Introduction

Michèle Mattelart is a French sociologist who does research in communications and mass culture and teaches at the University of Paris VIII. She is co-author of the recently published International Image Markets: In Search of an Alternative Perspective, written with Armand Mattelart and Xavier Delcourt, and published by the Comedia Publishing Group, London, 1984. Mattelart lived and worked for many years in Latin America, particularly in Chile, where she was a programer at the national television network during the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. It was during those years that she associated Armand Mattelart and Ariel Dorfman published the well-known *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. Michèle Mattelart's publications include books and articles on women's magazines, television, photo-novellas and feminism and culture in Latin America. In July 1980 she was part of the French government's delegation to UNESCO's international conference on culture held in Mexico City. Mattelart has also worked on many governmental agency projects, including one Güelten García Martínez initiated in France called Intonatones, whose mandate it is to raise questions about the internationalization of culture.

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Cultural Economy

In Question!

The implementation of a cultural policy linked to a reindustrialization strategy goes a new acuteness to the question of the "American Program" and of the "Americanization of production". The presence of a television system is rising through a serious production crisis: the development of a video products market, the launching of a fourth television channel, the inauguration of satellite direct broadcasting and the beginning of an active policy in favour of 'cable' — all of these are creating an urgent need to foresee new contents and to encourage innovation not only in technical uses, but on the part of viewers themselves. The implementation of this conscious communications policy raises the problem of programs and services. What can be put into these new containers?

The few debates — too few — which this question raises are haunted inevitably by the fear that the creation of new channels will open fantastic possibilities for invasion by North American programs. The precedents offered by countries which have deregulated their television systems would be sufficient to legitimate this fear. France's situation today is no doubt extraordinary in this respect. What is less so is the possibility, since the arrival to power of a socialist government in May 1981, for the debate to get somewhere. The jubilation demonstrated by US industrialists would suffice to justify the fear mentioned above, in a recent issue of *Computer World* the satisfaction over the multiplication of networks and channels in Europe — a multiplication which implies many possible sources for the diffusion of cultural American products — was clearly expressed. 'It's good for us.' Our worry is no less than the reverse side of this interest.

This forced reference to the threat of a tidal wave of North American production clarifies what is at stake inasmuch as it evokes the influence of technical, financial and cultural determinisms which weigh heavily on a policy of communication. The North American program thus becomes the symbol of the mass-media model which the logic of the development of capital tends to implant and generalize. These stakes can be summed up by the following questions: Will it open the way to the construction of a national industry of programs which, when responding to new needs, will not be satisfied with merely copying the transnational model of production represented today by the US? Will it stimulate the search for new alternatives, original means of production and diffusion? What will be the ratio between the budget for equipment and the budget for creation? How can one combine industrial logic and the social logic of group expression, of a wide base of audio-visual production, of the participation of civil society, in the choice of technologies of communication and in the definitions of their use? Is there an incompatibility between a "local" product which gather the expression of a collectivity, thus allowing to reappropriate its own sounds and images, and the international market? Does an international 'alternative' product as compared to a transnationalized mass culture product exist?

Fascinated, France is witnessing the tidal wave of new technologies. Such TV programs as 'La Pléiade Bleue' ("The Blue Planet") — in which the complete panoply of new technologies was shown to a flabbergasted audience of shepherds in a small village of the Pyrénées — gave proof of this seduction, as does the extraordinarily increasing number of articles dealing with this new "advent" which are published by a euphoric press. We are entering into modernity. Modernity was refused us for many years for reasons which cultural and political anthropology should want to clarify. One only needs to think about the difference between France and other European countries in the matter of audio-visual equipment — TV sets yesterday, video today — which has already placed France at the end of the list of beneficiaries of these products.

If the signs of the technological prospective say "file" in our collective imagination, and if they exert such a fascination, it's not mostly because they reflect what modernity is — par excellence, American modernity? Besides, few media can resist admitting their joy at rejoicing the founding myth. The first country to have written its his
In order to explain the success of tv films of National American serial production, one would be tempted to stick to analysis of their narrative structure, their content—that is to say, to isolate oneself in these tv products in order to find the answer to the questions one has about them.

Doesn’t this tendency hide the very important fact that this television product is the emanation of a particular television system which, in its turn, comes from a historical heritage? It is a system which crystallizes in its mode of organization the characteristics of its genealogy, as well as the role which it has been given in the production and reproduction of the social whole—specifically in comparison to the other apparatuses for socialization and the creation of a ‘general will’.

