





**FROM THE CHILEAN LABORATORY  
TO WORLD-COMMUNICATION  
ARMAND MATTELART'S INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY**



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*Armand Mattelart's Intellectual Journey*

by  
Mariano Zarowsky

*Foreword by Peter Simonson*

*Translated by William Quinn & Peter Simonson*



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Translation of Mariano Zarowsky, *Del Laboratorio chileno a la comunicación-mundo. Un itinerario intelectual de Armand Mattelart* (Editorial Biblos, 2013). The support of the Argentine Republic (through its Programa Sur de Apoyo a las Traducciones) is gratefully acknowledged.

**Published by:**

mediastudies.press

414 W. Broad St.

Bethlehem, PA 18018, USA

**Cover design:** Natascha Chtena

**Landing page:** [mediastudies.press/from-the-chilean-laboratory-to-world-communication-armand-mattelarts-intellectual-journey](https://mediastudies.press/from-the-chilean-laboratory-to-world-communication-armand-mattelarts-intellectual-journey)

History of Media Studies series - issn (*online*) 2637-6091 | issn (*print*) 2637-6091

isbn 978-1-951399-50-4 (*print*) | isbn 978-1-951399-47-4 (*pdf*)

isbn 978-1-951399-49-8 (*epub*) | isbn 978-1-951399-48-1 (*html*)

doi 10.64629/3f8575cb.08e7ds72 | lccn 2025943425

*Edition 1 published in October 2025*







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# Preface to the English Translation

Mariano Zarowsky

This book was originally published in Spanish in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in the year 2013. It is a rewriting of the thesis that I submitted at the end of 2011 to earn my Doctorate in Social Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires. Since then, new empirical evidence has emerged, as well as numerous publications dealing with the different theoretical and historiographical topics that this book addresses; nevertheless, I have decided not to make substantive changes to the text of the thesis, only some minor corrections. I have opted, however, for replacing the prologue by Héctor Schmucler—written with Argentinian and Latin American readers in mind—with a new preface by Peter Simonson that introduces the book and discusses its significance for the non-Spanish-speaking audience.

I would like to express my gratitude first of all to Peter Simonson, David Park, and Jefferson Pooley, of *mediastudies.press*, for their confidence in my work and for steering this editorial project toward a more balanced exchange of knowledge between the North and the South. For these same reasons I am grateful to the “Programa Sur de apoyo a las traducciones” (Program for Fomenting Translations) of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Argentine Republic, which selected this book in its call for publications of 2023. And finally, I want to give special thanks to Bill Quinn for his commitment to the project and for the quality of his translation, y nuevamente a Pete Simonson por su generosa y erudita revision del trabajo.

I dedicate this collective effort to Armand Mattelart.

*Mariano Zarowsky, Buenos Aires, October 2024*

# Foreword to the English Translation

Peter Simonson

Armand Mattelart has produced one of the most important bodies of work on communication over the last half century. Yet, somehow, he is poorly known in the English-speaking world and only selectively read beyond it. How that gap came to be is itself a worthy question, but my main aim here is to introduce this translation of Mariano Zarowsky's outstanding study of Mattelart for Anglophone readers. The book not only illuminates the intellectual trajectory of a remarkable global figure, but it also gives us the resources to belatedly incorporate him into our current thinking and practice.

Over more than fifty years and almost that many books, writing in three languages and often in collaboration with his wife Michèle (b. 1941), the Belgian-born Mattelart (b. 1936) consistently did work that is at once original, rigorous, and politically engaged. His thinking, like the subjects he researched, evolved over time, but they cut across critical theory and the international political economy, culture, policy, and history of communication. Beyond his books, his contributions took the form of articles, reports for governments and non-governmental organizations, major editorial projects, and an experimental documentary film. Beginning in the late 1960s, working in the hotbed that was Chile in that era, he developed a distinctive kind of non-doctrinaire Marxism deeply attuned to class struggle and the specificities of culture and history. The Marxian dimension became less explicit in the 1980s and '90s, as he creatively drew upon Foucauldian genealogy and world-systems theory, but his commitment to a multi-faceted

critical analysis of communication as a pathway to a more humane and just world persisted. He was probably the most international of the major communication theorists and certainly the most committed to traversing the lines separating Global North and South. This reflected the realities of his own journey—from the Belgium of his youth and doctoral studies in France, to Chile and the democratically elected socialist regime of Salvador Allende, exile to France after the US-backed coup, research missions in the post-revolutionary states of Mozambique and Nicaragua, and intellectual networks that spanned the globe. He was a singular figure.

For more than a decade now, Zarowsky, an Argentinian scholar, has published some of the best work done anywhere on the intellectual history of communication and communication studies. His monograph, originally published in Spanish in 2013, is valuable not just for its historical and interpretive road map of Mattelart's career, but also for its methodological approach, one that blends intellectual history with a materialist sociology of culture. Zarowsky carefully reconstructs Mattelart's production and its dynamic relation to the contexts, sensibilities, and debates that shaped it. In so doing, he offers us an uncommonly rich education about Mattelart, but also a window into the political history of the transnational intellectual left and its engagements with the problem of communication since the 1960s.

The overwhelming majority of work published in English on the history of communication studies has centered on the United States, with Canadian media theory, British cultural studies, and German critical theory rounding out the major loci in the Anglophone version of the field's collective memory.<sup>1</sup> Zarowsky's story effectively decenters all that. It arises from within the horizons of Latin American communication studies, a sprawling and vibrant intellectual formation that, for multiple reasons, has been marginalized if not totally ignored by the Global North. "Los Mattelart," as Armand and Michèle are often called,<sup>2</sup> are widely recognized as founding figures in the Latin American field, and their work is read and taught across the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds. At the same time, as Zarowsky shows in

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<sup>1</sup> There are other significant intellectual formations at (or beyond) the margins of Anglophone collective memory, perhaps most notably the group gathered around the Centre d'études de communications de masse (CECMAS), formed at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris in 1960. (See Stefanie Averbeck, "Comparative History of Communication Studies: France and Germany," *Open Communication Journal* 2 [2008]).

<sup>2</sup> The Spanish, "los Mattelart," aptly carries both a singular and plural sense, pointing to how Armand and Michèle have operated both as individuals and a singular unit of intellectual production. It is a moniker that has been used in Latin American writings about them since at least the mid-1980s.

one of the book's key interventions within Latin America, there is a highly selective memory of him there.<sup>3</sup> Zarowsky offers a story with multiple centers but grounded especially in Mattelart's deeply formative years in Chile (1962–1973). France is the other main locus, but he also emphasizes the transnational exchanges of people, ideas, and texts that moved between France and the Southern Cone of Latin America and shaped thinking about communication. If we take it seriously, his account will reorient the way most of us in the North have understood how the media became a politically charged object of study and what it has meant to be what Zarowsky elsewhere calls a “communication intellectual.”<sup>4</sup> It will also allow us to add, retroactively, a powerful guide and interlocutor, Armand Mattelart, to our current studies. The book speaks for itself, but in this Foreword to the English edition, I try to frame the project for readers who may know little of the contexts and international significance of Mattelart's work and of Zarowsky's study of it—and to contribute to the case to bring los Mattelart more prominently into Anglophone thinking about communication.

### *An “Intellectual Itinerary”*

The original, Spanish subtitle for this book is “un itinerario intelectual de Armand Mattelart”—literally, an intellectual itinerary. The phrase sounded a bit strange in English, so the translation variously uses the more familiar *journey* or *trajectory* (though *path*, *route*, *road*, or *course* also recommended themselves). At the same time, *intellectual itinerary* signals what Zarowsky is doing here, methodologically and substantively. An *itinerary* suggests movement across different places in space and time. Zarowsky delivers by showing us how Mattelart's thought unfolds, from the 1960s to the early 2000s, in different historical moments, cultural-political matrices, and social networks and organizations. His version of the sociology of culture draws its bearings from Raymond Williams and, to a lesser extent, Pierre Bourdieu to materially link intellectual production to social location and praxis. At the same time, reconstructing an *intellectual* itinerary, Zarowsky never loses sight of ideas. He unpacks their meanings as they took shape in texts, edito-

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<sup>3</sup> For a recent bibliometric study of Armand Mattelart's influence in Latin America, see Raúl Fuentes Navarro in a special issue devoted to the Mattelarts: “Leer la biblioteca matelartiana,” *MATRIZES* 14, no. 3 (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Mariano Zarowsky, “Communication Studies in Argentina in the 1960s and '70s: Specialized Knowledge and Intellectual Intervention Between the Local and the Global,” *History of Media Studies* 1 (2021).

rial undertakings, and theoretically guided political interventions, as well as their interpretations and uses by others. Zarowsky is an expert guide through Mattelart's writings, which can be difficult, and the intellectual debates they responded to. The project is also anchored to the present. As he tells us in the book's eloquent "Final Words," by reconstructing the conditions of Mattelart's production, so different from our own, we might "question our own intellectual praxis" and reveal something important about the present.

The itinerary begins with Mattelart's years in Chile, which in 1970 (eight years after he arrived) became the first country in the world to democratically elect a Marxist government. I'll say more about "the Chilean laboratory" in a moment, but, in the contexts of Cold War ideological battles and modernization initiatives, the country attracted major international attention even before Allende became president. It drew in scores of scholars and other knowledge workers from abroad, including exiles fleeing Latin American military dictatorships. Zarowsky situates Mattelart within that context and what he calls "the political, social and cultural laboratory known as the *democratic road to socialism*." In so doing, he re-establishes the historicity of Mattelart's most famous book, published with Ariel Dorfman in 1972: *Para leer al Pato Donald: Comunicación de masa y colonialismo* (published in English as *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*). The book quickly became a bestseller across Latin America, going through more than twenty editions, and it was eventually translated into fifteen languages. It is now considered a classic in the study of cultural imperialism, though it was intended more as an effort at what we might call popular media literacy than scholarship more narrowly. Its fame has sometimes overshadowed everything else Mattelart did, and it is common to find people who know nothing of him but *Donald Duck*, which he wrote near the beginning of his career.<sup>5</sup> Zarowsky gives the book its historical due, but he concentrates on the rest of Mattelart's remarkable career.

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<sup>5</sup> For a brief, recent account in English, see Dan Piepenbring, "The Book That Exposed the Cynical Politics of Donald Duck," *The New Yorker*, June 3, 2019. For the history of translations of the work, see Alejandro Cárdenas López, "Los flujos globales de 'Para leer al Pato Donald' y la censura de Disney," *Chasqui: Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación* 154 (December 2023). For a recent work that extends Zarowsky's historical contextualization of the book within socialist Chile, see Daniel Badenes and Alfredo Afonso, "Para leer 'Para leer al Pato Donald,'" *Tram[pl]as de la Comunicación y la Cultura*, no. 86 (December 2021). For profiles of Dorfman, see Naomi Lindstrom, "Ariel Dorfman: The Trajectory of a Transnational Jewish Intellectual," *Contemporary Jewry* 41 (2021); and, emphasizing his literary output, Sophia A. McClennan, "Ariel Dorfman," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 20, no. 3 (2000).

Given their work for the Allende government and status as Marxist intellectuals, the Mattelarts were forced into exile after the US-supported 1973 coup that installed Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship. Zarowsky's story thus shifts to France. Mattelart wouldn't secure a permanent university job for a decade, and even then, it was in a provincial university (Université Rennes 2), outside the intellectual center of Paris, where he wouldn't get a position until 1997 (Université de Paris 8). In the interim, he took temporary university jobs, worked on an experimental documentary about Chile (*La Spirale*), served as an editor, public writer, and expert consultant for the United Nations and for new socialist states in the Global South and in France after the socialists came into power in 1981. Zarowsky guides us through leftist intellectual and political debates of the 1970s and '80s, where Mattelart's connection to the democratic socialist experiment in Chile provided domestic and international cachet that allowed him to bring his blend of critical-theoretical acumen and practical policy experience to bear both domestically and internationally. We are offered a window into a type of communication research supported by governments and non-governmental organizations, embedded in leftist and progressive politics traversing national and regional borders, and alive until the neoliberal revolution of the 1980s and '90s. In the academic realm, Zarowsky's reconstruction also gives us a glimpse of the relatively late institutionalization of communication research in France in the 1980s, where Mattelart played a role that was at once central and marginalized.

In the last two substantive chapters of the book, Zarowsky shifts from a historically organized intellectual itinerary to a more conceptually oriented "cognitive map," centered on two broad problematics that shaped Mattelart's work: *class analysis and the political economy of communication* in the first half of his career, *world-communication* in the second. The transition occurs in the mid-1980s, in the contexts of the transformed political horizons in France and Mattelart finally landing a permanent faculty position. The first of these chapters offers a valuable discussion of different approaches to the political economy of communication and how Mattelart's position was distinctive. Zarowsky sketches the views of figures well-known in the Anglophone world (including Herbert Schiller, Dallas Smythe, Graham Murdoch, and Raymond Williams) and others who are not (Bernard Miège and, briefly, Ramón Zallo). Since Mattelart has, in the last twenty-five years at least, rarely received more than passing attention in English-language political economy,



situating him in that field is itself an important intervention.<sup>6</sup> Zarowsky also draws out how Armand and Michèle together formulated a powerful analysis that engaged deeply with Marx's original writings, situated the cultural industries within the dynamics of class struggle, and emphasized the need to understand how they contributed to broader transformations of the state and the transnational political order. Theirs was an approach that also cut across the battlelines drawn between cultural studies and political economy in the US and UK. It is a distinctive and valuable perspective worth re-engaging in our current moment of global political crisis and transnational media industries.

After the mid-1980s, the Mattelarts incorporated Foucauldian genealogy and the world-systems theories of Immanuel Wallerstein and Fernand Braudel into their work. Zarowsky shows how they and others in France turned critical attention to the burgeoning discourse of "communication" circulating around new technologies and the nascent neoliberal order. This would open toward broad genealogical studies of "the invention of communication" since the 1600s and its entanglements with empire and war, along with more circumscribed accounts of the related history of media theory in the twentieth century. This body of work drew together histories of concepts, cultural images, networks, industries, technologies, practices, and apparatuses. Holding it together was the overarching concept of *world-communication*, which allowed them to show how social processes and representations of communication developed historically within a capitalist world-economy and systems of power—something that applied as much to communication theory as to media industries and strategies of empire. Both technologies and ideas of communication, the argument went, fed processes of internationalization that the capitalist world-economy needed in order to develop. Long attuned to international patterns of domination, ideology, and networks, the world-communication concept put the Mattelarts at the forefront of a global turn in communication studies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For representative examples from North American scholars, see two chapters in John Nerone, ed., *Media History and the Foundations of Media Studies* (Blackwell, 2013): Vincent Mosco, "The Two Marxes: Bridging the Political Economy/Technology and Culture Divide," which gives credit to Mattelart as "the most prominent" figure in a stream of political economic research that foregrounds class struggle (66); and Robert W. McChesney, "The Political Economy of Communication: An Idiosyncratic Presentation of an Emerging Subfield," which makes no mention of Mattelart.

<sup>7</sup> Whereas earlier books by Mattelart that appeared in English were published by small, often leftist presses, larger publishers offered translations of this later work in the 1980s and '90s, including several by the University of Minnesota Press. None included prefatory accounts to situate the books in the contexts of their original production in France or

## *“The Chilean Laboratory” in International Perspective*

Though the Mattelarts’ thinking continued to develop, their time in Chile during the 1960s and early ’70s left a lasting mark. Most people outside the region don’t know about the global geopolitical and intellectual significance of that time and place—one part of which was the pioneering studies done of media, communication, and culture. When Armand stepped off the ship from Europe in September of 1962, he entered a zone of growing international focus, where communication would become an object of analysis, contention, and social action.<sup>8</sup> The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had major international repercussions, particularly in the contexts of the Cold War. Its significance for Chile and the region “cannot be overestimated,” write two observers: It energized the left in the region and brought a change in US geopolitical policy, which shifted (for a time) from military intervention in Latin America to “a policy of openness and democratic reforms, mainly aimed to hinder the revolutionary impulses boosted by the Cuban example.” It was also an era of “deep economic, political and sociocultural transformations” in Chile, which gave new salience to the social sciences as a way of understanding and directing change.<sup>9</sup> In these contexts, Santiago became, in Fernanda Beigel’s words, “one of the main platforms of the international cooperation system,” with “a concentration of academic capital” of several kinds.<sup>10</sup>

The Mattelarts were part of a remarkable moment in Chile that incubated multiple strands of thought that would significantly shape thinking in communication and the social sciences—and well beyond. International figures made major contributions, both exiled leftist intellectuals who resettled there after the military coups in Brazil (1964) and Argentina (1966) and others who were educated outside the country. Santiago in the 1960s was the site where

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with reference to Mattelart’s trajectory of thought, and some included titles that occluded their underlying intellectual framework (e.g., *La mondialisation de communication* became *Networking the World*). For Mattelart’s critical take on the English editions, see Costas M. Constantinou, “Communications/Excommunications: An Interview with Armand Mattelart,” *Review of International Studies* 34 (2008), 29–30.

<sup>8</sup> One of the few historical studies of communication research in Chile published in English is the very fine account by political scientist Matt Davies, *International Political Economy and Mass Communication in Chile: National Intellectuals and Transnational Hegemony* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Juan Jesús Morales Martín and Justino Gómez de Benito, *History of Sociology in Chile: Trajectories, Discontinuities, and Projections* (Springer Nature, 2022), 33; Davies, “Scientific Mass Communications Study: 1958–67,” chap. 2 in *International Political Economy*.

<sup>10</sup> Fernanda Beigel, “Origins of the Dependency Theory: Trajectories, Actors, and Institutions,” in *Dependency Theories in Latin America: An Intellectual Reconstruction*, ed. André Magnelli, Felipe Maia, and Paulo Henrique Martins (Routledge, 2024), 18.

a cluster of scholars developed dependency theory, the widely influential neo-Marxist framework for understanding the underdevelopment of Latin America and the Global South as part of the system of world capitalism and its systematic exploitation of countries on the “periphery” by those in the core. It received its classic formulation in *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina* (*Dependency and Development in Latin America* [1969]), by the sociologists Fernando Enrique Cardoso (an exiled Brazilian who was later president of the country) and the Chilean Enzo Faletto.<sup>11</sup> A young Manuel Castells, Spanish-born and Paris-educated, spent parts of several years in Santiago between 1968 and 1972. In the Marxist phase of his life, he worked with Cardoso and Faletto, which he credits with “decisively shap[ing]” his theory and research on globalization.<sup>12</sup>

Santiago also drew in Brazilian liberationist thinkers. The educator-philosopher Paulo Freire lived there in exile from 1964 to 1969, where he worked for a time in the same research institute as Mattelart. He wrote several books in that context, including the *Education as the Practice of Freedom, Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and between them, *¿Extensión o comunicación?* (*Extension or Communication?*), which offered a sharp critique of the dominant transmission-of-expertise model of rural development in favor of a dialogic, communicative alternative.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, his fellow Brazilian, the sociologically trained theologian Hugo Assmann, who would collaborate with Mattelart in founding the journal *Comunicación y Cultura*, wrote some of the early texts in Latin American liberation theology while exiled in Santiago between 1971 and 1973.<sup>14</sup> Like the dependency theorists, they were connected to broader, New Left political networks in the region whose actions would reverberate globally.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Beigel, “Origins of the Dependency Theory.”

<sup>12</sup> Castells worked as a visiting professor and scholar at both the University of Chile and Pontifical Catholic University (Manuel Castells, “A Sociology of Power: My Intellectual Journey,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 42 (2019), 17).

<sup>13</sup> John D. Holst, “Paulo Freire in Chile, 1964–1969: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in its Socio-political Economic Context,” *Harvard Educational Review* 76, no. 2 (2006); Fabian Cabaluz and Beatriz Areyuna-Ibarra, “La ruta de Paulo Freire en Chile (1964–1969): Alfabetización popular e influencias del marxismo heterodoxo,” *Revista Colombiana de Educación* 80 (2020), 302–304.

<sup>14</sup> Assmann’s *Teología desde la praxis de liberación: Ensayo teológico desde la América dependiente* was published in 1973, one of the classic works of liberation theology whose subtitle reveals its debt to dependency theory and Marxism, erased in its English-language edition, *Practical Theology of Liberation*.

<sup>15</sup> Aldo Marchesi, “Southern Cone Cities as Political Laboratories of the Global Sixties: Montevideo (1962–1968); Santiago de Chile (1969–1973); Buenos Aires (1973–1976),” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 28, no. 2 (2017); Tanya Harmer,

Meanwhile, in very different ideological circles, Pontifical Catholic University, where Mattelart worked for a time, housed a group of University of Chicago-trained Chilean economists who had studied with Milton Friedman. Known as “the Chicago boys,” they were the architects of Chilean neoliberalism, which Pinochet’s government embraced after the 1973 coup. This was its own kind of “Chilean laboratory,” which provided a testing ground for the neoliberal policies adopted by the Thatcher and Reagan governments in Great Britain and the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Amidst this effervescence, we can find three intellectual formations with distinct understandings of communication operating in Chile in the 1960s. Each would find a broader place in the field of communication studies in Latin America and beyond. Each implied different geopolitical commitments, and each was advanced by a mix of Chilean and foreign figures. The best established was US-style functionalist sociology and mass communication research, articulated to a paradigm of modernization through expertise and the dissemination of information, which began coming together in the 1940s. The second was a Catholic understanding of “social communication,” a newer concept forged in the contexts of Vatican II (1962–1965) and the Church’s reform efforts. In subsequent years, it would take root across Latin American higher education and communication research as well as the pastoral activity of the Church.<sup>17</sup> And the third, which intermixed with the leftist versions of the Catholic project and defined itself against US social science, was a Marxian critical framework articulated to grassroots, participatory, and socialist efforts in popular empowerment and a critique of the capitalism and imperialism emanating from the North. Its account of media would begin to take shape during a student strike at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in May of 1967.

Mattelart came to Chile as part of the sociological wing of the Catholic community. This was his entry into the interdisciplinary, transnational, and progressive-left sensibilities that would define his communication research. He had grown up Catholic in Belgium and took his doctorate in law from

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“Toward a Global History of the Unidad Popular,” *Radical Americas* 6, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>16</sup> Alexander D. Barder, “American Hegemony Comes Home: The Chilean Laboratory and the Neoliberalization of the United States,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 38, no. 2 (2013); Johanna Bockman, “Democratic Socialism in Chile and Peru: Revisiting ‘the Chicago Boys’ as the Origin of Neoliberalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61, no. 3 (2019).

<sup>17</sup> For a valuable collection of primary documents and interpretations of Catholic thinking about communication in Latin America, see Benito Spoletni, *Comunicación e Iglesia Latinoamericana* (Ediciones Paulinas, 1985).

the Catholic University of Louvain before moving on for advanced training at the French Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris. Demography was for him a way to address problems of social inequality, and he studied with Catholic humanists who rejected economistic models of development.<sup>18</sup> Funded by a Rockefeller Foundation grant, he accepted a three-year position as a professor of demography in the School of Sociology at Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in Santiago. It was headed by the Belgian Jesuit sociologist and priest Roger Vekemans, an intellectual and institutional impresario who spoke some ten languages and had an extensive network of connections in Europe and the United States. Vekemans had moved to Chile in 1958, part of a wave of Catholic social scientists, laymen and priests, who came from Europe (especially Belgium, France, and the Netherlands) between 1958 and 1962. The majority were “militant Catholics” committed to working on development-related projects that might benefit the poor.<sup>19</sup> The Europeans joined a Chilean Catholic community whose left wing would appropriate Marxist thinking and liberation theology and provide strong support for Allende’s socialist government (1970–1973).<sup>20</sup>

Arriving two months after Mattelart at Catholic University’s School of Sociology was Charles R. Wright, the UCLA functionalist sociologist who at the time was, in Mattelart’s retrospective account, “lord and master of the problem of mass communications media.”<sup>21</sup> He was one of many US sociologists brought into Chilean universities with support from the US government, private foundations (especially Rockefeller and Ford, which set up a Santiago office in 1963), or, as in Wright’s case, international organizations with significant US influence (the Organization of American States).<sup>22</sup> In Mattelart’s telling, Wright (who had studied at Columbia with

<sup>18</sup> For the best account of Mattelart’s early, Catholic trajectory and personal recollections of his time in Chile, see his long interview in Fernanda Beigel, *Misión Santiago: El mundo académico jesuita y los inicios de la cooperación internacional católica* (LOM Ediciones, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Beigel, *Misión Santiago*, 136. On Vekemans, see Alexis Cortés, “Clodomiro Almeyda and Roger Vekemans: The Tension Between Autonomy and Political Commitment in the Institutionalization of Chilean Sociology, 1957–1973,” *Current Sociology* 69, no. 6 (2021).

<sup>20</sup> Marcos Fernández Labbé, “‘A Christianity for Times of Revolution’: Context of the Political-Intellectual Reception and Controversy over Liberation Theology in the Chilean Path to Socialism, 1970–1973,” *International Journal of Latin American Religions* 6 (2022); Denisa Jashari, “The Chilean Christians for Socialism Movement: Liberationist, Third Worldist, and Utopian,” *Latin American Research Review* 59 (2024).

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Arturo Torrecilla, “Cultural Imperialism, Mass Media and Class Struggle: An Interview with Armand Mattelart,” trans. Mary C. Axtmann, *The Insurgent Sociologist* 9, no. 4 (1980), 72.

<sup>22</sup> Charles W. Wright, oral history interview by Jefferson Pooley, 19 July 2016, Communication Scholars Oral History Project, Annenberg School for Communication Library

Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton) had come to found a department of sociology of communication and establish a chair in it, but his presence alone was a sign of the influence of US social science in Chile at the time.<sup>23</sup> So-called scientific sociology was then less than a decade old in the country, planted by Eduardo Hamuy, another Chilean who had also studied at Columbia and conducted the first scientific public opinion polls in Chile.<sup>24</sup>

Wright may have been the first US mass communication researcher Mattelart had met, but there were others in Santiago, connected with President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, the economic, development, and modernization program launched in the wake of the Cuban Revolution.<sup>25</sup> They were part of what Mattelart described as the reality of the US modernization theory he was confronted with, advanced by the sociologists and demographers who aided in the development of communication strategies for birth control and other development projects, and whose work was translated into Spanish and distributed free of charge by the United States Information Service (USIS).<sup>26</sup> In 1961, UNESCO organized a twelve-day Meeting of Experts on the Development of Information Media in Latin America that issued a call for building up scientific (read: US-style) research in mass communication, with Stanford University's Wilbur Schramm a featured participant.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile,

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Archives, University of Pennsylvania: 46–47; Beigel, *Misión Santiago*, 136.

<sup>23</sup> As he recounted in his oral history interview with Pooley, Wright spoke no Spanish but taught classes in English to the sociology students (46–47). A Spanish translation of his book, *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective*, would be published in Buenos Aires in 1963 (Charles R. Wright, *Comunicación de masas: Una perspectiva sociológica*, trans. Raquel Ferrario and Ricardo E. Malfé [Editorial Paidós, 1963]).

<sup>24</sup> Morales Martín and Gómez de Benito, *History of Sociology in Chile*, 17, 27–28; Edmundo F. Fuenzalida, "The Reception of 'Scientific Sociology' in Chile," *Latin American Research Review* 18, no. 2 (1983).

<sup>25</sup> Stephen G. Rabe, "Alliance for Progress," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, published March 3, 2016; accessed May 28, 2025; Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> Armand Mattelart, introduction to *Communication and Class Struggle 1: Capitalism, Imperialism*, ed. Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub (International General, 1979). Another form of US influence came via the export of television programming to Chile. Television arrived late and only began to develop when Chile hosted the World Cup in 1962. After that, imported programming, much of it from the US, supplemented the limited amount of programming produced in the country. This was part of the experiential context for thinking about media and cultural dependency in Chile.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, report of the Meeting of Experts on Development of Information Media in Latin America, Santiago, Chile, February 1–3, 1961, UNESCO Archives, Paris.

Stanford and other US universities were beginning to train Latin American graduate students in behaviorist communication research.<sup>28</sup>

Mattelart would be instrumental in forging a third model of communication inquiry, embedded in a more radical politics that took its intellectual bearings from a mix of Latin American leftist thought, Western European Marxism, and French and Argentinian semiology. It energetically separated itself from behaviorist functionalism but intermixed with leftist Catholic thought. This is the story Zarowsky vividly tells in chapter 2, illuminating the factors that shaped Mattelart's work and left lasting dispositions for him. It's worth mentioning a few details about this intellectual formation and its genesis, however, to draw out its global significance in the history of communication and media studies.

First, the original catalyst for critical studies of communication and culture in Chile were student strikes at Pontifical Catholic University in May of 1967, during the presidency of Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei.<sup>29</sup> This was a year before the seismic protests of 1968 in Paris and around the world. As Zarowsky details, it led to a study of news coverage of the unrest by Armand and Michèle Mattelart and their Argentinian colleague Mabel Piccini (1942–2015). Their analysis opened with a broadside against US functionalist communication research before turning to a groundbreaking study of the liberal press in Chile that blended ideological critique, the political economy of media ownership, and critical scrutiny of the transnational dependency of Chilean media in relation to US ideology and culture industries.<sup>30</sup> Their investigation took place within a newly created research institute, the Center for the Study of National Reality (CEREN in its Spanish acronym), which would be the institutional location for a form of media studies with that blend of analysis. In this and other ways, the Chilean laboratory was ahead of the Global North.

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<sup>28</sup> For this and more on US entanglements with Latin American communication research, see Peter Simonson, Jefferson Pooley, and David Park, "The History of Communication Studies Across the Americas: A View from the United States," *MATRIZES* 17, no. 3 (2023).

<sup>29</sup> As Mattelart himself has noted, there were precedents in Venezuela for critical and cultural communication studies in the region, led by Antonio Pasquali at the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) (Mattelart, introduction to *Communication and Class Struggle* 1, 32). On Pasquali and UCV in the 1950s and '60s, see Emiliano Sanchez Narvarte, "Antonio Pasquali, un itinerario intelectual transnacional: Comunicación, cultura y política (1958–1989)" (PhD diss., Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Originally published as a special issue of *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* 3, and then as a stand-alone book: Armand Mattelart, Mabel Piccini, and Michèle Mattelart, *Los medios de comunicación de masas: La ideología de la prensa liberal* [*The Media of Mass Communication: The Ideology of the Liberal Press*] (Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional, 1970).



Compare, for instance, British cultural studies as developed through the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Established in 1964, the CCCS was part of the British New Left, which expanded traditional definitions of the political, invested in culture as a key site of social reproduction and change, and sought “a new conception of socialism and a radically new analysis of the social relations, dynamics and culture of post-war capitalism.”<sup>31</sup> The New Left’s Communist wing was also committed to renewed thinking free from both the economistic orthodoxies of Marxist thought and the legacies of Stalinism and state socialism as it had developed in the Soviet Union. It was only in the early 1970s, however, when the CCCS directorship passed from Richard Hoggart to Stuart Hall, that the CCCS turned seriously to social theory and Marxism—facilitated by 1971 English translations of Althusser and Gramsci.<sup>32</sup> The Mattelart group was several years ahead of the work that the CCCS would be doing.<sup>33</sup>

The Santiago-based research collective was part of a broader formation in the Southern Cone that in the 1960s had been investigating similar problematics as the British New Left.<sup>34</sup> At one of its leading edges was a group of Argentinians associated with *Pasado y Presente*, an important, consciously Gramscian journal founded in 1963 and devoted to problems of culture and ideology.<sup>35</sup> Like other Latin American Marxists, they benefit-

<sup>31</sup> Stuart Hall, “Life and Times of the First New Left,” *New Left Review* 61 (January/February 2010). For an extended historical account, see Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>32</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New Left Books, 1971); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (International Publishers, 1971). On the history of English translations and receptions of Gramsci, see Geoff Eley, “Reading Gramsci in English: Observations on the Reception of Antonio Gramsci in the English-Speaking World 1957–82,” *European History Quarterly* 14 (1984); and David Forgacs, “Gramsci and Marxism in Britain,” *New Left Review* 176 (August 1989). On the uptake of Gramsci in British cultural studies, see chapter 2 in Marco Briziarelli and Susana Martínez Guillem, *Reviving Gramsci: Crisis, Communication, and Change* (Routledge, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> A point also made in probably the most penetrating historical-cum-theoretical accounts of Mattelart’s work in Chile that has been published in English: Timothy Brennan and Ewart Skinner, “Communication and Cultural Theory: Armand Mattelart in Chile,” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 10 (1990).

<sup>34</sup> On the Latin American left in the 1960s, see Jeffrey L. Gould, “Solidarity Under Siege: The Latin American Left, 1968,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (2009); Eric Zolov, introduction to “Latin America in the Global Sixties,” special issue, *The Americas* 70, no. 3 (2010); Harmer, “Toward a Global History of the Unidad Popular”; and Marchesi, “Southern Cone Cities as Political Laboratories.”

<sup>35</sup> Subtitled *Revista Trimestral de Ideología y Cultura* [Quarterly Journal of Ideology and Culture], the journal took its name from a quote by Gramsci which it included at the start



ted from a series of Spanish translations of Gramsci in the 1950s and early '60s, including the first publication in any language beyond Italian of *The Prison Notebooks*, in 1950.<sup>36</sup> That journal, and, after 1968, Mattelart's group in Santiago, read and incorporated many of the same texts that the CCCS group would bring into their work in the early 1970s: French structuralism, semiology, and other Continental social theory. After Mattelart traveled to Paris in 1968 and brought dozens of books back with him, CEREN's media research group decisively turned toward Marxism.

Beyond being on the front end of incorporating cultural Marxism into media studies, the CEREN group also led the way in prominently including women researchers in their work. While women had played a prominent if undervalued role in the making of classic media sociology at Columbia University in the 1940s, and there were important individual figures in other national contexts, it was only in the 1970s that they began to carve out a significant space in the field, fueled by the international women's movement.<sup>37</sup> We can see the fundamental contributions made to critical media research in Chile by Michèle Mattelart and Mabel Piccini as the dawning of this Second Wave feminist age. Like a comparative study of the international New Left and the ways it undergirded a heterogeneous array of critical and cultural studies of the media, the roles of women in the Chilean laboratory deserves an extended study. This is not a focus of Zarowsky's

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of its inaugural issue. That issue and a partial archive of the journal is available online at <https://americalee.cedinci.org/portfolio-items/pasado-y-presente/>. It included essays by Eliseo Verón and Héctor Schmucler that can be retroactively read as concerned with the nexus of communication and culture before that problematic was fully conceptualized. On the journal and "the Argentinian Gramscians," see Raúl Burgos, *Los gramscianos argentinos: Cultura y política en la experiencia de Pasado y Presente* (Siglo XXI, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> Burgos, *Los gramscianos argentinos*, 31–62. See also Burgos, "The Ups and Downs of an Uncomfortable Legacy: The Complicated Dialogue Between Gramsci and the Latin American Left," trans. Victoria J. Furio, *Latin American Perspectives* 42, no. 5 (2014).

<sup>37</sup> There is a rapidly growing body of work on the international history of women in communication research. For a start, with ample bibliographic references in each, see the research output by the FEMICOM project at the Universidad de Murcia in Spain (<https://www.femicom.es/en/articles/>), which includes the superb dissertation on women at Columbia University by Esperanza Herrero Andreu ("Aportaciones e influencia de mujeres investigadoras en las teorías de la comunicación: Una aproximación a la Escuela de Columbia [1935–1955]"); Elena D. Hristova, Aimee-Marie Dorsten, and Carol A. Stabile, *The Ghost Reader: Recovering Women's Contributions to Media Studies* (Goldsmiths Press, 2024); and, for Latin America, Yamila Hiram and Santiago Gándara, *Pioneras en los estudios latinoamericanos de la comunicación* (Teseo Press, 2021); along with the various *Mujeres de la comunicación* volumes published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (<https://fescomunica.fes.de/mujeres-de-la-comunicacion.html>).

book, but he offers pieces of the story that have been filled out by recent feminist historiographical work.<sup>38</sup>

From the time they married in 1963, Armand and Michèle worked in tandem, sometimes formally through co-publication, at other times as the closest of interlocutors, a fact reflected in their colleagues' tendency to call them "los Mattelart." Their formal co-authorship began with a study of rural Chilean women and images of them in US-backed development programs, which was the first of several notable studies of women, communication, and culture that Michèle would conduct.<sup>39</sup> Among much else, she would also coordinate a roundtable on Propaganda and Mass Communication with the influential Marxist sociologist Marta Harnecker at an international conference on women in Santiago in 1972.<sup>40</sup> Beginning with the pioneering critical study of Chilean media after the student protests of 1967, the Mattelarts were joined by the Argentinian Mabel Piccini, who along with her husband, the historian Sempat Assadurian, were among the Argentinian Gramscians from the city of Córdoba connected to *Pasado y Presente*. They would connect the Mattelarts to the journal and the community.<sup>41</sup> Both Michèle Mattelart

<sup>38</sup> Yamila Heram and Santiago Gándara, "Pionera: Los aportes de Michèle Mattelart al campo comunicacional," *MATRIZES* 14, no. 3 (2020); Ana Carolina Escosteguy, "Michèle Mattelart and the Open Veins of Communication and Gender in Latin America," *MATRIZES* 14, no. 3 (2020); Michèle Mattelart, interview with Leonarda García-Jiménez, October 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Michèle Mattelart and Armand Mattelart, *La mujer chilena en una nueva sociedad: Un estudio exploratorio acerca de la situación e imagen de la mujer en Chile* (Editorial del Pacífico, 1968); see also Michèle Mattelart's *Women, Media and Crisis: Femininity and Disorder* (Comedia, 1986), which builds from her experience studying women and media in Chile. For Michèle's memories of Chilean women's movements and research about women and media, see her "Chile: The Feminine Side of the Coup or When Bourgeois Women Take to the Streets," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report* 9, no. 6 (1975); "Mujeres y medios: Memorias de un pensamiento crítico," in *Crítica feminista y comunicación*, ed. M.J. Sánchez Leyva and A. Reigada Olaizola (Comunicación Social, 2007); and "Género, comunicación e investigación desarrollada por mujeres," *Revista de la Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación* 1, no. 2 (2014). For discussions of her work on women and communication, see Heram and Gándara, "Pionera"; and Escosteguy, "Michèle Mattelart."

<sup>40</sup> In October of 1972, the Second Latin American Conference on Women (Segundo Seminario Latinoamericano de Mujeres), sponsored by the International Democratic Federation of Women, took place in Santiago and included the roundtable on propaganda and mass communication (Hebe Ortega, "El proceso chileno: algunas observaciones sobre la participación de la mujer," *Revista de Psicología* 6 [1973]). Harnecker (1937–2019), who had studied with Louis Althusser in Paris, would become "one of the most influential Marxist theorists in the Latin American left," and her book *The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism* (originally published in Spanish in 1969) "had far-reaching impact" (Jorge G. Castañeda, "Marta Harnecker and the Death of the Latin American Hard Left," *New York Times*, June 25, 2019).

<sup>41</sup> Mariano Zarowsky, "Entre Paris y Santiago de Chile: Circulación de ideas y redes intelectuales en la recepción de Armand Mattelart de la semiología y la problemática ide-

and Piccini were powerful intellects on their own, and one could make the case that it was their contributions to the collaborations with Armand that launched the critical media studies of the Chilean laboratory and served as a catalyst for what he would do afterwards. Though the fuller story has yet to be told, in Santiago there was a place for women in media research and for studies of women in the media that wouldn't open in the US or Europe for several more years.<sup>42</sup>

In sum, there is an argument for adding Santiago to the list of places that populate the historical imaginary of media and communication theory in the Anglophone world. Along with Chicago in the first decades of the twentieth century, Frankfurt and New York City in the 1930s and '40s, Toronto in the 1950s and '60s, and Birmingham in the 1970s and '80s, we could add Santiago, ca. 1967–1973.<sup>43</sup> This would be a step toward a more global map of the geographical sites of interaction and intellectual labor that have been particularly productive in the transnational intellectual history of the field.

### *“The Popular International of Communication”*

Among those who visited the Chilean socialist laboratory were the trailblazing North American political economists of communication Herbert Schiller and Dallas Smythe, who traveled to Santiago de Chile in July of 1971, less than a year after Allende's election.<sup>44</sup> Their visit opened a third axis of in-

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ológica,” *Question 1* (2008). On Piccini, see Yamila Hiram and Santiago Gándara, “Visibilidad y reconocimiento a las mujeres pioneras del campo comunicacional latinoamericano: Un análisis de la trayectoria de Mabel Piccini,” *Revista Mediterráneo de Comunicación* 12, no. 2 (2021); and Malvina Rodríguez, Carla Avandaño, and Paula Navarro, “Mabel Piccini: Recorriendo las redes de la tejedora invisible; Una reconstrucción de la vida y la trayectoria de la intelectual Cordobesa,” in *Mujeres de la comunicación: Argentina*, ed. Alejandra García Vargas, Nancy Díaz Larrañaga, and Larisa Kejval (Friedrich Ebert, 2022).

<sup>42</sup> This work took place in a complex sociopolitical context for women in Chile. On the one hand, some Chilean women became militant left-wing feminists during the 1960s, and the Allende government made efforts to advance women's rights, proposing a Ministry of the Woman. On the other, there was a strong, conservative women's movement organized in opposition to his socialist government. On the former, see Gina Inostroza Retamal, “Sujetividades rebeldes: Las trayectorias militantes de mujeres y conciencia feminista en Concepción y Santiago 1960–1980,” *Revista de Historia* 2, no. 29 (2022); on the latter, Lisa Baldez, *Why Women Protest: Women's Movements in Chile* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Michèle Mattelart, *Women, Media and Crisis*.

<sup>43</sup> If it were more central in the Anglophone world, one would add Paris in the 1960s, organized by the Centre d'études de communications de masse (CECMAS), begun by Georges Friedmann, Edgar Morin, and Roland Barthes.

<sup>44</sup> Herbert Schiller and Dallas Smythe, “Chile: An End to Cultural Colonialism,” *International Observer* 9 (1972); Andrew Williams, “The Herbert Schiller Papers and a Glimpse of Salvador Allende's Chile,” Annenberg School for Communication Library Archives Blog,

tellectual and interpersonal exchange for the development of the Mattelart group's critical media research, supplementing the internal networks within Latin America and the connections with France that had largely defined it.<sup>45</sup> Mattelart would later say that the trip would "strengthen his ties" with the critical scholars from the North, whose work paralleled what the Mattelart group was already doing in their study of the Chilean liberal press.<sup>46</sup> Schiller and Smythe arranged an invitation for Mattelart to attend a conference on Communications Technology and Social Policy organized by George Gerbner at the Annenberg School for Communication in Philadelphia in 1972, which strengthened his connection with US-based scholars. Schiller and Smythe would bring Mattelart into the circles of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR), where they organized a new Political Economy section, while Gerbner would invite Mattelart to contribute to the field-defining "Ferment in the Field" issue of the *Journal of Communication*, published in 1983.

Zarowsky offers the concept of "a popular international of communication" to capture these kinds of politically engaged leftist networks of scholars, activists, governments, and international organizations that were highly active from the late 1960s until the neoliberal revolution of the 1980s. It is a valuable, historically specific framework made possible by Zarowsky's careful attention to the social connections among Marxist and other progressive scholars in the era and their meaningful agency in shaping national and international policy through writing, editing, pedagogy, and direct intervention. Most famously, it advanced the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order.<sup>47</sup> As Zarowsky shows, Mattelart was a significant node in this popular international who did particularly important work in facilitating points of contact between the Global North and South—as well as within each of those world regions. Chile and France would be the main geopolitical loci of his intellectual production (with sig-

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January 29, 2025.

<sup>45</sup> One could add their relation to US functionalist social science, embodied for a time in Chile by Charles R. Wright, which stood in as the dominant paradigm against which the critical Marxians defined their own work.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Fernanda Beigel in *Misión Santiago*, 190.

<sup>47</sup> Vanessa Freije, "The 'Emancipation of Media': Latin American Advocacy for a New International Information Order in the 1970s," *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 2 (2019); Jonas Brendebach, "Contested Sovereignities: The Case of the 'New World Information and Communication Order' at UNESCO in the 1970s," in *Cultural Sovereignty Beyond the Modern State: Space, Objects, and Media*, ed. Gregor Feindt, Bernhard Gissibl, and Johannes Paulmann (De Gruyter, 2021).

nificant forays into post-revolutionary Mozambique [1978] and Nicaragua [1985]), but his efforts extended far beyond. He had a unique and highly important international profile, which Zarowsky reconstructs.

One important vehicle for this work across Latin America was the journal *Comunicación y Cultura*, whose publication (from 1973 to 1985) reflects another significant episode in the global history of communication studies largely unknown outside Latin America. The names that appear in the journal could serve as a rough guide to a swath of the popular international that cut across Latin America and was linked, often through Mattelart, to France and regions beyond. *Comunicación y Cultura* was a product of the transnational intellectual community of the Southern Cone in the early 1970s. The idea came out of a meeting organized by Mario Kaplún, a Jewish-born Argentinian convert to Catholicism exiled in Uruguay, who collaborated with Jesuit efforts at *comunicación social* through television, education, and research.<sup>48</sup> Kaplún brought together Mattelart and the other two founding editors of the journal. One was Héctor Schmucler, a former Communist Party militant who turned in more heterodox directions with the 1963 founding of *Pasado y Presente*, studied semiology with Roland Barthes in Paris, directed the Mass Communication series for the Argentinian editorial house Siglo XXI in the 1970s, and wrote many essays on media, culture, and technology.<sup>49</sup> (He also wrote the preface for the original edition of Zarowsky's book). The other was Hugo Assmann, the Brazilian liberation theologian, then exiled in Chile, who had an interest in communication as emancipatory "emotive-utopic" socialist praxis.<sup>50</sup> The mix of Marxists and Jesuits reflects the entwined intellectual and political communities of the era while also signaling two lines of development of communication studies in Latin America. The

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<sup>48</sup> Florencia Soria, "The Christian Communicator: The Intellectual Trajectory of Mario Kaplún from the Fifties to the Seventies," paper presented to the History of Media Studies Working Group, Consortium for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine (virtual), March 19, 2025.

<sup>49</sup> Mariano Zarowsky, "Héctor Schmucler: Izquierdas, vanguardias, comunicación," in *Pensadoras de la comunicación argentina*, ed. Guillermo Mastrini, María Graciela Rodríguez, and Mariano Zarowsky (Ediciones UNGS, 2020); Héctor Schmucler, *Memoria de la comunicación* (Biblos, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Hugo Assmann, "Las necesidades emotivo-utópicas de las masas y la comunicación masiva" [The emotive-utopic needs of the masses and mass communication], in *Comunicación y Cambio Social*, ed. Peter Shenkel and Marco Ordoñez, 2nd ed. (Editora Andina, 1981). The text was originally presented at the important 1972 Costa Rica meeting that played a significant role in the institutionalization of Latin American communication studies: *El papel sociopolítico de los medios de comunicación para la sociedad de cambio in América Latina* [The Sociopolitical Role of Communication Media for Social Change in Latin America]. Little seems to have been written about Assmann's contributions to communication studies.

journal was a self-consciously Gramscian initiative whose first issue reflected these currents. It would be “an organ for linking and expression of diverse experiences that are gestating in Latin America in the field of mass communication . . . [particularly] those that favor the processes of the total liberation of our dependent societies.”<sup>51</sup> The journal’s publication home followed the trail of exiles from the Southern Cone: from Santiago for the first volume in 1973, to Buenos Aires after the Chilean coup, and then to Mexico City from 1978 to 1985, when Schmucler was part of the wave of Argentinian intellectuals who emigrated there.<sup>52</sup> Mattelart would co-edit from his own exile in France.

Another notable locus for the popular international that Zarowsky discusses is the International Mass Media Research Center (IMMRC) and its book publishing arm, International General. Housed on the outskirts of Paris, it was the creation of Seth Siegelaub, an American polymath who had been an important figure in the New York City art scene of the 1960s. He moved to Paris in 1972 and turned his attention to communication and culture, fed by French activists and left intellectuals. Siegelaub founded the IMMRC the following year, which he described as “an independent political research institute . . . [whose] purpose is to document Marxist studies concerning all aspects of communication, past and present, and contribute to the development of Marxist communication theory and practice in political and ideological struggle.” Its library housed tens of thousands of books, magazines, and pamphlets devoted to Marxist and progressive causes, “coming from more than 50 countries, and engaged in exchanges with organizations and communication researchers around the world.”<sup>53</sup> Between 1972 and 1986, IMMRC published an annual bibliography, “Marxism and the Mass Media,” each with some five hundred entries. It was part of what Siegelaub

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<sup>51</sup> Editor’s introduction to *Comunicación y Cultura* 1 (1973), 3, quoted in Daniel Badenes, “Tramas de la comunicación crítica en América Latina: Orígenes y contextos de *Comunicación y Cultura*,” in *Redes intelectuales y redes textuales: Formas y prácticas de la sociabilidad letrada*, ed. Liliana Weinberg (Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina, 2021), 523. On *Comunicación y Cultura*, see also Victor Lenarduzzi, *Revista “Comunicación y Cultura”: Itinerarios, ideas, y pasiones* (Eudeba, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> Mariano Zarowsky, “Del exilio a los nuevos paradigmas: Los intelectuales argentinos de la comunicación en México (de Controversia a *Comunicación y Cultura*),” *Comunicación y Cultura* 24, no. 6 (2015).

<sup>53</sup> “What is IMMRC?” in *Communication and Class Struggle 1: Capitalism, Imperialism*, ed. Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub (International General, 1979), 446. See also Sarah Martinetti, “Seth Siegelaub,” trans. Boris Kremer (2012); and Götz Langkau, “Unpacking Seth’s Library: The International Mass Media Research Center at the International Institute of Social History,” in *Catalogue Seth Siegelaub, Beyond Conceptual Art*, 12 December–17 April 2016 (Stedelijk Museum, 2015).



in 1980 called a “continuing effort to develop Marxist communication and cultural theory and left cultural studies.”<sup>54</sup>

Zarowsky documents Siegelaub’s collaboration with Mattelart, which began when International General published the first English translation of *How to Read Donald Duck*, a project mainstream publishers avoided for fear of legal action from the Disney Corporation. Mattelart extended the IMMRC’s focus into Latin America and led their effort on the extraordinary two-volume anthology, *Communication and Class Struggle*, edited with Siegelaub and one of Mattelart’s relatively few books originally published in English. With long introductions to each volume written by Mattelart and selections of writings by everyone from Marx, Gramsci, and Frantz Fanon to contemporary communication researchers, it was a nearly nine-hundred-page anthology of Marxist writings on communication theory and practice from the rise of capitalism to the contemporary “popular and working-class struggle for the realization of a liberated society.”<sup>55</sup>

While *Communication and Class Struggle* has been cited (often in passing) by critical and Marxian communication scholars from the Global North, there is a notable gap between the ambition of the project and its apparent uptake. It is of a piece with Mattelart’s broader marginalization in the English-language iterations of the field, including areas where there is clear intellectual resonance with his work. Cultural studies is an example. Though Mattelart co-authored a book introducing British cultural studies to a French audience, the gesture was generally not reciprocated.<sup>56</sup> For all its spaciousness, cultural studies as it grew out from Birmingham developed a closed, self-referential sense of itself, with a history that ran from Williams, Hoggart, and E.P. Thompson through the CCCS and those who explicitly traced their lineages to it. There was almost never room to include Mattelart or the Chilean laboratory, or even to engage it with any real seriousness.<sup>57</sup> This was true even for that work that had been translated or published in

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Eleanor S. Block, “Reference Sources in Journalism and Mass Communication,” *RSR: Reference Services Review* 12, no. 4 (1984), 57.

<sup>55</sup> Seth Siegelaub, preface to *Communication and Class Struggle* 1, 19.

<sup>56</sup> Armand Mattelart and Érik Neveu, *Introduction aux Cultural Studies* (Éditions la Découverte, 2003). Exceptions to the non-engagement of Mattelart within cultural studies include Nicholas Garnham, John Fiske, and David Morley—whose former student Nick Couldry wrote a knowing review of Mattelart’s 2003 book, *The Information Society: An Introduction* (*Media, Culture & Society* 27, no. 3 [2005]).

<sup>57</sup> This is less true of genealogies of Latin American cultural studies, some of which make room for Mattelart. See for instance Mónica Szurmuk and Silvio Waisbord, “The Intellectual Impasse of Cultural Studies of the Media in Latin America: How to Move Forward,” *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 8, no. 1 (2011).

English and so was readily available. Moreover, what James Carey called, in 1995, “the interminable conflict between political economy and cultural studies” was, in the English language scholarship, framed through Anglo-North American thought.<sup>58</sup> Mattelart’s thinking in many ways cut across the divide, which both reveals the provinciality of the conflict and suggests that there was an established way out of it that had arisen in the contexts of Latin America’s New Left and concrete political work within the Chilean socialist process. The fact that North American and British scholars didn’t seize on that fact points to geopolitical asymmetries in the popular international of communication—what Mattelart called, in a different context, the “complicity with the law of unequal exchange” of researchers from the US and Europe.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> James Carey, “Abolishing the Old Spirit World,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 1 (1995), 82. Carey’s comment was itself part of a colloquy that illustrated that conflict, organized by Oscar Gandy in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 1 (1995). It arose from what Gandy called “an emotionally charged exchange” that took place at the International Communication Association convention in Washington, D.C., in 1993 and opened with a polemical statement by Nicholas Garnham, “whose call for a historical perspective on mass communication research had literally defined the scholastic approach to political economy within the field,” in Gandy’s words (60). Lawrence Grossberg weighed in, equally polemically, with a defense of cultural studies and insistence on its historical separation from political economy. Carey weighed in from the horizons of his pragmatist and Geertzian version of cultural studies and, drawing heavily from Williams, argued for the necessity of focusing on “the complex interplay between a technology and the entire political, economic, and cultural infrastructure built up in relation to the articulation of a way of life” (84). Rounding it out, Graham Murdoch made a case for disregarding the lines of demarcation in the name of constructing a more complete account of contemporary culture and mobilizing them “in the service of revitalizing democracy” (94). The question of political practice and the early connections of Cultural Studies to the New Left and working-class movements cut across the exchange. It is striking how much the Mattelart group in Chile was already doing these things while attending to ideology and cultural representations, local and transnational media industries, audience interpretations, ideologies, and class struggle while directly participating in a broader, national political movement. Garnham knew and appreciated this fact, as evidenced by the excellent 1984 short introduction he wrote to the English edition of one of the Mattelarts’ books (Nicholas Garnham, introduction to *International Image Markets: In Search of an Alternative Perspective*, by Armand Mattelart, Xavier Delcourt, and Michèle Mattelart [Comedia Publishing Group, 1984]).

<sup>59</sup> Mattelart, “Introduction,” *Communication and Class Struggle* 1, 34. Ironically, mainstream US communication scientists seemed more committed to facilitating dialogue with Latin American critical scholarship in the 1980s and ’90s. Many knew Latin Americans through development work in the South or US graduate programs, and some read Spanish. (See Simonson, Pooley, and Park, “History Across the Americas,” 203.)



## *Mattelart Today*

By guiding us historically through Armand Mattelart's career, Zarowsky also makes both Armand and Michèle newly available for our rediscovery. To be sure, Armand is the focus of the study, but as Héctor Schmucler wrote in his original, poetic preface to the book, "the recurrent presence of Michèle, his wife, represents a kind of parable of Armand's thinking, in which the subjectivity of the everyday does not diminish but rather amplifies the richness of his intellectual production." It would be more fitting to say *their* intellectual production, for surely the everyday, over more than sixty years together, has enhanced if not birthed much of their enormous corpus of work. That abundance is probably one reason they haven't entered the weft of our thinking about communication more fully. That, along with the fact that they don't fit neatly into a single national or regional tradition or school of thought and kept developing in new directions.

Zarowsky's book has the effect of motivating one to dive into this body of work—or it certainly had that effect on me. Both the early political economy and cultural imperialism writings and the later turn to world-communication would reward our readings today. For me, the writings that run from the Chilean period through the *Communication and Class Struggle* project have a particular draw, representing a different kind of Marxian project than those more familiar to us in the North—be it cultural studies as infused by post-structuralism, textualism, and the centering of discourse; economic varieties of political economy less attuned to class struggle, cultural praxis, or transnational industries and networks of power; or critical scholarship that emphasized critique, without opening toward a positive vision of a more just, humane social order.

Drawing synthetically from both the early and later periods of writing, the Mattelarts point us toward an overarching theoretical perspective that attends to the historical and cultural specificities of texts and communicative practices and their place in larger political and global totalities shaped by class and other power-laden social relations, and situated within the capitalist world order and dynamics of war and empire that have advanced it. While any particular study of communication is necessarily constrained in scope, what we might call the theoretical imaginary that emerges from their work calls us, if nothing else, to engage in thought experiments that cast specific objects of study into the flows of much larger social, political, and historical processes.

Theoretically, they offer an abundance of specific concepts that can function as critical heuristics. One is *mode of production of communication*, which Zarowsky discusses in chapter 6.<sup>60</sup> It directs our attention to the material activities through which all types of communication are produced, foregrounding issues of labor, while encompassing techniques, instruments, and social relations embedded in the process. While it comes out of the Marxian tradition and finds its most comfortable home there, it also has broader applicability. It could easily be extended in the directions of ecological or new materialist and actor–network theory directions, orienting us to the environmental costs of our modes of communication and the assemblages of activities and things that make them possible. Something similar could be done to productively (re-)engage numerous other Mattelartian concepts.

Beyond its theoretical richness, the Mattelarts' corpus offers an invaluable critical historical record of communication systems, industries, and practices from the era of socialist revolution and full-throated left progressive hope through the first decades of the neoliberal global regime that supplanted it. Their studies of then-contemporary dynamics of national and transnational media cultures can open toward a reading strategy that recognizes their texts as critical-documentary resources for a history of our own present.<sup>61</sup> This in turn can lead one into their world-communication genealogies, which punctuated their transition from communication research as an active component of concrete, socialist/emancipatory political struggles to a

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<sup>60</sup> For one version of Mattelart's account of the concept, see his introduction to *Communication and Class Struggle* 1, 36–41.

<sup>61</sup> To chronologically highlight just a few texts that are available in English, this sort of reading might begin with *Mass Media, Ideologies and the Revolutionary Movement* ([1974] 1980), which charts the battle over social communication and culture in socialist Chile and includes penetrating theoretical sections on communication as a fetish; and a pair of essays from the mid-1970s on transnational cultural imperialism, published by the Peace Research Institute of Finland's University of Tampere ("Modern Communication Technologies and New Facets of Cultural Imperialism" [1973]; and "Cultural Imperialism in the Multinationals' Age" [1976]). Other texts with similar critical-documentary functions include selections from both volumes of *Communication and Class Struggle* (1979, 1983); a report he wrote for a United Nations entity on the sociocultural impact of multinational corporations, *Transnationals and the Third World: The Struggle for Culture* (1983); another report, for the French Ministry of Culture, documenting imbalances in global flows of culture and exploring the possibility of developing an alternate "Latin audiovisual space" across France, Spain, Italy, and Latin America that could counter US hegemony, *International Image Markets: In Search of an Alternative Perspective* ([1983] 1984); and a study of the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of the international advertising industry, *Advertising International: The Privatization of Public Space* ([1989] 1991). There is much more, including work in his genealogical world-communication trilogy, but this line of research collectively offers a recent history of the transnational present regarding both US cultural imperialism and political struggles to resist and develop alternatives.

different register of inquiry, where history took center stage, accounting for the realities of communication that came to dominance. As Zarowsky notes, this era also coincided with Armand finally securing permanent university professorships in France, which may explain why these genealogical projects don't give much space to the history of communication and communication theory in Latin America. Instead, they re-center the North Atlantic, reflecting realities of the French field. At the same time, they are stunningly wide-ranging and provide a model for situating the ideas and fields of communication within a grander geopolitical history of empire, capitalism, and war. The next task would be to follow the methodological and substantive lead of the books and make Latin America and other regions of the Global South active players in the story too.

It would be wrong to say that the Mattelarts abandoned the political struggle they had joined in Chile in the 1960s, but it took different form as time passed. The revolutionary edge was gone, the socialist dreams disappointed, yet the genealogical turn to world-communication also functioned as a social critique of the present that made space for alternative forms of thought, practice, and policy. That all remains available for us to think with.

But there is another, more dispositional dimension of this later work which I believe speaks to our moment. At the end of *Networking the World* ([1996] 2000), Mattelart points to the dual threats posed by "exclusivist nationalisms" and "free-market globalism." They have come on the world scene at precisely the moment that the liberal ideology of progress and "the great emancipatory utopias" are in crisis. That crisis continues into our own day, joined by a third kind of threat, the rise of global populisms. In that earlier moment, Mattelart felt called to end his book by quoting Edgar Morin: "Our hope must abandon salvation. That is why I prefer to speak of tragic hope" (123). As he later elaborated, "Without utopia, there is no hope of another possible world, namely a fairer world that is based on solidarity. This hope is tragic because it is lucid. Breaking off the thought of salvation means leaving one's innocence and cultivating another type of hope."<sup>62</sup> Having lived through the military coup in Chile, the socialist government's failure in France, neoliberal intensifications of global capitalism, and much more, Mattelart was more than familiar with social distress and the loss of innocence. Tragic hope, backed by utopia, was what he turned to. Perhaps we should as well.

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<sup>62</sup> Mattelart, interview with Constantinou, 36.

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# Prologue

Héctor Schmucler

The year was 1973, and *Para leer al Pato Donald* [*How to Read Donald Duck*] was selling off the shelves throughout Latin America as no other text about so-called “mass culture” had ever done. To be precise, it was September 1973. A few days after the coup d’état that overthrew Salvador Allende, I received in Buenos Aires a telegram from Chile signed by someone who called himself “El Pato” (“The Duck”) informing me of his imminent arrival. For security reasons the telegram did not mention the name Armand Mattelart, but “the Duck,” without any coordination on our part, served as an unmistakable code word between us. And that is how Mattelart made Argentina the first stop of his long exile.

It was actually a return to Europe, from where Mattelart had departed eleven years earlier, headed for Latin America. A return, but also an exile. This Mattelart who was returning would never stop belonging to the region where he had lived the life-changing experience that made him what he was. In the “Chilean laboratory,” Mattelart had allowed himself to be buffeted by the crosswinds of history and there, in that place and at the time, he put himself to the test. Arriving in France, he recovered his native language for day-to-day activities even as he learned what exile meant. Exiles share their condition with foreigners, but they also know that they cannot return to the place they consider home. When others labeled him “the one from Chile,” Armand Mattelart, I suppose, must have felt like a stranger in his own land. It was in these conditions that he undertook the task of understanding communication in a globalized world. His perspective as an exile—an exile from Chile who continued to learn from the ongoing developments in Latin America—helped him discern the sometimes-veiled faces of planetary capitalism.

