
Preface

It is a challenge to publish a comprehensive work on the physical geography of Hungary. Several excellent works have been written with a similar content, from various points of view. Some of them aimed to analyse the palaeo-geographic changes of Hungary (Martonné 1995, Schweitzer 2002), and others highlighted the issues of relief development (Lovász 1994, Pécsi 1996) or concentrated on the different landscapes and regions (Kogutowicz 1930, *Magyarország tájféldrajzi sorozata 1967–1988*).

The objective of physical geography is to analyse and explain the geographical patterns created by the interaction of soil, hydrology and surface forms. In fact, the integration of these disciplines constitutes the “core knowledge” of geography and not the thorough examination of them one by one. It is evident that various specialized disciplines are known in physical geography; e.g., geomorphology describes and explains surface forms, whereas soil geography defines the origin, character and potential use of soils. It is definitely true that a grounded, comprehensive analysis of natural conditions is difficult without this classical knowledge. Each discipline may motivate and require the analysis of several geographical questions.

The integrative interpretation and approach of our natural environment is not a simple task, especially if we take into consideration that the socio-economic factors also play a role in it. One of the pathways of an integrated approach must lead into the geographical landscapes; however, now a little bit different direction was taken and aimed at describing the correlations of some natural conditions in a regional sense.

It is “one-sided”, since it examines only the effect relationships of a few natural processes. It also undertakes the presentation of the most important physical geographical processes of the natural units, because the analysis of impact chains would be far from complete without them. Certain elements of the present volume attempt to explore some topics in a novel way. It extends beyond classical knowledge and addresses a few integrated issues in some of its segments.

Nevertheless, it does not aim at the complete synthesis of the geographical environment, but rather at describing some of the correlations of the soil–water–air relief system. It is also hard to undertake a “synthesis” because the different rate and scale of the factors active in the geographical systems is an especially difficult issue—just to mention one of the most evident reasons. For example, it is complicated to describe the effects of the climate on the

relief or the soil types and processes, because we know the tendencies and the rate of change on the global scale, but the answers are difficult to formulate on a regional scale, even if the discussion required this. The challenge is not only in the above-mentioned magnitude differences, but also in the need to measure the overall impact of a lot of parameters. Therefore, the present work can only undertake to highlight the importance of some effect relationships and to demonstrate through some examples how a partial analysis may lead to an impact analysis.

The use of a certain surface affects the whole geo-system, not only the individual parameters. This systemic interrelatedness is not always conspicuous when using the geographical elements, because the relationship of the factors is sometimes loose, and it is hard to recognize that the processes influence the system by their combined impact. It is becoming acknowledged more clearly with the more and more intense exploitation of the resources and assets, because accessing them is becoming more and more costly and hazardous. It is difficult to follow exactly how and which factor is changed by the environmental use without the above-mentioned approach.

The present book is organized around two major frames of thought, adopting a traditional structure in this respect. The first part discusses the general physical geographical issues of Hungary; however, it does not aim at a thorough chronological and spatial analysis of each physical geographical factor (e.g. hydrography, soil or vegetation) due to space constraints. Instead, we provide an overview of the evolution of the main landforms, their general state, the more important processes and the rhythm of their natural changes, that is, in our opinion, all the information that physical geography can use in complex, multifactorial analyses. Undoubtedly, we pay more attention to relief evolution, because this is one of the scientific tasks of physical geography.

The second part with a regional content provides a physical geographical overview on a macro-regional scale. The meso- or micro-regional analysis and a monographic completeness are not regarded as an aim here, either, since we know of excellent summaries, at both meso-regional (see the Landscape Geography of Hungary) and micro-regional levels (*Magyarország kistájainak katasztere I–II*). Nevertheless, through a few examples on this scale, this part undertakes to demonstrate the environmental conflicts, values and hazards in an area and the specific landscape features, which require a comprehensive geographical knowledge.

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