Economy and culture. It is known that the US, which the mass media system developed from the beginning under the auspices of business, was the first to resolve this equation economy/culture and to turn it into the spearhead for the conquest of markets, thus instilling it as the trademark of universalism. Hence today in the French

d morbidity it exudes. The masses were called upon to be jurors; the same masses and the daily plebs ittey they constitute mobilized to defend the only culture supposed to fit the advanced industrial age. While focusing so much on the attack made against americanophibia and ambients ambition, one thinks one sees a sentence: a kind of programmatic order of the day, which was at the turning point of the Mexican speech before it came to be the heart of the debate on cultural politics: ‘Economy and Culture, the same struggle.’ The debate has been activated not only by the arrival of new technologies. These key words speak the real place of the challenge. This challenge is endowed with a particular meaning in a country such as France which, up to now, has always been preoccupied with the thought of associating so bluntly these two terms and realities. Mairaux’s words, ‘Cinema is an art, but it is also an industry’ anticipated this realism, but in any case—was it because of the times, because of the personality or was it because it was about cinema—his words did not seem to be understood at all because the way culture was thought in France.

The ministerial changes which took place in March 1983 shortly after the colloquium of intellectuals—‘the international of the imaginary’ as it is has been called—established the return to a more orthodox notion of effectiveness. Economists were called back to the seats of power and culture was pushed back.

One could foresee that things were not going to be simple. It is not in vain that the shadow of Dallas hovers over any meeting where the future of culture is being discussed. Dallas: ready-made emblem of a cultural production which must be anarchasymetrical. This is it. This is the indifference which we do not want. (It goes without saying that cultural indifference is meant, since in Dallas no one is broke!) But even in the Sorbonne some were excommunicating Dallas, others were signing contracts which would renew the programming of this series in France. (TF1 had just purchased 23 epistles.) Just when the American writer Susan Sontag was asserting that ‘American culture does not have the influence they say it has’, the great majority of television audiences the world over were getting ready to enjoy that Saturday evening, as well as on other Saturdays, J.R.’s new Machiavellian plots and Sue Ellen’s new torments, all of which keep on priming the private time success of the series. Such is one of the incoherences to be mentioned, one of the contradictions to be analyzed, because it simply points to the reaction of the consumer to the present by the binomial economy/culture.

Could The Universal Be Confused

With The Commercial?

The following conversation with Michele Mattiar took place July 8, 1983, with Judy Sedait, Rosenay Desgranges, Peter Festa and Alexander Wilson. Translated by the Peter Festa
France will be filled with US programs. Look at the situation in Italy since TV (and radio) were deregulated, and the rapid emergence of private networks and cable. There are apparently more than 600 private stations in Italy, which in many cases are more successful than the state stations. Twenty-four hours a day, these stations show US-produced programming. This has forced the Rai (Italian national) to try to increase and refine what it itself produces. This is the route of most of our national programming—so we are tied to the flight of capital, from Italy, and we look at the way of making these new demands on us. Obviously the Rai is being forced to respond to a dynamic caught off by the private channels. In the older supply and demand relationship of TV programming by switching to a programming system based entirely on distribution, and that to foreign programs and series.

It is there a positive aspect to the pressures (US) internationalization of culture, particularly on television programs? PPM: Let us be very careful when we speak of internationalization. Only some programs are internationalized. We do not have a France complete picture of American TV production. Even the largest commercial or network programs and production companies can produce programs for specific minor- group and cultures in the US. There are no the programs which are internationalized. We must be very clear that the bias is not only a negative one. The phenomenon of internationalization requires a selection of US TV production, but Americans themselves can watch on their screens programs which correspond closely to a culture which is the same cyber culture and cultural minority. Nor should we expect, PPM, and it is certainly not what these programs are exported. Nor should we place the value of what a program says on the screen, we know that.

Given these qualifications, let me give you an example of the potential dimension of internationalization. In the so-called local television, for instance, we might try to create the image of a US culture program, a program and a distribution, indeed even licensing, in his book The Alternative, the East German Rudolph Behrens states that we today only talk, it is a national news— copy breed from the West— that the East German intellectuals learned of the debates among western European community parties in Europe, for instance, that they were able to link up with groups in West Germany.

It must be recognized that mass culture has developed within a specific class society—that of liberal democracy. Democratization is an important component of mass culture, democratization in the shaping of and access to cultural products, and even some sense as the content of these products.

