

**STRICT EMBARGO: 8 JUNE, 2023, 15:00, CEST / 09:00 AM, EDT**

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## **The Holberg Prize conferred upon Professor Joan Martinez-Alier**

**(Bergen, Norway) – Today, the Holberg Prize was conferred upon Professor Emeritus Joan Martinez-Alier, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, by HRH Crown Prince Haakon of Norway.**

At a prestigious award ceremony today in the University Aula in Bergen, Professor Emeritus Joan Martinez-Alier received the international research award from HRH Crown Prince Haakon of Norway.

The Holberg Prize is worth NOK 6 million (approx. EUR 505,000) and is awarded annually for outstanding contributions to research in the humanities, social sciences, law or theology.

‘This generous award from the Holberg Committee and Board places ecological economics and political ecology, and the debates on degrowth, in the academic spotlight and nearer to the center of politics’, said Martinez-Alier. ‘Our main purpose is indeed to make visible the many environmental conflicts that exist around the world, arising from the growth and changes in the social metabolism.’

Martinez-Alier receives the Prize for his outstanding research in these areas over five decades. He is known for criticizing established economic theory and traditional approaches to economic growth, and he is also a major figure and leading public intellectual in the burgeoning movement for degrowth.

In his acceptance speech, Martinez-Alier described how the actual clash between economy and environment has been hidden by a ‘contrived consensus’ on sustainable development. ‘Even worse,’ he said, ‘international democratic limitations on the abuse of the environment are made impossible by increasing inequality and unleashed state power. Effective agreements to prevent environmental damages and achieve respect for human rights are less likely than ever.’

Martinez-Alier also explained how ecological economists use multi-criteria evaluation, as plural values such as ecological values, livelihood values, economic values, sacredness, and indigenous territorial rights cannot be expressed in a single unit of account. ‘Who has the power to simplify complexity and hide injustice and uncertainty?’ he asked. ‘Political science studies power. That is why political ecology studying such conflicts is *political* ecology.’

### **The Nils Klim Prize conferred upon Simona Zetterberg-Nielsen**

Also today, the Nils Klim Prize was conferred upon Danish literary researcher Simona Zetterberg-Nielsen, by Norwegian Minister of Research and Higher Education Ola Borten Moe. This prize is worth NOK 500,000 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 at the time of the nomination deadline.

Zetterberg-Nielsen is Associate Professor of Scandinavian Studies at Aarhus University in Denmark. She is also a member of the Danish Young Academy. She receives the Prize 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.

‘I want to express my gratefulness not only for receiving the prize, but for the Holberg week as a whole – and what it stands for: A celebration of science, and the humanities’, said the Nils Klim Laureate in her acceptance speech.

‘I have made 18th century novels such as *Niels Klim* my subject area, not just for the interest of history itself, but also for the answers to the present and the future that may lie hidden in the past’, Zetterberg-Nielsen explained.

‘A celebration in the name of Holberg’s *Niels Klim* is, therefore, a celebration: 1) of historical beginnings; 2) of science and fiction; and 3) of resistance to mis-information and superstition,’ she continued. ‘I could not be prouder to be the recipient of a prize with that name.’

### About the Holberg Laureate

Joan Martinez-Alier is Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (ICTA-UAB). He holds a PhD in Economics from UAB, where he became professor in its Department of Economics and Economic History in 1976, a position he held until 2009. Martinez-Alier is also professor emeritus at Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLACSO), Ecuador, and he 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.

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 was a visiting scholar at the Free University of Berlin (1980-1981), St Antony’s College, University of Oxford (1984-1985), at Stanford and at UC Davis (1988-1989), and at Yale University (1999-2000). He has served as president of the International Society for Ecological Economics in 2006 and 2007, and was as a member of the Scientific Committee of the European Environment Agency between 2000 and 2008. Since 1990, he has edited the journal *Ecología Política*. Martinez-Alier received the Leontief Prize in 2017 and the Balzan Prize in 2020 as a leading figure in ecological economics and political ecology.

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### About the Holberg Prize

Established by the Norwegian Parliament in 2003, the Holberg Prize is one of the largest annual international research prizes awarded to scholars who have made 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, Paul Gilroy, Griselda Pollock, Martha Nussbaum, and Shelia Jasanoff. To learn more about the Holberg Prize and the call for nominations, visit: <https://holbergprize.org/en>.

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