulting from the conditions that shape it in its present, as well as from the positions—not devoid of self-interest—staked out by those who are involved in a particular field of cultural production, which cannot be understood in isolation from the movements and shifts within the wider dynamics of hegemony. As we look at these reading operations, we will refer to the construction of a tradition of Latin American communication studies that reflects on both its past and the ways its own historicization was a constitutive part of its process of disciplinary consolidation and institutionalization. In other words: It is not about reviewing what has "already been said" so as to point out obscure or unaddressed aspects of the figure of Mattelart, with the aim of finally coming up with a reading that is more germane to its "object"—as if there were already an object-author just waiting for the keys to decipher his enigma. The aim is rather to produce our own problematic field and carve out a space for discussion.

Indeed, starting in the 1980s, assessments made of Latin American communication studies included reviews of certain itineraries, perspectives, and lineages that favored the consolidation of the identity of a field in formation and the legitimization of certain positions within it. In them Mattelart was assigned the function of being one of the "founding fathers." In these assessments (which were not necessarily homogeneous but always had dominant storylines), there is agreement in establishing the emergence of the discipline in the late 1960s and identifying a foundational core of the field in the founders' concern with issues connected to communication and their culture of intervening in politics through specific practice. Thus, the first step in framing and explaining the discipline's own self-assessment and, within that, its assessment of the figure of Mattelart, must be to review the

way the link between intellectuals and politics in the '60s and '70s was analyzed in the field of Latin American social sciences and intellectual history.[1]

Intellectuals and Politics in the '60s and '70s: Interpreting the Interpretations

It was probably the fall of the Popular Union (UP, in its initials in Spanish) that marked the beginning of the review—earlier than is usually thought—of the way a certain tension had emerged between theoretical practice and political intervention in communication studies in the '60s and '70s. In the first edition of the Argentinian Semiotics Association's journal *Lenguajes*, which came out in April 1974, Eliseo Verón published an article where he did a comparative review of the reception of structuralism in Argentine and Chile. While he acknowledged that some of the most important theory and research on the media in Chile was generated by the team led by Armand Mattelart at the Center for National Reality Studies (CEREN, in its initials in Spanish) of the Catholic University of Santiago, in his view this team's work did not offer anything beyond an "intuitive reading" of messages that lacked a well-defined theoretical corpus and any real methodological care. This shortcoming was explained primarily by what Verón took to be one the features of Latin American cultural dependence as it related to knowledge production: the intrinsic distortion caused by "importing" ideas detached from the "practice that gave rise to them" in the core countries. In this sense, argued Verón, the uptake of semiology in Chile was one of the cases where the circulation of certain knowledge produced abroad appeared detached from productive theoretical work. Verón then explained the character of Mattelart's work in terms of a second contradiction: the "immediacy" demanded by political-cultural intervention versus the times and logics that ought to orient the work of producing specific knowledge. Thus Verón called on Mattelart and Dorfman (on account of *How to Read Donald Duck*) to choose between political demands, which he deemed a legitimate op-

[1] We should clarify here that while this study extends the study of Mattelart's intellectual journey to his post-exile years, we will not review here the way his figure has been read in France and in Europe. If we have chosen to present what has been said about Mattelart in the Old World in different chapters of this book and with respect to each particular issue (and not as an explicit matter to be objectivized), it is because our research is positioned in dialogue with the intellectual history of communication studies in Latin America, and in a more general way, with the ways the tensions that existed in the social sciences in the '60s and '70s between intellectuals, the social sciences, and politics have been read in recent years.

tion, and scientific work that make would its own kind of contribution to liberation processes.

Héctor Schmucler would reply to Verón in the fourth issue of *Comunicación y Cultura*, published in Buenos Aires in September 1975. There he argued, in response to the sociologist's position, that "the only method that is 'scientific,' i.e., that produces a truth, is one that emerges from a determinant historical-political situation and verifies its conclusions in a social practice that accords with the historical-political propositions in which they are to be inscribed." The one who posited the dichotomy between science and politics was Verón in *Lenguajes*, contended Schmucler, while Dorfman and Mattelart knew the opposite: "Political practice is a condition of truth for the social sciences."

