

## Program 3: Designing Lifeworlds of Sustainability and Wellbeing

### **Program Goal**

Our “lifeworlds” are composed of the physical spaces and socio-cultural spheres of our everyday lives. They are continually reproduced, reimagined, and evolving through an interactive and reflexive relationship with society, culture, and nature. Program 3 proposes research aimed at illuminating reciprocal linkages between diverse rural and urban lifeworlds and contributing to the solution of sustainability problems by working with various societal partners such as governments, companies, and citizen groups. Special emphasis is placed on envisioning sustainable futures that improve wellbeing and gauging their feasibility.

### **Mission**

More than 60% of the world’s population resides in Asia and the regions surrounding it. Over a third of global environmental activity occurs there. Within these places lies an incredible diversity of cultures, histories, societies, economies, livelihoods, and ecologies. It is also affected by myriad global and local environmental issues such as population increase, air, water, soil, and coastal pollution, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, and biodiversity loss. At the same time, growing wealth disparity, social isolation, rising levels of poverty, and the disappearance of traditional culture and knowledges are emerging.

Within these processes, the combination of migration between the countryside and cities, and rural depopulation with urban concentration is accompanied by rapid socio-cultural change, resource over-use, and the deterioration of the natural environment. Both urban and rural lifeworlds are disintegrating rapidly. Consequently, through the reconstruction of the lifeworld concept and by highlighting the reciprocal linkages between rural and urban spaces, Program 3 designs lifeworlds of sustainability and wellbeing and co-creates concrete pathways for their realization.

In these same places, diverse world-views and experiences related to the ways in which humanity and nature can exist have accumulated. Pre-existing, yet latent, diverse socio-cultural elements, such as livelihood styles, lay knowledge, conflict resolution strategies, and the vitality of the people themselves can be called upon to address problems and help to chart a course toward possible future societies. Program 3 builds upon these experiences and knowledges of human-nature interaction to propose concrete changes needed to achieve a sustainable society.

Through the transformations and frameworks leading to sustainable urban and rural lifeworld design, the existing economic systems, markets, and political decision making systems will also require fundamental shifts in the way they are conceived. However, Program 3 will not investigate top-down approaches to system change, but will work with local residents, government officials, companies, citizen groups and other various stakeholders to propose sustainable alternatives and gauge their feasibility.

In order not to run the risk of developing proposals that are only applicable to specific regions or sites, Program 3 will aim for research results that are generalizable, but retain their diversity.