

## Comment Form

February 16, 2017

<b>Title of the Program</b>	<b>Societal Transformation under Environmental Change</b>
<b>Program Director</b>	<b>SUGIHARA Kaoru</b>
<p><b>Program Comments Summaries of the EREC:</b></p> <p>The Committee was impressed with the stimulating presentation of the mission statement, with its well-structured framework. The historical perspective is particularly illuminating and interesting: the long time frame is very useful in putting sustainability into perspective – for example what would be the significance of the Northeastern Japan earthquake and tsunami on a thousand-year scale? The emphasis on the Asia-specific nature of historical changes in the region was also appreciated. A challenge to be addressed is how to include a future dimension or how to relate the experiences of history to the future.</p> <p>The Committee felt some of the key concepts are in need of further clarification. “Transformation” is used in a relatively vague way and members wondered if this is understood as a neutral term or if it implies a certain direction and therefore a moral dimension? The relation between environmental change and social transformation also needs to be understood more dynamically: surely, this is not a unidirectional relation, but rather the two are mutually constitutive.</p> <p>It was pointed out that growth and sustainability are not always mutually exclusive and may perhaps better not be framed as necessarily in opposition. In particular, the role of technology is important in this context as IT and the digital environment are important drivers of societal transformation.</p> <p>Finally, a key question is what role there is for transdisciplinarity in Program 1. Perhaps the historical perspective of the program provides an opportunity to explore forms of transdisciplinarity that go beyond the relatively common engagement with rural communities.</p>	