We will return to this issue later in the book. Now we would like to highlight a fact that commenters on the controversy have mostly overlooked. While Verón's article is dated July 1973, its publication and Schmucler's reply took place between April 1974 and September 1975, after the fall of Popular Unity in Chile and of Héctor Cámpora's government in Argentina, both in 1973, i.e., in the context of what even then could already be seen as the end of a particular political stage. In general, however, the tendency has been to read the debate between *Comunicación y Cultura* and *Lenguajes* in terms that actually apply to a reading of the field's previous stage, i.e., as a programmatic-type dispute, representative of the tensions of a time of political radicalization, over the relation—and here we resort to a schematic and therefore overly simplistic expression—between "intellectuals and politics," or between "science" and "ideology."[2] However, it is possible to read that some of the points of this debate were anticipating an assessment that would be made from the perspective of the political defeat—more precisely, a certain way of understanding the memory of the field of communication studies that would leave its mark in the '80s and, especially, the '90s, when the institutional consolidation of Latin American communication studies would manifest itself, among other ways, in the proliferation of disciplinary assessments. To put it in yet other terms: If the journals set two epistemological conceptions against each other, and above all two ways of conceiving the relation between intellectuals and society, between science and politics, Eliseo Verón's assessment can also be understood as an anticipation, or better yet, as a way of initiating a certain way of reading the tension that would

[2] The controversy between the journals has been commented on extensively. Readers can consult Rivera (1987), Fuentes Navarro (1992), Entel (1994), Saintout (1998), Grimson and Varela (1999), Duek (2007), Zarowsky (2007).

characterize later assessments. What did it imply to debate the autonomy of scientific practice and the way of articulating science and politics when the Chilean process (which, as we will argue in the next chapter, framed the questions, the new investigations, and possibilities of intellectual experimentation expressed in *Comunicación y Cultura*) had been shut down? When Schmucler replied to Verón in September 1975 by gleaning the experience sedimented in the "Chilean laboratory," he was formulating a research program, but also a program for political, epistemological, and intellectual intervention that for all practical purposes had been left without a subject and without institutional conditions of possibility: Though he did not realize it, he was not so much proposing or formulating a program to be developed as assessing a stage that had come to a close. Thus Verón, who advocated a certain specificity of scientific production as a way to intervene in politics, was in a certain sense declared the winner of the controversy in an intellectual field where, generally speaking, a critical assessment of the previous process would predominate years later. In short: The idea would begin to spread that while in the mid-1960s a conflicted but productive relationship had been established in the cultural field between intellectuals and politics, by the early 70s this tension would finally be resolved by subordinating intellectual activity to the demands of politics. And this subordination would cancel its alleged or proposed specificity.

This line of interpretation, based in many cases on Weberian theoretical assumptions that we cannot discuss here, expresses the tone that predominated in the '80s and '90s in the assessment of the link between intellectuals and politics in the previous decades in Argentina, a climate of ideas that to a large extent spread throughout the continent and, as we will see later, permeated the assessments of communication studies. Even though an acknowledgment and in some cases a celebration was made of the moments when intellectual practice was undertaken both hand-in-hand and in tension with politics, in the final analysis the loss of the former's autonomy was seen as a setback—we would even go so far as to say a kind of "epistemological obstacle" with respect to the production of knowledge and specific discourses. According to this interpretation, which soon became dominant, the subordination of intellectual practice to politics in the late 1960s and '70s for all practical purposes canceled intellectual practice as such. [3]

[3] A quick summary: It might have been Beatriz Sarlo (1985) who offered the first incisive definition of the problem, laying the groundwork for a line of interpretation and revision that was widely taken up in certain sectors of the Argentinian intellectual field. According to Sarlo, in the early '70s the "empire of politics" in Argentina had succeeded in imposing

The Assessments of Latin American Communication Studies: Founding Fathers, Straw Men and Origin Myths

It is perhaps in the field of Latin American communication studies where the assessment of the traditions, the research proposals, and the personal trajectories were most explicitly marked by an evaluation of the link between intellectuals, culture, and politics in the '60s and '70s. As Raúl Fuentes Navarro (1992) observes, a good deal of the development of communication research in the '60s took the researchers' interest in responding to the demands of society as its foundational condition. Nevertheless, these assessments were done in the '80s, in the context of major theoretical and epistemological shifts. It could be argued, in short, that the "crisis of Marxism" was the backdrop of a series of questions about the research matrices and proposals of the previous decades. In parallel, the disciplinary consolidation, in as much as it stabilized certain problematical objects and legitimate approaches, was carried out with a critical eye to what was understood as the "reductivisms" of an early stage. In one of the hinge texts of this period, *De los medios a las mediaciones* [published in English as *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From Media to Mediations*)], Jesús Martín-Barbero (1987: 49) undertook a

