

June 1, 2025

MEG 2025 Newsletter

Transitions and Transformations in MEG and Today's World.



Why the Topic 'Transformation'?

Ina Hobson, MEG 19, Editor

First, I want to say thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter. It's projects like these that remind me there's no point in doing things alone. I could have written an entire newsletter about the MEG annual experience from my own point of view, but that wouldn't even begin to capture the dynamic nature of our cohort and program.

The idea of the theme 'transitions and transformation' came out of the 'Sustainability and Governance' Core MEG Module. In this module, we learnt that there are some key differences (view page 3). In this newsletter, I want to reflect on the different levels of change that are occurring in relation to MEG.

Of course, this newsletter is still centered around the academic achievements and career aspirations of the MEG program, but it wouldn't be complete without sharing some of the everyday experiences as well. To be very honest with you all – I'm terrified. Climate change anxiety affects me deeply. That's why I chose this Master's in the first place: to find hope, to find companionship.

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I recently watched a speech – which I, unfortunately, can't seem to find anymore – where the speaker argued that the problem with current rhetoric around tackling climate change is that we all ask ourselves, "What can I do?" – as if we, individually, are supposed to solve this. This mindset is a direct reflection of the individualistic society we've become, and it comes from a fundamentally flawed starting point. The question should instead be, "What can WE do?"

This idea has deeply resonated with me. In fact, it's made me think that we need to go beyond the idea of sustainability. Even though we've learned in MEG that there's no single definition of sustainability, it generally implies *"maintaining existing systems to support future generations by reducing environmental impact and degradation."* In other words: *"How can we meet today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs?"*

Yet, here in Germany – a global leader in sustainability – our Earth Overshoot Day in 2025 was on May 3rd. That got me thinking: how can we address the future without repeating the mistakes of the past?

I recently stumbled upon the term regenerative cultures, which offers a more proactive approach that goes beyond sustainability. It focuses on enhancing and supporting natural environmental systems and services while also reconnecting us, as humans, with the life cycles of this planet.

Naturally, this approach improves social, economic, and environmental outcomes by reimagining how we interact with all these pillars.

You can read more about this concept here: [What are Regenerative Cultures?](#). I reference this because it aligns closely with my view of what "sustainable transformations" mean to me.

Below, I hope you enjoy and learn more about how transformation and/or transitions are unfolding in the everyday lives of current Meggies, MEG Alumni, and beyond. Thank you.

The 'Change'

Heavy Renovations to the Herder Building

In 2024, the final phase of renovating the Herderbau building began—the home base of 'MEGgies' and the MEG faculty staff. This building is currently part of 19 buildings that make the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resource (ENR) (which MEG belongs to). Since the building was first used as a university site in the 1990s, renovations have been gradual, but this final phase involves relocating offices, classrooms, and labs across multiple temporary sites.



Notably, this has caused some temporary havoc for MEGgies, especially because the FOCA (common café area) was also closed. In the meantime, MEGgies have made a pop-up 'commoning' café where students are collaborating together to ensure hot water, coffee and mate are available for long study days within the faculty. The renovation supports ENRs broader goal of spatial consolidation, reducing its current spread across 19 locations in and around Freiburg to just four core sites, enhancing collaboration, efficiency, and innovation. We are excited to see what the faculty looks like post-renovation and look forward to the benefits of sharing the space with more academics across the Environment and Natural Resource faculty.

Asking MEG's the Difference between Transformation or Transitions



1

A transformation uproots and rebuilds whole systems. A transition reshapes part of an existing system.

2

Transformation is more revolutionary, transition slow step by step

3

The difference is about scale. Transition in a technology, sector, or local place is the renewable energy transition vs a transformation in thinking and ways of working on a societal level. Moving to a degrowth economic model would require transforming the capitalist system including the ways we can think, interact and work.

4

Transformation is more radical and revolutionary whereas transition is more gradual and a longer-term development

5

Transition is a shift. Transformation is an abrupt change.

