

APRIL 2022

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the MEG Newsletter

Editor

As we look forward to the start of a new semester, the newsletter offers us a chance to reflect on the achievements and activities of Winter semester 2021/22 and take on board some of the thoughts and updates of MEGgies past and present as we continue to move forward.

At the start of this Winter semester, we welcomed the 17th generation of students to the MEG programme, who were welcomed in-person to the faculty for the first time since the start of the pandemic. A hybrid format of online and presence teaching was adopted for current students of the programme, as staff and students alike endeavoured to provide modes of teaching which centred student experience as well as the health and wellbeing of us all.

MEGgies were as busy as ever outside of the classroom, from internships to guest lecture series, from the alumni association to the world of work for our graduates. This newsletter provides an insight into just a few of these things that have been going on across the MEG network.

That said, I would like to thank all the contributors for their excellent pieces and I wish all our readers an enjoyable experience!



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“ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ACTION” SPEAKER SERIES

STUDENT ORGANISED SPEAKER SERIES SHEDS NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

**Text by Ilai Krämer, Sophia McRae
and Julio Millán (MEG16)**

In March, 2021, a group of seven MEG 16 students came together to push beyond the classroom and engage more deeply with critical theories and solutions-oriented approaches to environmental governance. After nearly eight months of work, we hosted the “Environmental Justice in Action: Turning Theory into Practice” speaker series from October 11-22, 2021. We wanted to answer the questions: “how is environmental (in)justice addressed theoretically and in practice in specific contexts? What do solutions-oriented approaches to environmental and social crises look like? And how can visions of sustainability and intersectional justice be implemented?” Tapping into our cohort’s network, the series featured eight expert lecturers from six countries, who shared their insights into a range of environmental justice arenas.

One of the speakers was Patience Affi,

who called from Uganda to share her experience in promoting the use of renewable energy with a foundational gender-just field perspective. Other session topics included an introduction to the Eco-Swaraj (Radical Ecological Democracy) framework, nature conservation and community engagement in Palestine, the impact of large-scale infrastructure corridors on international labor markets, and a practical workshop on embodied sustainability and mindfulness.

You can find the full list of speakers and topics in our [Final Programme](#). You can also learn more about the content and resources shared during the seven sessions in our [Program Summary](#), which also includes slides and a summary of the Q&A sections.

This project demonstrated how knowledge-sharing events can generate a snowball effect of collaboration. We are excited about the new partnerships initiated between speakers and participants,



which we did not expect at the start of this project. For example, we enabled new connections between our speakers and grantwriters, as well as international cooperation organizations like the GIZ. Additionally, two student groups from Karlsruhe and Berlin connected with us for support on launching similar initiatives at their institutions, generating new student networks across Germany.

We look back on an empowering experience that enabled us to explore our interests together, practice organizational and moderation skills,

connect with radical researchers and other practitioners in the field of environmental justice. Importantly, we also gained inspiration from practitioners actively shaping a just transition.

This experience contributed to our learning about feminist, post-colonial and practice-oriented understandings of environmental justice and we want to sincerely thank everyone who participated, either as a speaker or discussant! Moreover, we want to encourage future MEGgies to carry this lecture series into the future.



Image: Environmental Justice in Action Speaker Series logo, designed by the committee



Image: A word cloud representing some of the key themes and topics raised during the speaker series

Find our process summary here: [Process Summary](#) and don't hesitate to contact us at meg-and-beyond@gmx.de (yes we have an email!) if you have any questions or simply want to exchange. Never underestimate the power that arises from collectively organising and fighting for your desire to learn beyond the mainstream.

Speaker Series Committee:

Ilai Krämer, MEG16
Julio Millán, MEG16
Pablo Nuñez, MEG16
Parminder Gill, MEG16
Kirstin Herbst, MEG16
Sofia Konstantinova, MEG16
Sophia McRae, MEG16
Christy Williams, MEG16

ALUMNI NEWS

THE MEG ALUMNI ASSOCIATION DISSOLVES AND THE MEG NETWORK DAWNS.