its "totalizing" laws on intellectual practice and logics (3–4). Years later Sarlo would write, along these same lines, that while in the late '60s one could observe a certain articulation that maintained the tension between political intervention and the specificity of cultural practice, "at the end of the '60s and in the early '70s, the left rarely posed the 'intellectual question' as a specific issue any longer: it had been resolved—dissolved—in politics." The author saw it as the "closure of the intellectual issue" based on "a crisis of legitimacy of the specific discourses" that encompassed the entire cultural field (Sarlo, 2001: 104–105). Oscar Terán took part in this line of revision as it related to the link between intellectuals and politics in the new intellectual left in Argentina. In the view of Terán (1993 [1991]), the 1966 coup d'état had ushered in a stage where politics subsumed intellectual practice. Thus, the author argued, "the relation established up to that point from culture toward politics would begin to falter to the point that politics threatened to cannibalize *tout court* the specific sphere of intellectual activity," which produced "the hollowing-out of the legitimacy of intellectual practice" (159). For her part, Silvia Sigal (1991) maintained that toward the end of the decade and in the early '70s, a process took place in Argentina in which certain ideological axes organized intellectual practices; this was a process characterized by "the dissolution of the entity of the intellectual, of the distance between thought and behavior" (209). All the same, Sigal points out nuances: She understands that the politicization was a result of the autonomy achieved by the intellectual field. In explicit filiation with the authors quoted here, Claudia Gilman extends this way of reading the period to the Latin American scale. Gilman (2003) contends, along the same lines as Sarlo, Terán, and Sigal, that the tension toward politics that characterized the literary field in the '60s was finally resolved with the rise of a marked "anti-intellectualism" and the subordination of the figure of the writer-intellectual to that of the "revolutionary writer," i.e., subsuming the specificity of intellectual and literary practice. Along these same lines, see also Diego (2007 [2003]: 13, 31).

"settling of accounts"—his word, *ajuste de cuentas*—with Theodor W. Adorno and, by elevation, with the critical Latin American theories "associated, or confused, with a functionalism to which a reply was 'summarily' made from a Marxism that was more affective than effective."

Notwithstanding the accuracy or inaccuracy of his affirmations about Adorno, Martín-Barbero's case is the most representative of the reading operations that constructed an image of the previous decades' research. This operation of constituting a tradition (denied) about which the contenders made their affirmations, as Carlos Mangone points out (2007), drew on certain argumentative procedures (straw men, lack of proper names and specific references to research, generalization based on examples taken from some marginal case) that led to a homogenization and decontextualization that glossed over all nuances and served to "perfect a series of operations that consolidated shifts, mitigated emphasis and concealed knowledge construction processes" (81).[4] For instance, in the critiques of what he called *mediacentrism*, Martín-Barbero "constructed" and then critically reviewed the two traditions that in his conception had characterized communication studies in the 1960s and '70s: the analysis of media ownership and so-called "ideological analysis" that used the semiological matrix. Overall, inasmuch as he was one of the references in the field during those years, the name of Armand Mattelart (though Martín-Barbero seldom mentions him explicitly) was associated with a straw man that reduced the complexity of his theoretical stance and overlooked the shifts and nuances of his intellectual perspective. This revealed the absence of a history of communication studies that situated theoretical and research practices within their conditions of production. The effect, typical in the history of ideas, was the postulation of a more or less linear evolution, consisting of accumulation and leaps, that overlooked the dual movement of breaks and continuities that the "new paradigms" had with respect to previous experiences.

Nevertheless, around the same time several authors from the field undertook the task of writing the history of the development of communication studies in Latin America. A manifestation of the field's disciplinary consolidation and institutionalization (some of these texts came out of courses taught in the new university degree programs, others were commissioned by various institutions), the historiography consolidated selective readings and traditions, especially for pedagogical purposes or in the form of

[4] On the specific case of Martín-Barbero with respect to his reading of Adorno and the construction of straw man fallacies, see Santiago Gándara (2007).

disciplinary manuals. And if the 1960s and '70s were seen as the founding years, the key issue revolved around what tradition (after weighing errors and virtues) would be consolidated in the emerging field. In some cases, even though the link with politics was recognized as a driver of research and the emergence of the discipline, a clear boundary was proposed separating it from scientific practice. Raúl Fuentes Navarro (1992), in his well-known assessment, drew a clear line when he stated that "generating knowledge and transforming society are projects that call for different principles of action that are often at odds; the basic factors for organizing the work and defining the operations to achieve the objectives in one genre or the other respond to different logics that are not easy to reconcile" (111). Along these same lines, the Mexican researcher suggested that the debate about the social and political function of research "can be seen as a very relevant and productive attempt to adopt and/or create the most appropriate scientific approaches to reality," but at the same time, he added, it can be viewed "as a sterile exercise" (114).

