

## Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

**R. ALAN HEDLEY, *Running out of Control: Dilemmas of Globalization*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press. 2002. 201 p., Index.**

Dedicated to our grandchildren's children, *Running out of Control* takes a long term, macro-sociological point of view of the factors stimulating current society to spiral out of control. With the expertise of a seasoned scholar, Hedley succinctly and accurately covers the familiar theoretical ground of development and underdevelopment theories and shows them wanting. He then moves to incorporate the less expected but as important conceptual frameworks of systems theory (e.g., Buckley) and technological development theories (e.g., Ogburn and Ellul). Not content to cover this necessary terrain the fourth chapter contextualizes these concerns with a discussion on the human encroachment on the ecological environment. What is particularly pleasing about all this high level theorizing is that it is presented clearly and concisely, minus the jargon of much contemporary sociology, along with superbly telling empirical illustrations. Any interested lay reader, undergraduate student, or professional sociologist will appreciate the validity of his arguments.

Hedley, a professor of sociology at the University of Victoria, initiated in 1995, as Vice-President of the International Institute of Sociology, the Dialogue Graduate Scholarship Program for Women in Developing Countries. He has published extensively in the areas of technology, social change, and development. His previous book, *Making a Living: Technology and Change*, is a comparative historical analysis of industrialization in the United States, Britain, and Japan. In this most recent writing the author is well situated. The central argument in *Running out of Control* is that through globalization we are quickly approaching the limits to our survival.

The book is divided into 5 chapters. These supporting arguments are consistent and tightly knit together. The first defines the concept of globalization including: the forces (technological, organizational, and individual) and counter forces (regional, cultural, and class). The second looks at theories of social change and levels of measurement. The third and fourth form the core of the argument and examine the issues of human control and relations of power, and our impact on the earth's ecology.

On the question of control, Hedley (p. 111) states: "Because a globalized system of control relies first and foremost upon the worldwide information

and communications infrastructure that supports it, and because there are system dependability problems with this infrastructure such as interdependence, the thesis that the trajectory of **human control is now on a downward course** [emphasis added] cannot be rejected." With regard to our encroachment on the eco-environment he (p. 155-56) concludes: "We now face **one absolute certainty** [emphasis in the original]: there are definite ecological limits to the amount of habitat we can convert entirely for human use, the tons of pollutants we can discharge into the environment, the number of biotic changes we can introduce, and the quantity of natural resource we can exploit. The overwhelming evidence indicates that we are **quickly nearing these limits in terms of our survival as a species**" [emphasis added]. The fifth chapter provides some viable pro-active scenarios to try and identify problems before they occur.

The primary evidence is empirical example ranging from demographic analysis of human population expansion and density, economic analysis of foreign investment and corporate concentration, the unbalance of production and consumption across the north-south divide, the extent of vulnerability in the global communications network, and total human energy use across three time periods: pre-history, at the time of industrialization, and in 1900. Most are chilling. All stimulate the reader's imagination. This book will convince even the most cynical.

A main criticism of this argument—a macro level system historical analysis of society—is well known to most contemporary anthropologists and sociologists. Many (e.g., Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens in sociology) now recognize human behaviour as a complex dialectical outcome, informed by a historically generated and cognitively structured sensibility, or habitus, that both produces and reproduces and is in turn produced and reproduced by a myriad of historically structured social, political, and cultural interactive positions, or fields, across and within concrete time and space. In other words, macro level explanations such as Hedley's must also be relationally tied to micro level interactions. Readers might also be disappointed by the absence of detailed discussion on the particular impact of globalization on women and families.

Having read this book while doing field work with a group of undergraduate students in Mexico, I am convinced of the necessity of informing system analysis with the lifeworld. For those of us blessed with living in the bubbled comfort of core societies, the real experience of poverty and inequality must be felt as well as understood. Hedley's is a fine contribution to the debate on the hazards of globalization. He not only identifies the problems but suggests some solutions. One of these is the need for enlightened self interest.

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