Diagnosis of cylindrical projections and analysis of suitability for the territorial area of South America

Diagnóstico de projeções cilíndricas e análise de adequabilidade para área territorial da América do Sul

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Abstract
Cartographic Projection can be defined as the mathematical relationship between the position of a model of the terrestrial surface and the flat surface. Cylindrical projections are employed around the world, taking into consideration their properties and special characteristics. The purpose of this study was to identify the cartographic projection that best represents South America terrestrial surface, focusing mainly on the area of the continent, determined by the South American Defense Council. Initially, the projections were selected based on a bibliographic review. Subsequently, a

Resumo
A projeção cartográfica pode ser definida como a relação matemática entre a posição de um modelo da superfície terrestre e a superfície plana. As projeções cilíndricas são empregadas em todo o mundo, levando em consideração suas propriedades e características especiais. O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar a projeção cartográfica que melhor representa a superfície terrestre da América do Sul, focalizando principalmente a área do continente, determinada pelo Conselho de Defesa Sul-Americano. Inicialmente, as projeções foram selecionadas com base em uma revisão bibliográfica. Posteriormente, um julgamento de adequação foi feito para a América do Sul aplicando Tissot Indicatrix, Isolines of Maximum Angular Distortion e Região de distorção aceitável. Por fim, foi traçada uma premissa entre os melhores resultados. O controle do estudo foi realizado por meio dos softwares Flex Projector e ArcGIS 10.1, recursos computacionais de grande utilidade em Cartografia. O estudo forneceu uma compreensão clara, simples e objetiva de como as diferentes projeções se comportam. A motivação vem da insuficiência de informações detalhadas e aplicadas na escolha da projeção cartográfica em regiões de grandes áreas.

Palavras-chave: Projeções cilíndricas. Análise de viabilidade. Projetor Flex. América do Sul.
suitability judgment was made for South America applying Tissot Indicatrix, Isolines of Maximum Angular Distortion and Region of Acceptable Distortion. Finally, an assumption was drawn up among the best results. The study control was performed using the software Flex Projector and ArcGIS 10.1, computational resources of great use in Cartography. The study provided a clear, simple and objective understanding of how different projections behave. The motivation comes from the insufficiency of detailed information and applied to the choice of map projection in regions of large areas.

**Keywords:** Cylindrical Projections. Feasibility Analysis. Flex Projector. South America.

1. **Introduction**

Cartography is responsible for the representation of the Earth's surface, in a clear and objective way, where the spatial variables can be interpreted by the users. There are several forms to represent the terrestrial surface, such as reduced models, globes, maps and charts, digital terrain models and others. According to Thofehrn (1980) globes exhibit a great advantage in a description, because they can show the user a realistic illustration, but they have only a few practical applications. Some complication in the globe’s application is the planimetric scalar dimensions (X and Y) that cannot be settled with height (Z).

Since the Earth's surface is not flat, cartography uses mathematical methods to represent a curved surface in a plane. Cartographic projections are methods applied in the portrayal of the Earth, considering the distortions. Map projections can be defined as mathematical functions that relate the points on a surface used as a reference (sphere or ellipsoid) to a projection surface (plane, cone, cylinder).

There are different ways to set a classification for cartographic projections, but according to Lapaine (2015), projections are classified according to their geometry, shape, special properties, projection parameters and nomenclature. The main properties of the projections are described in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Properties and Characteristics of Map Projections.**

| Method              | Geometric  | Geometry principles                  |
|---------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
|                     | Analytical | Mathematical formulation             |
| **Projection Surface** |            |                                      |
| Azimuthal           |            | Earth surface over a plane           |
| Conic               |            | Earth surface in a cone              |
| Cylindrical         |            | Earth surface in a cylinder          |
| **Properties**      |            |                                      |
| Poli superficial    |            | Earth surface represented in more than one projection surface |
| Conformal           |            | It preserves the angles              |
| Equivalent or       |            | It preserves the areas               |
| Equal-area          |            |                                      |
| Equidistant         |            | It does not present linear distortions |
| Affiliated          |            | Absence of the other properties      |
| **Point of contact**|            |                                      |
| Tangent             |            | Projection surface is tangential to the reference surface |
| Secant              |            | Projection surface cuts the reference surface |

The decision to adopt a particular type of projection will depend on several factors, such as location, shape, dimensions and purpose of the work in relation to the globe. Some mappings present some characteristics that make this decision even more challenging, either because they provide a
continental location, or with a considerable variation of longitude and latitude, or areas whose purpose implies in the variation of scales. All these obstacles related to the cartographic projection must be analyzed taking into account the current technological advances.