One variant of this selective tradition recognized the political inspiration of the work and research undertaken at the time, but simplified its significance or, more precisely, the complexity, heterogeneity, and productivity of the link between knowledge production and political practice by offering a *romantic view* that, while effective at installing an origin myth, skipped the historical perspective, overlooking the concrete determinations of this articulation. It was enough to make a general reference to a certain spirit of "denunciation," to "passions of subjects," or to a critical "will" inspired in a context of generalized politicization. Thus, the Madrid journal *Telos*, in its 19th volume (1989), proposed a sort of assessment-homage of the trajectory of Latin American research in communication in which Luis Motta Gonzaga (1989: 147–151), for example, referred to "militant research" and "praxis theory" to characterize the predominant tendencies when the field emerged in the 1960s, and concluded that "the history of communication studies in the region was thus a part of the history of political and social struggles (among other reasons because the leading players were often one and the same)." This romantic view might not coincide with the perspective that is more concerned with demarcating fields and the specificity of practices (science-politics), but it proves to be complementary in terms of its effects: It tends toward a movement that recovers one element from the past but, inasmuch as it recovers it as a relic from the past, without its concrete connection to historical experience, it does so in a de-politicized way that, by flattening, cuts it off from its conflictive relation to the present. In this

sense, Héctor Schmucler argued that the edition of *Telos* (especially Robert White's article) was emblematic of a series of shifts that had taken place in the field. The assessment offered there, which recognized the ineluctable link between intellectual production and political practice, was somehow seen as symptomatic by Schmucler (1997), who stated: " [T]o make assessments indicates that something has concluded: a period, a project, a hope. […] [the *Telos* volume] was, although it was difficult to foresee at the time, a look at what had been; while narrated in the present tense, it was already a way of seeing the history […] [marked] more by nostalgia than by renewed impulses" (156, 158). This type of assessment of what the trajectory of communication studies "had been" was, for the author, an indication of a shift in the field toward an a-critical and celebratory vision of contemporary cultural processes; now media democracy—by way of the free market—and audience sovereignty were seen as the gateway to modernity and the construction of democratic citizenship for Latin America.

Armand Mattelart: Among Pioneers, Ducks and Bestsellers

In the late 1980s, in Mexico, the Argentinian researcher Máximo Simpson outlined his "reckoning" with the positions that Mattelart had taken with regard to alternative communication during his Chilean experience. While he took a specific stance in the history of the debates about the so-called "alternative communication," in a chapter of a compilation he edited, *Comunicación alternativa y cambio social* [*Alternative Communication and Social Change*], he offered an assessment and constructed a memory of communication studies in which he placed Mattelart within a tradition of the "authoritarian left" and, in the strictly disciplinary field, within "Leninist-style functionalism and neo-behaviorism."[5] Simpson's reading (1986) does a good job of expressing the reading practices we are describing: On the one hand, a decontextualization with respect to all of Mattelart's writings

[5] Simpson (1986) stated: "That was, to cite a historical case, the position of Armand Mattelart and the First National Assembly of Leftist Journalists during the Popular Unity government in Chile. The available documents show that while the discourse speaks of 'returning the voice to the people,' what is actually being proposed is one-way formats that concentrate communication power in the hands of the State; furthermore, in the context of that discourse the workers' struggle for control of the media would be *provisional and circumstantial*. [...] [I]t is important to point out that some authors, by taking Leninist-style functionalism and neo-behaviorism as their point of departure, are unable to extract the proper conclusions from the facts. This applies especially to Armand Mattelart in his illustrative and pioneering work about the alternative press in the *industrial belts of Santiago de Chile*" (27, 51, italics in original).

as a whole, both his works written in the era and his elaborations and shifts written years after he made the original critique; on the other hand, a lack of contextualization of the concrete political-cultural stances and debates that would situate Mattelart's interventions in a dialogue with other thinkers at the time. Simpson did not know that Mattelart's interventions took place largely within a cultural debate with the Chilean Communist Party, a party that belonged to the Popular Unity government. As we will argue, Simpson was mistaken when he lumped Mattelart's stances together with statist and—it is no exaggeration to say—neo-Stalinist positions.

The issue here is that Mattelart as a public intellectual was read with the yardstick used to measure the recent past of Latin American communication studies that we have described: either abstracting his production and his interventions from the social conditions in which they emerged, thus promoting a kind of romantic origin myth about his "founding" role in the discipline based on his political inspiration; or else making a critical reading of his intention to articulate political intervention with knowledge production. It is no exaggeration to turn the framing on its head and assert that the field was read through a particular and partial retrospective vision of Mattelart the public intellectual.