Text by Sofie Hovmand (MEG 14), Rafaella Ferraz Ziegert (MEG 13), Braoin MacLauchlan (MEG 16), Ilja Lange (MEG 10) and János Jákli (MEG 8)

At the last general meeting of the MEG Alumni Association in September 2021, it was decided to steer the MEG Alumni activities in a new direction. In the meantime, MEG students and alumni primarily use the Facebook and LinkedIn groups, with the liaisons group also serving as a popular communication platform in which at least one person from each MEG generation is represented. Here, the

alumni initiate the exchange based on their own initiative and motivation. Against this background, the general meeting on 16 September decided to dissolve the association as a legal form and to continue as the MEG Network. We would like to reduce the administrative workload associated with the association, to allow more time for informal MEG exchange and to provide space for more diverse developments.

The MEG Network offers an informal structure for alumni related activities. The liaison group forms the basis of

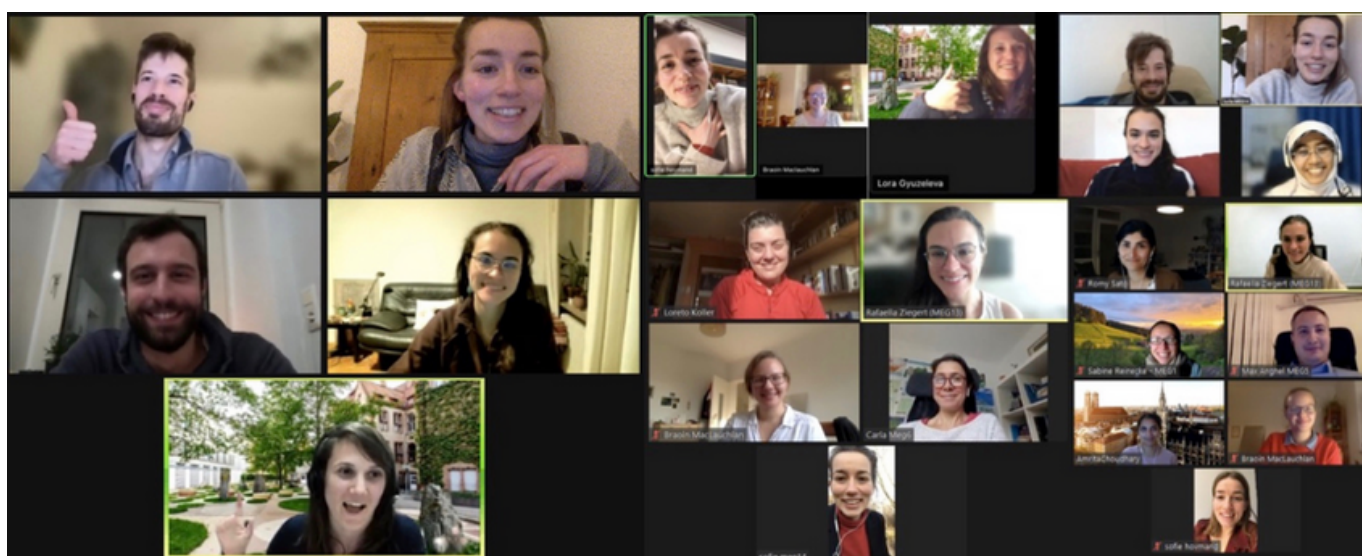


Image: members of the MEG network, spanning several generations, at their meetings



this network by representing their respective generation. However, our work space is open for anyone interested in engaging with MEG-related topics and activities. Regular meetings enable ongoing dialogue across generations and the agenda usually includes community news and future activities.

In this way, participants can both exchange perspectives with recent news from their respective generations and develop ideas for the MEG community as a whole. Join us by getting in touch with your generation's representatives or simply introduce yourself in our workspace. We welcome your input and participation.

