

WINTER 2018

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the MEG Newsletter 2018

Editor

As the landscape around Freiburg transitioned through the autumn colors, discovering a new expression, your annual newsletter did the very same.

In this new format, you are invited to read about the recent MEG activities happening around the world. These start at the faculty, where the 14th MEG generation greeted the new semester in a choir performance. Next, another story travels widely to keep up with the adventures of the start-up, Noor Medical. This is followed by regional travel and an Anglo-American tradition covered through reflections on the Frankfurt excursion and Thanksgiving celebrated among good friends. In the last part, you find valuable tips in choosing an internship and concrete work experience. With this, you learn about the German Development Institute's postgraduate programme, a future link between Freiburg and ICLEI, and intense fire management in Congo.

We thank the members of the MEG community warmly for sharing their outstanding achievements, reflections, and stories. May the newsletter continue to bring us all a little closer.



**Albert-Ludwigs-Universität
Faculty of Environment and
Natural Resources**

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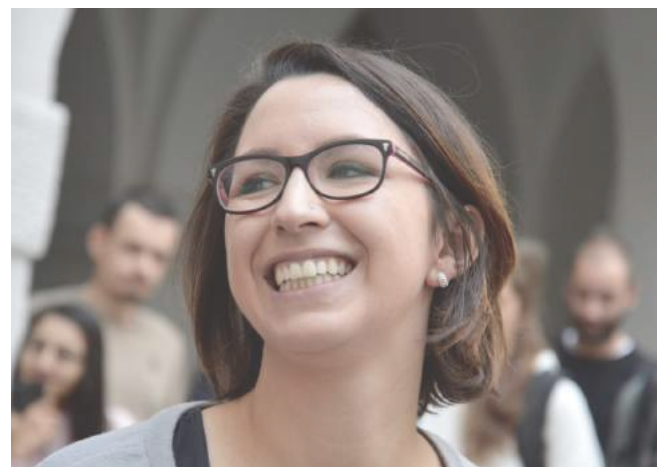
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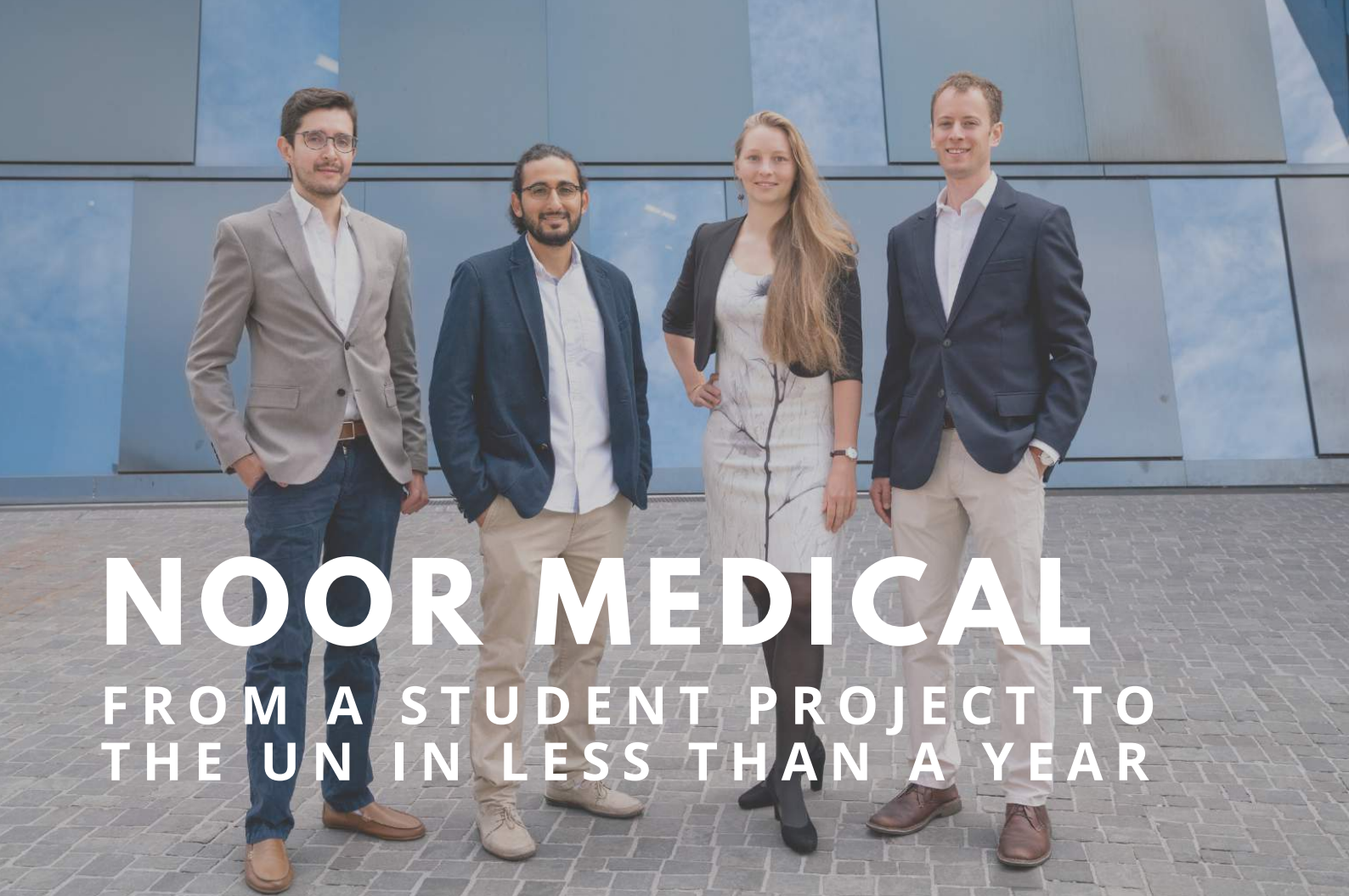
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SEMESTER START