As examples, let's turn to some of the most notable cases in the production of a tradition and a memory of the field. When Fuentes Navarro outlined the table of the "pioneers" and "founding fathers" of communication studies on the continent, all of whom were researchers who had begun their studies in the 1960s, he quoted a researcher who placed Armand Mattelart's team at the CEREN at the top of the list of the "most important research projects undertaken in Latin America," followed by Antonio Pasquali in Venezuela, Luis Ramiro Beltrán in Colombia, and Eliseo Verón in Argentina. The author reaffirmed the idea—"quite generalized," he said—that these were the "main pioneers and most important leaders of communication research in Latin America." Fuentes Navarro (1992) then called for an exploration of the relationship between the most heavily researched topics and approaches and the "theoretical contributions in the work of these *founding fathers* of ours" (14). This appeal to the myth of the "founding fathers" (with its language taken from traditional history of ideas: the "theoretical contributions" that are attributed to an "author" and his/her "work") abstracts these interventions from their conditions of production—notwithstanding certain references to the overall historical context—while at the same time overlooking, by taking it for granted, the production of the author figure through legitimation

and consecration processes. In this way, the perspective is consistent with a linear vision of the history of ideas, made through breaks from this mythic past.[6] We can confirm as much when Fuentes Navarro refers to Mattelart as one of many "pioneers" who undertook "self-critical reformulations of the study of communication" (31, 33) without referring to his works that were contemporary at that time and much less to the *ties of continuity* that these works had—as we will argue in this thesis—with an intellectual *habitus* and a perspective forged in the Chilean experience.[7]

In Argentina, Alicia Entel in 1994 published an introduction to theories of communication and culture that summarized the main currents of thought: the Frankfurt School, the cultural studies of the University of Birmingham's CCCS, and North American functionalism. The chapter devoted to communication studies in the '60s and '70s in Latin America described the main lines of work in terms of "the task of denouncing based on the ideology and the ownership" of the communication media. As an example of these two lines, Entel (1994: 233–237) observed that the work published in 1970 by Armand and Michèle Mattelart and Mabel Piccini, *Los medios de comunicación de masas* [*The Media of Mass Communication*], had been one of the "pioneering" studies on the continent, especially because of its chapter "El marco del análisis ideológico" ["The Framework of Ideological Analysis"], which she characterized as a "foundational text" and "almost a manifesto." Pointing to Mattelart's prominent role, Entel referred to some of his other works and finally affirmed that one of his "last exhaustive works"—*La internacional publicitaria* [*Advertising International*]—was published in 1989. It is highly significant that she does so in the chapter focusing on Latin American research in the '60s and '70s. Notwithstanding a possible omission due to overlapping publication dates, it is puzzling that she makes such a sweeping

[6] While lamenting the fact that many of these authors and their theoretical-methodological contributions no longer inspired the research projects or universities of the moment, Fuentes Navarro mapped a trajectory of communicology in which, on the assumption it consisted of breaks and "evolutions," the "field pointing toward the future" was marked by culturalism, which took the ideas of Néstor García Canclini and Jesús Martín-Barbero as its lodestar.

[7] Fuentes Navarro refers above all to the assessment that Armand and Michèle Mattelart made in *Pensar sobre los medios* [*Rethinking Media Theory*] (1987 [1986]). In that work the authors affirmed that "as we rethink the history of communication research, it is also the history of a personal journey that is being outlined" (22). From this affirmation Fuentes Navarro (1992) concluded, however, that the book "clearly situated its discourse in France," "meaning that the outline of 'the history of a personal journey' does not particularly relate to Latin America" (43). He prefers to highlight the shifts—which undoubtedly existed—rather than the continuities that tied Armand Mattelart's perspective to the Chilean experience.

