FROM THE CHILEAN LABORATORY TO WORLD-COMMUNICATION

ARMAND MATTELART'S INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY

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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.[1] *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

[1] 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.[2] 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.[3] 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

[2] 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]).

[3] 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 worshiping 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).[4]

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.[5]

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

[4] 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.

[5] 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).[6] 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

[6] 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 strategies* (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.[7] 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.[8] 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.

[7] 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].

[8] 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.[9] 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.[10] 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-

[9] 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).

[10] 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).[11] 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 strategies* [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

[11] 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.[12]

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."[13] Armand Mattelart

[12] 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 works 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).

[13] 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 one 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). [14]

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.

[14] 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 imperialism 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).[15]

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).[16]

[15] 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.

[16] 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 publicitario*) (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.[17] 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

[17] 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 Carnaval 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. [18]

[18] 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

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. [19]

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). [20] 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

[19] 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).

[20] 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).[21] 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

[21] 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).[22] 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

[22] 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).[23] 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

[23] Mattelart wrote five books especially for the "Repéres" 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.[24] 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.

[24] 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.