



Message from the Director-General

The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) was established in April 2001 to conduct integrated research in the field of global environmental studies. In 2004, RIHN became one of the original members of the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU), an Inter-University Research Institute Corporation.

Environmental degradation can be understood as an imbalance in interactions between human beings and natural systems. Our mission is, therefore, to conduct solution-oriented research aimed at exploring how these interactions between humanity and nature ought to be. To achieve this mission, RIHN has been conducting interdisciplinary research spanning the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences, and in recent years, has developed towards transdisciplinary research that involves collaboration with various stakeholders in society.

Since its establishment, RIHN researchers have formulated creative projects to address social needs in diverse fields of environmental interaction. Following an external review of research activities and organizational structures,

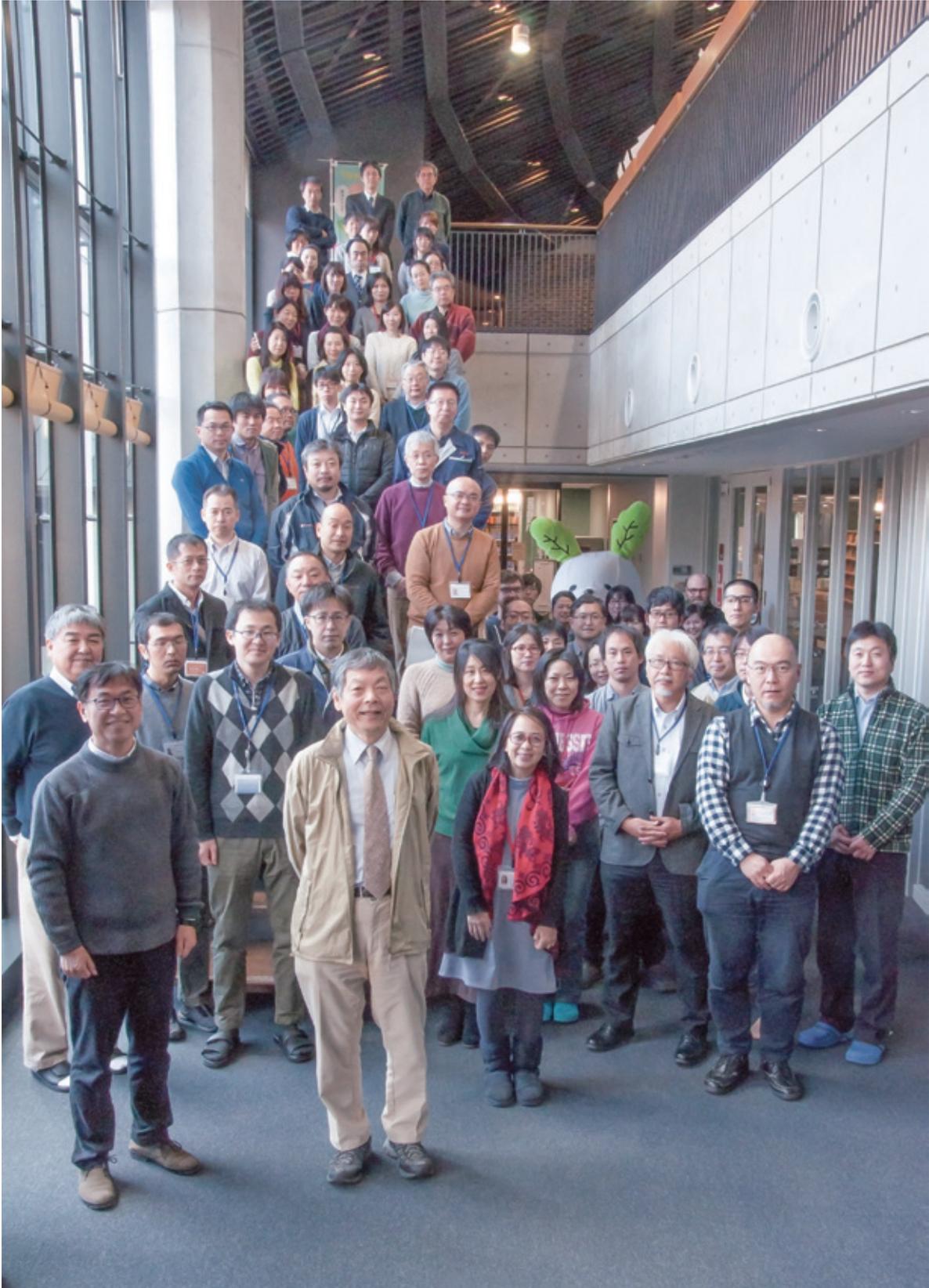
in fiscal year 2015 we reformed the ways in which we conduct and promote research projects in order to enhance coordination and integration of the projects for achieving the goals of the RIHN mission. As part of this reform, in April of 2016 (beginning of fiscal year 2016), we launched a new research initiative to achieve “Transformation Towards Sustainable Futures in Complex Human-Nature Systems in Asia.” For this purpose, we started a set of Research Programs, a Core Program, and the RIHN Center. With a new structure in place, we are now pursuing our initiative through enhanced collaboration within our institute, across the diverse research community, and with society in general.