generalization of Mattelart's subsequent production and leaves out his work published between 1989 and 1994—when Entel's book was published—such as *La comunicación-mundo* [*Mapping World Communication*] (1992) or *La invención de la comunicación* [*The Invention of Communication*] (1994), which, it is only fair to point out, were not translated into Spanish until 1996 and 1995, respectively. But had Entel decided to comment on these three works of Armand Mattelart's in her book, it would have made more sense to place them (along with *Pensar sobre los medios* [*Rethinking Media Theory*], written with Michèle Mattelart in 1986) in the chapter that discusses the shifts of the 1980s, together with the reading of the works of García Canclini and Martín-Barbero. This would have involved, first of all, pointing out the heterogeneity of their positions. But the misreading did not derive only from confused chronology and the late arrival of translations: It was more of a symptom that pointed to the conditions and possibilities of interpretation. While Fuentes Navarro at the same time, emphasizing the supposed "break," observed that Mattelart had engaged in "self-criticism" and revised his perspectives, Entel saw smooth continuity and associated the author's trajectory and his later works with his first publications of the '70s—*in* and *with* which she recognized no nuances, differences, or shifts. Thus, in her comment on *Los medios de comunicación de masas*, which came out in 1970, Entel concluded that for the Belgian author (by defect and omission, in his work in general), the subject was reduced to society or ideology and that, given the "omnipotence" of these structures, Mattelart's perspective left no room for conflict. This conclusion is perplexing to say the least; if we put it in perspective, we will see that the so-called *ideological analysis* in Mattelart's case involved not only a critical appropriation of semiology and structuralism, but also only a brief stop in his intellectual journey: Very soon, after the Popular Union assumed power in November 1970, it was to be displaced, or at least given a new meaning, as he pursued different research priorities and interests. Moreover, at the time Entel wrote her book, Armand and Michèle Mattelart had already extensively discussed—particularly in *Rethinking Media Theory* (1986)—the positive elements of what they called "the new paradigms" in the social sciences and communication studies. Among other points, they referred to the "rehabilitation of the subject," to looking at the dynamic of conflict rather than the mere reproduction of ideology, etc.

In short, the predominant readings in the Latin American assessments of Mattelart as a public intellectual, at least up to the mid-1990s, oscillated between abstracting his theoretical positions from his conditions of production, and explicitly or implicitly presenting his image either as a straw man

against which the new perspectives were positioned or as a representative of an origin myth who on his own—in the best case associated with a generic political will—explained the emergence of a field of knowledge. In some cases, these accounts ignored the concrete practices by which Mattelart got himself involved in the experience and the debates of the Chilean political-cultural process through playing an active role in cultural initiatives, institutions, and political groups. And when it came to Mattelart's particular decisions, these accounts overlooked the links that connected his political practice to his specific knowledge production, i.e., the productive ties between theoretical production and political practice that his trajectory serves to highlight. They took even less note of the double thread, made of *continuities* but also *shifts*, that links Mattelart's Chilean experience with his extensive subsequent trajectory in Europe and his life of thinking.

Starting in the mid-1990s, however, certain studies, editorial projects, and lines of research began a revision that fostered a different way of interpreting historical developments and accounts of the discipline. It might have been in the pages of the journal *Causas y Azares* (1994–1998) where the most thorough effort was made to reconstruct, from a historical perspective, the specific conditions that gave rise to communication and culture studies, their consolidation and institutionalization in Argentina and Latin America. From a perspective inspired by Raymond Williams's "cultural materialism" but also by Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture, *Causas y Azares* sought to reconstruct the history of the journals and the cultural formations and institutions, and their specific links to the political processes at the heart of the emergence of this field of knowledge.[8] For his part, Héctor Schmucler celebrated in *Memoria de la comunicación* [*Memories of Communication*] (1997) certain exceptions to what he saw as the decline of the critical tradition and the fascination that was overtaking Latin American communication research, bedazzled by technological innovations, the newfound creative uses of audiences, or the imagined democratizing virtues attributed to the media market. Exemplifying divergent lines, Schmucler pointed to María Cristina Mata's works on the one hand and Armand Mattelart's on the other—such as *Mapping World Communication* (1992) and *The Invention of Communication* (1994). While most accounts of the field only recognized—critically or otherwise—Mattelart's work of the '70s, Schmucler (1997: 13) placed his publications from the '90s at the center of contemporary Latin American

[8] It is possible to follow the process by reading the interviews published in the journal with the leading lights of the field of Latin American communicology: Schmucler (1994), García Canclini (1995), Verón (1995), Mattelart (1996), Sarlo (1997), Ford (1997).

debate and recovered his long-durée historical perspective as a way to take critical distance from the supposedly novel techno-communicational developments. Along these same lines, the Brazilian Renato Ortiz, in *Mundialización y cultura* [*Globalization and Culture*] (1997 [1994]), revisited some of Mattelart's contributions, especially from *Advertising International* and *Mapping Word Communication*, to think about cultural globalization processes.