Being an exile does not imply only feeling uprooted. Exiles are also characterized by having a clear-eyed vision of the present, because they know that it is not necessarily the last word, and because, through their own past it is illuminated by other realities. At times, Mattelart had felt like an exile in Chile too: a foreigner carrying a knapsack full of questions who sometimes made people uncomfortable. A stranger who tried to recognize a diversity of flowers on the roadside where a less competent traveler only sees sameness. Mattelart dared to swim against the current in a river made of time that was *his* river, all the more so because he made a concerted effort not to be swept along by the current. It is worth noting that all critical thinkers, those who do not conform to the tranquilizing forms of academia, share the experience of exile, of exclusion: They are familiar with the wary looks of those who fancy themselves the guardians of knowledge. The turbulent waters of his Chilean river taught Mattelart to be what he still is today, forty years later: an incisive and critical shaper of lines of thought that help to make sense of today's world through the multi-faceted lens of "world-communication."

With painstaking rigor, Mariano Zarowsky reconstructs Armand Mattelart's intellectual journey in this book, from Chile in the 1960s and '70s to contemporary Europe. Zarowsky revisits the myriad paths Mattelart went down, across a good part of the planet; he stops to consider the multiple areas of knowledge to which Mattelart made contributions, and he fashions a meticulously documented and insightful interpretation of the life work of this thinker who, like few others, has left an imprint on critical studies of communication and culture. Zarowsky's assessment fills an important need: It takes an in-depth look not only at Mattelart's texts but also his actions and public positions, and makes a sustained effort to parry the stereotypes that still swirl around the perceptions of Armand Mattelart's thinking. Zarowsky's research confronts these stereotypes, takes them apart to understand their inner workings, makes use of them to construct a more solid understanding that does not dismiss but incorporates them as an analytical tool. This is not the least of the text's many virtues. Midway between intellectual history and sociology of culture, as he himself points out, the author of this intellectual biography of Armand Mattelart succeeds in writing a genuine "conceptual history," where ideas acquire meaning in precise contexts, in dialogue with other concepts, equally understandable in the heat of their own histories and the debates to which they were subjected. The approach that Zarowsky uses is doubly commendable because it not only underscores the ever-present risk of anachronistic interpretations, it also serves to draw attention to one of the greatest mistakes that commentators

have made about the work of the Belgian-born thinker: Zarowsky lays out the limitations and deformations that come from the repeated tendency to encapsulate Mattelart's expressions in contexts that are alien to the ideas that gave rise to these expressions and to the "conditions of production" of his writings. When Zarowsky characterizes the "Chilean laboratory," for example, one must read "the political, social and cultural laboratory where the *Chilean road* to socialism was tested." It was there, for example, in those precise circumstances, that *How to Read Donald Duck* was conceived, together with numerous essays that sought to shed light on the situation in which people were striving to wage an innovative battle in favor of socialism. What was not in doubt (is it necessary to recall that we are talking about the late 1960s and early '70s, in Chile?) was the socialist horizon that people seemed to imagine whatever their geographical location.

It was in that specific space, not somewhere else, where Mattelart staked out a position that did not always align with the orthodoxy championed by dominant factions of the Chilean left, afflicted as it was with a particularly short-sighted determinism. For those who shared Armand Mattelart's point of view, the option for socialism did not depend exclusively—or even primarily—on putting the ownership of the means of production (including strictly cultural "production") into different hands; it was more about imagining "another way of living." Socialism was desirable, substantially, because it implied the hope of freeing people from the bonds that held them down, rescuing them from their *reification*. The aim was to generate possibilities for people to escape the alienated condition to which they had been driven by a civilization centered on commercial materiality. Socialism, for them, represented the possibility of a renewed humanity where people could be themselves and where, in order to be themselves, they recognized themselves in others, their fellows.

Mariano Zarowsky's meticulous description leads clearly to the recognition that the name Armand Mattelart encompasses a whole web of subjects, a complex interwoven fabric in which other names from different parts of the world also stand out. The names of people that Mattelart encouraged and stimulated, and the names of those who constructed with him a shared perspective. In my own case, I acknowledge my great fortune—and this may be my only qualification for writing this prologue—in encountering Armand in the early stages of his indefatigable journey.

Among other things, the work you have in your hands gives due importance to the role Mattelart played as intellectual "translator" (in the sense of one who passes knowledge across borders), as a "mediator" and as

a “sponsor” of unique cross-pollinations of many forms of knowledge. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that a number of his books were produced in collaboration. None of them are free of Mattelart’s distinct imprint, but in all of them Mattelart has succeeded in sharing, stimulating, and multiplying knowledge through the thinking of others. One name, that of Michèle Mattelart, is particularly frequent, and it is no coincidence that it appears on some of the most enduring titles. In fact, I would go so far as to assert, along with my unqualified satisfaction in writing the prologue for this remarkably comprehensive analysis of Mattelart’s *oeuvre*, that the recurrent presence of Michèle, his wife, represents a kind of parable of Armand’s thinking, in which the subjectivity of the everyday does not diminish but rather amplifies the richness of his intellectual production.

“Armand Mattelart’s intellectual journey,” a kind of travelogue in which Zarowsky sets out to trace the long road traveled by this signal figure in the field of communication studies, offers us the compelling challenge of placing ourselves on a unique path that has no previously fixed destination point. Just as it actually occurs in the life of human beings and peoples, this shifting road suggests a way of living in the world with “tragic hope,” an expression that Mattelart happily borrows from Edgard Morin. A hope in which uncertainty is inevitable, which results in the creation of new possibilities, new meanings of life.

The route that Zarowsky traces, in the end, highlights the existential vicissitudes of an intellectual who is embedded in his circumstances, who grounds his research in both the fluctuations of history and the latest developments of the ongoing controversies about interpretations, beliefs, and collective aspirations. Simplification has no place in this uncompromising reflection: I am referring to the author of this book, but the observation could apply just as well to Armand Mattelart himself, the chosen “object of study,” whom I refer to as such with affectionate irony.

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup> 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 in 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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 cross-roads 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 heterogeneous spheres of social practice and intellectual traditions as well as cultural formations from diverse national spaces.<sup>7</sup> 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

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<sup>7</sup> 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).<sup>8</sup>

For our part, we have defined our perspective as a *cross between intellectual history and the sociology of culture*,<sup>9</sup> 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 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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<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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

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<sup>10</sup> 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<sup>11</sup> — “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 politics.

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

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

### *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-

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<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 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

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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).<sup>4</sup> 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

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<sup>4</sup> 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."<sup>5</sup> 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

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<sup>5</sup> 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 legitimization

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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

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<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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

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<sup>10</sup> 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 *denunciacionist* key is summarized by the author in her review of the so-called *ideological critique*.<sup>11</sup> 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*<sup>12</sup> 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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<sup>11</sup> 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 “denunciacionism” 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 “denunciacionism.”

<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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

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<sup>13</sup> 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.

## CHAPTER TWO

# The Chilean Laboratory: Configuration of an Intellectual Disposition

### *From Demography to Communication Studies*

In September 1962 Armand Mattelart, a 26-year-old Belgian professor with a doctorate in law from the Catholic University of Louvain and a degree in demography from the University of Paris, arrived in Santiago de Chile to teach demography at the Pontifical Catholic University's School of Sociology. Trained at the Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris, founded by Alfred Sauvy in 1947, Mattelart had been invited to teach a new course on population theories and demographic policies at the School of Sociology, and to get a research program started. The arrival of the expert foreigner trained at the venerable Belgian university and then at the renowned Paris institute needs to be understood in the context of a series of local and international processes in which great hopes were placed on the idea of modernization—to be reached by a variety of possible routes—which served as a sort of horizon that gave meaning and direction to the social sciences, and more specifically to the field of demography and the development of population policies.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> With the support of private organizations such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, the Population Council had been formed in 1952, and one of its aims was to intervene in the formulation of scientific programs in Latin American countries to foment *development*. Also, in the field of population studies, the Economic Commission for Latin America and

The consolidation and institutionalization of sociology in Chile, as in other Latin American countries, dates back to the 1950s, driven by two convergent processes. On the one hand, efforts at social transformation begun in the previous decades through a process of import substitution led to economic and sociopolitical diversification in the country, which called for “expert knowledge” capable of proposing alternatives to the process underway (Garretón, 2005). Certain conditions and legitimacies had arisen in Chile that favored the institutionalization and creation of an autonomous organizational space for the social sciences that, in that context, were to be seen as a kind of “conscience for sociohistorical projects.” In its early years, its main problematic would be the creation of an institutional foundation and a strong emphasis on topics of underdevelopment and structural reforms.<sup>2</sup> The movement consisted of varied but convergent lines of force. As Fernanda Beigel has highlighted with regard to the role played by the Catholic Church in the development of Chilean social sciences, this process gave great importance to the formation of a series of international networks and research centers linked to the Catholic world, more specifically, to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). In this way, the Society was involved in geopolitical struggles and the reconfiguration of hegemony in the postwar world. In 1957 the Jesuit priest Roger Vekemans, founder of the sociology program at the Pontifical Catholic University of Santiago de Chile, arrived in Chile under the orders of the Society of Jesus; his presence was a key part of this process and “represented the high-water mark of this international strategy” (Beigel, 2011).<sup>3</sup>

With the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation, Mattelart came to the Catholic University as a visiting professor. The invitation was

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the Caribbean (ECLAC), under the aegis of the United Nations, included a demography section, and under the direct supervision of the United National Population Service, the Latin American Demography Center (CELADE, in its Spanish acronym) had been created in Santiago de Chile in 1958. See Mattelart and Mattelart (1982 [1964]).

<sup>2</sup> The School of Sociology of the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile was created in 1959, in a context characterized by the rapid creation, institutionalization, and professionalization of the discipline. According to Manuel Garretón (2005), this school would struggle through the early '60s with disagreement between “teaching sociologists” and “professional sociologists.” While its director, Roger Vekemans, gave priority from the beginning to the development of the Catholic Church’s social philosophy and social doctrine, the process soon consolidated around the paradigm of the “professional scientist,” in part, Garretón observes, due to the influence of foreign guest professors (Vekemans himself encouraged the invitations) and locals who had studied abroad.

<sup>3</sup> In her research, Fernanda Beigel argues that the Catholic University of Louvain—where Mattelart studied law—was one of the keys that explains the academic and intellectual migrations that took place within the Jesuits’ worldwide networks.

made thanks to the mediation of François Houtart (Catholic priest and Marxist sociologist) and at the request of Roger Vekemans, who was anxious to incorporate a demography professor; it was part of a larger process of internationalizing certain networks affiliated with pontifical institutions, which were eager to stake out a differentiated position on issues related to population and family planning. In late 1962, Vekemans assigned Mattelart to participate in the Center for Social Development in Latin America (DESAL, in its Spanish acronym), which he had inaugurated a short time earlier.<sup>4</sup> While engaged in his teaching duties, Mattelart also found time to update demographic research and data collection methods, and in 1964 published the *Manual de análisis demográfico* [*Demographic Analysis Manual*], an instructional text for disseminating knowledge, aimed at Chilean and Latin American researchers, that proposed a general methodology and model for undertaking population studies. At this point, Mattelart—introduced by Vekemans in the book’s prologue as an “expert advisor”—identified wholeheartedly with the expectations that had brought him to South America, and he hoped the manual would help “integrate certain demographic elements into the formulation of economic and, above all, social development plans” (Mattelart, 1964: XI). While the project overlapped with the modernization paradigm that was part of the emergence and consolidation of Latin American social sciences, it would be a mistake to recognize just one paradigm for development or a homogeneity among the institutional projects that promoted it.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, the type of sociology pursued at the Catholic University (in an atmosphere of relative pluralism based on a certain openness in the Latin American Church) was distinctive, blending the humanistic philosophical

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<sup>4</sup> The DESAL set out to make a diagnosis of economic and social development in Latin America and formed part of a Catholic network that linked priests and academics (Beigel, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> The most widespread version of this line of thought, which tends to construct a homogenous vision, maintains that starting in the 1950s a reorientation of the social sciences in Latin America began to take root, under the influence of “CEPAL’s thinking,” with a focus on explaining and overcoming the conditions of so-called “underdevelopment” (Fuentes Navarro, 1992: 72–74). To put it briefly, and therefore somewhat schematically, the “modernization” of science—understood in terms of the parameters of North American empiricism, i.e., guided by the principles of objectivity, verification by observation, evaluative neutrality, and an emphasis on methodology—was considered one of the necessary conditions for development and overcoming the “backwardness” of “traditional societies,” which were defined as such by economic theories that sought development as the overriding goal (Blanco, 2006: 204–213). In this sense, the modernizing paradigm assumed a certain definition of science and a certain type of scientist. Garretón (2005) characterized this period as dominated by a “professional scientific” project based on a modernization of the discipline, specialization, the consolidation of the professional role of the sociologist, and the preponderance of the structural-functionalist approach.

tradition with an interest in the modernization of the social sciences. Thus, in a way Mattelart's first "demographic" studies in Chile point to the heterogeneity of matrices that made up this modernization paradigm.

With the change in the social and political conditions in Chile brought about by the victory of the Christian Democrats (DC, in the Spanish acronym)—who won the 1964 elections with a reform agenda summarized by the slogan "Revolution in freedom"—pluralism gave way, within the Catholic world and beyond, to a rise of opposing political doctrines. While this victory to a certain extent dislodged from power the traditional, right-wing oligarchic sectors then represented by Jorge Alesandri, the contradictions and tensions within the reformist program precipitated in 1964 the "political radicalization process" that would reach its peak in the period from 1970 to 1973 (Moulián, 1985: 71). These changes sparked a certain displacement in the orientation of the social sciences (or perhaps we could speak of an intensification of certain tendencies that were already underway). According to Manuel Garretón (2005), starting in 1964 the social sciences in Chile "found room for professional engagement by formulating diagnoses of socioeconomic reform and policy, promoting development among the popular sectors, and reforming education." Or to put it another way, social scientists got directly involved in the debates about modernization and development strategies, by both participating professionally in agencies or programs of the state and reflecting on the implications of their scientific production.

It was in this context, between 1964 and 1967, that Mattelart worked in a variety of institutional settings, which we can define—using the concept proposed by Federico Neiburg and Mariano Plotkin (2004)—as a series of *spaces of multiple intersections*. Aside from teaching at the Catholic University, Mattelart participated in research projects for international foundations, in different state agencies such as the Department of Planning of the National Popular Promotion Council (Mattelart and Garretón, 1965), in the agricultural development plan for the Maule basin (Mattelart, 1965), and, finally, in the Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute (ICIRA, in the Spanish acronym), where Jacques Chonchol invited him to run the Department of Social Development. At this center, supported by the government and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Mattelart would establish ties with intellectuals of different nationalities and disciplinary and political traditions, ties that would prove to be instrumental in shaping his political perspective and interdisciplinary approach.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> At ICIRA Mattelart would meet Andrés Pascal Allende (who would be one of his contacts in the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR in its Spanish acronym), with which he culti-

This network of exchanges and institutional linkages constituted a framework of possibilities for problematizing the policies and concepts of development from the field of demography and the issues of family planning. Mattelart's publications between 1964 and 1967 addressed these matters and reveal an original take on the problems of development and modernization, initially imbued with a certain *humanistic* vision that circulated in Catholic settings—critical of the economistic and technocratic tendencies that drove the process (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1982 [1964]; Mattelart and Garretón, 1965; Mattelart, 1965, 1967)—and later oriented by the debates that took place within different state agencies charged with bringing the reforms proposed by Eduardo Frei's government to fruition. The result was a unique position that, on the one hand, shared some of the general assumptions of social theory at the time, but that on the other, bearing a humanistic stamp, questioned the technocratic options that superseded the spiritual and cultural aspects that, according to Mattelart, should orient the process. While it was not formulated in terms that would later come to be known as *dependentismo* ("dependence"), this perspective—somewhere between the humanistic critique and the critique of the dominant sociological paradigm—would contribute to shaping a critique of the structural conditions that derailed development plans.<sup>7</sup> In short, Mattelart's early demographic and sociological publications (virtually unread in the field of communication studies) constituted one of the many accounts that, oversimplifications notwithstanding, made up the complex tapestry of conceptions of modernization.

In each of these works Mattelart examined and problematized the proper place of social scientists as experts and echoed, from a *normative* perspective, an insistent call that intellectuals of the time were making to the social sciences.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in the *Manual de análisis demográfico* (1964), Mattelart ex-

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lated relations), the US economist Solon Barraclough (director of the center), Brazilian exiles such as Pablo de Tarso and Almino Affonso (former Ministers of Education and Labor in João Goulart's government in Brazil), Paulo Freire (who worked at the center on agrarian reform matters), among others (Beigel, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> For example, in *Integración nacional y marginalidad. Un ensayo de regionalización social en Chile* [National Integration and Marginalization: An Essay on Social Regionalization in Chile] (1965), Mattelart and Garretón critically re-elaborated some categories of structural-formalism and the sociology in fashion at the time—such as *integration*, *marginalization*, *participation*, *industrial society*—and using empirical research demonstrated the existence of what they understood to be a series of structural barriers to integration, such as class structure and the gulf between the rural and urban worlds.

<sup>8</sup> Silvia Sigal (1991) points out that between 1950 and 1955, the emergence of sociology in Europe bestowed a new role on intellectuals, who were beginning to be assigned the function of social guides. They were expected to provide options and shed light on the alternatives, not with illusions, Sigal observes, but with specific utopias and simple projects that

pressed a certain unease with the type of professional scientist and the partial technocratic gaze that predominated at the time in academic institutions, calling, from a humanistic perspective, for a synthesis of the epistemological and ontological dimensions and an “integrated conception of the world, society and life” (180). Later he would insist, together with Manuel Garretón, on the “close relation” that should guide the use of concepts and the social reality to which they were applied (Mattelart and Garretón, 1965: 13). In other words, the pursuit of scientificity should be driven, they wrote, by an “existential vibration” and combined with a program of social reform, because the “people” were both the foundation and the target of the developments of science. This task could not be undertaken without questioning the very conditions of production of the social sciences in Latin American countries, that is, the system that tied them to the science developed in the international centers. Along these lines, in a publication devoted to analyzing birth control policies, Mattelart criticized as sterile the promotional strategies recommended by some US sociologists as a mode of “diffusion of modern attitudes,” as well as the surveys that used market research models to sway public opinion and sound out the population’s attitude toward possible birth control policies (Mattelart, 1967: 152, 187–198).

Mattelart’s devotion to birth control policies, rural development, and regional integration led him to consider problems linked to the cultural dimension of modernization. The move toward studying the role of the mass media in this process seemed imminent. The actual trajectory, however, was neither linear nor necessary, insofar as taking the step involved a kind of epistemological shift that, while maintaining lines of continuity with earlier studies, would raise new problematics and ways to address them. This *moment of transition* can be read as occurring around 1968, in two papers he wrote with Michèle Mattelart: “La mujer chilena en una nueva sociedad” [“Chilean Women in a New Society”] (1968) and “Juventud chilena: rebeldía y conformismo” [“Chilean Youth: Rebellion and Conformism”] (1970). We speak of a *moment of transition*<sup>9</sup> toward communication studies and the problems of cultural dependency because in these papers we see the appearance of new terms such as *ideology*, *myth*, *alienation* (although they are not yet elaborated as concepts); the authors’ first references to Marxist conceptions (albeit in

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would address society’s day-to-day needs.

<sup>9</sup> Víctor Lenarduzzi (1998: 53) proposes this notion in his study of the journal *Comunicación y Cultura*. There he understands a *moment of transition* to be when a partial redefinition of a certain theoretical framework or problematic field is proposed, on the basis of a questioning that lays the groundwork for a subsequent formulation.

the context of a bibliography for dissemination); the substitution of the call for social scientists to commit to “social reform” with a commitment to the “revolution”; and above all, the formulation of new questions that threw into relief the lack of any theoretical or methodological basis for addressing them:

What is the cultural content of these two means of communication [image and book]? What are the values conveyed by the literary and cinematic productions that young people say they consume? The format of a single chapter is far too constraining to answer this *fundamental and monstrous question*. We will settle then for simply pointing out this *virgin territory of investigation* and addressing it, for our part, from an *angle of perception of the phenomenon of cultural alienation, which will remain morphological*. (201; italics mine)

While they took the “alienating” content of media messages for granted, they recognized the limitation of the perspective from which they had been working—the combination of qualitative and quantitative surveys—which left the *texts* unexamined. They thus found themselves in the presence of “a fundamental and monstrous question” (the metaphor suggests the disquiet produced by the presence of the unknown and the simultaneous awareness of its relevance) to which they had, as yet, no answer to offer. It is possible then to read a moment of transition toward the specific study of communication phenomena and the so-called “ideological reading” of messages. But the transition was neither linear nor necessary. As we will argue below, Mattelart’s participation in the mobilization and reform process that took place at the Chilean university in 1967, on the one hand, and his *disposition* (in the sense of *habitus*) to perceive the political and cultural echoes of May 1968, on the other, would frame his disciplinary, epistemological and political turn.

### *Between Marxism and Semiology, or the Bridges between University Reform and the French May*

In early 1967, universities in Chile were shaken by a student movement that took over and occupied academic units, demanding a program that was clearly identified with the traditional banners of university reform.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Up to this point, the university structure in Chile had not been substantially altered by the reformist principles that rippled through Latin America starting in 1918. For more on student mobilization and Chilean university reform, see Scherz García (1980), San Francisco (2007), and Beigel (2011).



mobilization represented a turning point in the intellectual and academic field of Chile, at the Catholic University in particular and in Mattelart's intellectual and political trajectory. In the Catholic world, it would sharpen the break between the conservative sectors and those who leaned toward Marxism or the different political currents that would later support the Popular Unity (UP, in its Spanish acronym) (Beigel, 2011). In the academic realm, it would give rise to changes in the universities' system of governance and institutional structure. At the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile, new departments and study centers were created—including the Center for Studies of the National Reality (Centro for Estudios de la Realidad Nacional, or CEREN in its Spanish acronym)—that responded to the reformist agenda that called for addressing the demands of the national context and reviewing—in the words of one of its “ideologues,” José Joaquín Brunner (1970)—the epistemological underpinnings of the knowledge produced and its usefulness for the process of change. CEREN's creation in 1968 would trigger a process of debate and reformulation of the perspectives for the social sciences: Voices there soon started to argue that it was not enough to promote scientific work if this work did not start by questioning more than just the definition of science's role with respect to society and the political processes of change; more importantly, it needed to question the epistemological assumptions of the dominant scientific tradition. Mattelart's participation in this institutional space was undoubtedly key in shaping his intellectual trajectory, and his profile as a researcher and specialist in matters of communication and culture. Mattelart was, along with Jacques Chonchol, Franz Hinkelammert, and Andrés Pascal Allende, one of CEREN's founders. He soon took on a variety of roles: member of the advisory board; director, researcher, and teacher in the Area of Ideology and Culture; and member of the editorial board of the center's journal, *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*. What distinguished CEREN in this first stage was the convergence of specialists from different countries and disciplines, the search for a closer relation between teaching and research, an institutional space devoted to the emerging area of ideology and culture studies, and finally, the search for productive collaboration between social scientists and emerging subjects. All of these elements, which he took an active part in formulating, would come to permeate Mattelart's intellectual stance and perspective, and play a key role in shaping a field of knowledge revolving around communication.

In overall terms, the student mobilization and university reform had a profound impact on a certain climate of ideas in which the field of com-

munication studies emerged and took shape. On the one hand, the systematic opposition of the conservative Chilean newspaper, *El Mercurio*, to the reformist students and their response to it served as a kind of watershed in Chile in terms of sensitivity to the media, especially for a large segment of the university sector.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the university reform provided a decisive push for the institutionalization of this field of studies, as it catalyzed pre-existing social demands related to the process of cultural and social modernization that grew out of the changes to the country's economic structure undertaken in previous decades. The reformist platform put at the forefront of its concerns the need to question the relations between "the university and the national agenda" and advocated the creation of new media to "nourish" this link. In this context, as a replacement for the traditional extension departments, new "offices of communications" were created (these would be in charge of managing television channels, with most of them in the hands of universities). Aside from the Area of Ideology and Culture that Mattelart would direct within CEREN, other teaching and research areas were created, such as the Department of Communications of the School of Communication Arts (EAC, in its Spanish acronym) in 1969, also at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, and the Area of Communication and Ideology of the Institute for Social Sciences and Development at the Catholic University of Valparaíso in 1971.

The repercussions of the confrontation between members of the university community and *El Mercurio* in large measure inspired Mattelart's team to follow the press and develop methodological tools to study mass media messages. We are referring, clearly, to *Los medios de la comunicación de masas: La ideología de la prensa liberal en Chile* [*The Media of Mass Communication: The Ideology of the Liberal Press in Chile*], published as the third issue of CEREN's

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<sup>11</sup> During the days the Catholic University was occupied, the traditional newspaper of the Chilean right wing undertook an intense campaign against the reformist movement and became its main detractor. In response to this situation, on August 11, 1967, students and professors took over the university's main campus and unfurled an eloquent banner: "Chileans: *El Mercurio* is lying." The accusation was aimed at a traditional institution of Chilean society and, more importantly, at the horizon of expectations on which the relation between the medium and its audience was based. The intensity of the repercussions emanating from the confrontation can be perceived in a somewhat unusual and highly significant incident: the debate that took place on Saturday, August 19, 1967, on channel 13, not between student movement representatives and university authorities or between students and government representatives, but between Miguel Ángel Solar, leader of the reformist movement at the Catholic University, and René Silva Espejo, director of *El Mercurio* (San Francisco, 2007). A detailed analysis of *El Mercurio*'s coverage of the reformist movement can be found in *Los medios de comunicación de masas. La ideología de la prensa liberal en Chile* (Mattelart, Mattelart, and Piccini, 1970).

journal *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* (Mattelart, Mattelart, and Piccini, 1970). We have been arguing that Mattelart's focus on the issue of media and ideology represents both a *shift* and *continuity* with respect to his earlier work, on a trajectory that moved from demographics, population studies, and the sociology of development to communication issues. One element that unquestionably favored the leading role he played in the institutionalization of knowledge about communication was his *disposition*—in the sense of *habitus*—to receive and assimilate the latest developments of a structural semiology that, on the one hand, had an inherent inclination toward formalization that contributed to a preliminary framework of categories in the definition of objects and methods for an emerging field of studies; and that, on the other, helped to generate epistemological and methodological principles for an alternative to the empiricism of North American media sociology. At the end of 1968, during a month-long trip to France that he made for personal reasons, Armand Mattelart would find a sort of key to answer the question he had posed together with Michèle Mattelart in their study of Chilean youth: how to address the cultural content of media? Jacques Chonchol, the director of CEREN, had asked Mattelart to buy books for the center while he was in France, and he came back with a pile of books and journals from François Maspero's now legendary bookstore, La Joie de Lire (Mattelart, 2010: 98): seminal texts of linguistics and semiology (including Saussure, Barthes, Greimas, and Kristeva), some works on ideology and Marxism (Adam Schaf, Althusser, and Gramsci, among others), and the leading journals where, in the context of an intellectual field in upheaval over the events of May, structuralists and Marxists engaged in fierce debate (Beigel, 2011; Mattelart, interview with the author, 2008).<sup>12</sup> Aside from Mattelart's direct role in this "bibliographical importation," it is worth remembering that this reception was only possible and significant given the author's prior concerns and the social demand to account for the media's role in Chile's stormy political process. This took on a specific institutional shape within CEREN, where a prominent place was given to the promotion of interdisciplinarity and debates about the role of culture in the phenomena of underdevelopment and dependency. It could be that Mattelart had the right dispositions to carry out this kind of intellectual transfer, in a political-cultural situation in upheaval, where the space of the possible posi-

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<sup>12</sup> We cannot estimate the importance and effects of this bibliographical "importation" on the intellectual field and the social sciences of Chile and Latin America in comparison with the work of other "importers," such as Eliseo Verón in Argentina and Luis Ribeiro in Chile.

tions in the academic field was undergoing change, giving rise to strategies for disciplinary shifts that redefined, as Fernanda Beigel (2011) observes, the specific weight of the kinds of capital in play to favor “activist capital.” For a young French-speaking researcher, who could have direct access to the latest developments in semiology and the debates in the leading French journals, and who had been trained in a discipline like demographics that was new and open to integrating a variety of social science disciplines (but was perhaps less susceptible to becoming the “total knowledge” needed for the intellectual intervention that the situation “demanded”), the introduction of semiology allowed him to bring together types of capital from different sources, especially—beyond that which accrued to him on account of his “Frenchness”—the capital that comes from political commitment and from “theoretical modernization.” At the same time, it is difficult to conceive of this disciplinary and theoretical-epistemological shift without noting Mattelart’s simultaneous turn toward Marxism and political radicalization. The two shifts explain each other, or to be more precise, are part of the same movement.

Even though they had no formal ties, Mattelart’s theoretical appropriation of semiology and structuralism was mediated by his reading of the works that Eliseo Verón and his team were producing in Buenos Aires at the Social Research Center of the Instituto Di Tella.<sup>13</sup> In both *Los medios de comunicación de masas* (Mattelart, Mattelart, and Piccini, 1970) and *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente* [*The Ideology of Domination in a Dependent Society*] (Mattelart, Castillo, and Castillo, 1980), Mattelart took Verón’s works and built a kind of filiation with the Argentinian semiologist.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the theoretical and methodological differences between

<sup>13</sup> In *Lenguaje y comunicación social* [*Language and Social Communication*], Verón (1971 [1969]) proposed an “ideological analysis of messages” and laid out some of his methodological principles, inspired to a great extent by structural semiology.

<sup>14</sup> In the historiography of the field, this filiation has not been addressed; more attention has been paid to the confrontation between Mattelart and Verón as expressed in the controversy between *Lenguajes* and *Comunicación y Cultura*. In *Los medios de comunicación de masas*, however, Mattelart wrote that the methods for latent content analysis used in structural semantics pointed him toward the new territory of discourse structure and went beyond descriptive juxtaposition. He then pointed out that the phenomena in question did not lend themselves to mathematical models, whose properties—and here he quoted Verón—“make it impossible to formalize the structural organization of the meanings contained in the messages” (Mattelart, Mattelart, and Piccini, 1970: 17). A short time later, in *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente*, Mattelart proposed a kind of filiation with the works of the Argentinian researcher: “This paper cannot be regarded as an isolated phenomenon,” he noted, “it is situated on a heuristic line that for some time has served as an axis for our observations.” Mattelart stated that his research belonged to a “current of studies inaugurated in Latin America by Eliseo Verón and his collabora-

the two groups were manifest from the beginning and ran deep (which is why the *filiation* constructed by Mattelart is so noteworthy: Perhaps it was a way to position himself in an emerging field). By 1970 he was proposing a unique appropriation of semiology, based particularly on an attempt to link it to the Marxist tradition, which distinguished it from the framework proposed by Verón. This critical appropriation—expressed here in a highly abridged version—assumed a social conception of the meaning that marked the limits of the immanent analysis of messages, i.e., the need, in his words, to “identify the sender socially” and to understand the *texts* (as opposed to those who emphasized the Saussurean notion of *langue*) as “convergences of social practices.” In this sense, Mattelart understood the notion of *intertextuality* (which he took from Julia Kristeva) as an indicator of how a text reads history and is inserted in social space; therefore, he postulated the need to do *diachronic* analysis, i.e., to not just identify the structures that frame and organize messages, but to give an account of their variations. Mattelart’s conception of *ideology* (which, following Adam Schaff, he defined as a set of opinions about the issues and objectives of social development that are formed on the basis of interests) placed emphasis on its determination of class and on its political effect. Verón’s conception, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on its formal functioning.<sup>15</sup>

The publication of *Los medios de comunicación de masas* as the first special number of *Cuadernos de Realidad Nacional* (no. 3) in March 1970 broadened the circulation of Mattelart’s thinking and produced a consecrating effect, after which he started to consolidate his position as a disciplinary reference in an emerging field of studies. In addition, with the circulation of this publication, he found a platform that would project his intellectual profile

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tors”; a critical current, he asserted, “and unfortunately still a minority position, which throws the postulates of empiricism into disarray.” By making an *ideological reading* of the dominant class’s discourse, Mattelart observed, using the term proposed by Verón, this current “refuses to consider said sender’s speech or message as capable of being exhausted immediately in a cursory reading.” For this reason, he advocated “the need to dispel the objective illusion” “so that hidden structures or secondary meanings can emerge, making it possible to decipher the functional messages of social domination” (Mattelart, Castillo, and Castillo, 1970: 5, 11).

<sup>15</sup> As Barthes might have done, Verón maintained that ideology was not a class of social discourse or a particular type of message, but a system of semantic rules that generated them. The basic mechanism of ideological communication consisted of erasing the tracks of this process of selection and combination (semantization) by which “discourse becomes invisible as such, and the receiver believes s/he is looking at an object.” The “ideological reading” of social communication that he proposed thus consisted of discovering the implicit organization of messages to account for their process of production (Verón, 1971 [1969]: 186). For an in-depth analysis of Verón’s positions, see Leona (2007) and Zarowsky and Cuesta (2009).

beyond the bounds of academia.<sup>16</sup> The “social resonance” of the publication can also be explained by the fact that in the midst of the election campaigns, the book shone a critical spotlight on *El Mercurio*, that traditional bastion of the so-called “serious press” and mouthpiece of the dominant class in Chile. One example of the breadth of circulation of Mattelart’s voice is an issue of the leftist weekly *Punto Final* (with an announced circulation at the time of ten thousand) that dedicated its cover to “The Masters of the Press in Chile” (no. 100, March 17, 1970) and offered a special eight-page supplement whose main source was Mattelart’s chapter from *Los medios de comunicación de masas* about the monopoly on communication and the press in Chile. (The book had come out in bookstores just a few days previously.) The publisher of *Punto Final* “translated” the research into more political language, placing emphasis on the call for popular control of the media. What this example highlights is the way academic research, political activism, and cultural journalism came together to construct the figure of Mattelart as a reference figure for communication studies. This legitimized him as a recognized public intellectual: Mattelart recalls having received a call from Salvador Allende himself at the height of the electoral campaign (Beigel, 2011).

In spite of his “founding effects” for studies of communication and culture (and the accounts given in Latin American communicology), Mattelart’s work in the domain of *ideological analysis* with a semiological imprint was short-lived. It is true that a few months after publishing *Los medios de comunicación de masas*, he indicated that the developments related to the concept of ideology and how to address it in “no way” represented “a definitive benchmark” and that he regarded the work done so far as an opening act, thus announcing his intention to fine-tune the analysis and “use it in future research” (Mattelart, Castillo, and Castillo, 1970: 6). But his project was soon

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<sup>16</sup> We can cite testimonies for all of these interpretations: Jacques Chonchol, the director of CEREN, presented *Los medios de comunicación de masas* and framed it within the university’s transformation process, pointing to the depth of the changes that it expressed. The authors’ aim, stated Chonchol (1970), was to “set forth the overall issue of the need to re-define the conditions of ‘scientificity’ in the process of transforming the university” (3–4). Some months later Franz Hinkelammert (1970: 172), a teacher and researcher at CEREN, wrote a review calling it a “high-level scientific book” that focused on an “underdiscussed topic” in the Chilean academic field, but that at the same time was accessible to the non-specialized reader. Eliseo Verón, having visited Chile in 1971, claimed he had on several occasions heard the story that “Salvador Allende, during the presidential campaign, had made explicit reference to that issue of the CEREN journal during a television show and had even shown a copy before the cameras.” For the author, the anecdote revealed “clearly the cultural impact of these studies within the Chilean situation” (Verón, 1974b: 16). Shortly thereafter, the writer Hernán Valdés (1975: 14) identified this work as the point of departure of the cultural controversy over the process of change.

to be modified: The date of the prologue to *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente*, where Mattelart expressed these intentions, coincided with the electoral victory of Popular Unity in September 1970. Salvador Allende's inauguration as president would shake up the intellectual field and reorient both the conception of CEREN's research activity and the institutional participation of Mattelart and his team. This shift was not going to mean the abandonment of semiological analysis altogether, but rather its reinterpretation within the framework of new problematics: the conclusions they had reached about the ideological functions of the press and the culture industry would be integrated into debates about the development of cultural policies and alternative forms of popular communication.

### *Salvador Allende's Victory: From the Ideological Analysis of Messages to Cultural Policies*

On September 4, 1970, Salvador Allende won the presidential election in Chile. Although there had been a high level of mobilization during the campaign, it was primarily after the electoral victory that a significant segment of the Chilean intelligentsia started intensely discussing their specific responsibility in the process of change. While the question of their social function and the call to higher levels of commitment to the political process were nothing new for Chilean academics and intellectuals, the UP's triumph made their decisions more fateful and reshaped the landscape. CEREN instituted a number of institutional and political changes that are key to interpreting Mattelart's journey, specifically the transformation of his intellectual profile and perspective, his participation in the political-cultural process and, above all, certain conditions that spurred the circulation of his writings and his status as a renowned expert in communication studies. We are referring in particular to a certain shift in its initial reformist program.<sup>17</sup> Manuel Garretón, who took Jacques Chonchol's place as director of the center (Chonchol took the position of Minister of Agriculture in the new administration), wrote at the time that reflection on the process of change presupposed the willingness to "bring about the realignment of scientific activity with social praxis" (CESO-CEREN, 1972: 8). Garretón imagined a wholesale redefinition of the social sciences, in terms of both their epistemology and their connection to society. In this sense, it was no longer postulated that the university's *relative*

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<sup>17</sup> For more on this see Chonchol (1969), Brunner (1970), Scherz García (1988), Munizaga and Rivera (1983), Diez (mimeograph).



*autonomy* was a condition for it to carry out its function “as a critical conscience of historical processes” by generating knowledge *about* society—in the words of the reformist platform that had given rise to the center—but, on the contrary, the intention to promote new relations with actors in the social world, that is, new conditions of knowledge production that called for reformulations of theory and epistemology (Garretón, 1971: 7).<sup>18</sup>

The intention to connect scientific production with actors from the social world found its expression in a series of institutional agreements with state agencies, such as the Corporation for Promoting Production (CORFO, in its Spanish acronym), or in the organization of the international symposium “Transition to Socialism and the Chilean Experience” in October 1971 in Santiago de Chile, under the aegis of the Center for Socioeconomic Studies of the University of Chile (CESO, in its Spanish acronym) and CEREN. This event opened a space where high-level political actors (ministers, officials) could exchange ideas with social researchers, while also providing an international setting that convened highly respected leftist intellectuals from around the world to debate the theory and strategy of the transition to socialism. Mattelart would be in charge of one of the few presentations at the symposium that dealt with cultural issues in the socialist transition. It would later be published in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* (Mattelart, 1971d).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This reformulation coexisted at CEREN with the stance of those who saw themselves, with their scientific activity and knowledge *about* society, effectively guiding the process of change. Thus, when they presented their research about unequal development, a group of researchers expressed their intention to “lay the foundation of a strategy for Latin American socialism” (Hinkelammert, Vergara, Perret, and Biedma, 1970: 12). On the other side, the talk was of formulating a “theory of the construction of socialism in Chile” in order to “contribute to creating a rational basis for social praxis,” i.e., “to provide operational tools for socialist policy and the execution of its plans” (*Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, no. 11, 1972: 274–275). It is fair to ask whether such formulations did not assume a relation of exteriority and hierarchy between scientific knowledge and social demands, where the former was seen as the foundation and guide of political practice.

<sup>19</sup> The symposium’s intention was twofold. On the one hand, to take systematic stock of the theoretical contributions being made at the international level regarding the transition to socialism and the meaning and scope of Chile’s experience after one year of UP government. At the same time, the symposium, in the words of its organizers, intended to “open up the debate beyond limited academic circles and facilitate a discussion with the country’s broadest sectors” by promoting the participation of labor union representatives, neighborhood organizations, political parties, and government representatives (Pizarro and Garretón, 1972: 8; see also Arroyo, 1972). Participants included Pedro Vuskovic, Minister of the Economy; Jacques Chonchol, Minister of Agriculture; Alberto Martínez, Head of the Directorate of Industry and Trade; José Antonio Viera-Gallo, Deputy Minister of Justice; Lelio Basso, former Chairman of the Socialist Proletarian Unity Party of Italy; Paul Sweezy, Kalki Glauser, Marco Aurelio García de Almeida, Vania Bambirra, Rossana Rossanda, Ruy Mauro Marini, Marta Harnecker, André Gunder Frank, Michel Gutelman, Franz Hinkelammert, Antonio Sánchez, Theotonio dos Santos, Manuel Antonio Garretón,



It is in this context that a certain shift in the orientation of Mattelart's work must be read. When he published *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente*, he framed his research as what might be called "a cross" between the *ideological analysis* of messages and the description of the ownership structure of the media, but after November 1970 he would declare a shift in the axes of his inquiry with an eye to creating a communication medium identified with the revolutionary context.<sup>20</sup> The seminars and research projects that Mattelart coordinated at CEREN starting in 1971 were framed within the Area of Culture and Ideology that he himself directed. According to statements made when the Area was featured in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, its intent was to discuss the concept of a "new culture" and to reflect on the evaluative and ideological aspects involved in the process of change, with a prominent place given to the question about the role of mass media. The hope was that the results of its research would lead to a "discussion of the foundations of mass media policies, educational policies, etc.," whereby the aim was to carry out the work with "direct contact" between researchers and the people in charge of implementing policy in the field (*Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, no. 9, 1971: 260). The courses taught between the first semester of 1971 and the second semester of 1972 in the Area of Culture and Ideology were for university students, many of them engaged in their own communication experiences.<sup>21</sup> It could be said that a circuit had been

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Mattelart himsel. According to dos Santos (1972: 181), Louis Althusser, Ernest Mandel, and Samir Amin were also invited but could not attend due to "last-minute engagements."

<sup>20</sup> In an article published in April 1971, Mattelart (1971c) pointed to the change in objectives by stating that deciphering "the ideology of mass media in the hands of the bourgeoisie" (in reference to his own previous work) had constituted a first stage that needed to "be surpassed or at least understood as merely a rung on the ladder of creating a communication medium identified with the revolutionary context" (173).

<sup>21</sup> In 1971 Armand Mattelart presented the research project "Mass Communication, Culture and Socialist Revolution," which looked at Marxist theory about "base and superstructure," the classic texts on culture and cultural revolution (Lenin, Trotsky, Proletkul, Mao, etc.), and the specific coordinates of the Chilean situation (*Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, no. 9, 1971: 261). Within the same area, the project "The Issue of Television in the Chilean Process," run by Mabel Piccini and Michèle Mattelart, set out to produce a synthesis of the topic—with a "practical and theoretical scope," they announced—that they hoped would contribute to "a concrete task of reformulating the mass media." As for teaching, Armand Mattelart would participate, along with other teachers, in the seminars devoted to analyzing the "national reality" (267); he would also teach the courses: a) "Technocratic Culture and Socialist Culture"—about different theoretical conceptions and historical cases of cultural revolution (*Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, no. 7, 1971: 208); b) "Mass Culture and the Socialist Revolution"—about base and superstructure theory and the specific coordinates of the Chilean process (*Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, no. 12, 1972: 285); and c) together with Mabel Piccini and Michèle Mattelart, "Ideology and Mass Media in Chile" (*Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, no. 9, 1971: 266). Mabel Piccini

set up at CEREN, a space for discussion and thinking where teaching and research were linked to professional practice and political activism, albeit at an embryonic level. Mattelart brought the debates that took place there into his own thinking, which was published to a large extent in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, the center's journal. Starting in 1972, as we will see, his experience at the Quimantú National Publishing House would be decisive for his intellectual evolution.<sup>22</sup>

It was clear that social demands were driving an issue that took on its own forms and routes at the universities. Already by the presidential campaign that would propel Salvador Allende to the presidency, the question of the media's role in the process of change was placed squarely on the agenda of political and academic debates. Popular Unity's electoral platform regarded the transformation of mass media as a fundamental factor for creating a "new culture." In this sense, it proposed taking actions both to free communication from its commercial model and to eliminate monopolies, and to make mass media available to social organizations who would give them "an educational orientation" (Programa Unidad Popular, 1969). But shortly after the election results were made known in September 1970, the project's limitations and contradictions rose to the surface. In the agreement protocols between Popular Unity (UP) and the Christian Democrats (DC, in their Spanish acronyms), a series of pacts were signed by which the DC promised Allende parliamentary votes in exchange for UP commitments to respect "freedom of expression," among other things. Or to put it less euphemistically: UP promised to make an exception for the mass media when it came to its program to shift some economic activity to the "social property sec-

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and Michèle Mattelart would also offer the seminar "Mass Communication and Ideology," which sought to make a critical analysis of the main theoretical currents related to communication and to design a methodological apparatus for surveying ideology and power structures in the media. As a result, they announced, they hoped to accomplish an "[o]verall evaluation of mass culture and a reframing of the communication medium in a revolutionary process" (*Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, no. 12, 1972: 281).

<sup>22</sup> In several of the texts he wrote at the time, Mattelart referred to these spaces of multiple intersection as a condition of possibility for his reflections. For example, he presented one of his articles published in the *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* and stated that it was not primarily a "theoretical" text, "but rather the orderly presentation of a set of ideas conceived in the heat of the current issues of the process in Chile, in team discussions and with fellow workers from the media themselves" (1971c: 173). In an article written jointly with Michèle Mattelart (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1972) the two presented the work as an attempt to gather "the fruits of the culture workers' practices," and they stated that the concepts and ideas expressed in the article came out of—referring to his work at Quimantú—"group discussions based on shared practice and confronting it every day with a process," primarily with "the members of the mass communication research and evaluation committee or section" at the publishing house (100).

tor”: The media could only be expropriated by way of a special law, with the alternative being their purchase by the government. This scenario would not change substantially in the following years, which meant that Allende would govern with a media structure hegemonized by the commercial model and an antagonistic editorial line: The dominant sectors turned the media into an effective tool for readying their ideological offensive and mobilizing the masses, which in the end would lend legitimacy to the conspiracy and coup d’état. The government, faithful to the commitments it made in the parliamentary agreements and to the “democratic path” to socialism, adhered overall to the principles of “freedom of expression” and refused to make substantial changes to the map of media ownership. Many left-wing activists in the field warned about what they felt was an underestimation of the cultural or communicational front by the popular forces; however, there was no shortage of experiences in which people struggled with the challenges involved in undertaking a transformation of communication with an eye to creating a new culture. In a context where the commercial model predominated in the media and the culture industry was well-developed and skilled in shaping audience expectations, the challenge was huge, not to mention unprecedented with respect to earlier twentieth-century socialist experiences, which formulated their cultural policies within a framework where the culture industry was either absent or inconspicuous. In this scenario, reconstructing Mattelart’s participation in the debates over the role of communication in the process of transition to socialism, as well as some of his experiences such as his work at the Quimantú National Publishing House, sheds light on the conditions in which his materialist perspective on cultural analysis emerged. This perspective was developed in a series of *spaces of multiple intersection* (university, cultural world, activism), where politics functioned as an element of articulation and meaning-giving. Providing an account of these hubs of intersection is also useful for highlighting the processes by which Mattelart the *author figure* circulated and was legitimized as a reference in communication studies in the 1970s.

One particularly important nexus between academic activity and practices related to the creation of alternatives in the domain of culture and communication was the participation of a significant number of social scientists or university professors in advising the Allende government’s Quimantú National Publishing House. It arose from the Zig-Zag publishing house, at the time one of the largest and most important in Latin America, which had been bought by the state in February 1971 in response to a conflict between workers and the company (Albornoz, 2005; Bergot, 2005). This might have

been one of the most notable experiences that the UP faced on the cultural front, inasmuch as it concentrated in one event a number of the tensions and dilemmas that permeated the cultural field and, in a certain sense and seen from this perspective, the whole *Chilean way* project. When Quimantú was acquired by the state, its directors wasted no time in undertaking an ambitious editorial project that involved modifying certain models and processes for producing its cultural materials; those intended for entertainment, especially comic books, were subjected to intense experimentation in the search for alternatives, within the framework of a broader debate about what Chile's cultural policies should look like. Quimantú faced the challenge of contributing to the creation of a "new culture" within the framework—and with the materials—of a relatively well-developed cultural industry that for years had shaped the tastes and expectations of its consumers through a commercial logic and with a particular vision of the world.<sup>23</sup> Unlike what happened with other media outlets where each party had its own mouthpiece, at Quimantú there were different opinions on cultural policy, because the different forces that made up the UP had been assigned a certain "quota" of the executive posts. It is safe to say that the profiles of Quimantú's sections and publications reflected the different perspectives of the parties that made up the UP. At the risk of oversimplifying, we can see on the one hand a line represented to a large extent by the Communist Party, which advocated "cultural democratization," i.e., greater access for the "people" to certain cultural goods, and, on the other hand, a line represented by the Socialist Party, which sought to promote political education for the purpose of raising awareness and mobilizing the population.<sup>24</sup> It is no exaggeration

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<sup>23</sup> While acknowledging the difficulty of gaining access to statistics and documentation, Solène Bergot (2005) estimates that Quimantú edited a total of eleven million books and sold about ten million—this in a country that at the time had 8.8 million inhabitants.

<sup>24</sup> The editorial department run by the writer Joaquín Gutiérrez, from the Communist Party, was divided into two sections: one devoted to publishing works of fiction and the other for "Special Publications," with the latter under the direction of Alejandro Chelén Rojas, from the Socialist Party (Albornoz, 2005). The organizational structure of the publishing house also included sections devoted to children's and educational magazines, as well as informational and journalistic publications. Of the books published, the collection "Quimantú for Everyone" took pride of place; it aimed to broaden access to certain cultural goods by making classic works of literature, especially Latin American literature, available to a wide audience of readers at a low cost. In the political book section, two collections stood out: "Classics of Social Thought," directed by Alejandro Chelén Rojas, which sought to form young political cadres in the classics of Marxist thought, and the "Popular Education Notebooks," directed by Marta Harnecker and Gabriela Uribe, which aimed to "educate workers and raise their awareness" by looking at key aspects of the current political situation from the perspective of the classics of Marxism-Leninism (Harnecker and Uribe, 1971).

to say that the differences in editorial and cultural policies were a kind of translation of the disagreements about political strategy in general, with the advocates of the *democratic path* to socialism facing off against those who urged the *insurreccional path* or *popular power*.<sup>25</sup> It was probably in the field of mass-audience publications—journalistic and children’s magazines, comic books—where the divergent criteria for dealing with the tension between “old” and “new” culture were most acutely felt—or, put differently, the contrast between the inherited ways of the old publishing house and the new content they aimed to put out. Mattelart was quick to draw attention to the issue and reflected cogently on it.

What can be “reclaimed” in the different media we work with and what most definitely cannot be asked in April 1971 in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* (1971c), a few months before he joined Quimantú. In this article Mattelart posed a series of questions related to the conditions for creating a communication medium that would accompany the process of change, and wondered—taking comic books and photo comics [*fotonovelas*] as examples—about the possibility and effectiveness of making modifications to the content of the messages while keeping the forms unchanged. In other words, he wondered whether it would be a good idea to insert “new values” in the place of the “mystified” vision of reality that such publications supposedly conveyed. Might the “transition period” have a certain specificity, making it possible and desirable—on the road toward the creation of a “new culture”—to deploy inherited forms while inverting the orientation of their content? “With the form manipulated by the bourgeois medium,”—in Mattelart’s words summarizing the question—the idea would be to gradually “slip in new content.” The problem was not a simple one, and did not lend itself to easy solutions; Mattelart warned that this possibility could not be accepted without giving thought to its implications and assumptions because, he observed, resorting to “expressive forms created by the old society” and “with connotations stemming from their commercial use” to convey content that denies the values of that system, represented a “contradiction whose different facets and ramifications” called for research.

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<sup>25</sup> The internal differences notwithstanding, both Allende and the Communist Party (PC) and other smaller parties agreed on a platform whose strategy did not stray from the framework of the democratic system and that sought to implement, within the possibilities that the accumulation of forces allowed, a process of far-reaching reforms. For their part, sectors of the Socialist Party (which had shifted their position to an “insurreccional path” based on the experience of the Cuban Revolution), together with MIR [Revolutionary Left Movement]—outside of the front—proposed an insurreccional strategy confronting “class against class” and the deployment of “popular power” (Moulián, 1993).

The second axis that, in general terms, ran through Mattelart's proposals regarding mass publications had to do with the idea of promoting "popular workshops," a series of evaluation sessions that aimed not only to find out more about readers' reception but also, more fundamentally, to integrate them gradually into the message production process. Taking the motto "return speech to the people" as his guiding principle, Mattelart argued that the popular workshops would serve to break down the messages' one-way flow and closed, or "canned," nature, in a way that, "launched by their sender to the 'masses' [they would return] to their sender, de-alienated and enriched." This is how he proposed to break down the stratification inside the message production process, so that the group in charge of creating a comic book, for example, would have to discuss "as a team the way to carry out their work with an explicit cultural objective." In his proposal, Mattelart imagined "workshops located in towns, working-class neighborhoods, new agricultural units," with the idea of creating "new community structures" in which to insert communication practice.

In one way or another, the ideas described here guided the first steps taken to modify certain publications at Quimantú. Not long after the questions were posed, the Section for Mass Communication Research and Evaluation was created and Mattelart joined the publishing house to direct the team, which included René Broussain, Abraham Nazal, and Mario Salazar. The section, created formally in August 1971, set out to study Quimantú's periodical publications. In parallel, the Comic Book Coordination and Evaluation Team was formed, a team made up of young sociologists and literature specialists (some of whom had taken part in Mattelart's seminars or Ariel Dorfman's courses) that proposed interacting with scriptwriters, artists, and letterers to formulate changes to the comic books and adapt them to the objectives of the cultural process (Jofré, 1974). The proposed changes ranged from the modification of the forms and content of the magazines inherited from Zig-Zag—which for commercial reasons continued to be published—to the creation of new comic books, with new characters, structures and conflicts that would express new world visions and value judgments. But tensions and difficulties soon arose. Some magazines saw their sales decline edition by edition, which suggested, in part, readers' rejection of the questioning of their reading expectations. Moreover, in response to the reorganization that was undertaken, conflicts emerged within the process of producing the publications. The Comic Book Coordination and Evaluation Team pushed through certain modifications in the workflow as a way to articulate the various production stages and ensure the participation of the different professionals—artists, letterers,

script-writers—in the discussion and conception of the publications. The “advisors” came up against the difficulty of getting the “makers” to accept their proposals and modify contents and forms, not to mention the main challenge: the ways of working. In their eyes, the scriptwriters and artists, most of whom were holdovers from the old publishing house, did not understand the objectives of the new proposals: They defended the “freedom of artistic creation” and refused to attend the new team meetings, arguing that they imposed overtime that was not paid. The advisors saw themselves as a kind of awareness-raising vanguard (Nomez, 1974). For their part, the “makers” felt that the “sociologists” “ideologized” and “politicized” comic books too much, when in their opinion comic books were meant to simply entertain (testimonies in Villafaña Muñoz and Díaz Navarro, 2008). To fill out the map of tensions, mention must be made of the typesetters—who in a way were expected to be the first readers and evaluators of material—who at one point accused the “sociologists” of “dressing” Mizomba (Tarzan) and setting his adventures in the city. This modification, which altered readers’ expectations, had been proposed from the advisors’ perspective to neutralize the “ideological effect” attributed to this supposedly modern incarnation of the noble savage myth: The conflicts were not between man and nature, but were social (Navarro, 2003). The problem became more acute when the managers or the typesetters themselves concluded that the alteration of the materials was causing the drop in sales and thus jeopardized the company’s continuity and their jobs.

What is certain is that as the process advanced, the differences over cultural policy within the left rose to the surface, along with the contradictions and limits of actual communicative practice in the context of a legacy cultural organization. Armand Mattelart would reflect on these points together with Michèle Mattelart in April 1972, in an article in which they reviewed their actions up to that point, especially the experience at Quimantú. They pointed out the need to delimit the focus of cultural interventions, insofar as they perceived that up to that point two different projects had coexisted: one, which tried to defeat the enemy in the cultural market and “permeate” the “uninfected” audience, i.e., the middle-class sectors that the UP was trying to incorporate into the spectrum of its class alliances; the other, which posited “the need to achieve a certain efficiency in class struggle, as it relates to the ideological and cultural field, and more generally in the struggle for power and the advance of socialism.” For the Mattelarts, the policy of winning over the middle-class sectors involved costs because it took away from the promotion of communication that, directed specifically at the



proponents of the process of change, would help to promote their organization and mobilization. As for Quimantú, the authors suggested that the publishing house had limited itself to working with the accustomed genres and formats that, as ways of organizing topics and audiences into separate and apparently autonomous spheres, maintained the label of an average audience (“women,” “young people,” “sports fans”) abstracted from its social register. They underscored the need to question audience organization by commercial criteria, that is, the “generic and socially amorphous” concept of “‘mass’ communication.” To change the situation, they proposed a series of modifications that went beyond the forms and content of the publications: They suggested using different criteria to define and delimit the audience segments to target, modifying or substituting some genres, reviewing and transforming the place of specialized content producers, and modifying the distribution system, since it was aimed at the individual, middle-class consumer. Following Antonio Gramsci’s instructions regarding the character of a cultural journal, Armand and Michèle Mattelart concluded—and their conclusion served to justify the popular workshops—that creating a new culture required not just coming up with a new world vision but also a new way of organizing it through the participation of a wide range of social actors.

In short, Armand Mattelart’s experience at Quimantú—within the framework of the overall political-cultural process and its debates—was key to his formulation of a critique of the abstract notion of “mass communication.” By concluding that communication was more than a question of messages and media, he insisted on the need to look at the material organization of the culture in which communication is embedded. It would not be until the late 1970s that he would come up with a more explicit and conceptual version of this conclusion within the framework of his proposal to develop a *class analysis of communication* or, also in his words, a *critique of its political economy*.

### *The Chilean Route at the Crossroads: Journalism, Culture and Popular Power*

After Allende’s victory, the expectations to deploy communication on behalf of the process of change, together with concerns over the opposition media’s attacks, led some left-wing journalism sectors to deeper discussions, and above all, to identify new challenges in the realm of communication. Four months after the UP assumed power, worries were expressed about the lack of a collective communication policy: While journalists linked to right-wing



sectors launched an ideological assault against Allende, the left was seen as entrenched in a defensive position.<sup>26</sup> In response to this situation, the First National Assembly of Leftist Journalists was organized. Held in April 1971, it brought together 640 journalists and representatives of political parties and different social organizations. After a keynote address by Salvador Allende, they discussed the offensive undertaken by the opposition press and considered a variety of alternatives, ranging from the formation of media cooperatives and legislation that would democratize journalists' access and participation in their workplaces and professional organizations, to different types of control of media workers (in some cases journalists had managed to publish columns expressing opinions opposed to the editorial line of the companies where they worked), including proposals of outright state takeover as a transition toward the socialization of the media.<sup>27</sup>

Mattelart was invited to speak at this assembly through the intermediation of Augusto Olivares, who was a journalist, collaborator at the weekly *Punto Final*, general director of National Television, and advisor to President Allende. Mattelart's intervention, which would later be reproduced in its entirety and published in a special supplement of *Punto Final*, already laid out the main axes of what would be his questions regarding the problems that the transition process entailed in terms of journalism and communication. He laid out the initial difficulty: Mass communication was the domain where Marxist scholars had done the least research, and while some studies of its ideological content did exist, "the most absolute vacuum" could be seen—he insisted—when it came to determining "and meeting the requirements for the revolutionary transformation of the mass media." To address this question, Mattelart (1971a) proposed, first of all, making a diagnosis of the "ideological offensive" undertaken by the press against Allende, and he described some of the elements that he felt characterized the "nature" of the "bourgeoisie's communication activity." Underneath this perspective lay a radical stance that Mattelart would gradually consolidate and develop over the course of

<sup>26</sup> "There is an economic policy. There is agrarian reform activity. There are plans for public works, housing, health programs. What about mass communication?" asked a columnist in the weekly *Punto Final*. He argued that it was also important for journalism companies to pass over to the social property regime ("La sorda voz de la izquierda," *Punto Final*, no. 127, Santiago de Chile, March 30, 1971, p. 12). While announcing the First National Assembly of Leftist Journalists and urging "an ideological offensive," another commentator quoted extensively from a study of *El Mercurio's* "ideological offensive" that Mattelart had recently finished ("La izquierda debe pasar a la ofensiva ideológica," *Punto Final*, no. 127, Santiago de Chile, March 30, 1971, pp. 26–27).

<sup>27</sup> "Declaración de la Primera Asamblea Nacional de Periodistas de Izquierda," *Punto Final*, no. 129, Santiago de Chile, April 27, 1972, pp. 9–11.

the process: If the intention was to transform communication and place it on the agenda for the construction of the socialist society, the question of the character of communicative practice called first of all for “denaturalizing it,” i.e., understanding it as a historically configured practice within the framework of certain social relations. In this sense, he was pointing in his intervention to the rules for constructing “the newsworthy” (governed by a sensationalist principle that served a commercial interest) and, above all, to the way of organizing journalistic practice, which even in the left’s conceptions assumed a split between the journalist, assigned the role of agent, and the masses, the subject of the news. From this point of departure, he conceived of the transformations that a short time later he would sum up with the expression “the return of speech to the people.”

The intention to make a Marxist-inspired review of culture and communication issues within the conditions peculiar to the Chilean experience would lead, as we will see, to Mattelart’s formulation of a unique perspective that was ahead of its time in terms of both politics and cultural analysis. While he did weigh in on points of debate that came from the left, Mattelart found a way to broaden the scope of a discussion that had mostly limited itself to the issues of ownership, media control, and the call for greater commitment on the part of journalists.<sup>28</sup> Although he agreed that one of the objectives of the current stage should be workers’ control of the media, Mattelart maintained that this could not “constitute the revolution’s sole objective when it came to mass media”; in other words, its transformation could not be approached by imitating the logic by which other companies passed into the realm of social property: What characterized the mass media was the possibility of generating products that were at the same time “power to raise awareness.” This specificity made it necessary to pose a different question about the media issue, which could be formulated as follows: How is the strategy of *popular power* reflected in the area of communication? Just as in the matter of cultural policy, Mattelart’s proposal for journalism and communication was structured around the principle that the people should gradually become the makers of their own news. The “information cells” and “worker

<sup>28</sup> This line would hold firm throughout the whole process. For example, the Assembly of Communication Workers, held in October 1972 as an alternative to a meeting of the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) in Santiago, released a statement in favor of a change in the ownership regime, but advocated for the “current moment” the development of a policy of “control” through the formation of journalists’ committees at each workplace. Together with a call for the constitution of a federation of communication workers, the assembly expressed the need for left-wing journalists to engage in “self-criticism,” and called on them to be more open to “translating” the popular wishes (*Punto Final*, no. 169, Santiago de Chile, October 24, 1972, pp. 30–32).

correspondents” organized in labor unions and activist settings—ideas taken from the Leninist playbook—would be the basis for creating spaces that, after critically analyzing the press and producing their own information, could contribute to the formation of a cultural infrastructure and an alternative way to organize information. Along these lines, while he did point to a role for the political-cultural vanguard in the process of awareness-raising and political mobilization, Mattelart had less of an instrumental focus than some of his colleagues or fellow travelers, and raised questions to pursue from a leftist perspective, matters that included everyday life, leisure, the development of a “new sensibility,” and the construction of a new cultural infrastructure.<sup>29</sup>

As the UP consolidated its position in electoral and institutional terms, the dominant classes modified their opposition strategy, shifting from confrontation within the institutional system to the construction of an insurrectional strategy that eventually legitimized the coup d'état in September 1973. This policy demanded intense work of ideological preparation: The press became, in Mattelart's analysis (1974d), a “collective organizer” engaged in creating the dominant classes' “mass line.” Although some voices protested the lack of debate about the issue (or its place lower on the agenda than “other priorities”), the truth is the problem was not overlooked among the forces on the left: Fingers were pointed time and again at the shortcomings in communication policy and the insufficient part played by the press in the ideological battle. But repeating the diagnosis did not necessarily translate into agreements to formulate an overall policy. Every time the confrontation grew heated and turned critical, the forces on the left once again pointed out their own limitations.<sup>30</sup> The arguments to explain the situation ranged from

<sup>29</sup> A short time later Mattelart would make a more in-depth systematization of these proposals in an article published in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* (1971c) that then—in a slightly longer version—would be compiled with other articles by Patricio Biedma and Santiago Funes by a publishing house linked to the Socialist Party (Mattelart, Biedma, and Funes, 1971). It is interesting to compare Armand Mattelart's position with Patricio Biedma's (Biedma was an Argentinian sociologist and MIR militant); the latter took a more instrumentalist stance regarding communication's role in taking over the power of the state. Mattelart, on the other hand, while not overlooking the role of the political-cultural vanguards in matters of communication, also insisted on the necessity, in the social transition, of communication policies to address other issues that in his view the process demanded.

