

SECCION INTERNACIONAL

**Local efforts and people participation
in the development of marginal regions**

**A summary of 10 years' research at
the Fribourg Department of Geography**

Walter Leimgruber

Introduction

In recent years, research in development has increasingly been devoted to problems encountered by people in Third World countries. In particular, attention has been paid to the many initiatives taken by the populations themselves, such as summed up in the book by EKINS (1992). Grassroots movements are among the driving forces which promote development on local and regional scales, trying to solve the many social, cultural and economic problems of the populations concerned through the use of their own potential.

However, organized movements alone cannot suffice in this process, because organizations tend to develop rigid structures which may lead to inertia, thereby preventing spontaneous evolution. Institutions may be necessary, but they must be viewed critically as soon as they tend to be more important than the aim they were created for. People's own choice is as important as a formal organization.

The Fribourg Department of Geography has no long tradition in Third World research; however, enthusiasm by young researchers is about to overcome this deficiency, and a new orientation on marginal regions has been built up over the past 10 years. This paper intends to sum up a few results of these efforts and to point the way our research may take in the future. After a few general remarks, it will present individual studies which have made a considerable contribution to our understanding of marginality and marginal regions as well as to the way of getting out of the problems people in the 'South' face increasingly. Let me add that our efforts are not confined to the Third World but will consider development from a broader perspective.

Marginality, development and values

In our research concept, developing countries are allocated to the field of studies in marginal regions. *Marginality* is a concept which holds good for various scales and topics: it can be seen spatially, economically or socially, on the level of the village, of a province, of a country or of the whole world. Thus, the Third World is a marginal part of the global system because it is marginalized both economically and politically; in addition, there are also nationally marginal regions, because the areas in need of development are not to be found in the core of capitals and large cities but rather in the urban periphery and in the countryside.

So far, the global scale has hardly been touched upon in our studies (except for the doctoral theses by MIESCHER 1995); most projects have centred on people participation or on development strategies on the local or regional scale. Rural areas have been privileged so far; even LAURENT (1995) in his study on Ouahigouya, the provincial capital of Yatenga in Burkina Faso, was confronted with an essentially rural population, 70 % of the town's inhabitants being engaged in agricultural activities.

The marginality concept has been discussed by various authors (ANDREOLI, 1992, DAHLGREN 1989, LEIMGRUBER 1994, MEHRETU 1991, etc.) and it has turned out to be remarkably variable. Thus, while in most cases economic factors are considered, social and ecological ones may be of equal interest (LEIMGRUBER 1994), whereas sheer location is less relevant. The marginality concept is used in its widest possible sense in the present context, and it includes the countries commonly called 'Third World Countries' which are characterized by a lack of 'development' (by European and North American standards). However, problems of development occur at all scales and in all areas of the globe - indeed, the so-called advanced or developed countries might be most in need of (spiritual) development! The present survey is therefore incomplete as it excludes similar phenomena in European countries.

The *development* concept is probably the most crucial element in our research activity. The definition of this term has mobilized countless authors, but no consensus has been reached so far. The contents of the term depends on the ideological position each writer takes. Hence, it may be useful to define development in a pragmatic way. Personally, I would regard development as a process leading from an original situation (which is judged as unsatisfactory) to a new situation, judged as better or satisfactory. This short definition owes a lot to the one given by the SOUTH

COMMISSION (1990, p. 10): "a process which enables human beings to realize their potential, build self-confidence, and lead lives of dignity and fulfilment." Therefore, development means to eliminate or at least reduce regional economic and social disparities.

Disparities, however, are a regular phenomenon in any human society, based on differences among individuals and their talent, their social and cultural setting, their economic situation etc. As has been said above, development is not an imperative in Third World countries alone; disparities are also found in so-called developed countries whose regional policies are a kind of development policy, aiming at reducing inequalities. Our research concept will therefore not be confined to the Third World but be flexible enough to include regions in the 'First World' where local and regional self-help are equally required (cf. for example the LIM-regions in Switzerland; LEIMGRUBER 1985).

One important element of the discussion will concern *values*. Value systems are foundations of culture which in turn is an essential element of the socio-economic standard a population achieves or intends to arrive at. Culture can be seen as one possible adaptation (out of a wide choice of alternatives) of a social organization to a natural environment - probabilistic, not deterministic. The values inherent in a society or in a group are important factors - the scale of reference - in that choice. We have developed a simple model of values, based on BECKER (quoted in HILLMANN 1989) and distinguishing between the more externally oriented secular values on the one side, and the more internally oriented sacred values on the other (Fig. 1).

Secular values are predominant in our 'post-modern' society: dynamics, innovation, forward-orientation, competition are some of its key-elements. *Sacred values*, on the other hand, are characterized by stability, conservation, backward-orientation, security. Every society (and also every human being) needs both in order to survive. Privileging the former leads to fragmentation and dissolution of a society, sole dependence on the latter results in a static society, unable to take up the challenges which are incessantly facing it. There must be an interplay between the two. Unfortunately, the 'western' or 'northern' society tends to evaluate secular values as positive and sacred ones as negative. Innovation is a key-word in our society, and stability is looked upon as sentimental. I.e. our society privileges the intellect and neglects the heart. However, values cannot be assessed in this simple way, they are just there, and it is the people's task to see what is wrong and to act accordingly.

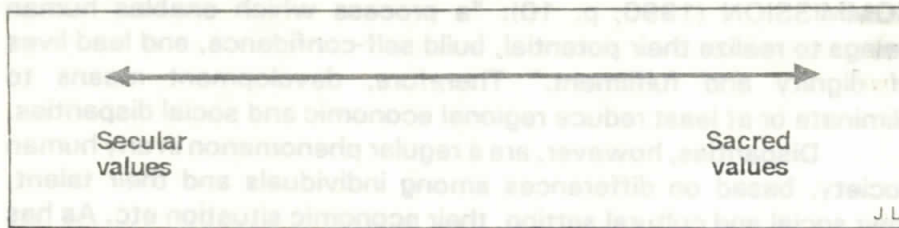


Fig. 1: The value-continuum

The role of people in development

Quite obviously, development is first and foremost about people, as GALTUNG (1983; quoted in KUNZ 1987, p. 11) has formulated, and material and non-material human needs are particularly touched (IBID.). This has become a real issue after decolonization, when formerly dependent territories became independent nation-states, subject to the international ideological game during the Cold War. All of a sudden, these countries became aware of their 'backwardness' compared to their former motherlands and to the rest of the industrialized world. This awareness was chiefly created by the élites formed in European, North American or Soviet bloc universities, who carried new ideas and new values back home. The continuing international expansion of the 'northern' economy led to globalization and to the integration of the 'South' into the company strategies: available space, absence of labour and environmental legislation, regimes in need of money and of prestigious armies made these countries willing partners in this process.