PPM: How can we begin to think of an alternative to American TV in our market? PPM: What is it that turns us over forever? Our present civicization of our reaction to this technological explosion lies in our failure to question the underlying assumptions about communication. TV is always judged, for instance, in terms of entertainment; it is monitored by producers. The relationship between production and consumption itself is never questioned. What I would propose is that we begin to look at communication itself as it were and not at its form—this new form of communication is for us the form of television, which for us is the form of television which stems from the idea of modernity—this new teleology will come to rought, unless we examine why we continue to develop the means of mass communication, even if not looking at communications media as a means of communication, as the possibility for communication.

Juneau says CBC can’t afford to drop U.S. shows

OTTAWA (CP) — The CBC cannot afford to replace its popular U.S. television programs with more expensive Canadian productions, CBC president Pierre Juneau says.

"You can buy an American program, one hour, for $35,000, $40,000, $45,000, $50,000," he said yesterday at an interview on the CBC's morning show, "The Current.

"If we produce them in Canada, we can manage to produce them at a lower cost, but it's still much more than the cost, of buying an American program off the shelf.

"The CBC, for those purely economic reasons, "can’t afford to replace them," he said.

But the network will continue to try to satisfy Canadian demand for quality programs, he said, adding: "The CBC is looking at seeing things." Charlie Croft's War and Gender Report was among programs he noted.

"We’ve had for all those programs, more or less, for most of the American programs we put on," he said.

"These are real things that generate one part of the community, the other part of the community, and still another part of the community," he said.

"I think we must bridge these diversities, and we can do that."
It has been evident for a long time that there is a developing crisis in Canadian television, and the reasons for this crisis have been amply evident. According to the Canada television system (now available to about 75 percent of the Canadian population), and used in a wide range of markets, the Canadian audience is the most fragmented in the world. In the larger cities, viewers may have a dozen or more choices to choose from to watch television. Canadian commercial networks and the public broadcasting service. ABS. Ironically, the new commercial networks which have been licensed over the years have added to the flow of American material. This, by some weight of numbers, American programs dominate Canadian screens and Canadian viewing. In the fall season last year, nearly two thirds of all the television programs available in English Canada were of foreign—mainly American—origins. And English-speaking viewers see as a whole, nearly 70 percent of their viewing time watching these foreign programs. In the case of children, the proportion is even higher—83 percent.

Even French-speaking Canadians, in spite of the apparent protection of language, spend 46 percent of their viewing time watching foreign programs. Some in translation on French channels, others on English Canadian stations or direct to the U.S. by cable. For French-speaking children, the figure is 86 percent.

We are being caught up in a rapidly expanding communication technology, with attractive new opportunities for the hardware side of broadcasting—satellite-to-satellite distribution, pay television, fiber optics, cheaper earth stations, videocassette and video systems in the home, the evolution of the family computer. It sets into a kind of computer-terminal-with-access to a whole range of information and entertainment. And at the same time, the nature of the events—if it is not contended—will be for these new distribution systems to bring Canadian and even wider interests of foreign material. American movies, American television, American sporting events.

Unfortunately the events of 1978-79 did not bode well for the resolution of the crisis. The budget forecast of the CBC for 1979-80 was cut by 177 million; the cable companies, while still pressing for pay tv. showed little sign of being willing to contribute to the production of more and better Canadian programming and for Canadian broadcasters; and private television stations and networks did little to contribute to an increase in the range and quality of Canadian production.


or rather from the impression of reality; it also and mostly draws it from its relationships with other images, within a corpus which transcends them. This immense dialogue among images creates effects of exchange, and of intertextuality, whereby images maintain a system of intertextuality through reference to each other.

When Z. Brzezinski says, "the US is the society which best exemplifies the result of the artificial order," he is not only unaware of the potential meaning of his own sentence. The flow of images of American series constantly reinforces the memory of the North American system and thus consciously nourishes the imaginary which this industry of the image shapes.

There is in fact in the US image-industry today a development which is little different from a conscious management of the imaginary, particularly since it stimulates the memory of genres, of the gestures, of the cliches of the culture of the United States. It is made as a real digest of the adventure genre. Dallas situates itself at the confluence of the western, the soap operas and the family saga. In its time, Sesame Street understood perfectly the benefit to be derived from this reprieve of all the daily productions made to children's imaginary by television. It organized stimuli which would ensure the dramatic effect of its educational objectives. It incorporated all the genres and forms which each culture has been accustomed to among children: cartoons, puppets, sketches, comedies, series, commercials. The novelty, in this first industrial production on education, was to do precisely in the way it organized around a pedagogical model the synergy of all these genres, and the resources of this immense bank of images.

