

# *Bibliografía específica sobre un proceso de ladera: «flujo masivo de depósito» (debris flows), cuando es generado por lluvias intensas en áreas no volcánicas*

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## INTRODUCCIÓN

Los procesos erosivos sobre laderas tienen una incidencia fundamental en el desarrollo de la actividad humana y constituyen los factores más importantes de riesgo natural. Estos procesos, determinados fundamentalmente por la gravedad, se ven acompañados en su génesis por una gran diversidad de agentes: debilidades estructurales, precipitaciones intensas, fluctuación de las temperaturas, fusión del manto de nieve, terremotos, erupciones, la acción de los glaciares, el efecto de zapa fluvial o torrencial, el efecto de las aguas subterráneas, el viento, los animales, la propia acción humana, etc. Estos agentes, conjugados normalmente por múltiples variables, generan procesos que se pueden agrupar en cuatro tipos: 1) los desarrollados por pura caída libre; 2) los deslizamientos de una masa compacta de sedimentos sobre un plano; 3) los generados por un flujo masivo de una colada de sedimentos; 4) y los que están determinados por el transporte del agua.

El tercer tipo de proceso de ladera enumerado se conoce actualmente en la terminología científica como «debris flow», englobando a una gran variedad de términos con los que se designaba anteriormente un mismo proceso: debris slide, mudflow, earth flow, lahar, rocky mudflow, laves torrentielles, .... Se trata de un flujo de depósitos mezclados con una proporción relativamente pequeña de agua. Este proceso tiene una enorme capacidad de transporte, donde se incluye el desplazamiento de bloques de dimensiones métricas junto a material de granulometría mucho más fina como arenas, limos e incluso arcillas. El inicio del proceso suele ser un deslizamiento, o mediante el llamado efecto «firehose» (impacto sobre los materiales no consolidados de una corriente de agua a velocidad elevada), donde gracias a una gran presión hidrostática, la masa adquiere capacidad

de flujo. De esta manera podríamos apuntar que los requisitos imprescindibles para la existencia de debris flow serían un aporte importante de agua (procedente de precipitaciones, fusión de la nieve, aguas subterráneas, glaciares desprendidos, etc.), la existencia de material no consolidado, laderas con suficiente pendiente (las más apropiadas: 32-40°) y una cobertura vegetal insuficiente.

Durante el flujo se incorporan materiales por remoción y la colada aumenta su contenido en agua a la vez que la masa es empujada ladera abajo, para canalizarse en su recorrido y terminar, cuando la pendiente disminuye, formando una especie de lóbulo, en cuyo frente, se encuentran los clastos de mayor tamaño. En los laterales de la colada se forman pequeños muros de sedimentos (levées). Los depósitos originados por un debris flow aparecen pobremente clasificados, apenas poseen una estructura sedimentológica interna y contienen numerosos huecos entre los cantos que los componen. Estos, se distribuyen de manera irregular y sin una orientación preferente.

Los debris flows tienen una extensión geográfica prácticamente universal, si bien es el proceso fundamental de transporte, por las razones apuntadas, uno de los principales desencadenantes en áreas con fuertes pendientes y sin cobertura vegetal, como sucede en numerosas zonas áridas y semiáridas, en los pisos supraforestales de alta montaña y en los volcanes activos.

Entre la abundantísima bibliografía sobre debris flows, hemos seleccionado las publicaciones que tratan específicamente sobre la génesis del proceso, y en concreto cuando el factor que los origina son las lluvias intensas. Para evitar una excesiva recopilación, no hemos incluido las referencias que tratan sobre este factor en áreas volcánicas, como tampoco nos hemos centrado en circunstancias ambientales puramente climáticas.

Como es lógico, la cantidad de publicaciones no se corresponde, en su distribución geográfica, con la importancia en sí de los procesos, sino por el nivel de desarrollo científico y técnico de los países donde se publican. Por este motivo, la mayoría de las publicaciones que describen casos concretos de debris flows son norteamericanas. Destacan los casos citados en el estado de California, en su mayoría generados por tormentas de verano o situaciones prolongadas de gotas frías (Brunengo 1983; Campbell, 1974; Campbell, 1975; Cannon, 1985; Davenport, 1984; Egashira, 1983; Ellen et al. 1988; Har & Herd, 1982; Herd et al. 1982; Hughes, 1986; Merifield, 1985; Merifield, 1992; Nielsen, 1984; Nolan & Marron 1988; Rice & Foggin, 1971; Wiczorek, 1987; Wiczorek & Sarmiento, 1982; Wiczorek & Sarmiento, 1983).

A pesar de ser un fenómeno fundamental en las áreas áridas, las publicaciones desde estas áreas son escasas, y casi siempre proceden de Estados Unidos (ver por ejemplo Anderson et al. 1985, o Kaliser & Slosson 1988). La estación de lluvias en las zonas tropicales generan con frecuencia debris

flows a pesar de existir una cubierta forestal intensa (Guidicini & Iwasa, 1977; Jibson, 1988; Rapp, 1974; Torikai & Wilson, 1992). Estos procesos son verdaderamente frecuentes al paso de huracanes y tifones (Auer, 1989; Furuya, 1975; Gryta & Bartholomew, 1989; Jibson, 1987; Jibson, 1986; Manning et al. 1988; Nieto & Barany, 1988).