The question is, who is really concerned by development. Is it the upper-class élite which cultivates a European way of life, or is it the small but growing urban middle-class which benefits from the gradual transition under the impact of the world economy, or is it the large majority, the poor rural population which suffers under the integration into the world economy and faces not only emigration but also ecological degradation? The history of development theories, as outlined by HAMMER (1986) furnishes an idea of how development was conceived of since the end of World War II. The accent laid onto economic growth (benefitting the upper class) has gradually given way to a people-oriented view, centring on the autochthonous or endogenous potential and on local-regional participation. HAMMER (1992, p. 96) defines five compatibilities of a programme for endogenous development (fig. 2): only if cultural, social, ecological, economic and local-regional compatibility are

guaranteed, a programme can really be called successful for people, i.e. for the suffering rural majority.

It seems natural that a development programme requires the presence of a population to be developed or helped and that it ought to be designed for their benefit. All too often, huge technological projects have been drafted in the 'North' and subsequently implemented in the 'South' without any consideration for their real efficiency and consequences for people. The mentality prevailing was one of helping with as much money one could afford, but with little regard for the local/regional conditions and their impact. Thus, while irrigation could in itself be beneficial, it also requires drainage, and the micro-climatic aspects of large dams have never been seriously contemplated. Ecological considerations were for the most part absent, essentially for the simple reason that development agencies in the moderate climates implicitly assumed that the carrying capacities and elasticity of tropical ecosystems were similar to theirs (MIESCHER 1995). 'Northern' values and ideas were thus indiscriminately transferred to the 'South', and they were obviously perceived by the people as a gift from heaven, since an image of superiority was attached to them.

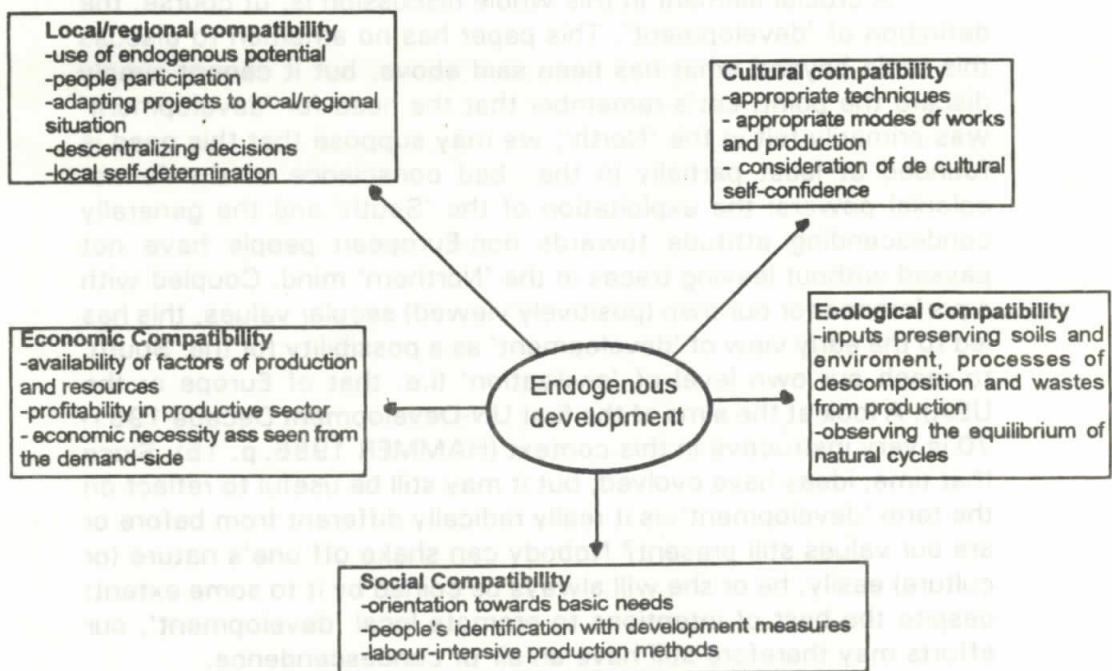


Fig. 2 The five compatibilities of a programme for endogenous development (after HAMMER 1992)

The early locally oriented development strategies were driven by the notion of people's basic requirements: need-oriented strategies are endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and rooted in traditional social structures (EKINS 1992, p. 99 f). By using the native potential they reduce dependence from the outside and give people back part of their dignity. However, they have to consider the new social and economic conditions, in particular population growth and the opening of their countries towards the world economy. A return to pre-colonial times is not possible. Thus, there is an objective need for evolution, but the fundamental values must have their foundations in the local society. Consequently, the notion of development must be adapted to the society in question; it must by no means be drawn from the 'North' where both the society (quite dramatically) and the natural environment (less conspicuously) are menaced. If the 'South' is to avoid the many mishaps of economic development the 'North' has made, it will have to remember its own past and the values attached to it.

Elements of development

A crucial element in this whole discussion is, of course, the definition of 'development'. This paper has no ambition to discuss this topic beyond what has been said above, but it cannot simply discard the point. Let's remember that the need for 'development' was primarily felt in the 'North'; we may suppose that this need is founded at least partially in the bad conscience of the former colonial powers: the exploitation of the 'South' and the generally condescending attitude towards non-European people have not passed without leaving traces in the 'Northern' mind. Coupled with a preference for our own (positively viewed) secular values, this has led to the early view of 'development' as a possibility for the 'South' to reach our own level of 'civilization' (i.e. that of Europe or the USA). A look at the aims of the first UN-Development Decade 1961-70 is very instructive in this context (HAMMER 1986, p. 15). Since that time, ideas have evolved, but it may still be useful to reflect on the term 'development': is it really radically different from before or are our values still present? Nobody can shake off one's nature (or culture) easily, he or she will always be coined by it to some extent; despite the best of intentions to promote local 'development', our efforts may therefore still have an air of condescendence.

