

WHEN THE WATER RISES

Robert Bosch Junior Professor **Björn Vollan** is investigating how people are dealing with climate change in the most heavily affected regions.

My research is carried out wherever the impact of climate change is already being felt, such as in the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. Our findings show that there is a discrepancy between the forecasts and reports in the media about “climate refugees,” and whether those affected are actually able to leave their homes. Even if they sell everything they own, many can only manage to make it to the poorer districts of the next largest city or a nearby island. My team and I have disproved the theory that the people facing the looming threat of being uprooted become more selfish in order to make sure they acquire the sparsely available resources such as fish or forests. On the contrary, they identify even more with their difficult situation and feel an even stronger

connection to the other members of their group. It is thanks to the Robert Bosch Junior Professorship that I have been able to research these issues. Being able to spend €1 million over five years on a research project is a great vote of confidence. The Junior Professorship has helped me to acquire two further research projects, one from the German Research Foundation and one from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. I’m starting a full professorship at the University of Marburg in Germany in the next few months.

PEOPLE LIVING ON MANMADE ISLANDS

Just how urgent the issue of climate change is was really brought home to me when I visited a group of people in a lagoon who live on islands that they built them-

selves. The islands are less than a meter above sea level. This image really stayed in my mind: wherever you look, there is water, and it’s constantly rising. It really is a scary situation. You are at one with nature, but you’re also at its mercy. It is a place where you can see that climate change is very real.

We, those who are living in rich, industrialized countries, have caused this situation. The “polluter pays” principle should definitely apply to us here. But how can you compensate people for something that has endangered their very existence? This question should give us pause and get us to reduce global warming as soon as possible, even if people associate what is necessary with hardship and cultural change. We are still behaving as though we are unaware of the consequences of our actions. ◀



Water wherever you look. The effects of climate change can already be seen in the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.



“You are one with nature, but you’re also at its mercy.”



Polluter pays: “But how can you compensate people for something that has endangered their very existence?”



Professor Björn Vollan, Environmental and Resource Economist at the University of Marburg, received the Robert Bosch Junior Professorship for “Research into the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources” in 2015. Every year, the Robert Bosch Stiftung grants a five-year Junior Professorship to young scientists from a variety of different disciplines, thus funding research into sustainability.

www.bosch-stiftung.de/en/project/robert-bosch-junior-professorship

PHOTOS: ANDREAS FRIEDLE/ROBERT BOSCH STIFTUNG

Don't be surprised, if everything is upside down. We're celebrating!

A DIGITAL FUTURE FOR EVERYONE

The digital future must be safer and more inclusive. A panel of experts from the United Nations (UN) is making a call for this. The panel conducted a year-long investigation into how increased international cooperation in the digital age can contribute to reaching the United Nations’ sustainable development goals (SDGs). In the “The Age of Digital Interdependence” report, the experts submitted their recommendations to UN Secretary-General **António Guterres** (round photo, center). Along with aiming towards developing a common understanding for the digital future, it is designed to act as the starting point for a worldwide debate.

Some 20 experts contributed to the report. These include philanthropist **Melinda Gates** (photo below, left); Chinese founder of Alibaba, **Jack Ma** (photo, right); the Norwegian Minister of Digitalization Nikolai Astrup; Internet pioneer Vint Cerf from Google; and the former head of ICANN, Fadi Chehadé. Governments and foundations, including the Robert Bosch Stiftung, backed and supported the work of the expert panel.

According to the experts’ estimate, the current instruments and opportunities available are totally insufficient for shaping the digital age in a way that benefits everyone. They are recommending new models for international cooperation. These models are designed to ensure that the benefits of technological advancements outweigh their dangers, that people and nations can be involved, and that human rights and universal values such as respect, humanity, transparency, and sustainability also apply in the digital realm.

digitalcooperation.org

