

“The laureates have shifted the focus to how poor people actually live”

This year, the Riksbank's Economy Prize is awarded to Esther Duflo, Abijit Banerjee and Michael Kremer for their new ways of researching poverty reduction. On Monday, the Royal Academy of Sciences revealed who will receive the Swedish Riksbank's prize in economic science in memory of Alfred Nobel in 2019.

The prize is shared between French Esther Duflo, Indian Abijit Banerjee and American Michael Kremer, for their research on poverty reduction. It is the second time ever a woman receives the economy prize. “The research behind this year's Economics Award has significantly improved our ability to fight global poverty. In just two decades, their new experimental approach has transformed the development economy into a thriving field of research. ”, The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences writes in its motivation.

Miri Stryjan, who is an economist and researcher and teacher in development economics at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, and who has a PhD from Stockholm University, is delighted. - I think it is very positive and absolutely well deserved that Duflo, Banerjee and Kremer receive the economy prize. I hope that this can be a big boost in development economics and that it attracts more researchers and students.

I am especially happy that Esther Duflo gets the award not only because she is a woman, but also because she is relatively young. There is an ongoing discussion about gender imbalances in the field of economics.

Miri Stryjan says that although the researchers did not always write together, both their individual and joint work have had a great influence and contributed a great deal. - The focus of development economics has been shifted from a macro level, where we have discussed why some countries are rich and others are poor and how we should increase the growth of poor countries at the country level, to a micro and individual level, where we talk about how poor people live, reason and make decisions. This has not only led to a humanization of people living in poverty, but also been able to provide answers to what leads some initiatives to work better than others.

She says that Duflo, Banerjee and Kremer had a great influence on her own view of the research field, and that other fields have also begun to use their methods.

- What is unique is that they collaborate with aid organizations as well as other organizations and conduct field experiments, to answer which poverty reduction initiatives work and why. For example, it may be a new study plan that some schools receive and not others. The schools that did not receive the curriculum then become a control group, and the effects of the study plan can be seen more clearly. They have simply borrowed methods from the medical and natural sciences to obtain more credible results.