In October, the new MEG students performed "Wonderful World" marking the beginning of the semester. Among the audience were the faculty dean Prof. Dr. Daniela Kleinschmit, MEG Programme Coordinator Esther Muschelknautz, and other international students in high spirits.





NOOR MEDICAL

FROM A STUDENT PROJECT TO THE UN IN LESS THAN A YEAR

Laila Berning (MEG12)
Andrew Bonneau (MEG11)
Federico Castillejo (MEG12)
Saji Zagha (MEG12)

We are a team of MEG 12 and MEG 11 students dedicated to improve humanity's access to equitable health-care through social entrepreneurship. We, Laila Berning (Germany), Andrew Bonneau (USA), Federico Castillejo (Colombia) and Saji Zagha (Palestine), advanced with our start-up Noor Medical to the Global Final of the Hult-Prize and were invited to present our safe surgery enterprise at the United Nations headquarters in New York City on September 15th 2018.

From a student project to the UN
Our journey with Noor Medical started at Mensa Institutsviertel where Saji, Laila and Federico met Andrew the first time to discuss some bureaucratic difficulties registering a business in Germany. We talked about our own entrepreneurial experiences and quickly noticed that we would be good team to start a project. Saji introduced us to the Hult-Prize, a partnership between the Hult International Business School, the United Nations Foundation, and the Clinton Global Initiative, which was established in 2010 and has become the world's largest and most prestigious start-up event in the field of social impact centered entrepreneurship.

We applied for the 2018 Hult Prize challenge to “harness the power of energy to transform the lives of 10 million people by 2025”. In March we won first place at the regional competition in Tunis against 33 student teams from prestigious international universities and business schools, selected from over 150.000 global applicants. Together with 41 international university teams, selected from other regional and national events, we were invited to the six-week Hult Business Accelerator at the Ashridge Castle, outside of London in the United Kingdom. The experience pitted us against teams from such prestigious universities as the University of Oxford, Duke University, the University of Pennsylvania, University College London and UNC Chapel Hill. Noor Medical ranked first during the final pitch event and we advanced to present our startup with five other teams at the United Nations competing for the final 1 million USD prize in seed capital.

About Noor Medical

Noor Medical is a new venture dedicated to developing market-based ecosystems of care for safe surgery. By providing medical equipment to sterilize medical instruments, with capability to work in a variety of operational contexts, we are working towards improving the provision of safe surgery in rural and off-grid medical clinics.

