

Preface

The present volume of “Prace Geograficzne” No. 175 has been issued in 2024, which is the year when the Institute of Geography and Spatial Management (IGSM) celebrated the 175th anniversary of establishment as the second chair of geography in Europe, after that at the University of Berlin. The jubilee was celebrated with many events, organized throughout the year, aimed at expressing gratitude to the geographical ancestors of the Institute’s community for all their enormous efforts during the time when Poland did not exist on the map of Europe, despite many difficulties and their great sacrifices. One of the aforementioned events was the International Conference “Earth as a Human-Environmental System: Challenges and Dynamics”, which took place from 6th to 8th May, 2024, and was followed by conference trips on 9th May, 2024. The papers included in the present volume address selected issues discussed during the conference. Three of the Authors: Prof. Chiara Rabbiosi from the University of Padova, Italy, Dr. Estela Nadal-Romero from the Pyrenean Ecology Institute of the Spanish National Research Council in Zaragoza, Spain and Prof. Stefan Brönnimann from the University of Bern, Switzerland, were keynote speakers during the plenary session that opened the conference. Prof. Josef Strobl from the University of Salzburg and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Austria, participated in the conference as a special guest, as he had been awarded the Merentibus Medal by the Senate of the Jagiellonian University in 2024 for great services rendered to the university, and in particular to IGSM, in the field of GIS studies development. The paper by Prof. Bolesław Domański, Prof. Grzegorz Micek and Agnieszka Świgost-Kaposci, M.Sc. presents research conducted in the Department of Regional Development of IGSM to celebrate the 45th anniversary of its establishment in 1979 as the Department of Industry Geography; the name was changed to the present one in 2000.

The papers included in the present volume concentrate around various current environmental and socio-economic issues that are interconnected, namely: climate change effects, the impact of global environmental changes on soils, contemporary tourism issues, geospatially focused citizen participation, and the relationships between the employment of temporary and foreign workers and the recent development of export-oriented manufacturing in Poland. Geography is a science that enables us to understand the world around us as a system and to observe the

numerous processes which decide about its state. Global environmental change is a challenge that citizens worldwide must comprehend in order to accept the unpopular decisions which have to be taken to protect the Earth. This common understanding must be based on sound scientific knowledge. Therefore, the papers included in the current volume present the issues relevant to future sustainable human-environmental interactions, which are rooted both in previous geographical studies and past environmental changes. The paper by S. Brönnimann summarizes the challenge of climate change detection over the past 50 years as well as the past 300 years. It addresses long-term regional trends in temperature and atmospheric circulation and briefly presents historical climate reconstructions. Climate change is one of the soil hazards discussed in the paper by E. Nadal-Romero et al. However, most studies indicate that land use and land cover changes, along with land management, exert a greater impact on soil organic carbon than the direct effects of climate change. Contemporary tourism is expanding its impact and transforming into diverse spatial and social configurations, as presented in the paper by C. Rabbiosi. Interdisciplinary geographical knowledge, however, can deepen the understanding of tourism's complex impact on space and place in the context of global challenges, including climate change. J. Strobl shows in his paper that successful participation in societal processes and effective contributions to decisions requires informed opinions, which often need orientation within and assessment of spatial context. These are hallmarks of an open and democratic society, which will have to face and solve global environmental problems, mainly within the local context. The final paper by B. Domański et al. examines current processes in the industrial sector in Poland linked to employment issues. These issues, in turn, are linked to migrations triggered by both the political situation and environmental stress. All the papers published in the present volume contribute to a better understanding of the numerous links and processes that exist among elements of nature and between nature and human activity, which form the essence of geographic studies. The papers also show the research perspectives for the future, as geography has a great potential to support actions aimed at mitigating global environmental changes and promoting sustainable development.

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