

Introduction

Dear readers,
the book which you are going to read, tries to raise a question, and hopefully suggest some answers as to what the current challenges of the central european area are. It was prepared as a follow-up to the 3rd year of international interdisciplinary conference titled *Our Common Present: Current Challenges of Central Europe* held in April 2013 in Prague. A social sciences' perspective on the human-environment relationship is emphasized in the individual chapters due to the scope of the conference and the long-term interest of the editors. The book starts with a short introductory essay on what Central Europe is. This essay is followed by eight peer-reviewed chapters, the first one trying to summarize the content of this book, its message and some debates about Central Europe. Together, thirteen authors from five countries present their selection and understanding of important current challenges of Central Europe, both in case studies and wider theoretical reflections.

We would like to use this introduction to say many thanks to the authors of the chapters and all of the people who helped us with the preparation of this book. We also would like to acknowledge the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague and Faculty of Economics, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice for their support.

We wish you a good reading experience and we hope that this book will bring a lot of inspiration for your own reflections on Central Europe, global challenges, socio-cultural changes, the environment, sustainability, and our common present in general.

Jan Vávra, Miloslav Lapka, Eva Cudlínová
October 2014