Faculty & MEG Programme Updates

2024/2025

Transitions and transformations can occur at many scales. Alongside the ENR faculty being renovated and transformed, the faculty has had notable transformation on the inside as well. As of Winter Semester 2023/2024 the faculty's master programmes, MEG included, were partially redesigned to allow students access to a wider variety of course and greater collaboration amongst the programmes. Physically this has meant that the winter semester no longer operates in a 3-week block system, but instead courses run a semester long (15 weeks). In the summer semesters the 3-week block structure has been kept. This structure and it's time blocks are now synchronized across the master programmes of the faculty thus allowing for MEGs to take electives more easily from all other master programmes and create their own profile line. Courses such as 'Systems Thinking, Planning & Transitions', 'Intersectional-Feminist Lessons for Sustainable Futures', 'Global Social Transitions in Local Contexts', 'What Works? Reconciling Planetary Boundaries with Social Needs and Aspirations in Practice', 'Gender Planning', and 'We Do Change: Reshaping Organisations for Global Impact' reflect the MEG Programme's aims toward dynamic curriculum and the value of interdisciplinary learning.

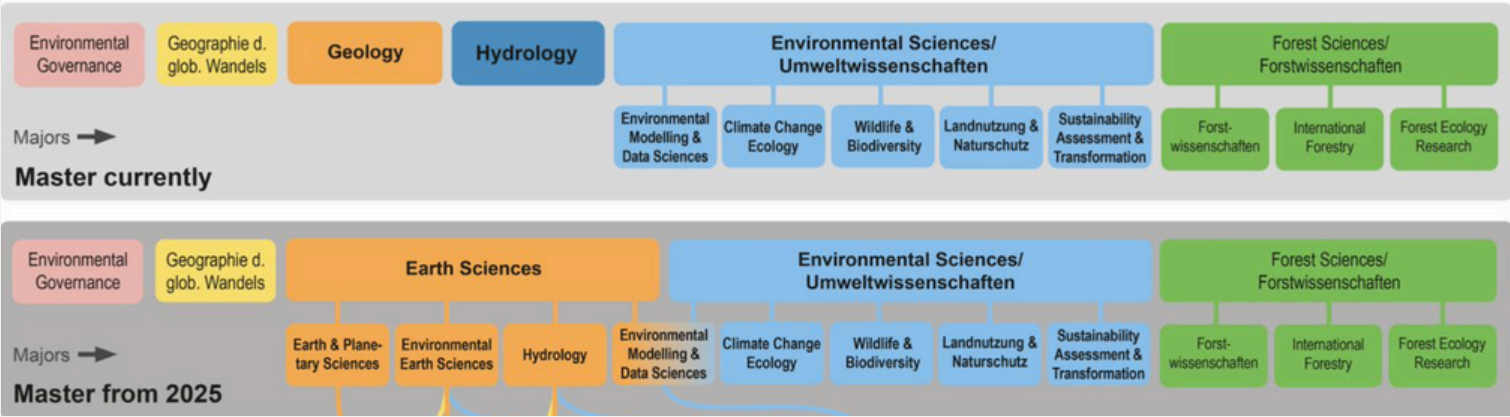
Parallel to the MEG program, a new English-language Master's program in Earth Science will launch in the Winter Semester 2025/26. With this new English-taught offering, the faculty aims to attract more international students.

Adding to the momentum are also the following newly created Chairs in the faculty:

- Chair of Transformation towards Sustainable Energy Systems,
- Chair of Sustainability and Transitions Research,
- Chairs of Environmental Planning & Transformation, and
- Chair of Modelling of Social-Ecological Systems

In a recent newsletter published by the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR), it was highlighted that a fulltime GIS teaching position has been formed and the focus will "ensure high teaching quality in this central area of education and systematically adapt this teaching to current requirements, for example with regard to web services and AI."

Also worth noting is the official launch of the new webpages for the university. The ENR Faculty and it's Chairs are each transitioning to the new format and MEG will follow in Spring 2026.