<sup>30</sup> The difficulties were noted at the highest levels. In the evaluation after the UP's electoral defeat in the municipal elections in southern Chile in January 1972, Volodia Teitelboim, a senator from the Communist Party and member of its political commission, decried the lack of an overall communication strategy from the government and called left-wing journalists “snipers” (*Punto Final*, no. 150, Santiago de Chile, February 1, 1972, pp. 22, 26). According to *Punto Final's* chronicler, the lack of an overall policy could also be seen in the

“ideological weakness” on the part of journalists to the underestimation of the cultural front on the part of a certain Marxist orthodoxy and the right wing’s continued dominance of the media as a result of the government’s policy of “freedom of expression” and the existing property regime. Without necessarily denying these points, Mattelart’s analysis attempted to shed light on the depth and complexity of the problem and to identify aspects that were not being addressed in the popular field.<sup>31</sup> He was trying to elucidate a “communicative rationality”—a way of organizing the whole array of communication practices that emerged in the framework of a given set of social relations—that having been naturalized, even by the left, stood in the way of its own transformation. When he realized how practices committed to the process of change could reproduce a cultural norm that tended to undercut their own transformative aims, Mattelart began to outline a different way of understanding communication that questioned the abstract notion of “mass communication”; in other words, he conceived of communication as something more than a matter of messages and media: His intention was to situate it in a specific form of material organization of culture, in the framework of specific social relations of production.

At this point it is important to note that Mattelart’s proposals came out in parallel with certain communication experiences that took place primarily from 1972 onward, in the context of a polarization of alternatives and a class conflict that escalated with the employers’ lockout in October of that year. We are referring to workers’ takeover of some opposition dailies, like *La Mañana* in Talca, the emergence of the “industrial belt press,” and the takeover and subsequent operation of the University of Chile’s Channel 9 Television by its workers between October 1972 and August 1973. All these experiences threw into sharp relief what was at stake in the battle over com-

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Rapporteur Commission of Leftist Journalists which, while praised for bringing together journalists of different leanings, had neglected to come up with a “strategy to commit the entire left wing organically and effectively to the ideological battle.” As president of the Unified Workers’ Confederation (CUT, in its initials in Spanish), Luis Figueroa, also of the Communist Party, had lodged his criticism of the left-wing press, stating that its pages contained only sensationalism; he warned that the situation could not go on that way (*Punto Final*, no. 175, Santiago de Chile, January 16, 1973, pp. 6, 7).

<sup>31</sup> To a large extent these debates and exercises in self-criticism played out, for a wide audience, on the pages of *Punto Final* and *Chile Hoy*. The latter published, over two subsequent editions, a special dossier on the topic: “La prensa de izquierda. Examen sin concesiones” [“The Left-wing Press: Examination without Concessions”] (*Chile Hoy*, no. 4, June 7–13, 1972, and no. 5, June 14–20, 1972). The most salient article of the second installment was an interview with Mattelart and his team at Quimantú: “El periodismo revolucionario está por desarrollarse” [“Revolutionary Journalism Has Yet to Be Developed”: Mattelart and his Team Speak”].

munication and established the conditions for a theoretical formulation of the matter. Inevitably, the scope and development of these initiatives were limited, given the short time they lasted.<sup>32</sup> Not long thereafter, Mattelart, who had experience with some of these phenomena as a researcher (for instance the industrial belt press [Mattelart, 1974e]), did a stocktaking exercise that gave an account of how these experiences shaped the perspective he formulated. He maintained that these initiatives should not be overestimated, but rather seen as an “index” that bore witness to the conclusions that the process in Chile had taught. For one thing, “there are no possibilities of a new communication apparatus except through the creation of new mass organizations that look for or find new forms of communication among themselves or with other sectors in a process of mobilization” (Mattelart, 1974–1975: 32). Aside from what might seem to be an expression of political will, the formulation sums up a whole critique of the abstract concept of “mass communication” and outlines certain principles for a materialist analysis of culture and communication: Counter to any “mediacentric” or content-based perspective, it reaffirms the analysis of its functioning and potential within the logics governing social and cultural dynamics, with a special focus on the shifting relations of force between the classes.

This debate about the role of journalism and the media must be situated within a broader debate over the role of culture, intellectuals, and cultural policies during the transition period. Salvador Allende’s election had represented a sea change in the self-perception of writers, filmmakers, and journalists, who felt themselves challenged or “called” to rethink their relationship with the political process and their role as intellectuals.<sup>33</sup> While it is fair to say that the process of “the emergence of a new critical awareness among intellectuals and artists” had already begun in Chile in the 1960s (Garretón, 2005), and that the link between intellectuals and politics had traditionally been stronger there than in other Latin American countries, the UP’s victory without a doubt helped redefine the actors’ understanding of their practice and social function, which were reflected in the proliferation of a variety of intellectual associations. Some of them reflected positions that could be seen as corporatist (like the professional associations of writers and artists that hoped to improve the conditions and possibilities for cultural workers

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<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, we cannot delve deeper into the reconstruction of these experiences. That history has yet to be written.

<sup>33</sup> Various accounts capture an experience that many intellectuals shared: Allende’s victory was seen as a “call” to undertake some kind of “mission” as writers, filmmakers, social scientists, etc. (Valdés, 1975; Guzmán, 1981; Dorfman, 1984).

under the new government); others were more committed to the political process in general, and sought to find their place in the tension (which could be felt even within a single grouping, such as Popular Unity's Writers' Workshop) between a Sartrean definition of the *committed intellectual* (writers who express a critical awareness of society in their works but keep a distance from direct, practical political commitments) and the search for a new, more "organic" orientation, such as the one promoted by the Communist Party's National Assembly of Culture Workers.<sup>34</sup>

As for cultural policies, the "Basic Platform" on which Allende ran in Chile's 1970 presidential election aimed for creation of a "new culture" as one of the three pillars of the transition to socialism (along with the creation of the "Social Property Sector" in the economic realm and the legal reform that would give rise to the "Popular State"). Nevertheless, the process was barely underway when the main players in the cultural debate—from a range of political leanings—began to complain of a lack of a policy backed by the government and popular forces that, in the view of some, could channel the masses' participation and promote the creation of the "new culture," and according to others, could achieve consensus in the middle-class sectors that were hostile to the platform of change. Quimantú's publication of a cultural journal called *La Quinta Rueda* [*The Fifth Wheel*] (an ironic reference to the way culture was perceived as secondary in the process of change) points to an assessment common among intellectuals of different stripes. This does not mean, however, that writers, academic and political leaders avoided discussing content and strategy for promoting cultural policies, even when they regarded these topics as marginal compared to other issues.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, in the debates about the fundamentals of cultural policy we can speak, in very general and thus somewhat schematic terms, of positions aligned with three different paradigms: first, *diffusionism* or *cultural democratization* (aimed at making cultural goods available to broad sectors of society); sec-

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<sup>34</sup> Aside from the testimonies and the historiographical literature quoted above, for the documentary reconstruction of intellectuals' positions see Valdés (1971), the "Manifesto of the Catholic University's Writers' Workshop" (*Cormorán*, no. 8, Santiago de Chile, December 1970), and the documents of the Communist Party's National Assembly of Culture Workers (AA.VV., 1971).

<sup>35</sup> This somewhat pessimistic perception on the part of the main players (see, for example, Garretón, 1975; Valdés, 1975) could be interpreted in terms of their own expectation of becoming recognized experts or guides of the political process. An assessment of the policies that actually existed under the UP government is an area that historians have only recently begun to research. Unlike the situated perception of the main players, César Albronz (2005) finds that culture was one of the UP government's top priorities. Along these lines, see also Bowen Silva (2008) and Bergot's work (2005) on Quimantú.

ond, those more inclined toward the so-called *cultural revolution* (aimed at promoting the organization of culture around new forms and contents); and, finally, others who subsumed the specificity of culture practice into general political work: The Communist Party's formula stated that the new culture should emerge "from the practical work of constructing a new society, day after day, for the entire people" (National Assembly of Culture Workers of the Chilean Communist Party, 1971).<sup>36</sup>

From his work in different institutional spaces, Mattelart took an active part in these debates. His proposals were set forth most clearly in his intervention at the International Symposium "Transition to Socialism and the Chilean Experience," later published in its entirety in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, as well as in different articles that appeared in the same journal. One that sparked the most controversy among one sector of the intellectual field referred to the role that writers should play in promoting a new culture. Mattelart identified the problem of the balance between promoting freedom of creation (which should not be neglected) and educating the masses, the "mass line" that—in alignment with the direction that Cuban cultural policy was taking at the time—should be the measure of any cultural policy. In this sense he drew attention to the need to shift the debate about writers' freedom of creation and broaden its scope, since the idea was to avoid restricting cultural policy to the "merely" cultural, i.e., to a traditional, limited sense of artistic productions. Mattelart reviewed the conceptions behind the separation of culture and politics, and advocated, instead of an intensification of specialized practices, a total "culturalization" of so-called "political practice." He was reading Gramsci's notion of "collective intellectual" (Mattelart, 1971d: 84) and arguing along those lines against the idea of the role of writers "as the epiphenomenal conscience of the nation," highlighting the need to confront their particular voice "with those other custodians of critical conscience: the masses." As we will see, this was one of the formulations that one part of the Latin American intellectual field followed after the shift in Cuban cultural policy and the conclusions of the First Cuban Congress on Education and Culture in 1971. In this regard, despite other profound differences, Mattelart's positions coincided with Carlos Maldonado's (cultural representative of the Communist Party and director of the culture section of *El Siglo*, one of its mass newspapers) when he criticized the Manifesto of the Writers' Workshop because it postulated the intellectual "as the sole critical conscience of society, which implied a vanguard role for this sector in the

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<sup>36</sup> For more on the political paradigms of cultural action, see Néstor García Canclini (1987).



cultural process” (Maldonado, 1972). Maldonado was implicitly claiming the vanguard role in the process for the party. Similarly, Mattelart argued that the cultural problem should not be framed in terms of the regimentation of this or that content or the restriction of writers’ creative freedom, but as a question of the class that should direct cultural policy, which should correspond to the political party, although he criticized one sector of the left for the “verticality that tends to characterize party activity with the masses.” From there the aim was to delineate the location that corresponded to those who up to then had been “the privileged ones in terms of technique and culture in the process of cultural revolution” (1971d). Mattelart’s proposal was based on historical analysis of the location of different social sectors in revolutionary processes. It was important to keep the petit bourgeois sectors that favored the revolution, he stated—revisiting Leon Trotsky’s debate with the aesthetic vanguards and formalism—from imposing their artistic norm, their particular interest (“freedom of expression,” “creation and experimentation”) as a general interest, cloaked in the idea of being the “critical conscience of the nation”; the aim, on the contrary, was to “challenge their status as intellectuals, as artists, as exclusive interpreters of the world’s meaning.” This proposition by no means implied anti-intellectualism for the author. On the contrary, Mattelart was critical of the idea of proletarianizing intellectuals if proletarianization was understood at face value, in his words, as “shovel practice” (Mattelart was referring to one of the many activities in which university-types and intellectuals tended to participate), and he insisted, following Leninist thought, on the fundamental role of theory in the development of the revolutionary movement. What was at stake was not the disappearance of intellectuals but the redefinition of their relationship with the masses, where instead of being “exclusive purveyors of meaning” they should become, Mattelart contended (1971d), “monitors of meaning,” by way of a dual movement: “The *proletarianization* of the monopolizers of knowledge and the *intellectualization* of the proletariat” (90-91).

This proposition would be hotly debated by many of the signers of the Manifesto of the Communist Party’s Writers’ Workshop. Enrique Lihn (1996 [1971]), for example, devoted a long section of his essay “Política y cultura en una etapa de transición al socialismo” [“Politics and Culture in a Stage of Transition to Socialism”] to contesting the position Mattelart set forth in *Comunicación masiva y revolución socialista* [Mass Communication and Socialist Revolution] (1971). In his arguments, the Chilean writer made comments on the style and type of language that Mattelart used, accusing him of being overly rational—a consequence of coming from Europe, he explained—and



ignorant of “the concrete situation of the country he speaks of.” Read in the context of his arguments—where he distinguishes a Latin American style of thinking, more given to “images”—, the accusation against Mattelart was built on pointing to his foreignness as a key factor. The controversy also involved the content of his program, of course, because Mattelart assigned a role to the *petite bourgeoisie* in the cultural process. The way Lihn saw it, writers were expected to proceed “under Mattelart’s orders to die as such.” And more categorically, he stated that the “cultural front” that Mattelart proposed was “a kind of suicidal vanguard.” In contrast, Lihn drew on the terms of the Manifesto of the Writers’ Workshop that envisioned the co-existence of political-ideological work and individual creation, without dismissing the popularization of classic world literature. What was being fought over, as we have said, was the path and the “direction” of this cultural process. Several months later Mattelart would take up the controversy again and clarify that in his view what called for “suicide” was not the writers as such but the *position* of the *petit bourgeois* class. To put it plainly, this was nothing but a critique of gradualism: The first moment of the revolution needed to be inspired by the last stage, and the “unprejudiced” goal “of the inventive and creative possibilities of the proletariat should inspire the initial moment” (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1972). In other words, the guiding principle of cultural policy should be the “mass line.”

The controversy between Lihn and Mattelart sheds light on a dimension of the cultural debate that went beyond specific content: It laid bare, on the one hand, certain tensions in the intellectual field between “writers” and “social scientists” with respect to the places where it was legitimate to intervene as intellectuals (the consolidation of the social sciences and the commitment of their champions to intervene in public affairs on the basis of specialized knowledge undermined the traditional place reserved for writers as intellectuals);<sup>37</sup> on the other, differences over strategy for the *Chilean way* (between the proponents of the *democratic path* and those of *popular power*) and, finally, certain tensions that arose between the political and cultural vanguards over the direction of the process that was underway. This last point cannot be considered in isolation from the commotion produced in the

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<sup>37</sup> In terms similar to those of Enrique Lihn, the writer Hernán Valdés (1975) accused Mattelart a few years later of thinking that “*petit bourgeois*” writers “should commit suicide in order to ‘return speech to the people.’” To Valdés’s way of thinking, Mattelart had not succeeded in implementing his demand because, “as a *good theorist*, he speaks of an abstract people” and falls “into the idealism of assuming that in Chile the people actually had ‘speech’ at some point. His formulation,” Valdés continued, “completely overlooked the reality in Chile” (17–20; my italics).

Latin American cultural world by the shift that occurred in Cuban cultural policy in the late 1960s. If Cuba had “spectacularized” a traditional issue in the cultural debates of the left, i.e., “the relation between political vanguards and artistic vanguards” (Mangone, 1997: 187–205), in those years the discussions about the island multiplied all over the continent, generating specific ruptures and acts of solidarity: After the “Padilla affair” and Fidel Castro’s words at the First National Congress on Education and Culture, a significant portion of the political-cultural debates of the period made reference to what was happening on the island. It was as if the new Cuban context was undergoing a sort of Latin-Americanization (Gilman, 2003: 243). In Chile, where the possibility of a *democratic path* to the socialist transition was under discussion, the debate about the link between culture and politics took on special importance and was tied to specific circumstances.<sup>38</sup>

The conclusions of the Congress on Culture and Education in Cuba, and especially Fidel Castro’s closing remarks of May 1, 1971, had a certain impact on Mattelart’s positions. In his intervention at the symposium organized by CEREN in October 1971, “About the Transition to Socialism,” he gave his evaluation of the Cuban policy change after the congress, calling it “a process of maturation” that had taken shape in Cuban over the previous years (1971d: 95). Given the co-existence of two projects in the revolutionary process, this shift, wrote Mattelart, reflected the policy of “massification of cultural creation” and “the urgency of mobilizing the masses” around this task, i.e., a break with the implicit conception of the intellectual as the “wizard of modern knowledge.” Mattelart judged that the line of action that came out of the congress “could be constituted” as the point of departure for an “authentic process of cultural revolution,” as the only way to bring about genuine cultural democracy: by generating a new institutionality that would

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<sup>38</sup> Until 1968 a certain balance was maintained in the Cuban cultural debate between the positions that favored the autonomy of intellectual and artistic work and those that advocated its subordination to the “needs of the revolution” or, to put it differently, to the direction of the political vanguard. After that, the balance began to tilt toward the latter position. We can mention some Chilean echoes of the Cuban debate. Lisandro Otero, cultural counselor of the Cuban embassy, explained the new cultural orientation of the revolution in June 1971 in the Chilean magazine *Mensaje*; there he criticized—in practically the same words that Fidel Castro spoke at the First Congress on Culture and Education—the existence of “self-chosen castes” that “at the side of the road” assigned themselves the monopoly on the interpretation of collective events, as opposed to those who “sweat and work” (in Lihn, 1996 [1971]: 452). In the same sense, a group of writers signed the “Chilean Declaration” that supported the shift in Cuban cultural policy and spoke against the critics of the Padilla affair. They stated that these were not times for “intermediate stances” (*Ahora*, no. 8, Santiago de Chile, June 1971). On the opposite side of the debate, other Chilean writers signed the *Carta de los 61* [*Letter of the 61*], where the shift in Cuban policy was likened to a “Stalinization” process.

deliver to the people “the power of decision and generation of their culture.” In this same tenor a short time later, in early 1972, Armand and Michèle Mattelart ventured that the congress had done a good job of internalizing the “pressing need to redefine science and culture on the basis of the practice of the masses and a new concept of knowledge-wielding man, of deepening the mass line” (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1972: 127). The important thing here is that the Mattelarts’ positions on the cultural discussion in Cuba were closely linked to their interpretation of the perspectives on the transition to socialism in Chile: They affirmed that the critique of the Cuban revolutionary process in the name of individual freedom and anti-Stalinism echoed the “false interpretation of the *Chilean way*” that—they wrote—“contains the possibility of capturing and winning over the petite bourgeoisie to the revolutionary cause.” At that time, the Mattelarts associated the critiques of the program that came out of the Congress on Education and Culture with the petite bourgeoisie’s resistance to surrender their “statute as interpreters or representatives” of cultural phenomena (122).<sup>39</sup>

### How to Read Donald Duck: *From the Context in which It Emerged to the History of the Myth*

Having outlined some of the parameters of the debate, we will devote space to the conditions in which Dorfman and Mattelart’s famous book emerged. This will enable us, on the one hand, to define more precisely the emergence and character of the issue of communication and culture in the socialist transition and Mattelart’s participation in this discussion; on the other hand, to highlight one of the key controversies of this work as it relates to the accounts of Latin American communicology. While Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart’s book left a mark on the emergence of communication

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<sup>39</sup> Enrique Lihn also understood that the discussion at the heart of the Chilean debate about Cuba revolved around the character of the *Chilean road to socialism*. He wrote in 1971 that the change in Cuba represented a policy of breaking with the “sole front” in cultural matters, a front that until then had allowed certain levels of ideological autonomy and plurality within the framework of a policy of alliances with intellectual sectors that traditionally came from the petite bourgeoisie. Although Lihn’s position regarding the island lacked nuances (he took a stance in favor of the Cuban Revolution), he argued that while in the Cuban situation it was explicable and understandable that the army should become the people’s ideological vanguard and subordinate intellectual practice and its autonomy, at home it was necessary “to find Chile’s road for Chile” (Lihn, 1996 [1971]: 452). In short, if the *Chilean road* involved the unity of the “sole front,” in cultural matters it implied the need for the intellectual petite bourgeoisie to take part in a democratic socialist process that would win over the consensus of the middle-class sectors.

studies in Latin America—and perhaps even on the overall cultural history of the continent—as the years passed it also became an extraordinary source of misunderstanding with respect to its meaning and history. The reason is that, aside from a few passing contextualizations within the political-cultural process that followed Salvador Allende’s election, the book was read with no consideration of the specific conditions of its emergence that explain its meaning. As a result, *How to Read Donald Duck* [*Para leer al Pato Donald*] would become an icon of a certain time period and of a moment in the field that is either remembered with the nostalgia reserved for good—but naïve—intentions of youth, or else put forward as an emblematic example of “ideologism” or “anti-intellectualism” that—in diminishing the scientificity, research autonomy or reflexivity characteristic of the semiological discipline—supposedly characterized communication studies in the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> What is paradoxical is that a book that set out to *demystify* Disney’s most popular comic book became a myth in its own right by being extracted from the context in which it was situated: specifically, from the substance of the political-cultural debate that took place in socialist Chile, and from the series of social spaces of multiple intersections, cultural formations, and institutions, which saw experimentation with novel forms of producing scientific knowledge and intellectual intervention.

*How to Read Donald Duck* was published by Ediciones Universitarias of the Catholic University of Valparaíso in December 1971. In its prologue, Dorfman and Mattelart laid out their intention to address audiences broader than just academics, and to include science as one of the terms to be analyzed in their work—not with an eye to denying its rationality or its specific being, they insisted, but to reformulate its conditions. It aimed “to make communication more effective” with readers insofar as critical work also encompassed “self-criticism about the way the results are to be communicated.” The language they used was trying to “break down the false solemnity in which science usually shrouds its own work.” This intention—with echoes of the orientations given by Fidel Castro in early 1971 at the First Cuban Congress on Education and Culture—converged with the proposal of the workshops developed at Quimantú, and it was generally consistent, as we

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<sup>40</sup> The critical bibliography on *How to Read Donald Duck* in Argentina is extensive. For a semiotic perspective, one can consult Wajzman (1974), Verón (1974b), and the latest works of Berone (2010). From the perspective of cultural history, Vázquez (2010). As we have pointed out in Chapter 1, a recent review of Mattelart’s role in the continent’s intellectual history, more specifically in the debate about the relation between intellectuals and mass media, sees *How to Read Donald Duck* and Mattelart’s intellectual profile to be a clear expression of “anti-intellectualist positions” (Varela, 2010: 780).

have seen, with the reformulations that had been worked out at the publishing house.<sup>41</sup> But the book was also enmeshed in a very specific political-cultural dispute. The state's expropriation of the Zig-Zag publishing house in early 1971 had sounded the alarm in the editorial mouthpieces of the dominant classes. Concerned about the potential impact of Quimantú's publications on children and young people, they proceeded to question first the state's takeover of the publisher and then its editorial policies. In this sense, it is noteworthy how little the book's critics and commentators have considered the *intertextual techniques*—more in line with an avant-garde novel than a scientific treatise—with which *How to Read Donald Duck* integrated its adversaries' journalistic discourse and defined its interlocutors. Not only in the section "Instructions for getting kicked out of the Disneyland Club" do the authors anticipate the opposition press's potential criticisms of the book, but also even more throughout the body of the text they incorporate and refute fragments of journalistic articles in which the liberal press tried to delegitimize Quimantú's editorial policies. As is evident, these articles (several of which explicitly attacked many of the intellectuals and social scientists who worked at Quimantú) had been published before the book appeared. The right-wing press was thus one of their chief debate partners in the search for legitimacy for Quimantú's initiatives.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> With the caution necessary in approaching any retrospective account by the actors involved, it is worth noting Mattelart's version of the genesis of *How to Read Donald Duck*: "At the time, the [Quimantú] workers came to see us, saying: it's funny, we keep printing magazines that slap us in the face; we'd like to know what's behind all of that. And we started to work with them. We had begun to run workshops—and not just about Walt Disney—that tried to spark reflection about these products that absolutely were against them [...] Our first concern was not to write a book but to have a discussion with them in workshops regarding the many questions they were asking about this kind of cultural product" (Mattelart, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> Dorfman and Mattelart (2002 [1972]) quoted fragments from the newspaper *La Segunda* (July 20, 1971), which on the appearance of Quimantú's first children's magazine ironically predicted that "Walt Disney would be banned in Chile" and that "the *consciousness-raising experts* had come to the conclusion that Chilean children could not think, or feel, or love, or suffer through animals" (12). They likewise quoted a long fragment from an opinion piece in *El Mercurio* (August 13, 1971) that, under the title "Voice of Alert to Parents" directed their attention to the dangerous objectives pursued by the Popular Unity government, which intended "to create a new mentality in the younger generations." The article directly slammed Quimantú's projects and the "pseudosociologists" who, with their "convoluted language," collaborated as "foreign personnel" at the service of a state-run company that sought, by means of "Marxist procedures," the ideological indoctrination of children and young people through children's magazines (80). Finally, the authors quoted fragments from another *El Mercurio* article that in September 1971 denounced the appearance of a young-adult magazine at Quimantú, warning that "[u]nfortunately, immorality is cultivated in information media that belong to the government" (159).

But upon its release, *How to Read Donald Duck* also unleashed controversy in the heart of the left wing, underscoring the tensions that ran through it. The objections to the book from certain progressive sectors were situated within the debate about the role of culture and everyday life in the process of change and, more specifically, about Quimantú's editorial policies. Carlos Maldonado (1972), a respected cultural expert from the Chilean Communist Party, published an article in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* where he objected, in converse to a tendency to underestimate the cultural factor (which he also criticized), to a "highly paralyzing" element, which was the "despair into which not insignificant sectors of the left fall... moaning about the lack of a cultural policy." These intellectual sectors—wrote Maldonado—"do harm to the cultural process" even as they "present themselves as its staunchest defenders," because they envision "the cultural revolution as an *act of will*, seeing the world of the conscience only in terms of its autonomy"; consequently, they tried to "endow semantic factors, advertising slogans, and characters in comic books or soap operas with a power they did not (and never will) have." Maldonado then highlighted the "close" ties between "base" and "superstructure" in order to emphasize the heteronomy of the cultural realm, and he concluded that it was futile to "conceive of the appearance of features that announce a new culture unless they were rooted in the appearance of a new kind of social relations." As we can see, Maldonado's reference to some of Quimantú's experiences, and especially to Dorfman and Mattelart's book, *How to Read Donald Duck*, was straightforward. In the same tenor, the communist writer Bernardo Subercaseaux (1972) wrote a long article in the cultural supplement of *El Siglo* (the Communist Party's newspaper for the masses) in which he criticized the authors. While he did acknowledge some positive aspects—they "made a compelling argument" that the world of Disney "is not an innocent world"—Subercaseaux observed that Dorfman and Mattelart made the mistake of supposing that Donald Duck was responsible for the victory or defeat of the revolution in Chile; he accused them of "idealism," of conceiving of the class struggle exclusively as an ideological struggle and of being detached from both the working class and the reality in Chile. Subercaseaux framed his differences in terms of the strategy of ideological and cultural combat that he attributed to the authors and, in part, to Quimantú. He thus questioned some of the state publisher's output, such as the magazines *Onda*, *Cabrochico*, and *Mayoría*. Instead of doing an ideological reading of the magazines or telling parents not to read their children's comic books, he asked why not promote volunteer work or parents' participation in resolving educational problems. It was ultimately

about a cultural strategy where ideological combat should be framed “within a concrete historical situation alongside political and economic combat.”<sup>43</sup>

Mattelart’s replies to these objections point to the uniqueness of his theoretical stance. In general terms, he emphasized the need to take up the question of everyday life and its relation to mass culture as an issue for the socialist perspective.<sup>44</sup> Thus, in a 1972 article, Armand and Michèle Mattelart defended what Quimantú had done to that point, suggesting that it had addressed issues neglected by left-wing culture in novel ways. In response to the critiques, they maintained that the questioning and experimentation with genres proposed in their editorial policy represented one of the most interesting attempts—and one of the only attempts in regimes transitioning to socialism—at dealing with the complexity of the mechanisms of mass culture. This was the only way, they insisted, to ensure that in a moment of transition “leisure is not put on hold for a long time,” because if the intention was to suppress people’s desires for entertainment by decree, the pressure to satisfy them would eventually come back all the stronger. The left should adopt the problem of everyday culture as its own, they argued, and this problem was not solved “with solutions dictated in manuals,” but by working on a new sensibility. If this problem was not addressed, they warned that a key battlefield in the struggle would be left in the hands of a culture industry that, the Mattelarts pointed out (1972: 109, 115), at this stage of the game had politicized and mobilized their “popular fronts” against Allende’s government with the help of an everyday culture that the same culture industry had long since consolidated in its images.

In theoretical terms, it could be argued that the crux of the cultural debate could be grasped by comparing the way the antagonists understood the relation between those well-traveled concepts of Marxist theory, “base” and “superstructure.” In this sense it is illuminating to compare the analysis made by Héctor Schmucler—who participated in the debate by editing and writing the prologue for the Argentinian edition of *How to Read Donald Duck* published by Siglo XXI—with those of Maldonado and Subercaseaux. While there was alignment in their thinking about the relation of “structure-superstructure”

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<sup>43</sup> These discrepancies with the Communist Party’s cultural policy most likely explain why *How to Read Donald Duck* could never find broad support to be published by the state-run publishing house, where Mattelart says he and Dorfman first offered their manuscript (Beigel, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to observe the significance that Mattelart retrospectively gives to his familiarity with the edition of Leon Trotsky’s book *El nuevo curso. Problemas de la vida cotidiana* [*The New Course: Problems from Everyday Life*], published in *Cuadernos Pasado y Presente* in 1971 (Beigel, 2011; Mattelart, interview given to the author, 2007).



as a totality, Schmucler's conclusions diverged from Maldonado's concerning the need to undertake an ideological critique of the messages of mass culture. In the Chilean process, he wrote,

it was proven once again that the structure-superstructure relation is much tighter than we are led to believe by a type of thinking that purports to be revolutionary but simply repeats the commonplaces of a rigorously mechanistic positivism. The so-called structure actually encompasses all social relations. There is therefore just one moment of change [...] Ideology, then, cannot be seen as an epiphenomenal field where a battle can 'also' (but later) be waged, as the thick-headed and bloodless left claims. The revolution must be conceived as a total project even though the ownership of a company may change hands suddenly and the collective imaginary requires a long process of transformation. If, from the first act, power is not postulated as ideological change, any good intentions of carrying out the revolution will inevitably end up as a farce. (Schmucler, 2002 [1972]: 3–5)

The "correct" interpretation of the link between "base" and "superstructure" would seem to hold the keys to resolving the cultural dilemma. And while all the disputants seemed to agree on criticizing so-called "mechanicism," differences surfaced in the emphasis they placed on one of the relation's two poles and, above all, in the interpretation of the political work that followed from their understanding. That was how Mattelart (1971d) understood it when he observed that while everyone seemed to belittle mechanicism and acknowledge the complexity of the mechanisms that articulated the relation between "base" and "superstructure," problems surfaced when someone tried to specify the significance and practical orientations implied by the characterization of that interrelation. He discerned mechanistic positions that he attributed to the cultural line of the Communist Party, as expressed by Carlos Maldonado, among others. In this debate, Mattelart, following the premises of structuralist theories and certain Marxist writings, was one of the few authors who went beyond the oft-cited "dialectical interrelation" to argue that the "superstructure" could have some autonomy from the "base" and, in this sense, either lay the groundwork for changes or put a brake on their development. This idea, already set forth in *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente* (1970), had important practical consequences, putting in play the possibility that communicative or cultural practice would precede the process of change and prepare the way for changes "in the base." Be that as it may, Mattelart made it clear that the different emphases



that drove the theoretical debate about the “base”-“superstructure” relation owed a great deal to discussions of political strategy and the nature of the *Chilean way*. He contended that these discussions were bound to find their concrete landing point in the act of mobilizing the masses and the tempo required for this process of direct participation. Thus, some time later, in the 1973 prologue to *La comunicación masiva en el proceso de liberación* [*Mass Communication in the Process of Liberation*], he situated this discussion within the debate about popular power and the *Chilean way*. He wrote:

Muzzling and postponing the question of ideological struggle, for the sake of giving priority to the construction of material power, means in reality relegating to a secondary place the role of the organized masses to consolidate power in their daily practice of class struggle. (Mattelart, 1998 [1973]: 13)

To conclude, only by analyzing *How to Read Donald Duck* in the conditions in which it emerged and circulated can one fully grasp its implication and significance. As the book itself states in several passages, Dorfman and Mattelart’s concerns had less to do with methodological reflection on how to analyze mass discourse or study its effects on audiences, and more with the process of formulating cultural policies and discussing their function and legitimacy. The dispute was enmeshed in an intense battle of ideas against the dominant sectors for control of an entertainment industry that covered the country virtually in its entirety, and, simultaneously, in a debate within the left—with the experience of the Quimantú publishing house as one of its points of reference—about the mandate and content of cultural policies in a process of democratic transition to socialism. Inevitably, the international circulation of *How to Read Donald Duck* meant that it was read “out of context,” i.e., with no consideration given to the field of production it came out of nor, to put it differently, to the controversy in which it was enmeshed and took on very specific meaning.<sup>45</sup> And this applies both to the readings made of the book in other parts of the world (that of Eliseo Verón and his group at the journal *Lenguajes* in Argentina) and to the assessments made in later years, when the temporal distance had the same decontextualizing effect as its international circulation.

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<sup>45</sup> In his work on the social conditions for the circulation of ideas, Pierre Bourdieu (1999 [1990]) states that the fact that receivers of a text reinterpret it every time based on the structure of the field of reception is a “driver of tremendous misunderstandings.”

## *Local and International Intellectual Networks*

The last point we wish to develop in this chapter is a reconstruction of how in the Chilean laboratory Mattelart participated in an interlinked, local, and international network of intellectual sociability that significantly contributed to shaping his horizon of production and his heterogeneous, cosmopolitan intellectual profile. The existence and dynamics of these networks also partly explain the processes of Mattelart's legitimization and recognition throughout Latin America as a reference figure in communication studies. We are referring to the academic ties and networks created in Santiago de Chile in the 1960s and early 1970s, which enabled Mattelart to establish relations with a number of groups, including the MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement), a group of Argentinian "Gramscians" (one of the leading members, Schmucler, would later co-found the journal *Comunicación y Cultura* with Mattelart), Cuban cultural institutions such as the Cuban Institute of Cinematic Art and Industry (ICAIC, in its Spanish acronym), and international academic networks where the North American "pioneers" of the so-called *political economy of communication*, among others, worked.<sup>46</sup>

If, as we have seen, Mattelart's inquiries into the cultural problem in the transition to socialism revolved around the question of how to express the theses of *popular power* in communicative and cultural practices, then we need to complete the genealogy of his engagement in spaces of multiple intersection, referenced to now only in a brief mention of his political-intellectual ties with the MIR. Mattelart maintained a dialogue and close collaboration with this movement, which aside from leaving certain marks on his political

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<sup>46</sup> We have already referred to the successful process of the institutionalization of the social sciences that took place in Chile starting in the 1950s. The political stability that the country afforded for many exiled Latin American academics, the international recognition of its universities and social science departments (which looked to international exchange as a way to institutionalize and "modernize" themselves), and the geopolitical appeal that Chile offered for the establishment of foundations and research centers funded from abroad, all served to bestow international recognition on its remarkably heterogeneous academic field (Garretón, 2005; Beigel, 2006a, 2011). The configuration of networks of intellectual and academic circulation in Santiago de Chile opened up a productive space that enabled exchanges between a variety of intellectual traditions and led to original theoretical and disciplinary developments. Then the victory of Popular Unity sparked interest among intellectuals and activists around the world in what was seen as a unique road to socialism, which encouraged more trips, pilgrimages, and intellectual exchanges. We do not have the space here to give a full account of this presence of writers, filmmakers, journalists, sociologists, etc., who spent time in Chile to witness the Chilean experience first-hand and show their solidarity with it, but we do wish to highlight, for reasons we will develop in the next chapter, that the people's Chile exerted a particular pull on the French intellectual and political world.

stances, in a way also contributed to delineating and enhancing his intellectual and research project in communication and culture.<sup>47</sup>

The testimonies agree in describing the existence within the MIR of the Unit for the Analysis of Content, or of “open sources,” which depended on its Intelligence Area and monitored the radio, press, and television for the purpose of writing up regular reports on the conjuncture for the organization’s political commission. They also agree in pointing out that Mattelart was not organically linked to the Area, but that he did maintain a relation of exchange and cooperation with it. Pascal Allende states that Mattelart had a decisive impact on the creation and orientation of the group that monitored the media (with the participation of Patricio Biedma, Manuela Gumucio, and Carmen Castillo, among others), perhaps on the methodology, perhaps because some of them had been “formed” by him.<sup>48</sup> Other testimonies (from María Luz Lagarrigue, former member of the MIR and wife of Patricio Biedma) indicate that the relation went both ways: The team kept a daily log that often reached Mattelart’s hands, while Mattelart’s analyses served as materials for the Analysis unit’s work (Lagarrigue Castillo, interview with the author, 2008). In a seminar he ran in Lima in 1981, Mattelart recalled the Chilean experience and referred autobiographically to the existence of a group—about which he gave few details—that tried to identify the inter-

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<sup>47</sup> Mattelart met Andrés Pascal Allende, one of the founders and future secretary general of the MIR, at the Catholic University’s School of Sociology, where he was Mattelart’s student. They met up again years later through Carmen Castillo (at the time Pascal Allende’s wife), with whom Mattelart in 1970 wrote *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente*. Together they participated in the creation of CEREN, taking advantage of the “direct line” that Pascal Allende had with the rector of the Catholic University, Fernando Velasco Castillo, his father-in-law at the time (Garretón, interview with the author, 2008; Pascal Allende, interview with the author, 2008). Mattelart’s friendship with Pascal Allende enabled him to engage in dialogue with other leading figures of the organization, such as Miguel Enríquez, Bautista von Schowen, Edgardo Enríquez (Beigel, 2011; Mattelart, interview with the author, 2011). According to Pascal Allende, they would get together informally to discuss politics and the “national reality.” Mattelart, Pascal Allende states, was an “intellectual interlocutor” and a “practical helper” for the MIR (Pascal Allende, interview with the author, 2008). For his part, in a recent retrospective assessment, Mattelart highlights the intellectual dialogue he maintained at the time with leading figures from the MIR (Mattelart, 2010: 111). For an introductory historiographic look at the history of the MIR and its participation in the political debate of the Chilean and Latin American left, see Pinto (2005). For a partisan perspective, see Pascal Allende (2003). The documents cited in Löwy (2007) also provide information.

<sup>48</sup> This orientation coincides with the reading that Mattelart made at the time of Lenin’s instruction, as he remembered it, to decipher the press in order to learn the different strategies and divisions of the dominant classes, since bourgeois newspapers were the best at denouncing their “adversaries” (Mattelart, 1971c: 186).

play of class alliances and changing power relations by making a systematic reading of the press (Mattelart, 1981b: 87).

We are interested in pointing out this area of exchange between Mattelart's thinking about communication and his political activism, because this monitoring played a key role in the development of one of his lines of work: inquiring, within the overall correlations of power, into the role of the media in the destabilization of the government and the different forms the dominant classes' "ideological offensive" took against the process that started with Allende's election. It is a key question because, on the basis of that work, Mattelart would construct his materialist perspective on communication and modify his conception of the functioning of ideology and the so-called "ideological analysis" of mass media messages. Mattelart saw how, over the course of the popular process, the media changed their own practices and conceptions of communication: The opposition media stopped addressing an undifferentiated audience—the "average man," "public opinion"—and passive receivers with the intention of meeting their information or entertainment needs, and began making political appeals to their target segments, identifying them by sector—"professionals," "women," "business-people"—for the purpose of producing an active mobilization against the UP government. The socially amorphous notion of "public opinion" turned into "popular opinion." To put it another way, the dominant classes were wrestling with the popular forces over the meaning of the word *people* and the possibilities of representing it. Mattelart concluded provocatively that the bourgeoisie "had gone to Lenin's school": It had manufactured its "mass lines," and the press had assumed the role of its "collective organizer" (Mattelart, 1998 [1973]: 213–221; 1974d). In short, as opposed to the abstract and ahistorical notion of "mass communication" reproduced by functionalist theorists and communicators themselves (on the right and on the left), Mattelart formulated a materialist perspective of communication based on the analysis of a social process that had taken on exceptional characteristics: He confirmed that the ways of organizing communication, the genres that structured the messages, and the ways of relating to the target audience, far from being universal characteristic properties of all mediated communication or the natural consequence of the underlying technologies, were in part the modifiable product of the state of power relations and the conflictive interaction between the classes.<sup>49</sup> Together with the conclusions from the

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<sup>49</sup> In this sense, Mattelart (1981b) wrote autobiographically some years later: "The first 'disturbing' fact that laid bare the Chilean process was that the way communication is produced in time of social peace is eminently reversible" (85). Mattelart was referring to

Quimantú experience and from the overall debate about strategies of cultural transformation (as we saw, Mattelart's invitation to review and denaturalize the whole functional mode of the circuit of production, circulation, and consumption of messages, i.e., the material infrastructure of culture), this monitoring would be key, as we will argue, to Mattelart's formulation, years later, of the concept of "mode of communication production" and his "class analysis." Based on this monitoring of the press, Mattelart and his team also confirmed the theses—along the lines already sketched out in *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente*—of the *elasticity of the sign*, and they were moving from a structural reading of the messages toward a diachronic and dynamic analysis of the contestation of meaning. They no longer defined the ideological dimension as an internal property of textual forms—as assumed in the version of ideological analysis that Eliseo Verón promoted in the late 1960s; they defined it by its concrete effects on the struggle to impose certain meanings over others.<sup>50</sup> As we saw, in a more general frame of reference and political influence, Mattelart's theses in the debate about cultural and communication policies cannot be understood without understanding the shared framework and points of commonality and difference they had with the MIR's political positions and its strategy for creating popular power.<sup>51</sup>

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the construction of a "mass line for the bourgeoisie," the shift from mass communication medium to class medium engaged in collective organization. He then emphasized that that was the novelty that the Chilean process had taught him, and which led him to a critical theory of communication based on reflection about the behavior of the dominant classes (91).

<sup>50</sup> In an interview in 1974, already in exile, Mattelart left a record of his theoretical shift away from his first appropriation of semiological theories. In the dynamic of class confrontation in Chile, he affirmed, "very concrete problems were identified" in relation to the analysis of ideologies. Semiology had represented a step forward from functionalism, he pointed out, but it risked rationalization of the internal operations of texts. And what the process had taught him was that "an ideology is ideology only insofar as it produces political effects." Ideological functioning had nothing static about it, which meant that analysis had to account for the "effect produced by the dominant ideology on the dominated and the responses that the latter formulated in their struggle" (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1977: 35).

<sup>51</sup> Mattelart referred retrospectively to this environment of dialogue. He recalls "having spoken with Miguel [Enriquez], who in the end was not well versed in these issues, and most of all with Andrés Pascal, about the contradictions in the left's policies, especially after the article we wrote with Michèle about rupture and continuity [he is referring to "Cultura y continuidad en la comunicación" ["Culture and Continuity in Communication"], 1972]. He had read it carefully and I remember having spoken a great deal with him. There was an openness, and I believe it was the only place where these things could be discussed to see where the problems were" (Mattelart, interview with the author, January 2011).

On another front, Mattelart's role as a founding member and co-director of the journal *Comunicación y Cultura* represents a watershed movement in the development of his intellectual perspective and his international renown. While the journal was produced by an international team, the first two issues were firmly anchored in the Chilean experience; i.e., Mattelart and his closest circle made the key decisions.<sup>52</sup> In their inaugural editorial, the editors situated the journal project within a tradition: The one Antonio Gramsci referred to when he spoke of the "broad denomination of cultural journal." This *Gramscian imprint* (more a "structure of feeling" than systematic work with the ideas of the Italian Marxist),<sup>53</sup> which was explicitly acknowledged in these inaugural pages, left its impact on two central questions: on the one hand, the intention to constitute a specific space from which to intervene politically in culture, i.e., from the specificity of intellectual practice; on the other, and the idea that oriented the initial steps of this intervention: the attempt to disrupt both the social mode of knowledge production and cultural activity as a whole, as part of the configuration of a new hegemony. It was no coincidence that the journal's first theoretical reference was to the author of *The Prison Notebooks*. "Gramsci warned," they wrote in the editorial, "that if a journal of this type is not linked to a 'disciplined base movement,' it inevitably tends to become the expression of a coterie of 'unarmed prophets'" (*Comunicación y Cultura*, 1973: 3–4). The journal did not set out to create that movement but to "accompany it," since the function it proposed to fulfill was "that of establishing itself as a clearinghouse and mouthpiece of the diverse experiences" that were emerging in the field of mass communication, those that fostered processes of "liberation of the dependent societies" of Latin America. Based on "this norm of political priority," the journal stated that it would select its topics, areas of interest, readers, and collaborators. This was a project to link up different experiences (those that emerged from workers in culture, communication, and education, but also from researchers "driven by a desire to merge theory with action"), so that "the seeds of a new theory and a new practice of communication" would emerge. At the time,

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<sup>52</sup> At the urging of Mario Kaplún, a meeting was organized in Montevideo at the end of 1971 with the participation of Kaplún himself, Roque Faraone from Uruguay, Hugo Assman, Héctor Schmucler, and Michèle and Armand Mattelart. This meeting gave rise to the plan to publish *Comunicación y Cultura*. With funding provided by Hugo Assman, the first number was edited in Santiago de Chile and appeared in newsstands in July 1973, with an editorial board made up of Mattelart, Assman, and Schmucler, and a team of Latin American writers. See Lenarduzzi (1998).

<sup>53</sup> For more on the *Gramscian influence* of *Comunicación y Cultura*, see the retrospective assessment by Schmucler (1998: 154; 1994: 6).

these new practices and theories did not aim to promote or consolidate an emerging discipline. On the contrary, the intention was for them to blend *in* and *with* “a new total way of producing life, down to the most intimate aspects of people’s day-to-day lives.” Along these lines, the editorial published in the journal’s second issue called for strengthening already existing ties among groups and emphasizing experiences of popular participation with the media, “as a point of departure for elaborating new forms of culture that will consolidate social relations transformed by the people.” The appearance of *Comunicación y Cultura* could thus be seen as part of an underlying debate with CEREN at the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile (for the last editions of *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, Mattelart no longer belonged to the editorial council) about the way to conceive of intellectual work and, in this sense, intellectuals’ participation in the political process. While Mattelart conducted a sort of research-action with the workers who were actually experimenting with a journalism of the base (the press of the industrial belts of Santiago de Chile), and while *Comunicación y Cultura* tried to link itself “to a disciplined base movement,” at the *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*, on the other hand, the stated intention was for CEREN to be an institutional space where the “theory of the transition to socialism” would be formulated or a theory would be produced to “guide planning.” The center’s ties with key players of the process of change took the form, as we saw, of institutional relations, especially with state agencies.

The fact that, for its first two editions before the coup d’état, Santiago de Chile was the seat of *Comunicación y Cultura* shows that its center of gravity at the time revolved around Mattelart’s group and the dynamics of the Chilean process, which explains why a good number of the articles were devoted to discussing cultural and communicational aspects of this effort to transition to socialism. While the second issue hit the streets after the coup d’état of September 1973 and billed itself as a “witness” and “homage” to the road taken by the popular movement in Chile, the fact is that most of the articles were written before the coup, with the intention of assessing the experiences and intervening in the debates about the conjuncture. And they were produced, as we have seen, through their authors’ concrete participation in research and teaching institutions or spaces of political and cultural activism.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Comunicación y Cultura* initial issue was first printed in July 1973 in Santiago de Chile, the city identified as the location of the first editorial signed by its editors. Mattelart, aside from being the director and editor, appeared on the masthead as “responsible representative.” After the coup the first number was reprinted in September 1973 by Galerna



Now, how do we explain the formation of this international space that had its epicenter in Chile? And how did the journal manage to take a certain *Gramscian imprint*—Gramsci’s ideas were not yet nearly as widely known on the continent as they would be in the 1980s—and make it an element of affinity and commonality? To answer these questions, we have to go back to the formation of a new left in Argentina—for the most part with a Gramscian bent—and its dissemination throughout the continent by way of its proponents’ cultural praxis and the intellectual networks they forged. In this sense, it is worth noting Mattelart’s account of learning about the journal *Pasado y Presente* and its namesake pamphlets from his dealings with several Argentinian academics who had been exiled or moved to Chile—Cordoban “friends” or sympathizers of the group of “Argentinian Gramscians” led by José Aricó, such as Mabel Piccini and Carlos Sempat Assadourian. According to Mattelart, this pair of Cordobans played the role of “smugglers” of texts—Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, Alexandra Kollontai, some of which were published in *Cuadernos Pasado y Presente*—which were regarded as a “an essential source of criticism of orthodox Marxism during all of those years” (Mattelart, interview with the author, 2007). According to the historian Diego García (2011), Carlos Sempat Assadourian also used his good standing with the editors to have Mattelart, Carmen, and Leonardo Castillo’s *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente* [*The Ideology of Domination in a Dependent Society*] (1970) published at Signos, an editorial house in Buenos Aires run by José Aricó, Santiago Funes, and Héctor Schmucler.<sup>55</sup> From this first connection they probably suggested other projects. Soon after Salvador Allende’s government took

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publishers. Mattelart wrote about *Sesame Street* (“Imperialism in Pursuit of a Cultural Counterrevolution”), and yet the table of contents of this first issue reveals that most of the articles looked at different aspects of the Chilean “cultural battle”: Patricio Biedma (“The Ideological Struggle for the Press in Chile”), Guillermo Labarca (“Examining the Exam: Secondary School in Chile”), Rody Oñate Z., (“The *Surazo* in Three Dimensions: Analysis of an Experience”). In the second issue, which came out in 1974, Naim Nomez (“The Comic Book in the Process of Social Change”) analyzed the challenges that had been identified in the field of comic book production at Quimantú, Armand Mattelart (“Press and Ideological Struggle in the Industrial Belts of Santiago: Testimonies”) and Michèle Mattelart and Mabel Piccini (“Television and the Popular Sectors”) discussed in their research different aspects of the problem of popular communication in the Chilean process.

<sup>55</sup> For a historical reconstruction of the role of the “Argentinian Gramscians” through their journal and their editorial work in the dissemination, debate and updating of leftist culture and thinking throughout Latin America, see the work of Raúl Burgos (2004). From the perspective of one of the leading players, see Aricó (2005 [1988]). Burgos considers both the project of Signos and that of Siglo XXI as part of the editorial and political-cultural project of the group led by Aricó. Diego García (2011), who relativized this idea, contends that Signos grew out of a convergence of groups and interests.



power, Santiago Funes (who in 1971 would publish *Comunicación masiva y revolución socialista* together with Patricio Biedma and Mattelart) traveled to Chile in his capacity as editorial secretary of the journal *Los Libros* to make a proposal to its director, Héctor Schmucler, to put together a special edition about the Chilean process (Schmucler, interview with the author, 2007). As he recalled, his first direct contact with Mattelart was in the context of preparing this special edition (Lenarduzzi, 1998: 146).<sup>56</sup>

These links clearly formed part of a larger movement, a formal and informal network of editorial, intellectual, and academic exchange that operated on both sides of the Andes. In essence, it was a process that combined attraction to the burgeoning modernization and institutionalization of the social sciences in Chile—whose universities and research centers had taken in many Latin American exiles—and fascination with the country's political scene. The existence of a special issue of *Los Libros* invites us to consider not only the networks of exchange among cultural formations but also the influences—which were clearly fundamental—in the intellectual realm; *Los Libros* also revealed the emergence of new circulation networks of authors and texts and, therefore, of legitimization opportunities for the Latin American intellectual field. This space of circulation and legitimization was also produced through political activism, which, as José Aricó (2005 [1988]: 39) asserts in assessing the experience of *Pasado y Presente*, regarded editorial activity as a useful platform for intervening politically through cultural practice. Piecing together this mosaic of relations is key to understanding Mattelart's consolidation as a recognized figure, as well as his intellectual profile and perspective. Mattelart's ties to this cultural formation, especially surrounding Héctor Schmucler, indexes his participation in the processes of renewing leftist thinking in Latin America, while

<sup>56</sup> The editorial of issue no. 15–16 of *Los Libros*, dated February 1971, stated that Chile since November 1970 occupied “a privileged place in the interest of contemporary history,” which justified the preparation of a special monographic edition (*Los Libros*, 15–16, 1971). It also mentioned that Mattelart's collaboration—he also published an article, “Los medios de comunicación de masas” [“Mass Communication Media”] (1971b)—along with Santiago Funes's, had been essential for bringing together the collaborations of his Chilean colleagues. Raúl Burgos (2004) argues that the *Los Libros* project should be regarded “as part of the broader editorial experience” of the “*Pasado y Presente* group” (158). While we understand that this statement needs to be placed in its context, the genealogy should not be overlooked. *Los Libros* represented an articulation between the academic world, cultural critique in the journalistic tradition, and political activism, a project that aimed for cultural modernization and “theoretical updating.” Unlike other limited-circulation Argentinian cultural journals, like *Contorno* and *Pasado y Presente*—whose mantle it was taking up, in a certain sense—it ventured into a new and broader market of journals and audiences that encompassed all of Latin America. For more on *Los Libros*, see Fontdevilla and Pulleiro (2004–2005), de Diego (2007 [2003]: 87–106), Cousido (2008), among others.

also explaining conditions for the circulation and legitimization of his work across the continent, especially after Schmucler promoted the re-editing of *How to Read Donald Duck* in 1972 at Siglo XXI in Argentina (the first edition, as we saw, was published by the University Press in Valparaíso). This project would mark the beginning of Mattelart's connections with Siglo XXI (at the time Schmucler was its editorial manager; Aricó, production manager), which would also publish *Agresión desde el espacio. Cultura y napalm en la era de los satélites* [*Aggression from Space: Culture and Napalm in the Satellite Age*] in 1972, and in 1973 *La comunicación de masas en el proceso de liberación*, a book that drew together a number of articles, including some of the texts Mattelart published in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* in the heat of the political-cultural debate. It was the materiality of this network of circulation and intellectual sociability that enabled Mattelart and Schmucler to establish, as Jorge Rivera (1987: 76) put it, a common area around their political positions and perspectives regarding the study of communication processes, but also—and above all—the shared experience, in Schmucler's words (1998), of living “the political dimension almost as an articulator of intellectual work” (146).

Finally, it is important to comment on the idea of the *Gramscian imprint* that left its mark on the early numbers of *Comunicación y Cultura*. This influence took the form not so much of a conceptual, systematic analysis of Antonio Gramsci's thinking as an orientation based on the idea of a cultural journal and the somewhat imprecise but still productive notion of “organic intellectual.” The questioning of the place of the traditional scientist and researcher was situated within a conception positing that new forms of communication needed to be developed in the framework of new relations between media, cultural producers, and popular organizations; but this same reconfiguration was seen, especially in Mattelart's positions, as redefining the field of knowledge production itself. This “mass line” that Mattelart advocated in his interventions in the debate over cultural policy emerged, in a way, from his different work experiences with “the bases.” The main players saw it as an approach that, rather than “populist,” involved the creation of new relations that would articulate “the old knowledge—which can be transmitted but must be transformed—with a new practice and a new class” (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1977: 37–38). Perhaps now it is easier to fully understand the meaning of Schmucler's response in *Comunicación y Cultura* to Verón and the journal *Lenguajes*, where he affirmed, as we have seen, the idea that political practice was a condition of truth for the social sciences. Far from being simply a statement of more or less abstract prin-

ciples or a program to be carried out in the future, his position assumed the experience, with Mattelart at the center, that advocated redefining the ways of producing knowledge, communication, and culture within the framework of the Chilean political process. Schmucler (1975) wrote that, among other things that sparked his reflection, he should mention “a direct or indirect social practice (*that is, carried out by others and assumed by me*) that gradually modified conceptions we entertained some years ago about the role of the mass media [...] [i.e.] the political process that has shaken Latin America in recent years and that has generated new conditions for thinking, while also verifying or dismissing the truth of some of the hypotheses wielded up to now” (4; *my italics*).

In that article, Schmucler would anticipate many of the topics that constituted the agenda of communication studies in the 1980s. What we wish to highlight here, in contrast to the position that saw the politicization and new forms of intellectual work deployed in the Chilean laboratory as a kind of “epistemological obstacle” to knowledge production, is that they, and the reflexive capacity that their proponents fostered, yielded fundamental contributions about the way people think about communication and culture, for example, considerations about the activity of reception, about the elasticity of the ideological sign or the impossibility of understanding communication processes outside the material (historical-social) organization of the culture and the conflicts it entails.<sup>57</sup>

Another relevant place to observe the configuration of this network of international connections that Mattelart established in Chile pertains to the ties he established with two “pioneering” researchers of what then was an incipient *political economy of communication*. The US researcher Herbert Schiller (University of California San Diego) and the Canadian Dallas Smythe (Simon Fraser University) had traveled to Santiago de Chile in 1971, one year after Allende took power, to learn about the experience in matters related to communication and to express their solidarity with the political developments (Schiller and Smythe, 1972). Through them, Mattelart learned about one of the first and most classic books about media and imperialism,

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<sup>57</sup> A prime example is the continuity that can be drawn between the article on television reception and popular reception that Michèle Mattelart and Mabel Piccini published in issue no. 2 of *Comunicación y Cultura* (Mattelart and Piccini, 1974) and the “pioneering” research program that Schmucler (1975) suggested with regard to this topic in his article. For an assessment of the contributions of these articles as they relate to later developments in the field, especially the question of reception, see Grimson and Varela (1999) and Saintout (1998). For a contextualization of Piccini and Mattelart’s article in the political-cultural debate in Chile, allow me to cite Zarowsky (2007).

*Mass Communications and American Empire*, by Herbert Schiller (1969), and more importantly, he forged a series of ties linking him with North American research groups and spaces devoted to studying internationalization processes and the connections between communication, technologies, and economic and military power. These encounters advanced the building of an informal international core of researchers who in the 1970s critically addressed the debate about communication policies and the new order of information and communication. More institutionally, Herbert Schiller and Dallas Smythe, among others, proposed to Mattelart the formation of a section of the International Association of Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) devoted to the political economy of communication and the internationalization of cultural industries. These ties led to a trip to the United States, which would provide Mattelart with access to indispensable sources for his research.<sup>58</sup>

These international connections would frame one line of research that Mattelart began to develop in 1971, in which he defined his object around processes of commercialization and internationalization of communication and culture. The influence of Schiller's work, especially *Mass Communication and American Empire*, was evident in Mattelart's writing during this period. Schiller proposed a series of considerations for analyzing the geopolitical reordering of the world in the postwar years and the way the US developed supremacy by means of innovative relations among communicational, military, and industrial power. Mattelart was already raising the same issues by pursuing questions opened by developments in Chile: He wanted to understand the role—unprecedented in cases of destabilization at the hands of the military in other countries—that transnational corporations

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<sup>58</sup> Through George Gerbner, professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications (as it was then called) and editor of the *Journal of Communication*, Mattelart would receive an invitation to travel to the International Symposium on Communications: Technology, Impact and Politics, held in March 1972 at the Annenberg School in Philadelphia. At this conference (his first trip to the United States), Mattelart presented his analysis of the communication experiences in Chile (Mattelart, 1973c). There he took part in debates with Elihu Katz, James Halloran, Kaarle Nordestreng, Herbert Schiller, and Dallas Smythe. It was not just academics who attended the conference. Researchers from major corporations, such as ITT, and from state agencies, like NASA, presented papers on topics ranging from the Chinese Cultural Revolution and new television technologies to the worldwide imbalance in telecommunications and the role of security in the formulation of public policy. See Mattelart (1973 [1972]: 17). In New York he met researchers from the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), a news agency organized by a group of journalism students linked to the "New Left" on university campuses. These ties would become relevant for his access to certain sources related to strategies deployed by the US military and the transnational networks it mobilized in Chile and Latin America.

like International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT), press and public relations agencies, and organizations like the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) were playing in the attempt to overthrow Allende's government as well as the political meaning of what he concluded were new ways of wielding transnational power. Once again, the analysis of the role of communication and culture was embedded in the challenges set in motion by the *Chilean way*.<sup>59</sup> Mattelart clearly specified his objectives and interlocutors within the Chilean context, stating that he chose "the particular viewpoint of communication to lay bare a power structure" (1973 [1972]: 10). Along these lines, in *La cultura como empresa multinacional* [*Culture as a Multinational Corporation*] (finished in Santiago de Chile a few months before the coup, in April 1973, and published in 1974 in Buenos Aires by Galerna publishers), he proposed redefining the debate about *mass culture* outside of the "culturalist sphere," and returning "to the material bases of culture"; more specifically, "reconnecting products that are called cultural with the system that provides their manufacturers with 'inspiration' and enables their manufacture" (1974: 11). While we will return to this question later, we would like to emphasize here that, in its early formulations, the emergence of this type of cultural materialism to address the international dimension of culture occurred in the context of discussion about the process of change and an analysis of the strategies of the Chilean bourgeoisie and their external allies. The shift proposed by Armand Mattelart in the definition of the object to be addressed had to do with his political will, which came out of his experience in the cultural debate, to move the struggle away from the fronts defined by the left itself on the basis of naturalized and universalized assumptions. In other words, if the problem of the "ideological battle" was not limited to the transformation of mass media genres and content, then it implied the total reorganization of a cultural infrastructure; in the same way, the problem of power could not be reduced to a merely military matter or to a question of state apparatus, as if these issues had no relation to the cultural context. The strategies of what was called "cultural imperialism" for Chile and the helplessness of the popular forces only highlighted the gravity of the matter.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> It was framed, to be sure, in the theoretical space that had been opened in Chile around the phenomena of internationalization and dependence, and that was deployed to a great extent by Latin American exiles who had come to the country. We are referring to the ties that Mattelart's team at CEREN maintained with certain "dependentists" such as Franz Hinkelammert, André Gunder Frank, Theotonio dos Santos, and Ruy Mauro Marini, among others, which framed and enabled his own question about the transnational and dependent nature of cultural and ideological phenomena (Beigel, 2011; Mattelart, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> His words hint at a debate with sectors of the left that downplayed the issue. He wrote:

Finally, it is worth mentioning here another relationship that came out of the “Santiago Connection,” the one Mattelart forged with some Cuban cultural institutions and personalities. The relation dates back to the moment when Salvador Allende was inaugurated president in November 1970. Alfredo Guevara, president of the ICAIC, headed the Cuban delegation of filmmakers that had traveled to Santiago de Chile to film the ceremony. Interested in the study that Michèle and Armand Mattelart had done together with Mabel Piccini about the ideology of the liberal press in Chile, Guevara proposed a meeting with them to exchange ideas, and he invited them to visit the island. The result was a profuse exchange: In June 1971 Mattelart published an article in the heterodox journal *Pensamiento Crítico* (Mattelart, 1971e), in the very last number before it was controversially shut down by the Cuban authorities under Soviet pressure (Löwy, 2007: 52). In January 1972, Michèle and Armand Mattelart were invited through Alfredo Guevara’s good offices to form part of the official delegation of Chilean filmmakers in Havana, where they toured the island and took a close look at the audiovisual initiatives undertaken by the ICAIC. That same year Mattelart ran a two-week seminar at the University of Havana. The dedication of the Chilean edition of *How to Read Donald Duck* (December 1971), which included Alfredo Guevara alongside the authors’ children, bears witness to Guevara’s relevance and to the impact the ICAIC experience had on Mattelart. Mattelart also took part in putting together the edition that the then-prestigious *Casa de las Américas*<sup>61</sup> devoted to “imperialism and the mass media,” where he published a long article (Mattelart, 1973b). The thanks that the editors expressed to Mattelart show that he collaborated, along with Michèle Mattelart and Héctor Schmucler (from Argentina), in sending most of the texts published in that special edition (*Casa de las Américas*, no. 77, March 1973: 174). Some of them cited Mattelart extensively as a voice of authority, for example, in the introductory piece by the Cuban Leonardo Acosta, who used as a source versions of Mattelart’s articles reproduced and edited by

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“And don’t let them find fault with us for choosing the particular viewpoint of communication to lay bare a power structure. All power structures are total, and it is precisely that totality that shows how bound together economic infrastructure and superstructural factors are. One more proof that communication is none other than a political problem” (Mattelart, 1973: 10).

