

Foreword

This special GRF issue contains a selection of papers presented at the conference of the IGU Commission on Changing Rural Systems, held in Jerusalem in December 1991. The central theme of the conference was *Harmony and Conflict in Rural and Ex-Urban Space*. Even though much can be said about harmony and complementarity between rural and urban land uses, it is not too surprising that this selection deals mostly with conflicts rather than harmony.

Troughton's keynote address amply illustrates this point. Taking a broad historical perspective, his message is that we must adopt means for avoiding conflicts in the ways we utilize our resources. The three papers which follow provide specific examples and approaches to the conflicts in the urban fringe of three northern European countries: Britain, the Netherlands, and Finland. The approaches, however, are varied. Pacione's contribution focuses on the interaction amongst the 'actors' (e.g., government, councillors, estate agents, developers and planners) taking part in the land use 'game'. Van den Berg, on the other hand, focuses on the process itself: the struggle between intensive agriculture and residential demand and possible alternative ways to solve it, while Vartiainen is concerned with the largely uncontrolled dispersed housing, which takes advantage of ambiguous policies of local government, on landscape and ecology near urban agglomerations.

Two other contributions consider problems on the national level, rather than limit themselves to the urban fringe. Both focus on the implications of the changing rural-urban balance. The thesis presented by Tan is that the official policy aimed at reducing rural-urban gaps has resulted in 'a new kind of dualism' in densely-settled China, while Naukarinen et al., in their study of sparsely-settled Finland, are mainly concerned with dualism in a spatial sense, namely, with the future implications of rural depopulation and demographic concentration.

The only article which chooses to present the theme of harmony rather than conflict is that of Amiran. Significantly, this is because this is the only study which is not focused on the urban-rural fringe. It deals, rather, with desert agriculture in a remote part of Israel, where benefits outweigh the harshness of the resources.

The other papers selected for presentation here deal with methodology. De Villiers' paper presents a hydrological model for measuring rural river flows generated by urban development in South Africa. Van Vuüren and Sappingo-Kumankumah (Canada) provide an economic model which is aimed at minimiz-

ing losses and maximizing benefits of prime land preservation. Rusanen et al. (Finland) offer a cartographic tool, i.e., a mapping method used for defining rural areas. Akkerman (Canada) presents a demographic tool, a GIS-based method for estimating spatio-temporal change, while Xiang and Furuseth (USA) also present a GIS-based model. Its objective is to promote cooperation among rival resource users by identifying potential sources of conflicts and help to solve them before the crisis stage is encountered.

Finally, we included in this issue invited contributions by Fraser, Hart and Amiran, each of whom were asked to present their opinions on some of the main research aspects of the themes in the conference. The presentation of personal viewpoints is not a standard practice of scientific journals, and is not included in regular GRF issues. We felt, however, that their inclusion in this special issue will help to sharpen our central theme. The viewpoints, which form the last section of this issue, are presented largely unaltered.

It is unfortunate that because of shortage of space and the editorial selection policy, it was impossible to include in this issue all the papers which were submitted for publication. The editors would like to acknowledge all those who submitted manuscripts as well as the referees who assisted in the evaluation of the papers. The reviewers' cooperation and their effective responses were instrumental in the selection process. It is they who made sure that this collection of articles does not compromise quality for coherence. However, it must be emphasized that they do not share responsibility with the editors for any of defects that are found in this issue.