La alta montaña es otro ambiente geográfico donde se desarrollan habitualmente los debris flows, normalmente generados por las aguas de deshielo, aunque también son frecuentes durante las tormentas de verano (Caine, 1976; DeGraff, 1986; Dellavalle, 1986; Gemperle, 1986; Evans et al. 1984; Rapp et al. 1981; Starkel, 1970; Villi, 1992; Zimmermann, 1990). En las bajas montañas de ambientes árticos, al carecer de cubierta forestal, también se desarrollan debris flows durante lluvias de verano (Jahn, 1976; Larson, 1982; Rapp & Stromquist, 1976).

En un ambiente bioclimáticamente poco propicio la importancia de la densidad de población y el intenso efecto de las actividades humanas sobre la estabilidad de las laderas ha generado una gran riqueza bibliográfica sobre el fenómeno; así por ejemplo en Europa Occidental, en áreas oceánicas de USA o Nueva Zelanda (Addison et al. 1987; Cruden; et al. 1989; Jacobson, 1988; Jacobson, 1993; Jacobson; Cron et al. 1987; Jacobson et al. 1989; Laprade, 1986; Miller, 1991; Pomcroy, 1980; Pomeroy, 1984; Renwick, 1977; Schwab, 1985; Rogers et al. 1976; Selby, 1980). Este es el caso también del Japón (Endo et al. 1984; Okunishi et al. 1988; Katsurajima, 1974; Watanabe et al. 1981) o de China (Liu et al. 1983).

Además de estas publicaciones centradas en la descripción de casos concretos, son ya muy frecuentes los trabajos que analizan algunos aspectos específicos del proceso. Los más numerosos son las investigaciones que tratan de calcular la relación intensidad-tiempo de las precipitaciones, para conocer el umbral a partir del cual, en una región determinada, se inician los debris flows (Caine, 1976; Church & Miles, 1987; Kashiwaya, 1987; Okimura, 1987; Kawatani, 1987; Kobashi, 1987; Suzuki, 1987; Neary, 1987; Swift, 1987; Neary, 1984; Swift, 1984; Wang, 1992; Wilson, 1986).

Otros trabajos relacionan la intensidad de las precipitaciones con la cantidad de sedimentos transportados por este proceso (Cai, 1992; Canuti, Focardi & Garzonio, 1985; Ashida, 1980; Takahashi, 1980; Sawada, 1980; Ashida, 1984; Takahashi, 1984; Sawada, 1984; Ashida, 1985; Takahashi, 1985; Sawada, 1985; Ashida, 1992; Sawada, 1992; Ashida, 1986; Takahashi, 1986; Sawada, 1986). Otros trabajos proponen técnicas concretas para el análisis de la intensidad de la erosión durante estos eventos (Caine, 1980; Ashida, 1986; Egashira, 1986; Aoi, 1986).

Ciertas publicaciones se especializan en el estudio de otros factores que determinan el proceso a parte de las precipitaciones. Este es el caso de la permeabilidad del suelo (Everett, 1979); la humedad previa a las precipitaciones en el suelo (Johnson, 1989; Sitar, 1989; Thiel & Zabuski, 1979); el control estructural (Nakagawa, 1985; Poesen, 1985; Ingelmo, 1985; Mue-

cher, 1990; Reid, 1992; Baum, 1992; Wieczorek, 1984; Ellen, 1984; Cannon, 1984; Wilson, 1989) o el efecto de zapa que generan los ríos sobre las laderas durante las inundaciones (Miller, 1990; Schleiff, 1989; Kite, 1989). Son también interesantes los trabajos que explican cómo se producen debris flows en laderas con escasa pendiente (Morris, 1986; Neary & Swift, 1987; Pomeroy, 1980; Pomeroy, 1982).

Gran importancia tienen los trabajos que proponen teorías concretas para explicar la mecánica del inicio del proceso (Ashida, 1989; Sawada, 1989; Cannon, 1988; Ellen, 1988; Johnson-Kennet, 1986; Sitar, 1986; Totten, 1994; Guenther, 1994). Fruto de estas propuestas se ha llegado en algunas publicaciones a postular una teoría general sobre la aportación del proceso al modelado general de las laderas (Cannon, 1988; Ellen, 1988; Rapp, 1987; Starkel, 1976).

Ultimamente se han desarrollado modelos matemáticos donde se relacionan la cantidad de agua aportada por las precipitaciones y la dinámica del proceso (Nakagawa, 1985; Poesen, 1990; Ingelmo, 1990; Muecher, 1990; Reid, 1992; Baum, 1992; Wieczorek, 1984; Ellen, 1984; Cannon, 1984; Wilson, 1989).

También se han publicado algunos trabajos que proponen técnicas de cartografía concretas para representar a los debris flows (Ellen, 1991; Everson, 1991; Pierson, 1991; Wentworth, 1986).

Por último, cabe destacar el esfuerzo expresado en numerosos trabajos recientes por aplicar los conocimientos adquiridos sobre el proceso en la prevención de catástrofes (Govi, 1985; Govi & Sorzana, 1980; Keefer, 1988; Slosson, 1979; Krohn, 1979; Starkel, 1972; Takahashi, 1991; Nakagawa, 1991; Tsukamoto, 1981; Wilson, 1992; Torikai, 1992; Ellen, 1992; Wilson, 1988; Wieczorek, 1988; Wright et al. 1986).

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