1.1 South America and its territorial extensions

South America is composed of the southern portion of the American continent, its location occurring predominantly in the southern hemisphere, in the western intertropical zone. It is surrounded to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the North by the Antilles Sea, also known as the Caribbean Sea. It has 13 territories and 12 countries. The members of the continental part include Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. The territory of French Guiana, whose capital is Cayenne, belongs to France.

Brazil is the largest country in South America regarding territorial extension followed by Argentina and Peru. Table 2 displays the area of each South American country according to South American Defense Council (CDS, in Portuguese). CDS was established in 2008, targeting to consolidate South America as a zone of peace and create conditions for political stability and economic and social development; as well as establishing a South American defense identity to generate an agreement able to help strengthen cooperation on the continent (Brazil, 2017).

Table 2 - Territorial area of South American countries

| Country       | Capital    | Area (sq.km) |
|---------------|------------|--------------|
| Argentina     | Buenos Aires | 2,780,400    |
| Bolivia       | La Paz     | 1,098,581    |
| Brazil        | Brasília   | 8,514,877    |
| Chile         | Santiago   | 756,102      |
| Colombia      | Bogotá     | 1,138,910    |
| Ecuador       | Quito      | 283,561      |
| Guyana        | Georgetown | 214,969      |
| French Guiana | Cayenne    | 83,534       |
| Paraguay      | Assunção   | 406,752      |
| Peru          | Lima       | 1,285,216    |
| Suriname      | Paramaribo | 163,820      |
| Uruguay       | Montevideo | 176,215      |
| Venezuela     | Caracas    | 912,050      |
| **Total**     |            | **17,814,987** |

2. Methodology

The methodology applied in the research made use of exploratory and inductive approaches. KOBASHI et. al, (2006) model was established to guide the steps for the development of a scientific research in the field of Cartography:

- Definition of the analysis chain and the bibliographic elements to be considered in the study;
- Characterization of the areas of study;
- Investigation of analysis parameters; and
- Results discussion

2.1 Bibliographic Investigation

A bibliographic survey of the cartographic projections used around the world was made to establish criteria that could contribute to the proposed research. During the theoretical background, academic studies were identified over the years. In this phase, Werner (1993) and Šavrič et. al, (2016) made several discussions of the main projections applied globally. They carried out a survey
of map users and professionals to choose the best projection to be used. 496 people and nine cartographic projections were involved. The pairing comparison test evaluated each element of a projection with all the other projections. The nine cartographic models analyzed were: Robinson, Eckert IV, Winkel Tripel, Wagner VII, Mollweide, Goode Homolosine, Plate Carrée, Interrupted Mollweide and Mercator (Figure 1). The hierarchical results of preference are shown in Table 3.

![Projections Images](image-url)

**Figure 1 - Small-scale projections investigated.**

Table 3 - The most conventional projections applied by cartographers and other users

|   | 1(%) | 2(%) | 3(%) | 4(%) | 5(%) | 6(%) | 7(%) | 8(%) | 9(%) |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. Robinson | 68   | 77   | 71   | 77   | 74   | 84   | 78   | 95   |
| 2. Winkel Tripel | 32   | 49   | 57   | 72   | 65   | 70   | 76   | 90   |
| 3. Eckert IV | 23   | 51   | 55   | 62   | 66   | 68   | 76   | 84   |
| 4. Mollweide | 29   | 43   | 45   | 54   | 61   | 70   | 70   | 81   |
| 5. Wagner VII | 23   | 28   | 38   | 46   | 53   | 67   | 67   | 81   |
| 6. Plate Carrée | 26   | 35   | 34   | 39   | 47   | 56   | 57   | 89   |
| 7. Mollweide Int | 16   | 30   | 32   | 30   | 33   | 44   | 69   | 71   |
| 8. Goode Homolosine | 22   | 24   | 24   | 30   | 33   | 43   | 31   | 68   |
| 9. Mercator | 5    | 10   | 16   | 19   | 19   | 11   | 29   | 32   |

