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Department of Romance Languages and Literatures Harvard University
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Editor

Carlo Tognato

Series Editor in Chief

José Luis Falconi

Editorial Management

Art Life Lab, LLC. (Miami and Boston) www.artlifelaboratory.com

For Art Life Lab:

Artistic Directors

Santiago Montoya and José Luis Falconi

Editorial Manager and Visual Dossier Research

Laura Oliveros Sánchez

Design

Arturo Higa Taira (Lima, Perú) (www.sputnik.pe)

and Natalia Gómez (Ciudad de México, México) (www.miheladodevanilla.com)

Color Separation

Alejandra Bonilla

Translation

Lisa Crossman, Amanda Gokee, Cydney Gottlieb

Copyeditors

Lisa Crossman, Baird Campbell, Bronte Velez, Amanda Gokee, Cydney Gottlieb, Madelyn Stroik, Lina Cepero

Printer

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of Antanas Mockus**

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Edited by Carlo Tognato

Distributed by
Harvard University Press

To my dear father, Mario
To my beloved daughter, Martina

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Acknowledgements

In October 2008, Doris Sommer came to Bogotá to participate in a symposium entitled “Cultural Agency, Aesthetics, and Politics,” organized by the Center for Social Studies at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (National University of Colombia), the Banco de la República (Central Bank of Colombia), and Corpovisionarios. (Corpovisionarios is the think-tank Antanas Mockus founded after the end of his second term as mayor of Bogotá to generate ideas in support of his later attempts to run as a presidential candidate and to channel his expertise into consulting). The Cultural Affairs Department of the Central Bank of Colombia is the most important cultural institution in the country. Its director, Ángela Pérez, former Associate Professor of Latin American Literature and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Brandeis University, has been supportive of the work of Doris Sommer and the Cultural Agents Initiative at Harvard University. Francisco Ortega, then Associate Professor of History and member of the Center for Social Studies at the National University of Colombia, helped establish the link between Doris Sommer and a group of the Center’s faculty members who participated in the event and some of whom later contributed to this book. Ortega had worked with Sommer at Harvard as a postdoctoral fellow before taking his position as Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

During the symposium, Doris floated the idea of publishing a book about Antanas Mockus in the *Cultural Agents Series*, published by Harvard University Press. One month later, I visited the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale, of which I am a Faculty Fellow, and made it to Cambridge to discuss the idea with her and José Luis Falconi, the editor of the series. We then realized our mutual interest in finding ways to collaborate more closely.

In the winter and spring of 2009, I brought together an initial group of contributors to the book project with the idea of meeting again one year later with the preliminary versions of our chapters. I would like to express my special thanks to Enrique Chaux and Andrea Bustamante for submitting their piece in 2010 and even greater thanks to them for holding on throughout the long incubation period of this project.

In 2010 the Faculty of Human Sciences at the National University of Colombia launched its Doctoral Program in Human and Social Sciences. At that point, I thought that building a concentration on “Cultural Agents” within the program would allow us to institutionalize our collaboration with the Cultural Agents Initiative. Paolo Vignolo, one of the contributors to this book, enthusiastically welcomed the idea and since then has been a driving force within that concentration. Over the years, various doctoral students from the National University of Colombia and from Harvard have visited one another’s institutions, and in 2012-2013, Paolo Vignolo spent a year at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies as the Santo Domingo Visiting Scholar. Meanwhile, in 2011 I left Colombia for Australia—I thought back then for good—and Paolo took up the entire coordination of the concentration on Cultural Agents within the Doctoral Program.

In April 2013 I returned to Bogotá. At the beginning of 2014, one last chapter came in, but we were still five chapters short regarding my initial design of the book. We contacted another group of contributors, which added another year to this venture. Meanwhile, the Faculty of Human Sciences at the National University of Colombia offered its institutional support for this project, as well as some financial support and a pledge of further backing for the Spanish edition of this book.

Throughout this incredibly long process, the project—and more generally Cultural Agents–Bogotá—has faced numerous challenges. Some critics of Antanas Mockus interpreted this book venture as a sophisticated operation in favor of a Colombian politician. Skeptics about North-South collaborations, for their part, politely reminded us that structural asymmetries would prevent local contributors from making their voices heard and questioned the possibility for Cultural Agents–Bogotá to be anything but a colonial outpost of Cultural Agents–Cambridge.