<sup>61</sup> *Casa de las Américas* is a journal that managed to become one of the intellectual reference points and legitimizing markers in the Latin American intellectual field, and its opinion held great weight when it came to consecrating figures. For a specific overview of the journal, see Fornet (1999).

Cuban institutions, such as Ediciones ICAIC and the journal *Referencias*, of the University of Havana (Acosta, 1973, 9, 13).

These references are sufficient to demonstrate a level of Mattelart's circulation as an intellectual figure at the Latin American scale, which, at the same time, would be amplified by his relation with the cultural institutions of the island, which at that point still served as a point of reference and source of legitimacy for the Latin American intellectual field (Gilman, 2003). These intellectual exchanges and networks thus explain long-lasting political and intellectual influences (I have analyzed the allusions to Cuban cultural policy in Mattelart's positions in the Chilean debate), but they also enable us to reconstruct the underpinnings of the circulation and legitimation of his intellectual figure. The appeal to a reader and a continent-wide *popular we*, as expressed in the journal *Comunicación y Cultura*, points to the maturation of these political, editorial, and institutional exchange networks that sustained the publication and circulation of his works. This all served to configure a space of prestige and a reputation as an author figure.<sup>62</sup> As we will argue starting in the next chapter, Mattelart's participation in these international intellectual networks is key to understanding both his political-professional trajectory after his exile in France in 1973 and the formation—which condenses all of his experience in the *Chilean laboratory*—of a unique intellectual disposition that would mark his cosmopolitan profile, his experience of the political as articulating his intellectual work, and his inexhaustible energy for trying to understand society on the basis of a materialist critique of communication and culture.

A few days after the coup d'état launched by Augusto Pinochet, Mattelart was expelled from Chile along with his family. From that point onward, his experience of the *Chilean laboratory* would be reworked under the influence of different political, cultural, and intellectual coordinates; of new theoretical appropriations; and from renewed positions—marked by his experience of *exile*—within the intellectual field and the cultural world of the French left.

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<sup>62</sup> In this sense, the presentation of *La cultura como empresa multinacional* (published in Santiago de Chile in April 1973) takes on added meaning: Mattelart stated that his new lines of research “had matured” “in step with the liberation processes” in Latin America. Thus, he affirmed, he set out to inquire into “the role of culture in the domination of *our* peoples” (Mattelart, 1973: 11).



## CHAPTER THREE

# The Years of Exile: From Popular Unity to the *Unité de la Gauche*

The bombardment of the Casa de la Moneda by the troops under General Augusto Pinochet's command on September 11, 1973, epitomized in a single act the brutality that was to come after the coup d'état put an abrupt end to Chile's brief and unprecedented experience of transition to socialism. The history is well-known: Salvador Allende's death, and the torture, killing, and exile of hundreds of thousands of Chileans was the condition of possibility for the seventeen years of dictatorship that radically set back the country's economy, society, culture, and political life.

Armand Mattelart, like so many others, was thrown out of the Andean country just a few days after the coup d'état. The compromising objects he kept in his house; the fear for his own life and that of his children; the abrupt departure without his wife and most of his belongings; the friends and co-workers who disappeared, were killed, or went into underground resistance: All of these memories would leave an indelible mark on his psyche and his personality. According to his own account, the nightmares that afflicted him relentlessly every night did not let up until December 1991, when the prohibition against him was lifted and he was able to set foot on Chilean soil for the first time since his exile (Mattelart, 2010: 126).<sup>1</sup> But that was not all

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<sup>1</sup> We cannot linger here on the chronicle of the events that preceded his banishment. Mattelart on several occasions has told of his personal experience of the coup, his traumatic flight from Chile, and the nightmares that troubled him until 1991 (Beigel, 2011; Mat-



that he took with him from Chile: his experience in the *Chilean laboratory*, the collective passions and joys that it entailed, would also accompany him as an inexhaustible stimulus for his work and intellectual intervention. The status of *exile* thus becomes an ever-present axis for describing the thinking and the rich and singular life trajectory of this young Belgian who, after arriving in Chile at the age of twenty-six, had opted—in his own words—“to expatriate himself for good,” to live definitively in Latin America and who, at the age of thirty-seven, together with his two small children and his wife, was forced out of his adopted country.

But wasn't he going back to his natural habitat, to the continent where he had been born and grew up, to his wife's native country? Why speak of the status of *exile*? Insisting on this status might seem odd for those who, from Latin America, might assume that his return to Europe simply meant going back home after a long stint working in Chile.<sup>2</sup> But what cannot be denied is that, in addition to overcoming the anguish of forced deportation, the Mattelarts had to cope, especially in the early years of their return to France, with certain challenges in resettling (during their time in Chile they had made almost no effort to build up a professional network in Europe because at the time they had no intention to return), which included precarious economic circumstances, and problems finding housing and employment. These experiences, of course, are common among many exiles, but in this unique case, what does exile imply as an intellectual experience? What does exile entail—as Edward Said proposes—as a metaphor for thinking about a certain intellectual disposition?<sup>3</sup> If underlying the metaphor of the exiled

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teltart, 2010: 122–123; Mattelart 2011 [1983]: 9). We have also compiled the following personal testimonies: Armand Mattelart (interview with the author, 2011), Michèle Mattelart (interview with the author, 2011), Tristán Mattelart (interview with the author, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> And yet this status left such a deep mark on his lived identity that at the end of the prologue to the English edition of *How to Read Donald Duck [Para leer al Pato Donald]* (June 1975), the authors added the phrase “in exile” after their names as if it were a badge of identity (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1975: 10). Many years later, in a continuation of this lived experience of his own status, Mattelart would offer a retrospective of his life where he stated that his expulsion by the dictatorship “cut short this project and made me an exile in the continent where I was born, lived, and completed all my studies” (Mattelart, 2011 [1983]: 9).

<sup>3</sup> Edward Said (1996: 14, 26) proposes exile as one of the possible metaphors for thinking about representations of the intellectual, in the normative sense of Julien Benda and his classic work *La trahison des clercs [The Treason of the Intellectuals]* (1928). In his view, intellectuals are by definition marginal: They do not feel entirely adapted to the society where they are born or to the one that adopts them, and they are deprived of the advantages afforded by privilege and power. The intellectual—wrote Said (1996)—“never feels at home,” is like an exile: He “therefore exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-

intellectual put forward by the Palestinian critic is a *metaphysical and normative* component, this will allow us to develop understandings and reference points for reconstructing and interpreting Mattelart's intellectual and life journey.<sup>4</sup> His status as an exile, more than the result of a deliberate choice or a metaphysical condition, can be interpreted from a sociological standpoint that—by specifying the network of relations and the positions that Mattelart occupied in the French academic and intellectual field—will allow us to position him in a borderline zone between the Chilean laboratory and European society. Like all borderline areas, it is a space that implies distance but also points of contact and encounter. Inhabiting this area would enable Mattelart to translate the memory of his Chilean experience and the intellectual disposition that came out of it in terms that were understandable for the society receiving him. In other words, the idea of Mattelart as an exiled intellectual will also align with the idea of a hybrid, composite figure: the idea of a *mediating* intellectual, a *translator* who can foster dialogue between different areas of social activity, different intellectual traditions, and cultural formations from different national settings.

### *The “Lessons” of Chile in Post-1968 France*

Without an academic and professional network in France, since their intention had been to stay in Latin America, the Mattelarts faced steep obstacles on their arrival: They had to find their political place, not to mention employment. They had forged some contacts in Chile with French intellectuals who had gone to the Andean country, attracted by the Popular Unity (UP in its Spanish acronym) experiment, which helped them begin to build a nascent professional network. The cultural and political climate was highly favor-

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detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another” (60). This in-between figure, in transit, inhabits several worlds at the same time; because of this, Said suggests, their condition would be a privileged one for seeing things differently, from a double perspective. From this position, the intellectual does the work that defines their restless and disrupting role: destabilizing truths established as common sense and critiquing the existing order. What is at play, Said insists, goes beyond the *actual* experience of exile; it involves a *metaphorical* figure: Theodor Adorno, who “was very predisposed to being a metaphysical exile before he came to the United States” (66), is one of his prototypes.

<sup>4</sup> As Carlos Altamirano (2006: 31–47) observes, the *normative* view is characterized by asking not what an intellectual is or what their social function is, but, prescriptively, *what it ought to be*. In this sense, we add, it must be seen as a figure embedded in the *intellectual habitus* itself, i.e., as an ideological self-representation that while trying to justify the position of the intellectual in the social world, nevertheless is in part the product of the trajectory and position of the intellectual within that world.

able given the widespread solidarity with Chile and French interest in the Chilean road to socialism. While the early years of the Cuban Revolution had raised expectations among many left-leaning French intellectuals and solidified their public stances (the paradigmatic cases were those of Jean-Paul Sartre and Régis Debray), in the late 1960s and '70s certain aspects of Cuba's policies (support for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Padilla "affair," among others) undercut hopes that had been invested in the Cuban model. The shift, to be sure, also was tied to local developments: One important sector of the left was readjusting its position as attempts were made to find a political-institutional channel for the social mobilization that was galvanized in May 1968.

In this scenario, Chile had become a point of reference. In 1971, recently elected as secretary of the French Socialist Party, François Mitterand had traveled to Santiago de Chile and stated that he was awestruck by Salvador Allende's moral resolve and the originality of the model he was promoting; Chileans—trumpeted *Le Monde* (November 14–15, 1971)—were calling Mitterand "the French Allende" (in Leenhardt and Kalfon, 1992: 18). In this perspective, some sectors of the French left—the most prominent being the Socialist and Communist Parties—managed to put together a common platform in June 1972. But the interest sparked by the *Chilean road to socialism* in certain intellectual and political sectors in France exploded after the coup d'état, when hundreds of demonstrations expressed solidarity with the Chilean people. The motivations, once again, were internal. The political debate in the run-up to the 1974 elections managed to transfer the dilemmas of the *Chilean road* and its commitment to democratic mechanisms onto the French political map: The revolutionary left saw little hope for a transition to socialism within the framework of liberal democracy, while the French right, fearful of a unified left, turned the Chilean case into a warning sign. In France Chile became fodder for electoral wrangling (Leenhardt and Kalfon, 1992: 18).

Within this framework of mobilization, one of the first ties the Mattelarts established upon their arrival in France was with a group of journalists who had visited Chile and who edited two journals: a weekly, *Politique Hebdo*, and a monthly, *Politique aujourd'hui*. At the time, the journals, founded by Paul Noirot, had close ties to the Unified Socialist Party (PSU in its French acronym), and brought together a variety of political currents: sectors of the radical left and what would soon be called the "second left."<sup>5</sup> Through these

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<sup>5</sup> The phrase "second left" is attributed to Michel Rocard, who coined it at a Socialist

early contacts, Armand Mattelart was invited to publish in the January 1974 edition of *Politique aujourd'hui*—he would join its editorial board—dedicated, as its cover intoned, to the “Latin American challenge after Santiago.” An editorial written by Paul Blanquart, Anne Valier, and Daniel Vasthy demonstrated the interest that one part of the French political and intellectual world took in the Latin American situation and its points of contact with political debates in France. The editorialists opened with a query: Were the topics covered in the special issue that far from what was happening in France? The enormous echo in the country of the September 11 coup and the profound anxiety felt by so many social sectors, “are they not indicators of a visceral, instinctive awareness that Santiago could be Paris tomorrow?” (*Politique aujourd'hui*, January 1974: 2). The Chile that was engrossing France was not the country where Allende won the election but the country that killed him, they declared. The analysis of the Latin American case served as a way to gauge the adversary (the worldwide system of imperialism) and its ability to bend developments in its favor under a wide range of circumstances.<sup>6</sup> At a time when class warfare in France was near the boiling point (who was going to pay for the oil crisis if not the working class, the editorialists asked), the lesson of Chile cried out for attention: “It is imperative to reflect on the lessons that the Chilean comrades have put on the table in their experience of the last three years, with regard to relations with the middle classes, with regard to the use of the apparatus of the bourgeois State, with regard to the vanguard and its relationship with the masses, and with regard to the army” (4). The editorialists were in part sharing their views and doubts about the unity of the French left. In this regard, and in line with one of the journal’s fundamental objectives—to circulate socialist practices and research from

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Party convention in 1977. In Michel Sellenart’s view, it was a left-wing movement that kept its distance from the more orthodox Marxist positions and was open to new issues like everyday life, the status of women, self-management, etc. To put it schematically, the idea suggested two cultures: one Jacobin, state-centered, that accepts the alliance with the Communists, and the other decentralizing, inclined toward civil society and the third sector that rejects the alliance, called the second left (Sellenart, 2009 [2004]: 420). In François Cusset’s more critical view (2008 [2006]: 29), the movement of the New Left—social democratic and modernist—“was born of the conversion to the ‘realism’ of the libertarian, self-directing left.” Cusset places intellectuals like Pierre Rosanvallon, Alain Touraine, the PSU, and the newspaper *Nouvel Observateur* in this camp.

<sup>6</sup> For the editorialists of *Politique aujourd'hui*, the Chilean experience laid bare the risks faced by proponents of a peaceful transition to socialism: What ultimately motivated Richard Nixon’s advisors to act, they argued, was what might happen in France and in Italy. If the Brazilian case illustrated the military option in a country lacking strong democratic traditions and with outlawed Marxist parties, the Chilean case drew attention to the bourgeoisie’s response capabilities in a country with deep-rooted democratic traditions and a working class organized in Marxist parties, as in France.

around the world, they noted—they were determined to give a voice to Latin American colleagues, remarking that in the span of a few years “the continent had become one of the most advanced fields for Marxist research” (5). Among the invited colleagues was Mattelart, who took advantage of the opportunity to publish his first text in the French media since his exile: an article signed in November 1973 titled “La bourgeoisie à l’école de Lénine: le ‘gremialisme’ et la ligne de masse de la bourgeoisie chilienne” [“The Bourgeoisie in Lenin’s School: ‘Guildism’ and the Mass Line of the Chilean Bourgeoisie”] (1974d: 23–46). There he extended and deepened one of the lines of research he had developed in Chile:<sup>7</sup> how in the face of the UP’s steady consolidation the bourgeoisie had jettisoned its “democratic” tactics, banking on the control of the liberal state’s apparatuses, such as Parliament and the judiciary and taken up a “mass line” that involved organizing and mobilizing the population along sectoral lines and for insurrectional purposes. Mattelart then analyzed how this mobilization had required a change in the dominant conception of the mass media: The bourgeoisie had scrapped its traditional communication model, where the media are conceived as vehicles for information and entertainment, and started politicizing everyday genres and mobilizing specific target audiences in different ways, driven by corporate interests (“guildist, or *gremialist*, ideology”) but with an eye to laying the groundwork for an insurrection against the popularly elected government. In short: The bourgeoisie “had gone Leninist,” i.e., it had “formed its mass line,” turning the press into a “collective organizer” for the reaction.

The interest that the Chilean situation had sparked in the journalist Claude Julien, then chief editor at *Le Monde Diplomatique*, served as another point of entry into the French cultural world for Mattelart. This contact actually built on connections that had been forged in the Chilean laboratory. As Mattelart himself tells it, Alfredo Guevara, then president of the Cuban Institute of Cinematic Art and Industry (ICAIC, in its Spanish acronym), had suggested to Julien—who had met Michèle Mattelart<sup>8</sup> at a colloquium on the Chilean

<sup>7</sup> See Mattelart (1998 [1973]), especially the section “Los reaccionarios aprendieron más rápidamente que las masas” [“The Reactionaries Learned Faster than the Masses”]. For a genealogy of guildism (*gremialismo*), see also Mattelart, Mattelart and Piccini (1970), Mattelart, Castillo, and Castillo (1970).

<sup>8</sup> Michèle Mattelart’s entry into the French political and intellectual circles upon her return to France very much followed its own course, although somewhat in parallel to Armand Mattelart’s. Shortly after her arrival in France, Michèle Mattelart was already participating in the Chilean solidarity movement (she coordinated the collection of signatures for the release of Carmen Castillo, the wife of Miguel Enríquez, of MIR). She also ran the newspaper *Urgent Amérique latine* (an activist newspaper created by exiled Chilean journalists that compiled contributions about Latin America from *Le Monde diplomatique*,

case and Latin American dictatorships held in Washington—that he contact Armand Mattelart (interview with the author, 2011). Julien would then make a proposal to Mattelart to write for the collection of articles he was preparing for *Le Monde diplomatique* about the situation in Chile, “Rêves et cauchemars de la junte” [“The Junta’s Dreams and Nightmares”] (*Le Monde diplomatique*, July 1974). Mattelart’s contribution, “Un fascisme créole en quête d’idéologies” [“A Creole Fascism in Search of Ideologies”] would open the collection and launch an uninterrupted collaboration that would last decades, up to the present day, resulting in dozens of published articles.<sup>9</sup>

Once the urgency and initial shock produced by the coup d’état in Chile had passed, spaces began to open up in the French cultural and political field for taking a deeper look at Popular Unity’s experience. By 1974, Mattelart proposed to the Anthropos publishing house the manuscript of what would become *Mass media, idéologies et mouvement révolutionnaire. Chili 1970–1973* [*Mass Media, Ideologies and Revolutionary Movement: Chile 1970–1973*] (1974). The group running the publishing house founded in 1960 also published the journal *L’Homme et la Société. Revue internationale de recherches et de synthèses sociologiques*. Mattelart’s ties to the journal—where several heterodox Marxists collaborated, including some Latin Americans<sup>10</sup>—dated back to 1969,

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the left-wing press, and *Politique Hebdo*), published articles in *Le Monde diplomatique* about the Chilean situation, and together with Armand Mattelart wrote the script for the documentary *La Spirale*. In parallel, she took part in the debate about the Chilean question in leading French cultural magazines, where some of their current topics, such as feminism, were overlaid with interest in the Chilean experience. See the edition devoted to Chile of *Les Temps modernes*, with articles by Ruy Mauro Marini, André Grunder Frank, and Armand Mattelart, among others (no. 342, January 1975), and Michèle Mattelart’s article “Le coup d’état au féminin” [“The Coup d’État against the Feminine”] (*Les Temps modernes*, no. 345, April 1975). Owing to the resonance of that article and interest in her analytical perspective, Julia Kristeva invited Michèle Mattelart to contribute to a special issue of the journal *Tel Quel* devoted to feminist research (“Les femmes et l’ordre de la crise” [“Women and the Crisis Order”], no. 74, 1977). Making these networks visible allows us to give an account of the points of contact on both sides of the Atlantic that we are throwing into relief, at the same time that it points to the modes of constructing a certain legitimacy as author figures, by means of which the Mattelarts (who often published as co-authors) augmented their possibilities for publishing in the French media.

<sup>9</sup> In the article in question, Mattelart (1974a) proposed an analysis of the perspectives that had emerged 10 months after the coup d’état in Chile, did a meticulous reading of the “Declaración de principios de la junta” [“The Junta’s Statement of Principles”] of March 1974, and discussed the genesis of the far-right groups and their “organic intellectuals” (especially Opus Dei) that put together a political platform that he characterized as integralist (in the Francoist tradition) and technocratic.

<sup>10</sup> The journal was founded in 1966. Those who participated or collaborated at the time were Henri Lefebvre and a group of heterodox Marxists, including Nikos Poulantzas, Samir Amin, Joseph Gabel, Pierre Naville, Manuel Castells, among others. From Latin America, intellectuals such as Michael Löwy, Theotonio dos Santos, Henrique Cardoso,

in Chile: He had sent its editorial committee an article about the ideological reading of Thomas Malthus, published in *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* (Mattelart, 1969).<sup>11</sup> Anthropos immediately accepted the manuscript and published the book, with translations of the texts published by Mattelart in *La comunicación masiva en el proceso de liberación* [*Mass Communication in the Process of Liberation*] (1998 [1973]) (a compilation of Siglo XXI's editions of many of his articles from *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional*); plus the interviews Mattelart had conducted with workers from the industrial belts of Santiago, published in *Comunicación y Cultura* (1974); and the article published in *Politique aujourd'hui* about the bourgeoisie's mass line that we mentioned above. Drawn by the book's publication, Serge Daney and Serge Toubiana, at the time the editors in chief of the prestigious *Cahiers du Cinéma*, proposed to Mattelart a long conversation that was published in the journal in its December–January 1974–1975 edition, titled “Appareils idéologiques d'état et lutte de classes—Chili 1970–1973. Entretien avec Armand Mattelart” [“State Ideological Apparatuses and Class Struggle—Chile 1970–1973: Interview with Armand Mattelart”]. In their introduction, Daney and Toubiana pointed to the productivity of “transporting whole chunks of the Chilean experience” to France or Italy, and the need to “come up with the means for thinking about those lessons,” even at the risk—they were implicitly warning against the possibility of Eurocentric leftist thinking—of being “accused of exoticism.”<sup>12</sup> As we see, the political interest in the Chilean experience was folded into an interest in thinking about the *lessons* and the questions that this process entailed for the specific theory and practice of cinema as it related to a revolutionary process. 1968 and the disputes within the university system and the cultural apparatus had laid bare the problem of ideological struggle in France, creating conditions for the emergence and spread of perspectives and concepts such as “ideological

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Emilio de Ipola, and André Gunder Frank.

<sup>11</sup> The article was accepted and published in no. 15 of *L'Homme et la Société* (January–March 1970, pp. 183–219) under the title “Una lecture idéologique de l'Essai sur le principe de population” [“An Ideological Reading of *Essay on the Principle of Population*”].

<sup>12</sup> They wrote: “It may be said that Chile is not France and we could be accused of exoticism. The danger is there. But for us, how could anyone think for a second that we could avoid turning our eyes toward Chile? [...] From the moment an experience like Chile's takes place, it challenges the thinking of the international workers' movement and its failure is our concern. To a certain extent, whole chunks of the Chilean experience could be transported to France or Italy. We still need to come up with means for thinking about these lessons, to come up with a theoretical corpus that can specify the context and the place where the questions are being formulated [...] [and] that would allow us to mark off substantial theoretical and practical ground, which should without fail produce returns for our specific field, which is cinema” (Mattelart, 1974–1975: 6–7).



state apparatus,” which the interviewers insisted on including in the title of the interview with Mattelart despite its absence from the book in question, and which indicated its pervasive presence in the leftist culture of France at the time. Within this framework, Mattelart summarized and translated in the *Cahiers du Cinéma*—in dialogue with intellectual luminaries of the caliber of Daney and Toubiana—the questions that the *Chilean laboratory* had posed for the intellectual world and for the French left, specifically: How does one undertake a cultural transformation with materials from an inherited cultural industry that is highly developed? How will the dominant classes respond and how will they make use—assuming freedom of expression is respected—of their mass media? What international forces are put in play when a traditionally democratic country undertakes such a political process?

### La Spirale: A Cinematic Adventure

These same questions underlay the screenplay that Mattelart was writing at the time for *La Spirale* (1975),<sup>13</sup> a documentary that we dare say served as a veritable passport in exile. This film is highly significant for his intellectual journey because it represented not only one of his first job opportunities after his exile but also because analyzing the film’s conditions of production allows us to reconstruct a network of relations that contributes to our viewpoint regarding his trajectory and what it means for the intellectual history of communication studies and the sociology of cultural formations: on the one hand, the existence of a space for sociability, of an international network of political-intellectual association where, on the basis of certain similarities between the political-cultural maps of France and Chile, Mattelart would act as a kind of *cultural mediator* and *go-between*; on the other, because *La Spirale* itself became a mediation, a fundamental link in the intellectual processing of an experience, the *Chilean laboratory*, that would leave its mark on Mattelart’s trajectory and shape his theoretical and political stances.

With regard to the former point, if Chris Marker, activist writer, photographer, and filmmaker, proposed to Mattelart as soon as he set foot in France

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<sup>13</sup> *La Spirale* (France, 1975, 134 minutes); Armand Mattelart, Jacqueline Meppiel, and Valérie Mayoux. With collaboration by Chris Marker. Produced by Jacques Perrin (Reggane Films). Participation: Jean-Claude Eloy, Jean-Michel Folon, François Périer, Med Hondo. It premiered in France in 1976. To reconstruct the production history and conditions of *La Spirale*, I have made use of personal interviews with Armand and Michèle Mattelart. See also the interviews made by Paul-Louis Thirard (Mattelart, 1976), Michael Palmer (Mattelart, 2008), and Didier Bigo (Mattelart, 2009), as well as Mattelart’s own articles (2008, 2010).



in October 1973 that they make a documentary about Popular Unity, it was because they had already forged a relationship in the heat of the Chilean process. Marker had visited Chile in 1972 while accompanying the Greek filmmaker Costa-Gavras, who had traveled to Santiago to film a movie about the Uruguayan Tupamaro guerrillas, *State of Siege* (1973). Marker's interest in Chile—according to Mattelart's retrospective account—was to observe how the left-wing forces dealt with cultural policies using cinema; more specifically, whether the process of democratic transition to socialism was producing alternative cinema from within popular collectives.<sup>14</sup> Marker, who had not only promoted experimental and activist filmmaking in France but also understood the need to create alternative production and distribution channels,<sup>15</sup> met with Armand and Michèle Mattelart in Santiago because he was interested in their work on communication, ideology, and cultural policies. As Armand Mattelart tells it years later (2008), at this meeting they agreed “that the question of media constituted a blind spot in the history of the revolutionary movement's thinking” (157). The encounter would spark a number of shared projects. Marker was so taken with *How to Read Donald Duck* that he resolved to have it translated into French and immediately, upon his return to France, urged his friend and editor François Maspero publish it at his now iconic publishing house, Éditions Maspero. (Maspero hesitated for a time but finally rejected the idea and Marker had to abandon his proposed translation, which would eventually come out through other channels.) For his part, Mattelart convinced his friend Héctor Schmucler, then one of the editors at Siglo XXI Argentina—who was likewise enthusiastic about the project—to publish a Spanish version of the diary of the Soviet filmmaker Aleksandr Medvedkin about his revolutionary experiences with the “cinetrain,” which Marker had recovered and edited in French with his collective SLON the year before (Medvedkine, 1973). In short, friendships sometimes become the affective embodiment of collective processes.<sup>16</sup> No sooner did

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<sup>14</sup> Marker's interest was well-grounded. It is important to bear in mind that the UP's victory and the boost it gave to the state film promotion body, Chile Films, jump-started film production in a country that had not developed its film industry under the previous administration, enabling the emergence of experimental avant-garde cinema. This was not part of the cinematic renewal that had already taken place with the wave of new Latin American film; it was about politicizing the popularity of movies “used as a medium in the service of the social transformation process” (Schumann, 1987: 191–192).

<sup>15</sup> To this end he founded the cooperative Société de Lancement del Oeuvres Nouvelles (SLON) and later Images, Sons, Kinescope, Réalisations, Audiovisuelles (ISKRA). With Jean-Luc Godard, who was fascinated with the “cinetrain,” he had created the “Medvedkine group” in late 1969, taking the name and idea from the Soviet filmmaker.

<sup>16</sup> The network of connections that tied the French intellectual and cultural world to the

Mattelart arrive as an exile in France than Chris Marker suggested that he go see the producer Jacques Perrin (who had also accompanied Costa-Gavras to Chile and met with Salvador Allende and Augusto Olivares) to ask him to finance a documentary about the Chilean process.<sup>17</sup> Thus Marker formed the group that brought together Armand Mattelart and the film editors Jacqueline Meppiel and Valérie Mayoux. Production took over two years, between 1974 and 1975, and was also supported by other international networks of political and intellectual exchange that Mattelart established and organized. Aside from his relation with Marker, Mattelart's ties with the ICAIC, with which he had forged a close collaboration in Chile, were decisive. In exchange for exclusive rights for a Spanish-language version (which at the time did not get off the ground), the ICAIC opened up its files for Mattelart, and, together with Jacqueline Meppiel, he did a careful inventory of visual materials. In addition to Santiago Álvarez's newscasts and the reports from Cuban television, the filmmakers had access to the materials from Chile Films' newscasts that had been sent to ICAIC to be archived in Havana. Mattelart estimates that almost a third of the visual materials used in *La Spirale* came from the film library in Havana.<sup>18</sup>

The process of producing *La Spirale* turned into a propitious moment for intellectually processing some of the lessons from the Chilean experience. In

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Chilean process is broad (Alain Touraine, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, among others, traveled to Chile during the UP years), and it took on added importance in the case of filmmakers: among others, Régis Debray interviewed Salvador Allende one year into his government for Miguel Littin's film *Compañero presidente*; Chris Marker made contact with Patricio Guzmán and, having taken an interest in his work, saw to the distribution of his film *El primer año* in Europe; he also played a key role in the conception, filming, and production (after the coup) of *La batalla de Chile*. This network of exchange grew stronger with the help that Chilean filmmakers would receive after 1973, which gave rise to a perhaps unprecedented phenomenon in the history of cinema: the existence of a "national cinema" forged in exile (Ruffinelli, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> As Mattelart tells it in retrospect, when he arrived in France, Marker disclosed to him that Jacques Perrin had promised Augusto Olivares (Allende's personal advisor and news director of National Television, killed on the day La Moneda was bombarded) that he would make a film about Chile, especially if a coup d'état occurred (Mattelart, 2008: 157; Mattelart and Bigo, 2009: 2).

<sup>18</sup> Since they had no images of their own, they had to select materials from about twenty different sources: film libraries, television archives in France, Belgium, the United States, and especially Cuba; films by Chilean filmmakers such as Patricio Guzmán, Miguel Littin, and Pedro Chaskel; but also documentarians who had taken an interest in the popular movement in Chile, such as Saul Landau from the United States, Jan Linqvist from Sweden and Santiago Álvarez from Cuba, among others. *La Spirale* shares this international pedigree that characterizes other Chilean films from the same years. It is no coincidence that Patricio Guzmán, in order to finish *La batalla de Chile*, perhaps the most emblematic of them all, also relied on the essential collaboration of ICAIC (Ruffinelli, 2001).

late 1973 Mattelart wrote a script outline about the “Chilean bourgeoisie’s mass line” (which later became an article published in *Politique aujourd’hui* in early 1974, as already mentioned) that served to structure the documentary project. On the basis of his dialogue with Jacqueline Meppiel and Valérie Mayoux (who had not been in Chile and were learning about the country’s political reality at the editing desk) and above all in coming to grips with the 52 hours of film that had to be cut down and organized, Mattelart would hammer out a series of hypotheses about the Chilean experience. It would be at the editing desk where he would bridge the gap between the drafting of the script outline about the bourgeoisie’s mass line that he had written to start the project and the finished film, two years later, for which he did not have a prior screenplay. On the basis of this material, Armand, along with Michèle Mattelart, put together the extensive voice-over script that was then revised by Chris Marker, who added his signature style to bring the project to fruition. In sum, the dialogical character of the film was built through indispensable intellectual mediation from which Mattelart formulated a view of the Chilean laboratory, above all from the necessity of finding a principle for organizing and prioritizing the enormous quantity of available visual material.<sup>19</sup>

*La Spirale* premiered in French theaters in April 1976, and in May it was screened in the “Perspectives” section of the Cannes Film Festival. It then had a somewhat uneven run on television and at universities. From a cinematic viewpoint, it can be said that *La Spirale*, a classic expository documentary, presents an analysis of the gradual development of the strategy deployed by the Chilean bourgeoisie and US imperialism, i.e., the construction of a mass line on which Allende’s overthrow was built. A simulation game, “Politics,” is the organizing thread that structures the story; it uses scale models (designed by the visual artist Jean Michel Folon) to represent the game while a voiceover interprets the documentary images outside of the plotline. “Politics” is a simulation game commissioned by the Pentagon

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<sup>19</sup> A few years after the film premiered, Mattelart (1981b) referred to the production of *La Spirale* as a formative experience: “Spending days watching movies, newscasts, documentaries filmed during the UP government [...] was a political challenge because it forced me, during the entire time, to reflect on the process that was cut short by the coup d’état [...] [F]or two and a half years I was able to see the different players in the Chilean process exactly as the Chilean bourgeoisie presented them through their reporters and also as the forces on the left presented them. That was very painful because in those newscasts—we had 52 hours of film to work with—you can see the outlines of the social structure, the diagnosis of the relation of forces within the process that the different actors had” (81–82). At this point we will not go into the therapeutic role that Mattelart attributes to his work on *La Spirale* in several of his accounts.

in 1965 and developed at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, with the participation of the think tank ABT Associates, of Cambridge, Massachusetts; it serves to analyze hypotheses of “internal revolutionary conflict” in an imaginary country, which coincidentally bore a remarkable resemblance to Chile. *La Spirale* stages “Politics” through Folon’s scale models as a way of organizing the plot thread—one can read a reflexivity strategy there—while at the same time presenting (and denouncing) the actual existence of the game, i.e., as an example of the power strategies that the film sets out to analyze. In this sense, the voiceover points out at one point that, on the basis of “Politics,” “the Pentagon discovers that society is divided into classes and for the first time tries to analyze it.”<sup>20</sup> *La Spirale* then proceeds to analyze the functioning and dialectics of power, which can be read not just in the priority given by its narrative plot to the Chilean right’s destabilizing strategy (at the expense of an analysis of the popular experience), but above all in its form, in the representation and choice of “Politics” as the narrative thread, as the place of enunciation that simulates the other’s gaze—since strictly speaking it is the film itself that proposes the analysis of the developments in the conflict and the movements of the social forces. As Mattelart (2008: 162) observes in retrospect, *La Spirale* proposes an “inverted system of references,” an analysis of the process from the perspective of the dominant classes’ strategy that dialectically leads to reflection about the UP’s strategy and tactics. From this angle, the film serves to clarify the profound unity of the process. The choice of “Politics” as the narrative thread and the enunciative ambiguity that it stages thus underscores a view of the ambiguity and complexity of the functioning of power and hegemony that distinguishes Mattelart’s theoretical stance and that he would maintain, as we will see, in the rest of his work from that point on.

From another angle, it is important to emphasize that *La Spirale*’s premier in 1976 helped to raise Mattelart’s profile in the French cultural world, where as a virtual newcomer he had little presence. If the film had a notable impact in political-cultural commentary and French cinematography, it was because

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<sup>20</sup> Briefly: The game defines twelve social forces in an imaginary country, proposes different conflict scenarios—for example, and not coincidentally, the nationalization of a mining company—and predicts the possible movements of each social force. The existence of “Politics” suggests that the US Armed Forces used not only military games and hypotheses as an input for planning but also simulations set in civil society that focused on the political dimension of conflicts. In other words, the Chilean case can be read as a laboratory for an intervention strategy by the world’s hegemonic power. Mattelart learned of the existence of “Politics” shortly after starting to conceive the film, thanks to his ties to journalists from the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) in the United States, and a group of students from the University of California, Berkeley.

it addressed two issues that to a large extent took center stage after 1968: on the one hand, as we have seen, the interest in the Chilean experience as a way to frame and interpret the stakes and the challenges that the French left was dealing with, especially after the PS and the PC forged their unity platform; on the other hand, in a context of intellectual politicization and the emergence of new production technologies, like the Super 8, the question of the *practice* and *theory* of cinema as forms of political intervention (Casetti, 1994). Within this framework, *La Spirale* drew the attention of the press and specialized journals and became an object of dispute among critics, one more stance to be taken in their political positioning.

Finally, one can identify two axes for organizing the positions that critics took with respect to *La Spirale*. On the one hand there were readings of the film's specifically cinematic elements to interpret the existence of politics in language and its ideological effectiveness. Along this line, Louis Marcorelles, Robert Grelier, Dominique Lecourt and Ignacio Ramonet, among others wrote about the film in specialized journals, espousing different points of view.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, one can see a more explicitly political axis of analysis in commentaries about *La Spirale*, linked to the way the criticism positioned itself in relation to the Chilean experience—the oft-cited *democratic road to socialism*—and how this related to positions that were crystallizing with respect to the process of unifying the French left. The strictly cinematic debate would obviously not have had the scope and impact that it did had

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<sup>21</sup> Louis Marcorelles (1976a, 1976b), in a series of articles for *Le Monde*, compared *La Spirale*'s modes of enunciation with those of the first two parts of Patricio Guzmán's *La batalla de Chile* (1975-1976), preferring Guzmán's open, polyphonic cinematic treatment to *La Spirale*'s more straightforward expository strategy. At the opposite extreme other critics preferred *La Spirale* for the way it organized its ensemble of materials to serve the purpose of exposition and political analysis. Robert Grelier (1976: 91-97), in the *Revue du Cinéma*, highlighted the way Mattelart's documentary, unlike more avant-garde, experimental cinematic offerings, subordinated the use of language to expository purposes, thus leaving it open and allowing spectators to pose their own questions. Dominique Lecourt (1976) wrote in *Le Monde* that *La Spirale* put politics in the driver's seat, and that by subordinating technical questions and stylistic writing it promoted the spectators' intelligence and encouraged their critical appropriation of the contradictions of the Chilean process. In the same tenor, in a dossier that appeared in *Le Monde diplomatique* about Chilean political cinema, Ignacio Ramonet wrote glowingly of the quality of *La Spirale*'s research and its skilled exposition. Comparing *La Spirale* and *La batalla de Chile*, he praised the former's capacity for analysis and observed that the latter skimmed on the political analysis, settling for simply "showing the struggles." Subordinating "open" testimony to activist filmmaking, Ramonet (1975) asserted that Guzmán's film "vividly illustrated *La Spirale*'s arguments." The critical debate would follow its course, and eventually shed political criteria in favor of more aesthetic considerations, with *La batalla de Chile* gradually gaining prestige for its enunciative strategies, to the detriment of *La Spirale*'s expository approach. See Pick (1980), Ramonet (2000), Shoat and Stam (2002).

it not been tied up with assessments of the *Chilean road* and the ghosts that haunted the world of the French left.<sup>22</sup>

### *Cultural Imperialism, a Latin American Issue?*

Armand Mattelart's introduction into the political-cultural world of France was channeled through certain cultural formations and intellectual networks of the French left. Mattelart became a sort of *translator* of the Chilean experience, transposing it onto the coordinates of a France that, in the mid-1970s, was debating a series of issues that had points in common with the Chilean debate. Which of the topics and perspectives that he had developed in Chile might interest the French intellectual circles? Which topics or theoretical stances might prove to be illegible or clash with their cultural and intellectual traditions?

Practically upon arrival from Chile, Mattelart proposed to the Anthropos publishing house the publication of the manuscript that became *Mass media, ideologies et mouvement révolutionnaire. Chili 1970–1973* [*Mass Media, Ideologies and Revolutionary Movement. Chile 1970–1973*]. While the communication landscapes in France and Chile were quite different, it should be noted that in the years following the events of May 1968 a heated debate took place in France about the democratic appropriation of the media and new technologies, in a context where the consensus regarding the public monopoly of radio broadcasting was beginning to crack. The extension of this debate

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<sup>22</sup> In strictly political terms, Ignacio Ramonet (1975) thought highly of *La Spirale's* analysis of the United States' destabilizing strategies but took it to task, "as a leftist," at the end of his article for not including an analysis of some of the UP's mistakes or MIR's warnings about them. The French Communist Party's weekly *Humanité-Dimanche*, however, seemed to grasp better than Ramonet *La Spirale's* critical stance toward the policy of the Chilean Communist Party: It concluded its review with a negative comment about the film: "Better no doubt to think about the Chile of today and tomorrow than to nurse grudges about events that cannot be undone" (*Humanité-Dimanche*, 1976; in Mattelart, 2008: 169). The person who perhaps best appreciated *La Spirale's* aim, drawing out and translating its implications for the French political debate, was Régis Debray, who wrote in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (1976) about "La leçon de *La Spirale*." Drawing on his knowledge of the situation in Chile and Latin America, Debray argued that *La Spirale* offered "the first concrete analysis of a concrete situation that, to our knowledge, film has ever produced [...] thus restoring to immediate history its true nature of *strategy*, that is, of a fight to death where each side must be determined in terms of the other." If *La Spirale* posed a dilemma that was dear to revolutionary theory, i.e., "what freedoms should be permitted for the enemies of socialism," the question took on relevance not only due to the events in Chile. Anticipating the electoral victory of the unified French left, Debray then turned to "the prudent activists of the socialism of tomorrow" to offer them what was essentially a heads-up: "One day you will have to deal with this contradiction, without vacillation or naïve fantasies." *La Spirale*, for Debray, would help them deal with this dilemma.

created conditions for reading the texts that Mattelart had written in Chile (recall the keen interest that the directors of *Cahiers du Cinéma* had for that first book published in French), while also spurring an emerging process of strengthening communication studies in France, which had lagged somewhat behind what was happening in the United States and Latin America.

It is significant that the most notable articles of an issue that *Le Monde diplomatique* put out in December 1974 devoted to the question of “cultural imperialism” were written by two foreign researchers—Armand Mattelart and Herbert Schiller—and they focused on processes that had emerged outside France. It is also noteworthy that the editor presented as novel an argument that moderately informed Latin American readers at the time would have found commonplace: affirming that the power of the empire was not only military, because economic imperialism did not exist without intellectual and scientific domination (*Le Monde diplomatique*, December 1974).

Aside from writing two articles for the issue, Mattelart introduced the editors—which is to say the French intellectual world—to one of the pioneers of the so-called political economy of communication, the US scholar Herbert Schiller (an author who was unpublished in French; to this day his books have not been translated), who published “Les mécanismes de la domination internationale” [“The Mechanisms of International Domination”] (1974), an article that took up the ideas of *Mass Communications and American Empire*. As the rest of the issue’s articles make clear, a certain novelty in the discussion of the topic did not imply distance from the reality of a France that was beginning to question itself about the mutations of a cultural universe more and more exposed to the pressures of the economy and models originating in the US. What is relevant for our work here is the fact that the articles cited Mattelart’s publications in Spanish and in French.<sup>23</sup> For his part, Mattelart contributed “Une stratégie globale pour l’Amérique latine” [“A Global Strategy for Latin America”] (Mattelart, 1974b), an article where he analyzed through empirical case studies what he understood to be a redefinition of cultural relations in the Third World: New social actors were developing new cultural functions while old actors were redefining their participation

<sup>23</sup> The other contributors to the issue were Jean-Claude Texier with an article titled “Métamorphoses d’une industrie de la pensée?” [“Metamorphoses of a Thought Industry?”] and Igancio Ramonet with “Cinéma français et capitaux américains” [“French Cinema and American Capital”]. Among his references, the former cited *La cultura como empresa multinacional* [Culture as a Multinational Corporation] (Mattelart, 1974) directly from the Spanish and analyzed the mutations of the French publishing industry which, he felt, was falling more and more under the seductive sway of the US model. The latter cited “Hollywood en vente?” [“Hollywood for Sale?”], an article Mattelart wrote for the journal *Ecran* (1974f), and analyzed the growing ties between French cinema and US film studios.



in the cultural process. With this idea, Mattelart was referring to the new ties being established in the field of cultural production between large US companies, the state, the military apparatus, the information apparatus, universities, and private foundations. As one example he offered the case of educational television and the children's program *Sesame Street*. These "new alliances" threw into relief the existence of new modes through which cultural imperialism operated: "[T]he division of labor between the political, the economic and the cultural that has until now governed the penetration of U.S. cultural imperialism is fading away," he concluded (9). The second article he published in the issue, "Les armes de la contre-révolution culturelle" ["The Weapons of the Cultural Counterrevolution"] (Mattelart, 1974c), was closely related to the first. It tied the assessment of the destabilization strategies against Salvador Allende's government to the analysis of the global redefinitions of power and culture that he proposed in the first article: The way the dominant classes had taken the ideological offensive proved that more and more "the traditional instruments of cultural imperialism can accomplish functions that are different from those they have been assigned over the past fifteen years" (8).<sup>24</sup>

One aspect of these interventions deserves note: While Mattelart took processes that occurred in Latin America as material for his analyses, the articles' publication in *Le Monde diplomatique* suggests that he was trying to formulate more general conclusions that could be applied to other parts of the world. We can read in these publications one dimension of his role as *translator* or *cultural go-between*: For one thing, he was trying to approach new processes that were emerging in French society on the basis of problematics and perspectives forged in the Latin American experience; for another, in order to do this he was introducing heretofore unknown international networks and intellectual traditions (the case of Schiller) into the French sphere, which in those years tended to isolate itself in the French-speaking world. In this way Mattelart helped give shape to an emerging problematic concerning processes of growing cultural internationalization and commercialization.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, *Multinationales et systèmes de communication*

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<sup>24</sup> Mattelart offered the example of how US advertising agencies located in Chile had shifted from pushing the *American way of life* to participating in the ever more explicit design of political models for "shaping the consciousness of the masses" of the population against the UP. He also described the SIP's (Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa/Inter-American Press Association) role in delegitimizing the popular government following a plan conceived in 1950 by the US State Department.

<sup>25</sup> Several decades later, Bernard Miège (2004), one of the luminaries of communication studies in France, would recognize the value of this intervention. He writes: "Armand



[*Multinationals and Communication Systems*] (1976)—the first book Mattelart wrote directly in French since his exile, where he elaborated on the theses of these articles—can be read as an attempt to present a perspective unusual to the European audience: trying to think the notion of *imperialism* without the accustomed drama, without the “exoticism of its eruptions”—military invasions or coups d’état—that reduced it, as Mattelart wrote (1977 [1976]: 9), to a problem that only concerned Third-World countries. The Chilean experience, he argued, offered conclusions that were valid for the European situation: It shed light on the way a system in its totality operated in the case of class confrontation. The transnational nature of the ideological deployment that was put into motion in Chile suggested that it was time to rethink these mechanisms and their implications at the global scale. That is to say, it served as the inspiration or point of departure for the formulation of one of the book’s key theses: that the internationalization and concentration of production (within the framework of the consolidation of “state monopoly capitalism” and a structural economic and political crisis without precedent) extended to the production of cultural goods, which was being reshaped by the worldwide spread of the U.S. model. In other words, the nature of the production apparatus and the reproduction of hegemony were being modified in significant ways. The author argued that this called for revising certain notions, *cultural imperialism* among them, in order to activate a perspective that would extricate it from the purely cultural sphere (Mattelart, 1977 [1976]: 265).

For the moment we will present these theses in a highly abridged version, as an aid for understanding vicissitudes in the publication of *Multinationales et systèmes de communication* and the interpretation we can offer for these difficulties. As it happened, Mattelart at first and practically as a matter of course proposed the publication of the manuscript to François Maspero, the now-mythical editor and promoter of leftist culture, with whom he had

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Mattelart plays a sort of *passeur* role, a go-between: well-versed in Latin American thought, he is also thoroughly acquainted with the arguments of Herbert Schiller’s works, and insists in several books (1976, 1979) on the importance of a new kind of ideological apparatus that accompanies the restructuring and offensive of US imperialism [...]. According to him, hegemony thus takes place in the field of knowledge and technological communication. These analyses will become known by the phrase ‘cultural imperialism’: Schiller and Mattelart contributed in December 1974 to an issue in *Le Monde diplomatique* on this topic” (48). Another example from the same era is the article that Mattelart (1975c) published in the January–February 1975 edition of *Politique aujourd’hui* focusing on the “challenge” that transnationals represented for the French economy. In that same year it was published in Spanish under the title “Hacia la formación de los aparatos ideológicos del Estado multinacional” [“Toward the Formation of the Ideological Apparatuses of the Multinational State”] in the fourth issue of *Comunicación y Cultura* (Mattelart, 1975a).

established ties through Chris Marker's attempt to get Maspero's publishing house to put out the French edition of *How to Read Donald Duck*. Maspero read the manuscript and quickly contacted the author to explain why he was rejecting it. In Mattelart's retrospective telling (2010: 137; interview with the author, 2011), Maspero contended that the book fell outside the French left's interpretative framework, broke with its ways of thinking and cultural references, and could even prove to be a "demobilizing" book. With similar reservations, other editors also rejected Mattelart's manuscript. We can assume that the analysis of the links between communication and processes of internationalization, between economics, culture, and technology that Mattelart was undertaking in the book broke with a tradition that had deep roots in France, where culture was still conceived as a space that was impervious to the pressures of economics and technological determination, and where, as we will see, communication studies (and not just its critical branch) was still an emerging field. *Multinationales et systèmes de communication* was eventually published by Anthropos and in a few years—proof that the issue of the internationalization of cultural production could be discussed from a perspective that interpreted and drew on local processes—was published in England, the United States, Italy, Brazil, Portugal, and Mexico.

Both the difficulties in finding a publisher and the eventual publication by a press outside the centers of prestige suggest a certain breach between the book and the horizons of experience of French readers. It is possible that this discrepancy had to do with the notion of *imperialism* that conceptually organized Mattelart's research problematic and that was familiar to the Latin American public and intellectual world. This can help to make sense of the observation that Mattelart made in an article published a short time later in the journal *Homme et la Société* ("Idéologies, information et État militaire" ["Ideologies, Information and the Military State"], 1978a), where he urged people to give up the stereotypical image of Latin American dictators (then popularized in Europe by the boom in Latin American literature) in order to analyze the modalities of the "permanent state of exception" and the military regimes of the Southern Cone as new templates of domination that could spread around the world. Thus, in the Spanish version of the article, published as a book, Mattelart wrote in the foreword that an analysis of the Latin American situation—after jettisoning the Eurocentric stereotypes—could be useful for "detecting lines of continuity with other realities that continue to arise within the framework of democratic norms" (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1978: 8), i.e., the realities of Western Europe.

This decentering of the horizon of experience of French culture and intellectual life might explain why (aside from the fear of lawsuits that its publication could trigger, in a context of censure and persecution) some years earlier François Maspero had rejected Marker's proposal to publish *How to Read Donald Duck* in France. Dorfman and Mattelart's book finally came out in 1976, published by Alain Moreau, a small alternative publishing house, in a series directed by Bernard Cassin, at the time editor of *Le Monde diplomatique* and one of its Latin America specialists. The modification of the original title is indicative of the distance we are pointing to between the horizon of expectation that can be read in the work—a products of the conditions in which it emerged, as we have analyzed—and the horizon of experience of its French readers: the book changed the title of the Latin American version from *Para leer al Pato Donald. Comunicación de masas y colonialismo* to *Donald l'imposteur, ou l'impérialisme raconté aux enfants* [*Donald the Impostor, or Imperialism Told to Children*. Leaving aside the loss of the nod to Althusser's famous text (which can be read first as a sign of a certain Althusserian presence or style in South American intellectual circles in the late 1970s, and then as a distancing from a certain conception of how ideology functions that the *Chilean laboratory* had brought to light), the term "colonialism" that appears in the subtitle in Spanish might have raised hackles in a country where the colonial past and the social divisions opened up by the war in Algeria were still fresh. And its association with the term "mass communication" in the original version, that is, a conceptual stretching of the narrow political-military meaning, could have produced some bewilderment among French readers. To conclude the argument about the book's disconnect with the horizon of experience of the reception culture, it is worth noting that, unlike the thousands of books sold and the dozens of editions that have come out in Latin America—in fact, the book is still being published by Siglo XXI—and its dozens of translations into different languages, *How to Read Donald Duck* had only one printing in France.<sup>26</sup>

In this context, Michèle Mattelart, in charge of the translation and foreword of *Donald l'imposteur* (1976), did not have an easy job: explaining what there was in this book written in Latin America that could speak to *incredulous* French readers.<sup>27</sup> After contextualizing the book's origins within the

<sup>26</sup> It is worth pointing out that in France the market share for Disney comic books was not as large as in other countries, since they had to compete with the robust local production, which even included a children's magazine put out by the French Communist Party.

<sup>27</sup> The use of the adjective and the irony are not gratuitous. The book's launch in Chile several years earlier had not been overlooked by the French press. In the context of the interest in Allende's election, *France Soir*, one of the highest circulating daily newspa-

cultural battles of the transition to socialism in Chile, and especially within the debate about Quimantu's editorial policies, the writer of the foreword tried to draw attention to what she saw as an incipient cultural transformation in France that had commonalities with the Latin American situation: She showed that "Disney's imperialist inclinations were being affirmed in the Hexagon (France)" (8), not only in quantitative terms (for example, based on the growth of the number of moviegoers watching films from the United States) but also in the operating mode of a culture industry that, in her view, was beginning to subvert certain norms of French culture: Disney promoted the premiere of its movies by simultaneously launching records, foods, costumes, i.e., with a merchandising campaign that blanketed everyday life. These superproductions—wrote Michèle Mattelart—"underscored the all-encompassing characteristics of the offensive and the effectiveness of a promotional system that pulls marketing recipes off the shelf that have already proven their mettle on the other side of the Atlantic in the form of cold cash" (9). These imperialist inclinations, then, implied for her that an industry-driven operating logic was permeating the field of cultural production in France. The local press's strategies for coping with the economic crisis were already evidence enough. In this sense, she warned against the risk of focusing exclusively on what was happening in the United States, i.e., against the risk of "seeing the speck in your brother's eye that you don't see in your own" (*"voir dans l'oeil américain les poutres qu'on ne voit pas chez soi,"* 14). Or to put it another way, it was about avoiding overly simplistic conceptions of imperialism that—given the lack of its most brutal and conspicuous manifestations in France—could interfere with the intelligibility of the subtle yet profound cultural transformation that was unfolding before their eyes.<sup>28</sup>

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pers in the country, had printed the headline: "Donald Duck vs Allende." Claude Vincent concluded his report with irony and misunderstanding with respect to the cultural issue: "If the opposition has the brave Donald Duck as their leader, then President Salvatore [*sic*] Allende can go quietly about his nationalizations" (*France Soir*, December 31, 1971).

<sup>28</sup> The review of the book that Robert Escarpit (1977) wrote in *Le Monde diplomatique* provides insights for appreciating the reception of Mattelart's book in France and, in this sense, helps us to shed light on his role in certain processes of the international circulation of ideas. Escarpit expressed enthusiasm for Mattelart's work on mass communication: It was extensive and original, he asserted, although little-known in France because most of it had been written and published in Spanish. While calling out Walt Disney as the purveyor of the most repugnant aspects of U.S. ideology might seem to be easy and obviate the need to write a whole book about it—wrote Escarpit—Dorfman and Mattelart accomplished something quite different from "thrashing out banal truths that are plain to see" (*"ressasser des truisms"*): They remorselessly dismantled the mechanisms of the underlying propaganda and persuasion.

Along these lines Michèle Mattelart showed that in the case of Disney, the U.S. producer did not export its comics directly; instead it had decentralized production, establishing affiliations throughout the world with local producers who looked for the best ways to adapt the comics to the national context. The comics then being published in France, she argued, looked less imported than those published in 1955. Her work as the book's translator had allowed her to analyze a highly important point: when she compared the translation of the same chapter of a Disney comic published in Italy, Latin America, and France, she found that the Italian- and Spanish-language versions were more faithful to the English-language original. The French version, on the other hand, showed greater adaptation: The translators had eliminated all references to conflicts that could be identified with contemporary history (very different from the case of the Latin American versions that Dorfman and Mattelart had analyzed, which were full of explicit references). In short, concluded Michèle Mattelart, in the age of cultural multi-nationalization, the key for a producer to achieve universality was to adapt to the local frames of reference, to look for a national truth.

This way of thinking about imperialism converged with the reconceptualization that Mattelart was then proposing in *Multinationales et systèmes de communication* (1976). There, in response to certain overly linear approaches, Mattelart called for a more complex notion of *cultural imperialism*, one that would look at the mediations that linked the process of internationalization to national cultures or, to put it another way, that would consider the specificity of the national factor in the dynamic of dependence, since imperialism ran up against local cultural traditions that grew out of a particular configuration of local class relations and the relation between national and foreign bourgeoisies. Along these lines, in his introduction to *Communication and Class Struggle* (vol. 1), written practically at the same time, Mattelart (2010 [1979]) laid out the theoretical difficulties he found in France for reflecting on these issues: "The notion of a monolithic, triumphant imperialism steamrolling all diversity and homogenizing cultures can provoke a legitimate refusal to recognize its clear existence," he wrote. Instead he proposed "doing away with the idea that imperialism invades the different sectors of a society in a uniform way and replacing it with an analysis that accounts for the particular contexts that facilitate this infiltration" (106). In Mattelart's view, the difficulty in reflecting on imperialism was not simply a question of concepts. It could be explained through certain peculiarities of the French cultural tradition and French geopolitical history: its colonialist past, the

liberation of Paris, the effects of the Marshall Plan on the imaginary of the United States in France, etc. He wrote:

The fact that the signs of cultural colonization are less visible [...] leads many sectors of the public to go so far as to laugh under their breath at any talk of imperialism, especially cultural imperialism. Those who speak about these things are accused of “third-worlding the old continent” by those who find said continent quite capable of resistance. (Mattelart, 2010 [1979]: 106)

As he lays out his analysis, Mattelart gives us an idea of how he lived his peripheral position with respect to much of leftist culture and the French intellectual field: Laughing under their breath at his attempt to put cultural imperialism on the agenda, accusations of “third-worlding the old continent,” it is not far-fetched to think that he was referring to his own trajectory and the way he experienced his position. What is certain is that even as he encountered these difficulties, he would embark on a kind of theoretical and conceptual battle to draw attention to certain issues.

*“Lessons” from the Peripheral World (or the Dispute  
over the Profile of an Emerging Discipline)*

Just as with some of his earlier books, Mattelart had trouble finding a publishing house interested in *De l’usage des médias en temps de crise* [*Media Usage in Times of Crisis*], written together with Michèle Mattelart (1979). Nicos Poulantzas (Marxist political scientist and contemporary of Althusser whom Mattelart had met at the University of Paris-8) had agreed to publish the book in the “Politiques” series that he directed at Presses Universitaires de France (PUF). The managing editor of PUF, however, alleging its excessive length, asked the Mattelarts to reduce it by a fifth and, in response to their refusal to do so, rejected its publication (Mattelart, 2010: 143). The book eventually came out thanks to the Alain Moreau publishing house, the same one that had published the translation of *How to Read Donald Duck*. The difficulty in finding a publisher might have had less to do with its 450-page length than with its implication for French universities, not just in its content but also in what it said in the paratext.

The book was divided into four parts: sections I and II (“Le nouvel ordre culturel” [“The New Cultural Order”], “Les ideologies de la sécurité”, [“The Ideologies of Security”]), section III with its provocative title “Leçons

du monde périphérique à l'usage des pays européens" ["Lessons from the Peripheral World to the European Countries"], and finally, in the form of an epilogue, a perhaps even more provocative "Appel à la recherche critique en France" ["Argument in Favor of Critical Research in France"]. Sections I and II offered a deep analysis of the social and cultural reorganization that was taking place around the world in response to the crisis of the 1970s, and the central role played by communication in the new modes of accumulation and organization of labor, but also as a favored modality for bringing about consensus and exercising power. Section III consists of three chapters. The first looks at the research into communication and culture that the Mattelarts had done in Chile and Mozambique, and the "lessons" that these experiences offered for the study of media and communication. Put briefly: The authors contended that, based on the ways the Chilean bourgeoisie had modified their understanding and their practice of mass communication in the arena of class struggle, but also based on the new communication practices that emerged through popular organizations and new social relations that were emerging in Chile and Mozambique, it was possible to reflect on the non-natural character of communication practices and techniques, i.e., to question the universal notion of "mass communication" and demonstrate the historicity of what the Mattelarts at the time were calling "mode of production of communication." At another level, the authors highlighted the general processes and the specific dynamics within the Latin American intellectual field that had led to the emergence of novel conceptions regarding communication. The example they cited was the research that Michèle Mattelart and Mabel Piccini had done about television reception in the popular sectors of Santiago de Chile. Theirs was a study—as we have seen—that introduced complexity into the analysis of the communication process and the functioning of ideology, offering a pioneering account of the polyvalence of messages and audience activity based on specific reception conditions. In the third chapter of the "Leçons..." called "Voyage à Mozambique" ["Journey to Mozambique"], Armand Mattelart described the lessons concerning popular communication he learned from his work in Mozambique, a country then exploring possible communication alternatives within the framework of political and cultural decolonialization. Finally, the epilogue can be read in a number of ways. On the one hand, the Mattelarts seem to be displaying their credentials for admittance into the academic field of communication studies in France; at the same time, they were making a case for their disciplinary orientation, insisting on the need to build scientific practice in France on a different foundation. By outlining a sort of



map of the status of university research in communication in the country, they drew attention to the underdevelopment of critical traditions and the predominance of functionalist empiricism or technological determinism built around Marshall McLuhan's ideas. By way of contrast, the Mattelarts did a survey of the French centers, schools, traditions, and theoretical references that could constitute a broad framework for critical thinking about communication, approaching it not from the technical or mediatic perspective but through its philosophical, political, and cultural implications: Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Étienne Balibar, Jacques Rancière, Nicos Poulantzas, Robert Escarpit, or Lucien Goldmann. Rejecting any reductionist definition of the field's object, they proposed constructing it by using the tools of contemporary theories of the state, power, ideology, social reproduction, and culture. Finally, the Mattelarts proposed a research program that would break with technological determinism, the exclusive focus on content analysis, and the lack of historical approaches (the counter-examples, obviously, were the analyses proposed on the basis of the cases of Chile and Mozambique). But above all, they advocated for a redefinition of the relations between the university apparatus, left-wing parties, and forms of popular organization and cultural resistance movements. They advocated closing the gaps that separated these social spheres, as a condition for creating a critical project—in the theoretical-epistemological sense—that could not exist outside new forms of association that would contest and construct alternative forms of hegemony.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, one can read in *De l'usage des médias en temps de crise* (for instance, in the paratextual decisions it makes: the unsettling names of its chapters and parts, such as "Journey to Mozambique," "Lessons from the Peripheral World to the European Countries," "Argument in Favor a Critical Research in France") Mattelart's construction of the figure of a heterodox, provocative author who positions himself on the borderline of a new disciplinary field marked by a low level of institutionalization and a lack of critical traditions. We can also detect the fingerprints of a multi-faceted intellectual figure who calls for mobility and the crossing of borders—of

<sup>29</sup> The "absence of a global critical approach to the mass media in France," they wrote, was one of many indicators "of the crisis of the university apparatus, more and more detached from the national reality defined in terms of classes, and also an indicator of the crisis of mass organization [...] There is a gap between the development of forms of cultural resistance and popular creation and their recognition by universities as an object of scientific inquiry. There is a gap between parties' practice and these popular, small-scale, everyday endeavors, these forms of responding to the hegemonic culture that fail to grow into a political strategy for creating grassroots cultural powers" (Mattelart and Mattelart, 2003 [1979]: 254–255).



national spaces, but also of theoretical traditions and the social spaces and practices where knowledge about the social is produced—as a condition for knowledge production. On the borderline of genres, the last “argument” polemically and provocatively proposed—in his own version of the aesthetic or political manifesto—a dispute over the direction and makeup of an emerging disciplinary field, questioning its own definition of its limits. Mattelart positioned himself in a border zone, a place of intersections, which had at its core not so much an appeal for the interdisciplinary as an appeal for intellectual work marked by the notion of praxis and true commitment to actors in the social world. More than a normative stance, it was a political and epistemological way of thinking, as we will consider more closely in a later chapter. Beyond its disruptive and provocative dimensions, the publication and dissemination of *De l’usage des médias en temps de crise* contributed to cementing Mattelart’s status, reinforcing Mattelart as an author figure and reference point for communication studies in France.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> For a negative perception, see Rita Cruise O’Brien’s review in *Culture, Media and Society* (1981, 3: 200–202); there she expresses a certain bewilderment and confusion regarding the genre in which the authors thought they had written their book. She wondered who it was addressed to: specialists? radical students? non-committed students? A more positive assessment appeared in *Communication et langages*; it stated that the Mattelarts’ experience in Africa and South America suggested that there were “resistances to the hegemony of the large-scale culture industries,” and urged the authors to make use of these glimmers of hope to “deepen their critical analysis in order to intervene in a more concrete way in the formulation of cultural policies” (Clémencot, 1980: 126). Likewise, in *Amérique latine* Pierre Corset (1980: 102) focused on the new directions that the research on Chile and Mozambique opened up for French readers by suggesting possibilities of resistance to large-scale cultural industries. See also the review by Bertrand Poirot Delpech (1979) in *Le Monde* and, above all, the references to Armand Mattelart made in second issue of the English journal *Media, Culture and Society* by Patrice Flichy (1980) in his overview of the different trends in mass communication research in France. There Flichy stated that Armand Mattelart had been “the first in France to study the problem of internationalization in the sphere of communication” (182) and that his greatest contribution had been “to develop a dialectical vision of cultural imperialism” (183). Finally, he observed that *De l’usage des médias en temps de crise*, by analyzing the transformations in media and culture as a global response to the crisis, was anticipating the way a new balance between security and freedom could spread to Western democracies (183).

## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Connection-World, or the Cultural Networks of the Popular International of Communication

“Western Marxism,” as defined by Perry Anderson in 1976, was the product of a fundamental change in Marxist discussion. Unlike the Marxism of the “classic tradition,” which had its center of gravity in Central and Eastern Europe, Western Marxism—which Anderson (1998 [1976]: 115–117) places between the eclipse of the European revolutionary wave of the 1920s and the new cycle of struggle that began in 1968—has among its main characteristics the isolation of the producers of theory from the arena of practical politics; their retreat into the university world; the focus on philosophical, aesthetic, and epistemological problems; and finally, its lack of internationalism. Anderson was not referring to the international dimension as a strategic issue or dictate but to the actual conditions of production of a theory that, unlike the tradition of its founders, “increasingly proceeded, not merely at a distance from political militancy, but also from any international horizon. Theory gradually contracted into national compartments, sealed off from each other by comparative indifference or ignorance.” The result, according to the English historian, “of this generalized parochialism and blankness towards extra-national bodies of thought was to prevent any coherent or lucid self-awareness of the lay-out of Western

Marxism as a whole” (87–88). While Anderson could be reproached for not considering intellectual traditions that had emerged in other parts of the world—his indifference toward Latin America is perplexing—he was right when he stated that one might have expected the cycle of struggle that began in 1968 to lead to the emergence of new geographical centers of intellectual production, new encounters between theory and practice, and, therefore, new theoretical syntheses and intellectual profiles. The emergence of the English New Left and the very enterprise of *The New Left Review* that Anderson helped drive—and which was, in his words, the source of his essay—were examples of the ferment he had in mind.

Armand Mattelart’s active participation, in Chile and after his exile, in a vast and diverse network of international intellectual sociability serves to highlight the emergence of novel networks for the production and circulation of ideas. In a certain way, these networks point to new alliances that existed at the time between intellectual formations, emerging subjects, popular movements, and/or governments, whose scope extended well into the 1980s. Mattelart’s trajectory is that of an emerging intellectual who is well aware of his unique status. His cosmopolitan profile, forged above all during his years of work in Chile and enhanced after his exile, was not tied only to his choice of issues to focus on; it grew out of his participation in spaces of sociability forged in the *Chilean laboratory* or would repeatedly draw on that experience: the editing of the journal *Comunicación y Cultura* (1973–1985); the formation and training work in peripheral countries convulsed by profound transformation processes, such as Mozambique and Nicaragua; his work editing and compiling anthologies in different languages, often as a result of these experiences—*Communication and Class Struggle* (1979–1983), *Comunicación y transición al socialismo. El caso Mozambique* [*Communication and Transition to Socialism: The Case of Mozambique*] (1981), *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua: An Anthology* (1986); his key role in organizing the International Conference on Cultural Imperialism held in Algiers in 1977; his work as *researcher* or *expert* or *advisor* for different international bodies; or his participation in publishing collectives that put out different French journals. All these interventions bear witness to these international spaces of cross-linking where Mattelart occupied a prominent place as a mentor and organizer. Of course, this is not about an exceptional individual—the result of some mysterious gift; it is about a profile forged amid collective processes through networks that in many cases Mattelart helped to establish and that point to the existence at the time of a kind of *popular international public sphere*, by definition variegated, fleeting, hard to map—because it is

also made from cross pollination and reciprocal loans with the dominant one—that does its work from subordinate positions and at the intersection of national intellectual spaces.<sup>1</sup> In the diversity of work that Mattelart performed simultaneously as editor, as advisor to different international bodies, and as activist involved in different ways in a variety of revolutionary experiences, we can make out a unique cosmopolitan intellectual profile: In those years he was a kind of *translator* or *mediator* devoted to putting disparate spheres of social practice in contact with each other (scientific research with pedagogy, cultural intervention through publishing with political activism), as well as intellectual traditions and cultural formations from different national spaces (it is about movement from “north to south” but also from “south to north”). Reconstructing a genealogy of these spaces will provide us with insight into the existence and nature of this *popular international public sphere* that, far from being a pure or autonomous space, proves to be a zone of imprecise and unstable boundaries where subjects can traverse its borders, simultaneously cultivating relations with more established institutions or mainstream elements. In the intersection of these spaces, they produce knowledge about the social and manage the tensions and conflicts that contribute to the reproduction of hegemony while also questioning it. Mattelart’s participation in these zones of intersection will allow us to situate the social conditions of production of his thinking and the bridge that connects his life experience to the formulation of his theoretical positions.

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of a popular *international public sphere* that we are proposing draws on different sources. Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1983 [1972]) came up with the concept of *proletarian public sphere* in the 1970s as a counterpoint to Habermas’s concept of *bourgeois public sphere*. Along similar lines, Terry Eagleton (1999 [1984]: 126–127) refers to the paradoxical existence of an “absent but desirable” *public countersphere* for the case of England in the second post-war period and contrasts it with its actual existence in the Weimar Republic in the 1920s. It is possible to read in his work a reflection on the ambiguous and paradoxical existence of this diffuse, inchoate space. Finally, with respect to its international character, it is helpful to consider the formula proposed by the sociologist Renato Ortiz regarding “popular international culture” as a way of referring to the symbolic and material relations and exchanges between cultures from different national spaces and the configuration of transnational identities. It should be noted that Ortiz (1997 [1994]) does not refer to class articulations, to counterhegemonic movements, or to the inequalities that govern their exchange. We will overlook here the debates about Habermas’s concept of bourgeois public sphere and the difficulties that arise, as Eagleton points out (1999 [1984]: 135), when the concept is put forward—marked by rationalism—as the prefiguration of a socialist future.

## Communication and Class Struggle: *Editorial Project and Intellectual Intervention*

One of the most interesting entry points for thinking about Mattelart's manifold and cosmopolitan intellectual profile might be his role as editor of *Communication and Class Struggle* (1979–1983). This was an extensive anthology in English, published in two thick volumes and containing 128 texts, which Mattelart compiled, edited, and wrote the prologue for, together with Seth Siegelaub. The first volume, subtitled *Capitalism, Imperialism* (1979), was followed by a second, subtitled *Liberation, Socialism* (1983).<sup>2</sup>

Siegelaub, a US artist, sculptor, editor and art curator with ties to avant-garde visual media in New York in the 1960s (although he preferred to identify himself by his job as a “plumber”), had left the art world to devote himself to publishing. In 1972 he moved to France, where he organized and published the first volume of *Marxism and the Mass Media: Towards a Basic Bibliography*, a sort of multilingual bibliographical catalogue that sought to bring together the entire state of the art of communication and media research from a leftist and Marxist perspective. Siegelaub published the catalogue on and off between 1973 and 1986 at the independent publishing house that he ran: International General, headquartered in New York, and the International Mass Media Research Center (IMMRC) that he founded in 1973 in Bagnolet, France. The institute sought to organize a collection of materials, books and documents that would address all aspects of media and communication. As its founders stated, its objective was to improve

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<sup>2</sup> This was not an isolated effort. The urge to spread Marxism and write its history was felt intensely around the world between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. Ambitious publishing projects contributed to a renewal of Marxist thinking and opened up a space for advocating a socialism adapted to the historical moment and the ongoing search for possibilities for its transformation. In the English-speaking world, the translation and publishing projects of *The New Left Review*, founded in 1960, and of Verso, the journal's publisher, did noteworthy work in this sense and, as Maria Cevasco observes (2003: 131), in laying down the conditions that made it possible to formulate “cultural materialism,” promoted above all by Raymond Williams. In Perry Anderson's assessment (1988 [1976]), *The New Left Review* had set out to remedy the lack of dialogue between the Marxism of the United Kingdom and the Marxist traditions of Italy, France, and Germany. It is also important to remember that in these same years a number of studies were made of the history and spread of socialism and Marxism, among them three major collective works: *Storia del marxismo contemporaneo*, which Feltrinelli in Milan began to publish in 1974; *Storia del marxismo*, which Einaudi in Rome began to publish in 1978; and the *Histoire générale du socialisme*, published in 1984 by PUF in Paris (Tarcus, 2007: 55). In short, a veritable field of studies on the spread of Marxism opened up in those years in Europe, consisting of debates, colloquia, specialized journals and collective works in which the works of different authors were brought together and reinforced one another (idem: 56).

the conditions for international exchange in the field and to “contribute to the development of Marxist theory and practice of communication in the ideological and political struggle.” The exchange of information and materials among people from different countries, it stated, but also between different areas of work (organizations, newspapers, journals, publishers, institutions and communication researchers) was a condition if the aim was to “reflect the reality of communication throughout the world” (Mattelart and Siegelaub, 1979: 446).

The origins of the relationship between Mattelart and Siegelaub once again go back to the Chilean laboratory and *How to Read Donald Duck*. As Mattelart tells it in retrospect, after visiting Santiago de Chile, Herbert Schiller mentioned the existence of the book to his friend Siegelaub, who immediately wrote to Dorfman and Mattelart to see about publishing it in English (Mattelart, interview with the author, 2011). Since Dorfman and Mattelart had already sold the worldwide copyright to the Italian publishing house Feltrinelli, which in turn negotiated with major publishers in the English-speaking world like Random House in the United States and Penguin in London, the authors could not accept the proposal at that time. Because the negotiations were going nowhere—the big publishing houses feared that Disney would sue them over the use of its images—after his arrival in France, Mattelart reached out once again to Siegelaub, at the time a kind of outsider in the publishing world, who convinced him to rescind the contract with Feltrinelli and assign him the rights to the English edition of *How to Read Donald Duck*. Siegelaub published it in 1975 through the International General publishing house, having entrusted the project to David Kunzle, who had been in Chile during the UP years studying emerging forms of political art, and who translated the text and wrote an introduction to the English-language version. This edition maintained the original title: *Para leer el Pato Donald* was translated more literally, *How to Read Donald Duck* (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1975).<sup>3</sup>

After establishing this tie, Mattelart began to collaborate with Siegelaub on making a catalogue for the IMMRC. He contributed his bibliographic knowledge of critical Latin American research on communication—which

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<sup>3</sup> In the appendix to *How to Read Donald Duck*, John Shelton Lawrence recounts the legal acrobatics that the English-language version of the book was subjected to. Disney managed to block the book’s distribution in the United States for a time, arguing that it violated intellectual property law by using images from Disney’s comic books. The publishers hired lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), who prevailed in the court case by appealing to freedom of expression. To this day the case is considered a legal precedent for matters of freedom of expression in the United States (Lawrence, 1991 [1975]).

from then on occupied a significant part of *Marxism and the Mass Media: Towards a Basic Bibliography*—and above all, his contacts with researchers from around the world, thus helping to create a network connecting critical communication researchers and traditions from different national spaces and establishing ties between the world of research, activism and political or communicational militancy. According to information put out by the IMMRC itself, at the time the first volume of *Communication and Class Struggle* appeared in 1979, the institute had a collection of some ten thousand books, pamphlets, articles, and theses dating back to the nineteenth century, from roughly fifty countries (Mattelart and Siegelau, 1979: 446).

While not encompassing a huge team—it revolved primarily around Siegelau and Mattelart, who invited itinerant collaborators—the structure that was set up between the IMMRC and International General proved to be quite effective in terms of editorial production.<sup>4</sup> Its most ambitious project was undoubtedly the publication of *Communication and Class Struggle*. This was a heterodox endeavor, almost handcrafted, dependent to a large extent on voluntary work by the editors and translators. While Siegelau and Mattelart began to envision the project in 1975, due to its peculiarities and especially to financial problems, it was not until 1979 that the first volume came out, and the second was not published until 1983.<sup>5</sup> The anthology's stated aim was singularly ambitious: to lay the theoretical, conceptual and epistemological groundwork for Marxist thinking about communication and culture, which Mattelart would call, in his long introduction to the first part, a *class analysis of communication*. Thus, the division into two volumes was meant to express a conceptual unity. Broadly speaking, *Capitalism, Imperialism* (vol. 1) set out to introduce the authors, conceptual references, and research that the editors felt were indispensable for a Marxist analysis of the way communication functions under capitalism: from Karl Marx to Antonio Gramsci, from Pierre Bourdieu to Jürgen Habermas, passing through Herbert Schiller, Raymond Williams, or Henri Lefebvre, among

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<sup>4</sup> One can consult the index attached to the two volumes of *Communication and Class Struggle*. It is also interesting to see the presence of Latin American authors in the index prepared by Michèle Mattelart together with the IMMRC in the appendix to *Donald l'imposeur* (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> The anthologies were never translated into Spanish or French. In the case of Mattelart's introductions to the two volumes, we will refer from here on to the recent editions in Spanish that came out in Buenos Aires (Mattelart, 2010 [1979], 2011 [1983]). [Translator's note: Zarowsky edited, translated, and wrote an introduction for a Spanish-language version of the work: Mattelart, Armando, *Comunicacion, cultura y lucha de clases. Génesis de un campo de estudios*, Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2021. Translation, editing and introduction by Mariano Zarowsky.



others. *Liberation, Socialism* (vol. 2) for the most part brought together a series of studies that analyzed or gave testimony of a range of practices of resistance and popular communication arising in processes of intense social mobilization, in countries from both center and periphery from the Soviet Union to Cuba, from Chile under the UP to France in May of 1968 or the Italy of “free radios.” What stands out in both volumes is the breadth and diversity of the spectrum of theoretical reflections, research, and alternative experiences included, in terms of both geographical perspectives and social spheres set in relation to one another: The anthologies include studies that came out of a strictly academic context alongside programmatic political texts and accounts written by social actors who participated in experiences of cultural resistance or alternative communication.

Moreover, the compilation and editing of the anthology aimed to improve and promote the material conditions of production and circulation of a critical tradition that was considered marginal in the field of communication studies, especially in the English-speaking world. In his preface to the first volume, Seth Siegelau specified, with ample detail and quantitative data, the conditions and limitations that the concentration of the publishing industry and its distribution and sales system imposed on the production and circulation of Marxist-inspired works, especially in the United States. He also identified as an obstacle the fact that leftist thinking about communication was limited to the university setting, with no connection to the production connected to other kinds of intellectual workers or communication practices such as those that took place in labor unions, political parties, or grass-roots organizations. In this sense, Siegelau drew attention to the paucity of materials written by left-wing journalists or unionized communication industry workers in libraries and archives. Workers’ organizations, he observed, usually lacked the means to properly document their production: by making do with the low-cost resources at their disposal, they could not help but condemn their production to a fragmentary and ephemeral existence.<sup>6</sup> By way of contrast, Siegelau (1979: 15–16) highlighted the anthology’s citation policy and the bibliographic presentation that it proposed as an explicit part of the

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<sup>6</sup> It was no coincidence that the first volume of *Communication and Class Struggle* included “Notes for the History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria,” a text in which Antonio Gramsci analyzes the difficulties entailed in making a history of the subaltern classes. According to Gramsci, these difficulties consisted of the subaltern classes’ inability to articulate a unitary vision of the world and to constitute themselves as a power block, or put differently, to procure the material conditions for establishing an alternative cultural infrastructure.



overall project's objectives, stating that the very act of documenting was a political action.

The anthology was thus put forth simultaneously as a theoretical-epistemological project (as affirmed in the overall framework that Mattelart formulated in the respective introductions), an effort in documentation, and finally, though no less importantly, an exercise in *translation*. In this last sense it aimed to contribute to a Marxist dialogue and interchange among different traditions of "Western Marxism," but also to foreground what were considered to be fundamental theoretical contributions developed in peripheral countries, such as that of José Carlos Mariátegui, whom Mattelart characterized (2010 [1979]) as "a contemporary of Gramsci who continues to be relatively unknown by Marxists in central countries." He went on to point out the need to question "the law of one-sided exchange, which operates even within the revolutionary field" (137).<sup>7</sup> But the exercise in *translation* that ran through *Communication and Class Struggle* can also be understood in a metaphorical sense, not just as a question of relating theoretical traditions forged in different national spaces and historical moments, but also as an attempt to articulate diverse social practices. This work blended a pedagogical aim and an intention to bridge spatial and social gaps. Recovering the memory of the struggles and records of historical experiences of popular communication was presented as a condition for developing a critical tradition.

There can be no doubt that Mattelart played a key role in selecting the texts that make up the diverse and cosmopolitan array of works that appear in *Communication and Class Struggle*. One need look no further than the references to critical research in Latin American communication listed in the bibliographies at the end of each volume and the inclusion in his introductions of references to authors from such a wide range of geographical regions, political-intellectual and disciplinary traditions—many of whom were unknown in the English-speaking countries that were the intended audience, or in the French intellectual tradition—: from the theorists of the so-called "countries of real socialism" to the Anglophone political economy of communication, from African decolonization theorists to French cul-

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<sup>7</sup> As a mark of the project's significance, one notes the first English-language publication—or says the editors' introduction to the article—of Antonio Gramsci's observations on popular national literature and folklore, translated directly from the volume *Marxismo e letteratura* (edited by Giuliano Manacorda for Editori Riuniti of Rome in 1975) (Mattelart and Siegelau, 1983: 71–75). As an example of the effort to reverse this one-sided exchange flow, one can mention the quotes that Mattelart took from Gramsci in his introduction to the first volume, drawn from the *Antologia* published by Siglo XXI of Mexico City, under the direction of Manuel Sacristán (Mattelart, 2010 [1979]: 137).

tural sociology, from Gramsci to Latin American dependency theorists, etc. Especially at the end of his introduction to the anthology's second volume, Mattelart laid out his conception of the project when he proposed a non-Eurocentric gaze that called for building bridges between different experiences of struggle, and between these experiences and the production of theoretical syntheses. The theoretical-practical experiences of the Third World had much to offer. He wrote:

Rather than posing the eternal question [...], Can the models of Western science serve the Third World?, it is perhaps time to pose the inverse question: What lessons can be drawn from the experience of struggles undertaken by peripheral countries in the domain of popular communication networks, for use in Europe and the United States? [...] Questions which have been posed in the revolutionary processes of so-called backward countries have been the forerunners of questions that progressive forces in advanced capitalist countries have only posed later. Well before free radios re-appeared in Europe, the questions which they provoked, notably concerning the impossibility of dissociating form and content, were sharply posed in a movement of reflection such as in Chile between 1970 and 1973. However, to avoid repeating past errors in which experiments unfolding in the Third World have been taken as recipes and read as catechism [...] there is a greater need than ever for *a theoretical reflection enabling us to unite the general and the specific and vice versa*. This *detour through theory* is necessary in order to approach these experiences as being problematic, knots of questions, both similar and different, and would have the advantage of replying to the current objection "that which happens far away doesn't concern us." (Mattelart, 2011 [1983]: 135; italics mine)

The translation metaphor that we have used to characterize this project and Mattelart's activity does not imply the transposition of texts to other temporal and national realities, or a linear recovery of historical memory. On the contrary, it involves deliberate reflection that tries to connect *the general* (the tendency toward homogenization that is inherent to the internationalization process and the absorption of communication and culture into the sphere of value; but also what the struggle for justice and equality might have in *common* as a collective aspiration) to *the specific* (the particular shape that these processes take in each national social formation) on the basis of an indispensable detour through theory that can spark questions and distinguish similarities and differences between historical processes. The history of the traditions of communication research in the particular

conditions of Latin America, the United States, and Europe that Mattelart proposed in his introductions to the two volumes was a call to steer clear of unthinkingly transposing concepts and theories as well as models and conceptualizations about popular communication that were developed in specific conditions and historical situations.

### *Mattelart in Algeria, or the International Networks of Comunicación y Cultura*

The nature of a project like the one embodied in *Communication and Class Struggle* was grounded in functioning international networks of articulation, exchange, and production. In other words, in the existence of an international intellectual collective. A clear example of the existence of these networks and of the role Mattelart played in them is his participation in the International Conference on Cultural Imperialism organized jointly by the government of Algeria and the Lelio Basso International Foundation for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples.

With a clear political profile—Third World and internationalist—the Conference on Cultural Imperialism was convened as a follow-up to the conclusions reached at the Algiers Conference (1973), and it was held in the same city in October 1977. According to its final statement, attendees included individuals and groups from the fields of information, art, and the social sciences, from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and with representatives from Europe and North America. In general terms, again according to its final statement, the conference addressed experiences of cultural domination in the areas of mass media, science, education, and language, but also “experiences of struggle against imperialism” (in *Comunicación y Cultura*, no. 6, 1978). Working from the assumption that cultural exchange—and consequently the very conditions of research and knowledge production—“is subjected to the same power relations that govern the unequal exchange that takes place in the worldwide economy,” the conference recommended, in its conclusions, the implementation of a series of initiatives aimed at reversing this one-sided flow: the creation of working groups to analyze the different forms that cultural imperialism takes, the creation of a center for documenting and distributing materials related to the study of mechanisms of cultural domination and developing resistive action, and solidarity with “recently liberated” peoples through cultural exchange.

As we have said, Mattelart played a key role in organizing the conference and the event's working groups. He had been invited as part of the conference's scientific organization by the Lelio Basso Foundation, with which he had ties since participating in sessions of the second Russell Tribunal,<sup>8</sup> also organized by the foundation. He was assigned the opening presentation in the inaugural session, and he tried to set the tone for the debates by dissecting the idea of cultural imperialism itself, discussing certain ambiguities in the concept and the way it had been addressed to that point. This intervention, different versions of which later appeared as articles or parts of books, is considered a sort of watershed moment in the development and rigorous definition of the concept of cultural imperialism. In the eyes of Collen Roach (1997: 49), it produced some of the "cracks" that can be seen in cultural imperialism theories of the late 1970s. In the same tenor, Víctor Lenarduzzi (1998: 52–53) argues that Mattelart's critical observations about the "counterfascination of power"—which he attributed to many analyses of cultural imperialism—and his reference to Antonio Gramsci—from whom he posited the need to analyze the system of correlations of international force as always linked with the correlations of local forces—constituted a "moment of transition" on the map of studies of communication in Latin America, since it opened distance from an imaginary of power without seams or gaps, situating mass culture historically, in relation to "popular cultures." This degree of problematization marked a stark contrast with the level of debate in France, where the issue was much less developed.<sup>9</sup>

Mattelart's role at the conference, as the hub of a network of international sociability and intellectual exchange, was complemented and enhanced by his editorial work. In addition to his editorial project with Seth Siegelau, Mattelart was also coordinating a collection at the French publishing house Anthropos (called *Mass media et idéologie* ["Mass Media and Ideology"]) and, together with Héctor Schmucler, directing the journal *Comunicación y*

<sup>8</sup> The second Russell Tribunal was held in three sessions: Rome (1974), Brussels (1975), and Rome (1976). It dealt with the political and human rights situation in Latin American countries, focusing particularly on Brazil and Chile.

<sup>9</sup> A good indicator is the presentation made by Ignacio Ramonet (1977) for the short dossier about the Algiers Conference that *Le Monde diplomatique* put together at the time. There, rather than problematizing anything, Ramonet highlighted the deployment of the concept of cultural imperialism as a positive development in and of itself, since it broadened a notion of imperialism that was usually limited to economic and political matters. Paying less attention to the ambiguities and limits of the notion emphasized in Mattelart's address in Algiers, Ramonet emphasized the way Mattelart described the new narrative techniques of Hollywood films, which made a compelling case that films from other places are not always innocent and that the predominance of the ideological dimension "is more widespread than people believe."

*Cultura*, published in Mexico. Mattelart would thus become disseminator and translator of the debates and conclusions reached at the Algiers Conference. A year after it was held, he coordinated a thematic special issue for the journal *L'Homme et la Société*: “Mass media et idéologie. Impérialisme et front de lutte” [“Mass Media and Ideology. Imperialism and Battlefront”] (January–December 1978) where, among other articles, he included three papers from the conference (those by Bernard Cassen, Luis Nieves Falcón, and Michèle Mattelart) and a text of his own called “Ideología, información y Estado militar.” In addition, under his direction jointly with Héctor Schmucler (who had attended the conference from Mexico), *Comunicación y Cultura* devoted its sixth issue of 1978 to the Algiers Conference and the issue of cultural imperialism. Aside from Mattelart’s inaugural address (“Notas al margen del imperialismo cultural” [“Marginal Notes on Cultural Imperialism”], 1978b), the journal published in their entirety more than ten of the papers presented at Algiers by authors of very diverse backgrounds and, by way of conclusion, the Conference’s final statement. In their introduction to the issue, the editors pointed out that, “like all concepts, cultural imperialism was marked by the concrete (material) conditions of its formulation”; therefore, they suggested, it was necessary to recover a dialectical view that, even when taken up, sometimes neglected to consider the contradictions and the diverse “situations in specific countries” where different alternative projects were confronting cultural domination (*Comunicación y Cultura*, 1978: 3–4).

In short, through its dissemination and translation work, *Comunicación y Cultura* extended the scope of the debates and the networks of exchange and documentation that the conference had set out to promote, by shining a spotlight on the theoretical contributions being made in peripheral countries. To be sure, we will see that the journal would repeat this work for other papers and interventions that Mattelart made in contexts outside of Latin America (his experiences in Mozambique or the report he would write up for France’s Ministry of Industry and Research).<sup>10</sup> In the issue dedicated to the debate about a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO, or NOMIC in its Spanish acronym) (*Comunicación y Cultura*, no. 7,

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<sup>10</sup> Since its fifth issue in 1978, *Comunicación y Cultura* had been published in Mexico and its center of gravity had shifted to Héctor Schmucler and the group he had put together at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México. Mattelart’s role from that point on, while more distant than during the Chilean stage, was important for connecting the journal with French and European researchers who published their own work there, thus bringing issues and discussions from Europe to Latin America. Among these researchers were David Buxton and Michael Chanan, who at the time were the translators of Mattelart’s work into English.

1982) we find a reflection by the editors that applies to the journal's broader intellectual program. There, in an editorial, Mattelart and Schmucler wrote:

If we want to generate a real critical theory of communication that can be useful for an equally critical practice that stands up to the dominant models, we need to *cross-pollinate experiences from different parts of the world* (north-south, south-north) that foster forms of democratic communication, take them as common problematics—with similarities and differences—and from them develop conceptualizations that lead us to a theoretical formulation. *The character of the problematic is very often more important than its geographical location.* In response to the internationalization driven by transnational culture *it is necessary to propose a new type of internationalism* that will wipe away the vestiges of unidirectional transfer of theoretical models, which have so often boxed us into problems and solutions that were actually one more expression of the unequal flow of information.

For this to happen, it is essential to recover the recent history of Latin American experiences that attempted or attempt to encourage forms of popular communication. No future experience should fail to take account of the mistakes and successes of this already considerable historical storehouse that is a legacy of popular culture. *Amnesia is a poor guide when it comes to building a scientific theory.* (Mattelart and Schmucler, 1982a: 10, italics mine)

As the quotation shows, though in a less programmatic mode than in the inaugural issue of 1973, this was the mission and aim that the directors of *Comunicación y Cultura* imagined for their journal almost ten years after its founding. And this self-representation is in tune with other international intellectual and editorial projects that Mattelart was involved in at the time, like the publication of *Communication and Class Struggle*. Aside from laying out the international-scale political-cultural project that this formation was trying to accomplish, this snippet of the editorial stakes out a clear epistemological position. If, as Schmucler wrote in 1975, one of the journal's founding principles had been the idea that political practice was a condition of truth for the social sciences, now this principle assumed a new dimension: In the era of the internationalization of cultural exchanges, Schmucler and Mattelart proposed “cross-pollinating experiences from different parts of the world” (both theoretical and taken from popular communication) and posited this task as a condition for formulating a critical theory of communication or, in their words, “a scientific theory.”

## *Mozambique and Nicaragua: Between Editorial Activity and Communication Policies*

A clear line can be drawn from the questions posed by Mattelart in his inaugural address at the Conference on Cultural Imperialism in Algiers to his work in Mozambique, where he was invited in April 1978 by the governing Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) to help formulate communication policies for the socialist transition.<sup>11</sup> This work made a key contribution to the configuration of Mattelart's intellectual profile and the redefinition of his theoretical positions.

While the invitation came about through different channels, it is undeniable that the Chilean experience—once again—opened doors for him. Mattelart was invited to Mozambique through Jacques d'Arthuys, France's culture attaché at the time in Maputo, who had met him on a visit to Santiago de Chile during the UP years and who had contacted him anew on account of *La Spirale*. It is possible that, in certain cultural and government sectors of Mozambique, there was awareness of the Portuguese translation of *Mass media, idéologies et mouvement révolutionnaire*, published in Lisbon in 1977 in the context of the so-called “Carnation Revolution,” and that this sparked the interest of some FRELIMO leaders in knowing more about the details of the Chilean process that Mattelart described and analyzed in his book. The Mozambique Ministry of Information extended the invitation to Mattelart to provide training at the Centro de Estudos de Comunicação of the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, in April 1978 (Mattelart, 1981c: 57; interview with the author, 2011). To be precise, the invitation was not simply a personal matter, but part of a series of geopolitical, institutional and cultural relations that France cultivated with the newly decolonized Mozambique. Concretely, the cooperation service of France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had signed a cooperation agreement with the African country's brand-new Film Institute, for the purpose of supporting the installation of technical infrastructure for using Super 8. Television was practically unknown in Mozambique, and the development of its communication networks was still nascent. This explains in part why among the French personalities who offered their solidarity to the newly independent country were leading

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<sup>11</sup> In 1975 Mozambique obtained its independence from Portugal after several years of civil war, under the direction of FRELIMO on the insurgent side. The end of the conflict occurred in the context of the fall of António Salazar's dictatorship, in 1974. In 1977, the FRELIMO, which had formed the government, declared itself Marxist-Leninist. While at first socialist forms of social organization were undertaken, as the years passed a certain institutionalization of the change process became cemented in place.



filmmakers, including Jean-Luc Godard. It was in this context that Mattelart was officially invited to support the project for installing Super 8, under the aegis of the Institute for Ethnographic Film of the Université de Nanterre de Paris, coordinated by the documentary filmmaker Jean Rouch. The training at the university included some attempts at inserting Super 8 into popular development initiatives, along the lines of the Medvedkine mobile film experiments in the Soviet Union (Mattelart, 1981c: 61–62).

In observations written right after his return to France in August 1978, Mattelart presented his “journey to Mozambique” with certain ethnographic touches, mentioning a kind of anthropological estrangement from his own world that contact with the local culture produced in him. Using the first person singular, he recounted in the text his presence in different work spaces, which afforded him, in his words, the possibility to have “numerous conversations” “in many different circles,” “in newsrooms, at the university, in the new farmers’ production units” (Mattelart, 1981c: 27, 45, 60–61).<sup>12</sup> This experience of work and political exchange allowed Mattelart to see some of the issues he had been working on with new eyes, at the same time that it posed new problems. The experience served, once again, to decenter his gaze. Formulated as a general question, the issue could be expressed in the same terms as in the Chilean case: How to formulate a communication policy for the transition to socialism that considers Mozambique’s particular situation and possibilities? How to assimilate at the same time new experiences and inherited theoretical traditions deployed at different times and in different places? To begin with, the challenge called for a historical gaze that would provide insights into the concrete reality of a *mode of producing communication* that operated in Mozambique and that was different from that of France, but also different from the one developed in Chile up to the 1970s. Mattelart took his first analytical steps in this direction. In a summarized version: In Mozambique, he wrote, the absence of a mass media network was due not only to the low level of development of technical media (where the railway structure reflected the development of means of communication that served a colonial-era structure of production and extraction), but also to a type of colonial domination that, unlike in the Chilean case, had not

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<sup>12</sup> The notes eventually became an article: “Mozambique: communication et transition au socialisme” [“Mozambique: Communication and Transition to Socialism”] published in the journal *Tiers-Monde*, no. 79, 1979. The text appeared in different versions: It was a chapter of *De l’usage des médias en temps de crise* [Media Usage in Times of Crisis] and also the introduction to an anthology in Spanish that Mattelart himself edited: *Comunicación y transición al socialismo. El caso Mozambique* ] (1981c). Here we quote this last version.



required the emergence of a mass culture to regulate conflict and incorporate the subaltern classes into a hegemonic dynamic.<sup>13</sup>

As for the problem of communication in the transition to socialism, the case of Mozambique possibly had a certain continuity with the Chilean experience and could be approached on the basis of Chile's lessons. At different meetings and conferences organized by FRELIMO, before and after they took power, efforts were made to understand the tensions that permeated the project to establish popular information networks. These tensions, wrote Mattelart (2011 [1983]) some years later, "come from the class character of the accepted journalistic models, from the difficulty of forming a concrete alliance between information professionals and the people, and from the contradictions that can arise between the requirements of party organization and the needs of a press with a certain degree of autonomy and spontaneity" (61). But the Mozambique experience also lent itself to reflection about an element that was absent in the Chilean debate: the role of new technologies in a process involving the transformation of culture and communication. The analysis of the experiences with Super 8 and other lightweight media led Mattelart to object to the optimism underlying a technological determinism that forgot to situate "these attempts to create new communication media in the concrete conditions of production." Taking as a counter-example the semi-failure of other audiovisual experiences—such as those of other African nations that tried to get the population to participate in the elaboration of their own messages, only to find that the organizers were so busy with the technical experiment that they turned these experiences into "an enclave"—Mattelart (1981c) called for integrating the analysis of the uses of new technologies into "a national moment [...], the only way to evaluate their contribution and their originality, and to outline, on the basis of these experiences, lines of behavior for other realities" (60). We will come back to the meaning of this integration of the technological factor into the "national moment" when we examine the notion of *class analysis of communication* that Mattelart was working on at the time. For now we can say that Mozambique prompted Mattelart to review questions of communication in line with certain reconsiderations that were occurring at the time in the Marxist

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<sup>13</sup> In this way Mattelart (1981c) articulated what was then still a genealogical research project: "Take into account the genesis of the communication networks, look into the way the colonial domination projects and the reality of this domination were received, look at how this historical background impacts the way modern technological media are received and resisted today: these would seem to us to be the fundamental aims of a study that seeks to restore the originality of the processes for forming communication apparatuses in Africa" (11).

debate (the question of the national dimension in the socialist transition, the status of the subject of change, and their relationship with the state and party-based forms of organization, etc.), and Mattelart was trying out a way of thinking about popular communication based on cross-pollination between traditions of critical thought, the analysis of particular national situations (situated in their historicity and their international dimension) and the memory of experiences carried out at different times and in different regions. Before announcing any particularity or exceptional circumstance for thinking about that “national moment,” the idea was to try out possible transpositions or general conclusions taken from theoretical traditions and historical experiences of the past, to deploy them in a particular situation and problematize them, at the same time, on the basis of the questions that the new situation generated.<sup>14</sup> In a certain sense, this was the theoretical program that Mattelart defined, together with his “fellow traveler” Héctor Schmucler, in the editorial that appeared in *Comunicación y Cultura* no. 7 (1982a) that we have analyzed and can also trace out in the editorial project of *Communication and Class Struggle*.

We could say that when it comes to the shaping of his intellectual perspective, the Mozambique experience played a role that was analogous—perhaps at a smaller scale—to that of the *Chilean laboratory*.<sup>15</sup> Mattelart integrated the experience into his research and his intellectual project: In addition to publishing several articles about Mozambique in different journals, he used his stays in the African country as a source to draw upon for his editorial and “translation” projects: he devoted a chapter of *De l’usage des médias en temps de crise* (1979) to Mozambique and compiled *Comunicación y transición al socialismo. El caso Mozambique* (1981c) for Ediciones Era, of Mexico. In this book he included a long introduction that he wrote himself and ten documents written by Mozambican intellectuals and political leaders that discussed issues of culture, communication, and information in the context of a revolutionary war and the construction of a socialist society in the particular conditions of the country. The compilation, published only in

<sup>14</sup> The Mozambique case gave Mattelart occasion to draw attention to the ethnocentrism of a certain Marxist tradition that avoided—he wrote—“integrating contributions as essential as those of Amílcar Cabral in Africa and of the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui in Latin America.” Mattelart (1981c) emphasized how in Mozambique—the same thing had occurred in Chile—heterodox combinations were made of theoretical or ideological traditions “that are never found together in socialist contexts” (26, 27).

<sup>15</sup> Mattelart saw it in those terms in his own retrospective view (1981a: 80), and he placed both experiences on the same level when he presented the “Leçons du monde périphérique à l’usage des pays européens” [“Lessons from the Peripheral World to the European Countries”] in *De l’usage des médias en temps de crise* (1979).

Spanish, included documents from the National Conference of FRELIMO's Information and Propaganda Department, held in 1975, and from the papers, preliminary documents, and conclusions of the First National Information Seminar, held in Maputo in September 1977. With this compilation, Mattelart amplified the voices of the key players and political leaders of the Mozambican process: Samora Michel (President), Jorge Robelo (Information Minister), and José Luis Cabaço, among others. In this same tenor, he also published documents about Mozambique in the second volume of *Communication and Class Struggle* (1983), in the section about "post-colonial transition," where he included three texts from the 1975 conference (two were party resolutions) that, according to the editors, were being presented to the public for the first time in English (Siegelaub and Mattelart, 1983: 309–314).

If Mattelart's writings about Mozambique were thrust into the middle of the debate about communication in France in the late 1970s, as we have seen, the reading that one sector of Latin American communicology made of *Comunicación y transición al socialismo* shows how the author connected issues common to both sides of the Atlantic, and also triggered a series of theoretical-political shifts that affected the way a group of Argentinian intellectuals exiled in Mexico thought about communication. Thus, Nicolás Casullo wrote a review for the Mexican journal *Unomásuno* ("Mattelart en Mozambique" ["Mattelart in Mozambique"] 1982) in which he read Mattelart's book in terms of certain limits that could be seen in the journal *Comunicación y Cultura*—Casullo sat on the editorial board—with respect to the debate about the New World Information and Communication Order. Casullo pointed out what he considered to be the relevance of Mattelart's anthology, arguing that "it forces us to grapple with a problem of the Third World that few have analyzed or even recognize: the complex and untransferable national realities" in which communicative activity takes place. Taking exception to certain sweeping, abstract notions like "Third World" and "cultural imperialism," Casullo (1981) highlighted Mattelart's contribution in calling out "the impossibility of continuing to synthesize—mythically—issues that differ profoundly: those of certain African regions, for example, with those of Latin America" (21). In the same tenor, a short time later in the pages of *Comunicación y Cultura* ("La comunicación entre el Estado colonial y el socialismo" ["Communication between the Colonial State and Socialism"], no. 7, 1982), Casullo elaborated broadly on Mattelart's book as a pretext for problematizing certain dimensions of the Latin American left's thinking in general and its analyses of communication in particular. The concrete analysis of a national situation that Mattelart undertook, he

wrote, opened the way to revise and add complexity to what he called the “economistic” and “denunciative” analyses of the relation between communication, economics, and society in Latin American communicology. In contrast, Casullo concluded, “the moment of the political” and of culture was now being revalorized as “*organizer and articulator of the social*” (italics in the original).

But while he drew attention to these elements of the anthology that he considered productive, when it came to the theoretical-political redefinitions, Casullo went beyond Mattelart’s positions. In this sense it is interesting to observe how the Mozambican leaders’ documents that Mattelart had included were read by Casullo to question what he regarded as the “authoritarian” character underlying the Leninist model of party and state (present somehow in the Africans’ positions) and its impact on different experiences of organizing communication. Along these lines, although from a different theoretical-political perspective, Máximo Simpson Grinberg (1982: 46–48) referred to *Comunicación y transición al socialismo* in an article in the *Revista de la Universidad de México* and later systematized his critiques of the Leninist fingerprint on communicational thinking in an anthology that he compiled about alternative communication. There he positioned Mattelart in a “leftist authoritarian” tradition and accused him, based on his activity in Chile, of being a standard-bearer for “Leninist-style functionalism and behaviorism” (Simpson Grinberg, 1986: 27, 51).<sup>16</sup>

What is paradoxical is that this vision of Leninism does not necessarily align with Mattelart’s position or with the revision of socialist experiences and the Leninist tradition he was making at the time and with which Casullo and Simpson were “settling scores.” Although we cannot look deeply at this question here, it is important to point out that, far from essentializing Lenin’s thinking and reducing it to a single matrix, Mattelart included a brief historical overview in his introduction to the second volume of *Communication and Class Struggle*—which he was writing at the time—in which he differentiated among the disparate positions that the Bolshevik leader took with respect to the press, situating them in the different contexts in which they emerged. Mattelart (2011 [1983]) clearly distinguished considerations about the character and function of a newspaper that Lenin formulated in 1905, when the party was operating underground, from his proposals for a press at the moment of the revolutionary wave in 1917, as well as from

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<sup>16</sup> For more about the shifting fortunes of the Argentinian intelligentsia exiled in Mexico and the “conceptual revolution of the left,” see an abridged overview in Burgos (2004: 231–300).

his observations about the status of a mass press in writings from the early 1920s, when the revolution was being consolidated.

Finally, Mattelart was invited back to Mozambique in 1980 by the Ministry of Health (in coordination with UNICEF) to explore the possibilities and limits of using the “small” technologies of television in community development projects (Mattelart, 2010: 151). Parts of the conclusions he drew on that occasion were once again “translated” in the seventh issue of *Comunicación y Cultura* (1982), which published an article where he problematized the question of new communication technologies and their potential for fostering democracy. Summarizing these reflections: In response to the myths that swirled around the expansion of lightweight technologies (that they automatically promoted democracy and decentralization), the work done in Mozambique to introduce Super 8 into community structures and institutional and educational projects gave Mattelart (1982e) occasion to dispute these media-centered visions and conclude that “[w]hat creates decentralized communication” was not the technical medium itself but “the network of decentralized social organization into which it was inserted” (110). In short, communication needed to be examined as part of the culture and the material dynamics in which hegemony is articulated and negotiated. The issue—and this is what gives relevance and meaning to the “translation” that *Comunicación y Cultura* made—spoke to communicology on a continent with a long tradition of alternative and popular communication.

Mattelart’s stay in Nicaragua within the frame of the democratic turn of the Sandinista revolution was one of his last great *activist journeys*. The activity he undertook there and after his stay (especially his writing and his work as editor) serves to reinforce our hypothesis about the central role he played in that diffuse space of intellectual sociability that we have called the *Popular International of Communication*. The invitation once again ties back to the Chilean experience as a guiding thread: It came from Nicaragua’s Ministry of Culture and Education, and financing from UNESCO made it happen, basically thanks to the good offices of the Venezuelan Antonio Pasquali, who worked at the time in the agency. But the request and the contact, Mattelart remembered later, had come from the “Chilean diaspora” in Nicaragua, specifically from several exiles who worked at the University of Managua (interview with the author, 2011). His visit took place in February and March of 1985. The invitation, once again, was embedded in collective experiences:<sup>17</sup> Sandinista-led Nicaragua had given rise to a wave

<sup>17</sup> In November 1984, presidential elections were held in Nicaragua. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN, in its Spanish acronym), which had taken power by force

of international solidarity, which manifested itself in the arrival of dozens of foreign contingents to the Central American country, from a wide variety of background and with diverse motivations: Cubans sent by their government in brigades, exiled intellectuals or guerrillas from Latin America, young North Americans taking part in a range of cultural activism experiences, all with the aim of providing different kinds of support for the revolution. The Nicaraguan model, based on a mixed economy and political pluralism, was clearly different from the UP's process in Chile (first and foremost, the Sandinistas had taken political power by force of arms), but there were also points of convergence. For one thing, the call for elections made by the FSLN and the model of a plurality of parties had few precedents in socialist processes, carrying the struggle to the terrain of a dispute over political consensus. Moreover, the development of a communication policy and the construction of popular power in the realm of culture entailed—in spite of the existence of a significant network of popular and alternative radio stations—the daunting task of resignifying a mass culture that had already developed under strong US influence and become the default, everyday culture for many Nicaraguans. “The classics of revolutionary propaganda always ended exactly at the point where popular tastes began,” wrote Mattelart (1986: 324), underscoring the theoretical vacuum that, once again, existed in leftist thinking. The 1984 elections and the new developments that were unfolding for the revolutionary process triggered a series of questions that, strictly speaking, had arisen earlier: When it came to issues of culture and communication, the Sandinistas had very few references to look to for guidance. Mattelart (1986: 324) drew attention to the thread that connected the Nicaraguans to the Chilean experience of 1970–1973.

Later, Mattelart wrote about his experience in Nicaragua in several articles published in Spanish, French, and English. In this last language he also edited a compilation with International General and the IMMRC: *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua* (Mattelart, 1986), where he brought together texts by authors from different backgrounds: Sandinista intellectuals; FSLN leaders (such as Tomás Borge); communication activists; Argentinian, Nicaraguan, English and US academics such as Julianne Burton, Fernando Cardenal, José Luis Coraggio, and David Kunzle, among others.<sup>18</sup> The need to promote

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of arms in 1979, prevailed over its opponents by a wide margin. The electoral victory constituted a turning-point in the revolutionary process, because it expanded the list of questions about the future development of a socialist transition, now in democracy, that from the start had defined its own paths and questions.

<sup>18</sup> Mattelart's introduction to the volume was translated into French under the title “La communication au Nicaragua. Entre la guerre et la démocratie” [“Communication in

written documentation and the memory of the experiences as a resource for critical research, but also for activist education and work, which Mattelart articulated in his introduction to *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua* (in 1986b: 326), can be read as a continuation of the stated objectives of *Communication and Class Struggle*. The reference he made here to “discovery through dialogue with the main players” reflects an experience and a way of working (Mattelart presented his texts as “resulting from interviews, discussions and debates with journalists, content creators, researchers and decision-makers from different mass media outlets, and also with readers, listeners and viewers,” 308), but also a mode of expression that in this introduction more than any of his other texts appealed to the first person singular to foreground the author’s presence in the situation or, to put it another way, the contingency of his own work of thinking in its becoming. The dialogue that he explicitly mentions thus alludes to a way of constructing knowledge, to a conception of work where researchers would attempt to articulate heterogeneous spaces and diverse voices, putting historical experiences and their own memory of past communication research into dialogue.<sup>19</sup> But the use of the first person and the staging of the dialogues that sometimes showed a certain level of disagreement with his interlocutors can be read as Mattelart’s way of registering certain reservations or misgivings toward the alternatives that communication policy, and more generally the socialist process, could take in Nicaragua, where he felt a delicate balance had to be struck between “the logic of war” and “the logic of democracy” and popular participation. Mattelart took seriously the possibility of conceiving a new type of socialist project, such as the one Nicaragua was undertaking, but he was careful to reserve a space for possible dissident voices. In this delicate balance, he did not hesitate to stake out a clear position of support for Nicaragua: He asked, in outright debate with one sector of European intellectuals critical

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Nicaragua: Between War and Democracy”], and published in the journal *Communication et Information*, vol. 8, no. 1, Spring 1986 (Mattelart, 1986a). There is also a version in Spanish (the one we quote from here) in a compilation made by José Luis Coraggio and Carmen Diana Deere (Mattelart, 1986b).

<sup>19</sup> Several passages of the text are told in the first person, making the author’s presence explicit in the dialogue with the people in charge of designing communication policy. “Honest answer from the young lieutenant in charge of the Media Office” (Mattelart, 1986b: 318); “Tomás Borge, Interior Affairs Minister, to whom I posed the same question that I asked of the person in charge of the Media Office, told me...” (319); “Nicaraguans to their credit pay attention when they are given explanations of this kind of reflection inspired in the history of so-called real socialisms. And this is no small thing” (319); “I told them I was baffled, and we discussed it for over two hours. They expressed the same concerns that I had and, I must admit, tried to address them the best they could” (331) (*italics mine in all cases*).



of Sandinismo and any other socialist undertaking, whether “restricting oneself to the East-West front when trying to understand the world and gain insight into its conflict did not imply negating the appearance of new historical subjects on the international scene” (308).<sup>20</sup> For Mattelart, opposing this polarization meant opening himself to the possibility of acknowledging the identity of the “other,” i.e., “opting for moving away from old certainties and venturing down the road of hypotheses” (308). This experimental quality of his intellectual project can be read in his work on the ground and in the way he expresses himself in the article we are citing, but also in the project of *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua* itself. There, in his introduction and editorial work, he took upon himself the work of mediating, articulating, translating, and disseminating experiences that in his view broke with east-west polarization. In this last gasp of the battle of ideas unleashed by the Cold War, Mattelart was trying to put new questions on the agenda and make people entertain the possibility that new subjects and practices could emerge.

### *On the Borders of the Popular International*

The notion of a *popular international public sphere* entails a number of tensions and difficulties that call for reflection. How to demonstrate the actual existence of a space consisting of material networks and emerging symbolic productions that was also tied up with established institutions and cultural materials? How to objectivize this kaleidoscopic, ever-shifting space that gave rise to a productive, historically situated link between cultural formations from the popular classes and a certain category of intellectuals that sometimes emerged organically from those popular ranks but more often from the petite and middle-class bourgeoisie? How to read these international cultural formations, recognizing their subordinate positions, while at the

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<sup>20</sup> Mattelart’s intellectual intervention must be situated in a context of profound transformations in the ideological universe of the French left, as we will see in the next chapter, pulled between the liberal transformation of the Socialist Party then in power and the irreversible crossroads of the so-called “real socialisms.” Since the late 1970s, broad swaths of intellectuals had been advocating a conceptual revolution that subsumed the word “socialism”—in any of its variants—under totalitarianism. In March 1985 (the moment was no coincidence: The Sandinista consolidation in a multi-party model defied the opposition’s classifications and arguments), a group of intellectuals in France created “the International of Resistance” and published a request in *Le Monde* demanding that the US Congress lend “aid to the Nicaraguan resistance in a spirit of democratic solidarity” (March 21). In Mattelart’s opinion (1986b: 397), it was the first time that such a level of reaction had arisen in the history of intellectuals in France: The request in essence called for a crime to be committed in the name of freedom and democracy.



same time signaling the places where they have prefigured and also participated in the constitution of a space of power? And finally, how to indicate the asymmetries in the international circulation of ideas and among emergent cultural formations from different social formations? These are questions that have barely been formulated theoretically and will require further refinement and research. In the meantime, for the purpose of completing and drawing out complexity in the sweep of the intellectual trajectory, we must mention, at least in passing, Mattelart's work in a series of spaces that were more institutional and less linked to emergent movements, which will to some extent help us address these incipient questions. For one thing, this work also contributed to the configuration of his theoretical perspective, his intellectual profile, and his eminent place in communication and culture studies; and for another, highlighting Mattelart's ability to inhabit diverse social worlds simultaneously reminds us of the reciprocal cross-pollination and borrowing that takes place between cultural formations—where rising social subjects make themselves known—and more institutionalized spaces where social phenomena are monitored and knowledge is produced. Or to put it another way, reconstructing this aspect of his journey can help shed light on the complex weave of conflicting articulations between the dominant and the subaltern—made up of oppositions but also of appropriations in both directions—from which this *popular international public sphere* was interknit and where we situate his trajectory, and that his very biography helps us to draw together and problematize.

We will point to a few of these spaces. In 1978 Mattelart was invited by the Audiovisual Service of the Ministry of the French Community of Belgium, together with Jean-Marie Piemme, a researcher from the National Higher Institute of the Performing Arts in Brussels, to conduct a study of the conditions for an alternative communication policy, particularly in the audiovisual realm. As the authors observed presenting their results (published under the provocative title of *Télévision: enjeux sans frontières. Industries culturelles et politique de la communication* [*Television: Borderless Issues: Cultural Industries and Communication Policy*]), Belgium served as an illustrative case study of how the division of labor and the globalization of local economies impacted the field of cultural production (Mattelart and Piemme, 1980).<sup>21</sup> In 1981

<sup>21</sup> They then proposed a painstaking genealogical analysis of this specific case in an attempt to challenge—in their words—an abstract and universal view of the media and their impact on humanity, with a concrete history of a political and industrial apparatus. This history, they wrote, “is the best way to grasp the simultaneously general and specific nature of communication apparatuses, the best route for moving from the local to the global” (8–9).

Mattelart was also enlisted by other international institutions. The United Nations' Center for Studies of Transnational Corporations hired him to write up a report on the "sociocultural impact of transnational corporations on developing countries." Some of his conclusions circulated in different languages<sup>22</sup> and, since the center did not publish the report, Mattelart published it later in English, as *Transnationals and the Third World: The Struggle for Culture* (1983). We will say more about his critical approach and his conclusions in a later chapter. That same year, Mattelart worked with Héctor Schmucler on a study aiming to describe and analyze the most important aspects of the process of introducing new information and communication technologies in Latin America. The study was financed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), headquartered in Ottawa, Canada, and directed at the time by Elizabeth Fox. Their final report was published in Spanish as *América Latina en la encrucijada telemática* [*Latin America at the Telematic Crossroads*] (Schmucler and Mattelart, 1983), under the auspices of the Latin American Institute of Transnational Studies (ILET, in its Spanish acronym), headquartered in Mexico City.<sup>23</sup> The book was also published that same year in French, by the François Maspero publishing house. Finally, it is worth noting that Mattelart contributed to the journal *Amérique latine*, an initiative launched in early 1980 by the association *Amérique Latine Tiers Monde* of the Centre de Recherche sur l'Amérique Latine et le Tiers Monde (CETRAL), chaired at the time by Claude Julien and directed by the Chilean exile Gonzalo Arroyo (who had worked at CEREN).<sup>24</sup> Mattelart sat on the editorial board of the journal—which, across its issues, included renowned French and Latin American social scientists among its collaborators—and was

<sup>22</sup> In a dossier prepared by the French journal *Amérique latine* ("Aide-memoire pour l'analyse de l'impact culturel des firmes multinationales" ["Reference Guide for Analyzing the Cultural Impact of Multinationals"], 1982b) and in the Mexican journal *Unomásuno* ("Transnacionales y mercadería cultural" ["Transnationals and Cultural Merchandise"], July 5–9, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> At the time Schmucler was a researcher at ILET. The activities undertaken at ILET in organizing, researching, and promoting the edition were part of the network of connection and intellectual exchange made up of critical Latin American researchers. The authors' own assessment of the Institute can be found in Schmucler and Mattelart (1983: 4); for an outsider's perspective, see Fuentes Navarro (1992: 166).

<sup>24</sup> Upon presenting the first edition of *Amérique latine*, Guy Petitdemange stated that Latin America was not an exotic or unique place, but a region where universal issues were being disputed. Materials about the continent, however, were mostly dispersed or buried in the activist press; consequently, the stated objective of the journal was to provide scientific information and to compile and circulate documents (Petitdemange, 1980: 3). Among those who collaborated or wrote for the journal were Jacques Chonchol, Ignacio Ramonet, Alain Touraine, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, José Serra, Ruy Mauro Marini, Gonzalo Arroyo, and Armand and Michèle Mattelart.

in charge of preparing the central dossier of the ninth issue, called “Médias-culture-société,” for which he selected a number of texts by Latin American authors. Mattelart (1982d: 30) wrote a brief introduction for the dossier, titled “Ouvertures” [“Openings”] in which he emphasized that it aimed to provide a sample of the “contribution from Latin American countries to the creation of a critical theory of communication and culture.”<sup>25</sup> The existence of *Amérique latine* spotlights the existence of networks of cooperation among French and Latin American intellectuals, in which Mattelart played a key mediating role. In this case, in a reversal of his contributions to *Comunicación y Cultura* in the 1980s, his intervention introduced a Francophone public to Latin American contributions to thinking about communication.

Once again, taken as a whole, these experiences contributed to the forging of his intellectual and theoretical perspective.

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<sup>25</sup> For the dossier Mattelart selected a text of his own (excerpts from *Transnationals and the Third World*) and, among others, one by Jesús Martín-Barbero (which had been published in *Comunicación y Cultura* and that would prove to be a watershed for communication studies in Latin America: “Retos a la investigación sobre la comunicación en América Latina” [“Challenges for Research on Communication in Latin America”]).

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Between the Mitterrand (Dis)enchantment and the Institutionalization of Communication Science

I'm one of those who experienced the '60s like a spring that seemed like it would never end, so much so that I'm embarrassed to become accustomed to this long winter of the '80s!

—Félix Guattari, 1980–1985, *Les années d'hiver* [Winter Years]

In the period that goes from Mattelart's arrival in France in 1973 until December 1983, when he finally secured a steady job as a professor at the University of Rennes, he had to scramble to find work. He juggled temporary jobs at two universities with a variety of other activities: He was a filmmaker, an editor, a guest professor abroad, an expert consultant hired by international bodies and institutions, a writer and regular collaborator for prestigious journals like *Le Monde diplomatique*. Looking back, Mattelart (2010: 149) recalls this stage of his life as a period of *nomadism* that he associates with his experience of exile and the need to find ways to earn a living and advance his professional career. His status as a foreigner, his cosmopolitan background and ties to Latin America and the Third World, his links to left-wing activism and diverse spaces of cultural production, but

also his affiliation with an emerging disciplinary field seeking legitimacy in the hierarchy of knowledge and the division of scientific and academic work—all these elements taken together created a general profile difficult for the French university system to recognize. Without a doubt, these ten years of professional instability and nomadism made important contributions to his intellectual profile, to the development of his theoretical perspectives, and to his political stances. In the mid-1980s, Mattelart achieved a certain institutional stability that allowed him to consolidate his position as a university professor and researcher. This change took place in the context of profound transformations in the world of French politics and the French intellectual and cultural field. Within this broader scene, which we will look at carefully, the *sciences de l'information et de la communication* (SICs) [sciences of communication and information in France] advanced in an incipient process of disciplinary consolidation and institutionalization within the university.

After making *La Spirale*—for which he was hired for eleven months in 1974—Mattelart went through a period without regular employment, and for about a year and a half he received an unemployment subsidy as an “intermittent show business worker,” a benefit that came from his work on the documentary. It looked as though he would be leaving the precariousness behind in 1976 when he was accepted as a *maître de conférences associé* [associate professor] in Information and Communication Science at the University of Paris 7 (Jussieu), where he led a seminar on the internationalization of communication systems. Since he was a foreigner, he could not be recruited as a full professor of the state, which meant that he had to renew his appointment as a *maître de conférences associé* every year, and even then was not entitled to hold the job for more than three years. It was clearly a position far from the pinnacle of the university hierarchy. Paris 7 was a new university, created in 1971 in direct response to the events of May 1968 and the decentralization promoted as a solution to the crisis in institutions of higher education. At the time it did not have a communication department, only an “audiovisual service,” and it had only just launched a doctorate in Information and Communication Science. When his contract expired in 1979, Mattelart tried to get his rank reconsidered so that he could be made full professor. The university’s preference for a professor from the field of informatics—Mattelart (1999: 22) recalled years later—gives an indication of

the tensions over the different sorts of expertise in a discipline undergoing a consolidation and institutionalization process.<sup>1</sup>

Aided by the publication and impact of *De l'usage des médias en temps de crise* [*Media Usage in Times of Crisis*] under his belt, Mattelart was brought onto the faculty of Paris 8 (Vincennes) from September 1979 to September 1980, again as a *maître de conférences associé*. At Paris 8 in that time, there was no department of information and communication science, and Mattelart, in his capacity as a sociologist, was appointed head of the Department of Economic and Social Administration (AES, in its French acronym), a subject area that was manifestly foreign to his expertise. When it came time for him to renew his appointment, one year later, his experience at Paris 7 repeated itself: In spite of the university commission's favorable recommendation, the national sociology commission voted against extending his contract.<sup>2</sup> In Mattelart's retrospective account, this time his rejection had to do with his political stances: One committee member, Annie Kriegel (a former member of the French Communist Party, historian, and specialist in the world of French communism), suggested ironically that given Mattelart's international and leftist profile (Mattelart 2010: 149), he should look for a job at UNESCO, which was then engaged in a debate over the global imbalance in information. From that point, more precisely between September 1980 and December 1983, Mattelart did not have a regular job at a French university and, as we have seen, he spent much of his time working abroad.

The socialists' accession to power in May 1981 would bring changes to the social and political scene, and with that, the possibilities for the intervention and institutional inclusion of intellectuals, professors, and researchers. In 1982 Mattelart was hired, together with Yves Stourdzé, by the Ministry of Industry and Research to produce a report about the status of communication research in France. In a very specific context in which they entertained the possibility—soon to be frustrated—of intervening in the design of an alternative model for teaching and researching communication, Mattelart and Stourdzé wrote the report titled *Technologie, culture et communication* [*Technology, Culture and Communication*] (1982). There, as we will see, they summarized a series of proposals. As a result of this report,

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<sup>1</sup> It should be pointed out that, in the French configuration of the field of information and communication science, everything that we in Latin America call communication science shares space with disciplines dealing with information processing and storage, such as informatics and library science.