Table 3 shows that the projection most used in constructing maps is Robinson's projection. The projection of Mercator is the least employed, despite of being the most known. Cylindrical projections are essentially recommended in the mapping of the two hemispheres and the construction of world maps. This fact can be explained due to the minimal distortions obtained in the equatorial region.

2.2 Analyzed Projections

According to Lopez (2015), cylindrical projections are useful for cartographic representation of world maps, however, these projections present a distortion nuisance in high latitude areas. Comparisons and specific properties among these projections can be found in Table 4.

Table 4 - Comparisons and main properties of the nine most employed projections by
professionals for the representation of world maps

| Projection     | Property                | Area                                      |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Robinson       | Affiliated Cylindrical  | Low distortion between parallels ± 45 °   |
| Winkel Tripel  | Affiliated Cylindrical  | Moderate distortion except in the polar   |
|                |                         | regions along the outer meridians         |
| Eckert IV      | Equivalent Pseudocylindrical | Distortions magnified as it moves away from standard parallels |
| Wagner VII     | Modified Azimuthal      | Equivalent                                |
| Plate Carrée   | Cylindrical             | Equivalent                                |
| Mollweide      | Pseudocylindrical       | Equivalent                                |
| Goode Homolosine | Interrupted Pseudocylindrical | Equivalent                             |
| Mercator       | Cylindrical             | Larger distortions at the polar regions   |
| Mollweide Int. | Pseudocylindrical       | Equivalent                                |

In the equidistant cylindrical projection, distortion in the parallels can be observed defined by the scale factor, while the meridians remain undistorted. As a result, the areas are also distorted. To compensate the area deviation, projections which keep the proportion of areas can be formed by manipulating and modelling the scale factor between meridians and parallels. From the nine projections in Table 4, the ones that best fit the field of study were used, selected by their properties and parameters of interest (Table 5) related to the equivalence of the areas and the representation of deformations, and are displayed in Table 5. However, Mercator's projection was applied in the research even not being included in the selective criteria, since it is widely adopted in South American due to historical factors.

Table 5 - Projections to be evaluated in the study

| Projection        | Scale | Continental Scale | Area | Continental Area |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|------|------------------|
| Eckert IV         | 0.36  | 0.45              | 0    | 0                |
| Goode Homolosine  | 0.46  | 0.46              | 0    | 0                |
| Mercator          | -     | -                 | -    | -                |
| Mollweide         | 0.39  | 0.43              | 0    | 0                |
| Wagner VII        | 0.37  | 0.4               | 0    | 0                |
| Winkel Tripel     | 0.26  | 0.26              | 0.18 | 0.26             |

2.3 Software appliance

Some software products are currently available in the market for manipulating parameters from cartographic projections and data files in the shapefile format. The selected programs for the study were Flex Projector and Arccgis 10.1.

In Flex Projector the projections are able to be manipulated through sliders, in addition to the creation of a new projection from another already existing one. The software has four groups of cursors to adjust the length of the parallels, vertical distribution, bending, and meridian distribution.
Through an interactive table, it is possible to have an entire view of the distortions in the modified projection.

The procedure to evaluate and classify the selected projections was based on the results achieved with Flex Projector. The case study was carried out using shapefile formats of the projections, Tissot Indicatrix (TI), Isolines of Maximum Angular Distortion (IMAD) and Region of Acceptable Distortion (RAD).

