



Message from the Director-General

The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature was established in April 2001 by the Government of Japan as an inter-university research institute to promote integrated research in the field of global environmental studies. RIHN's objective is to define, conduct and debate integrative research capable of describing the true dynamism of Earth phenomena and humanity's place in it. To this end, RIHN solicits, funds and hosts fixed-term research projects on key areas of interaction between humanity and nature.

In 2011 RIHN celebrated its first decade of activity. Publication of *the RIHN Encyclopedia of Global Environmental Studies* demonstrates RIHN's impressive accomplishments in the realm of cognitive science to date. But we must look to the future. In our next decade, we have set our sights on several key tasks that are critical to the progress of contemporary environmental studies.

We reaffirm our commitment to conduct coordinated, problem-centered, context-specific, and multi-dimensional science. In 2011 we established the Core Research Hub in order to promote synthesis of the established domain-based projects, and to stimulate academy-society links that lead us from descriptive to design science. This endeavor has brought us into close communication and early steps

of collaboration with several important international organizations and networks with consonant goals. Such partnerships affirm our sense of urgency of the need for a new kind of environmental intelligence.

RIHN is taking substantial steps to amplify its capacity as a center of environmental study. Now that an interactive joint academic base, or hyperbase, has gotten up to full speed, we will further expand the functions and roles of inter-university research. In 2012 we also launch a project to create a network-based repository of project data. Such endeavors allow us to pursue more substantial and effective collaborations with our partners in Japan and around the world.

As we advance in our second decade, we renew our determination to make innovative society-science research projects supported by the most colorful and diverse spectrum of collaborations. In reviewing this prospectus, I believe you will see that RIHN is a unique research institute working in a field of urgent, global concern. Your continued support and guidance are greatly appreciated.

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TACHIMOTO Narifumi

Director-General
Research Institute for Humanity and Nature



1. Breezeway between buildings 2. Main entrance hall 3. The *hanare*, or floating room, lies over a small pond 4. Basement laboratories

1	2
3	4



The small cluster of buildings above, and inset, is the RIHN House with one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments for guest researchers and their families.



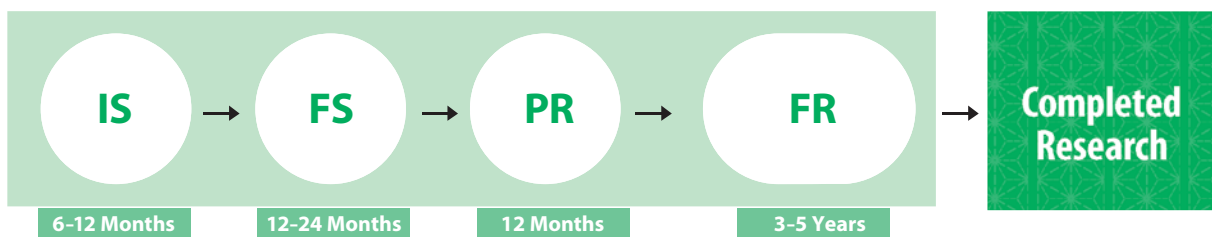
Philosophy and Structure

The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature is a national research institute established by the Government of Japan in 2001. RIHN's objective is to conduct integrative research on key areas of interaction between humanity and nature. RIHN solicits, funds, and hosts research projects lasting from between three to five years. Projects conduct high quality basic research; they are always multi-disciplinary and based on multiple methodologies. All projects are subject to a rigorous course of internal and external review.

There is an ever-increasing need for accurate and flexible knowledge of the world around, for coordinated, problem-centered, context-specific, and multi-dimensional science. Such knowledge should cross disciplinary boundaries and encompasses novel units of analysis and so correspond to the real dynamism of ecological processes and their intersections with human activity and institutions at multiple levels.*

At RIHN we seek concepts, theories and mechanisms capable of describing and enabling transformation of human-environment interactions. We use the term *futurability*, a translation of a Japanese word combining the ideographs for 'future' and 'potential', to express the wide range of possibility in future development. Similarly, RIHN research is increasingly transdisciplinary in that it seeks to redefine the role of science in society, improve dialogue between different traditions of knowledge, and stimulate local, national and international collaborations in the design and production of knowledge concerning key social and environmental problems.

Research projects are conducted within one of two structures. **Domain-based projects** conduct basic research within one of five research domains that reflect 'root metaphors' with meaning beyond single disciplines or fields of study: Circulation, Resources, Diversity, Ecosophy and Ecohistory. The thematic focus of each domain is described in the introduction to its respective project pages.



* Niles, D. and N. Tachimoto. 2012. *Science and the experience of nature*. RIHN Working Paper No. 2. RIHN: Kyoto.



How should human societies act to enhance ecological integrity and improve human well-being in tandem, now and in the future? This is not simply a matter of defining the appropriate science and policy. Indeed, science and policy are liable to remain ineffectual unless they draw on deeper waters.*

After 10 years of domain-based research, the **Core Research Hub** was developed to achieve two related goals. First, the Hub is to enhance RIHN's capacity to benefit from its current and completed research projects. The Hub therefore actively facilitates dialogue and interaction between research projects and domains, encouraging critical reflection on key themes in international environmental research in relation to ongoing project objectives and completed project results.

Second, the Hub is to facilitate new research proposals emerging from such internal dialogue. These **RIHN Initiative projects** advance RIHN research beyond the fields of the descriptive sciences and into the realm of **design science**. Informed by international trends in transdisciplinary research, design science should propose solutions to social-environmental problems that are informed by lived social practices and values and that increase human societal flexibility and capability.

Initiative projects therefore emphasize the co-design and co-production of knowledge. In their scope and methodologies, initiative-based projects stimulate dialogue between different realms of observation, action and aspiration, generating new understanding of the causes of, and possible solutions to, environmental problems.



The challenge of addressing environmental change in a proactive manner, and offering effective mitigations or sensible adaptations, brings one face-to-face with human culture. Empirical understandings of environmental change must be brought directly into dialogue with human experience as inhabitants of, and agents in, perpetually changing environments.

Our subject is always ultimately *humanity in the midst of a dynamic, yet changeable nature*.*

A Brief History of RIHN