This chapter will summarize a number of studies carried out by young researchers of our department, thus pointing out the directions of research opened up since the mid-1980ies. They all

concern rural areas, even the one on waste collection in Ouahigouya, though set in an urban area, is intimately related to the rural activity of farming, to say nothing of the rural setting of this small town. They all reflect an awareness of local populations to adjust to changing circumstances, illustrating the concept of endogenous development by including the definition of development goals and the power to implement measures on this scale.

Education and training in Guatemala

Although one may question the use of literacy in societies where there are no books and papers to read and no paper to write upon, alphabetization is an important step towards development because it increases people's independence: if they are able to read government posters and information leaflets themselves, they can form their own judgements and will become less subject to manipulation. On the other hand, literacy is only one element in the learning process: a lot of knowledge has been passed on as oral knowledge from one generation to the next, and the growth of modern media (newspapers, magazines, books, but also radio and television) may threaten this traditional way of transmission and lead to the subsequent loss of knowledge.

In her study, KUNZ (1987) puts strong emphasis on the latter, the informal side of learning. She advocates that the development expert becomes a member of a local or regional communications network which will enable him to act from the inside (as a member of a community) rather than as an outsider placed somewhere in an external hierarchy. I.e. development cooperation does not attempt to change people straightaway from the outside but it offers them the necessary tools to change themselves (p. 62). In this way the expert becomes integrated into the traditional communications system which is one of interaction within the group (p. 63 ff). His influence is based on his competence, not on the place he occupies in the hierarchy of the development agency.

Her conclusion is that a lot of work has to be done on the local level, where programmes can and should be adapted to specific needs (KUNZ 1987, p. 153 ff). She sees advantages and drawbacks: while closely connected to the people concerned, such programmes need, however, to be coordinated on a supra-local or even supra-regional level. The crucial question is, whether the state is really willing to promote this kind of development. Educating people could in fact make them more aware and more critical, which

is not necessarily in the interest of the ruling class.

Rural development in Burkina Faso

One of the fundamental errors in development thinking is the worldwide generalization. Even if the 'South' shares certain traits (such as the colonial heritage, the incorporation into the world economy and into the world power game), it is still highly differentiated. Spanish, French and English colonial rule differed from each other, and the outcomes are different, too. As a consequence, the degree to which native structures were left untouched or radically modified varied from one country to another.

Thus, the fundamentals of 'underdevelopment' in Africa are not the same as those in Latin America: the absence of *latifundiae* and the very close relationship of the African farmer to the land furnish a radically different background to rural development measures. The structure of land ownership is a central element in rural development, if the survival, nutrition, social and cultural welfare of regional and local populations are to be assured in order to maintain life in rural areas or, said otherwise, to reduce outmigration towards urban areas. This latter can be seen as one of the major objectives of rural development (CHIFFELLE 1992, p. 6-8). However, good conditions in the country can only be achieved if people's attention is also drawn to their natural environment. The prevention of soil erosion is an important task, and this is intimately related to the more human side of rural development. In a follow-up project to his first study in Burkina Faso, HAMMER is currently examining a number of projects in French-speaking West Africa on their efficiency in this domain as well as in the prevention of outmigration. His reports delivered so far reveal the positive side of many small-scale projects, but also point to the importance of the general framework in the individual countries to promote local/regional efforts (HAMMER 1994 a, b, c; 1995a, b).

The concept of the *five compatibilities* of development measures, developed by HAMMER (1992, p. 94) in his initial study on Burkina Faso (Fig. 2), succinctly puts the various aspects of development into perspective. It shows that self-reliant development has to be compatible with the cultural background, the ecological setting, the social structure, the economic potential, and with the spatial scale (local-regional). We could add to this a sixth element, called *intellectual compatibility*. By this we want to emphasize that

development measures have also to take into account the current state of training and education of a given population. Local/regional techniques and knowledge are often more adapted to local and regional needs and conditions than those imported (with the best of intentions) from Europe, hence it may be premature at one moment in time to fly in material help if good advice and a willing ear for the real needs are more useful.

In this context, the local society often offers a good structural basis which can serve as an intermediary between development agents and village people. As FELIX (1992) has demonstrated, the *Naam* groups in the Mossi society are currently experiencing a revival, but in a rejuvenated form: the traditional youth groupings (called *Kombi-Naam*) has become a 'modern' *Groupement Naam*, where traditional functions have been retained, albeit slightly transformed (FELIX 1992, p. 32 ff). This is a reaction to the breakup of traditional social organizations following decolonization and independence. The positive side of out-migration can be quoted in this context: not all migrants leave their villages definitively, a number of them do in fact return, equipped with (positive and negative) experience from town-life, but also with intellectual and technical knowledge, and in particular with a new regard on social life. It is these re-migrants who may push the local society to development by pointing out certain shortcomings. The young generation may wish to rush ahead in developing their villages, they are, however, retained by certain traditional ways of proceeding (e.g. that decisions are being taken by the elders). The *groupements Naam*, however, have succeeded in maintaining the notables in their (honourary) positions, thereby respecting the traditional hierarchy, even if the *groupements* are in reality more powerful than they ought to be traditionally: "Le rôle de ces notables n'est plus d'enraciner le groupement au sein du village, mais simplement de rassurer la hiérarchie traditionnelle sur le fait qu'elle est, ou se donne l'illusion d'être encore, la seule détentrice du pouvoir politique." (FELIX 1992, p. 22). Thus a compromise between the new experience gained by the young and the role held by the elders has been reached, and the *groupements* maintain the good relations by either admitting the elders as member or by helping them particularly with their work in the fields (IBID.), thus creating goodwill for their own activities.

The respect for tradition by the young and the hope for the future invested in the young by the elders represents a constructive way of meeting somewhere on the value continuum. This attitude permits social cooperation, but it is only possible on a local level, where these structures are operating and where the society was

traditionally organized in a similar way. The really innovative element is the organization of the *groupements* into unions (on the provincial level) and of the unions into a (national) federation, whereby cooperation and exchange of information on a large scale has become possible. Equally, it is these levels which can be more directly in contact with NGOs and other development agencies. This vertical organization reflects the social change which has taken place in the traditionally locally-oriented society in Burkina Faso. The main problem at the top level of this organization may be that administrative concerns dominate the real needs.

