

The Gunnerus Award in Sustainability Science goes to a holistic thinker

The Gunnerus Award in Sustainability Science for 2021 has been awarded to Professor Jianguo (Jack) Liu at Michigan State University.

"I am deeply honoured and most grateful to receive this prestigious award," says Professor Jianguo Liu. "This great honour also belongs to my students, postdoctoral associates, colleagues at Michigan State University, collaborators, funding agencies, and numerous others including my friends and family who have helped me in the past several decades."

The Gunnerus Award in Sustainability Science is an international research prize of NOK 1 million. It is jointly awarded every other year by the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters (DKNVS) and NTNU. <https://www.dknvs.no/gunnerusprisen/?lang=en>

Professor Liu holds the Rachel Carson Chair in Sustainability at Michigan State University in the United States. He takes a holistic approach to complex challenges where people interact with the environment.

"Professor Liu scores high on all the criteria that are absolutely central to the Gunnerus Award. He is outstanding in the areas of research, social impact and environmental footprint," says May Thorseth, president at DKNVS.

Professor Liu has made extraordinary scientific advances in sustainability, stated the scientific committee's recommendation, which was unanimous.

Man and nature are one

Liu coined the groundbreaking concept of "telecoupling" (socioeconomic-environmental interactions over distances, <http://telecoupling.org>) and is the leader in developing and applying the telecoupling framework to untangle the complexity of increasing globalization. His team's research shows that human activity in one place on the planet can affect nature and sustainability in completely different places, including those far away. This is how we are all part of a global society.

Professor Liu's overarching message is that no scientific basis exists for distinguishing between humans and nature. The two are inseparable, for better or for worse.

Liu's research helps us deal with the various wounds and scars we expose our planet to.

World leader in integration

Dr. Liu is a world leader in the work of integrating ecology with other disciplines, such as the social sciences, policies and various technologies that can help us understand and promote global sustainability.

His work has led to increased research collaboration, communication, education and knowledge sharing with the general public. He is the founding director of the Center for Systems Integration and Sustainability at Michigan State University.

Liu founded the International Network of Research on Coupled Human and Natural Systems (CHANS-Net.org), which promotes collaboration and communication among researchers from multiple disciplines worldwide.

Liu has been involved with some 380 publications, 26 of which have appeared in *Science* and *Nature*. He is one of the most cited researchers in his field, with a google h-index of 86 and 30 305 google citations.

Proposes concrete changes

Liu's scientific findings have contributed to positive environmental changes, especially in China. Examples are the conservation of pandas, better management of protected areas and practically a revolution in environmental protection in the country that has enormous implications for global sustainability and climate change mitigation.

“His critical work with ecological contexts and biological diversity is of great importance. In particular, he’s shown how different disciplines need to work together for sustainable development,” says Anne Borg, rector at NTNU.

The Gunnerus Award in Sustainability aligns well with NTNU's vision of knowledge for a better world. NTNU is committed to UN's sustainability goals and is working systematically to strengthen sustainability in research and education.

Biodiversity

Professor Liu was a coordinating lead author of the global assessment of biological diversity and ecosystems conducted by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). <https://www.ipbes.net>

Before coming to Michigan State University, Liu was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard. He was also a visiting scholar at Harvard, as well as at Stanford and Princeton.

Dr. Liu has received a number of international awards and was elected to the American Philosophical Society (America’s oldest learned society) in 2015.

The Gunnerus Award in Sustainability Science is scheduled to be awarded on Friday 1 October during an event in Trondheim, barring a pandemic-related need to change the plan.

Previous winners of the Gunnerus Award in Sustainability Science are biologist Kamal Bawa, environmental researcher Carl Folke and ecology professor Sandra M. Díaz.

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<https://www.dknvs.no/gunnerusprisen/?lang=en>

<https://www.ntnu.edu>



Professor Jianguo Liu.

Photo: Michigan State University Center for Systems Integration and Sustainability



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