

Foreword

High mountain areas belong to the last places on Earth, where natural environment has hardly been changed due to human impact and where vast regions have been preserved nearly intact. Moreover, high mountains are relatively poorly studied, although increasingly more intensively penetrated areas of the world. Therefore, it deems necessary to recognize functioning of natural environment of such regions, as well as the means and results of human activity. The results of studies of scientists representing different branches of natural sciences, including geomorphology and geoecology, can provide a basis for elaborating more effective methods of protection of high mountain regions under conditions of increasing anthropopression and, particularly, still developing tourist infrastructure. Prediction of future environmental changes in these areas is also likely.

This volume of *Landform Analysis* includes papers presented during the international conference on *Geoecological Problems of High Mountains*, which was held at Tatranska Lomnica in the High Tatra Mountains, Slovak Republic, 15–18 September, 2009. The conference was organized under the auspices of the Association of Polish Geomorphologists, Association of Slovak Geomorphologists, TANAP, and the Polish Association for Landscape Ecology. The meeting was attended by more than 60 persons representing Carpathian countries, mostly Poland and Slovakia. Particular attention was paid to the causes and results of the damaging windstorm of 19th November, 2004, on the southern slopes of the High Tatra Mountains.

Among twenty papers published in this issue of *Landform Analysis*, eleven were written by Polish, seven by Slovak, one by Bulgarian and one by Romanian scientists. These papers deal mostly with the Tatra Mountains (14 papers), as well as other high mountain regions, like the Himalayas, Scandinavian Mountains, Romanian Carpathians, and mountainous regions of Bulgaria and Greece. The topics of papers included in this volume cover different aspects of inanimated nature and its relationships with animated nature as well:

- changes of geoecological belts in high mountain areas in the Holocene, record of changes preserved in landforms and sediments;
- role of recent climate changes in the transformation of natural environment of high mountain areas, with special attention paid to extreme events;
- course of geomorphic processes in high mountains due to changes in land use; its reflection in relief, vegetation cover and water circulation;
- problem of human impact on natural processes active in high mountains, particularly in areas covered by different natural protection measures;
- methods of studies of natural environmental changes in high mountains.

We do hope that this volume of *Landform Analysis* will enhance our knowledge of such extraordinary places on Earth like high mountains.

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Guest Editors