The *Groupements Naam* are an essential element in the implementation of the strategy developed by the organization *Six S (Se Servir de la Saison Sèche en Savane et au Sahel)*. This latter has been developed on an international and regional scale first, before a national and an inter-regional level were added (FELIX 1992, p. 47). The most interesting contribution of *Six S*, however, will be on the local level (HAMMER 1992, p. 277) where the *Groupements Naam* are implicitly included. Their contributions to development cover various domains: financing (helping people to manage the transfer from a society based on barter to a money-oriented society, financing projects, etc.), education and training (e.g. setting up model fields, visits to fields, training individuals and groups, instruction in local administration etc.), and consulting (IBID., p. 284-295).

Six S is one of the about 200 NGOs active in Burkina Faso (IBID., p. 202). As such, it lacks the officiality of certain development programmes implemented by the state, and its activity may be confined to selected areas rather than covering the country as a whole, but this may in itself constitute an advantage because adhering to it requires a certain effort to be furnished by a local population. It is therefore active in a certain number of 'zones' (52 in Burkina Faso in 1989, plus 30 in Senegal and 18 more in other West-African countries; IBID., p. 285). Just as the *groupements Naam* are organized in a (spatial) hierarchy on the national scale, *Six S* also disposes of such a network, reaching, however, up to the international level. The whole movement is directed from the central secretariat in Ouahigouya (Burkina Faso). It is thus a truly endogenous movement (IBID., p. 286).

The success of this strategy is based on the variety of activities, covering techniques suitable to the specific natural and cultural environment, considering rural life as an integrated way of living (including farming, animal husbandry, storage of surplus production, afforestation, health service, education), and promoting local crafts in order to broaden the income base of the population

(e.g. soap production, drying of vegetables, wood and metal working, spinning and weaving, etc.; IBID., p. 288 f). Aims of this strategy are to ensure the survival of the rural populations in decent living conditions by enabling them to build on their tradition, to teach them to improve their techniques and to give them a new self-confidence. In a way, the success of one village or one zone may serve as an example for other villages: there should be something like an automatic diffusion of the idea of self-determination which includes auto-financing, self-education, self-evaluation and self-responsibility (IBID., p. 299 f.)

Despite certain shortcomings and problems which are inherent in all human activities, the *Six S* strategy is a very successful way of approaching rural development, as HAMMER (1992, p. 302) concludes, even if the local scale still dominates over the regional one. It is true that the problem of food supply has become a critical issue in the past few decades in view of the sharp increase in population, but a good management of the land by the farmers can still lead to surplus production which can be stored for bad years or sold on the market (IBID.). The principle of subsistence farming is not necessarily antiquated.

Urban waste in Ouahigouya

Waste management is predominantly a problem of the 'western' or 'northern' world, but it has increasingly become one of Third World countries as well. Among the 'benefits' of modernization there is the ever growing number of objects made from non-native raw-materials such as glass, plastic, polythene, nylon etc. (to say nothing of complex combinations of such materials in, e.g., transistor radios etc.) which do not decompose naturally but require specific treatment. Urbanization has further increased the problem of waste disposal. The presence of organic and inorganic matter, the lack of urban infrastructure and of money to finance it and a certain carelessness of the people towards waste constitute serious problems both to the individuals and to the public authorities.

On behalf of the Swiss Development Agency, LAURENT (1995) has studied the question of how to organize local waste collection and disposal on a private and participatory basis. His task was to identify the needs, to investigate people's attitudes and to develop and test a programme of private waste collection by using traditional techniques. The donkey-cart and the collector walking behind, the housewives who take the dustbin to the entrance of the courtyard, the families who were asked to subscribe to the service on a voluntary basis - they all constituted the elements of an intricate puzzle patiently set up by a small team of researchers and locals active in this domain. Judging by his impressions after a month's test phase, the population seems to have reacted positively to the project which, at the time of LAURENT's departure, was to be carried on.

One of the most interesting findings of this project was the fact that about 70 % of the economically active population of Ouahigouya (the provincial capital of Yatenga with about 50'000 inhabitants) are farmers; most of them use the organic waste for compost, thereby reducing the total quantity of refuse considerably. A few of those even buy additional compost from within the town LAURENT 1995, p. 96), which means that very little organic material can be found in the garbage. Apart from this particular use of waste, most objects do not end up in the dustbin but will be sold on the local market (e.g. tins to tinsmiths for buckets etc.; IBID., p. 66) - another way of reducing the quantity of waste. Indeed, sampling the waste showed that most of it was composed of earth, sand and gravel, originating from the frequent sweeping of the courtyards, whereas materials which could be recycled were largely missing (Table 1). Because of a predominantly rural way of living combined

with farming activities, waste management is not a very serious problem in small towns in the countryside. However, LAURENT is fully aware of the fact that his pilot project has deliberately chosen a sector where access to the population was easier than in other parts of the town. His aim was to test the methods of collection and disposal, to find out about people's attitudes, and to seek ways to pursue the pilot project in order to promote acceptance of the private waste disposal scheme. In this respect, a good start has been made, even if nothing can be said at the moment about its long-term success.

Material	totalweight\in kgs	%
Vegetable material	105	18
Rags, waste paper, plastic	11	2
Earth, sand	406	69
Gravel	66	11
Metal	0	0
Total	588	100

Table 1: Composition of urban waste in Ouahigouya from two sample collections (LAURENT 1995, p. 144 ff)

Conclusion

The examples summed up in this paper demonstrate the need for local action and reveal the potential which can be found with the population. Macro-scale development measures may be (a) necessary (evil), but they usually fail to reach their targets because they rely on national and international power structures only. If one wants the people to profit more directly, they have to be included into the development process and its decisions. Development must therefore not orient itself by our western standard of living but be seen as an improvement of a local situation, perceived as unsatisfactory by the population concerned. The efforts undertaken by this population have to be supported (but not dictated) from the outside - if required. The condescending attitude which has for decades dominated international aid has to give way to an attitude of partnership which can enhance people's self-confidence and make them receptive to advice. By respecting people and their traditions,

it will be possible to resort to the local potential in order to ameliorate the general situation. With this, we rejoin LAURENT'S (forthcoming) conclusions: in order to be successful, development has to be people-oriented, pragmatic, flexible and multi-disciplinary. There is indeed a worldwide need for improving general living conditions. If the decrease of infant mortality and the increase of life expectancy at birth are hailed as a "success of the South in using scientific advance for human and social betterment" (SOUTH COMMISSION 1990, p. 73), this implies more mouths to be fed and more individuals to be housed - at the expense of an earth whose resources are limited. It is doubtful if the adoption of secular values (which emerges from such a statement) is a real progress; maybe the 'South' ought to privilege sacred values more than secular ones and in this way serve the 'North' as an example! There is a great difference between improving general conditions and striving for the living-standard of the 'western world'.

