

Zonneveld, I.S.: **Land Ecology**. - SPB Academic Publishing, Amsterdam 1995. 199 pp.

The information presented in this book is based on the author's extensive work in the field of all continents and in all climates, from the marshes to the mountains, from the arctic to the tropics, and from the deserts to the rainforests. It is not surprising that the awareness of complexity and multiplicity of approaches to the topic are omnipresent in this book. Integrated approach to the environment, land evaluation methodology and large area survey techniques based on sound ecological principles, especially applicable in developing countries, are well presented.

Zonneveld uses the term "land" instead of "landscape" ecology because he considers the former as a better translation of the original German term "Landschaft" used by von Humboldt and Troll who formulated the scientific background of the field. He defines land as "the environment of mankind, *i.e.* the space at the transition point between the solid/fluid core of the planet and endless universe". The methodology of the study of this relatively thin layer surrounding the globe, and its composition and function in spatial and temporal dimensions, are the subjects of this book.

The style in which the book is written also reflects the author's "objection to being put in one or another scientific pigeonhole"; the issue is viewed in a complex and provocative way. Still, it is intended as a text-book for students starting out in this field. For me, however, the book represents rather a philosophical and conceptual framework of landscape ecology, as it is viewed, understood, and interpreted by Zonneveld. As a textbook, it should have a more sharp structure and I feel that some previous experience in the field is necessary for the readers to get the most of it. The author himself points out that "...the aim of this book is not to be a field guide for carrying out all the activities and research surveys". But this is, at least in part, what a good textbook should be, shouldn't it?

The chapters include definition of terms, scientific background, classification, pattern and function. I enjoyed namely the chapter on land unit survey which is concise and well written (this one is a textbook actually).

The book undoubtedly offers stimulating ideas (although sometimes a bit lost in the complicated terminology) and the aim, *i.e.* to show the need to approach environment more comprehensively, has been fulfilled. The author is aware of the limitations of landscape ecologist, and admits that landscape ecology hardly has its own unique methodology - rather other specialists have developed methods that can be used in landscape ecology. Anyway, it somewhat suffers from describing relatively straightforward things by using complicated terminology. One example for all can be found on p. 141. Do we really need a formal definition of "misery of the world", especially if the equation operates with such variables as "irresponsible behaviour of people toward environment". Note the methodological apparatus used to express that attitude of humans towards environment should change!

Nevertheless, *Land Ecology* is a useful book that can be recommended to anybody with deeper interest in environmental issues.

P. PYŠEK (*Průhonice*)