

***European Margin Sediment Dynamics: Side-Scan Sonar and Seismic Images*, edited by Jürgen Mienert & Philip Weaver, 2003. Springer-Verlag, Postfach 105280, D-69042 Heidelberg, Germany; 256 pages, hardbound; USD 109.00, EUR 99.95, GBP 70.00, SFR 166.00; ISBN 3-540-42393-1.**

A comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and processes that create and modify continental margins is of great importance for effective exploration of marine resources and for more accurate evaluation - and eventual prediction - of geohazards. The book edited by Mienert & Weaver is an ambitious and great initiative to summarize the efforts of several research institutes and universities that are engaged in characterizing the sediment dynamics and the evolution of the European continental margin. The book focuses on the deep-water aspects (continental slope and rise, and abyssal plain) of the continental margin, and covers the margins from northern Norway to the Canary Islands, but it excludes the Mediterranean convergent margin to the south. Because of the huge area covered and the large amount of information to be presented, generalisations were, obviously, unavoidable. This is expressed in, for instance, the figures: they are reduced to fit a single book page (there are no fold-outs) and, in some cases, presented in an interpreted form (original data are often not provided). The reader should, therefore, not expect that he will be able to use the figures (particularly seismic lines) as a source of data: the book is not an 'atlas-like' publication.

There is a total of 51 papers in the book, divided into an Introduction and five geographically determined chapters (Norwegian margin, Faeroe-Shetland margin, Rockall and Porcupine margins, Celtic and Armorican margins, Iberian and Canaries margin). The Introduction contains an interesting and brief historic review of studies on the Atlantic European margin, and a useful review of the main geophysical tools used throughout the book (sidescan sonar, multibeam echosounders, seismic profilers). The editors claim in the Introduction that the book will "link offshore industry and academia". The reader who is interested in this bridge between theory and practice will, however, be disappointed because the contribution from the oil industry seems to be at most modest in all the book. The vast majority of authors are from universities and research institutes.

The five chapters are divided into sub-chapters, such as 'Slides and Debris Flows', 'Fans and Debris Flows', 'Channels', 'Drifts', 'Gas Hydrates and Fluid Escape Features', 'Slides', 'Debris Flows and Turbidites', 'Carbonate Mud Mounds', 'Fans', 'Feeder Systems of the Fans', etc. Such nomenclature is confusing, particularly because it mixes descriptive (e.g., 'Fans') and genetic (e.g. 'Debris Flows') terms. The titles, of the subchapters do, in addition, not always reflect clearly what the reader will find. Each sub-chapter contains a variable number of contributions, each of which is, as a rule, short (5-8 pages). They are all illustrated, well focused, and very descriptive.

Despite the above-mentioned shortcomings, the book is very interesting because it deals with an exciting subject. The limited length and focus of the individual contributions, and the relatively large number of illustrations contribute to pleasant reading. It is an essential reference work for sedimentary geologists and stratigraphers working with present-day and past aspects of passive margins, for oceanographers, geophysicists and environmental geologists. Although the book is certainly not cheap considering its length, it is worth the price.

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