Development is a process which has to be followed jointly on the national and on the local/regional level. The central state may furnish an optimum legal and political framework (e.g. political decentralization) within which the local and regional populations can act according to their own needs. Following the colonial tradition, the Third World has been thoroughly incorporated into the global market, but this process has been too radical because it was dictated by western secular values. Subsistence farming is considered as old-fashioned in Europe, and this view has been transferred to the Third World, but it may well be the right mode of production for farmers in the South who are still leading relatively isolated lives. Indeed, it has been used as a policy-measure by the socialist government in Mali (1960-68) in order to ensure self-sufficiency of the labourers on the collective farms (HAMMER 1995 b, p. 11). There is nothing negative about subsistence farming, it corresponds to a society whose values are still more on the sacred side of the continuum. As the examples reported above have shown, development centred on people may preferably emphasize this side of the value continuum because it will provide them with a certain kind of inner security and self-confidence which are necessary in order to find their way into the 21st century. This may be at least as important as developing the national and the international viewpoints discussed at large by the South Commission (SOUTH COMMISSION 1991, p. 79-270).

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Abstract

The present paper offers an overview of research on development in Third World countries done by researchers of the Department of Geography of Fribourg University (Switzerland) over the past 10 years. The common denominator of all the projects reported is the focus on the local/regional scale, on people and their needs, on their potential for endogenous development. Most of the research has been carried out in French speaking West Africa, in particular in Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) where rural development strategies have been (and are still being) examined.

It is planned to transfer this focus on autochthonous development efforts to developed countries: Third World countries are marginal areas on a worldwide scale, but similar problems of marginality are increasingly found in the 'North', and here, too, endogenous potentials may be important for local/regional survival.

Résumé

Cet article offre un survol d'un certain nombre d'études qui ont été effectuées au Tiers Monde par des chercheurs de l'Institut de Géographie de l'Université de Fribourg (Suisse) dans les dix dernières années. Tous ces projets ont un dénominateur commun qui est l'orientation vers l'échelle locale/régionale, les populations et leur besoins, le potentiel pour leur développement endogène. Les recherches ont été effectuées surtout dans les pays francophones de l'Afrique occidentale, notamment au Burkina Faso (jadis Haut Volta) où l'accent était mis (est se met toujours) sur les stratégies de développement rural.

Nous avons l'intention de transférer cette optique de développement autochtone aux pays développés: le Tiers Monde est une région marginale à l'échelle planétaire, mais des problèmes de marginalité semblables se poseront dans le 'Nord' d'une façon croissante, et ici, on fera également recours à des potentiels endogènes pour assurer la survie.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta un cuadro sinóptico de un cierto número de estudios efectuados en el Tercer mundo por investigadores del Instituto de Geografía de la Universidad de Friburgo (Suiza) en el curso de los últimos diez años. Todos estos proyectos tienen un denominador común que es la orientación hacia una escala local/regional, las poblaciones y sus necesidades, el potencial para su desarrollo indígena. Las investigaciones se efectuaron sobretudo en payses de lengua francesa de la Africa occidental, especialmente en Burkina Faso (antes Volta Superior), donde el acento se puso (y se pone todavía) sobre la estrategia del desarrollo rural.

Tenemos la idea de transferir esta óptica de desarrollo autóctono a los payses desarrollados: El Tercer Mundo es una región marginal en la escala planetaria, pero problemas semejantes de marginalidad estan aumentando también en el Norte, y aquí como allá, los potenciales indígenas podrán ser importantes para asegurar la supervivencia.

Résumé

Cet article offre un survol d'un certain nombre d'études qui ont été effectuées au Tiers Monde par des chercheurs de l'Institut de Géographie de l'Université de Fribourg (Suisse) dans les dix dernières années. Tous ces projets ont un dénominateur commun qui est l'orientation vers l'échelle locale/régionale, les populations et leur besoins, le potentiel pour leur développement endogène. Les recherches ont été effectuées surtout dans les pays francophones de l'Afrique occidentale, notamment au Burkina Faso (deja Haut Volta) où l'accent était mis (est se met toujours) sur les stratégies de développement rural.

NOTAS Y REFLEXIONES

Esta sección del Boletín constituirá un espacio para reflexionar sobre la Geografía, sus teorías, escuelas, objetos de estudio y sobre el rol del geógrafo en la ciencia y en la sociedad. Las contribuciones deberán ser relativamente breves. Serán incluidos también ensayos no extensos.

Se pretende generar además un lugar para la discusión y el intercambio de ideas. En ese sentido se recibirán aportes de lectores del Boletín, argentinos y del extranjero, que amplíen, complementen o refuten las notas y reflexiones que se vayan publicando. Se publicarán además, noticias de interés de los geógrafos, homenajes, memorias, etc.

VII JORNADAS CUYANAS DE GEOGRAFIA

Para celebrar los 45 años del Instituto de Geografía, se llevaron a cabo las VII Jornadas Cuyanas de Geografía, entre el 30 de setiembre y el 3 de octubre de 1992, en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo.

En oportunidad del acto inaugural, la Lic. María E. Furlani de Civit, Directora del Instituto, destacó la labor que ha desarrollado nuestra institución en la difusión del quehacer geográfico mendocino en el país y en el mundo. El prestigio alcanzado, se puso de manifiesto con la generosa respuesta a esa convocatoria científica, de la que participaron más de 400 personas entre profesores y alumnos de Geografía.

Las Universidades de todo el país estuvieron representadas. Además, se contó con la presencia de geógrafos de Chile, Brasil, Perú, Francia y España, tanto con su asistencia como con la presentación de comunicaciones.

El elevado número de trabajos inscriptos (112) motivó el doblamiento de las comunicaciones en sesiones simultáneas. A pesar de ello, la variedad de temáticas presentadas permitió la elección de los asistentes según preferencias particulares.

La reunión sirvió, entre otras cosas, para realizar un balance sobre las preocupaciones actuales de los geógrafos de Argentina y América Latina. En este sentido se destacaron los temas vinculados con el medio ambiente, ya que fue el denominador común de la cuarta parte de los trabajos presentados. Le siguen en orden de importancia, la enseñanza de la Geografía, la integración interdisciplinaria y el desarrollo local. En cambio, las investigaciones orientadas hacia la teoría y la técnica, ocuparon un interés menor, ya que fueron pocos los ejemplos que se expusieron, aunque de elevada calidad académica.