To enhance international activities of RIHN, we are also collaborating with the international research platform Future Earth, which aims to integrate global environmental change research for achieving global sustainability.

In fiscal year 2018 we are fully implementing these new research initiatives.

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Director-General
Research Institute for Humanity and Nature





Above: WADE Shin-ichi, Short summer, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan

Bottom: OSHIUMI Keiichi, Old market, Siem Reap, Cambodia

RIHN Philosophy and Approach

For several decades, researchers have attempted to find solutions to the environmental problems that now confront human communities at all scales, but despite extensive research in individual disciplines, many environmental problems have remained unresolved. There is therefore a need to go beyond partial descriptions of discrete environmental problems towards holistic understandings of the underlying causes of these problems and for integrated approaches to their solutions.

The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature is a national research institute established by the Government of Japan in 2001 and it is part of the National Institutes for the Humanities. RIHN research starts from the premise that environmental problems are rooted in human society, culture, and values. The goal of RIHN is to seek concepts, theories and mechanisms capable of describing and enabling transformation of human-environment interactions. This implies that RIHN research involves a normative dimension, driven by questions such as what the relationship between humanity and nature ought to be like. To this end, RIHN solicits, funds, and hosts integrative research projects investigating environmental change problems in specific settings. Research projects are undertaken by interdisciplinary teams at RIHN, partner institutions, and societal stakeholders in Japan and abroad.

We at RIHN believe that research ought to contribute to the search for solutions to real-world problems and, therefore, we promote a co-design and co-production approach where researchers and societal actors join hands in exploring problems and developing new framings and possible solutions. 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 new multi-actor local, national and international collaborations. This approach needs to draw on multiple, diverse perspectives from a range of disciplines including the natural and social sciences, arts and humanities, and engineering and design.

Science cannot be uniformly applied to the world but should instead enable solutions to social-environmental problems that are informed by lived social practices and communal values. RIHN research is developed globally, but with Asia as a core focus area. Not only is Asia's impact on global development increasingly conspicuous, but at the same time it is also home to many examples of long-term cultural-ecological continuity that need to be understood in terms of their own significance to regional dynamics. RIHN research crucially depends on long-established networks in Asia and contributes to transdisciplinary initiatives in the region, among others by hosting the Regional Centre for Future Earth in Asia.

RIHN research is guided by the following three objectives:

- Conduct research that analyzes the interaction between humanity and nature and critically examines the sustainability of human societies, based on past RIHN research and international literature and experiences
- Apply research results to solve real-world sustainability problems
- Promote solution-oriented research on environmental challenges that is co-designed and co-produced in close collaboration with societal stakeholders

While other regions are not excluded, the primary geographical focus of RIHN research is on Asia. More broadly, RIHN strives to deploy an Asian perspective in its research on global environmental change