Preface

The thematic issue you are holding in your hands is a selection of papers presented at the 7th Study Conference on BALTEX which took place on the Swedish island of Öland from 10–14 June 2013. It was a very special event: it was the final conference for the BALTEX programme, and it was here that the successor programme Baltic Earth was launched in the presence of H. M. King Carl XVI Gustaf, King of Sweden. With this conference on Öland, we have returned to Sweden where the first BALTEX Study Conference had taken place in 1995 on Gotland. The conference was attended by 120 participants from 14 countries, mostly from countries in the Baltic Sea drainage basin: Sweden, Finland, Russia, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Denmark, but also from the Netherlands, France, Italy, UK and the US. In total, 110 contributions were presented, with 65 oral and 45 presentations posters, spanning the scope of BALTEX research: water and energy cycles, climate variability and change, water management and extremes, and biogeochemical cycles under anthropogenic influence. Most of the contributions addressed cross-discipline topics, underlining the interdisciplinary nature of the conference and BALTEX in general.

The idea of BALTEX was born and brought to life about twenty years ago. The intention was to install a European research programme within the newly designed Global Energy and Water Cycle Experiment (GEWEX), with the Baltic Sea drainage basin as a challenging region to investigate the water and energy cycles in a major continental-scale catchment. Since then, a lot has happened. Projects were designed and executed, data were collected and analyzed, papers were written, networks and friendships were formed. With time, merited people left the programme for new challenges, and new people came, bringing in new ideas and networks. After about 10 years, Phase II was launched, extending the scope to climate variability and change, provision of tools for water management and coping with extreme events, biogeochemical changes, and more applied and societal topics like education and outreach. Now, after twenty years of successful research and scientific networking, BALTEX was terminated at this conference, as scheduled.

At the same time, the conference was a stepping stone for Baltic Earth. The new programme stands firmly in the BALTEX tradition of fostering the free collaboration between research groups from different countries and scientific disciplines in response to common research questions. Baltic Earth inherits the BALTEX network, infrastructure and scientific legacy, but will have its own slightly modified agenda (see www.baltic-earth.eu).

The selected papers in this volume reflect the interdisciplinary approach and at the same time symbolize the transition from the 'old' BALTEX to the 'young' Baltic Earth generation: both communities are represented by authors in this issue.

We would like to thank the Polish editors of OCEANOLOGIA for giving us the opportunity to publish our conference proceedings here for the second time, after 2011, and for the smooth and professional processing. As Baltic Earth will continue the tradition of conferences similar to BALTEX, we are looking forward to a possible new collaboration in a few years.

Marcus Reckermann
and the conference organizers