Over 1.5 billion people in the world lack access to medical clinics with capable surgical instrument sterilization equipment, resulting in the unfortunate statistic that 1 out of 3 patients in the developing world suffer from postoperative infections. Unsafe surgery results in approximately 17 million deaths annually. Noor Medical works with a variety of partners to rectify these conditions.

Strong partnerships

Noor Medical is partnered with Riders for Health, a world leader in medical supply delivery to rural locations, and Aesculap, a division of B Braun, one of the largest surgical instrument manufacturers in the world. Furthermore, we partner with the Schumpeter Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Ensign College of Public Health in Kpong, Ghana for continuing research into innovative market-based healthcare solutions. Noor Medical received generous financial support from “Neue Universitätsstiftung” and “Maria-Laden-burger Stiftung” for carrying out field trials in Africa, as well as from the Chair of Environmental Governance to carry out market research. Noor Medical has been supported during their field trials by the Institute for Infection Prevention and Hospital Epidemiology.

Noor Medical and MEG

Beside the financial support from the University and the Chair of Environmental Governance we are very grateful for the MEG-network which truly helped us get in touch with different stakeholders active in the healthcare space all around the world. We would also like to thank Prof. Heiner Schanz for always supporting us from a very early stage on, believing in us and connecting us with very valuable contacts. We experienced the power of networks and are grateful to be part of the MEG family.

Call to action

Kindly reach out to us, if you would like to get engaged with Noor Medical or know about someone who might be valuable to us

More

Website: www.noor-med.com

Press:

<https://medium.com/@noormed.media>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/NoorMedicalPR/>

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/noor-medical/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/noor_medical

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/noormedical/>

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NOOR MEDICAL
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

HULT PRIZE

Noor Medical's presentation at the UN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZ1t29Ypnw4>

FRANKFURT EXCURSION REFLECTIONS



Nadia Ali (MEG14)

The excursion to *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)* and *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)* in Frankfurt organized under module Global Societal Changes was an enriching experience for me. It helped me understand how theory can be used in the real world. I was highly fascinated to see how GIZ and KfW are contributing to the development in developing countries under the German government's objectives.

The excursion improved my understanding of project implementation approaches and knowledge on a wide range of themes including climate change, oceans and coasts, energy and climate protection, water management, food security, agriculture, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resource. The trainee programs, junior positions and internships opportunities offered by the organizations to students and fresh graduates could be a good start for MEGies to learn and make use of our abilities, skills and knowledge. However, German language requirement to avail the opportunities made me reflect on my German language abilities. Nevertheless, I found both organizations' efforts vital for sustainable development and to make this world a better place to live.





Jiji Plecha (MEG14)

Many people asked me whether I was sad not to be spending Thanksgiving with my family back home in Chicago. No, I told them, I wasn't sad, because I was making plans to share the day with my MEG14 family at my home away from home.

Over the traditional Thanksgiving weekend, I invited MEG14 to come together at my flat to give thanks and share an American/Canadian Thanksgiving dinner. Everyone from the US and Canada prepared dishes they would make at home (although instead of turkey, I made roast chicken). This main course was complemented by spinach-cheese dip and garlic bread, green beans, sweet potatoes, bread stuffing, and apple crumble with vanilla ice cream.

Emily Herman shared her family tradition with us. Earlier in the week, she had asked everyone to send her a couple words expressing what they were thankful for. She then wrote the phrases on small pieces of paper and baked them into bread rolls. During dinner, the rolls were handed out and we took turns reading out the notes. We all agreed it was a wonderful tradition and marked a special moment for us all.

After our very filling dinner and drinks, we transitioned from a feast to dance party! Irene Evbade-Dan opened the dance floor with her well practiced Japanese dance club moves. Nadia Ali shared some popular music from Pakistan and showed us new dance moves. Diego Marquez and Gabriela Rangel performed the salsa. Diego and Lina Gutierrez stole the show with their display of ska, a Caribbean dance.



THE CORPORATES NEED YOU!