<sup>2</sup> In the French university system, professors' promotions must pass through two stages: First the local university's evaluation commission renders its judgment, then the applications are passed on to an evaluation committee that belongs to the national state.

the director of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique [National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS in its French acronym)], the physicist Pierre Papon, suggested to the anthropologist Maurice Godelier, who was in charge of the Department of Social Sciences, that he invite Mattelart to join the institution, one of the most important centers of prestige and symbolic power in the French scientific field (Bourdieu 2008 [1984]: 60, 258). They offered him a position as an advisor, which he held for a short time, until December 1983, when he was officially accepted at the University of Rennes 2 as a *professeur* in the Department of Information and Communication. As he recalls, he left the CNRS because it adhered to a view of communication made hegemonic by Dominique Wolton, who openly identified with the classical sociological tradition and opposed critical sociology. In the face of these difficulties, Mattelart opted for the “more plural” possibilities—his words—that the University of Rennes offered (Mattelart, personal correspondence, March 2011).<sup>3</sup>

In December 1983 Mattelart joined the faculty of a provincial university, Rennes 2, as a full professor, and he worked there for fourteen years. The process is indicative of the vicissitudes that marked his career in the French university system. After his exile, his attempts to be reappointed and promoted as a professor were repeatedly blocked by the state administration, which refused to take his previous experience into account; nor was his appointment to Rennes 2 absent difficulties. After being awarded the highest merit-based recommendation by the university’s own evaluation committee, the national state commission relegated his application to third place, alleging among other reasons that Mattelart—this despite protests by Robert Escarpit, who sat on the national commission—was so engaged with international issues that he would neglect his obligations as a research professor. It was only the direct intervention of the Ministry of Education that managed to reverse the decision, and Mattelart was finally accepted (Mattelart, 2010: 169; interview with the author, 2011). His application for a position at a provincial university also points to his difficulties in securing a professional position in Paris, the academic and intellectual capital of

<sup>3</sup> Wolton and Mattelart did not have the same decision-making capacity at the CNRS: While Wolton had secured a permanent position, Mattelart had only a temporary appointment, as an advisor. The testimonies of people close to Mattelart are in agreement that the disputes between the two at the institution were heated (Tristan Mattelart, interview with the author, 2011; Jacques Guyot, interview with the author, 2011). They also agree that Mattelart’s intellectual profile did not suit the institutional and bureaucratic disputes and dynamics at the CNRS. His colleague and friend Michael Palmer (interview with the author, 2011) sums up the tension with the proverbial English expression: “It was not his cup of tea.”

France.<sup>4</sup> Mattelart kept his residence in Paris during the fourteen years he worked at the provincial university, during which time he commuted weekly to Rennes, over 300 kilometers away; and it was not an easy job that awaited him there, nor one that afforded a high level of institutional recognition. For a considerable period of time, he was the only professor in the Department of Information and Communication, which the institution had recently created and did not invest great hopes in. Mattelart threw himself into organizing the department and shaping it as a disciplinary entity, including the formation of a third cycle (doctorate) and the gradual incorporation of new faculty members. Jacques Guyot—one of his first students at Rennes and later one of his collaborators—recalls a certain institutional resistance or indifference to Mattelart's efforts (Guyot, interview with the author, 2011). Mattelart himself, looking back, associates these obstacles and difficulties in a general way with his status as an exile. But even though he revises his account of these difficulties in his telling and sees value in them as an engine for creation and research (Mattelart, interview with the author, 2011), the truth is that at the time, before securing the professorship at Rennes and faced with the difficulties of institutional promotion, at the age of 48—after devoting over twenty years to teaching and publishing books and articles—he had seriously considered the possibility of leaving France in search of more favorable career prospects in some other country (Mattelart, 2010: 169).

He ended up working for fourteen years at Rennes 2, until 1997, when at age of 61, he successfully applied for a professorship at the University of Paris 8 (Vincennes-Saint-Denis).<sup>5</sup> There he also devoted himself to establishing the Department of Information and Communication that was just getting

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Guyot trenchantly observes that the process of consolidating and institutionalizing information and communication science in France can be read through the lens of the geography reflected in the system of disciplinary hierarchies. It is no coincidence that in Paris, these disciplines' possibilities for development had been blocked, and that it was the product of provincial universities: Miège consolidated a research group that looked at cultural industries and developed the Department of Communication at Stendhal University in Grenoble; Escarpit did the same with a focus on the sociology of literature at the University of Bordeaux; Mattelart established himself over fourteen years at a university in the city of Rennes, where he carried out his research and shaped the area of communication (Guyot, interview with the author, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> The University of Paris 8 (Vincennes-Saint-Denis) also did not occupy the peak of the French university hierarchy. It was created in 1969 in response to the events of May 1968 and operated during an initial experimental stage in Vincennes, where it attracted leading professors and researchers who brought with them such prestige as critical thinking and left-wing positions could garner at the time. After its move some years later to Saint Denis, a working-class district on the outskirts of Paris with a significant immigrant population, it became known for receiving foreign students, especially from Latin America (Djian, 2009).



started when he arrived: He initially occupied the only professorship that existed at the time, which had been vacated by Eliseo Verón, an Argentinian sociologist and semiotician, also an expatriate. Aside from expanding the faculty and promoting the formation of a third cycle (doctorate) in communication, he founded the Centre d'études sur les médias, les technologies et la internationalization [Center for Studies on Media, Technology and Internationalization (CEMTI in its French acronym)] at Paris 8 and directed it until January 2004. After he retired, he was named professor emeritus by the university.

In short, his employment stability at the University of Rennes and his tenure as a research professor brought about a change in his working conditions and his intellectual production: Mattelart was enjoying institutional continuity for the first time since the Catholic University of Chile. After 1984, his job at the University of Rennes would require him to spend more hours teaching and running the Department of Information and Communication. He would make use of his position to create conditions for more long-term research and, in general terms, his theoretical stances and perspectives would undergo certain modifications. This shift cannot be explained except in relation to the upheaval that French society and the world of left-wing culture was going through since the socialists had taken charge of the government in 1981. Or to be more precise: The high hopes placed in the socialist government, and the subsequent—and sudden—disenchantment, would contribute to a reorganization of the cultural world as it existed at the time, to a radical transformation of both its ideological coordinates and the conditions of intellectual life itself.

### *Intellectual Counterrevolution and Socialist Hopes and Dreams*

By the end of the 1970s, the political-cultural context had changed noticeably since Mattelart's arrival in France (1973–1974). It had been a period of excitement and activist mobilization that, with the echoes of the events of May 1968 still in the background, was reinforced by the expectations that one sector of the left placed in the alliance and common platform of the Socialist Party (PS, in its French acronym) and the Communist Party (PC, in its French acronym) (1972). This alliance had real possibilities of winning the presidential election of 1974, but victory would have to wait until the next election in 1981. Thus, the period from 1974 to 1981 can be

considered the great return to order, a moment we need to go back to in order to trace the genealogy of the transition from the years of upheaval to those of political reaction and neoliberal ascent. . The agony of the 1970s was, in the view of the historian François Cusset (2008 [2006]), the “preamble” to the “nightmare of the 1980s,” which Felix Guattari (2009: 31) called the “long years of winter.”

What happened was that, once the springtime of the years of insurrection passed, the atmosphere in the second half of the 1970s was completely different, characterized by political retrogression and repression.<sup>6</sup> Even though France, in 1976–1977, witnessed a wave of factory struggles and political and cultural movements, Cusset recognizes that the organization of the party-based left and the struggles of workers, whether they were spontaneous or union-led, seemed to constitute separate worlds, less and less connected and incapable of joining forces. In this context of political retreat, a profound cultural transformation would come about in France; Cusset calls it an “intellectual counter-revolution” (Cusset, 2008 [2006]: 26). Within this context, theoretical work—which between 1970 and 1975 was sacralized as one of the keys of potential transformation—would be marked from 1976–1977 as the wellspring of all the disasters of the twentieth century. In 1977 André Gluksmann published *Les Maîtres-penseurs* [*The Master Thinkers*] and Bernard Henri Levy *La Barbarie à visage humain* [*Barbarism with a Human Face*], where they proposed a line of continuity between critical thinking and the Soviet concentration camps. It was the societal letter of introduction for the so-called “new philosophers.” A whole series of initiatives put the topic of the Soviet gulag on the French agenda (in 1974 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* was published, selling a million copies in one year), making the rights of man a dogma instead of a specific demand and demonizing “murderous” critical thinking: “For them,” observed Cusset (2008 [2006]) about the new philosophers, “the operation consists of throwing out the baby of any kind of social criticism with the totalitarian bathwater” (27). He felt that their critiques were less an anti-totalitarian struggle than a battle against Marxism (28). This mutation of the intellectual field would also take the shape of an attack against “overly Marxist” “Third-Worldism.”

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<sup>6</sup> In his cinematic essay *Le fond de l'air est rouge* [released in English as *Grin Without a Cat* (1977) Chris Marker presciently suggested, with exquisite style and pointed political insight, that the moment marked the end of a cycle that had started in 1967. The essay is divided into two parts. The first, “Fragile Hands”: from Vietnam to the death of Che and May 1968; the second, “Severed Hands”: from the Prague Spring to the Common Platform of the French left and the fall of popular Chile. “To... what?” is the question that closes Marker’s film.

Gérard Chaliand published *Mythes révolutionnaires du Tiers Monde* [Revolutionary Myths of the Third World] at Seuil in 1976, and in mid-1978, *Le Nouvel Observateur* organized a long debate about Third-Worldism, featuring attacks against “Third-Worldist intellectuals” who were allegedly either blind to or complicit with the supposed totalitarianism of African socialism (idem: 32–33). The birth of the “second French Left” completed the scene. In Cusset’s view, this could be attributed to a conversion to realism by a libertarian left that professed self-sufficiency and, from then on, would take potshots at statism rather than at power. A coherent set of guiding principles was taking shape: “Moral anti-authoritarianism, political anti-Marxism, a constant mantra of ‘political realism,’ the return of an ideas-based right wing, critique of criticism itself, new religion of democracy” (30).

The final pages of *De l’usage des médias en temps de crise* lend themselves to a reading of how Armand and Michèle Mattelart perceived the situation. They wrote: “Everything seemed to conspire against the need to grasp the particular in the general. The mistrust is also applied to theory and leads them to reject as totalitarian any attempt at systematization (even when it is only about experiences).” “Anti-intellectualism” and “anti-theory” were the new buzzwords of what the Mattelarts characterized as a “period of retreat” that produced mutations in the intellectual field. The combination of “blackmail” by the “terrorist threat” (West Germany was the model) and the growing pressure of commercial interests on media systems (which threatened to change the rules governing their logics of production) had reached the extreme, the Mattelarts (2003 [1979]) asserted, of “criminalizing critical reflection” (258–259). Within this framework, the question of communication as a strategic aim emerged forcefully. Without a doubt, one of the watershed moments was the report on technological change that President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing commissioned from Simon Nora and Alain Minc in December 1976. In the view of the authors of *L’information de la société* [The Information of Society], the report they prepared, the promotion of information could and must become one of the keys for overcoming the crisis: It was seen as a new structuring principle of society, as the heart of a reformulation of the relations between citizens, the state, and civil society. Technophilic stances and a discourse that turned communication into a vehicle of redemption made their entrance into one sector of the elite in power.

This overview of the shifts that took place in the world of French politics and culture must be interpreted without falling into anachronism. As François Dosse (2007 [2003]: 78) teaches, doing so implies eschewing generalizations established with the benefit of hindsight that obscures an appreciation of

the contradictions, tensions, advances, and counter-advances of the historical process. In other words: Regardless of the overall, long-term scheme that we are proposing—which can be summed up with Cusset’s idea of the emergence of an “intellectual counter-revolution” at the time—the truth is that we cannot overlook the implications and significance that the electoral victory of French socialism in 1981 had, especially in the world of left-wing culture and intellectuals.

The victory of the united left—PS and PC primarily—that gave François Mitterrand the presidency in May 1981 represented, at least until early 1983 (when Mitterrand would announce a shift in economic policy in favor of monetary austerity and European integration), a moment of intense mobilization of broad social sectors and left-wing activism, of wide-ranging political debate and high hopes in a segment of the cultural and intellectual world, which manifested themselves in the typical ways: special issues of journals, public interventions, calls to collective debate. As could hardly be otherwise, these spaces abounded with analyses of the possibilities of the era that was dawning, and posed the classic question about intellectuals’ role in the process of change.<sup>7</sup> Another relevant point in this trajectory: Eight years later the Chilean Popular Unity’s experience still echoed in the world of the French left. Mitterrand invited the widows of Salvador Allende and Pablo Neruda to his inaugural parades. The victory of the PS-PC unity ticket was celebrated by many “as a first revenge for the Chilean defeat” (Leenhardt and Kalfon, 1992: 18). In sum, we can thus speak of a “grace period” or honeymoon for the socialist government between May 1981 and

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<sup>7</sup> In August 1981 the newspaper *Libération* issued a call for proposals under the heading “Les intellectuels et l’état de grâce” [“Intellectuals and the State of Grace”]. In response, the philosopher Félix Guattari wrote an article for *Le Nouvel Observateur* called “Mitterrand et le Tiers État” [“Mitterrand and the Third Estate”] that does a good job of capturing the contradictions, expectations, and possibilities that the process set in motion for one sector of the French intellectual field tied to the New Left. In Guattari’s view, France was facing two possible scenarios: either worldwide capitalism, combined with a social democratic turn by the regime, would try to freeze the evolution of social relations, or else there would be an intensification of social movements that the socialist government would leverage to transform French society for good (Guattari, 2009: 46). Not long afterward, Paul Noirot, in an editorial published in the monthly *Politique aujourd’hui*, placed Mitterrand’s victory on the list of “great national hopes”—alongside others such as the Popular Front of 1936 and liberation in 1945—that initiated a historical adventure that could “cause a political break not only in France but in Europe, and change international relations for the better” (*Politique aujourd’hui*, January–February 1982: 2). Noirot called on the left as a whole to commit to the experience (marking clear distance from the radical left and subsuming it within this unity) and encouraged intellectuals to get out of their “ivory towers” to mobilize the population and influence public opinion. For this he put the journal’s pages at their disposal.

March 1983.<sup>8</sup> Its ending would be dramatic: The abyss that opened from the dream-turned-disenchantment definitively transformed French politics, the intellectual world, and left-wing culture.

The threads that connect the *Chilean laboratory* to the French situation run not only through a shared debate about political strategy and the tensions it entailed (reform/revolution, socialism/democracy), but also through big questions about the role that transformations in the scientific system, universities, media, and cultural apparatuses in general could play in the process of democratizing society. These issues took up a significant portion of the debate in journals and intellectual circles tied to left-wing groups, and also in government media, institutions, and agencies. Mattelart participated in some of these spaces and played a rather prominent role in the debate. Giving an account of this participation, including its conditions of emergence, will allow us to situate his role in the institutionalization of communication studies in France and the continuity of his stances with the positions he built through his Chilean experience.

In the realm of science, in January 1982 the National Colloquium of Research and Technology was held, a wide-ranging consultation of the scientific community that preceded the formulation of a law for orienting and programming research in science and technology. The colloquium set out, according to its definitions, “to restore the alliance between science and democracy” (Mattelart and Stourdzé, 1984 [1982]: 9). Between November 1981 and the end of January 1982, thirty-six meetings were held throughout the country to prepare for this colloquium, with the participation of research centers, universities, companies, labor unions, and professional organizations, creating, in Mattelart and Stourdzé’s words, “a movement of reflection unprecedented in the history of French research” (9). In general terms, the organizing criterion had been defined by the Ministry of Research and Technology: It was designed around the idea of redefining the relation between democracy, science, and technology in terms of their appropriation by society; or to put it another way: in terms of the will to conceive a new type of relations between scientists and *social demands*, the real leitmotif of the moment.

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<sup>8</sup> The government of the Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy (1981–1984) pursued some of the reforms promised in the electoral campaign: nationalization of banks and industrial conglomerates, new labor legislation, a law for political decentralization, abolition of the death penalty, among others. But the momentum quickly came up against the limits of the reformist agenda. France soon confronted a balance of payments crisis, which forced it to devalue its currency and replace Keynesian demand stimulus with neoliberal-style austerity measures.

A wide-ranging debate also took place at the time about the role of communication in the new political context and about reform of the media system. Several prominent figures in the field participated in the public debate in the press and academic or political-cultural journals associated with the world of the left.<sup>9</sup> The journal *Non! Repères pour le socialisme* devoted several of its issues in 1982 to the debate about communication policy.<sup>10</sup> Mattelart (1982c), who sat on the editorial committee, published an article titled “La communication dans la France du 10 mai” [“Communication in the France of May 10th”] (in reference to the date of Mitterrand’s victory). There he set out to problematize what he considered to be the tensions, ambiguities, and limits of the communication debate in socialist France. He contended that the call made by different institutional and governmental agencies for the societal appropriation of its technological tools was not so pronounced in the departments devoted to communication issues. Within the overall framework of the debate about the restructuring of the public radio broadcasting monopoly and the new media law, which took place in May and June 1982, Mattelart warned that the discussion centered on legal-institutional aspects, meaning the focus was on the communications rights of professionals to communicate (emphasis was placed on the question of their independence) rather than on the rights of society as a whole. Good intentions notwithstanding, Mattelart observed that the obstacle to a thoroughgoing transformation of the media was formidable because *professional ideology* set the limits within which it was possible to discuss the democratization of communication: The right to be informed took precedence over the right to produce one’s own information. The “ideology of journalism” assumed the transparency of meaning, the neutrality of journalistic technique, and with it, of all communication technologies. This emphasis, Mattelart went on, overlooked the perspective that had been emerging in the research and experiences of autonomy over the previous fifteen years in France—and in Europe in general—especially in the field of video and cinema. It ignored the

<sup>9</sup> Aside from Mattelart’s publications, see those of De la Haye and Miège (1982) and Flichy (1982). An overview of the alternatives in communication policy at the time can be found in Raboy (1983).

<sup>10</sup> *Non!* compiled contributions from intellectuals tied to left-wing sectors directly related to the Socialist Party (linked to the Center for Socialist Studies, Research and Education founded by Pierre Chevènement, Minister of Government, among others) but also from left-wing sectors that would go on to offer the government somewhat critical support. The main dossier of the January–February 1982 number was called “Pour une autre télévision” [“For a Different Television”]; the November–December 1982 issue was “Les médias face à la gauche ou la gauche face aux médias?” [“The Media Confronting the Left or the Left Confronting the Media?”].

fact that professional practices, as a codified way to produce information, assumed a type of relationship between specialists and reality that implied a certain kind of link to the rest of society at large. It is clear that this was an issue that grew out of Mattelart's experience in Chile and his observations about the role of the petite bourgeoisie in a process of cultural democratization: It is no coincidence that to support his assertions he drew on his book *Mass media, ideologies et mouvement révolutionnaire. Chili 1970–1973* [*Mass Media, Ideologies and Revolutionary Movement. Chile 1970–1973*] (1974).

In parallel with the debate about alternative forms of communication and their relationship with established models, Mattelart cast the issue in broader relief, suggesting that what needed to be questioned was the logic of the restructuring of the international economy, inherent in a model of overcoming the crisis through technology, in order to properly situate the discussion about the relations between democracy, technology, and communication. He tried to situate the debate in the field of tension that opened up between the imperatives of democracy and social demand, and the imperatives of a new industrial strategy that, by emphasizing the electronics industry, sought to reposition France in the arena of economic competition and international geopolitics. In the spheres of communication, technology, and science, the new government was shifting, Mattelart allowed, but also holding firm with the lines of action drawn in the previous administration, for example (referring to the “Mission Filière Electronique” [“Mission Electronic Sector”] report, 1982), with the philosophy expressed in the Nora-Minc report with its unabashed technophilia.<sup>11</sup> All the same, the aim was to situate the questions of communication, technology, and democracy on an all-encompassing horizon, without falling into an overemphasis on economics: The ways that France or any nation preserved its material and symbolic legacy were impacted both by the pressures that the international economic reorganization brought to bear and the need to produce new consensuses to find a way out of the political crisis. The growing debate about “national culture” (which, Mattelart observed, tended to revolve around topics of technological and cultural reappropriation) needed to be situated in relation to processes of transnationalization (domains that research had hardly touched, he pointed out), while the issues of culture and identity needed to be situated within the

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<sup>11</sup> Marking what would be one of the initial lines of action of his government, in the autumn of 1981, in a speech given in the Informatics Hall, Mitterrand had called for “democratizing informatics” (Mattelart and Stourdézé, 1984: 9). The phrase somewhat ambiguously announced a change of perspective with respect to the previous government's orientation as summed up in the Nora-Minc report, which called for “informatizing society.”



framework of the power relations upon which this national culture was built, i.e., within the framework of social struggles and antagonisms. Otherwise, “national culture” would become a kind of myth, a tool for homogenization and de-politicization that would paper over the conflicts inherent in relations between groups and classes. So, how is social demand to be captured in the field of communication? How can communication, technology, and democracy be articulated? Since demands and hopes had been raised for new relations between institutions of science and civil society with an eye to putting social demand in the driver’s seat, Mattelart pointed out certain limitations in communication studies in France that needed to be remedied if these objectives were to be met. The deficiencies could be blamed on institutional obstacles, but also on the dominant intellectual traditions in France that set the tone for a certain way of thinking and a set of images about the function of science and researchers. In this sense, he observed, it was important to reconceptualize one notion, that of *social experimentation*, which meant rejecting the idea of the “independence of the researcher” in relation to any form of power (another topic that emerged from the Chilean debate), because this image, a close relative of the “committed intellectual,” glossed over any questioning of the conditions of knowledge production (Mattelart, 1982: 41). Mattelart then proposed producing a new schema for participating in and understanding social and technological innovations, but its possibility depended on a more general concern: the redistribution of power among the classes and social groups that made up French society at a time of political resolution of the crisis, when negotiations were ongoing regarding the aspirations of the professional and technical sectors to shape society, their relations with the dominant classes and the power brokers. In short, in the framework of this special issue of *Non!* devoted to discussing the tensions related to the Marxist legacy,<sup>12</sup> Mattelart was putting forth, far from a dogmatic position, the argument that the critical task of the moment should be, rather than judging the conception of socialism that underlay the government’s philosophy, assessing the contradictions that ran through it (its ambiguities but also the forces being fought over within it) and, in this sense, the possibilities that it could open up for radical policy. With respect to the field of communication policy, he was not pessimistic, although his assessment was cautious without being obsequious.

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<sup>12</sup> The central dossier of the issue of *Non!* where Mattelart wrote was titled “Un héritage disputé: Marx sans marxisme ou marxistes sans Marx” [“A Disputed Heritage: Marx without Marxism, or Marxists without Marx”]. Among the other contributors, aside from Mattelart, were Maximilien Rubel and Dominique Lecourt.



## *The Mattelart-Stourdzé Rapport*

The content of the 1982 letter in which Jean-Pierre Chevènement, France's Minister of Industry and Research,<sup>13</sup> justified the request for the Technology, Communication and Dissemination of Culture Mission that raised the profile of Mattelart and Stourdzé, is indicative of the orientation of the first few months of the socialist government and the tensions, limits, and contradictions of its project. The acceleration of technological change, the introduction of microelectronics, and the internationalization of communication networks—the minister wrote—compelled France to make an “economic, industrial, but also, and primarily, a social and cultural” gamble (Chevènement, 1982: 3). The different colloquia held to discuss the issue had underscored the need—continued Chevènement—“to involve the social *partenaires* who have been left out up to now, in the implementation of the new technologies.” With this spirit, the minister entrusted Mattelart and Stourdzé with the coordination of the Technology, Communication and Dissemination of Culture Mission, which was to be guided by the following objectives: to assess the status of research and experimentation related to communication issues that were being carried out in administrations, businesses, labor unions, social collectives, and associations; to identify the fundamental issues generated by the foreseeable transformation of communication systems and by the expression of the social demands that arose in this area; to weigh all the useful suggestions about the axes of research, studies, and experiments, the resources that would have to be devoted to them, and the eventual reforms needed in the existing structures. To accomplish these objectives, Chevènement assured Mattelart and Stourdzé that they could count on all the financial and administrative resources they needed.

The findings of the Mission, published in September 1982 by the state editorial house La Documentation Française, can be read as a counterpoint to the Nora-Minc report. The leading figures and historians of French communication and information studies consider it to be one of the watershed moments in its institutionalization process, i.e., one of the first studies that tried to systematize the state of research in the field being done in the country, to define its objects and epistemological obstacles while also identifying the progress and work to be done to consolidate and institutionalize this field of

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<sup>13</sup> Jean-Pierre Chevènement had ties to the left-wing sectors of the French Socialist Party. He was one of the founders of the Centre d'études, de recherches et d'éducation socialiste, linked to the journal *Non!*

knowledge.<sup>14</sup> For this, the authors reviewed the communication, culture, and information research traditions that already existed in France and pointed out certain epistemological difficulties for consolidating the field as a realm of knowledge—among others, the predominance of a semiological tradition that could be explained in terms of the great weight afforded the literary tradition, which foregrounded an “aesthetics of culture” that complicated the consideration of the economic, political, and technological dimensions of communication phenomena. In Mattelart and Stourdzé’s view, this predominance accounted for France’s relative backwardness in comparison to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of studying, to put it in overly general terms, the so-called “cultural industries,” the processes of cultural internationalization, and the social history of the media and technological devices. The authors also analyzed the low level of institutionalization and recognition of communication studies both in the university system and in research in France, drawing attention to their “lack of legitimacy,” writing, “Very seldom have the major scientific institutions recognized the specificity, originality and social usefulness of this particular field of research and teaching in the social sciences” (Mattelart and Stourdzé, 1984 [1982]: 63).

While the different histories of *sciences de l’information et de la communication* (SICs) in France invariably consider the Mattelart-Stourdzé report to be one of the founding moments of an institutionalization process that played out more or less successfully,<sup>15</sup> it is symptomatic that they do not mention the directions offered by the report’s authors proposed for an alternative institutionalization that would be consistent with the possibility under consideration for democratizing the scientific and university teaching system, i.e., of reorganizing it to respond to what was called social demand. This silence is significant, especially in view of the fact that the proposal was not a marginal part of the report; on the contrary, it is what gave the report

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<sup>14</sup> In the opening words of the preface of the report, titled “About Communication Research,” Mattelart and Stourdzé wrote: “Delimiting the identity of its field was the great problem that the ‘Technology, Communication and Dissemination of Culture Mission’ had to at least set itself, if not resolve. Trying to conceptually delimit this field that, in the collective imaginary, was caught in a tug-of-war between a dominant aesthetic of culture on one side, and a dominant technology of communication on the other” (Mattelart and Stourdzé, 1984 [1982]: 53).

<sup>15</sup> On the history of SICs, especially as they relate to the recognition of the Mattelart-Stourdzé report on the assessments of the discipline, see the collective volume of the journals *CinémAction* (1992, no. 62–63) and *Dossiers de l’audiovisuel* (1999, no. 85) devoted to the history of communication research in France; also Boure (1997), Miège (2000) and Meyrat, and Miège (2002). In all of these cases the references to the Mattelart-Stourdzé report show a recognition only in terms of its role in institutionalizing communication studies in the French university system.

structure and meaning. “It is the conditions of *demand* for research that should be made to evolve as far as possible,” wrote Mattelart and Stourdzé, so that this *demand* would express “widely shared social priorities: the aim should be to create the institutional conditions for *this new demand* to gradually emerge, develop, be renewed” (161). With an eye to creating these conditions, the authors indicated to the minister the gaps in research about communication technologies and mass media (assigning special relevance to the sociology and economics of cultural production and consumption), and put forward as a general orientation the need to reexamine the relations between teaching, research, and the ways its results were communicated to society. To this end they proposed, among other general guidelines, designing the mediations that would permit the reversal of the traditional relation that went from the conception of a technical apparatus (or of a cultural program) to the research about its uses or its reception, in order to go the other way: from research about social demand to the conception and planning of the apparatus or program.<sup>16</sup>

It is also significant that the assessments of the SICs in France contain no references to Chapter 6 of the second part of Mattelart and Stourdzé’s report: “Toward a Different Conception of the National/Transnational Relation and North/South Dialogue” (219–232). Its content, in line with other documents we have drawn attention to, sheds light on an intellectual program and a unique political-cultural context. At a time when France was reviewing its international alliances in terms of its policy of geopolitical reengagement (as we will see, it was trying to form a power bloc that would encompass some Third World countries, especially from Latin America), the report formulated a series of proposals regarding international exchange in matters of culture and communication. Mattelart and Stourdzé aimed to create spaces for discussion, debate, and research that could draw support from university or scientific (but not governmental, they insisted) organizations, and also from labor and social movements. Given the plurality of actors in France that were associated with communication research, and

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<sup>16</sup> To accomplish these objectives, Mattelart and Stourdzé proposed, in a nutshell: a) creating a permanent inter-ministerial mission focused on research and progress in culture and communication; b) creating a technological research institute for communication and culture; c) creating a foundation for innovations in culture and communication; d) restructuring the basic research function in universities, with the creation of a section of the CNRS for information and communication sciences; e) formulating a regrouping policy aimed at alternative audio-visual production at universities; and f) promoting public debate and a program for mobilizing citizens with respect to the challenges of communication technologies. See the third part of the report, “Unas propuestas de estructuras” [“Some Structural Proposals”] (Mattelart and Stourdzé, 1984 [1982]: 235–252).

given the existence of a series of democratic communication practices, of “social experimentation” in communication, France was in the position to make a great deal of relevant information available to Third World countries. But at the same time, Mattelart and Stourdzé pointed to the initiatives that had arisen in countries of the South since the 1970s in response to the new worldwide economic order, and the debate about the transnationalization of culture and the unequal flows of information. The authors held these initiatives up as an example for France and as an opportunity for discussion and exchange. In short, in the field of international relations they proposed “starting to build, in collaboration with other interlocutors of the Third World, a new kind of policy of cooperation. *Relations of civil society to civil society (a mobile civil society)*” (226; italics in the original). This program clearly drew on experiences and relations that Mattelart knew intimately and in some cases had helped to promote. His intervention suggests the complex relations that at the time connected the cultural formations of the *popular international of communication*, part of the emerging *popular international public sphere*, to more institutionalized spaces of knowledge exchange and production. Sustained state-level participation by an industrial and political power of France’s stature would have qualitatively modified its makeup and potential. The accounts of communication studies in France, focused on analyzing the role of the Mattelart-Stourdzé *rapport* in the process of disciplinary consolidation and institutionalization, have paid little attention to the implications of this geopolitical gamble.

Finally, another relevant aspect of the report is that Mattelart and Stourdzé drew on a vast community of people to write it, including working groups and institutions from all over the country that submitted specific contributions at the organizers’ request. As Mattelart recalls (2002: 80–81), some two hundred people were mobilized in the effort.<sup>17</sup> Many of these inputs were compiled for the second volume of the *rapport*, which was published in April 1983, also by La Documentation Française. There Mattelart and Stourdzé selected and presented some of the articles and collaborations they had drawn on to produce the final report. The diversity of the chosen sources is noteworthy, ranging from civil society organizations—the Association pour le droit à l’information économique et sociale [Association for the Right to Economic and Social Information] for example—to national and foreign scholars—Nicholas Garnham, Jesús Martín-Barbero, among others, and the chapters for the most part looked at experiences or groups

<sup>17</sup> Annex I of the report presents a synthesis of the people, groups, and institutions that submitted contributions (Mattelart and Stourdzé, 1984 [1982]: 255–259).

of communication or cultural activism. Once again, Mattelart acted as a mediator between heterogenous social spaces and intellectual traditions.

The fact that the Technology, Communication and Dissemination of Culture Mission aimed to redefine policy at the highest levels of the state could be seen in the press conference about problems in the communication industries held in Paris on December 7, 1982, when the *rapport* was presented. A number of ministers of the socialist government were on hand, including Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Minister of Research and Industry; Jack Lang, Minister of Culture; and Georges Fillioud, Minister of Communication. The implementation of a plan of “image research” was announced there, and much of the discussion was about the Mattelart-Stourdzé *rapport* on the status of communication in France. Despite the political weight of the participants, Mattelart warned at the press conference about the limits and ambiguities of the socialist project. “The great risk,” he stated, “is to go from a society that has long rejected any kind of reflection about its communication apparatus to a society where technological bedazzlement blocks out critical questioning of the model of society that underlies these technical choices” (*Le Monde*, December 9, 1982). His suspicions were not unfounded: The socialist government’s lurch toward neoliberal policies would be accompanied by a discourse touting culture and communication as France’s savior, which would promptly turn them into a utopian aspiration and the preeminent vehicle of social cohesion.<sup>18</sup> In such a context, the initiatives proposed in the report were to fall on deaf ears. In disagreement with the “necessary shift” in economic policy announced in March 1983, shortly after the news conference mentioned above, Minister Chevènement resigned his post (although he joined the government again the next year as Minister of Education). In Mattelart’s retrospective telling (2010: 165), “The shift in the government priorities that took place three months later would negate this announcement that had received so much media coverage.” The new policy direction would become even more pronounced starting with

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<sup>18</sup> One early example was a meeting of intellectuals held on February 12, 1983, in the grand amphitheater of the Sorbonne, called the “Creation and Development” workshops, promoted with Mitterrand’s blessing by the Minister of Culture, Jack Lang. The organizing idea of the event was to put culture at the service of a “rejuvenated” economy and “creativity of all at the service of development.” In his final closing remarks, Mitterrand referred to the “advent of a society of creation and communication.” Jack Lang, who spoke next, let fly a number of such statements: “Culture must be mobilizing and profitable (*payant*) in times of economic crisis”; and that the “idea of culture has begun to gain stature as a possibility for globally solving the problems of all of humanity” (in Cusset, 2008 [2006]: 80).

Laurent Fabius's government in 1984, marking the close of the first stage of the socialist government.

*Eurocentrism and Third World-ism at the Crossroads (or the Twilight of the Popular International of Communication)*

Within the framework of the geopolitical realignment that came out of the French socialists' rise to power, in June 1982, the ministers of culture of Spain, France, Italy, Mexico, and Portugal met in Venice, where they declared their intention to promote greater cooperation among Romance language-speaking countries. According to the final declaration, the aim was "to establish an equilibrium of the potential for creation, dissemination, exchange and protection of cultural products" (in Mattelart, Mattelart, and Delcourt, 1984: 12). The government of France was the driving force behind the initiative, and therefore was assigned the job of exploring alternatives. It was no coincidence that the new socialist government was putting its own stamp on the attempt to re-insert France into the league of international powers: In the face of growing US hegemony, the establishment of its own template for technological development and cultural production was seen as a strategic objective. As Nicholas Garnham (1984: 2) insightfully observed, the policy of the French socialist government, which sought to stand up to the United States' power ambitions, led it to establish a policy of creating alliances with so-called Third World countries. In this context, and following up on the Venice conference, the World Conference on Cultural Policies was organized in Mexico City in July 1982. There Jack Lang, the socialist government's Minister of Culture, explicitly set forth the policy of redefining international alliances and solidarity: He expressed his desire that the conference would enable "peoples, through their governments, to make a statement in favor of genuine cultural resistance," i.e., "against financial and intellectual imperialism" (Mattelart, Mattelart, and Delcourt, 1984: 27). The declaration, uttered by an official representative of a great industrial power that also had a long colonial tradition, represented a remarkable turn of events and a provocative stance. Overall, the Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico City made it clear that new actors were beginning to perceive the links between economics and culture, on the one hand, and on the other, the threats posed by transnationalization, about which many Third World countries had been sounding the alarm publicly and collectively at least since the Algiers Conference in 1973. The growing commercialization of

cultural production and the emergence of all manner of new communication technologies projected culture into the very heart of the industrial and political apparatus. As Mattelart observed at the time, most European countries regarded this situation as “a radical development” (47).

With the immediate precedent of having worked on the Technology, Communication and Dissemination of Culture Mission for the socialist government, Jack Lang asked Mattelart to convene a commission to study the conditions of viability for creating a “Latin audio-visual space.” Mattelart chaired the commission (called, precisely, the Commission for a Latin Audio-Visual Space), which worked from November 15, 1982, to June 30, 1983, and brought together researchers as well as people involved in cinematic and audio-visual production from France, Spain, Italy, and Latin America. The final report, written by Armand Mattelart, Michèle Mattelart, and Xavier Delcourt, was submitted to the French Ministry of Culture in July 1983. It updated the analysis of the imbalances in international flows of culture, information, and communication, and related them to the tendencies inherent in the restructuring of the international economy. The authors pointed to the tensions that existed, in the French case, between the democratization project (which required society to appropriate technology) and the industrial imperative and its pressures aimed at conquering foreign markets. They also looked at experiences in the Third World, especially in Latin America, that had shone a spotlight on the question of unequal information flows and, by the same token, the conditions that explained the lack of such problematization in countries like France, where, for example, the publication of the MacBride Report had made few waves. In this sense, the authors advocated the creation of a space for international intellectual cooperation and exchange, which would arise out of the confrontation “not only of experiences but also of different historical, cultural, and economic heritages.” Only the sharing of such multiple ideas, realities, and projects, they stated, “could guarantee the preservation of diversities in this quest for new kinds of international solidarity” (Mattelart, Mattelart, and Delcourt, 1984: 12).

This initiative might have represented the high-water mark of institutionalization for this space of exchange and cooperation we have called the *Popular International of Communication* and that, operating within an emerging *international public sphere*, had in Mattelart one of its many guides and organizers. It was, as we have argued, a space with blurred boundaries, made up of reciprocal cross-pollination and borrowing between emerging and dominant elements from the cultural and intellectual fields. Perhaps for this



reason it can also be said that the commission's very existence marked the moment it began to decline. The proposals formulated in the report gained little traction in the face of the global offensive of neoliberal deregulation and privatization policies that took off in the 1980s. As we have seen, by then the French socialist government's orientations had taken a drastic turn. In Mattelart's recollection (2010: 166), the report was filed away where it would have no impact or even consideration, so he decided to publish it as a book without the Ministry's authorization. *La culture contre la démocratie? L'audiovisuel à l'heure transnationale* was published almost simultaneously in French, Spanish, and English (as *International Image Markets: In Search of an Alternative Perspective*).

Even so, a number of European luminaries from the field of communication research praised Mattelart, after the book was translated, for his capacity to foster dialogue between heterogenous realities and intellectual traditions. Enrique Bustamante, who wrote a prologue for the Spanish version, situated the book's release precisely in a context of structural changes in communication, and argued that it invited readers to question a certain "Eurocentric" way of regarding knowledge production in peripheral countries from the perspective of central countries, especially when it came to communication. Bustamante attributed the report's merit in this regard to Mattelart, while also highlighting the scope of critical communication studies coming out of Latin America.<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein, in his introduction to the English-language version of the book, Nicholas Garnham (1984) highlighted its value for English readers, who might well first look at a report drawn up by the commission for Latin audio-visual media as irrelevant to their reality. Garnham made use of his introduction to highlight Mattelart's contribution to communication thought and underscore his Chilean experience as a vital element for forming "a Third World perspective that is rare among Western scholars" (4). In spite of the expression, Garnham was referring to Mattelart's ability "to avoid the trap of ghettoized Third Worldism by

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<sup>19</sup> He wrote, "Just when it seems that we are finally witnessing the collapse of that absurd arrogance and incredible shortsightedness that led many European countries to regard the whole issue of informational imbalance and national communication policies as alien, Third World concerns, it also becomes important in this Latin space to emphasize the need and urgency of exchanging and sharing the communication experiences, analyses, and theories that have been developed with the North as well as with the South. And this is particularly true in the case of Latin America, where critical communication studies have had a remarkable development, driven by the continent's status as a pilot region for the best and the worst, for communication alternatives and for the transnationalization of information" (Bustamante, 1984: V). Bustamante then highlighted the figure of Mattelart (VI).



bringing the lessons learnt in the Third World to bear upon the problems of Europe, and vice-versa,” which accounts for the exceptional quality of this thinking. He concluded that Mattelart’s work represented “a model of internationalism in its best sense.”

### *The Crisis of the Left and the Change of Episteme*

Mattelart’s job security at the university starting in the mid-1980s coincided with a decisive shift in the world of French culture and politics. It could be characterized as a veritable change of episteme, understood as a way of naming that which defines the boundaries of what can be said and thought at a given time in a given society. 1984 represented the year when liberalism triumphed in France as the guide for economic policy and, above all, ideological horizon (Cusset, 2008 [2006]). It makes sense, then, to situate a certain shift in Mattelart’s intellectual project within this framework, or to be more precise, within the profound disenchantment that broad sectors of the intellectual left felt toward the socialist government’s change in direction and the jettisoning of its reformist platform.

In the opening words of the prologue to the French edition of *Penser les médias* [*Thinking about the Media*] (1986), the Mattelarts referred to the socialist government’s communication policies and its style of political communication. The language suggests the perception of a radical change in the media and cultural environment, as well as traces of intense personal and collective disappointment.<sup>20</sup> Mitterrand’s government contributed to a reconfiguration of the political-ideological horizons of French leftist culture: Impossible to criticize on pain of playing their enemies’ game, but also impossible not to criticize on pain of intellectual dishonesty, the left wing in power promoted just enough cynicism or resignation to the “possible” in the intellectual field to accompany the profound socio-cultural mutation that was underway. By missing its historical opportunity, as Félix Guattari (2009) observed, the left disappointed French society as a whole and, perhaps, the intellectuals most of all. In this context, intellectual life in France would undergo a radical

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<sup>20</sup> They wrote, “In five short years France has made peace with the media. Who would recognize in today’s France the country that struggled so hard to reach technological modernity?” (1987 [1986]: 25). The Mattelarts were referring to the socialist policy of liberalizing networks that led to a doubling of the number of television networks during the period. The left had been successful where it had not hoped to be: It had allowed itself to be seduced by the media and tried to be seductive itself using the logic of the media. In a few years it would achieve—they wrote—what “capital and market forces had not managed to do: It would help to grant this logic full legitimacy” (26).

modification. In general terms, it would be marked by the disarticulation of a good number of the networks of intellectual sociability tied to the cultural world of the left (the emblematic closure of the François Maspero publishing house in 1982, to name one example) and by the decline of all the varieties of the figure of the committed intellectual, now to be replaced by the figure of the expert. Historians confirm the consolidation of what was already being perceived as the emergence of a new *regime of truth*. The narrative of the end of politics and the end of history, the turning in upon the individual, the rehabilitation of business, technophilic optimism, among other elements, constituted its central tropes (Cusset, 2008 [2006]: 100).<sup>21</sup>

It is at this crossroads where the writing of *Penser les médias* (1986) must be situated. This is undoubtedly a hinge book in Mattelart's itinerary where, together with Michèle Mattelart, he makes an assessment of both the history of communication research and the paradigm that was unfolding at the time at the heart of leftist social sciences and thinking. This review coincided, in the words of the authors themselves, with a questioning of the certainties that had guided their theoretical stances up to that point: "By rethinking the history of communication research, we are also sketching out the history of a personal itinerary," they stated in the prologue to the Spanish-language edition (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1987 [1986]: 22). The evaluation of the "new paradigms" of social theory and thinking, i.e., what Armand and Michèle Mattelart called a shift from thinking about the *mechanical* to thinking about the *fluid*,<sup>22</sup> must be read, then, in autobiographical terms as a questioning

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<sup>21</sup> Of course, these mutations in the cultural universe of the left can be explained by a series of elements that we cannot thoroughly examine here and that must be considered as a whole. To put it briefly: the new ways of subsuming intellectual work and knowledge production under the law of value, and the need to reorganize the higher education system that this entailed (Bolaño, 2005); the reorganization of the specific weight of the fields of symbolic production under the domination of the audio-visual media, and with them, the introduction of market logic into cultural production (Debray, 1979; Bourdieu, 1997 [1996]; Champagne, 2007, among others); finally, but not least importantly, the crisis of leftist thought produced by the debates about the status of the so-called "real socialisms" and the controversies over the ties between socialism and democracy that, as we have seen, had played out with particular intensity in France in the late 1970s.

<sup>22</sup> The metaphors refer less to a definite body of theories and concepts than to a way of thinking. They wrote, "With 'mechanical' we had the solid, we had the high and the low, the before and the after, the *infra* and the *supra*, along with the whole entourage of metaphors that try to express the meaning given to history, to progress, to the imbalances of power, to the dynamics of social movement. Marx's celebrated metaphor, of society as a building, with the famous structure base-superstructure, isn't that the best example of this kind of thinking?" Then they added, "The syncopated montage of the social, shot after shot, has been replaced by the fused-linked montage. The former indicated before and after, hierarchies, source and recipient, cause and consequences, breaks and continuities" (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1987 [1986]: 75).

of their own intellectual journey. “We thought we had certainties,” they stated in the first-person plural, referring for example to their embrace of structuralism and the belief it afforded of “being in possession of a single method that was valid for all sciences” (70). In contrast, the drifting nature of Foucault’s propositions, the return of the subject and subjectivities, the analysis of micro-interactions, consumption processes, and the place of pleasure in communication processes (as opposed to linear approaches or a focus on media texts or large-scale power apparatuses) renewed the ways of understanding the functioning of societies and their relation with communication. In this sense, the Mattelarts wrote, “we cannot overstate the importance of this break,” because it represented “a considerable advance in understanding what is real,” the merit of which, they added, was to “question the smooth, clear-cut certainties of the categories and paradigms that have long lorded over critical thinking” (83–84).

After laying out the merits of this way of thinking about the fluid, the Mattelarts emphasized that the new paradigm must be read ambivalently and pointed to a series of “omissions” in many of the theories and research projects that tied into it: omission of economics, of large-scale macro-structures, of the role of the state, or of the power of media texts as indispensable dimensions for understanding what is real. Thus, it was necessary to read these new paradigms in all their ambiguity and to ask over and over throughout the book whether they formed part of a new *regime of truth* that lent itself to the new ways of managing the social dimension and producing new legitimacies.<sup>23</sup>

With respect to Marxism, it is telling that Armand and Michèle Mattelart (1987 [1986]) broadened their critiques of what they referred to as “Althusserian theoretical formalism” or called out the “cult of didacticism” and the “morality of effort” that, driven by historicist optimism that regarded the victory of socialism as a given, expressed a “religious dimension of Marxism” (37, 129). Nonetheless, these observations indicated not so much a break or distancing—quite in fashion at the time—from Marxism as a theoretical tradition, but rather a change in the coordinates of their positions and references. What can be read here, in any case, is that Mattelart stepped back from his earlier aim—exemplified by the editorial project he undertook with Seth Siegelaub—to promote a way of thinking about communication

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<sup>23</sup> This ambiguity has not been acknowledged by those who only observe the Mattelarts’ positive evaluation of the new paradigms. See Efendy Maldonado Gómez de la Torre (2003) and Fuentes Navarro (1992).

and culture that would draw explicitly and exclusively on the frameworks of Marxism, although, as we have seen, its lineage was broad and varied.

To sum up, while many French academics and intellectuals jumped on the bandwagon and disavowed their earlier political-theoretical identifications as youthful excess, or even tried to sweep them under the rug, Armand Mattelart was able to participate candidly in a debate about “communication and politics” (together with Michèle Mattelart and Bernard Miège, among others), like the one organized in the spring of 1988 by the Institut de Recherches Marxistes [Marxist Research Institute], a research center affiliated with the PC. In a special dossier about communication put out by the institute’s journal (*Société Française*) that followed up on these interventions, Armand and Michèle Mattelart (in an interview titled “Debate: Marxism, Media, and Communication”) told the story of how they got involved in Marxism in Latin America, and reasserted the potential of Althusser’s contributions, of the Frankfurt School and of Gramsci, among others, for understanding the cultural phenomenon (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1988).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> They also insisted on differentiating between what they felt had been the operationalization of Althusserian theory in Latin America (which had allowed for an “epistemological break” with functionalist theories, with manifest content analysis, and with the conception of communication and society in terms of interpersonal relations) and the use it had been given in France, where an “elitist” and “hierarchical” appropriation had predominated, along with disdain for the analysis of media and mass culture.

## INTERLUDE

# From the Itinerary to the Cognitive Map

Yet the compass at once introduces a new dimension into sea charts, a dimension that will utterly transform the problematic of the itinerary and allow us to pose the problem of a genuine cognitive mapping in a far more complex way.

—Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*

The aim of comprehending Armand Mattelart's thinking from its conditions of emergence does not imply that our interest in his itinerary is limited to the historiographic or contextual dimension. On the contrary, one of the aims of the reading we are trying out here is to show the ways his life itinerary ties into his theoretical production, or to put it another way, to tease out the threads that connect a way of thinking about life to a life of thinking. In the perspective of the *history of concepts*, as François Dosse (2007 [2003]) interprets it for intellectual history, recovering what the text meant in the moment in which it appeared makes it possible to "understand the statement's conflictive gamble" (222); at the same time, constructing a *cognitive map*—following the formula proposed by Fredric Jameson—around Mattelart's intellectual itinerary allows us to place that which it offers before the hermeneutic gaze of the present in search of categories and perspectives for gaining insight into recent developments in capitalism. Or in other words, to spotlight those elements of Mattelart's theoretical position that offer a productive and unique way of understanding contemporary social organization through the critique of culture and communication.

A quick clarification: When we look for certain keys to reading Mattelart's thinking and try to systematize his contributions, we run up against the paradox of representing a totality that, as Jameson (1991) points out—and as the metaphor of the *map* makes clear—is “impossible to represent” (83). Embracing this paradoxical dimension implicit in the notion of the cognitive map does not have to do, in our case, with the length of Mattelart's intellectual itinerary or the variety of his life experiences, the diversity of his professional undertakings, or the vicissitudes he had to deal with; the aim is to be faithful to his own conceptions of scientific work, of the status of theory, and its relation to an idea of truth situated in historical developments. These conceptions presuppose the collective nature of statements and the combative dimension of theoretical intervention, and thus suggest that any attempt to construct a closed, incontrovertible theory is to be rejected, since such a claim would be no more than the product of an abstract, linear, and accumulative conception of knowledge production.

Nonetheless, the *itinerary* of Mattelart's intellectual life has followed a *compass* and suggests that it makes sense to systematize certain coordinates and to clarify some theoretical points that could help to turn the itinerary into a *cognitive map*.<sup>1</sup> To this end we will propose some reading keys related to two notions that serve as conceptual hubs: *class analysis of communication* (or the *critique of its political economy*) and *communication-world*. These notions represent two differentiated moments of Mattelart's intellectual itinerary. Their point of differentiation can be located in the mid-1980s, between the time he joined the University of Rennes 2 faculty and the publication of *Penser les médias* in 1986 (published in English as *Rethinking Media Theory* in 1994): a moment when, as we have argued, the political-intellectual horizon in France was undergoing profound redefinitions. On either side of the timeline and around these two conceptual constellations, we can see the condensation and precipitation of theoretical-epistemological concepts that cut across his works and organize a reading of it.

The notion of *class analysis of communication* took shape between the late 1970s and early 1980s, and while it can be read in several publications that came out at the time, it gained currency primarily in one of Mattelart's texts

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<sup>1</sup> Fredric Jameson makes use of the metaphors of itinerary and compass when he refers to Kevin Lynch's work (1991: 83–84) *The Image of the City*, and from there proposes his notion of cognitive map. It is not lost on us that the same formula gives direction and even the title to Fernanda Beigel's work about “José Carlos Mariátegui's Aesthetic-Political Avant-Gardism”: *El itinerario y la brújula* [*The Itinerary and the Compass*]. Beigel (2003: 15) refers to Mariátegui's assertion that *dogma* (Marxism) was not an itinerary but a compass to be used on the journey.

that was remarkably marginal in his overall output (an edition in English that was never reprinted, as French and Spanish were the main languages in which he published his works) and, at the same time, highly significant (in view of the ambition of the intellectual project in which it was embedded): the respective introductions to the two volumes of *Communication and Class Struggle* (1979, 1983).<sup>2</sup> We have already alluded to the futility of trying to reconstruct a fully coherent theoretical system in his works from this period, but it must be noted that in these introductions Mattelart tried to demarcate a key that would organize the reading of the broad conceptual array that was implicit in the selected texts. One can read there a bold attempt to lay out a theoretical position that would condense previous experiences and formulations into a single conceptual enunciation, with an explicit two-fold aim of contributing to the development of Marxism from the perspective of thought about communication and culture, and of contributing to the development of communication and culture studies from the coordinates of the Marxist tradition.

The second notion takes clear shape in the so-called “communication-world trilogy” (*La comunicación-mundo* [*Mapping World Communication*], 1992; *La invención de la comunicación* [*The Invention of Communication*], 1994; *Historia de la utopía planetaria* [*History of Global Utopia*], 2000).<sup>3</sup> It can be traced back, however, to that moment of transition represented by his publication, together with Michèle Mattelart, of *Penser les médias* in 1986. We will situate the perspective of the *communication-world*—following the principle of *intertextuality* that has oriented the research and writing of this book—in relation to positions developed in France in the late 1980s and early 1990s with respect to the critique of the so-called “ideologies of communication” and their planetary scope. One of Adorno’s metaphors, that of *force fields*, will be useful for guiding a reading that will enable us, not to see a closed system of authors, texts, or ideas in oppositional relations, but to situate “concepts and ideas in dynamic relations of proximity and distance, of attractions and repulsions, in different ways” (Lenarduzzi, 1998: 20). From this cognitive map we will then propose reading the uniqueness of Mattelart’s thinking, a body of thought that suggests that the critique of communication and culture offers an especially fruitful approach for understanding social organization today.

<sup>2</sup> Allow us to refer once again to the recent Spanish-language edition of these introductions (Mattelart, 2010 [1979], 2011 [1983]).

<sup>3</sup> [Only the first two books of the trilogy were translated into English, with the titles *Mapping World Communication: War, Progress, Culture* (1994) and *The Invention of Communication* (1996). Like *Rethinking Media Theory* (1994), they were published by the University of Minnesota Press.—Translator’s Note]

## CHAPTER SIX

# Class Analysis of Communication, or the Critique of its Political Economy

But that the class struggle is also the “decisive link” in Marx’s scientific theory, is perhaps more difficult to understand.

—Louis Althusser

In reality one can “scientifically” foresee only the struggle.

—Antonio Gramsci

In the assessments of the field of communication studies there is consensus that what came to be known, once it achieved the status of a sort of sub-field, as the *political economy of culture and communication*, emerged later than other perspectives. César Bolaño, Guillermo Mastrini, and Francisco Sierra (2005: 18) outline a regional frame of references of its development. They assert that the “two main groups” that gave it a disciplinary presence were the “North American school” of Dallas Smythe and Herbert Schiller, and—though they believe that one cannot in a strict sense speak of a school—the European group: on the one hand the British academics Nicholas Garnham,



Peter Golding, and Graham Murdock, and on the other the French theorists Patrice Flichy, Bernard Miège, and Dominique LeRoy, among others. The authors also include the Latin American contribution, despite its greater diversity and more diffuse focus, tracing it back to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL in its Spanish acronym) economic analyses, with stops at the questioning of the developmentalist perspective by the dependency theories and the Latin American contribution to the debate about the New World Information and Communication Order. Along similar lines, the Canadian Vincent Mosco (2006) proposes in a recent assessment “making a map of the Political Economy of Communication with regional emphases.” In Mosco’s view, “although there are important exceptions and a mixing of currents of thought, the North American, European, and Third World approaches are different enough to warrant distinct treatment” (62).

Where, then, to place the position of Armand Mattelart, a multi-faceted cosmopolitan, in this map of regional references? In the European, Latin American, or North American tradition? The diversity of answers to this question (which has not always been posed in exactly these terms) is symptomatic: Bolaño, Mastrini, and Sierra (2005: 22) regard Mattelart’s intervention as part of the Latin American tradition, which promotes “the so-called cultural dependency or cultural imperialism theories.” Mosco (2006), on the other hand, places him in the European tradition that “puts *class struggle* in the foreground” (63), while Bernard Miège (2004) emphasizes Mattelart’s familiarity with the North American economic-cultural processes and his role as a *passeur*, or go-between (transmitter, mediator) in France, based on his contact with US economists like Herbert Schiller (48).<sup>1</sup>

The uncertainty about Mattelart’s place on this map can perhaps be explained by the cosmopolitan nature of his trajectory: He might have been one of the few who could, at a time when the political economy of communication was consolidating as a discipline in the late 1970s, straddle different traditions that were emerging in different parts of the world and that, as Miège (2006: 157–158) observes, sometimes had very little contact with each other. However, can Mattelart’s profile really be reduced to that of a *passeur* or go-between, that is, someone who gets different intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> In French communication and information science, observed Miège (2006), those who identified as part of the field knew little about the political economy of communication: In his opinion, the processes by which ideas spread in the country focuses on the French-speaking world, where “outside influences are admitted only through strictly controlled filters” (46). This gave relevance to Mattelart’s role as a *passeur*.

traditions to engage in dialogue? Or should we also be exploring how, at the same time that he has indeed carried out this operation of translation, articulation, and the promotion of dialogue, he has also formulated original categories and perspectives for thinking about communication and culture in contemporary capitalism or, to be more precise, to think about contemporary capitalism from the critique of culture and communication?

It is in this direction that we will reconstruct the framework of dialogue between the traditions that Mattelart helped to connect, with an eye to highlighting the uniqueness of his theoretical position. This map will allow us to understand the intentional controversy of his assertions, as well as the potential that his perspective has for today in the search for categories and perspectives. The idea of *force fields*, as we have pointed out, will be useful for orienting a reading that lays out the concepts and ideas of this emergent field in dynamic relations of proximity and distance, of variable attractions and repulsions, of reciprocal cross-pollination and borrowing. What interests us is not so much to offer an abstract definition of the positions that characterize the *political economy of communication* as to reconstruct the ways some of its “regional” representatives went about constructing the concept of their object and ways to address it. If the mid-1970s saw the emergence of a disciplinary approach that revolved around the phrase *political economy of communication*, then we ought to observe the emergence of a network of dialogues and intellectual exchanges about its object (in which Mattelart played a leading role), that established a community of peers and a disciplinary framework.

### *Monopoly Capital and Cultural Imperialism: The North American School*

While it is well known that Herbert Schiller, from the United States, and Dallas Smythe, from Canada, played key roles in the emergence of the political economy of communication, less well known is the fact that Armand Mattelart had contact with these researchers in 1971 in Santiago de Chile, and forged a very fruitful and long-lasting intellectual relationship with them. The encounter introduced Mattelart to *Mass Communications and American Empire*, a book of Schiller’s (published in the US in 1969) that had a deep impact on Mattelart’s first research into the internationalization of communication systems and so-called “cultural imperialism.”<sup>2</sup> Within the

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<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that *Mass Communications and American Empire* was translated

general framework of the arguments—following a line initiated by Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy—that referred to a mutation of capitalism based on the development of monopolism, Schiller's contribution was to propose an early materialist genealogy of a cultural system, the United States', that was already then having an impact on the whole planet.<sup>3</sup>

In *Mass Communications and American Empire*, he argued that, since the Second World War, a geopolitical reordering had taken root around the world. Schiller (1976 [1969]) contended that, while capitalism had always been an international system (a hierarchical system with one or two metropolises at the top, dependent colonies and many degrees of command and subordination in between), the distinctive feature of the stage was that new and more subtle forms of imperialism were taking shape and replacing the old British imperialist model and its "*iron and blood tactics*" (14, 18). This mutation resulted from a structural fact: The communication and electronics system was merging with the industrial economic system and with the military complex, and this union was giving rise to a new version of imperialism. While military influence over the official communication system was growing (the official sector was becoming militarized under the threat of a routine and prolonged state of emergency in response to insurgency), at the same time *civilian* participation was continually expanding within the block of military-industrial communications: The investment in satellites and electronic equipment resulted from a need for the international circulation of commodities that also expanded the system of values that accompanied and promoted them. The so-called "worldwide invasion of U.S. electronics" encompassed different dimensions, ranging from the regulation of the international satellite system to the spread of devices or, directly, of broadcasters. Thus, aside from the economic benefits, Schiller argued, this expansion served as a spearhead for disseminating an economic order and the US system of values. In his view, this trend pointed in a direction that extended to the planetary scale: "The structure, character, and direction of

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into Spanish in 1976 (as *Comunicación de masas e imperialism yanqui*) and that it was never translated into French.

<sup>3</sup> Revisiting Lenin's arguments about capitalism's transition from free competition to monopolism and looking at it from an economic perspective, Baran and Sweezy (1968 [1966]) stated that the need to absorb an ever-larger surplus (resulting from the elimination of certain tendencies toward the fall of the profit rate) led capital to look for new outlets for its reproduction. One of them was through spending on advertising, which would also create an adequate infrastructure for absorbing the growing supply of commodities. Another was the increase in military spending, which redefined the relations between the state and business, based on tightening the bond between the military and industrial complexes.

the internal communication complex are no longer, if they ever were, purely national issues,” he noted (25). Schiller in 1969 was already referring to the first industrial and political pressure to market a European television that had been developed through state sponsorship.

Reading Schiller’s works (in the context of the intervention of US state agencies and companies in the process of destabilizing Chile’s Popular Unity) had a profound impact on Mattelart and oriented his research to some extent. A certain familiarity can be observed, even in the writing style and the emphasis on compiling empirical documentation from public government, business or military sources.<sup>4</sup> The idea that the US model relied on the growing integration of communication systems into the military-industrial complex, and that this system tended toward internationalization, constituted one of the basic cores of Mattelart’s first works (1972, 1974) on the subject, in which Schiller was repeatedly quoted. At the same time, we must note that Schiller’s and Mattelart’s works were motivated by different interests, influences, and conditions of emergence. Mattelart, as we have seen, devoted some of his research between 1971 and 1973 to analyzing and documenting the ramifications of this model in Chile and Latin America, and the specific ways it made itself felt. On this point a different emphasis can be read with respect to Schiller’s position: Instead of a concern for giving an account of the genesis of the US model and its tendency toward expansion, Mattelart focused on recounting the international reactions, alliances, and strategies that were put into play on the local scene and in the media run by the dominant classes in peripheral countries, particularly Chile. From this emphasis, Mattelart worked back to the genesis of the processes of internationalization in the United States, and from there he problematized the notion of cultural imperialism.