ALUMNI PROJECTIONS

MATHEW BACH (MEG 8)

MEG Alumni: Driving Sustainability Across the Globe

One of MEG's greatest strengths is its deeply connected alumni network. No matter where you are in the world, chances are someone knows a "Meggie." This comes as no surprise, given the impressive career achievements of MEG graduates around the globe. One such example is close to home: Mathew Bach (MEG 8), who was recently promoted to European Managing Director at the global NGO ICLEI.



Leadership at ICLEI: A MEG Milestone

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability – was founded in 1990 as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. It is one of the world's leading networks of local and regional governments committed to sustainable development. The European Secretariat of ICLEI is based right here in Freiburg.

Beginning April 1, 2025, Mathew Bach will step into his new role as Managing Director for Strategy and Policy at ICLEI's European Secretariat—just a stone's throw from the MEG Faculty building. In fact, two MEG 19 students completed internships at ICLEI during the summer of 2024 and have since secured employment with the organization. Across MEG generations, over 16 alumni are currently working with ICLEI worldwide.

We warmly congratulate Mathew Bach on this achievement. It's inspiring to see MEG values reflected in the professional work of our alumni. This example highlights the intergenerational and interconnected opportunities MEG continues to offer its graduates.

"Now more than ever, the local level is the cornerstone of a climate neutral, resilient, prosperous, and inclusive future."



CURRENT MEG INITIATIVES

Some of the self-organised initiatives undertaken this year by MEG19/MEG20

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS (GEP)

Jakob Dauser (MEG19)

If there is one thing that characterises MEG students, it is that when we strive for knowledge, we get it, one way or another. Due to the programme changes, a previous course 'Global Environmental Politics', was not on offer. MEGies want it all, and so some of us did what MEGgies do best... we did it ourselves.

Many of us were eager to learn about global environmental politics as we understand it as an integral part of Environmental Governance. As such, we thought we would miss out on a learning opportunity and just decided to make up a student-taught class from scratch.

Since we are a diverse group, with backgrounds ranging from International Relations (IR) and Development Studies to Environmental Sciences or Engineering, we were able to come together over the summer and figure out what knowledge and competences we had in our cohort on IR, Global Studies and Development.

We aimed to come up with a course schedule that allowed people to gain a common understanding of what IR is about, but also to enable our experts to provide insights into their fields of specialization. (View GEP module schedule on the page below).

"The self-taught GEP module is a promising avenue for the democratization of the academy"

We met weekly and spent two hours on each session. Our facilitators tried to implement diverse and participatory teaching methods such as classic reading seminars and lectures, but also game sessions/simulations.

For us, the class was a great success. We established a stable group of 8-10 students that attended the sessions. Conducting a co-taught class allowed us to dive into a different type of learning without power imbalances between facilitators and students.

As our experts prepared sessions on fields they were passionate about, each session was prepared with great depth and diligence. We greatly appreciate the MEG faculty's support with providing us a room to conduct the class and to organize guest lectures, which are happening in the upcoming summer term.

In MEG, we were taught to be the change we want to see in the world. It was our conviction that we need global change in global environmental politics that brought this course together. And the joy and growth we experienced during this learning journey united us further in our endeavour.



The GEP Team

**Lucía D'Amore,
Jakob Dauser,
Darius Lee,
Hsin-Yu Miu,
Marius Montero Cabrera**

The GEP Modules

1: What is IR about?