Otras temáticas fueron la geografía urbana, pequeñas ciudades, áreas rururbanas, movimientos migratorios y geografía política.

Los trabajos entregados oportunamente en el Instituto de Geografía, fueron publicados en un número especial del Boletín, editado en 1993.

La participación de destacados profesionales invitados, especialistas en problemas actuales en nuestra ciencia, contribuyó a resaltar el nivel académico de las Jornadas. La Dra. L. Coltrinari, de la Universidad de San Pablo, inauguró las comunicaciones con el tema *Geografía de los cambios globales: una Geografía para el siglo XXI?*. Como representante de nuestra casa, el Dr. M. Zamorano, destacó *Lo específicamente geográfico a la luz del enfoque sistémico*. La Dra. M. Iturrioz, de Lyon (Francia), presentó *El desarrollo de una gran metrópoli africana: Abidján*, tema que fue completado con una extensa exposición fotográfica. Finalmente, el

Dr. H. Romera Aravena, de la Universidad de Chile, disertó sobre *Escenarios actuales y futuros de la modernización agrícola del semiárido chileno*.

Por intermedio del Boletín de Estudios Geográficos, el Instituto y el Departamento de Geografía agradecen la presencia de los geógrafos de nuestro país y colegas del extranjero.

Comisión organizadora:

Prof. *Griselda García de Martín*
Lic. *María E. Furlani de Civit*
Prof. *Gladys Molina de Buono*
Prof. *Margarita Schmidt*

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Introducción a la Geografía..... es el título del primer libro de un conjunto de doce que, bajo la dirección del Dr. Ricardo Capitanelli, publica la editorial CEYNE.

La autora, Josefina Ostuni, ha plasmado en ciento veinte páginas los resultados de su conocimiento sobre temas largamente reflexionados. Recorre cuidadosamente las fibras de la maraña geográfica de las numerosas orientaciones surgidas después de los años cincuenta, con marcos teóricos y metodológicos variados. Las despliega, las libera de ruidos y las reconstituye creando un nuevo tejido con unidad y coherencia. Hecho posible porque las polémicas se han aquietado y con otra perspectiva, lejos de esos conflictos encuentra el horizonte favorable para reconstruir los principios de su ciencia geográfica. Nos dice: esta obra intentará transferir todas las ideas surgidas de la reflexión del manejo bibliográfico y una organización recreada a partir de pautas propias (p.7).

Algunos geógrafos centran sus especulaciones epistemológicas en el objeto geográfico (G.Nicolas), otros en el método (D.Harvey) o en la tradición de la ciencia geográfica (N.Ortega Cantero). Ostuni toma como hilo conductor para elaborar su propuesta, la materia de los geógrafos, el espacio terrestre, el cual es analizado en sí mismo articulando los conceptos que constituyen su estructura, con otra idea directriz, la organización, considerada en este caso como un concepto supraordenado que encierra la esencia de lo geográfico (p.11).

El espacio es entendido como consecuencia de la red de interacciones surgidas entre el hombre y el medio (Cap.2. Contenido del Espacio); como producto resultante del proceso de las acciones de una sociedad (Cap.3. Espacio y Sociedad); como construido a partir de las configuraciones diversas que adquieren las localizaciones de los objetos que se estudian (Cap.4. La dimensión); como elaborado por los comportamientos surgidos de la toma de decisiones individuales y colectivas (Cap.5. El espacio geográfico receptor de decisiones). Son concepciones que reflejan los ángulos de observación de las corrientes del pensamiento geográfico: ambientalistas, positivistas y neohumanistas. De tal modo, en siete capítulos comunica un contenido difícil en un estilo accesible que denota la simbiosis entre el investigador y el profesor.

De Max Sorre a Max Sorre hemos denominado los aún no mencionados Cap.1 - El hombre comienza a modelar el espacio - y Cap.6 La organización del espacio: sus componentes -, porque en ambos se advierte con toda intensidad la influencia del geógrafo francés; para quien el hombre progresivamente se ha ido liberando del medio según las técnicas que desarrolla -energéticas, sociales, de relación, de producción, políticas. Por esa razón, de una parte, la autora inicia su reflexión (Cap.1) con el modo en que el manejo gradual de las fuentes de energía colaboraron en la organización del espacio. Señala que los progresos alcanzados han dado como resultado diferencias abismales de las organizaciones espaciales (p.26). De otra, concluye en el Cap.6 mostrando que en el espacio terrestre es posible descubrir la plasticidad, la inteligencia, la movilidad, la sociabilidad de los grupos que son los que pueden alcanzar una diversa organización... que propone obtener el máximo aprovechamiento con la colaboración de una amplia gama de técnicas producto de su creatividad e insertadas dentro de un contexto cultural (p.100). Los cuatro capítulos mencionados anteriormente parecen envueltos entre los límites de esas nociones básicas de la ciencia geográfica que nos lleva a decir que no todo lo nuevo es bueno ni todo lo viejo malo.

A estos seis capítulos se agrega una última reflexión, donde expresa su sentir y aspiración con respecto al futuro camino de la organización del territorio. Si el futuro humano puede ser proyectado, un conjunto de problemas que giran alrededor de la supervivencia, calidad de vida y perspectivas hacia el futuro deben ser resueltos. La descripción del mundo debe estar inspirada en un interés basado en la que es parte constitutiva del ser humano. Respeto, pensamiento riguroso y responsabilidad son los presupuestos para intentar moldes apriorísticos...Pensar en la organización del futuro es considerar al hombre comprometido en todos sus valores.

Si recordamos al geógrafo Nicolas, para quien el entendimiento de las obras geográficas requiere descubrir la afectividad, el intelecto y la ideología del autor, en este libro es bien clara la postura intelectual de Ostuni quien acepta los aportes de distintas escuelas. Son las diferentes lecturas a las cuales hace referencia; la postura afectiva señalada en su vocación profesional y la postura ideológica porque confía en un nuevo humanismo que permita al hombre realizarse en el amor, la amistad, la contemplación. Agreguemos que se trata de reflexiones de una geógrafa que desde un centro de investigación de una ciudad del fin del mundo, da una respuesta a la problemática de los espacios geográficos en un trabajo único hasta el momento.

Para concluir, anotemos que la obra cuenta con tablas originales (Nros. 1 y 5), esquemas recreados (Figs. 9, 11, 27 y 28) y se encuentra salpicada de múltiples citas bien escogidas y oportunamente utilizadas.