Finally, Víctor Lenarduzzi's study (1998) of *Comunicación y Cultura*, edited by Mattelart and Schmucler, sought to make a diachronous reading of the issues, conceptual contributions, and theoretical traditions developed over the course of the journal's history (1973–1985). In this way, it gained a renewed place in the history of Latin American communication studies. Lenarduzzi proposed dismantling certain dichotomous, simplistic readings, such as those that separated the '70s and '80s taxonomically, because that would allow for complex thinking where there had been reductivisms and limitations. Lenarduzzi thus advocated against breaking off, through simplification, the relation with the past, because "the illusion that today's thinking is vastly superior has been constructed by dismissing earlier trajectories" (19). Nevertheless, the author did not go beyond general suggestions in reconstructing the concrete relations that could link texts from the journal to their conditions of emergence, especially with respect to the Chilean political process (in which the first two editions of the journal were primarily situated); his study also failed to connect the journal's thematic and theoretical topics to movements in the intellectual field and cultural formations, which would embed their genealogy in a materialistic account of culture. Although he appealed to Raymond Williams's cultural materialism, the dominance of a reading that delimited his corpus to textual material in order to reconstruct a certain "field of forces"—in the tradition of Adorno—does not afford the possibility of tracing these relations.[9]

[9] Lenarduzzi is overly general in relating the series of economic and political processes in which the journal's launch was embedded, and identifies "the need for a reading in which not only the transformation of certain objects and methods can be understood, but also the relationship intellectual/society." And he adds, "It was the link to the political process, especially of Latin American life, that gave *Comunicación masiva* [referring to the journal's subtitle] a significance that was different from what was expected, i.e., it looked at a variety of dimensions (economic and political, in addition to cultural) that had not always been taken into account […] It was precisely the detection of such issues—in the articulation between theoretical practice and political process—that gave impetus to the construction of a critical space" (19, 26). However, Lenarduzzi reads the journal from a perspective that, in his words, seeks to elaborate a certain "field of forces" (an Adornian notion) with an eye to "historicizing certain ideas and notions, acknowledging their theoretical traditions, tracing their trajectories and the different emphases placed on them," which keeps him from identifying the links that he perceives in their concrete, productive manifestations.

In Brazil, the journal *Revista de Economía Política de las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación* (*EPTIC*) included in its first edition of January 2003 a "special Mattelart" section with different interviews and one article about the author's work.[10] What this section set out to do was, among other things, "to recover historical contributions to the field of the political economy of communication, republish old texts and revive some old debates." *EPTIC* at that time classified the "recovery" of Armand Mattelart's "contribution" to the field of communication studies within the tradition of political economy. Under the framework of a "culturalist" hegemony, the publication situated him in terms of the search for a certain specificity linked to the study of processes of economic valorization in cultural industries. Aside from the fact that it is debatable, as we will argue in this book, whether Mattelart can be considered exclusively as a political economist of communication, there is no denying that his "recovery" by *EPTIC* bolstered his reputation as a participant in Latin American debates on contemporary cultural processes—and no longer as only a leading voice in past debates—while at the same time offering a more expansive reading of his career.

The overview proposed here should not suggest a steady, linear evolution with respect to the readings of Mattelart's work and his status as a public intellectual in Latin American communicology. In a recent two-volume anthology about the history of Latin American intellectuals coordinated by Carlos Altamirano (2010), the Argentinian researcher Mirta Varela contributed a chapter devoted to the history of intellectuals in the field of communication studies and their relationship with the media. Since it deals with some of the main topics of the assessments we have analyzed, and above all, given the weight and the character of the book in which it appears (due to its collective nature, its length, its transdisciplinarity, and in a certain sense its canonizing ambitions in the field of intellectual history and Latin American intellectuals), we will devote a few paragraphs to Varela's article.

The author explicitly states her intention to give an account of both the ideas that drove the field of communication studies after it emerged in the '60s and the positions that the field's intellectuals took with respect to mass media. Consistent with some of the ideas presented here, Varela (2010) maintains that Mattelart was one of the main points of reference when communication studies emerged in the '60s and '70s, and that his career

[10] This "special Mattelart" section consisted of two interviews with the author: Mattelart (1996, *EPTIC* reproduced an interview made by the Argentinian journal *Causas y Azares* in 1996), Mattelart (2003, interview with César Bolaño), as well as an article by Alberto Efendy Maldonado Gómez de la Torre (2003).

was key "for the consolidation of a line of research whose immediate aim was the denunciation of the way North American businesses, technology and messages were invading Latin America" (764). This reading of Mattelart's position in the *denunciationist* key is summarized by the author in her review of the so-called *ideological critique*.[11] In the author's view, the most controversial aspect of this perspective (for which, she notes, it will later be relentlessly criticized) was the association between media ownership and ideology, "which was easily reduced to a causal relation." Nevertheless, Varela acknowledges that, at the time, such a relation "was not readily discernible—either theoretically or politically—" and that therefore "it was an indispensable contribution for media studies in that period" (763). Nuance notwithstanding, Valera's reading of this issue reproduces, by way of simplification, the dominant theses of the assessments of the field made after Verón's intervention in *Lenguajes*.