Our slack workspace:
https://join.slack.com/t/megmingle/shared_invite/zt-13z44jmwz-LxAPuBRRFWRvD0gVnHV2ig

If you are curious about the alumni activities, please get in touch with the MEG Network via your generation's liaisons or directly join the slack channel.

List of current liaisons:

MEG 1: Sabine Reinecke

MEG 2: Jelly Mae Moring

MEG 3: Michelle Hirst & Leonora Pires da Silveira

MEG 4: Cristina Espinosa & Romy Sato

MEG 5: Paul Maximilian Anghel

MEG 6: Melani Fernanda Pelaez Jara & Carla Soldan

MEG 7: Moritz Blanke

MEG 8: Syahrina Anggraini

MEG 9: Amrita Choudary

MEG 10: Ilja Lange

MEG 11: Maria Viviana López Hernández

MEG 12: Christian Lukas Bayer, Lora Gyuzeleva

MEG 13: Rafaella Ferraz Ziegert

MEG 14: Sofie Hovmand, Sherri Ombuya & Connor McNee

MEG 15: Paula Pinto, Tatenda Wangui & Tim Marxen

MEG 16: Braoin MacLauchlan & Isabella Casousa

MEG 17: Felicitas Fornefeld, Vincent Stein & Loreto Koller

CALLING FOR INPUT!

VOICES FROM THE FIELD: PRACTITIONER EXPERIENCES IN ENVIRONMENTAL FIELDS

Text by Yourui Yeo and Ramshid Rashidpour (MEG 16)

Do you or anyone you know work as a practitioner in environmental and sustainability-related fields? If so, MEG students would love to hear from you!

As MEG16 students, we have had a hard time getting to know practitioners who work in the field, given that our pandemic-affected studies prevented us from going on any excursions, hence precluding us from personal interactions with practitioners. Although we were fortunate enough to have some external speakers sharing their experiences through Zoom, we would love to further complement these sessions and the insights from academia by hearing directly from those working hands-on in the world outside academia.

In particular, we would also love to hear more from those working in Global South contexts, given some of the unique challenges in these settings. To this end, we hope to collect input from practitioners from all over the world and publish a simple

one-page newsletter titled "Voices from the field: Practitioner experiences in Environmental Governance".

The aim of the newsletter is to reflect the diverse practitioner perspectives (outside of academia) on specific topics. This will be especially useful for MEG students (including future generations) so that we can gain a better understanding of the situation "on the ground" / in the "real world". This will allow us to compare the strengths, potentials, and obstacles of the same topic in different contexts, which will help many of us as we explore potential career paths upon our graduation. The frequency of the newsletter would depend on how much input we can collect from the field, so we need your help!

If you are a practitioner working within environmental or sustainability-related fields, please spare five to ten minutes to fill out the four-question survey. The fields can include waste management, agriculture, circular economy, environmental policy-making, nature conservation, green financing, etc. - it can be very broad!



If you don't work as a practitioner within these fields, it would still be great if you could share it with your networks!

Here is the link to the survey: <https://forms.gle/amE5FUAodVv4Rbii6>. If you have any questions or feedback for the form, please feel free to contact us (contact information below).

Our sincerest appreciation for your time and support in advance!

Yourui Yeo (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/youruiyeo/>)

Ramshid Rashidpour (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ramshid-rashidpour-568420b3/> or r.rashidpour@gmail.com)

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN GREEN HYDROGEN TRADE?