2.4 Area analysis

In order to present the results of the areas, shapefiles were generated in Flex Projector for each one of the models. In the ArcGIS, manipulations of these files exported from Flex Projector were executed. In the software attribute table, the areas of each projection were calculated. The tables provide the information referring to the properties of an attribute, thus, quantitative, qualitative, textual and numerical information. The results are shown in Table 6.

| Projection        | Calculated area (sq.km) | Official area (sq.km) | Difference (sq.km) |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Mollweide         | 17,883,957              | 17,814,987            | 68,971             |
| Wagner VII        | 17,884,161              |                       | 69,175             |
| Eckert IV         | 17,884,357              |                       | 69,371             |
| Goode Homolosine  | 17,885,457              | 17,814,987            | 70,471             |
| Winkel Tripel     | 15,565,318              |                       | -2,249,669         |
| Mercator          | 20,865,481              |                       | 3,050,494          |

As it can be seen from the table, the results obtained indicated that the Mollweide projection achieved the best fitting to the official area defined by CDS, as shown in Table 6.

2.4.1 Shape Analysis

Equivalent or equal-area projections modify the original shape of the continents. In order to evaluate the similarity of the South American continent and which of the projections represent more accurately the terrestrial reality, we examined TI, IMAD and RAD parameters for the studied models.

TI estimates the distortion of an Earth's surface projection. Through calculations, it reaches
the deformations at a given point of an infinitesimal circle with ds radius, centered at a point P on the ellipsoid, and can be converted into a circle according to the type of projection. Figure 3 displays the behavior of the deformations in the studied projections from South America with a 30º distance between the error ellipses.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 3 - Tissot Indicatrix for six studied projections**

The largest deformations demonstrated by TI analysis occurred in the direction of the meridians and at the poles, as expected. Mercator projection proved to be the best one to represent the terrestrial reality, due to its conformity properties, but the distortion at the pole is remarkable.

IMAD analysis permits to verify different regions that share a common value. Every isoline tries to illustrate the spatial variation of a phenomenon. It calculates and represents the differences between the angles measured on the reference surface and on the projection, ranging from 0º (without deformation) to 180º. Isolines were generated at 5º intervals. The results are shown in Figure 4.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 4 - Angular distortion isolines for the studied projections.**

The maximum angular distortion considered was 20º. The highest deformations were obtained in the Goode Homolosine model. The Winkel Tripel projection exhibited the slightest distortions. Mercator projection could not be evaluated for IMAD.

From RAD analysis it is possible to verify the regions where the deformations appear according to the projection. In Figure 5, it can be observed that Goode Homolosine is not
recommended to reproduce South America projection, while the Winkel Tripel model presented to be the most suitable for the mapping of the study area. The other models exhibited distortions at the poles.

Figure 5 - Distortion areas of the projections.

Table 7 summarizes a relative evaluation of the studied parameters. A scale was created to define the most suitable projection for the South America mapping in three levels: Good, Reasonable and Bad. The evaluation showed that the projection with the lowest distortion associated with the shape of the South American continent was the Winkel Tripel projection.

Table 7 - Results obtained with Flex Projecton files.

| Projection type   | Tissot Indicatrix | IMAD   | RAD    |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Mollweide         | Bad               | Bad    | Reasonable |
| Wagner VII        | Bad               | Bad    | Reasonable |
| Eckert IV         | Reasonable        | Reasonable | Good  |
| Goode Homolosine  | Bad               | Bad    | Bad    |
| Winkel Tripel     | Reasonable        | Good   | Good   |
| Mercator          | Good              | -      | Reasonable |

3. Conclusions

The research evaluated cylindrical projections with respect to the area and shape of South America. The results showed that in relation to the surface area, Mollweide model is the closest to the known territorial area. Regarding to the shape of the continent, Winkel Tripel provided the greater conformity. Despite it has smaller deformations of area and shape, Eckert IV reached the closest result for the total official area. The decision was made based on Table 7 results. The developments of the models were personal contributions from their authors based on theoretical information and on their perceptions, experiences, interests and knowledge of cartographic projection systems. The decision of which model should be used is in the hands of the human beings. The role of the map model is basically to assist the specialists, ensuring quality, organization and documentation of the decision analysis process, validating value judgments, investigating conflicting goals, sharing understanding about issues, and often promoting consensus. According to the exposed facts, it could be concluded that the mapping results were satisfactory and supported the use of methodologies and the usage of the software Flex Projection and ArcGIS in the analysis of the representation of a particular region of the terrestrial surface.
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