Patrick Peura (MEG12)

One of the strongest tendencies I observe amongst MEGs is the paradigm that big business is not the solution to, but instead the source of, the world's problems. Pursuing an internship in the private sector, for many, is not an option. It's as if the reasoning is: If you want to do good, you can't do it for a profit. I continually hear MEGs say: *I want to work in government, NGOs, charities, development corporations, or social enterprises.* But I don't think I ever hear: *I want to work in big business.*

This is a major missed opportunity not only for MEGs, but also for the businesses that need the MEG skill set. Business, in its pursuit of profit, is transforming for the sake of good faster than ever before. This transformation is a market driven requirement necessitating corporate responsibility and positive impact to maintain their social licence to operate. This licence comes not only from the community, government, and consumers, but also from employees and business-to-business customers, suppliers, and peer groups (and hint: also their interns)! Employees no longer only want to be compensated well, they also want to feel proud of what they do.



Businesses are mobilising unparalleled ingenuity, stakeholder cooperation, and supply chain influence to reduce the impact they have on the environment and improve society. Don't believe me? Google these groups: B-Team, RE100, CA100+, SBTi, or PRI. These are just a few business based coalitions for good that I work with in the finance industry on a daily basis.

So what am I saying? That if you dream of working for an NGO, you should give it up and change your life

plan? Absolutely not!!! But now is your time to experiment. Don't close doors before you even peek through them. Take this opportunity during MEG to not only challenge your skills, but also your convictions. Germany has many amazing companies in the private sector working just as hard to make a positive impact in the world as any other type of undertaking. Go see for yourself what corporate culture is like and the impact you can drive – and hey, at the same time as doing good, you can also make some good money to donate to the NGO of your choice!



EXPERIENCE WITH POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Lena Laux (MEG11)

The German Development Institute (DIE) in Bonn offers a programme for university graduates, who are aiming to work in international development cooperation. The DIE is a think tank for global development and international cooperation combining research, policy advice and training. The nine-month Postgraduate Training Programme prepares each year up to 18 German and European graduates for a future career in international development cooperation. I find the programme interesting because it contributes to solutions to tackle global challenges, such as the protection of natural resources, the transformation of economic and social systems or the creation of equal opportunities in world

trade. The seminar phase in the beginning gives an introductory overview on specific development issues and global challenges, such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, migration and forced displacement, global economic governance or environment and development. The seminars consist of classical teaching, self-study as well as interactive discussions, group working and simulation games. Further workshops on professional writing, presentation skills, team building and communication complement the phase.

One of the advantages of the programme is the preparation for the job market, the DIE provides extensive advice and assists with the job application procedure for international and national development organisations.



What I enjoy the most are the vivid discussions with the other participants, DIE researchers and external speakers of interdisciplinary backgrounds. In my opinion, the seminars and workshops, in combination with the research teams and participation in conferences, offer a good mix of theory and practice. Despite all these interesting and challenging experien-

ces, I miss the intercultural orientation of the MEG programme. To apply for the DIE-programme a C1-C2 German level is necessary, since the seminars are mostly conducted in German. For a successful application relevant internships are needed, however, work experience is not required. The programme is free of charge, and financial support is provided.

More

The German Development Institute

<https://www.die-gdi.de/en/training/postgraduate-training-programme/>

Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik

<https://www.die-gdi.de/ausbildung/postgraduierten-programm/>



FINDING NEW WAYS TO WORK TOGETHER

Matthew Bach (MEG12)

To those of you in the midst of the programme, the end may seem like a distant mirage. Yet, at least for me, it came all too soon. All of a sudden, it seemed like the days of "it depends" and discussing the finer points of environmental governance with Michael Pregernig and Philipp Spaeth were at an end. Last year, I had the pleasure of reversing this situation by finding a new way to bring MEG back into my work at Local Governments for Sustainability's European Secretariat in Freiburg. Our two organizations, MEG and ICLEI, joined forces with five other exciting partners to prepare an EU (Horizon 2020) project proposal that will look all over Europe for solutions contributing to sustainable and inclusive cities, before sharing these discoveries with the European Commission and other policy actors.

After months of suspense, we received the good news that our project, now known as "*Urban Arena for sustainable and equitable solutions*" (UrbanA) had been accepted. We are gearing up to start the project in January and it will be a pleasure to work together for the next three years!

