

Estabrooks, M.F. and Lamarche, R.H., eds. (1987)
*Telecommunications : A Strategic Perspective on Regional and
Business Development*. Moncton : The Canadian Institute for
Research on Regional Development. Xi x 225 p.

Ronald F. Abler

Volume 33, Number 89, 1989

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/022047ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/022047ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (print)

1708-8968 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Abler, R. F. (1989). Review of [Estabrooks, M.F. and Lamarche, R.H., eds. (1987) *Telecommunications : A Strategic Perspective on Regional and Business Development*. Moncton : The Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development. Xi x 225 p.] *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 33(89), 291–292.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/022047ar>

One would certainly like to see more information on how regional planning ideologies influenced CIDA's development of projects in the region. Certainly there is no doubt that these ideologies had considerable impact on the development of projects in Indonesia.

The other Third World studies are drawn from Botswana and Haiti. Luthi's excellent analysis shows how the uneven distribution of water resources in Botswana creates the need for developing an inter-regional water system. As a result of studies of the needs it is made clear that real costs will be lowest if inter-regional integration of water systems is carried out, which would be greatly aided by government encouragement of regional development in the northern part of the country.

The final section of the book presents a succinct summary of the case studies and a conclusion by the editors. While they do not use the term «state», it is clear that the delicate balance of power that exists between the Federal and Provincial governments in Canada, compared to the much greater coercive powers of the State in developing countries, is the key to understanding why «[R]egional planning plays a more vital role in developing countries than in Canada» (p. 324). One might add that the different phases of incorporation into a world trading system are also important elements in this comparison.

This is a well-edited and interesting volume of papers which bridges the gap between researchers and policymakers. It is a valuable addition to the literature on regional development in Canada and the Third World.

T. G. McGEE
University of British Columbia

ESTABROOKS, M.F. and LAMARCHE, R.H., eds. (1987) *Telecommunications: A Strategic Perspective on Regional and Business Development*. Moncton: The Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development. xi × 225 p.

This volume consists of papers presented by academics, government officials, and private entrepreneurs at a November 1986 conference. The Foreword and Introduction are in English and in French; all other chapters are in English only. The fifteen chapters are arranged into four sections.

«Historical, Technological and Socio-Cultural Perspectives» (Section 1) contains five chapters on interrelationships among telecommunications technologies, regulatory policies, and Canadian and other societies. Of special interest are Gilles Paquet's speculations regarding the *dematerialization* and *detritorialization* of economic processes in information socio-economies; transactions are the basic units of economic analysis and people jockey to control the forum where information is exchanged. The dark side of such societies receives attention: Rodney Dobell notes that information technology makes nations vulnerable to overseas competition and that technology itself is no guarantee of development or growth.

Section II (Telecommunications and Urban and Regional Development) opens with Lamarche's information model of regional development. «Cities that set up their own telematic networks will be able to provide information network support to their businesses but cities without them could lose an important segment of their economy to either the national centres or to other regional centres» (p. 102). Subsequent chapters contend that telecommunications will favor prosperous core regions at the expense of less-favored peripheries (Andrew Gillespie and Mark Hepworth), and that an emerging set of world «city-states» are more closely linked to each other than an to their home nations (Mitchell Moss). Gerhard Hanneman describes teleports — an infrastructure feature upon which the global network economy depends.

The section (III) on «Telecommunications and International Development» contains chapters by Bjorn Wellenius on Third World development and by Peter Cowhey on international trade.

Wellenius proposes more investment in telecommunications infrastructure in lagging economies and Cowhey describes how telecommunications deregulation affects international trade in information and telecommunications services.

The first of three chapters devoted to « Telecommunications and Business Development » (Section IV), by Manley Irwin, shows how firms use telecommunications networks as strategic assets, creating unusual lines of business in the process : General Motors is now also a telephone company. Ian Angus offers further examples of how telecommunications technologies are changing industry structures, and Thomas Watts examines the interplay of multinational corporate strategy and national telecommunications policies. James Grant's chapter on telecommunications and banking concludes the volume.

The book is non-technical, but editors and authors assume knowledge of telecommunications technologies and industries. Terms are rarely defined. Indeed, « telecommunications » is never defined. Content suggests that authors and editors use the term for electronic communication media only, not for communication over distance, which would include express and postal services. Most chapters are more conceptual than empirical ; the book is largely devoted to ideas rather than their factual underpinnings. Some chapters are well documented ; others are not.

The purpose of the conference and volume was to update participants and readers on telecommunications and regional and business development. The collection achieves that goal. The papers are original and the density of new ideas is satisfactory. Telecommunications conferences attract humbugs whose speculative capacities exceed their common sense. The editors have excluded any such contributions. This is a balanced assessment of the geographic role of telecommunications in development.

If I have one complaint, it is that too many contributions are rough sketches rather than detailed portraits of the economic and regional structures they outline. Readers will often want to know more than this collection will tell them. Also, rapid policy and technological changes will quickly date many reports, suggesting that similar efforts should be undertaken regularly.

This volume is mandatory for anyone interested in relationships among the telecommunications industries, telecommunications policy, and regional development. It would be useful for courses on communications or telecommunications. Although its subject matter should be included in any economic geography course, the book should be used as a supplementary text in such courses only by instructors well versed in the issues it addresses. The book could be used in a graduate seminar devoted to telecommunications and regional development, where it would provide a base for exploring specific topics.

Entrepreneurs and firms use telecommunications technologies to reshape the corporate and economic landscapes in ways that remain mysterious to most geographers. Government officials are grappling with complicated policy and regulatory questions raised by the restructuring of domestic and international telecommunications industries. Differential employment of telecommunications technologies will be a fundamental determinant of regional fortunes in the decades ahead. This volume is one of the few works to address an inherently geographic topic of great policy, practical, and theoretical importance.

Ronald F. ABLER
Pennsylvania State University