María E.Furlani de Civit

DI PACE, M., FEDEROVSKY, S., HARDOY, J. y MAZZUCHELLI, S.
Medio ambiente urbano en la Argentina. Buenos Aires. CEAL. 1992.
202 p.

Este libro consta de diez capítulos, que son el resultado de investigaciones realizadas por los autores durante 1990 para el Instituto Internacional de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo para América Latina (IIED- AL), en seis ciudades de nuestro país, mediante un convenio realizado con el Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD).

Toma el concepto de calidad de vida como tema central de la cuestión ambiental y define a los problemas de esa naturaleza como aquellos aspectos de la relación entre sociedad y el medio físico (transformado o no) que generan directa o indirectamente consecuencias negativas sobre la calidad de vida de la población presente y/o futura .

La problemática ambiental es analizada tomando tres criterios generales: la amplitud geográfica de los procesos ambientales, el volumen de población afectada directamente y la gravedad de los efectos sobre la población y las actividades económicas.

El trabajo sitúa a la Argentina en el contexto latinoamericano. Considera problemas acuciantes como el avance la frontera agropecuaria, la erosión de los suelos, el manejo inadecuado de los recursos naturales y, principalmente, el grave problema del deterioro ambiental en las ciudades, teniendo en cuenta que el 75% de la población de América Latina es urbana o periurbana. Es aquí que se plantea una falta de estudios urbanos desde la interdisciplina en donde queda sesgada la interpretación de la relación establecida entre la sociedad y el medio natural.

En el Cap.I se hace una revisión del crecimiento y distribución de la población de la Argentina a través de los censos para definir someramente el sistema urbano nacional.

Por medio del análisis de distintos núcleos urbanos, se concluye que las ciudades argentinas se formaron, crecieron, desarrollaron y consolidaron sin tener en cuenta las características físicas del sitio original del asentamiento ; es así como al problema de la ubicación se le agrega el crecimiento desorganizado que se ve agudizado por la crisis económica.

Los autores describen las unidades de análisis que se tomarán para tratar la problemática ambiental y sus consecuencias sobre la población urbana. Aunque reconocen que existen macroproblemáticas que repercuten en toda la población, como por ejemplo, la contaminación del aire, recalcan la importancia de otros problemas puntuales tales como la falta de infraestructura y servicios que generan severos impuestos sobre todo en la población de bajos ingresos.

Desde el capítulo II al VII inclusive, se presentan los estudios de casos: las áreas metropolitanas de Buenos Aires y de Córdoba, las ciudades de La Rioja, Resistencia, San Antonio Oeste y San Carlos de Bariloche, elegidas por rango y por diferentes características de emplazamiento.

El análisis de los ejemplos considerados es descriptivo y se limita a enumerar las características del sitio, población, actividades económicas y problemas ambientales, señalándose lo más relevante en cada uno de aquellos centros. Esta parte del estudio ofrece datos con profusión; no obstante, no se evidencia una integración que resalte claramente las relaciones entre la sociedad y el medio físico, pese a que esta vinculación es reiteradamente planteada por los autores.

En el capítulo VIII se retoma la problemática a nivel nacional y el impacto que produce sobre la salud, comparando tasas de mortalidad infantil de la Argentina con las de América Latina y el Caribe; también se enumera las causas de las enfermedades de la pobreza en nuestro país. De su lectura, se aprecian posibilidades de desarrollar líneas de investigación interdisciplinarias al ponerse de manifiesto la escasez de estudios acerca de los efectos que producen los problemas ambientales sobre la salud de la población.

El tardío ingreso de la dimensión ambiental en las políticas nacionales es tratado en el capítulo IX. Se realiza un rápido análisis de este tema desde la Constitución Nacional de 1853 hasta la actualidad. Se puntualiza el gran inconveniente de reglamentar y ejecutar políticas ambientales con organismos que sólo atacan consecuencias y no las causas de los problemas ambientales.

Por último, el capítulo X resume los principales problemas analizados a lo largo del libro. Los autores exhortan al Estado y a la sociedad argentinos a concentrar su atención principalmente en problemáticas concretas que afectan a la sobrevivencia de gran parte de la población, antes que dedicarse a las macroproblemáticas ambientales que interesan a los países desarrollados.

La obra incluye, además, un anexo que informa sobre el seminario Problemas Ambientales de Areas Urbanas de la Argentina, realizado en Buenos Aires en 1991, promovido por el PNUD, cuyas conclusiones resumidas son presentadas por los autores.

Si bien la obra que comentamos es descriptiva en su mayor parte, nos introduce en los principales problemas ambientales de la Argentina, sobre todo de las áreas urbanas. Más allá de compartir o no la posición de los autores, su contribución es valorable puesto que proporciona abundantes datos estadísticos actuales y cumple ampliamente con la finalidad propuesta: introducir el debate sobre estos controvertidos temas y abrir líneas de investigación que promuevan soluciones a problemas ambientales específicos en la Argentina.

Claudia G.L. Pedone

CAPITANELLI, R.G. *Geomorfología, procesos y formas de modelado de los terrenos*. Buenos Aires. Col.Geográfica. Ed. CEYNE. Tomo 2. 1992.

Geomorfología, procesos y formas de modelado de los terrenos , del Dr. Ricardo G. Capitanelli representa, desde todo punto de vista o análisis, un valioso y profundo aporte especializado, enriquecedor de la bibliografía geográfica.

A lo largo de su claro, conciso y sustancial desarrollo, logra resumir en forma esquemática y amena -relación no del todo común en este tipo de publicaciones- la evolución que ha protagonizado la Geomorfología y sus objetivos hasta nuestros días, con la inclusión del factor antrópico como elemento desequilibrante del sistema geomorfológico.

Introduce variados y oportunos ejemplos referidos a la Argentina y a Mendoza, como es el caso del problema aluvional, acercando a los estudiosos a una problemática de percepción por demás cercana y de rigurosa actualidad.

Reflejan sus muy bien logradas páginas -de esmerada presentación, lo mismo que la sugestiva portada- los contenidos fundamentales de los sistemas estructurales y bioclimáticos del planeta, mediante la inserción de excelentes y demostrativos gráficos y láminas.

Muy oportuno el capítulo IV, puesto que son escasas las publicaciones que desarrollan el tema de la cartografía geomorfológica de forma tan concreta y clara mediante una muy bien lograda síntesis. Cita elementos esenciales a tener en cuenta para la confección del croquis geomorfológico.