This implicit dialogue can be followed, a few years later, in *Multinationales et systèmes de communication* [*Multinationals and Communication Systems*], where Mattelart took up some of Schiller’s arguments while also questioning the very concept of *imperialism*. In response to the question of how the state’s ideological apparatuses were being modified in the new stage of in-

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<sup>4</sup> Schiller’s work was built on a prodigious body of testimonies and sources, mostly from public archives in the United States (minutes of Congressional hearings, reports by commissions, etc.), which the US political economist seemed to prioritize over the theoretical analysis of the logic of the strictly economic processes and trends. Schiller seemed more concerned with revealing and documenting the economic corporations’ and military’s political control over the development of communication systems than with contributing to a definition or theorization of the concept of imperialism, which is practically absent in his work.

ternational capital accumulation, Mattelart (1977 [1976]: 10–11) observed, in tune with Schiller, that in the new scenario the boundaries between the economic, political, cultural, and military spheres were being blurred—in other words, that the novel result of this convergence was that economic profitability was merging with ideological profitability.<sup>5</sup> Mattelart diverged from Schiller, however, with respect to the ways of understanding the process of the internationalization of cultural production and its alleged North Americanization. At the very least he established a matrix. Following Nicos Poulantzas’s lead, Mattelart stated that while “state monopoly capitalism” modified the ways hegemony was produced (which made evident the need to problematize the appearance of “new forms of state practices,” 11), the process of the internationalization of cultural production did not necessarily imply the disappearance of national cultures. Cultural imperialism, he argued, could only work and be analyzed if it was situated in its relation with other cultures, i.e., if its formation was understood in the context of class alliances within a national space and their reproduction, as well as in the context of the relations between “interior bourgeoisies” (he used Poulantzas’s phrase) and international bourgeoisies. In short, it needed to be situated within a framework of relations of force and the concrete conditions of its manifestation. Cultural imperialism—wrote Mattelart—“changes shape and content depending on the phases of the empire’s political, economic, and military expansion,” but it also “adapts to the different dominant realities and contexts.” A perspective like the one he was proposing—he concluded—“would have the merit of sparking discussions about imperialism in the cultural sphere. It would underscore its historical character, its class-based character, and relate it to modifications in the respective roles of these bourgeoisies” (265–266).

This point highlights Mattelart’s very different emphasis with respect to Schiller’s positions. The North American betrays an economistic and somewhat “fatalist” concept of cultural imperialism, where the homogenization and internationalization processes of the production of symbolic commodities follow inexorably from the logic of capital valorization and the United

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<sup>5</sup> Mattelart provided some examples of this interpenetration: The development of the Communication Satellite Corporation (COMSAT), in charge of formulating satellite policy—and a whole telecommunications policy along with it—was effectively delegated by the state to large corporations. It also happened the other way around, as he demonstrated with the case of the educational television series *Sesame Street*: Foundations linked to large corporations took it upon themselves to conceive, plan, produce, and distribute educational services. As the analysis of the television series showed, certain logics of advertising language and commercial rationality developed in mass culture would come to permeate a product conceived for educational purposes.

States' military and technological predominance.<sup>6</sup> Mattelart commented on precisely this issue in his presentation at the Algiers Conference on cultural imperialism (1977):

Many studies are devoted to, and actually re-validate, the myth of imperialism's omnipotence and omniscience. How many critical studies of imperialism are victims of a *counter-fascination with power*? [...] If such a vision, bordering on the apocalyptic, is evident in certain denunciations, and even certain analyses, the reason is that imperialism is often treated as a *deus ex machina*. (Mattelart, 2010 [1979]: 99)<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, Mattelart insisted on the need to look at class issues and their relation to the national culture. Such a perspective, he stated, would keep analysts from conflating national realities as different as those of France and Brazil, for example. The class perspective that he was proposing had the merit of reconciling the study of multinational macro-systems with diverse national realities: It combined a given level of development of productive forces and a particular historical-cultural legacy with determinant class relations, i.e., with zones of struggle and conflict that conditioned the configuration of the whole process. By framing the problem this way, Mattelart was introducing a reference that was unusual at the time in the field of communication studies in Europe and the United States: He was taking from Gramsci the notions of *international political party* and of *intellectuals* (as international mediators), because they allowed him to analyze the dynamic of national and international *relations of force* and the diversity and complexity of ideological transmission circuits. Within this framework (and here the reference was to another heterodox Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg), consideration had to be given to the responses that popular or national liberation cultures put into play in each situation. In conclusion, Mattelart (2010 [1979]) wrote: "The existence of specific forms of mediation within each society, within each social formation, as well as the character of these different types of mediation, create a broad variety of encounters with imperialism" (102). It was no coincidence that he incorporated this matrix of Gramscian thought—we

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<sup>6</sup> The influence of Baran and Sweezy's economic arguments and their notion of *monopoly capital* on Schiller's reasoning (1983) are more explicit in an article that, though published a few years later, summarizes some of the economic premises that undergird his position, starting with the eloquent title: "Communication Follows Capital."

<sup>7</sup> Here I am quoting the version of the intervention that is incorporated into the introduction to Volume One of *Communication and Class Struggle* (1979). [Translator's Note: Here I am using the language from the original version in English.]

will come back to this later—into his introduction to *Communication and Class Struggle*: “For a Class Analysis of Communication.” This work—in his words—could well have been called “For a Critique of the Political Economy of Communication.”

To better understand the scope and significance of Mattelart’s theoretical position, it is useful to contrast it with that of another decisive player in the emergence of the political economy of communication. While Herbert Schiller emphasized the relations between communication and power (while starting from its economic role), his colleague and friend, the Canadian economist Dallas Smythe, focused primarily on posing novel questions about the economic logics that he believed governed mass communication.<sup>8</sup> Through the reverberations and replies it generated, Smythe’s position contributed significantly to the configuration of a problematic revolving around the political economy of communication, not just because he was one of the first to propose the problem of communication and culture industries as a differentiated object for economics, but also because the provocative tone with which he launched his theoretical-epistemological proposal sparked a series of replies, intellectual exchanges, and cross-pollinated readings on both sides of the Atlantic, which would contribute to erecting a framework of indispensable intellectual sociability for the consolidation of the discipline.<sup>9</sup> His essay from 1977, suggestively and provocatively entitled “Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism” (1983 [1977]), explicitly laid out his position in dialogue and continuity with Baran and Sweezy’s monopoly capitalism arguments. The article was presented as an attempt to spark a debate about the economic and political importance of communication systems, an issue that Smythe believed had not been considered by the tradition of “Western Marxism,” which gave importance to mass communication systems only insofar as they could produce and reproduce *ideology*, an ideology that was considered only for its function of reproducing social relations. Smythe (1983 [1977]) countered that “The first question that historical materialists should ask about mass communication systems is *what economic function of capital do they serve*, aiming to understand their role in reproducing capitalist relations of production” (71–72; italics mine). This was precisely—and here Smythe anticipated his conclusion—“the ‘blindspot’ of Western Marxism.” Of

<sup>8</sup> Though Canadian by birth, Dallas Smythe had an extensive professional career in the United States and in close contact with Schiller. See Schiller (1976 [1969]: 10).

<sup>9</sup> Among the many references to Smythe’s inaugural work are Murdock (2006 [1978]), Flichy (1982 [1980]), Schmucler and Mattelart (1983), Zallo (1988), Garnham (1994 [1990]), and Bolaño (2006).



course, the Canadian already had an answer for the question he had adroitly formulated; that function was “the management of demand (concretely, through economic processes of advertising and mass communication)” (99).

If at first Smythe seemed to be referring to an indirect economic function of the “consciousness industry,” in the sense of managing demand in order to reduce the gap between production and consumption (the famous “mortal leap” of commodities that Marx spoke of), Smythe quickly went on to state that this function was at the same time subsumed in the production of a particular surplus value. And here is where the novelty comes in: Smythe wondered about the economic and productive nature (in terms of direct creation of surplus value) of the processes of the management of demand that Baran and Sweezy had left at the point of (non-productive) circulation. Thus, the point of departure for a Marxist view, Smythe argued (1983 [1977]: 74–76), was to objectively define the nature of the commodities constituted by mass communication and from there to account for their specific form of valorization and their function in the overall accumulation process. These commodities were the *audience and readership* that broadcasters sold to advertisers. Smythe thought it was the audience that produced these commodities by doing work, although he immediately added, throwing a certain ambiguity into his proposition, that the audience was also a commodity “produced by the mass media” and by “the family” (74–96). Thus, the key question for Smythe was the following: “How does demand-management by monopoly capitalism, by means of advertising, relate to the labour theory of value, to ‘leisure’ and to ‘free time?’” (79).

If we have devoted space to developing Smythe’s hypotheses, it is because in his questions and dilemmas one can discern the emergence of the issues and tensions that, to a great extent, define the political economy of communication. And because situating them will help us to recognize, by way of contrast, the uniqueness of Mattelart’s critical-theoretical position. On the one hand, Smythe opened up a problematic when he identified the need to interrogate an absence in Marxism (specifically, the question about the nature and the specificity of the processes for valorizing capital in what he called the “consciousness industry” and their relation to the overall processes for valorizing and reproducing capital), and at the same time he noted—though he limited himself to simply formulating the question—that his proposition involved broader redefinitions of Marxist theory. If “the mass media of communications are *simultaneously* in the superstructure *and* engaged indispensably in the last stage of infrastructural production” (75), then fur-



ther analysis was needed of the inferences implied by “this ‘principal and decisive’ integration of superstructure and base which reality presents” (97).

As we will see below, the British current of the political economy of communication and culture would take up a polemical stance in this field opened up by Smythe and in the problems he posed for Marxist theory regarding its conceptualization of the relations between base and superstructure.<sup>10</sup> More controversy came, evidently, from the problematic that Raymond Williams had opened up with his attempt to formulate the bases of a materialist cultural critique.

### *The British Political Economy of Communication: Legacy and Reworking of Cultural Studies*

Despite the dichotomies and disagreements that have been noted between *cultural studies* and the *political economy of communication* (Garnham, 1997; Grossberg, 1997), it is not a stretch to say that both theoretical positions drew in part and with different emphases on the theoretical and epistemological program that Raymond Williams formulated in the early 1970s. In an article published in the *New Left Review* in 1973, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” Williams laid out some of the central axes of what would be his revision of Marxism and his attempt to think about the relations between economy, culture and society in a new way. In *Marxism and Literature* (2009 [1977]), where he expressed a central concern for the possibility of a materialist understanding of literary and cultural forms, Williams spotlighted the social impulse that motivated his intellectual undertaking. After referring to recent transformations in “neo-capitalist” society, he called on Marxism to revise some of its theoretical postulates and on critics to broaden their objects of research. He wrote:

The major modern communications systems are now so evidently key institutions in advanced capitalist societies that they require the same kind of attention, at least initially, that is given to the institutions of industrial production and distribution. Studies of the ownership and control of the capitalist press, the capitalist cinema, and capitalist and state-capitalist radio and television interlock, historically and theoretically, with wider analyses of capitalist society, capitalist economy, and

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<sup>10</sup> An example of this is the polemical response to Smythe’s article (2006 [1978]) that Graham Murdock (2006 [1978]) published on the other side of the Atlantic shortly after the article came out, which would in turn generate a “reply” from the Canadian to the “response.”

the neo-capitalist state. Further, many of the same institutions require analysis in the context of modern imperialism and neo-colonialism, to which they are crucially relevant (see Schiller (1969)). (Williams, 2009 [1977]: 184-185)<sup>11</sup>

Williams continued his reasoning with a conclusion that is central to our overview:

Over and above their empirical results, these analyses force theoretical revision of the formula of base and superstructure and of the definition of productive forces, in a social area in which large-scale capitalist economic activity and cultural production are now inseparable. (184-185)

The Brazilian critic Maria Cevalco (2003 [1991]) situates Williams's intellectual program within his attempt to understand these structural transformations that emerged in the Europe of the 1960s and '70s, and she emphasizes that one of the strongest impulses driving his theoretical work was "imagining a field of studies that does not yet exist, but that is an imperative of the new modality of social organization, where the scale of the communication media broadens the interpenetration of the economic [...] and the cultural" (61). What then was the content of this theoretical-intellectual program? To put it briefly, Williams developed a conception of cultural materialism that—in an abridged and thus rather schematic form—was based on two complementary principles: first of all, on the understanding of culture as a constitutive dimension of the social; or, in Marxist terms, on understanding culture as a material force, as a productive force. Secondly, on the need to account for the cultural sphere's own materiality and specificity. The articulation of these two principles led him to question the oft-trumpeted notions of base and superstructure (expressions that Williams attempted to demonstrate were used as simple metaphors in Marx's thinking).

In spite of the accusations of economism that some cultural studies partisans lobbed at the British political economy of communication, when it emerged it accommodated itself to a certain extent in precisely the problematical zones proposed by the author of *Marxism and Literature*. Of course, for this tradition the metaphor in question—even in its more complex version—continued to be productive. In general terms, the concern of the British theorists of the political economy of communication was centered on the possibility of establishing theoretical criteria for analyzing the relation between material production and symbolic production within the

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<sup>11</sup> Williams's reference was to *Communications and American Empire*, by Schiller (1969).

coordinates of a monopoly capitalism that extended commercial logic to ever more powerful media. In 1973 Graham Murdock and Peter Golding published, in the journal *The Socialist Register*, an inaugural programmatic article called “For a Political Economy of Mass Communications” where, to the best of our knowledge, they used the phrase for the first time. While it was an exploratory article that the authors themselves defined as a case analysis of the British media system, they were already announcing what they proposed as the two core dimensions of their analysis: on the one hand, that “the obvious starting point for a political economy of communication media is the recognition that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organizations which produce and distribute commodities” (Murdock and Golding, 1973: 205). On the other hand, that aside from producing and distributing commodities, “the media also disseminate ideas about economic and political structures. It is this second and ideological dimension of mass media production which gives it its importance and centrality, and which requires an approach in terms not only of economics but also of politics” (207). A short time later, in 1977, the same pair, Murdock and Golding, (1981 [1977]) published a theoretical work in London that would become one of the founding references of the emerging discipline, where they further developed their propositions. They argued that media studies should not be conceived as a self-contained specialization, but rather as part of the overall study of social and cultural reproduction and that, in this sense, it should share the concerns of traditional sociological analysis about the issue of class stratifications and the ways the social order is legitimized. Taking as their starting point the assumptions of *The German Ideology* and of the Preface to *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, the authors proposed that consideration should be given, in the first place, to the overall economic context in which media control was wielded, but at the same time to the analysis of cultural production in its specific form. While the authors understood that “Marxism’s distinctiveness and promise as a framework for the sociological investigation of culture and communication lies precisely in the fact that it focuses on the complex connections *between* economics and intellectual production, between base and superstructure” (30), most Marxist-inspired analyses of cultural issues either only looked at mass media products assuming simple relations between economic structures and relations and cultural production (they gave as an example a whole line of research linked to the concept of ideological state apparatus); or else they took the product as the starting point and then “worked backwards” to uncover its economic base, without going “nearly far enough towards

explaining how the [...] ‘culture industry’ actually works” (27). The authors situated Theodor Adorno’s arguments about the culture industry in this last position, but they also attributed a similar imbalance to Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall: Their “detailed and often dazzling dissection of cultural forms sits uneasily on an undeveloped analysis of the economic bases of their production” (29). For Murdock and Golding, in contrast, the task thus required inverting the primacy of the focus and concentrating on the issues of ownership, control, and production, in order to make “a concrete analysis of the economic formations and process that underpin the contemporary communications industry” (30). In short, by embedding the tasks of the political economy of communication within those of a Marxist sociology concerned with determining the relations between material production and symbolic production, Murdock and Golding redefined its problematics and urged researchers to work on the specific modalities by which the law of value subsumed cultural production.

Nicholas Garnham’s article “Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication,” published in the first edition of *Media, Culture and Society* in 1979 (republished in Garnham, 1994 [1990]), can also be read as a programmatic, foundational article that proposes synthesizing and formulating a position and a perspective for this current of thought. Fully identified with the sign “political economy,” Garnham—like Murdock and Golding—puts the study of the relations between “base-superstructure” at the problematic center of the discipline, or, to be more precise about his position, the study of the relation between the law of value and ideological forms. If the base-superstructure metaphor was the essential point of departure for a political economy of culture (on this point Garnham was making a strong challenge to Williams), it was so as long as one avoided falling into two traps: economicistic reductionism (which Garnham attributed to Smythe, for example, p. 29) and the idealistic autonomization of the ideological level (which he attributed to Stuart Hall, among others, p. 23).

What then was the political economy of communication trying to analyze? First, Garnham observed, it needed to shift its attention to the media as ideological apparatuses of the state in order to analyze their role as economic entities. In this sense, Garnham seemed to be taking up the question posed by Smythe (what economic function of capital do the media serve?), but he had a better answer than the Canadian did: The media fulfill an economic function by creating surplus value directly through certain cultural commodities—cultural products—and insofar as they valorize a particular type of capital; and indirectly in other sectors of production, through advertis-

ing, to the extent that they organize consumption and reduce commodities' circulation time. For Garnham, then, if it was necessary to maintain the distinction between base and superstructure, at the same time it became necessary to analyze the contemporary and specific ways that *monopoly capitalism industrialized the superstructure* and the effects that this produced.

The development of the political economy of communication in Great Britain clearly stoked an open controversy with the cultural studies camp and looked for modes of demarcation from it. The appearance of the journal *Media, Culture and Society*, founded in 1979 by Nicholas Garnham himself, was one of the spaces where this position was promoted and disseminated; by its own assessment, its emergence can be read as an attempt to lay bare the shortcomings of French-style semiology and above all of what Garnham (1994 [1990]: 20) called "Lacanian Althusserianism"—which by then had notably influenced a second generation of British cultural studies—and its emphasis on the relative autonomy of the ideological and on processes of the constitution of subjectivity (Hall, 1994 [1973]), (1994 [1980]). In the best tradition of the *New Left Review*, *Media, Culture and Society* would publish and debate work from the continent: Mattelart published some articles in the journal, and the English translations of his book were reviewed in its first issues.<sup>12</sup> These things point to the existence of a space of reciprocal knowledge, exchange and influence where Mattelart played a somewhat leading role. Nicholas Garnham wrote the prologue to the English-language version of the book by Armand and Michèle Mattelart and Xavier Delcourt (Garnham, 1984) where, as we have seen, he highlighted the uniqueness of Armand Mattelart's position within the field of the political economy of communication, drawing attention to the key role that his Chilean experience played in the configuration of his intellectual profile and his theoretical position.

The aim, as the reader is no doubt perceiving, is to consider Armand Mattelart's theoretical position within this overall space of dialogue that was beginning to take shape across Europe. For this, we still need to describe one last zone of interaction, related to his most immediate intellectual milieu at the time.

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<sup>12</sup> See in *Culture, Media and Society* the review of the English-language version of *Multi-nationales et systèmes de communications* (Paldan, 1980) and the review of the English-language version of *L'usage de médias en temps de crise (Media Usage in Times of Crisis)* (Cruise O'Brien, 1981).

## *On the Other Side of the English Channel*

Armand and Michèle Mattelart recall that on the occasion of the 1961 publication of the first edition of the journal *Communications*, edited by Roland Barthes, one of the era's few economists of the cinema, Henri Mercillon, expressed his astonishment to the editorial board over the "omission of economics" from the declaration of principles accompanying the launch of such a publication, devoted to studying mass culture and its meanings (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1987 [1986]: 35). The authors interpret this omission of an economics of culture industries in the leading journal about communication in France as symptomatic of a deeply rooted mindset that held firm until the late 1970s, linked to the French academic and intellectual field's resistance to analyze the phenomena of the economy and the culture as interconnected and occurring on the same plane. At that time the first analyses emerged that raised economic questions about cultural production.

While French researchers of the culture industries seem more reluctant than their British colleagues to embrace the phrase "political economy of communication," the truth is that when people speak of the emergence of a "French (non-)school," they are referring primarily to the space articulated around the Groupe de Recherche sur les Enjeux de la Communication (GRESEC) of Stendhal University in Grenoble, founded in 1978 by Yves de la Haye and Bernard Miège (Bolaño, Mastrini, and Sierra, 2005). In general terms, this group's early publications combined theoretical reflection about the status of communication and culture in the development of contemporary capitalism with a marked emphasis on case analyses, i.e., with the study of the specific, differentiated modality that the valorization of capital took on in each branch of cultural production. In 1978, the team led by Bernard Miège published a collective work, *Capitalisme et industries culturelles* (*Capitalism and Cultural Industries*), through the University Press of Grenoble. The authors concurred with a diagnosis being reached on the other side of the English Channel: The existence of a phenomenon that, while not new (Marx had already given an account of its early manifestations), had now expanded at an unprecedented scale: the conversion of the sphere of culture and art into a space of valorization of capital. The transition corresponded to the monopoly stage of capitalism (Miège *et al.*, 1978: 169-170). However, unlike the question that concerned their British colleagues (about the relation between processes of the valorization of capital in the culture and mechanisms of ideological reproduction), Miège's team placed more emphasis on

studying modalities of valorization of capital valorization in culture and questions surrounding the specificity of its economic status. Until then, most Marxist analyses had focused on analyzing superstructures, describing the relations between modes of production and dominant ideology, or analyzing the restructuring of capital and the formation of its corresponding ideological apparatuses. In general, the authors stated, these studies saw fit to apply an overly general theoretical principle: the ultimately economic determination of the ideological superstructure. In contrast, the economists on Miège's team—like their English colleagues—found it necessary to orient their research toward the concrete modalities of this determination, but also the economic status of cultural production itself. Consequently, while it was inevitable to approach the production of value in culture as part of the broader reproduction of capital, the research questions needed to aim at shedding light on the concrete modality of this determination: How and why is capital led to valorize capital in the sphere of culture? And then, what justifies a separate analysis for this type of commodity? Or, to put it another way, what specific problems does contemporary capitalism face when producing value through art and culture? (8). All the work done by Miège's team aimed at answering these questions in theoretical terms, but also on the basis of case analyses; it sought to differentiate itself explicitly from the tradition that Adorno and Horkheimer had inaugurated around the question of the effect that the "industrialization of culture" had on mechanisms of ideological reproduction and the constitution of subjectivity; and also from the tradition that formed around the Althusserian theory of ideological state apparatuses, which sought to determine the particular characteristics of cultural commodities relative to the specificity of their process of production, circulation, and realization (21). Of course, one of its particularities resulted from the fact that culture could not be reduced to a means of valorizing capital because it was part of the ideological reproduction of social relations. To sum up, after devoting several chapters to theoretical discussion of the economic dimensions in question and case analyses of specific media (photography, the record industry, audiovisuals, etc.), at the end of the book Miège and his team focused their conclusions on problematizing the relations between commercial cultural production and social reproduction.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the formulation of the issue they were

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<sup>13</sup> They argued that if culture participated in the overall world of commodities, it was not just because it became a field of surplus value, but because it participated in the broader reproduction of capital and intervened more and more in the process of realizing value in general. The logic of capitalism thus ensured, on the one hand, the promotion of culture



working on highlighted the need to account for the economic specificity (through the specific modality of its processes of production, circulation, and consumption) of culture industries.

Let us then recapitulate schematically the questions that account for the emergence of the political economy of communication: Within the framework of the development of monopoly capitalism, what economic function did mass media and culture industries fulfill—and how was this function to be analyzed if it turned out to have some specificity as the production of value? What was their nature and what was their economic particularity? Finally, what redefinitions in Marxist theory were implied—in Smythe’s words (1983 [1977])—by “this ‘principal and decisive’ integration of superstructure and base which reality presents”? And, if the distinction was still valid, how to account for the relations between these two entities?

It is in this problematic where we will situate the unique character of Mattelart’s position (he read, as few French intellectuals did, the North American school and the British debates, and his colleagues on the other side of the English Channel read him), which laid bare a sort of theoretical vacuum in the political economy of communication:<sup>14</sup> specifically, what place does conflict, class struggle, occupy in the dynamic of economic-cultural processes? Is it a secondary dimension, derived from the logic of capital accumulation? Does it work autonomously, according to its own legality? Or is class struggle located inside these processes, immanent in them?

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by way of its commercialization, and on the other, the promotion of commercial commodities by way of culture. It followed that if one analyzed the economic role of cultural production, it was impossible to ignore the fact that culture also interfered in the overall process of capital reproduction due to its ideological role, and that these two aspects were becoming more and more deeply intertwined (Miège *et al.*, 1978: 173). If culture as a commodity was independent of its content (the aim of capital in the field of culture, as in any other field, was valorization, and this went beyond the use value of the commodity in question), on the other hand the aim was to account for how the processes of commercialization and capitalist integration of culture industries filtered or conditioned this cultural production. Cultural production of the capitalist variety thus favored a profound interpenetration between the dominant ideology and culture industries.

<sup>14</sup> In his “response” to Murdock’s “reply” to his article about “communication as the blindspot of Western Marxism,” Dallas Smythe (2006 [1978]) conceded that Murdock was right when he pointed out that Smythe gave no indication of how *class struggle* was to be situated within his working framework. He wrote: “It’s true, I didn’t. The reason is that I didn’t know how to, not that I considered it irrelevant. So I left class struggle at the point of the reproduction of the force of labor (a very unsatisfactory situation to leave it in)” (26).



## *At the Crossroads of Regional Traditions, or the Critique of Political Economy*

Let us begin by situating the appearance of *De l'usage des médias en temps de crise*, published in 1979, in the series of debates we have laid out and in the problematic that the emerging political economy of communication opened up.

In this book, Armand and Michèle Mattelart revisited some of the arguments they developed in *Multinationales et systèmes de communication* (*Multinationals and Communication Systems*). Briefly: Since the mid-1980s, the structural crisis of capitalism had brought to a head the need to reorganize the mode of production of material goods. This same crisis also involved the need to restructure the mode of production of symbolic goods or of cultural commodities. This fact, in the authors' view, was somewhat less evident and thus less studied (Mattelart and Mattelart, 2003 [1979]: 13): if the contemporary phase of capitalism was characterized by the acceleration of monopolism, its novelty was not to be found exclusively in the economic dimension and the scale at which this process unfolded, but in the fact that it became "increasingly difficult to delimit the true sphere of the cultural dimension" (53). In this assertion we can situate one topic pointed out by the "pioneers" of the political economy of communication: In the new phase of monopolism, spaces of the valorization of capital came to include spheres of social activities that had up to then been linked to ideological reproduction or to the simple reproduction of capital, but not directly to accumulation. Nevertheless, the Mattelarts' analysis pointed in a particular direction. They wrote:

There is too much of a tendency to isolate analysis in the sphere of economic relations when the structures created by this acceleration are examined. [...] Monopolism can certainly be characterized as a process of business concentration (as in the communication and information industry, at the national and international levels); but beyond the economic sphere, doesn't the monopolist process mobilize the spheres of human activity in their entirety, the mode of production of the life of a society in its entirety? (53)

While they were witnessing a broadening of the spheres of social activity in which capital was valorized, rather than asking about the economic specificity implied in this process, the Mattelarts pointed to the political basis of the restructuring that was taking place. The fact that the *crisis* was at the

heart of the reconfigurations—considering that the authors did not see the crisis as just an accumulation crisis, but also a crisis of hegemony—suggests a particular modulation in their perspective. The tendencies they referred to were produced “in a moment when the capitalist state’s ideological apparatuses have reached a different level of maturity: They correspond to a different political and economic need.” This need was what they set out to analyze in their work:

For this we could apply a term that Gramsci incidentally uses in his analyses of Fordism and the rationalization of the U.S. state apparatus, and speak of the “Taylorization” of the sphere of hegemony. (58)

The assertion that the economic and political dimensions formed a unit of analysis that called for a joint explanation deserves our full attention and further clarification. The notion of *Taylorization of hegemony* as a single fused concept that the Mattelarts constructed on the basis of Gramsci’s reflections on *Americanism* gives us an interpretative clue: If, on the one hand, the notion of *Taylorization* invokes the economic rationalization of the production of symbolic goods (rationalization that could come from the logics that govern the movement of capital), at the same time the reference to Gramscian thinking and his notion of hegemony situate the game of political determinations on the same plane as the logics of valorization.<sup>15</sup> The concept of *hegemony* as “moral and intellectual direction,” consisting of both coercion and consensus, implies conflict, the unstable, changing relations of force between classes and, within that, the intellectual mediations that organize economic production and regulate the relations of classes with each other, with the state and with power. The phrase *Taylorization of hegemony*, since it locates on the same plane the logics that orient the production of value and the dynamics of the relations of force between classes (i.e., forces that refine economic legality itself), allows us to read the content of the notion

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<sup>15</sup> In another text from the same period, Armand Mattelart (2010 [1979]) used a similar syntagm. He stated that “the present moment of the mode of production of communication is characterized by the global process of ‘Taylorization’ of social control.” This also went back to Gramsci, who in his study on Fordism “used the term ‘Taylorism’ to refer to the rationalization of the State apparatus.” Mattelart made use of Gramsci’s reflections on *Americanism* to analyze the restructuring that had taken place in the United States in response to the crisis of the 1930s. This process was “commanded by the new cultural, economic, and political requirements necessary to continue the accumulation of capital” (65). The social restructuring was not driven only by an economic legality and needed to be analyzed as a transformation of the modes of production of hegemony.

of *critical* added to the phrase *political economy of communication* that the Mattelarts were proposing at the time.

Nevertheless, the sense that the Mattelarts gave to this notion, rather than in a theoretical formulation or systematization, should be read in the analysis that addressed the transformations of the systems and modes of communication then taking place in Europe. It was tied to a process whereby information was converted into material for economic production and simultaneously into a vector of political control: With the new communication networks, new modes of interaction and work were being promoted that—as the Mattelarts (2003 1979): 87) illustrated by pointing to an advertisement that offered communication systems for businesses—could appeal to a rhetoric of participation. In the same tenor, the development of new technologies or media of communication, such as videocable systems or community radio stations, brought to the surface the question of the user’s decentralization and activity, which was promoted, paradoxically, within a framework of increasing concentration of traditional media. The logics of the old models of mass communication were modified, or else they incorporated modalities that promoted a certain cooperation among consumers, in a process of “decentralization (within concentration) and [of] diversification (within standardization)” (78). This gave rise to questions: Did this process imply a democratization of the word and of political participation? How was this situation to be analyzed? As an extension of the logic of capital and part of its search for new markets or spaces of valorization in the local or the deep dimensions of everyday life? As a search on the part of the powerful for new modes of production of consensus and legitimization? Or, just the opposite, as a product of the resistance of alternative practices in the face of state power and private communication monopolies?

One can read in the Mattelarts’ position an effort to find a key for interpreting these processes in the articulation of economic and political factors, with an eye to situating them, always, on the plane of conflict, in the effects that produce variations in the relations of force between classes. In this sense they wrote:

To evaluate the scope of this tendency toward the linking of the media of mass communication, which takes different forms in each social formation, it is necessary to return to the notion of mass media and mass culture as a system, as a network of networks that are both autonomous and connected. There is too much compartmentalizing in the analysis of the vectors of this mass culture [...] The current conditions of monopoly capitalism call for considering all these

vectors as a system, within which each vector, each mass medium, yields, in different degrees, to the rationality that established them as a whole. Because each specific medium, placed along a continuum, reflects a different state of the productive forces, a different state of the movement of capital and, therefore, of the evolution of monopolism, a different correlation of social forces, manifold contradictions, a different way of materializing freedom of the press, different degrees of consciousness, in both senders and receivers. (68-69)

As this paragraph implies, for them the nature and the function of the media of communication and mass culture in the period of monopolism could not be deduced exclusively from an economic rationality that has as its engine the law of value; nor could it be deduced from the interests and logics of the powerful. These dimensions are overdetermined, they wrote, in each specific social formation, with the “different correlation of social forces,” with “varied contradictions,” with “different degrees of consciousness.” There can be no doubt that these are possible ways of naming the vicissitudes of class struggle. And this vision required that “all these vectors be considered as a system.” They then concluded, in relation to the configuration of the object of the *critique* of the political economy of communication:

The desired analysis, at once differentiated and unified, should, for example, make it possible to determine when each mass medium becomes an economic and/or political objective for the powerful, that is, when it really begins to function as an integral part of the state apparatus. (68-69)

If one looks carefully, beyond the absence of specific references (though there is an evident reference to Althusser’s notion of ideological state apparatus), this position can be read through the lens of the idea of *structural or complex causality* that Althusser had formulated in *Lire le capital* (*Reading Capital*), in the battle he waged against the economistic reading of Marxism (which happened to be a position that Armand Mattelart was quite familiar with from his first readings in Chile before the notion became widespread). In *Capital*, Althusser reads one way of understanding the idea of *determination* in Marx that, in opposition to an idea of *linear causality* implicit in the logic of *expressive totality* (which assumes a relation of expression within a whole between an inner *essence* and an outer *phenomenon*, i.e., between the economic dimension and superstructural forms, respectively), suggests *totality in its immanence*, that is, “the determination of the elements of the whole by the

structure of the whole” (Althusser, 2006 [1967]: 202).<sup>16</sup> This reading key helps us to situate in the Mattelarts’ theoretical position a unique production of the concept of the object of the critique of the political economy of communication. In their words:

One cannot overestimate the need to know the conditions and contradictions in which the market of mass cultural production is deployed and an alternative is sought, on the basis of the apparatuses and outside of them. Might this situation not be contradictory? Isn’t the democratization project that underlies this multiplication of cultural commodities and services the result of a mediation of class oppositions? (82)

This formulation thus suggests a revision of the concept of the object of the political economy of communication that assumes a break with the *economistic* assumption that oriented a good number of its approaches: Economic rationality could not be a self-sufficient variable for explaining the shifts and transformations in communication systems, because these shifts, even in their economic dimension, must be situated within the framework of class oppositions. Analysis needed to be oriented in that sense. In his introductions to *Communication and Class Struggle*, published in 1979 and 1983 respectively, Armand Mattelart would further develop his theoretical position and make it more explicit.

In the first of the two introductions, “For a Class Analysis of Communication,” he mentioned in a footnote at the beginning of the text that he had considered an alternate title that he believed was equally appropriate: “Paraphrasing Marx, we also might have entitled this work ‘A Critique of the Political Economy of Communication’” (2010 [1979]: 124). It was not just a question of preference for the phrase “class analysis of communication” over “political economy” (we note that this was the name used most

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<sup>16</sup> The idea of a structural causality assumes, Althusser argued (2006 [1967]), “that the effects are not outside of the structure, are not a pre-existing object, element, or space upon which it would come to *leave its mark*; on the contrary, this implies that the structure is immanent in its effects, a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozan sense of the term, that *the entire existence of the structure consists of its effects*, in other words, that the structure is nothing but a specific combination of its own elements, is nothing but its effects” (204). We would reiterate that we are not trying to say that Mattelart was working here explicitly from these Althusserian categories, but that they can serve as an interpretative key for reading his theoretical position. In a passage from his introduction to *Communication and Class Struggle*, a contemporary text, Armand Mattelart (2010 [1979]: 34) tried out some critiques of Althusser, distinguishing the different appropriations and conditions of reception of his thought in Latin America and Europe.

often in the British tradition), but also of the addition of the term *critique*.<sup>17</sup> What meaning can be given to this term, with all its interpretative baggage in the history of philosophy and above all in the history of the Marxist tradition? Why did Mattelart opt for the other title: “For a Class Analysis of Communication”? And what was at play in the apparent equivalence of the expressions?

Broadly speaking, Mattelart’s proposal can be read as an attempt to “take the subtitle of *Capital* literally: *A Critique of Political Economy*,” as Althusser (2006 [1967]: 171) had described his own intention. Or to put it another way, an attempt to problematize the *concept of its object*. At play in the distance separating “critique of political economy” from “class analysis of communication” is the critique of its empiricist assumptions, i.e., of the existence of a separate economic object governed by its own laws.<sup>18</sup> We will address the issue in parts.

The essential concept that helped him construct the totality of his perspective, wrote Mattelart, was *mode of production*, exactly as laid out in Marx’s *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Mattelart, 2010 [1979]: 47). He understood that while Marx had never defined it perfectly, his analyses suggested seeing this theoretical concept as a tool that could be applied to the social totality, not just for the economic structure of society, but also for the legal and political superstructures (48). From there, Mattelart drew an analogy and proposed the concept of *mode of production of communication*. The formula first of all indicates a correlation between the way communication apparatuses work, which determines the mode through which messages are generated and exchanged, and the general mechanisms of production and exchange that condition all human activities in capitalist society. However, far from being a “superstructural” expression of an economic base, the concept of mode of production of communication allows for an analysis of its specific configuration as a material activity. On the one hand, Mattelart indicated (2010 [1979]), the mode of production of communication includes

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<sup>17</sup> Should any doubts persist, they can be dissipated with a reference to the introduction to the second volume, published four years later, where Mattelart (2010 [1983]) titled one of the internal sections “For a critique of the political economy of the mass media” (85).

<sup>18</sup> In *Reading Capital* Althusser took “literally” the subtitle of *Capital* (“A Critique of Political Economy”) and argued that this phrase could not mean criticizing or correcting certain imprecisions or details of an existing discipline, filling in its gaps or its omissions. “To criticize political economy,” he wrote, “means to confront it with a new problematic and a new object: i.e., to question the very *object* of political economy [...] Marx’s whole attack is directed at this object, at its pretensions to the modality of a ‘given’ object: political economy’s pretensions being no more than the mirror reflection of its object’s pretensions to have been *given* it” (171–172).

all the instruments of production (the machines used to transmit information, ranging from the simplest to the most complex), the work methods (from the division into different genres to the ways of gathering and selecting information, etc.) and finally, he wrote, “all the relations of production established among individuals in the communication process (relations of ownership, relations between sender and receiver, the technical division of labor, and all the forms of organization and association)” (48). This definition of the relations of production is key to reading Mattelart’s perspective: It assumes that from the start, “in the base,” the concept of mode of production of communication involves relations marked by inequality with respect to ownership and the capacity to send messages, but also the “forms of organization and association,” i.e., the equilibria of forces that emerged as a product of the will and activity of the groups in conflict. In addition, the concept of mode of production of communication assumes that in the very “infrastructure” of communicative activity there is a specific “superstructure”: a political-legal superstructure (the regulations and laws that govern communication and information activity) and an ideological superstructure, i.e., the system of ideas, images, and sensitivities that organize and naturalize a way of understanding and engaging in communication. Mattelart then referred to a specific ideological form that he called “bourgeois communication ideology” (to which he actually devoted a specific selection of texts in the anthology he was editing), in which he included ideas related to freedom of the press and expression, or to the professional ethics of communicators and their ways of practicing and understanding their activity, the principle of the social division of labor in communication (that is, the naturalization of the predominance of specialists); but also to the very concept of a “science of communication” and the notions it generated, such as public opinion, objectivity, mass culture, communication revolution, etc. The ideological, therefore, must not be regarded only as a system of ideas or representations but, Mattelart wrote, as a “collection of social practices” (2010 [1979]: 49).

At this point in his argumentation, he insisted,

An essential part of the analysis is trying to explain how the different systems of television, radio, film and press were organized, and how *through* these systems *certain models of social relations were established*. It is also crucial to study how these systems changed, and how they continue to change, as a result of the development of the productive forces, *within the framework of class conflict*. (49; italics mine)

In this programmatic invitation, it is possible to read another of the elements that define the meaning of the *critique* of the political economy of communication that Mattelart was proposing. So far we have seen that the nature of a specific mode of production of communication must be understood in relation to a general mode of production of social life; and, at the same time, that this correlation cannot be conceived in abstract, generalized terms, because the mode of production of communication has its own specificities that must be accounted for, including the existence of a specific “infrastructure” and “superstructure.” The paragraph quoted above also suggests that Mattelart understood that communication and the media formed a constitutive part of the productive forces themselves: Rather than being a mere reflection or result of an outside economic entity, communication and the media were the means through which “certain models of social relations” “were established.” It is in this sense that we should read Mattelart’s reference to the chapter from *Capital* “Machinery and Large Industry” and the meaning Marx gave to the expression *means of communication* as *means of transportation* (Marx was thinking primarily of the railroad), and to Lenin’s observations about the development and extension of railway lines around the world in his analysis of imperialism (71-77). This led to Mattelart’s conclusion that Marx’s and Lenin’s texts should serve as an invitation to do research into, “first of all, *the origins of these other productive forces that are the mass media*, such as the press, radio, and television, and then as an invitation to shed light on the nature of *the social force that explains their emergence*” (75; italics mine).

The differentiation between the concept of *productive forces* and that of *social force* brings us back to another of the highlighted elements from the quoted paragraph. What was the *social force* that explained the emergence of the media? Could it be reduced to the development and deployment of the logics immanent in the process of accumulation? Could it be explained only as an effect of technological development? Evidently not. Thus the quoted phrase (“it is crucial to study how these systems changed, and how they continue to change, as a result of the development of the productive forces, within the framework of class conflict”) can be read as an attempt to establish an intrinsic connection between the development of the productive forces (of communication) and “class struggle,” which are thus no longer seen as outside entities. The two notions, in short, are projected onto the same plane, which implies that the relation between the entities is not hierarchical or one of determination, but of constitutive immanence. This is the deep meaning that should be given to Mattelart’s use of the notion of *historical bloc*.



Gramsci—quoted by Mattelart (2010 [1979])—asserted that “infrastructure and superstructure form a historical bloc” (57). Gramsci thought that this notion implied the unity not only of “base and superstructure” but, in his terms, of objectivity and subjectivity; it did not make sense to think about this constitutive immanence without remembering that the superstructure is also the place where, as Marx himself taught, people become aware of the conditions of their existence and fight to transform them.

It is clear that we are far removed from the dualism implied in the architectural metaphor (base-superstructure), which by definition assumes relations of determination and derivation, of cause-effect. Mattelart’s position can be read more in tune with a monistic, immanentist conception of causality when conflict and struggle are seen as constitutive elements of the development of the “historical bloc” and as indispensable variables for analyzing its objectivization.<sup>19</sup> The genealogy that Mattelart (2010 [1979]: 71-72) set out to trace in his introduction (and in the assumptions that accompanied his selection for the anthology) of the development of mass culture, understood as a “mode of exchange between the market and the classes,” points to the uniqueness of his theoretical stance. The emergence of this mass culture had broadened access to the “spiritual commodities” and ensured the participation of the subaltern classes in the modes of construction of consensus when the reality of class struggle had become visible, first at the local level and then at the international level. We can follow here Mattelart’s distance from the positions that accounted for the emergence of mass culture by referring exclusively to the logic of capitalism and its need to manage the demand for commodities.

After defining the concept of the mode of production of communication, which operated in an abstract and general register, Mattelart linked it closely to the concept of *social formation*. This—he wrote following Marx’s *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*—“can be defined as the type of mode of production existing in a particular historical situation” (59). The way the different relations of production are organized under the hegemony of certain social relations—which impose their characteristics on society as a whole—will define the nature of a specific social formation. Strictly speaking, it was Lenin who elaborated on the concept of economic-

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<sup>19</sup> We cannot look deeper here at the analysis of the points of contact between Althusser’s and Gramsci’s theoretical positions that we are suggesting on the basis of the reading of Mattelart’s position. It is well-known that Althusser himself has acknowledged profound concordances with the Italian communist, although he has also pointed out notable differences between them, especially regarding their conception of the status of philosophy (Althusser, 2006 [1967]).

social formation as it was put forth by Marx. Defined “as a living organism,” the concept made it possible to account for the particular existence that a social formation adopted in a concrete historical situation, where different modes of production co-existed, and where the status of the relations of force between the classes gave rise to particular legal-political structures and therefore different modes of production of communication.<sup>20</sup> To sum up, Mattelart wrote:

Just as we have applied the concept of mode of production to the process of communication, it is possible to use the concept of social formation to designate the specific characteristics that the capitalist mode of production of communication assumes in each specific society. The characteristics adopted by the process of communication in each social formation may be observed through a particular combination of relations of production, work methods, relations of power and class, struggles, forms of state domination, etc., which produce a media system that is both the same and different in each historic space. (59)

This paragraph highlights the *overdetermination* of elements that configure a mode of production of communication in a given society, where the relations of force and the state of class struggle play a constitutive, non-derived role. Moreover, the concept of social formation serves to avoid reductionism when one looks at the processes of internationalization of cultural production and the local development of each media system, “which is both the same and different in each historic space.” The concepts of mode of production of

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<sup>20</sup> Mattelart cited a famous paragraph of Lenin’s that addresses the question: “Marx... did not confine himself to economic theory in the ordinary sense of the term [...] he nevertheless everywhere and incessantly scrutinized the superstructure corresponding to these production relations and clothed the skeleton in flesh and blood [...] [Marx] showed the whole capitalist social formation to the reader as a living thing—with its everyday aspects, with the actual social manifestation of the class antagonism inherent in production relations, with the bourgeois political superstructure” (Lenin, “What the Friends of the People Are,” quoted by Mattelart, 2010 [1979]: 52). Almost at the same time, José Aricó (2011) interpreted the concepts of *economic-social formation* and *mode of production* in a similar vein. In his reading, Lenin had thoroughly demonstrated his understanding of the significance of the *critique* of political economy in Marx. Aricó wrote: “The concept [of economic-social formation] has a fundamental importance from the theoretical viewpoint since its essential characteristic consists of regarding all phenomena related to material production as mediations of human social relations. In this case [...] Lenin uses the term *skeleton*: the *economic-social formation* is the skeleton around with the whole society is articulated. From this viewpoint, Marxism is no longer a theory used to analyze *economic life* but *the totality of social life*. Furthermore, by proposing this category of economic-social formation as an axis for interpreting society, Lenin was placing himself outside the conception of historical materialism that had characterized earlier positions and that posed the question in terms of the infrastructure/superstructure relation” (146, italics in the original).

communication and social formation must then be read as they relate to the revision of the concept of *cultural imperialism* that Mattelart was undertaking at the time. As we have seen, he was trying to distance himself from the economism present in many of the critical approaches, which could do no more than describe and predict a fatal process of cultural homogenization.

To summarize, all these elements allow us to lay out the boundaries of *class analysis of communication*, or of the *critique of its political economy* that, as we have noted, Mattelart continued to delineate in the introduction to the second volume of *Communication and Class Struggle*: “For a Class and Group Analysis of Popular Communication Practices” (Mattelart, 2011 [1983]). In this text (where he devoted one section to the “critique of the political economy of mass media,” 85-106) Mattelart explained the conceptual unity that the anthology was trying to reflect in spite of being organized in two volumes (one devoted to theories and concepts of communication and culture, the other to the history and experiences of popular and alternative communication). He set this unity in opposition to the split he observed between the two traditions that, in his opinion, made up critical thinking about communication: political economy and the theories or research that focused their concerns on so-called “popular culture” and/or alternative communication.

With regard to political economy, after giving an account of his knowledge of the main debates and luminaries (he cited Smythe, Murdock, Garnham and Miège, among others), Mattelart asserted that this current had contributed to the construction of a materialist theory of communication inasmuch as it assumed a break with the reception of Althusserian ideas in studies of communication and culture,<sup>21</sup> with “approaches of the culturalist type” and with “the formalist and closed discourse of structuralist semiology.” Nevertheless, while he acknowledged that these ideas were helping to shape theories that served to explain the functioning of what some called “culture industries” and others, “apparatuses” or “devices,” he concluded that few researchers of the so-called political economy of communication succeeded in integrating “into their heuristic formulation the concern for exposing the economic and political system of the media of mass communication, and to detect the ways in which the logic of the development of these new productive forces can be obstructed” (87). The quote suggests that the analytical difficulty lay in

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<sup>21</sup> On the influence of Althusserian ideas, he wrote the following: “After having stimulated critical reflection and revitalizing the study of ideologies, [they] finally contributed to a distancing from the analysis of concrete group situations and class confrontations conflicts (Mattelart, 2011 [1983]: 87).

the split between the economic and political dimensions, on the one hand, and at the same time in the autonomization of the logic of the valorization of capital and of power with respect to conflict and struggles. This split was expressed in the mutual distrust that affected the two critical traditions: political economy and the study of popular communication.

Faithful to his style, Mattelart's reflection in this work connected the debate over theoretical positions to the attempt to understand the processes of societal restructuring that were unfolding at the time with culture and communication as vectors. There one can see his theoretical position deployed in analysis. Once again, he insisted on analyzing these transformations as a product and a way out of the crises of the 1970s. It was precisely in the force fields that were marked out by class oppositions, as manifested in the demands and practices of the popular sectors but also in the strategies of the powerful to neutralize or co-opt them, where one could find the keys to reading the transformation of the structures of the media systems that was taking place in the United States or Great Britain. Toward the end of the section devoted to the "critique of the political economy of communication," he made one last observation that, as he remarked, could also serve as a conclusion to what he was advocating. It is worth reproducing the quote in its entirety, despite its length:

To develop a *political economy of the media*, it is not enough to treat the culture industries (which are generally transnational) by analyzing the production process in its various phases (creation, conception, publishing, promotion, distribution, consumer sales), by analyzing the structures of its industrial sectors (forms of concentration, degrees of concentration, etc.) or by analyzing the strategies of these firms. One can only attempt to understand the functioning of these culture industries as a system both unified and diversified by raising an essential question which ought to underlie all critical research on the way in which capital is attempting to reconfigure the cultural field: what effect does it have on the political system? [...] In this time of crisis, where the restructuring of the mode of production of material goods has to be accompanied by a restructuring of the mode of production of symbolic goods and cultural commodities, no *political economy worthy of the name* can marginalize these questions from its concerns. What role do the culture industries and the new information system play in the restructuring of the state? How is the function of the state apparatus as producer of the collective will short-circuited by the ideological function of these industries? (105, italics mine)

The theoretical-methodological program contained in this paragraph, which to a great extent summarizes Mattelart's theoretical position, must then be set in opposition to that of the other traditions of the political economy of communication that he was explicitly contesting. These other traditions defined their object as an economic object: the study of the specificity of the culture industries' processes of valorization. In the best-case scenario, the aim was to account for the marks that this logic left on the configuration of the "superstructure." For this reason, the uniqueness of Mattelart's theoretical position within the political economy of communication can be read in his redefinition of the problem that had constituted it, i.e., in the critique of the very concept of its object. It was not about trying to conceive conflict and class struggle as an external element, in the sense of a moment of autonomy, resistance or deviation from the legalities of power or from the commodity (a position that was dear to the culturalist currents of communication theories starting in the 1980s). On the contrary, conflict and struggle were to be considered constitutive elements of the dynamics of economic accumulation and hegemony, i.e., of the logics that govern the production and reproduction of power and value, and consequently, as an indispensable element for thinking about communication processes and the configuration and transformations of media systems. On this point, what was at stake was a critique of the political economy of communication that aimed to redefine its object and its theoretical field and, ultimately, an original epistemological reading of Marxism as a critique of knowledge instituted on the basis of an empiricist definition of compartmentalized objects.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> In this sense, it is worth mentioning the critical observations that the Basque Marxist economist Ramón Zallo would make to Mattelart a few years later in an extensive publication where he set out to lay the theoretical groundwork for a political economy of communication. Zallo (1988) took the work that Mattelart wrote together with Schmucler, *América Latina en la encrucijada telemática* (*Latin America at the telematic crossroads*) (1983) and offered it as an example of what he defined as "a fundamentally sociological perspective" that "globalizes communication" (22). In Zallo's view, the authors' sociological perspective would not allow for the isolation of different classes of information because it would be located in the interpenetration of economic, political, and military elements (this was also the case of Schiller, Zallo argued). In contrast, Zallo observed that "from the economic—not sociological—viewpoint, 'the globalization of communication as a whole that Mattelart and Schmucler postulate does not seem right.' He proposed adopting a definition of the political economy of communication that would differentiate its object by its *nature* and its *economic function* (23). It should be noted that specialists regard Ramón Zallo as one of Spain's foremost proponents of the tradition of the political economy of communication inaugurated by Miège in France (Bolaño, Mastrini and Sierra, 2005: 20).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# World-Communication: Knowledge and Power in the Web of Global Hegemony

The notion of *world-communication* can be taken as a foundation on which to reconstruct the intellectual project that Mattelart took up in the late 1980s and has developed painstakingly ever since. In *Pensar sobre los medios* [*Rethinking Media Theory*] (1986), one can read a moment of transition, with significant shifts in his concerns and theoretical positions; at the same time, however, in the *world-communication* project it is possible to trace continuities with respect to the trajectory of Mattelart's thinking that we have been following. In keeping with the methodology we proposed to build a cognitive map regarding this trajectory (the notion of *intertextuality* suggests giving an account of the polyphonic dimension of statements and their tension with respect to the challenges that existed at the time they were expressed), we will present some of the theoretical positions that helped to carve out a critical space in communication studies in France at the time, in the face of the expansion of a discourse that assigned communication a central value in explaining social functioning and in solving all its ills. By situating Mattelart's theoretical position within this dialogue, we will be able to give an account of its conditions of emergence and show how unique and productive

his approach was to understand contemporary social organization through the critique of culture and communication.

### *The Critique of Communication: Between Epistemology and Ideological Critique*

Upon the fading of the crisis represented in France by the rise of the May 1968 movement and the exhaustion of a stage in the mode of accumulation that had emerged after World War II, discourses and representations of technological innovation and the promise of communicative transparency provided material for a rhetoric based on a longstanding imaginary of progress and modernization that sought to reorient and justify a profound economic, political, and cultural restructuring, and to mitigate the traumas it caused. As early as in *De l'usage des médias en temps de crise* [*Media Usage in Times of Crisis*], Armand and Michèle Mattelart (2003 [1979]) drew attention to the emergence in the late 1970s of a new philosophy that was making communication its ideological core, assuming “the role that the philosophy of progress played in the nineteenth century” (18). “Satellites, cable television, and computers give rise to the global village, electronic democracy, the return of the Greek forum.” The expansion of the technological supports of communication was becoming, in their view, “the yardstick for measuring a society’s level of evolution, civilization and harmony.”

In a similar vein, in his introduction to *Les industries de l'imaginaire* [*The Industries of the Imaginary*] (1980), Patrice Flichy compiled a series of speeches and texts by French businesspeople, politicians, and intellectuals in which he found a common denominator: the existence of an “ideology of audio-visual communication” that, he asserted, corresponded to a political project that sought to use audio-visual media to solve the contradictions that had arisen in the heart of French society. “They could be the anti-May 1968!” as Flichy (1982 [1980]) quoted the hopes of one of the project’s promoters.

In the early 1980s, the rise of the united left generated a framework of expectations that would have a transformational effect on politics. It did not take long, however, for François Mitterrand’s failed attempt to promote a national counterweight to the capitalist restructuring, including the prospect of greater distribution of political and economic power in favor of the popular classes, to produce, as we have argued, a profound disenchantment that led to series of transformations in the cultural world of the left and the French intellectual field. In the sphere of communication, the shattered

hopes for the democratization of the media systems stoked the crisis of the public-service audio-visual system. The demand for the privatization and liberalization of networks, the commercialization of the sectors that up to then had been protected from the pressures of the law of value, and the emergence of spheres of valorization linked to new technologies and media converged with a discourse that made technological innovation and the “obligation to communicate” a source of legitimization and consensus-building.

It comes as no surprise, then, that in the late 1980s Bernard Miège analyzed the situation and spoke of a “society conquered by communication” (an expression that served as the title of his book *La société conquise par la communication* [*Society Conquered by Communication*]: Miège, 1989) to refer to the relations between communication and society that had been forged in France in those years. Since the mid-1970s, communication had undergone a dizzying rise, to the point of being recognized, in Miège’s view, as a consequential social phenomenon that had spawned a growing list of identifiable policies and strategies. Lucien Sfez (professor of political science at the Sorbonne) made similar observations in his *Critique de la communication* [*Critique of Communication*]: Never before had people spoken so much about communication as in a society that did not know how to communicate with itself, whose cohesion was jeopardized, whose values were decaying, and whose overused symbols no longer unified (Sfez, 1995 [1988]: 34).

Giving voice to similar concerns, Philippe Breton (Marc Bloch University of Strasbourg and Paris I Sorbonne) and Serge Proulx (University of Quebec) published a paper with the suggestive title *L’explosion de la communication* [*The Explosion of Communication*] (1989). Computers, satellites, Minitel...: Communication techniques always existed, they argued, but there was not always a discourse that made communication such a key factor (Breton and Proulx, 1989: 12). Why is there so much talk today of communication and its technologies, they asked. By “explosion of communication,” Breton and Proulx were referring to what they took to be the birth of a new ideology, and they set out to delimit its content, date its emergence, and explain its development. About the content of this new ideology, Breton would soon write *La utopía de la comunicación* [*The Utopia of Communication*]. There he contended that communication as an ideology ran the risk of becoming a totalizing explanatory schema (2000 [1992]: 128).

The paradox was that within that framework certain professional circles in France were resistant to producing the knowledge needed to explain the status and functioning of communication in society. That is how Bernard Miège (1995: 5) saw it even in the early 1990s. Institutional recognition



of communication and information science was late in coming, and the discipline's lack of legitimacy in the French academic structure, alongside the prestige of the humanistic and social studies, only complicated the necessary work of addressing the underdevelopment of its epistemological basis. And this could not be explained merely by its brief disciplinary and institutional history, but precisely because the sciences of information and communication were affected by the very processes they were supposed to shed light on: The "communication boom" was redefining the very modes of production and circulation of knowledge to the detriment of the possibility of developing a critical mode of thought. In France, the thinking about communication and the media was dominated by empiricist positions and instrumental approaches.

The emergence of the works of Philippe Breton, Lucien Sfez, Bernard Miège, and Armand Mattelart that we have referenced can be read within this framework and situated under a common denominator, even though their interventions entailed different positions and perspectives: a cross between reflection on the epistemological status of knowledge about communication and the ideological critique of its function in contemporary societies.<sup>1</sup> *Penser les médias* (1986, translated into English as *Rethinking Media Theory: Signposts and New Directions* [1992]) was a pioneering treatment of the epistemological question with respect to the constitution of knowledge about communication and the media in France. Its authors pointed out that the proliferation of discourses about new technologies ("the technological rapture that took over France in the 1980s has created an extraordinary consensus about the value of the topic of communication," they wrote) contrasted with the "dispersions, uncertainties, fluctuations that swirl, now more than ever, around the theoretical status of the field of knowledge and practices that fall under the notion of communication" (31). This proliferation complicated the work of reflecting on the new technological objects, making "the task of establishing the status of the theory more arduous." The problem was not a minor one for the authors; they knew perfectly well that they were dealing

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<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, this cross, for a broad swath of French social science from Durkheim onward, is a necessary condition for constituting scientific knowledge about social phenomena. The notion of "epistemological break" in the sense in which Bachelard used it assumes, as Pierre Bourdieu and his collaborators teach, that scientific facts in the social sciences are secured against the illusions of immediate knowledge and against the illusions of empiricism, i.e., against a naïve realism that takes its objects from common sense definitions rather than as constructions of the very point of view of the thinking. At the same time, this break serves to reveal the social-objectivated character of objects of knowledge (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron, 2002 [1973]).

with an “ideology of communication,” a “new egalitarianism through communication,” which served to confer legitimacy (82).

If empiricism famously confused the *thing* with its *concept*, the Mattelarts wrote, it was noteworthy that much of the knowledge about communication in France tended to define it on the basis of its applications and uses, instead of “carrying out the theoretical operation that would make it possible to step back from technological objects” (28). Within this framework, the authors highlighted the importance of epistemological reflection, i.e., of the “need for theoretical distance to understand to what extent reforming communication systems affects our societies, and how to reflect on them (to conceptualize them)” (22). As a first measure, then, Armand and Michèle Mattelart revisited some remarks they had made in previous works and laid out a series of factors (a conception of culture as elite culture, the neglect of economics and history, the “parochialism” of French thinking, the lack of legitimacy of a university structure, etc.) that stood in the way of the production of critical theory of communication in France (31–65). They also warned against the ambiguities of what they called the “metaphorical temptation,” in other words, the adoption by the social sciences (but also by ordinary discourse) of a theoretical-conceptual arsenal taken from the life sciences and cybernetics that turned communication into a general explanatory schema (54–61, 176–189).

It is possible to read this question in the works of Philippe Breton, who was one of the first in France, after the publication of *Penser les médias*, to draw attention with suggestive and provocative titles (*La explosión de la comunicación* [1989] and *La utopía de la comunicación* [1992]) to what he saw as the emergence of a new utopian matrix, ideological, that was governing contemporary society. In Breton’s view, while the relation between a communicational sensibility and technological utopias could be tracked back to the beginnings of modernity, the “utopia of communication” had its origins in the 1940s, in the aftermath of World War II. That was when a qualitative leap took place, linked not so much to the boom of technological media but to a current of thought that turned communication into the key axis of the reorganization of societies: The utopia of the society of communication was said to have emerged “as a reaction to modern barbarianism” (the two world wars) and its source of inspiration was Norbert Wiener, the father of cybernetics, the overall science of control and communication applied to domains as diverse as nature, engineering, and society (Breton, 2000 [1992]).

With cybernetics, communication rose to the rank of explanatory key of society’s problems, but also of their possible solutions: Its assumption was

the illusion of transparency.<sup>2</sup> All of the ingredients of a new ideology, Breton explained, with strong utopian undertones, began to come together starting at that moment (39); cybernetics established communication as a value even though it was a content-free value; communication was posited as an end in itself. Breton then tried to account for what had been some of the channels by which the cybernetic matrix had spread as an intellectual influence.<sup>3</sup> This point, however, was marginal and somewhat imprecise within his work, and he claimed it was not a direct influence but the expression of a “Zeitgeist.”

In a certain sense, the work done at the time by Lucien Sfez in *Critique de la communication* [*The Globalization of Communication*] (1995 [1988]) can be said to address an issue similar to the one that concerned Breton: a reflection on the epistemological status of communication that at the same time set out to critique its ideological function. In Sfez’s view, a wide range of contemporary knowledge (biology, mass media studies, institutions, law, organization science, artificial intelligence, analytic philosophy) was rooted in a series of common concepts or a single principle: communication. They share an *epistemic core*, identifiable and describable by definition. This epistemic core, argued Sfez, following a line similar to Breton’s, had turned into what he called a *symbolic form*, i.e., a kind of frame that had surpassed and overflowed the specialized knowledge space and had begun to organize the world’s perceptions. Sfez posited that between episteme and symbolic form there was a relation of continuity: That concepts that were common to the communication sciences, the episteme, constituted the core of an emerging symbolic form. Certain concepts “*elaborated by the elites of the communication sciences* become realities of the social and political world, *pass over to the everyday world*, and form the screen by which we construct the world and that we cannot even perceive given how much we use it, how much it envelops us” (20; italics mine).

As the italicized quote shows, Sfez, like Breton, posited a genealogy that extended from the epistemic core to the symbolic form, or, to put it

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<sup>2</sup> Briefly: According to cybernetics, all phenomena in the visible world can be understood in terms of relations of exchange and circulation of information. In Wiener’s view, society is made up of the messages that circulate within it and beings’ behavior consists of exchanging information; therein lies their being in the world. Humans, rather than beings with an inner life, are beings that communicate, *Homo comunicans*: Human life tends toward *entropy* (a movement of information loss that leads to disorder), and *information*, as the regulator of social ties, is its counterweight (Breton, 2000 [1992]).