Pessimists about Colombian political culture, in turn, insisted that complex critical mediations have become impossible within such an extraordinarily polarized public sphere as that in Colombia; there would be hardly any way out of the opposition between friends and enemies. Scouting for valuable insights on both sides simultaneously or between them, as a result, might ultimately look suspicious and might turn out to be socially harmful.

At this point, I am confident that we managed to keep the promises we made at the beginning of this venture to ourselves, to the people who supported us, and also to our critics who observed us from afar. We took their concerns very much to heart from the beginning to the end. At the same time, we also recognized that in spite of their criticism, their skepticism, and their pessimism, all of us shared an irreducible hope that independent scholarship is possible in and from Colombia, that structural determinations are not perfectly tight, and that actors in the South *and* in the North may still stumble into some wiggle room, if they give up their reciprocal comfort zones and take the risk of looking for it. Finally, we acknowledged that all of us might have come to the realization that, in order to move the Colombian public sphere out of its current pragmatics of civil war and polarization into a new pragmatics of peace, one cannot avoid exposing oneself to the reactions and retaliations of those who may find criticism or unobvious mediations simply unbearable. In this sense, an expression drawn from Mockus's imaginative vocabulary, *dar papaya* (exposing one's own flank to possible attacks), is definitely pertinent. To authentically show one's own intentions and build trust, one needs to expose oneself to potential attacks, and risk whatever outcomes may arise.

This project capitalized on a broad range of resources that its participants, both those appearing in this book and those who have supported it from the outside, brought to it: a good deal of intellectual integrity, some audacity, a lot of patience, and a flinch of stubbornness. The broader institutional framework that ties Cultural Agents-Cambridge with Cultural Agents-Bogotá at the National University, the existence of a plurality of visions and styles within and between both, and the impossibility of composing all of them into a coherent whole (either because we did not mean to or because we lacked the time and resources to do so or both), may also have played a role in the successful completion of this project.

It is inevitable for a venture that has lasted more than six years to accumulate a debt of gratitude to a long list of people. Apart from the authors that appear in this book, I would like to thank a number of colleagues who took part in it at different stages: Terry Clark, Guillermo Hoyos, Amparo Vega, and Fernando Viviescas.

Although their contributions do not appear in this book, they added richly to our exchanges, and I am grateful to them for generously contributing to this project.

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Sebastián Cuellar assisted in the editorial process, transcribed three of the four interviews, and contributed together with Harvard's Julia Morse Leitner and with Cathy Girvin to the translation of different parts of this book. Sebastián, Cathy, and Javier Sáenz Obregón helped in translating Jesús Martín-Barbero's essay while Julia helped with those of Carlos Augusto Hernández and with Lucas Ospina. Sebastián also helped with the translation of the first three interviews. María Alejandra Ochoa transcribed Elster's interview, and Dennis Garzón provided her editorial assistance at a later stage for the interviews with Bromberg, Londoño, and Sánchez. I would like to express my thanks to all of them for volunteering to support this project. Finally, Patricia Simonson did a great job with the translation, in record time, of Antanas Mockus's "Conclusion."

Arturo Higa did a remarkable job with the graphic conception and the design of the book. Laura Oliveros, in turn, provided competent research assistance in the preparation of *Part Two*.

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Elaborating on the framework that ultimately brought together the contributions that appear in this book and finding a viable narrative for the argument that I make in the "Introduction" have been anything but a linear process. I am particularly grateful to José Luis Falconi, whose encouragement at a critical juncture was

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crucial to make this happen. Working with him has been indeed refreshing. His generosity throughout the editorial process has been simply unique.

I elaborated my introduction, which marked a flex-point in my conception of this entire project, as I was accompanying my father, Mario, in Turin, through a particularly painful stage of his cancer. I dedicate this book to him and to all the unforgettable moments we shared throughout our lives as well as to my sweet daughter, Martina, hoping that one day she will be able to say the same about me.