Novedoso por demás el contenido del capítulo V y a la vez muy útil, puesto que expone con indudable conocimiento y experiencia sobre cómo las actividades humanas se ubican y adecuan a formas del relieve particulares, utilizando, una vez más, muy acertadamente, ejemplos del país y de Mendoza, en particular con relación al piedemonte árido, los que hace extensivos a Sudamérica.

Es fundamental esta referencia a Mendoza en sus páginas, puesto que en ninguna obra de geomorfología se brindan ejemplos de realidad tangible para nuestro medio, salvo -honrosa excepción-, el trabajo de Viers sobre el río Mendoza en Cacheuta.

Asombra -sostiene Capitanelli- en un país donde la geomorfología asume rasgos preponderantes, la escasa cantidad de ensayos sobre el tema, especialmente por parte de geógrafos... .

Finalmente incursiona sobre las ya antiguas divisiones geomorfológicas del país, sus problemas (estructurales y geológicos) y da recomendaciones para obtener clasificaciones geomorfológicas de criterios propios.

Se trata de una obra necesaria que ocupará, sin duda, un lugar de preferencia en el interés y documentación de los estudiosos de la especialidad.

Raúl A. Mikkam

BRUNIARD, E. *Climatología. Procesos y tipos climáticos*. Buenos Aires. Col. Geográfica. Ed. CEYNE. 1992. 125 p.

Es una obra que como lo expresa la introducción, está destinada a docentes de nivel medio y estudiantes del ciclo terciario. En este sentido cumple con la finalidad buscada y pone de manifiesto la experiencia en el ejercicio de la docencia e investigación del autor.

A través de cuatro capítulos logra compendiar en forma didáctica un tema muy complejo y de difícil elaboración, el de los tipos climáticos. Para ello ha tratado de superar el esquema lineal común de los temas en el tratamiento de los mismos.

Después de la introducción y detalles sobre orientación metodológica, el primer capítulo está destinado a la Geografía de los climas. Considera en él, los puntos de partida del mapa climático, la necesidad de reducir los datos de la realidad; para ello opta, de acuerdo con los objetivos propuestos y la información de base, por la clasificación deductiva o división lógica. Esto plantea dos cuestiones a resolver, la de los valores discriminantes entre un tipo y otro y hasta dónde subdividir.

Estos conceptos introducen al siguiente tópico: Tipos de clasificación y grados de generalización. Plantea tres tipos de clasificación: genética, morfológica y efectivas o aplicadas, cuyas bases son las causas del clima, formas y efectos del mismo.

Para ello es necesario tener en cuenta como establece en el siguiente tema: Propiedades del clima a retener en la clasificación geográfica. Los valores críticos para determinar clases o grupos dependen de la información disponible, las variaciones espaciales que permiten establecer contrastes y los efectos que estas diferencias puedan producir. Los criterios a utilizar en la clasificación nos derivan al problema de su aplicación práctica, detallado en Paisajes y límites climáticos (procedimientos y alcances). Advirtiendo las limitaciones de los mapas climáticos según la escala, variaciones espaciales de parámetros climáticos y límites biológicos; variabilidad interanual entre núcleos climáticos y fajas de transición. Describe ejemplos, que según su opinión, permiten dimensionar los alcances del mapa climático como auxiliar de la Geografía y sus problemas.

En el capítulo dos, lleva a cabo en forma práctica el trazado de límites indicativos de valores críticos, realizando en función de ello divisiones y subdivisiones. Para la primera etapa utiliza el factor humedad y su representación a través de índices, ejemplificados en la Argentina y en el mapa mundial. Para la segunda, el factor térmico; y, en la tercera, el ritmo estacional. Arriba a un cuadro de clasificación y caracterización de los climas, estableciendo como síntesis el mapa climático y el modelo planetario en el cual están determinadas el número de unidades, adecuado al grado de generalización que se propuso de acuerdo a los objetivos. Para explicar las causas de dicho dispositivo elabora un esquema climático genético como corolario. Toma como punto de partida las interacciones entre radiación solar,

atmósfera, océanos y continentes, para destacar las manifestaciones del clima que producen consecuencias geográficas. La aproximación para la comprensión de ello, lo ofrece el estudio de las masas de aire y los procesos; de este modo va introduciendo conceptos importantes en lo que hace a los mismos y terminologías específicas. Analiza las condiciones de la tierra y la atmósfera en los distintos hemisferios en función de las estaciones y sus efectos en el sustrato y masas de aire, logrando una síntesis explicativa o integración en el ciclo anual.

Dedica el capítulo cuatro a los instrumentos básicos, con un anexo estadístico, que sirven, manteniendo los valores críticos de la clasificación elaborada y las etapas de división, para individualizar cada tipo climático partiendo de la información térmica y pluviométrica. Habilita además para describir sus características esenciales y las condiciones generales de los paisajes geográficos que corresponden a cada uno.

Desde el punto de vista pedagógico es una guía teórico-práctica que adiestra al lector en el manejo de información climática y en intentar explicaciones geográficas.

Como es habitual en sus obras, la preocupación del autor consiste en las fuentes y las posibilidades metodológicas. Tiende a una metodología de convergencia (dinámica-separativa) de raíz geográfica, tratando de utilizar de ambas lo que se ajuste mejor a los objetivos geográficos. Por ello recurre a la detección de discontinuidades, es decir, límites reales de valor trascendente utilizando valores como temperatura, humedad y ritmo estacional. Trata de conciliar estableciendo como problema común a estas metodologías la distribución espacial. Sustentando como problemas geográficos específicos los desfasajes entre paisajes geográficos y las clasificaciones climáticas y como problema derivado las clasificaciones climáticas donde juega un rol importante la doble abstracción de tipo climático y el de región. Ejemplifica didácticamente a través de recursos variados: perfiles de suelos, vegetación, topográficos, térmicos y barométricos, climodiagramas y otras formas de representación que recrean las nociones de degradación de los climas cálidos, diferencias entre climas marítimos y continentales. En resumen, trata de lograr -como dice el autor- un medio adecuado a través del ejercicio comparativo para lograr nociones de conexidad y combinaciones del hecho geográfico, para lo cual los mapas, gráficos y modelos tienen valor especial y a los cuales se les ha dado un lugar destacado en el texto.

Alicia Pérez de Scaraffia