<sup>3</sup> In science (linguistics and social sciences) the conduit was the structuralist paradigm of the Palo Alto school; in literature it was certain science fiction topics; for the general public it was scientific dissemination and, closer to the present day, the prolific activity of essayists and ideologues of the “communication society” (Breton 2000 [1992]).

another way, from scientific elaboration to common sense. To be more precise: The relation was one of determination of one by the other; the epistemic core shaped the assumptions of a symbolic form that, Sfez wrote, “spilling far past the scientific and technical media where it was born” had changed its nature, introducing “transformations in social practices” (22). In the theoretical principles posited by artificial intelligence, cybernetics, and cognitive psychology one could see the proposition of communication as the foundation of social ties and of the subject (an essence of the human person said to be in relation with one’s neighbors) but also the deployment of a utopia: The fascination with technology took on a sacralizing bias that instituted a worshipping of communication—understood to a large extent as a synonym for technology—which became, Sfez observed, the new God on earth. Cybernetics and cognitive science justified the proposition of a “universal morality of communication” that, in its shift toward discourse and social practices, became a “new Frankenstein theology” (33, 414).<sup>4</sup>

Breton’s and Sfez’s works show a common aim to deploy a critical position toward the epistemic foundations of scientific paradigms in vogue at the time in France and toward the ethical and political assumptions underlying what they thought was a “communication ideology.” And yet, when they tried to come up with interpretations about the socio-historical configuration of these processes, their arguments were rather feeble: The explanatory correlations they laid out suffered from a certain reductivism.<sup>5</sup>

In *La société conquise par la communication* (1989), Miège took a position by pointing to this explanatory gap. He observed that perspectives like those of Jean Baudrillard and Lucien Sfez did not help to understand

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<sup>4</sup> The use of the metaphor taken from Mary Shelley’s story is no coincidence. Sfez assimilated his *critique of communication* into a specific tradition of *ideological critique* that in several passages of the book drew on the *critique of religion* made by Ludwig Feuerbach (359, 401, 411). If the German philosopher’s critique led to an understanding of religion as a phantasmagoria, in Sfez’s case the critique was aimed at technology and communication as a new God on earth. While this is not the place to undertake a justification of the critique of the critique, we can say that the Feuerbachian anachronism might indicate, symptomatically, the shift away from any reference to the Marxist critique (and his critique of Feuerbach’s critique of religion) as a legitimate frame of interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> Sfez explains the constitution of communication as a central value and a general explanatory principle in the fact that it served as a response to the fragmentation and the gaps inherent in what he called the “North American culture of mixing,” since it was in the United States where communication emerged as an episteme. Breton, for his part, argued that there was a connection between Wiener’s thinking, the emergence of communication as a value, and the US military-industrial complex. Both Sfez and Breton saw scientific discourse—in Sfez’s words, the “elites of the communication sciences,” especially from North America—as playing a decisive and exclusive role in configuring other discourses and social practices.

the social function that communication was taking on. These authors, he contended, took as their starting point generalized theoretical propositions that purported to account for the whole phenomenon of communication on the basis of one specific issue, without considering its concrete manifestations. Miège countered that “the obligation to communicate” had emerged as a kind of categorical imperative in the moment that Western economies began restructuring. This imperative had arisen in the mid-1980s, when economic, social, and cultural reorganization was in full flight (16). In his view, communication should be understood as an information technology and, at the same time, as a technology of social management. One could witness its introduction into essential spheres of the social world, as much in the reorganization of processes of work within companies as in the world of politics, both in terms of mediation between citizens and their forms of representation (17). Miège then proceeded to analyze the concrete settings of social life where this great power of communication made itself felt: in the logics and mechanisms that structured consumption; in companies, where communication was being introduced as a resource both for organizing work and production, and for producing corporate identities; in schools, as a solution to their material and symbolic crises; and finally, in the reconfigurations of public space and politics, on the basis of their reconfiguration by audio-visual media.

This position evidently had multiple points of contact with the one Mattelart was developing at the time. Miège referred to him as one of the few researchers in France who had perceived this connection between technologies and social management techniques as a way of understanding the significance of communication in contemporary society. In *La société conquise par la communication* (1989), he quoted liberally from one of the key paragraphs of *Penser les médias* (1986). There Miège quoted Armand and Michèle Mattelart as writing:

Contrary to what one might believe given its meteoric rise in collective representations since the late 1970s, speaking about it [communication] is not a fad, a conjuncture, but actually a structural development. Communication from now on occupies a central place in the strategies that seek to restructure our societies. Through electronic technologies, it has become one of the key pieces for transforming the large, industrialized countries. It is a part of the new deployment of powers (and counter-powers) in the home, in school, in the factory, in the office, in the hospital, in the neighborhood, the region, the nation... And more than that, it has become a key element for the internationalization of economies

and cultures, and therefore, a challenge for the relations among peoples, among nations, and between the blocs. (Miège, 1989: 17–18.)

The paragraph clearly brings together a whole series of assessments of the role of communication in the reorganization of societies (after the crisis of the 1970s) that Armand Mattelart had been working on since the previous decade. At the same time, however, one can read in this fragment the summary of a proposed research program: In the mid-1980s, communication was consolidating its position for Armand and Michèle Mattelart as a fundamental entry point for understanding the restructuring that society was undergoing (especially in relation to its processes of internationalization) and the symbolic representations that accompanied and advanced it. We should thus read *Penser les médias* as a new *moment of transition* in Armand Mattelart's intellectual journey. There he put together a research program—here presented briefly and therefore somewhat schematically—that would combine the history of ideas and images of communication with the critique of its political economy. With the notion of *world-communication*, Mattelart would be aiming to throw into relief the international character of the processes through which the function and value of communication unfolded and were understood, of its techniques and apparatuses, but also of the production of representations and concepts of it. In short, he was proposing a bold effort to outline the bases of an epistemology of communication that would raise questions about the conditions in which knowledge production is intertwined and forms a unity (it is difficult to isolate an “epistemic core” that is then posited as the foundation of the social) with the management of technical systems, the economy, and the production of consensus.

### *A Genealogical Project: Economy and World-System*

As we have argued, the genealogical perspective that Mattelart began to systematize in the late 1980s had been forged over the years through the synthesis of different theoretical positions and life experiences. It is interesting to take a close look at the report “The Socio-Cultural Impact of Transnational Firms on Developing Countries” that Mattelart wrote in 1981 for the United Nations Center on Transnational Corporations, because there (once again we return to referencing places of multiple cross-linking where knowledge about the social dimension is produced) one can read in embryonic form some of the elements that would take the form of a theoretical position.

The center had commissioned two complementary reports: one under Mattelart's direction about the "negative sociocultural impact" of transnational corporations on developing countries, and another about the "positive impact," under the direction of another researcher (Mattelart, 1982: 31).<sup>6</sup> The objective was to produce conceptual tools for formulating cultural policies that would either mitigate the negative impact of transnational corporations or promote their positive aspects. Evidently uncomfortable with the perspective that underlay the assignment, Mattelart began writing his report by questioning the very assumptions of the research. Was it possible to make an inventory in two columns, with the "negative effects" of translational corporations on one side and the "positive effects" on the other? His answer to the question was to propose a radical challenge to the development project that assumed and naturalized transnationals themselves and the conceptual apparatus that they in turn naturalized (this point drew on his critiques of the notions of *development* that he made in Chile in the 1960s), which he called "transnational-centrism." Turning on its head the viewpoint that underlay the request to write the report, Mattelart proposed modifying the issue that gave rise and substance to the assignment. He stated that "one cannot understand the action of transnational corporations without asking about their genealogy [...] i.e., putting at the center of the issue of transnational corporations the question of their connections to the state apparatus and the range of institutions in their country of origin" (31). In this reversal of the issue, one can also read a questioning of the conceptual assumptions that underpinned the request for the research: a notion of "culture" regarded as a phenomenon detached from its political and economic functions; and a notion of "impact" that abstracted and separated the effect from the causes that explained it. Mattelart then proposed shifting the research "to the much wider field of questioning the global model of development, with its notion of progress, of modernity, of culture, of the human person, and the fulfillment of this person" (31).

Standing on the very stage where the notions and strategies of legitimization were formulated, Mattelart based his challenge on an idea: "Concepts represent a battleground between groups and classes, between projects for

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<sup>6</sup> Mattelart presented an excerpt of the introduction and conclusion of the report in a dossier put out by the journal *Amérique latine* ("Aide-memoire pour l'analyse de l'impact culturel des firmes multinationales" ["Reference Guide for Analyzing the Cultural Impact of Multinationals"], 1982). It should be recalled that since the Center on Transnational Corporations had no intention of publishing the report, Mattelart edited it later as *Transnationals and Third World: The Struggle for Culture* (1983). Here I am quoting the version from *Amérique latine*. [Translator's note: the quote is translated into English for this book.]



developing society” (39). The genealogical approach he was proposing went beyond the domain of the media, corporations, and communication practices, and incorporated an epistemological questioning related to the emergence and function of knowledge about communication. “One day we will need,” Mattelart wrote, shortly after he finished the report—tipping his hand that his report was about taking a gamble, about undertaking a program—“to reflect more not only on the origins of communication systems but also on the history of the construction of the concepts that have made them a high-priority field of research” (Mattelart, Delcourt, and Mattelart, 1984: 43).

Mattelart would continue to refine this position in the early 1980s and to specify the character that he believed a genealogical perspective should adopt, i.e., a particular way of introducing history into the study of communication and culture. In the Mattelart-Stourdzé report, he drew attention to the absence of, and need for, historical approaches in communication studies: It was a field where social history tended to be neglected on account of positions that were either clouded by the effects that technological innovations were expected to produce, or else focused on dismantling the supposed power of the mediatic text. To justify their position, the authors marshaled an extensive quote from another report, the one that Mattelart had written with Jean-Marie Piemme for the audio-visual service of the Ministry of the French Community of Belgium (Mattelart and Piemme, 1980). For the purpose of understanding the peculiarities of this country’s media system, the authors had questioned the assumptions of a history of the media that followed the model of “the history of events”: The “life” of a particular medium was conceived in terms of life stages—from its “birth” to its “growth”—as if it were governed by some sort of internal logic. What was left unsaid, “unexamined in this type of history,” noted Mattelart and Piemme, was “the connection between the informative medium and the collection of contradictions and structures in which it is embedded.” In other words, the “organic ties that link a medium to its historical-geographical era of functioning, the relations between informative media themselves (both within the country and at the international level), and the economic-political determination that, at a given moment, leaves its mark on the social function (or social functions) of communication technologies” (in Mattelart and Stourdzé, 1984 [1982]: 103–104).

Questions arise: How to tie the history of communication systems to that of theories and concepts of them? How to think about the relation between theoretical notions, representations, and movements of “the real”? The program that Mattelart was formulating should not be read as, on the one



hand, a call to write a social history of media and communication systems and, on the other and in parallel, a history of the concepts, representations, or theories about communication, which would be tasked with conceiving or making intelligible what had already happened on the level of “the real.” The genealogical approach that he was promoting aimed to account for the connectedness of these two elements. Only “embedding knowledge within the history of the construction of concepts,” wrote Mattelart at the time, “allows us to understand not only the *continuities*, but also the *breaks*, that have given rise to new approaches and new instruments, that are *articulated* to movements of the real” (Mattelart, Delcourt, and Mattelart, 1984: 43; italics mine). In other words, if the idea of articulation presupposes an unbreakable link between the “movements of the real” and the “manufacture of concepts,” this does not imply relations of exteriority, hierarchy, and determination between these elements, but rather, as the metaphor “manufacture” insinuates, the need to understand the constitutive and productive nature of concepts and representations—which explains the reference to the “breaks that give life”—in the production of this movement of the real with which together make up a unit. In this same tenor, a short time later Armand and Michèle Mattelart wrote in *Penser les médias*: “These movements of the real are connected to movements that operate in the scientific field, which in turn are an integral part of the real” (92).

This genealogical perspective can be found expressed with a certain degree of development in *La communication-monde. histoire des idées et des stratégies* (1992, translated into English as *Mapping World Communication: War, Progress, Culture* [1994]) and *L’invention de la communication* (1994, translated as *The Invention of Communication* [1996]). There Mattelart presented his research about “the history of international communication and of its representations” as “the history of the ties that have been established between *war*, *progress*, and *culture*, the trajectory of their successive readjustments, of their flows and refluxes” (Mattelart, 2003 [1992]: 18). The aim, he wrote, was to “root the reflection about communication in the history of the modes of social regulation that accompany the mutations of power” (Mattelart, 1995 [1994]: 16).

The notion of *world-communication* that organized both works took up and engaged in open dialogue with the concepts of *world-economy* and *world-system* proposed by the US sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein and by the French historian Fernand Braudel. Both made reference to the configuration—since the origins of capitalism and as a condition of its existence—of a hierarchized space of global interdependence that presupposed asymmetry

as a condition and guarantee of its existence.<sup>7</sup> For our purposes, we will highlight some elements of this perspective that can be useful for reading Mattelart's notion of *world-communication*. First of all, this notion is based on a basic assumption: the need to situate any analysis of contemporary society in the dynamic of the capitalist world-economy (Wallerstein, 1998 [1991]: 290). Secondly, since capitalism needs the complicity of the international economy to develop, Wallerstein and Braudel (and Mattelart would make lucid use of this) highlighted the role of technologies and communication in the constitution and development of processes of internationalization.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in epistemological terms, the analysis of world-systems is characterized by its aim to "combine coherently concern with the unit of analysis, concern with social temporalities, and concern with the barriers that had been erected between different social science disciplines" (Wallerstein, 2006 [2004]: 32). It is assumed, in other words, that the delimitation of the world-system is the right unit of analysis for understanding the phenomena of capitalism as a world-system, even in its local manifestations (this implies a fundamental shift from the approaches that focus on the nation-state); the concern for *long-duration* (*longue-durée*) analysis or, in Braudel's terms, for "long-duration (*longue-durée*) time," as opposed to a focus on short-term history and accounts of novelty; the need to review the divisions that had organized scientific disciplines since the nineteenth century based on objects defined as belonging to one of three categories—economics, politics, culture—that correspond, Wallerstein argues (2006 [1983]), to the assumptions of a liberal ideology.

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<sup>7</sup> According to Braudel, the *world-economy* is not to be confused with the *world(wide) economy* (that is, the sum total of economic activities on the planet), because it assumes the existence of an economically autonomous space on the globe that is capable of meeting its own essential needs and that has a certain organic unity thanks to its internal links and exchanges. Lines of hierarchization run through this space in such a way that it is divided into a center, into secondary regions that are somewhat developed but related to the metropolises, and the subordinate outer margins (Braudel, 1984 [1979]). As Braudel himself summarizes and emphasizes his agreement with Wallerstein (who had also demonstrated the reciprocal need of the different hierarchized spaces for their constitution): "Capitalism is a creation of the world's inequality; in order to develop, it needs the complicity of the international economy. It is the child of the authoritarian organization of an evidently exorbitant space" (Braudel, 1994 [1985]: 100). We cannot take time here to carefully examine the theoretical differences between the two authors. In a nutshell: Braudel contends that different world-economies have existed throughout history, while Wallerstein argues that there has been no other world-system but the capitalist one, starting in the sixteenth century. See Braudel, 1984 [1979], 1994 [1985]; Wallerstein, 2006 [1983], 1998 [1991], 2006 [2004].

<sup>8</sup> In this sense, Peter Burke (1993 [1990]: 46) has pointed out that one of Braudel's novel contributions to contemporary historiography was his foregrounding of the question of space, and the role of communication and technologies in the development of the world-economy.

With respect to this last point, the US sociologist stakes out his position by stating his intention to present “an integrated global reality, examining its expression successively in the economic, political, and ideological-cultural domains” (vii-viii). It is well-known that this last question has been one of the most vexing in the history of social theory. The problem continues to be not so much recognizing the existence of an “integrated global reality” as the ways of understanding the relation among its dimensions.<sup>9</sup> As far as we are concerned, how do we understand the role of communication in this process and its genealogy? Can it be reduced to that of a simple instrument or “reflection”? And the role of concepts and representations of it? And in a different realm: How are interactions produced between the singular and the universal, between the local, the national, and the global?

It is on these questions about the genealogy of the world-space and the contemporary phase of capitalism’s integration that Mattelart erects his notion of *world-communication*. The Belgian author put together his notion of world-communication gradually. He started out thinking about international processes in literal terms, very close to the original sense of the notions of world-economy and world-system, but over time he came up with his own ideas of how the concept related to the field of communication. The first time Mattelart proposed the notion of *world-communication* was in the prologue to *Rethinking Media Theory* (originally published as *Penser les médias* [1986]). Without elaborating on its meaning or scope, he introduced it together with Michèle Mattelart as a syntagm that complemented Braudel’s “world-economy,” to refer to the context in which his work was produced, that is, to the context of a profound political, economic, and cultural reorganization that had communication as one of its vectors.<sup>10</sup> A short time later, in *L’internationale publicitaire* [*The Advertising International*] (1989), Mattelart once again proposed the term to refer to the planetary scope that the inter-

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<sup>9</sup> A similar idea of Braudel’s about the mutual “proximities” and mutual invasions within “complexes” (economic, political, cultural and of social hierarchy) can be read as a more complex framing of the issue compared to the way Wallerstein formulates it (Braudel, 1994 [1985]: 100).

<sup>10</sup> They wrote: “The realities of ‘communication’ have evolved considerably, as shown in the processes of privatization and deregulation of the audio-visual industries and the telecommunication networks, the construction of a ‘world-communication’ system in the context of a ‘world-economy,’ in the Braudelian sense of the term, and the commercialization of sectors (culture, education, health, religion, etc.) that had remained, until then, on the margin of the commercial circuit and that had barely been affected by the law of value. The new communication technologies not only occupy a central place in an industrial challenge, they are at the very heart of the strategies for socially reorganizing the relations between the state and its citizens, producers and consumers, bosses and workers, teachers and those who are taught, the experts and the executives (1987 [1986]: 21).

nationalization of the advertising and marketing system had taken. Thus, he referred to what he saw as a process of “North-Americanization” that had “metabolized,” fused—he took the expression from the French historian Jean Chesneaux—with “world-modernity” (59).<sup>11</sup> What Mattelart was proposing was that in the new worldwide architecture of telematic networks, the United States—and the sociocultural processes that were taking shape there—continued to be decisive for the rest of the world’s national and regional realities, even assuming that each one of them would also undertake, as he affirmed, “its own route of access to world-communication with all the historical weight of its respective institutions.”

It is, finally, in *Mapping World Communication: War, Progress, Culture* (originally published as *La communication-monde. histoire des idées et des stratégies* [1992]) where one can find a fuller and distinctive development of the notion. Mattelart aimed to highlight the links that the deployment of communication networks, the representations of them, and the notions that give them shape have with the internationalization of exchanges and the international division of labor in the constitution of a hierarchized worldwide space. The idea of *world-communication*, which starts to take on its own shape here, draws on some themes that are present in Braudel’s and Wallerstein’s accounts: the framework of the capitalist world-system as an inescapable dimension for analyzing any dimension of the social; the worldwide scope as an inescapable unit of analysis; the relevance given to the role of communication (understood in a general sense as a “mode of exchange of circulation of goods, messages, and persons”) in the constitution of the capitalist world-system; long-duration (“*longue-durée*”) time as a frame of analysis. But, at the same time, the notion of *world-communication* advances issues that Wallerstein and Braudel had not developed—they might have simply fallen outside their immediate interest. Mattelart, from this point on, deploys a framework for understanding the multiple connections that in the constitution of the world-system exist between the emergence of technical designs and communication networks, the configuration of a body of beliefs and images about communication (as a vehicle of progress and planet-wide human connections), and the production of the concepts and doctrines that have it as an object. The reconstruction of these multiple connections, in Mattelart’s view, constitutes one of the ways to make the process of the construction of the world-system intelligible (therein lies his contribution and the uniqueness of his thinking), and at the same time, an

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<sup>11</sup> He was referring to Jean Chesneaux’s book, published that same year, *Modernité-monde* [*World Modernity*], Paris, La Découverte, 1989.

essential condition for an epistemological reflection on knowledge about communication.<sup>12</sup>

One might then think of the world-communication perspective in terms of both continuity and revision of some of the premises of theories of internationalization—and especially of the notion of *cultural imperialism* associated with them—that Mattelart himself had worked on since the 1970s. Systematizing this revision and analyzing the vicissitudes of the concept of cultural imperialism and the contributions and limits of *dependency theory* as a Latin American contribution to social theory, Armand and Michèle Mattelart had revisited, in *Rethinking Media Theory*, some of the critiques that these theories had received due both to their economism and their tendency to minimize the role of “host societies.” It is worth noting—as a way of highlighting the particularity of their subsequent approach—that there the Mattelarts argued that these critical observations could also apply to Wallerstein’s theory of the capitalist world-economy. They contended that “reducing the state to an instrumental status, understanding the state to be an institution”—the Mattelarts were quoting Wallerstein’s *The Capitalist World-Economy*—“created out of nothing that reflects the needs of the social forces that operate in the capitalist world-economy,” leads to a conception of the predominance of the economic dimension, without mediation, that instrumentalizes the political” (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1987 [1986]: 206). Both the approaches inspired by dependency theory and Wallerstein’s world-economy theory suffered, in the Mattelarts’ view, from a “confinement to a political economy that was not alert to political theory and that eschews the analysis of social classes, of power systems, and of the state.” These entities—they insisted—must be understood as “places of mediation and negotiation between social actors, national and local, with divergent interests and projects.”<sup>13</sup> Armand Mattelart

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<sup>12</sup> In this same tenor, he writes in the preface to *Mapping World Communication*: “Reconstructing the genealogy of the world-communication space—a concept adapted from Fernand Braudel’s notion of world-economy—that is what this work sets out to do. The aim is to analyze, using a transversal model, the modalities of the implementation of technologies and networks that, since the nineteenth century, have not stopped running roughshod over the borders of nation-states and, at the same time, demonstrating the relevance of the concepts, doctrines, theories, and controversies that have driven the construction of a field of scientific observation whose object is *international communication*” (Mattelart, 2003 [1992]: 18).

<sup>13</sup> Some years later, in *Mapping World Communication*, Mattelart qualified his critical assessment of the variants of dependency theory. Though he did not stop observing how some economists and historians from this current of thought minimized “the extra-economic and infra-international dimensions,” he now opted to emphasize that these theories gave back “to capitalism its dimension as a historical system, a global system of production and exchange, whose commercial networks create more and more ties, on the one hand,

would then go on to undertake, in *L'internationale publicitaire* (1989) and especially in *Mapping World Communication* (1994 [1992]), long-term research where he would try to put together a genealogy of the multiple instances of mediation in which these ties were established. From this conception, he would gradually configure a unique way of thinking about the world-space that, with a distinctive Gramscian imprint, would foreground the analysis of the function of intellectuals as producers of representations and strategies for managing the social dimension, i.e., as nodes of mediation between different national formations and classes. It was in this key that Mattelart would read the production of representations about communication, but also, well into the twentieth century, the construction of the concepts and scientific theories that produce communication as an object of study.

### *The Gramscian Imprint: Cosmopolitan Intellectuals in the Formation of a Globalized Space*

As we have indicated, in discussing the economistic assumption present in many formulations of *cultural imperialism*, in an early account Mattelart had pointed to the variety of ways the national and international could interact and, consequently, to the need to account for the role of intellectuals and their activity mediating between these levels. Antonio Gramsci, with his notion of hegemony—wrote Mattelart in “Notas al margen del imperialismo cultural” [“Notes at the Margins of Cultural Imperialism”]—had drawn attention to the interplay of local and international relations of force and the action that certain international actors undertook within it through a series of cultural and ideological circuits of transmission (Mattelart, 1978: 10–11).<sup>14</sup>

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between the economic, political, cultural, and scientific spheres, and on the other hand, between the local, national, and transnational levels.” Quoting a fragment of *Le capitalisme historique* [Historical Capitalism], he now recognized Wallerstein’s contribution in suggesting—along the lines of Braudel’s world-economy—“what the concept of world-system has contributed to a reflection on the origins of communication networks” (Mattelart, 2003 [1992]: 252). The polemical interlocutor was clearly no longer the field of theories about the internationalization of capital and what in their nuances was disputed in the realm of strategic differences in the world of the left. On the contrary, in the 1990s the notion of world-communication challenged the mythologies of communication that, in their fascination with technological development, posited and promoted the existence of an “information society” as a recent, spontaneous, and natural phenomenon, and conveyed an egalitarian and globalizing representation of the planet.

<sup>14</sup> On the notions of *hegemony*, *intellectuals*, and *historical bloc* in Gramsci’s thinking, we refer to Gramsci (1993, 2004) and some of his classic commentators: Buci-Gluksmann (1978 [1975]) and Portelli (1997 [1972]).

It could be said that, from then on, Mattelart would offer an original reading of two elements present in Gramsci's reflections: On the one hand, he would place special emphasis on the Italian communist's observation about the *international character* of certain intellectual formations, describing the networks that, especially starting in the nineteenth century, created a space of mediation between the international and the local at a planetary scale. On the other hand, he would include in the category of "organic intellectual" not just the traditional European-style figure (if we may be allowed to play with the terms), such as Benedetto Croce, but also the *new figure of the organic intellectual* that particularly interested Gramsci in his notes on "Americanism and Fordism"—faithful to his historical conception of the status and function of the intellectual—when he described the transformations of North American society in the 1920s and '30s (Gramsci, 2006: 285–322).

With respect to the first point, in *Mapping World Communication*, Mattelart (revisiting his "Notas al margen del imperialismo cultural") wrote that Gramsci's observations in "Analysis of Situations, Relations of Force" raised questions about the role of processes of cultural mediation and mediators in the constitution of the asymmetric framework of interdependence that the world-economy assumed (255–256). By highlighting a series of cultural and ideological transmission circuits, Gramsci had illustrated, Mattelart insisted, the action of a collection of international actors on the configuration of local and international balances of force and spaces of hegemony. Quoting Gramsci, Mattelart wrote:

Religion, for example, has always been a source of these national and international ideological-political combinations, and along with religion, Freemasonry, the Rotary Club [which the Italian theorist considered at the time to be one of the leading networks of Americanism], Jews, career diplomacy, all international formations that suggest political solutions with different historical origins and apply them in certain countries, functioning as an *international political party* that acts in each country and puts all of its concentrated international forces in motion. A religion, Freemasonry, Rotary, Jews, etc., can be included in the category of *intellectuals* whose function, at the international scale, is to act as mediators between the extremes; a function of *socialization* of technical resources that allows the activities of political direction to be wielded in a way that achieves a balance of commitments and finds intermediate ways out between extreme solutions. (In Mattelart, 2003 [1992]: 256; Mattelart's italics)



Gramsci spotlighted the existence of international intellectual formations, underscoring their function of ideological mediation, but also their function as agents for managing and organizing the technical resources that are available in a society. This explains the notion of *international political party* proposed by the Italian communist, for whom, Mattelart recalled, “the term *party* has a much broader meaning than the one used in political science or common usage: It merges with that of *organizer* or that of *organic* intellectual and is inseparable from the concept of hegemony” (Mattelart, 2003 [1992]: 256; Mattelart’s italics). Strictly speaking, with this reading Mattelart was foregrounding an observation that might have gone unnoticed by Gramsci’s readers, because he took the quoted fragments (exactly as his notebooks were edited) from a footnote of his writings. Mattelart concluded that the “axes of Gramsci’s work already suggested doing an analysis of the production of consensus and of the systems of alliance at the international scale,” and of the need to “bear in mind mediations and mediators in the encounter between unique cultures and the world-space” (257).<sup>15</sup>

This issue is related to the second aspect that we highlighted in Mattelart’s reading of Gramsci’s notion of the intellectual. As we have seen, in the late 1970s, Mattelart was making his first observations about Gramsci’s analyses of the rationalization of the US state apparatus in the 1920s and ’30s, showing its possible implications for analyzing the transformation of the apparatuses for the production of hegemony that Europe was undergoing at the time. Mattelart proposed the notion of “Taylorization of the sphere of hegemony” on the basis of his reading of Gramsci’s analyses of Fordism and Americanism, highlighting what in his view the Italian communist’s reflections could illustrate with respect to the way Europe was reorganizing its mode of production of commodities and hegemony (Mattelart and Mattelart, 2003 [1979]: 58; Mattelart, 2010 [1979]: 150–151).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that Gramsci drew attention to the need to investigate what he called the *cosmopolitan function of Italian intellectuals*, understanding that this was a key element for explaining the difficulty in forming the Italian national culture (as opposed, for example, to the national character of the intellectual formations in France at the time of the 1789 revolution). From the existence of the Roman Empire (which had its political-administrative capital in Italy) to the development of the Catholic Church with its Vatican seat in Rome, the historical formation of Italian intellectuals, Gramsci suggests (2004), was marked by cosmopolitanism. “The problem of ‘what are intellectuals’ can be shown in all of its complexity through this investigation” (38), he wrote with respect to this issue.

<sup>16</sup> Gramsci understood Americanism as a new mode of production of goods, but also as a new way of managing society and organizing culture. This is why he argued that the political function was being assumed in the United States by a different kind of intellectual: “Hegemony is born in the factory, and to exercise it, all that is needed is a minimum amount of professional intermediaries of politics and ideology.” All the same, in the 1930s



It might be in *L'internationale publicitaire* (1989) where one can most fully find the unique and productive reading in which Mattelart puts these aspects of Gramsci's thought into play. We are referring on the one hand to his considerations about the role of international intellectual formations in the configuration of hegemony at a planetary scale, and, on the other, to his observations about the new status that organic intellectuals were assuming in this stage of the "Taylorization of hegemony." In this book, Mattelart traces the history of advertising agencies and networks, and the multiple forms taken by their growing intersection with communication media, in a context where, in his view, the dictates of advertising were being consolidated as the rule of cultural production. Mattelart's thesis was that the scope of advertising (*lo pubblicitario*) (after a first stage of internationalization of its networks under US dominance following World War II) had changed: Since the late 1970s, advertising companies had expanded their activities to become "communication and management service" providers for companies and states. Advertising thus went beyond the scope of information and the traditional campaign, becoming a mode of communication and social management: a standard of organization of cultural production, of the work processes within companies, or within the political management of the public sphere. Advertising agencies born in the US were the beachheads of this process. Their networks—which Mattelart methodically describes, including the continuities and discontinuities that marked their origin, development, and transformations—contributed to tightening the ties between culture and society. The institutions of what he called the "advertising international" thus assumed a function that was at the same time economic organization and political direction: Together with the finance sector, with which they had been intertwined since the 1980s, these agencies represented genuine "advance guards of the process of market globalization" (1989: 116).

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this process was just getting underway, and "no superstructural blossoming" had yet taken place, he wrote, "except perhaps sporadically" (Gramsci, 2006: 291–292). Christine Buci-Glucksmann drew attention in France to the currency of these Gramscian intuitions for the European situation in the 1970s. She interpreted that in Gramsci's conception of Americanism, hegemony did not separate the factory from society, and it had to do with absolutely all modes of life: The infrastructure dominated the superstructure in the most direct way, and thus presupposed a new type of intellectual. Buci-Glucksmann (1978 [1975]: 111) concluded: "Gramsci's modernity and contemporaneity are clear because he sees, in this type of development, that monopoly capitalism has made the exercise of ideologies the order of the day." In Armand Mattelart's works since the late 1980s, this invitation to consider Antonio Gramsci's observations about Americanism and Fordism is a constant (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1987 [1986]: 88–91, 1987: 83; Mattelart 2003 [1992]: 123–125; 1995 [1994]: 337, among others).

It is no coincidence that Mattelart described his history of the networks that made up the advertising international as “a book that is also a book about intellectuals.” Of course, he immediately clarified that he was not referring to intellectuals as “they were defined not long ago by the exercise of the critical function, but to these new mediators of knowledge and know-how who make this industry and this institution work” (24). *L'internationale publicitaire* was thus the genealogy of the constitution of a type of international intellectual formation, which performed a key function at a time when, as Mattelart put it, the world was witnessing the global consolidation of a “new regime of truth” that was shifting from the welfare state and public service as the organizational axes of the social to “the company, the private sector, and the free play of market forces,” as “new ways of managing relations among people, new ways of wielding power” (20).

Having reached this point, we should clarify two issues. First of all, the analysis of the tendencies toward the configuration of a world-space does not imply in Mattelart's position the existence of a necessary, homogenous process of global subsumption under a single economic or cultural pattern, but a development made of contradictions, a process that is always open and unfinished.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, and in relation to the first issue, the role of these intellectual formations is not reduced to executing pre-existing processes, as if these could be carried out according to their own immanent economic logic. On the contrary, as in Gramsci's conception, for Mattelart the role of intellectuals as mediators is productive, active; to put it another way, intellectual formations participate through their mediation in the configuration of these tendencies and movements of the real. Thus, the importance of analyzing them to understand the complexities of the relations between economics, culture, and society and to make sense of the tendencies and movements that drive their development. This issue is thus related to another central

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<sup>17</sup> In *L'internationale publicitaire*, Mattelart was categorical when he affirmed that “within the alchemy of the relations of economic and cultural forces, these transplants of modernity, through the mediation of new sales techniques, have often given rise to contradictory processes in which adhesion, collusion, rejection, mimicry, and more or less critical appropriations of outside contributions commingle. Pending is an exhaustive and detailed study of this intricate operation, this permanent coming and going of unequal exchanges” (60). In the same tenor, in *Mapping World Communication* he lamented the fact that this need to take into account mediations and mediators, already present in the Gramscian program, had nonetheless been “smothered by polarizations that would lead to seeing *blocs* where there was diversity, a smooth surface where there were cracks, a first-degree equation where there was cultural complexity, a one-way street where there was circularity” (257).

aspect of his intellectual vision, linked to the role of the *imaginaries* in the construction of world-communication.

### *The Imaginaries of World-Communication (on the Trail of Walter Benjamin)*

“The link between economic rationality and political and cultural rationality: *This impossible question* has obsessed the contemporary history of critical theories of communication since the beginning,” observed Armand and Michèle Mattelart in *Le carnaval des images. la fiction brésilienne* [*The Carnival of Images: Brazilian Television Fiction*] (1987, quoting from the 1988 Spanish edition), as they offered an assessment of the debates between the political economy of communication and the approaches linked to the study of its role in ideological reproduction (75; italics mine). What were they referring to when they spoke of an impossible articulation between these two rationalities? Could this formulation be read as a shift on the part of the authors with respect to the problem posed by Armand Mattelart himself regarding the critique of the political economy of communication? Something of the sort was at play in the Mattelarts’ considerations of one of the fundamental questions that had run through all the variants of critical theory since it emerged. “The accusations of economism or idealism that political economy and discursive analysis lob at each other cannot conceal the issues that are left in suspense by one or the other of the two great traditions,” they stated. What were these omissions? On one side and the other, the Mattelarts concluded, “there appears the difficulty of *positing the imaginary as an active and essential dimension of all social practice*, which gives the impression that the analyses stop at the point in which new questions arise” (76; italics mine).

The identification of this gap related to the imaginary as an active and essential dimension of all social practice in critical theories of communication allows us to address another of the cores of the genealogical undertaking that Mattelart would deploy in his trilogy about *world-communication*. From then on, he would devote his efforts to tracing the important milestones of the production of an image of modernity where images and ideas of communication would occupy a leading place as a utopia of universal human connection. Mattelart would integrate this analysis of the *imaginary of communication* into the study of the formation of the spaces of international intellectual mediation that we have analyzed.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> It should be mentioned here that Mattelart has not made explicit his theoretical concep-

We will elaborate further on one of the most interesting and representative examples of this articulation that Mattelart proposes between the analysis of the imaginary (of communication) and the function of intellectuals, to which he devotes several pages and chapters of *Mapping World Communication* (2003 [1992]: 55–61) and *The Invention of Communication* (1995 [1994]: 113–169). He focuses specifically on the reconstruction and analysis, following the trail blazed by Walter Benjamin in his writings about Paris as the “capital of the nineteenth century,” of those grand events that were the world’s fairs and that were held around the world between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. These encounters, with their “temples of steel and glass,” veritable spaces of international mediation, put into circulation the exhibition of technological advances—with communication technologies occupying a prominent place—together with utopian representations that accompanied them at every possible opportunity and that linked them to the progress of humankind. But these events were also occasions that contributed to configuring an international space that produced and accelerated the globalization of cultural and commodity exchanges. As Mattelart shows in his painstaking work of documentation, a prominent role was played in all the world’s fairs by a series of political-cultural mediators. Such is the case, for example, of the Parisian fairs: The earlier versions boasted the collaboration of figures such as Michel Chevalier, a former member of the mythical Saint-Simon school, a veritable intellectual vanguard at the service of the design of ideas and strategies of world-communication. As we will argue, the concern with asking questions about the place of these figures of mediation, these cosmopolitan intellectuals who produced different groupings and associations of a national and international character, that is, structures of organization and connection for a world space under construction, is then articulated with another key element of Mattelart’s genealogical project: the historical study of the emergence and multiple forms of circulation and appropriation of these representations and imaginaries of communication as a constitutive utopia of modernity. Within the framework of this genealogical project, Mattelart would follow the trail of Walter Benjamin, especially his observations about the world’s fairs as a favored place for apprehending the emergence of certain

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tion of the *imaginary* and he only barely defines it, as we have quoted, as an “active and essential dimension of social practice.” For a conceptualization along these lines, the reader is referred to Cornelius Castoriadis (1999 [1975]) and Bronislaw Baczko (1984), among others. For these authors, the social and radical imaginaries are founding dimensions of the social.

characteristic representations of modernity. If the German philosopher had drawn attention to the roles the world's fairs played in creating a certain story that made technology an effective and unlimited vehicle of progress, then the genealogy that Mattelart was proposing would elaborate on one of its particular areas of content: The "communicational utopia," as a promise of establishing a "universal human connection" through technological mediation, had the world's fairs as one of its main avatars.<sup>19</sup>

In effect, Mattelart demonstrates over the course of the *world-communication trilogy* how, riding the development of the techniques and networks of communication that were exhibited and even tested within their confines, the world's fairs became a space where the symbolism of progress was multiplied, and the harmonious coexistence of peoples was trumpeted. Each new techno-communicational invention exhibited there (the railway, the telegraph, the telephone) offered a chance to renew the promise of redemption. "The World's Fair shares with the communication network the same imaginary, the same search for a lost paradise of human community and communion. They both reinforced and comforted one another in the construction of the myth of this transparent universal connection" (1995 [1994]: 155).<sup>20</sup> This communitarian utopia that aimed for the reconciliation of social antagonisms was closely related to the "coming together of the peoples," and this, to the representation of a kind of material unity of the human species. Something of this can be read in the promotion made in the official publication of the 1867 World's Fair that Mattelart (1995 [1994]: 154) quoted directly from the compilation that Benjamin had made in his collection about the arcades: "To walk around this palace, circular like the equator, is literally to take a turn around the world; they have come from all the peoples: The enemies live in peace, one next to the other." In the spatial design of the fair, with its structures of glass and steel, with its international

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<sup>19</sup> About the way Benjamin traced the emergence of certain modern "phantasmagorias" regarding commodities and technology at the world fairs, see Benjamin (1999) and, among others, the classic reading put forward by Susan Buck-Morss (1995 [1989], 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Some precursors of this imaginary involved the same actors. Mattelart (1995 [1994]: 113) observes that, around the middle of the eighteenth century, the appearance of the railroad had introduced in France the figure of the network as the first formulation of a redeeming ideology of communication. Communication networks were seen as creating a new universal connection. Mattelart shows how the utopian ideal of an egalitarian society, proclaimed by Saint-Simon, was transformed among his followers, including Michel Chevalier, into a principle for reorganizing society in a France that was undergoing its shift into an industrial society (157). It comes as no surprise, then, when we find that Chevalier was one of the main organizers of the World's Fair held in Paris in 1867: With responsibility for publishing the official reports of the fair, he was effectively in charge of designing its philosophy.

stands, a particular image was staged of that which, given the multiplication of communication networks and commercial exchanges, was being materialized at a planetary scale. This image invoked the constitution of a space—to a point that it was considered transparent—that was represented as within the grasp of one's hand. In short, Mattelart followed Benjamin's intuition about how the image of a universal human connection implicit in the utopia of progress was also closely linked to the image of a humanity united by worldwide interconnection. The new scenario of international exchanges celebrated in the exhibitions of the world's fairs modified "profoundly the images and beliefs of the globe and, at the same time, the lived realities of national/international relation" (Mattelart, 2003 [1992]: 59).

We can return, then, to the idea we have been developing around the existence in Mattelart's historical approach of a connection between the production of representations and imaginaries about modernity and the configuration of spaces of mediation, of an international network of political and cultural exchange. Its genealogy shows how, in addition to configuring and amplifying an imaginary of progress and universal community, what was promoted within the framework of the fairs was an exchange network that cut across fields of knowledge and spheres of social activity that consolidated a space of international mediation. With the fairs, Mattelart concludes (2003 [1992]), "There appear, progressively, new forms of circulating knowledge, new synergies between savants and industrialists, new modalities of interdisciplinarity, new types of relations between science and art, industry and art" (80).<sup>21</sup> In this reconstruction and analysis of the world's fairs, one can read the way Mattelart connects the study of the emergence and role of the

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<sup>21</sup> In this sense Mattelart reconstructs how in the context of imperial expansion and of a dual hegemony in the world-system (if London was the center of the world-economy and occupied world hegemony over communication routes and technical communication networks, Paris purported to dictate the standard of legitimate culture at the planetary level) the formula "world's fair" was multiplied in cities around the planet, including in several countries on the periphery (even as the presence of stands from Latin American countries grew at Paris fairs). He also reviews how the fairs were spaces that helped to configure a national and international scientific community that, among other issues, gradually negotiated the adoption of legal and technical standards with international validity or, through the associated congresses, created the first institutions in charge of regulating international exchange of information flows, such as the Universal Telegraph Union (1865) or the Universal Postal Union (1878). The fairs were likewise a space where a wide variety of cultural and scientific societies from around the world agreed on the description of the state of the art of their disciplines, giving rise to the birth of certain specialized, national, and international publications. Mattelart (1995 [1994]: 161, 295) refers, for example, to the creation of networks that were consolidated in the 1880s, dealing with legal issues, or with the development of criminal anthropology; the latter held its second international congress at the Paris World's Fair of 1889.

social imaginary to the mediation and management activities carried out by intellectuals under the aegis of international cultural formations and institutions. This topic can then be projected as a reading guide for following the vicissitudes of his genealogy of world-communication throughout his trilogy.

### *A Genealogy of Knowledge and Disciplines: Communication as a Geopolitical Effect and Strategy*

The promotion and celebration of harmony and concord among peoples and classes that is manifested in the world's fairs takes on its full meaning when it is contrasted, as proposed in Susan Buck-Morss's (1995 [1989]) analysis of Walter Benjamin's so-called "Arcades Project," with the proximity of each one of these events with the great social upheavals occurring in Europe and the United States between 1848 and 1939. We place emphasis on this point because, in the long-duration history that Mattelart puts forth, this adjacency between social crises and the expansion of technological utopias is shown to be a constant of modernity that continues through the end of the twentieth century. Their close relationship reveals something to us about the prism with which Mattelart scrutinizes certain milestones of the socio-historical configuration of *world-communication*: Far from being an imposition from the powers that be or some autonomous economic rationality, this configuration was a result of and a particular response to the different crises that capitalist modernity underwent starting in the nineteenth century. To put it another way: Their occurrence is the product of the way in which the techniques for managing the multitudes were intertwined with the struggles and resistances that these multitudes put up, in a kind of cross-pollination.

It is in this key that one must read Mattelart's proposed history of communication disciplines, as part of his genealogy of world-communication. In his view, the representations and social imaginaries related to communication are interwoven with the production of the scientific notions and theories that name them. In this way, unlike any history of the theories that would place them in a succession of internal dialogues, as if their development followed an internal logic and centered on national spaces, Mattelart's proposed genealogy makes an unflagging effort to shed light on the multiple ties that were woven between the development and circulation of the knowledge, objects, and concepts of social theory and communication thought, and the responses to the great upheavals of the twentieth century—from the Russian Revolution to the crisis of the 1930s, through the Third World insurgencies



of the postwar era and the structural crisis of the 1970s. From this premise, Mattelart organizes his historical inquiry, analyzes the formations and institutions where the concepts, knowledge, and tools of communication are produced at a global scale, and reviews their geopolitical implications and effects.

His epistemological program, which assumes that in this complex of discourses, practices, and power relations, the objects of knowledge are produced, and regimes of truth are activated, thus bears a Foucauldian imprint. This can be traced in the preface to *Mapping World Communication*, when Mattelart (2003 [1992]) affirms that communication “serves, in the first place, for waging war,” and that this grim origin was precisely the “blind spot of thinking about communication” (18).<sup>22</sup> Mattelart would set himself the task, then, throughout the book, of painstakingly reconstructing (with examples ranging from the emergence of the telegraph to photography, from the appearances of the notions of information and communication within the framework of the doctrines of psychological warfare deployed in the First World War to the notions of communication for development produced in the Cold War) how “war and its logic are essential components of the history of international communication, of its doctrines and its theories, as well as the uses to which they have been put” (18). And war, of course, would also serve as his model for thinking about the apparent “moments of peace,” i.e., the production of regimes of truth aimed at governing and managing crises. “The history of international communication and of its representations,” wrote Mattelart, “is the history of the ties that have been established between *war*, *progress*, and *culture*, the trajectory of their successive readjustments, of their flows and refluxes” (18). The long history of world-communication as a socio-historical entity that he proposes is also, therefore, the history of the theories and doctrines that participate in its configuration: from the emergence of mass communication theories in a North America shaken by the crisis of the 1930s and the birth of Fordism, to the theories about the

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<sup>22</sup> As you might recall, for Foucault scientific discourse is cut out of and autonomized from a *discursive formation* that is larger than it and contains it. In this space of discourses, practices, and power relations, objects of knowledge are produced, and *regimes of truth* are activated. The French philosopher drew on Nietzsche’s thinking and took the model of war to think about history, understanding invasion to be the inaugural event of societies. Thus, in opposition to the philosophical-legal conception of the contract, Foucault’s historical-political conception subverts the terms of the relations between force and truth. The Foucauldian genealogy, in short, “sheds light on the way power relations activate rules of law through the production of truth discourses. This is what sociologists call ‘legitimacy’ and Foucault calls knowledge-power mechanisms and truth policies” (Abraham, in Foucault, 1996 [1976]: 8). See also Foucault (1999 [1969], 1992 [1970], 1986).



“information society” and its emergence in the context of the crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s. Perhaps his greatest contribution to thinking about communication lies in the way he situates these knowledge-power relations in a space of international scope.

### *Coda on the “Repères” and the Effects of the International Circulation of Ideas*

The research findings that Mattelart compiled in his large-scale books and that took the notion of *world-communication* as their axis also came to be known through small-scale works that he wrote for teaching purposes and scientific dissemination. Between the mid-1990s and the middle of the following decade, he published five titles in the “Repères” collection (in English *repère* means “landmark,” “reference point”) for La Découverte publishing house and one in “Que sais-je?” a traditional collection of dissemination put out by Presses Universitaires de France (PUF).<sup>23</sup> Most of the works had a number of printings and reached quite a broad audience. In France alone, for example, *Rethinking Media Theory* [*Penser les médias*] had four printings and by 2011 had reached a total of 25,000 copies sold. *Histoire de la société de l’information* [*History of the Information Society*], for its part, reached 15,000.

While this type of essay-writing must be seen at first glance as a marketing strategy (which points to a certain level of academic institutionalization and expansion of communication studies and the elevation of Mattelart’s profile in France), at the same time it can be read as an intellectual intervention that proposed a historical approach to counter the apologetic discourses about the “information society” and so-called globalization, in vogue at the time. This template characterized Mattelart’s overall trajectory, permeated by a pedagogical vocation and by his inclination toward writing that sought to be accessible for broader audiences than the rarefied circle of specialized readers: a type of intervention that—clearly in very different conditions of production—had something in common with what motivated the authors

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<sup>23</sup> Mattelart wrote five books especially for the “Repères” collection: *La publicité* [Advertising] (2000 [1990]), *Histoire des théories de la communication* [Theories of Communication: A Short Introduction] (1997 [1995], with Michèle Mattelart), *Histoire de la société de l’information* [History of the Information Society] (2002 [2001]), *Introduction aux cultural studies* [Introduction to Cultural Studies] (2004 [2003], with Erik Neveau), *Diversité culturelle et mondialisation* [Cultural Diversity and Globalization] (2006 [2005]). For the collection “Que sais-je?” published by PUF, he wrote *La mondialisation de la communication* [Networking the World, 1794-2000] (1998 [1996]). In all of these cases, we also provide the dates of their Spanish translations.

of *How to Read Donald Duck* when they announced their aim to reach mass audiences and make communication with the reader more effective. Mattelart never abandoned this facet in his intellectual period in the 1980s. At that time, as we have seen, it took the shape of his diligent work as editor.

The fact that these were works of popularization does not imply that in these texts the author fails to offer an original discussion of the topic in question or daring to take critical positions. We will look at one example. The introductory work about British Cultural Studies that Mattelart wrote together with Erik Neveau makes interesting contributions to communication and culture studies. Since British literature on cultural theory was mostly unknown in France (with a few exceptions such as Pierre Bourdieu or Jean-Claude Passeron, who pushed for the translation of Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* in 1970), Mattelart and Neveau (2004 [2003]) set out to, among other objectives, introduce France to some authors and debates from the English-speaking world; they attributed the absence and ignorance of certain aspects of English cultural theory to the long-standing "provincialism" of the French academic world.<sup>24</sup> The authors not only took a stance about what they considered to be the loss of critical potential that had characterized the moment of emergence of British Cultural Studies; they also proposed a series of elements for studying these shifts. One prominent example, along the lines of the premises of *world-communication*, was the analysis of the logics that organize international academic exchange: The existence of a kind of global academic market had an impact on the conditions of production and circulation of contemporary cultural studies and explained in part its inability to gain traction, its depoliticization, its fragmentation, and its loss of critical potential.

Shedding light on the characteristics of the publications that Mattelart made in the collections "Repères" and "Que sais-je?" (with all that these popularized formats entail in terms of constraints on writing style and development of argumentation) from the perspective of the analysis of the social conditions of the international circulation of ideas, illuminates certain gray areas in the reading of his trajectory in Latin America. As in the case of the mythical *How to Read Donald Duck*, these collections—to paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu—circulated in Spanish shorn of their context of production.

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<sup>24</sup> In her overview of this situation, Diana Cooper-Richet (2008) highlights Mattelart's role in introducing authors and references from the British theoretical tradition into France (though she does not mention Mattelart and Neveau's critical stance with respect to the subsequent reworking of cultural studies), and she proposes, as we have seen, considering his figure as a *passeur* or "cultural mediator."

Mattelart's works of popularization—which paradoxically were published in Spanish in their entirety—circulated with no reference to the “paratextual” treatment given to the editions that in their origin and conception were texts for teaching, for popularizing, and if you will, for sparking controversy. This “stated purpose” was clear to see in the paratextual trappings of the original editions. In addition, these are publications that have a carefully constructed identity, and their specificity is widely recognized in its original field of circulation. It could be that, since no distinction was made in Latin America between his popularizing work and his heftier books, this situation contributed to a kind of minimization, or an effect of thematic “reiteration,” when Mattelart's entire opus was considered. It stands to reason that this omission played a role in one of the many “misunderstandings” (in the sense that Bourdieu gives to the word when he refers to the discrepancies of meaning that inevitably occur in every process of the international circulation of ideas, given the unstated difference between the field of production and reception) that arose in Latin America with respect to the reading of Armand Mattelart's work and intellectual itinerary. This situation also contributed somehow—together with what we have discussed at the beginning of this book—to the fact that as of today no overall assessment of his trajectory has been made in communication studies on the continent, in particular no systematization or interpretation of his most recent contributions to the discipline, and that, on the contrary, only a partial and fragmented reading has been done of his work.

# Final Words

## *Overdue and Partial Recognition*

Having secured a certain institutional stability, Armand Mattelart undertook an ambitious historical research project starting with *Rethinking Media Theory* (1986), giving shape to his *world-communication* trilogy (*Mapping World Communication*, 1992; *The Invention of Communication*, 1994; *Histoire de l'utopie planétaire* [*History of Global Utopia*], 1999). This voluminous work earned him a certain recognition from his academic colleagues, but it was relative and a bit overdue (in 1986 Mattelart turned 50).

One indicator of this qualified recognition was the invitation to collaborate, together with Michèle, on the *Dictionnaire critique de la communication* [*Critical Dictionary of Communication*] that Lucien Sfez coordinated and published for Presses Universitaires de France (PUF) in 1993. At once an ambitious endeavor and a clear manifestation of the disciplinary consolidation and of the persistence of an encyclopedic tradition in French universities, the *Dictionnaire critique de la communication* was a massive, two-volume work of over a thousand pages that included entries by more than three hundred specialists from several countries. In spite of their intellectual heft, Armand and Michèle Mattelart's participation in the project was marginal: They wrote only one entry on the links between "communication and crisis" in a work that published multiple contributions by other authors (in Sfez, 1993: 1011–1015). As we have seen, Armand Mattelart did not see eye-to-eye with Lucien Sfez on theoretical questions.

Another indicator of a certain recognition could be seen in the reviews—mostly favorable—of the books Mattelart published starting in the early 1990s, which appeared in the leading journals of information science and communication studies, such as *Réseaux* (founded by Patrice Flichy in

1983) and *Hermes* (founded and directed by Dominique Wolton in 1988, and published from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique [National Center for Scientific Research, or CNRS, in its French acronym]).<sup>1</sup> In the same sense, it is important to note that Mattelart was quoted as one of the most relevant figures in a number of studies—many of them written by leading figures in the field—that reconstructed the history of information and communication science in France. These assessments started to proliferate in the 1990s, a typical manifestation of a process of disciplinary consolidation and institutionalization that sought to shore up the field's epistemological traditions and external visibility.<sup>2</sup> In this same way one can read the multiple interviews that different specialized journals devoted to Mattelart, who offered his testimony and vision of information and communication science.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in 2010, Mattelart published through the La Découverte publishing house a long autobiographical interview with the Canadian researcher Michel Sénécal, *Pour un regard-monde* [*For a Global View*] (Mattelart, 2010).<sup>4</sup>

So, while his colleagues from the French field of information and communication science did offer him some recognition, we must note that, as he worked far from the leading institutions of the university hierarchy and the high-status disciplines, Mattelart occupies a somewhat peripheral position within the French academic and intellectual field as a whole. The constancy of his critical approach and his relation to Marxism (though heterodox and less pronounced, it never stopped being close) in a context where the tradition was losing legitimacy and a series of cultural institutions and formations of the French left were crumbling, helps to explain the marginalization and the overdue, relative recognition of his stature. Furthermore, it must be remembered that in an academic and intellectual field that was being reorganized by the pressure of the mass media, which had become

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<sup>1</sup> See, among other reviews of Mattelart's book, Palmer (1992), Pailliar (1994), Soulez (1996).

<sup>2</sup> See, among other assessments, Flichy (1980), Boure (1997), Miège (2000), Meyrat and Miège (2002).

<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest is his interview by the journal *Dossiers de l'audiovisuel* (journal of the National Audio-Visual Institute) in the issue devoted to the history of information and communication science in France. There Mattelart was questioned about his role in producing the Mattelart-Stourdé report (Pineau and Taynoud, 1999). On the same topic he was interviewed by the journal *MEI, Médiation & Information* (Lancien and Thonon, 2001). More recently, Michael Palmer conducted a long interview with him about his intellectual itinerary in the journal *Le Temps des médias* (Palmer, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> In one review of the book, Loïc Ballarini, of the University of Paris 8, described Mattelart as one of the indispensable figures of communication studies in France (Ballarini, 2010).

key actors in the process by which the intellectual word circulated and was legitimized (Bourdieu, 1997; Champagne, 2007), Mattelart was mostly reluctant to appear in the leading print and audio-visual media, except for his sporadic contributions to *Le Monde diplomatique*,<sup>5</sup> a non-specialized journal that fell far short of having mass appeal. This aspect of Mattelart's intellectual trajectory (as it relates to the changes in the conditions in which his words and image circulate) should be read in the light of the profound mutations that the intellectual world and left-wing culture underwent in France in the last quarter of the twentieth century and that are reflected in the twists and turns of Mattelart's own itinerary.

### Openings

The perspective that guided this research brought us up against a conundrum: the apparent paradox that comes from stating the need to study the collective nature of knowledge production processes and the positioning and social function of its leading producers and disseminators, while at the same time underscoring the uniqueness of Mattelart's intellectual profile and his contribution to thinking about society and communication. This is evidently one of the constitutive tensions of intellectual history and the sociology of culture. Thus, we have tried to avoid the risks of a biographical emphasis—which reduces historical density to a matter of “great men”—but also the risks that come with an approach that plays down the subjective dimension, thereby ruling out the possibility of understanding the active role of subjects in social processes. Feeling pulled in these two opposite directions, we have followed a route that has allowed us to address certain matters that we consider relevant.

First of all, it would be possible and desirable for this book to be read as a contribution to an emerging and still underdeveloped intellectual history of communication studies in Latin America. In fact, in order to follow the thread of Mattelart's itinerary, we have explored aspects and perspectives that have received little attention so far in the field. Here we hope to have dug deeper than the general superficialities that historians tend to mention when referring to contexts; our intention has been to identify the specific dynamics where, at the confluence of academic, cultural and political practices, knowledge about communication burst onto the scene in the 1960s and '70s.

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<sup>5</sup> This positioning contrasts, for example, with that of Dominique Wolton, who had a larger public presence, or that of the “mediologist” Régis Debray, whose intellectual visibility was bolstered by the considerable symbolic capital he accumulated in his political career.

In this sense, the history of communication studies on the continent is shown to be a fruitful field for undertaking research at the place where intellectual history and the sociology of culture cross paths: The moment in which the field emerged is rich ground for studying the way knowledge about the social is produced in *spaces of multiple cross-linkings*, or in other words, the way a space of knowledge emerges out of a heterogeneity of discourses and social practices from which it is then delimited and becomes autonomous as a discipline, very often papering over the processes that gave rise to it. In parallel with this epistemological question, or, to be more precise, intersecting with it, the figure of Mattelart has allowed us to demonstrate how the history of communication studies in Latin America is an extraordinary place to study the ways the emergence of the “communication question” in the 1960s and ’70s expressed, just as Gramsci (2009) wrote about the emergence of the “language question” in Italy, more general socio-political processes—in the words of the Italian communist, “the formation and growth of a ruling class, the reorganization of a cultural hegemony” (265).

Along these lines, we have explored—by contrasting certain aspects of Mattelart’s intellectual itinerary we have highlighted with the way he was read retrospectively—the forms that the construction of a *selective tradition* took in Latin American communication studies, and more generally, the consolidation of a legitimized version of the past that made a partial interpretation of the tensions between intellectuals, culture, and politics on the continent in the 1960s and ’70s. A convergent effect of the close of one political era and the reorganization of the academic-intellectual field that accompanied it, this selective tradition left a mark on the assessments of the social sciences of the previous period, contributing to the consolidation of an academic and intellectual generation and to the formation of a new cultural hegemony starting in the 1980s.

As a counterweight to this tradition, the figure of Mattelart is productive for arguing that, far from being a kind of obstacle to the production of knowledge or implying the subsumption of a purported autonomy (to be sure, defined in very different ways), the link between political practices, the production of specific knowledge, and intellectual intervention allowed an intense cultural matrix to be formed. This matrix served to generate novel questions, leading to the configuration of a problematic and a field that revolved around the phenomena of communication and culture, which broadened the horizons of Marxist debate and of the social sciences. This not only made possible the emergence of Latin American communication studies; it also gave the field its distinctive mark. Mattelart’s political-cultural

practice promoted, at the same time, contacts among emerging social subjects, which greatly impacted the development and shifts of the continent's cultural field.

On another level, we have maintained that Mattelart's experience in the *Chilean laboratory* helped to forge a multi-faceted and cosmopolitan intellectual profile, and a theoretical position that left its marks, after Mattelart's exile, on the cultural field, on the world of politics, and on communication studies in France. In this sense, another of this study's lines of argument has allowed us—from the perspective of inquiring into the social conditions of the international circulation of ideas—to foreground his role as a cultural mediator or go-between, shedding light on a flow of influence from the periphery to the center. This was an exceptional type of flow, little explored in the history of the international circulation of ideas in Latin America. Nevertheless, we have been able to read in Mattelart's theoretical positions an ongoing concern with generating an *interface* between Latin American and European thinking, all the while keeping a healthy distance from both *Eurocentrism* and Latin American *localism* or *exceptionalism* (to be sure, both tendencies can be detected on either side of the Atlantic). In this sense, the metaphor of *translation* that we have used in some sections of the book to characterize the figure and intellectual activity of Mattelart is useful as long as it is understood not in a mechanical sense, i.e., as an activity of transposing texts or theories into different temporal or national realities, but as an exercise in thinking that tries (and this is how Mattelart explicitly proposed it as an intellectual program in the early 1980s) to produce something new by combining the analysis of the *general* (the tendency toward homogenization inherent in the process of internationalization and subsumption of communication and culture under the sphere of value) with the *specific* (the particular form that this process takes in each national social formation based on the conflicts that its very development generates). For this, Mattelart called for an indispensable trek through theoretical work that, in his view, would lead to the production of new syntheses and inquiries, and help to establish differences and similarities among historical processes. Indeed, the translation metaphor refers not only to theoretical activity but also to political-cultural praxis. In the different editorial endeavors that Mattelart took part in, from *Comunicación y Cultura* to *Communication and Class Struggle* (even if they were not at the center of his activity and were not part of a continuous project sustained over time), oriented to different publics and languages, one can read and synthesize a program of intervention that extends across all his life and intellectual practice. It was characterized by



an indefatigable effort to promote emergent networks and cultural formations, to link subjects, heterogeneous social spaces, and different national realities. It is in this key that the metaphor of the *intellectual as translator*, which we have used in several sections of this book, is meant to be read.<sup>6</sup>

As for his theoretical and epistemological positions, we have argued that in Mattelart's thinking, one can read a productive and unique way of understanding contemporary social organization through the critique of communication and culture. At a time when, in the context of new communicative and socio-political configurations in the social sciences and especially in Latin American communication studies, there is renewed interest (after many years of "culturalist" hegemony) in the so-called political economy of communication and culture, reviewing Mattelart's theoretical position on the *critique of the political economy of communication* could contribute to a reconsideration and a more complex framing of the ways of constructing an object that is often defined on the basis of empiricist and economic assumptions. In addition, by pointing out Mattelart's own continuities and shifts with respect to this critical position, we have spotlighted the uniqueness of his perspective built around the notion of *world-communication*, insofar as it promotes a history of the representations, notions, and doctrines about communication that, using a long-duration approach that takes the world-system as the unit of analysis, is situated at the intersection of epistemological critique and the study of the ways hegemony is produced. Therein lies its potential and novelty as an epistemological and theoretical-political contribution for analyzing both contemporary social formations and the production of specific knowledge about communication.

In conclusion, what defines the uniqueness of Armand Mattelart's life praxis must be sought in his irreducibility to one national reality or to one disciplinary field. His intellectual intervention and his thinking have developed at the intersection of multiple national spaces and diverse spheres of social activity; the theoretical issues that he has addressed and the intellectual networks and connections that he has helped forge are thus embedded in a world-space. By situating his theoretical-political stances in conditions of production of intellectual life that are very different from our own, we have tried to head off a possible effect of romantic *enchantment* associated with the person; at the same time, by highlighting his exceptionality, we are also

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<sup>6</sup> Martín Cortés has analyzed the figure of José Aricó as an *intellectual-translator* and drawn attention to Antonio Gramsci's notes about the translatability of scientific and philosophical languages (Cortés, 2010; Gramsci, 2008 [1984]: 72-80). These texts provided some of my inspiration for interpreting this dimension of Mattelart's trajectory.

striving—along the lines of the *defamiliarization* of the Russian formalists—to question our own intellectual praxis and distinguish what this itinerary can tell us about our present.

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## *Interviews and Correspondence*

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