

# **Carl Folke** receives Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences 2022



Carl Folke  
Photo: Bram Belloni

Amsterdam, 7 June 2022 – Carl Folke, director of the Beijer Institute for Ecological Economics and founder and chair of the board of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, will be awarded the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences 2022. The award honours his pioneering role in the integrated approach to sustainability issues. The environmental scientist was one of the first to argue that society and nature must be examined as a whole in order to maintain the resilience of Earth's social and ecological systems.

The Heineken Prizes are the Netherlands' most prestigious international science prizes. Every two years they are awarded to five distinguished researchers. The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences is responsible for the nomination and selection process. During the first week of June, a 2022 laureate will be announced every weekday. Previous laureates of the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences include Corinne Le Quéré (2020) and Paul Hebert (2018). The award was established in 1990 by Alfred H. Heineken.

## **Folke translates scientific insights into concrete sustainable solutions for governments and businesses**

### **About the study**

Folke laid the foundation for the theory that describes the resilience of social and ecological systems. Resilience is seen as the degree to which ecosystems can recover after disruption. Resilience defines the capacity to live with changing conditions, and to cope with predictable and unpredictable events, such as increasingly frequent extreme weather events. The loss of species due to the way in which humans interact with nature reduces the resilience of the entire terrestrial ecosystem and, therefore, the certainty of its continued existence. Early in his career, Folke realised that you cannot solve this problem by considering humans as external factors affecting ecosystems, as was common at the time. People are part of the ecosystems they are changing. By linking the concept of resilience to these so-called social-ecological systems, Folke makes the case that the world can only be improved by starting with ourselves.

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Folke explores how this resilience can be increased by bridging the gap between science and policy. For example, he is seeking sustainable solutions with various governments and companies. He explains: *'We are studying municipalities that have made a successful transformation to sustainable nature management. That knowledge in turn can be used to help other municipalities, counties, and countries.'*

## **Jury praises Folke's visionary view of sustainability science**

Folke has played a crucial role in a cross-disciplinary approach to more sustainable use of the earth's resources. The jury, with chair Wim van der Putten, department head of Terrestrial Ecology NIOO-KNAW and special professor of Functional Biodiversity at WUR, underlines that thanks to Folke's vision, thinking about the sustainability challenge has changed: life on planet Earth is not limitless. He was at the forefront of influential concepts such as the ecological footprint, resilience, and Earth stewardship. In addition, he has brought science and policy together and ensures mutual knowledge sharing and understanding. The establishment of, among other things, the Stockholm Resilience Centre allows scientists from very different disciplines to work together to solve sustainability issues on a global level.

## **About Carl Folke**

Carl Folke (Stockholm, 1955) studied business economics and biology, and received his PhD in ecological economics from Stockholm University in 1990. In 1991, he became deputy director of the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, part of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. In 1997, he became professor of Natural Resource Management at Stockholm University. In 2007, he founded the Stockholm Resilience Centre, together with Johan Rockström, where he has been scientific director ever since. He also became director of the Beijer Institute in 2007. In addition to the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences, awards he has received include the Sustainability Science Award from the Ecological Society of America, the Planet and Humanity Medal from the International Geographical Union, and the Oceanographic Institute of Monaco's Grand Medal Albert I in Science.