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Environmental Justice Scholar Joan Martinez-Alier Named 2023 Holberg Prize Laureate

(BERGEN, Norway) – Today, [the Holberg Prize](#)—one of the largest international prizes awarded annually to an outstanding researcher in the humanities, social sciences, law or theology—named Catalan scholar Joan Martinez-Alier as its 2023 Laureate.

Joan Martinez-Alier is Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology, at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (ICTA-UAB). He will receive the award of NOK 6,000,000 (approx. EUR 550,000) during an 8 June ceremony at the University of Bergen, Norway.

Martinez-Alier receives the Prize for his ground-breaking research in ecological economics, political ecology and environmental justice. He is known for criticizing established economic theory and traditional approaches to economic growth. Martinez-Alier is also a major figure and leading public intellectual in the burgeoning movement for 'degrowth'.

Degrowth emphasizes the need to reduce global consumption and production and advocates the replacement of GDP as the indicator of prosperity with measurements of social and environmental well-being. This is seen as necessary to achieve a socially just and ecologically sustainable society.

“My research objective is to show that economic growth and changes in the flows of energy and materials in the economy, and the growing number of environmental injustices are two sides of the same coin,” says the Laureate. “My main purpose is to make visible the many environmental conflicts around the world.”

Martinez-Alier is the co-director of the [Atlas of Environmental Justice](#), which to date has documented about 4,000 social conflicts caused by environmental degradation or by unequal distribution of environmental resources. The Atlas aims to make environmental conflicts visible, point to government repression against environmentalists, and facilitate research on the ‘corporate social irresponsibility’ of transnational corporations.

Two of Martinez-Alier’s most influential books are *Ecological Economics: Energy, Environment and Society* (with Klaus Schlüpmann, 1987) and *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (2002). *Ecological Economics* traces the history of ecological critiques of economics from the 1860s to the 1940s. It articulated a different tradition of economic thought and was a major contribution to the development of political ecology. In 2023, Martinez-Alier will publish *Land, Water, Air and Freedom: The Making of World Movements for Environmental Justice*.

“Martinez-Alier has the unusual distinction of both anticipating and actively engaging with the interrelated planetary challenges of poverty, climate change, and food security”, says Holberg Committee Chair Heike Krieger. “His innovative theories and mentorship continue to build the capacity of new scholars and policy makers to address these intersecting crises of global economic life.”

The Nils Klim Prize Awarded to Danish Literary Researcher

The recipient of the 2023 Nils Klim Prize was also announced today. This prize is worth NOK 500 000 (approx. EUR 46.000) and is awarded annually to a young scholar who has excelled in one of the research areas covered by the Holberg Prize. The recipient must be from, or working in, a Nordic country and under the age of 35. The two prizes will be conferred during the same ceremony at the University of Bergen on 8 June.

This year's Nils Klim Prize is awarded to Simona Zetterberg-Nielsen, for her research into the history of the Danish novel, its narrative structure and its fictionality, as well as how literature relates to the world of individual and social experiences. Zetterberg-Nielsen is Associate Professor of Scandinavian Studies at Aarhus University in Denmark. She is also a member of the Danish Young Academy.

"The two most important findings in my research are that the categories of fact and fiction, as we understand them today, only came into being around the 18th century, and as a related discovery, that the novel is the first genre of fiction to emerge," says Zetterberg-Nielsen.

"My research uncovers the historical development of our ability to invent and especially how that developed into the novel genre in Denmark, written in the service of both entertainment and enlightenment," she explains.

The Laureate believes the Nils Klim Prize is a particularly important award, as few research prizes are given in the humanities, social sciences, law and theology.

"Zetterberg-Nielsen points to how fictionality is not limited to literary discourse", says the Nils Klim Committee Chair, Professor Ástráður Eysteinnsson, "for it plays a vital role in everyday conversation – and she is now turning her attention to the ways in which it pertains to science."

"The broad relevance of her impressive scholarship is highlighted by one of the key predicaments of our times," he continues, "namely the unreliability of mankind's ever-broadening technical modes of communication."

About the Holberg Prize

Established by the Norwegian Parliament in 2003, the Holberg Prize is one of the largest annual international research prizes awarded for outstanding contributions to research in the humanities, social science, law or theology. The Prize is funded by the Norwegian Government through a direct allocation from the Ministry of Education and Research to the University of Bergen. Previous Laureates include Julia Kristeva, Jürgen Habermas, Manuel Castells, Onora O'Neill, Cass Sunstein and Paul Gilroy. To learn more about the Holberg Prize, visit: <https://holbergprize.org/en>. For press photos, biography, Committee citation, expert contact information, and more, see: <http://holbergprize.org/en/press-room>.