

building. In short, these include: (1) the presence of a 'clear development strategy'; (2) the capability to import technology ('branch-plants are better than no plants'); (3) the presence of 'synergy' between players; (4) the presence of 'long-term vision' to develop the region; (5) the identification of 'sources of innovation'; (6) the early establishment of networks ('mechanisms and channels for information to flow'); (7) appropriate distances of regions from core industrial centres; (8) the need for selectivity in 'longer-distance strategies' (that is, it may be necessary to focus on more appropriate areas that suit technopole development rather than use a 'scatter-shot strategy' that is politically acceptable but 'fails to build up momentum anywhere'); (9) 'major central inducements' (government funding); (10) capacity to 'identify new niches' (that is, a region is able to penetrate and capitalise on niche markets); (11) the presence of 'protective mechanisms' that will 'insulate the project, for a long period, against premature accusations of failure'; and finally (12) recognition that evaluation of regional development according to the 'most rigorous exclusive criteria' may overlook the possibility of other 'useful fall-out effects' (pp. 248–50).

The authors outline their intent in the opening paragraphs of their work as a desire 'to bring together in one descriptive–analytic account, the most important ventures in constructing technopoles worldwide' (p. 2). In the main, they follow truly to their course and although some may consider the work more descriptive than analytical there are valuable insights to be gleaned from the work. The authors handle the multi-disciplinary nature of their topic well, moving between economics, history, sociology, planning, business and geography with commendable adroitness. They explore weighty contemporary issues and do well to illuminate an area often subject to considerable verbiage but little enlightenment. Overall, the work is an important, readable and valuable contribution to the literature on high technology and regional development. It is well worth examining if the reader's interests lie in this direction.

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The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal

Vincent Mosco

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The book is dedicated to students and so it is not unreasonable for students to ask: 'what does political economy have to do with communication?' In this book, Mosco responds to the question by offering a guide to political economy and how it can be used to study the media and communication.¹

From classical to postmodern theorists, Mosco takes on 'an inclusive, open, and non-reductionist perspective' into the study of the political economy of communication. While touching on various theoretical viewpoints, Mosco, nonetheless, provides some practical applications of the field.

The book is divided into two parts. In Part I, Mosco maps the political economy of communication and adopts a 'historical, descriptive and critical' approach. He starts off with the question 'What is Political Economy?' and defines it in terms of power relations between the production, distribution and consumption of resources. He proceeds on with a discussion of its central characteristics—social change and history, social totality, moral

philosophy and social praxis—and criticizes mainstream economics for its lack of concern for important elements that characterize societies such as their values, ideology and culture. A comparison of various schools of thought is made from the radical Marxian perspective to the feminist as well as environmental political economy with Mosco acknowledging a 'discipline in ferment, if not [in] crisis'.

Specific to the political economy of communication, Mosco traces its developments and achievements in North America, Great Britain and Europe, as well as in the 'Third World'. He identifies the broad social forces that have shaped the development of the field such as the transformation of the media from small family-owned enterprises to big conglomerates transcending time and space; the changing role of state from producer, distributor, consumer to regulator of communication and information resources; and the call for a New International Economic Order (NIEO)/New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) to bridge the resource gap between the North and the South. He gives credence to the distinguished scholars who have contributed to its intellectual growth, depth, and diversity, particularly recognizing the significant influences of Dallas Smythe and Herbert Schiller in North America; James Halloran, Karl Nordenstreng, Graham Murdock, Peter Golding and Armand Mattelart in Great Britain and Europe, as well as Paulo Freire and Luis Beltran in Latin America and Morris-Suzuki in Asia. With this effort, Mosco has undertaken a monumental task of lumping in one book an international collection of some four generations of scholarly work!

In Part II, Mosco goes into rethinking and renewing the political economy of communication using the concepts of commodification, spatialization and structuration as entry points. On the 'commodity form' in communication, Mosco notes the transformation from use to exchange values of media content, audience, and process. Another of Mosco's books, *The Pay-per Society: Computers and Communication in the Information Age* also discusses this trend.² He elucidates on the decreasing spatial distance between and among the factors of production with the increasing integration of national economies into a global political economy marked by strategic alliances, corporate partnerships and interlocking directorates not to mention the expanding regional and multilateral trade agreements. And with the changing configurations in current political and economic relations, so do social structures change resulting from a hegemonic struggle between social classes incorporating race and gender as well as people's movements.

