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## FOREWORD

Mountain areas are characterized by the most specific and complex forms of the landscape. Natural and anthropogenic elements decide about it. In contrast, areas of the valleys to the upper limit of grazing areas have very specific interactions between human activities and natural processes in the landscape. An example might be shepherding in the Małopolska Carpathians. As a result of decline in the number of sheep occurs not only the loss of jobs in shepherding and processing of the sheep products but also the disappearance of mountain clearings as part of the diverse landscape and space and viewpoints, which constitute tourist attractiveness of these areas with simultaneous threat to endemic species, closely associated with sheep grazing such as spiss saffron or crocus – one of the most important symbols of the Polish mountains.

The quoted example shows the diversity of those areas where it is hard to carry out changes and lead investment projects. On the one hand due to the physiographic conditions, on the other hand to the specific nature of local communities. Concepts for the mountains should be implemented taking into account their “complex specificity”. These areas need huge expenditures on infrastructure and safety measures for making full use of their potential. The difficulty which was encountered at the stage of designing were not topographical and climatic conditions, but public opposition practically making impossible the purchase of land for a new, much-needed infrastructure.

Mountain areas, concepts for their development and protection require still enormous work of different groups of professionals. Therefore, we are very pleased that such outstanding group of scientists decided to lean on selected problems of the Polish mountains and to publish their papers in the fourth issue of *Geomatics, Landmanagement and Landscape* journal. These papers highlight the need for innovative scientific research in the above range, which would be supported by the efforts of politicians and investors aimed to open up the Polish mountains to the masses of enthusiasts of their countryside and specificity. This issue contains interesting results of research on some economic and natural aspects of mountains, the role of tourism infrastructure in sustainable development and the local integration, weight of mineral extraction or issues related to tourism. We are confident that these articles will provide interesting reading – a contribution to the exchange of scientific ideas and valuable research implementation and application initiatives.

*Stanisław Hodorowicz, Senator of the Republic of Poland*  
*Urszula Litwin*