It is in the present process of concentration within the industry itself had as a counterpart a process of concentration on the symbolic level. The use of derived products and the multi-media techniques are upon a very important movement: the popular tv film refers back to the successful film; the toy or the record constantly reawakens a chain of meaning, definitively blurring the division between infrastructure/superstructure in an immense syndrome of repetition.

Need I mention that, aside from the new Japanese cartoon industry, the only industrial-cultural complex to possess the base for re-energizing the symbolic universe in the distribution network of goods and ideas? one? The new industry of microcomputers and video games happily dips into this huge stockpile. The French television channels have not been slow to reproduce this mechanism. A suggestive remark was made in Cannes by a New York television director about the opening of the American market to foreign products, including the French: The French must be willing to exploit every advantage and must remember a few essential points: they should study the American market which they want to conquer, propose a time and a finished product: avoid dubbing and subtitles, and prefer a version done directly in English: respect the length of the American program (22 1/2 and 48 1/2 minutes) while taking into account the time for commercials which have to be inserted."

As noted by a critic in Cahiers du Cinéma who was recapitulating a ten-year retrospective of tv in the US (an exhibit held at Beaoung, December 1981): "Obviousley, competition is tough and the finger of the tv viewer is fast on the knob. Every 45 seconds, the documentary changes its point of view. There is a fascinating quantitative study to be done concerning the number of changes in axis or place in American programs. I am sure that with all products taken together, one would get to a UTBB (base units of television time) of 45 minutes. This is approximately 45 seconds. Could it be said that North American television production crystallizes in its generally the law of competition?"

The era of the spectacular is no doubt the main cultural instance of technological society. In our recent study of the Sesame Street series, we noticed how much the rhythm of commercial time was felt. This series—it has been underlined enough—remains one of the few instances where the institutionality of mass culture was taught in order to attempt to remedy what its founders deemed to be the commercial mediocrity of this culture, the levelling effect it has. It is not only the configuration of cultural forms, however, that they had to make use of the laws of this culture and to utilize advertising as an appeal to new pedagogical messages—aimed in priority, let's not forget, at the development of the sense of the social and the economic values placed in disadvantageous position in the school system. Speaking of this era of spectracality, we wrote: "It is not only the refusal to the technical system which characterizes Sesame Street; it is the propensity to re-inject into the pedagogical field all the stimuli of the universe of consumption, all its normative circulation, all the categories and the necessary registers of childhood. Exploiting the seduction of rhythm, of diversity, Sesame Street mostly works by calling upon the huge stock of signs of the universe of the consumer culture, stimulating the in
The need for such funding varies from the continuing metamorphosis of the environment in which programs are produced. The new technology is becoming a significant aid to programming services, not just in Canada but around the world. This transformation of the visual broadcast medium will result in a continually growing and voracious demand for new programming to fill the multiplicity of channels that have to be produced. This hunger for new content represents an enormous opportunity for Canadian program producers. But, in order to compete effectively in these new markets, not just in our own domestic market, Canadian program producers must have the resources to produce creative, high-quality Canadian programs in both official languages and of international caliber—Canadian programming that people will choose to watch.

Towards a New National Broadening Policy
Department of Communications
Government of Canada

Culture As a Planetary Regulator

There may be a tendency to stick too closely to the consideration of the importance of the American mass-media as an industrial vector. It has in fact been a fantastic nation builder. The United States were very early faced with the emergency to create universal rallying signs in order to answer to the composite nature of its population, made up of immigrants from various races and ethnic groups. This urgency has haunted them since the Civil War and the mass-media culture offers an answer. First the comic, then the western, but the situation was already not: for example, like Kojak or Dallas have strongly contributed to amalgamating this national society. It is too often forgotten that the first effort toward amalgamation has the national society itself as a target. The first test, in fact, of the universal values of American programs (as well as that of their profitability) takes place within the limits of the national territory. They await the verdict of the national public, suitably mixed and representative. Said verdict will become the guarantee of universality.

The Italian filmmaker Roberto Rossellini evokes a mechanism which is complementary to the series when he judges that 'the success of a telefilm is to be attributed in the first place to the specificity of the product which contains in itself its own promotional campaign: each "episode" creates in the viewer the desire to find again and to recognize once more the search for novelty, but the confirmation of a habit, from the programming schedule to a narrative scheme, to the repetition of characters and actions. And it is precisely this multiplicity itself that mechanically each week.' (From the same commer-

editor's note: Readers wishing to find sources for quotations indicated in the text are advised to consult the full version of the book in question. Unfortunately, no direct quotations were provided in the first (here reformatted) translation issued in Urbana. We have taken the liberty of our own location to replace this sentence with an American version where it seemed appropriate; we respect the understanding.