More

Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI): <https://iclei.org/>

Urban Arena for sustainable and equitable solutions (UrbanA): <http://envsci.ceu.edu/projects/urban-arena-sustainable-and-equitable-solutions-urbana>



LIVING UNDER FIRE

IN WAR-TORN EASTERN CONGO

Lindon Pronto (MEG10)

I grew up in California, started working as a wildland firefighter after High School, and throughout 4 years of college. Two years later, I was still firefighting, married with a daughter – but I missed the intellectual challenge of academia. So, I moved to Germany with my family – my wife then pregnant with our son – and embarked on the journey of MEG.

After 2 years of MEG, I was ready again to roll up my sleeves and work full time. Angling originally for climate policy, I somehow landed back in the world of fire – and halfway through MEG began working for the Global Fire Monitoring Center. I quickly dove into projects and

fire management work in Southeast Asia, frequenting Indonesia after the devastating fire and smoke episode of 2015. I also became engaged across a half-dozen countries and by early 2017 was planning my first visit to Central Africa – a region totally unknown to me.

The months leading up to my planned mission were hectic – two trips to Indonesia, several engagements across Germany and France, family vacation in Croatia, and two days later I was embarking on a 3-day journey via Rwanda to my first destination village in South Kivu: An active conflict zone on the Eastern border of the Democratic Republic Congo. I had no idea what to expect.



Curious boys peer through the window while we meet with the village elders

Being a firefighter, I've had my share of unsettling experiences but the bus ride across Rwanda was unequivocally terrifying! Half a day later, walking across the border into the DRC, the difference between the two countries was striking.



Two women listen intently as we discuss community-led fire management. Women often use fire to burn crop residue and for cooking. Unfortunately, no women were selected to receive my training despite being more hard working and physically fit than most men in the village. Rural population demographics also disproportionately favored women.

They offered opposite outcomes achieved by authoritarian regimes: Rwanda presenting the public order, well-groomed countryside, neat infrastructure – the highlights of what state-control can achieve. Meanwhile, crossing into Bukavu, DRC, the surroundings became chaotic and disheveled – a mix of shacks and mansions, blanketed with the red dust that envelopes populated areas without pavement; public utilities like water and electricity were left behind. With a corrupt centralized government seated some 3000 km away, the impacts on a region gripped by one of the worst and most protracted humanitarian crises of the modern era, were suddenly tangible. After the Rwandan genocide and throughout the Congo wars, this region was held together by a mix of international and church organizations and UN Peacekeepers, still evident today by the constant flow of Toyotas insigniated with the logos of UN (MONUSCO), Red Cross, etc.



Young cattle herders framed by a completely deforested landscape, once tropical forest. Behind them, a fire-blackened mountain side lit to more quickly regenerate grass for their cows.

After passing through Bukavu, the patchy pavement gave way to an infinite quantity of pot holes and red dust. Our driver drifted the Land Rover at top speeds around cliffy blind corners as I regarded the wrecked and abandoned vehicles of past commuters, questioning my judgement in volunteering for this assignment. My first impression of a rural Kivu village was happening across a smashed blood-spattered semi-truck which lost its brakes and racing backwards downhill, crashed through huts and into a market, killing 17 – mostly children. What stunned me the most was the numbed normality with which observers regarded the scene.

Welcome to the Congo.

Over the course of the next couple weeks, I saw and experienced many things that I would best describe as inflicting discomfort on me. After all, I was just a brief witness, visitor, a guest in a world that was largely unrelatable to my own. My own discomfort – logically and emotionally trying to reconcile the abominable inequality and injustice within the human race – was my greatest hardship. This hardly registered on the scale these people experienced.

Every day we hiked many kilometers through steep terrain, convened town hall meetings, met with village chiefs and local leaders – often all in the same day. As security concerns barred most aid organizations from



Newly trained firefighters proudly present their training certificates

operating here, my colleague and I were the only foreigners for hours in any direction; by the end of each day, I felt the expectations of villagers weighing heavily on me. The experience was physically, mentally and emotionally depleting – a personal struggle that deepened when returning to my ‘privileged’ life in Germany. We live in a world of extremes and while the region is known for the most heinous acts humans are capable of, I was deeply moved by humanity, humility, and generosity that connected others through hardship. I encountered immediate friendships, affection and a lot of laughs along the journey.