In a more sociological dimension of the analysis, Varela understands that Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's book *How to Read Donald Duck*[12] can be read, in her words, "as a symptom" of both the status of the debate about the media in the region and the characteristic modes of intervention and the ways intellectual discourse circulated during the period. Varela points to the explicit wish, expressed by Dorfman and Mattelart in the prologue to their book, to redefine the ways of relating to the target audience (achieving more accessible lines of communication with the reader) in a literacy-challenged continent. In this sense, the author highlights the existence of multiple intellectual strategies in the period, revealed in the appearance of a political-cultural journal of the likes of *Comunicación y Cultura*, or in the titles Mattelart gave to his publications at the time (which, in Varela's words, "came out one after another"): "Superbombardments and Superheroes" or "Mass Culture and War Economy." These were some of the ways Mattelart summarized his ideas, Varela states, "with language that tended toward *slogans*." This leads her to conclude that "[t]he use of these formulas and the fast-paced proliferation of texts suggest a political interest in these publications, which were aimed at a wide audience" (764).

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[11] The precursors of this way of characterizing Marxist thought in communication studies can be found in an article by Sergio Caletti published in Mexico in *Comunicación y Cultura* (no. 10, 1983), where Caletti uses the term "denunciationism" to characterize certain theoretical traditions within the field about which he gives no further details or references. Years later, in his history of Latin American communication studies, Fuentes Navarro (1992: 140–148) assimilates structuralist-type ideological analysis into "denunciationism."

[12] Mattelart and Dorfman, *How to Read Donald Duck*: *Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic,* New York, International General Editions, 1975.

Counter to this line of interpretation, we will argue that the perspective known as "ideological critique" that Mattelart developed in Chile exhibited much more nuance and complexity than is recognized when he is called out for establishing a "causal relation" between media ownership and ideology; we will particularly argue that the author revised this perspective at a quite early date on the basis of his experiences in the midst of the Chilean political process. Furthermore, although Varela is right to emphasize the reconstruction of certain forms of intervention and the circulation of intellectual discourse in the period that saw Mattelart's intervention, she ultimately follows the dominant line of interpretation of recent intellectual history with respect to the link between intellectuals and politics in the '60s and '70s.[13] What the author does avoid—beyond the general reference to the actors' will and a certain "spirit of the times"—is an account of Mattelart's embedding in a series of cultural formations and institutions of a new sort that were developed in the Chilean laboratory, and in the political-cultural debates that raged there, and that provide an explanation for his theoretical stances and the uniqueness of his thinking. In this sense, it is telling that, after running down the main topics of communication research up to the '80s, Varela concludes that "*[a]nti-intellectualism* runs through both periods, however, and one of the aims of this article has been to highlight those aspects that, in the early era, provoked a crisis about the place of intellectuals in society and the means by which they had fulfilled their role up to that point" (780, my italics). What is suggestive is the ambiguity of the conclusion, which at the same time asserts that in the '70s a crisis arose for ONE specific model of intellectual intervention—i.e., one among possible others—while concluding that this questioning implies anti-intellectualist stances. Mattelart's public persona is then associated, given the place and leading role Varela assigns him in her article, with what the author describes as anti-intellectualist stances. However, this issue was part of one of the debates that Mattelart took a leading role in during his time in Chile and, as we will argue, his stance at the very least encompassed far greater complexity (not to say an entirely different thrust).

In conclusion, as Varela's article shows, even the success of the book *How to Read Donald Duck* as a bestseller, with its dozens of reprints (which continue to this day), thousands of copies sold and dozens of translations, is among the conditions that contributed to the creation of an image of Mattelart

[13] The article revisits the theses of Claudia Gilman (2003) and Eliseo Verón (1974); Varela quotes them on several occasions. See the critical references to these authors in this chapter.

as author, positioning him more in the field of popularization than in the field of theoretical production and scientific investigation; and to a certain extent, it contributes—together with the more general critical assessment about the modes of articulation between intellectuals and politics in the '60s that cast Mattelart as protagonist—to delegitimizing him as a thinker and social scientist, at least in one sector of the social sciences and communication studies in Latin America. This is precisely why we will devote one part of this book to reconstructing the conditions of emergence for Mattelart's book within the matrices of new types of institutions and cultural formations that tentatively unfolded during the Popular Unity period, among debates and tensions surrounding the development of a cultural policy.