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Press Release

Eight young scientists receive Society in Science fellowship

Society in Science, ETH Zurich's worldwide fellowship for outstanding postdoctoral researchers, has selected eight new fellows in research fields ranging from philosophy to applied systems biology

Zurich/Switzerland, June 6, 2012. – *Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship*, a program of ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich) to support outstanding junior scientists, has appointed eight new fellows. Nita Bharti, Karim Bschir, Zi Chen, Michael Fabinyi, Lea Haller, Michael Nash, Julia Sacher and Cheemeng Tan have received the prestigious award that can provide them with up to five years of academic freedom.

The Society in Science fellowship offers a generous personal grant of up to five years for researchers shortly after their PhD. The program belonging to ETH Zurich supports projects throughout the world: fellows can come from anywhere and are able to conduct their research at any institution. Applicants needed to demonstrate exceptional research skills and be prepared to look beyond their own scientific horizon. The eight new fellows are engaged in ecology, marine biology, evolutionary biology, cognitive neurology, computational biology, applied biophysics, biomedical engineering, nano science, history and philosophy.

The fellows:

Dr. Nita Bharti was born in the USA, received a PhD in biology at Penn State University and is currently at Princeton University. Dr. Bharti develops satellite-based methods to quantify human density and movement patterns to assess their impact on human health, particularly in low-income nations. Her work combines remote sensing with dynamic biological models to improve our understanding of the sociological drivers of human health.

Dr. Karim Bschir was born in Switzerland and is currently at ETH Zurich. His research aims at understanding how science deals with different kinds of uncertainty. Dr. Bschir intends to present a classification of scientific uncertainty against the background of a model of predictions in science. He will also analyze whether the concept of "potentiality" might be used to address certain interpretational problems in science and natural philosophy.

Dr. Zi Chen was born in China and is currently at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Chen received his PhD in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at Princeton University. As a Branco Weiss fellow, Dr. Chen will investigate how one-dimensional information coded in DNA translates into three-dimensional shapes. Understanding these mechanisms will facilitate biomedical research and inspire novel design principles for programmable nanofabrication techniques and bio-mimetic devices.

Dr. Michael Fabinyi was born in Australia and obtained his PhD from the Australian National University in Canberra. He is currently at James Cook University in Townsville, Queensland. As a Branco Weiss fellow, Dr. Fabinyi will provide a novel anthropological perspective on the consumption of seafood in China. By researching the trends and drivers of seafood consumption across China, the research will greatly

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increase our understanding of an important influence on the livelihoods and environments of the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr. Lea Haller was born in Switzerland and is currently at ETH Zurich. Dr. Haller is working to examine the global commodity trade in 20th century Switzerland. Her project aims at understanding the entanglement of political and economic spaces from a historical perspective. Dr. Haller will show to what extent the construction of political neutrality and the establishing of a global trading network complemented one another.

Dr. Michael Nash was born in the USA and received a dual PhD degree in bioengineering and nanotechnology from the University of Washington, Seattle in 2010. He is currently at Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich. Dr. Nash will undertake research to develop artificial bio-hybrid nanostructures that would convert agricultural wastes into sugars, providing a new approach to biofuel production.

Dr. Julia Sacher was born in Austria and is currently at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig. As a Branco Weiss fellow, Dr. Sacher will examine how subtle hormonal changes impact mood regulation by using the menstrual cycle as a model. Her findings will help prevent and treat severe premenstrual mood change, and elucidate the link between sex hormones and depression.

Dr. Cheemeng Tan was born in Malaysia and is currently at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. He received his PhD degree from the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Duke University. Dr. Tan will construct antibacterial artificial cells using a synthetic biology approach. His work could fundamentally improve antibacterial treatment, advance the predictive engineering of artificial cells and bring new insights into the application of computational algorithms in synthetic biology.

About Society in Science

Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship was founded in 2002 to provide a platform for researchers in the natural sciences and engineering who are aiming to extend their scientific work to cover specific social and cultural questions and perspectives. The fellowship was initiated and is financed by the Swiss entrepreneur Dr. Branco Weiss. It is coordinated by ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich). Professor Peter Chen and Professor Heidi Wunderli-Allenspach direct the fellowship program, and are supported by an advisory board consisting of prominent international scholars from a wide array of disciplines. Candidates must hold a PhD and provide evidence of outstanding scientific achievement to qualify for the prestigious grant.

For more information on Society in Science please visit www.society-in-science.org

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