Possibly another entry point to the study of the political economy of communication is 'mythologization'. Mosco thoroughly discusses this notion in his article 'The Mythology of Telecommunications Deregulation'.³ Indeed, with the perceived success of telecommunications deregulation in developed countries such as the US, UK and Japan, a number of countries have followed suit leading to the widespread belief that 'it is good'. Hence, there has been rampant privatization as well as liberalization of telecommunications services.

With the information economy increasingly being run by private corporations, the extensive capitalist influence in the media, communication and information systems cannot be denied. Further, with the incursion of transnational capital into the nation-states, the state has been ascribed to be an instrument of the capitalist class. And with the increasing concentration of media ownership and operations as well as control of information by powerful capitalist elites, this only further reinforces the thinking that global capitalism may inevitably rule the world! Indeed, in this information society, the 'rule of the game' is whoever has the information has the power.

In conclusion, Mosco proposes to build a political economy of communication that 'starts from a realist, inclusive and critical epistemology; takes an ontological stance

that warrants the ubiquity of social process and social change; and develops a substantive position built on the entry processes of commodification, spatialization, and structuration'. Challenging the disciplines at its borders, Mosco relates the study of political economy to policy studies and cultural studies. While acknowledging that both disciplines have 'excellent maps, analyses, and critiques', he argues that political economy rooted in the concept of class power as a tool of analysis offers a more central approach to the study of communication.

Mosco's approach reflects a Marxian analysis into the political economy of communication. With the fall of communism, one would think that a Marxian perspective would be obsolete by now. But it does live on and from an alternative viewpoint, a Marxist vision of capitalism controlling the world may indeed have some justifications. Just observe the widespread materialist messages in the print, broadcast and electronic media—they project so much commercialism and consumerism, particularly in the advertisements, that reflect so much capitalist representations of what people should desire and acquire creating the so-called 'false needs'.

Of course, this does not mean to say that everything that comes out from the media now is garbage. For example, recently a four-part television mini-series *The Uncertain Eye* consistently documented the conflict between those who wanted to use the media to inform and those who wanted to use it to entertain with the latter, more often than not, winning over the former. The final part of the television series entitled 'The Medium is the Market' caps the message: that anything that rates goes into the 'boob tube'.

The book thus offers a rich source of insights for students and practitioners alike to reflect as well as act on the evolving political economy of communication in their own terms. What Mosco offers is a guide to the many debates and approaches to the field. Admittedly, there is no single approach to the study of communication, but a political economic analysis, grounded on realism and power as a unifying factor, provides a well-rounded approach to the study of the continuing challenges in the field. Quoting Raymond Williams, 'What can be contributed is not resolution but perhaps, at times, just that extra edge of consciousness'.

Altogether, Mosco advocates a holistic and interdisciplinary approach integrating the disciplines of sociology, political science and economics, underscoring the importance of society, state and economy to better understand the political economy of communication. Mosco presents an excellent account of the dynamics within the political economy of communication and provides ample reference materials for further reading. A novice may find the book 'heavy reading' and indeed it is! Nonetheless, Mosco steers the discussion in such an organized and methodical manner with useful restatements of the main points in each chapter. To better appreciate the book, one must read, re-read, and read further to grapple with the intricacies of such a multifaceted field.

Notes and References

1. Professor Vincent Mosco received his Ph.D. in Sociology at Harvard University. He currently teaches at the School of Journalism and Communication of Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.
2. Vincent Mosco, *The Pay-per Society: Computers and Communication in the Information Age: Essays in Critical Theory and Public Policy*, Garamond Press, Toronto, 1989.
3. Vincent Mosco, 'The mythology of telecommunications deregulation', *Journal of Communication*, 40, 1, 1990, pp. 36-49.

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