A WORKING PAPER FROM THE TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT MEG ELECTIVE MODULE

Text by Yourui Yeo (MEG 16)

Students from the 'Technology Assessment' MEG module had an exciting opportunity to collaborate on a group work assignment that incorporated elements of role play to simulate the technology assessment process conducted at the German national parliament (Bundestag). The end product was a 32-page report collectively written by the nine course participants titled: "Environmental Justice in Green Hydrogen Trade? A Case Study of German-Moroccan Partnership"

The technology assessment elective course in Winter Semester 2021/2022 was taught by PD Dr. Philipp Späth. Students were introduced to the field and learned how the practice of technology assessment plays an important role in "problematizing" the potentials and risks involved in technological change. This is highly relevant for environmental governance, as the promises of technological innovation should be

assessed beyond technical considerations.

The seven MEG16 students and two students from Master programs in Environmental Sciences were introduced to the promises, methods, and challenges involved in conducting technology assessments in the first week through lecture input and readings. The students were then given the opportunity to "learn by doing" in engaging in their own technology assessment study. The group assignment included an element of role play, where four students represented the Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag (Office of Technology Assessment in the Bundestag, also known as TAB) while the other five students played two roles: 1) the role of TAB's principal, the parliamentary Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment, and 2) specialist experts providing input to the study commissioned by the parliamentarians and organised by



TAB. The topic for this year's TA study is international hydrogen economy, a technology currently pursued by the German federal government as a crucial component of the energy transition. Coincidentally, TAB had also recently been commissioned with a study on opportunities and risks of hydrogen partnerships and technologies in developing countries. With the guidance of the course coordinator PD Dr. Philipp Späth, the students went through an iterative process to formulate a research proposal addressing a gap in the literature. Their technology assessment study aimed to assist German policymakers in reflecting on and incorporating environmental justice (EJ) dimensions into green hydrogen partnerships. Through applying an EJ framework in the case study of the 2020 German-Moroccan green hydrogen partnership, the working paper highlighted key considerations for policy makers when



Photo by Kindel Media from Pexels



evaluating potential international hydrogen partnerships, with case-specific findings as well as two policy-relevant end products: 1) a preliminary criteria list to assess hydrogen partnerships, and 2) a policy instrument toolbox for policy makers. For more information regarding the module or the [study](#), please contact PD Dr. Philipp Späth (spaeth@envgov.uni-freiburg.de).

The feedback from the course participants was generally positive. For example, course participants appreciated the flexible course design and high level of autonomy, as well as the opportunity to work hands-on in the cutting edge of hydrogen research

In particular, it was exciting to have the end result of the two-week labour be shared beyond the module, as external audience members were invited to the presentation of the findings and the report was shared to the larger network of the course coordinator.

[The link to the final report can be found here.](#)



WHEN COVID-19 REACHED THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

**Text by Larissa Longano de Barcellos
(MEG 13)**

When the peak of the first COVID-19 wave hit Brazil, I was in Sao Paulo writing my thesis on the relationship established by the Awajún, an Amazonian Indigenous People from Peru, with the forest and their understanding of forest management and conservation. Locked in at home and worried about those who I met during my fieldwork, I engaged with an interdisciplinary study group called EtnoLinsi, which was created by my second supervisor and based in Brazil.

As a team, we organised online activities, such as a course on intercultural epidemiology, which was jointly conducted with healthcare specialists and had as its target audience indigenous healthcare workers who were on the frontline of the pandemic. We also discussed with researchers and indigenous leaders the different responses to the pandemic that were given by national and local governments as well as communities in Latin America. About six months after we started our

activities, the Gamma variant of concern was identified in Manaus, the largest city of the Amazon Basin.

My trajectory is far from unique. In fact, one lesson that I learned while working with indigenous communities in the Amazon is that, in their context, health, politics, and the environment are connected. The pandemic made it evident that the state of the environment in indigenous lands, the type of land tenure rights these communities hold, and how these rights are enforced by governments impact both their health and livelihoods. For instance, there were communities that, managing large portions of protected forest areas, could isolate themselves and regain their traditional environmental practices. Others, like the Awajún, were too integrated into the global market and, managing small or degraded forest areas, could not isolate themselves and take their livelihoods from it.

