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Sediment Flux to Basins: Causes, Controls and Consequences, edited by Stuart J. Jones & Lynne E. Frostick, 2002. Geological Society Special Publication 191. Geological Society Publishing House, Brassmill Lane, Bath (Somerset), United Kingdom. 284 pp, hardbound; GBP 76.00, USD 127.00 (for GSL members GBP 38.00, USD 63.00; for AAPG members GBP 51.00, USD 85.00). ISBN 1-86239-095-9.

The book evolved from a 2-day meeting in 2000 at the Southampton Oceanography Centre, where earth scientists met who work(ed) on the many aspects of sediment flux to basins, in order (as stated in the acknowledgements) to “provide a statement of the current research into sediment supply to basins at the beginning of this new millennium.” Such an objective is, obviously, overly ambitious: a book with such contents should count many more pages. The back-side cover is a bit more modest: the book “documents a mix of hinterland and sedimentary basin studies with a gradation from orogenic belts to the deep marine.” This is, indeed, a better reflection of the contents: the holistic approach to sediment supply that the editors claim (in the introduction) to present, is not truly realized.

It seems to me that the editors have been a bit over-ambitious, and most probably also over-optimistic as regards the work on such a book. They have, beyond any doubt, worked hard to compile this volume, but it looks whether they became tired at the end. How to explain otherwise easily avoidable mistakes such as on page 217, where a figure shows the 1956-1981 development of a river discharge, whereas the caption mentions a 1951-1989 period. And why otherwise, in the same figure, the abbreviation ‘sec’ for ‘second’ whereas ‘s’ is prescribed in the SI system? One must also deduce that the editors, having handled all manuscripts of other authors, wrote the introduction while being tired. It has neither been written nor been edited with care: it leaves the reader with questions, and it is also full with printing errors (= typing errors in this time of electronic submissions); several errors may be found even within one sentence.

As I did not attend the 2000 meeting, it is difficult to decide whether the editors managed to acquire manuscripts that cover all topics dealt with at the conference, and from as many different sources as possible. If they did not manage, the pretended statement of the current research is obviously not reached; if they did, it is difficult to believe that the book provides a true overview of the state-of-the-art with respect to the topic, as two thirds of the contributions come from UK authors. The contribution from non-European authors is almost nil. It is hard to believe that outside Europe (and more particularly outside the UK) nobody works at the frontier of this type of research. This doubt is strengthened by the nature of the contributions: there are six more or less generic contributions, but the majority (eleven) consists of regional studies. Several of these contributions are, admittedly, interesting (though most probably not for every sedimentologist working in fluvial environments or carrying out basin research), but some deal with such specialized topics that one can only question why such contributions are included in a book that pretends to provide some kind of overview.

The physical appearance of the book is good, just like one is used to in this series, certainly at first sight. It is well printed, and the binding is excellent. Yet, while reading the book one finds that not everything is sufficiently well thought over: particularly figures are sometimes unduly large. Several such examples can be found in the contributions by Milan et al. (Fig 5, for instance, takes 2.5 page but could have well been reproduced on one single page) and Jones (where figures 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 have a far too low information density). Other questions raise while consulting the index: it is a relatively extensive one (which is most welcome), but the philosophy behind the criteria for selecting terms for the index is not

clear at all. Who would look in a book on such a topic for a term like Apulian Foreland? And what to do with what one finds if doing so: 57, 59, 59, 61, 66-7, 70-2, 73? What is the meaning of '59, 59' (no information is given about the meaning of italics in the index)? And why '70-2, 73' and not '70-3'? Such enigmas should not be present in a book of this type.

It may be true that some of the contributions are interesting for those working in sediment fluxes. But the reader who expects (on the basis of the title) that he will get a state-of-the-art overview of causes, controls and consequences of the sediment fluxes to basins, will feel deceived. One can only conclude that this book is one of the less interesting ones in the commonly interesting series.

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