A year later when I next returned, Ebola and Cholera outbreaks were underway, there were still thousands of child soldiers, 40 armed militias; the UN had elevated the crisis to level three on par with Yemen, Syria and Iraq; 13.2 million people faced starvation, it was still sexual violence capital of the world: A

region where 2 in 3 women, 1 in 3 men and 1 in 10 children under the age of ten were raped and brutalized. Of course, I never ‘saw’ this; what I experienced was a hodgepodge of hopeful, desperate, inspirational and broken individuals – all showing their own brand of remarkable survivalist determination. So, what did these depressing facts have to do with my assignment? In retrospect, it was likely the invisible traumas of these broader conditions that I most underestimated while conveying a work ethic, orientation and value system applied in vastly different socio-economic contexts.

I was hired by a German-based NGO to conduct an assessment of fire management capacities and needs for five rural parishes in South Kivu (2017). The objective for my follow-up mission (2018) would be conducting a week-long training course and equipping villagers to defend them-



During a prescribed 'practice' fire, trainees ensure the fire intensity does not damage plantation trees.

selves against wildfires. Extreme poverty and lack of capacity limits prevention and response to wildfires which are increasingly threatening the livelihoods of the local population. No fire management system exists; fire prevention and suppression capacity development had to be designed on the basis of no political, financial or administrative support, outside the few thousand euros' project money.

To oversimplify the situation, farmers and the tree plantation owners are in conflict with the cattle herders (more often young children) who frequently ignite the steep mountain sides to regenerate green grass which is preferred by the cows. Any given area may burn multiple times a year – on the one hand further degrading a collapsed tropical ecosystem – but also fires are uncontrolled often barreling right into agricultural crops or through young

plantation forests. Imagine painstakingly nurturing a forest plot for years, counting on its harvest income to feed a family for several years to come – and in a matter of minutes, a herdsboy's fire decimates this vital source of income.

I was, of course, powerless to change cultural burning practices or desperate acts – but I could teach a handful of newly formed volunteer fire brigades – the first in the eastern DRC – how to defend their communities against fire with community-led fire management, and provide them with basic training and equipment for firefighting. In the end, the most significant challenge as an instructor was navigating the damage wrought on the individual by poverty and conflict which manifested as barriers to developing trust and comradery, teamwork and an aware-



ness of a jointly shared mission, all critical components of fire prevention work and necessary for ensuring safety during firefighting. I was training a group of men born into brutal conditions, a mostly fatherless generation and who learned early on they were on their own in this world. The

challenge then was teaching them fire cannot be fought alone, but one must depend on each other, work as one, communicate, and develop an awareness of the struggle of the man on their right and their left: A tall order for anyone who's chief concern is just surviving another season.

EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE 2019

JOIN THE MEG ALUMNI
AND STUDENTS IN JANUARY

Alicia Unrau & János Jákli (MEG Alumni Association e.V.)

Save The Date: on January 25th - 26th 2019 (Fri eve & Sat), MEG Alumni and Students have the opportunity to meet up in Freiburg to have fun together and explore thoughts on life after MEG. This year's event on "Experience Exchange" will begin with a social get-together on Friday evening (chat, catch up, quench thirst!), then continue Saturday with a moderated workshop that describes some directions taken by MEG Alumni since graduation and provides room to discuss different paths that the future could hold.

The event is organised by the MEG Alumni Association, with the aim of holding such an event each year on a weekend in Jan/Feb. These gatherings should offer some "food for thought" on an alternating focus, as well as be a means of meeting old and new friends.

Through regularity and yearly planning, we hope to institutionalise the event, have the possibility to apply for funding and attract MEG Alumni from further away. Plans for a new theme in 2020 are already underway.

Currently, the active members of the Association are: Sabine Reinecke, Torben Flörkemeier, Alicia Unrau, Mareike Blum and János Jákli. Our goal is to invest some focussed efforts in providing a platform for MEGs to meet up, while minding our own time constraints. Any help or organisation of new activities are more than welcome, either by joining the Association or simply volunteering. In case of questions, contact us at: megalumnicommittee@gmail.com

We will keep you informed via the MEG Newsletter, on LinkedIn and by email. Hope to see many of you in January!

**All of us at the
University of
Freiburg join in
sending seasons
greetings
with all good
wishes for the
New Year**



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