More dramatically, since COVID-19 got to South America, there have been reports of land grabbers and illegal



miners taking advantage of the pandemic to invade indigenous lands and, as a consequence, infecting the communities. In this context, one of the main concerns expressed by indigenous peoples is the loss of their elderly, who have such invaluable environmental and cultural knowledge and who are compared by some to living libraries.

However, even when facing poor or no support from the federal and local governments, these communities managed to find creative solutions to address the crisis. They created networks to share medicinal knowledge on treating the symptoms of COVID-19 and built partnerships with scientists and local universities. They also used social media to create an impact among civil society by denouncing invasions and other wrongdoings, raising awareness to their cause, and encouraging fundraising. EtnoLinsi's activities can be seen as part of this process.

MEG: SPECIALISATION AND SKILLS

THE ADVANTAGES OF BECOMING A 'GENERAL INDIVIDUAL'

Text by Ruchira Chakrabarty (MEG 15)

In MEG, we have often felt that our diverse modules never gave us as many 'hard skills' or clear expertise on focused topics, which left us at a loss when we drafted our CVs for internships and jobs. This uncertainty came from the abstract nature of the topics we dealt with – many of them being complex or wicked problems. Many discussions inside and outside class came back to the question of what we actually learnt and how we could summarise the MEG programme. The answers were never easy. But then again, the answers to several phenomena in the increasingly complex world we live in are rarely simple.

While having one such discussion with a fellow classmate, he mentioned a book he'd read: "Range – How Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World". Coincidentally, I happened to have watched a TED talk by the author, David Epstein, about the same topic just days before. During this discussion, it suddenly struck me that

our self-doubt as MEG students could be an interesting case study. Most MEG students come from very diverse personal and academic/professional backgrounds – so more often than not, we come with a different 'specialisation'.



Image: the cover of 'range' by David Epstein

Some of us, like myself, come from an academic background which is also primarily based on looking at complex problems – hence we develop few 'hard skills' that we can brag about.



Based on various studies (conducted primarily in the field of sports but also other professions), David Epstein argues that chasing specialisation and expertise early on in one's life and career may not reap the benefits in the long run. We often envision that the faster we can prove our mettle in a particular niche, the higher the likelihood that we gain 'success'. However, Epstein, in both his book and his talks, shows that whilst these early birds do have a head start and a greater success in the beginning of their careers, in the long run, it's the "generalists" who achieve sustained success and growth.

I believe that MEG results in more 'general individuals' than specialised ones – at least at the time of graduation. However, it is not necessarily a bad thing or a

disadvantage. Yes, we may not have the knowledge of the specific workings of a certain microbiome for instance, however, we do know how that microbiome interacts with the rest of the world. Hence, we are trained to have a bird's eye view and focus on the bigger picture. Because many of us lack 'expertise' in one subject, we are also less likely, I believe, to see the world through only one perspective.

In MEG, we have a "wicked learning environment", which according to Epstein is one which is less structured and focused. However, given the world we live in, this experience will likely be beneficial when we come face to face with wicked problems. Therefore, there is merit in not specialising in just one aspect. Expertise is valuable but not the sole goal to achieve in our academic lives, especially early on.



Image above (and cover page image): Winter sunset from the Schauinsland, near Freiburg - taken by Christy Williams (MEG 16)

A note from the editor - bye for now...!

Looking forward to Summer semester 2022, it is time for a 'changing of the guard' with regard to the MEG website and newsletter editor. As I prepare to write my thesis, Ella Grimwade from MEG 17 takes over this role. It has been a pleasure to engage with voices across the MEG network and to learn of the inspiring work that is going on from both former and current students.

The MEG network is constantly active and there is always much to report. If you felt inspired by the submissions and would like to share a piece for next time, keep an eye out for the next call for submissions in your email inbox and on the MEG LinkedIn page. More details on how to contribute will be shared in good time!

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