

MCC Press Release

Look to the small island states!

Countries like Barbados, Mauritius and Fiji are particularly threatened by climate change. But they also might serve as flagships in the transition to greenhouse gas neutrality.

Berlin, 17/02/2020. What could we achieve in climate protection if the government and the population gave it top priority? If there were no resistance from fossil fuel industries at home, and if transport and energy infrastructure would not have to be coordinated with other countries? Such ideal conditions do indeed exist: in small island states like Barbados in the Caribbean, Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, and Fiji in the South Pacific. A new study co-authored at the Berlin-based climate research institute MCC (Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change) shows just what is possible then. It has now been published in the journal *Sustainability*.

“Climate protection in small island states is important for the world, even if it is not significant in terms of quantity,” says [Felix Creutzig](#), co-author and head of the MCC working group Land Use, Infrastructure and Transport. “A global transition towards a carbon-free future needs positive examples and success stories – and it is precisely these countries that might provide them.” Specific development paths, hardly described in previous research literature, were realistic there.

The threat posed by global warming and rising sea levels is particularly obvious to small island states, which, according to the study, increases the readiness for national climate policy. There are three reasons why there is extra leeway for this: the insular nature, urbanisation patterns, and the role of tourism. Using Barbados, Mauritius, and Fiji as examples, the authors calculate that the decarbonisation of transport would be particularly easy to implement via e-mobility, sharing solutions, and an efficient bus line network.

The coastal road is ideal for connecting settlements to public transport. Switching to e-mobility is favourable due to the small area of the country: Fiji, for example, pays 10 percent of its economic output for imported fuel every year, but it would be a one-off investment of only 1.5 percent to convert its infrastructure to electric vehicle charging stations. Furthermore, the visitors from abroad, with their demand for transport, increase the financial and innovative resources, while they also appear open to new solutions. “There are already good approaches in the three countries examined,” reports Zakia Soomauroo, PhD student at the Technical University of Berlin and lead author. “This may send a strong signal to the global community that a zero carbon future is possible.”

About the MCC

The MCC explores sustainable management as well as the use of common goods such as global environmental systems and social infrastructures against the background of climate change. Our seven

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working groups are active in the fields of economic growth and development, resources and international trade, cities and infrastructure, governance and scientific policy advice. The MCC was co-founded by the Mercator Foundation and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK).

Reference of the cited article:

Soomauroo, Z., Blechinger, P., Creutzig, F., 2020, Unique Opportunities of Island States to Transition to a Low-Carbon Mobility System, *Sustainability*

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