– Laura Martelo Falla

2: Introduction to mainstream theories of IR

– Marius Montero Cabrera

3: Critical and discursive approaches to IR

– Jakob Dauser

4: Public vs private supply chain governance

– Darius Lee

5: Global energy politics – a European Union perspective

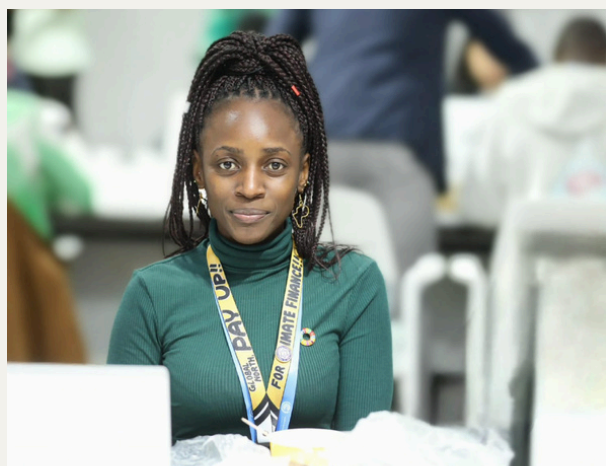
– Marius Montero Cabrera

6: Introduction to international development cooperation

– Nathaya Anandipa

7: Environmental human rights

– Gabriela Puschel



INSIDE THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP29)

WHOSE REALITIES COUNT?

Ogola A. Christine
(MEG20)

"It started with curiosity, urgency and the weight of responsibility..."

When I first set foot at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COPs), it was driven by desire to understand and a deep sense of duty. Four COPs later, that fire has evolved – fueled by experience, frustration, and sharper understanding of what real change demands. As a Kenyan youth active in climate justice, COP29 wasn't just about showing up—it was about ensuring that the lived struggles of frontline communities—those most vulnerable to climate change—were not drowned in high-level global negotiations.

I decided to further my studies in Environmental Governance after witnessing how well-intended policies fail – not because of lack of effort, but due to governance gaps, the sidelining of local knowledge, and frankly, the influence of powerful economies. Understanding science alone isn't enough; we must understand how power dynamics shapes solutions, ultimately determining whether they are truly put into practice. Attending COP29 deepened my conviction that this journey is not just necessary, but urgent.

Currents Unheard: Stories and Struggles Drowned in the Tides of Negotiation

I want to take you home, to Bondo, Kenya, along the shores of **Nam Lolwe**, the world's largest tropical lake, known to many as Lake Victoria. At COP29, I saw a stark disconnect between high level negotiations and daily realities of my community, *the Luo people*. While leaders debated targets, I thought of those whose lives are intimately tied to Nam Lolwe – once a source of hope, now a symbol of growing despair. For us, Nam Lolwe is more than just a lake—it's memory, identity, nourishment, language, rhythm, and survival.

In 2020, the Lake rose to a record 1,137 meters above sea level, a rise of 1.21 meters from late 2019,[1] triggering floods that displaced over 29,000 people living within 50km radius of the shoreline. Fishing communities lost homes, boats, and landing sites critical to their livelihoods. By 2023, Kenya's fish production from Nam Lolwe declined by 18.8%, from 86,394 metric tons in 2022 to 70,313 metric tons in 2023 [2], further deepening the economic strain on already vulnerable communities dependent on the lake.

These are not just statistics, they reflect eroding livelihoods and fading hope of my community. I've watched vibrant fishing villages sink into struggle as the Lake, once our lifeline, becomes unpredictable. For children, its their first school - where they learn responsibility, imagination and storytelling. For women, their provider - offering food, income and structure to daily life. For elders, it holds memory, wisdom and spiritual grounding. Now families face daily uncertainty, futures clouded by climate change. The helplessness in their eyes stays with me. This is more than an environmental crisis-it's a crisis of livelihoods, culture, survival. And it fuels my fight for change.

I carry the weight of these struggles with me. While global leaders debate climate finance goals like the \$300 billion for developing countries by 2035, the reality is far grimmer. The \$1.3 trillion needed annually by 2030 feels like a distant dream, especially when compared to the promises on the table[1]. The math does not add up, right? How do we reconcile these ambitious targets and the urgent needs of communities like mine?

Grassroot movements are the heart of real change

Despite global frustrations, one thing is always clear - change starts at the local level. The real heroes of the climate crisis are the vulnerable communities on the ground, innovating on the face of adversity. I've witnessed firsthand how grassroots initiatives are making tangible impacts, from "climate-smart agriculture" (Some people scoff at "climate-smart" practices, but let's roll with the term—it's working, at least for now) to decentralized renewable energy solutions. These efforts might not make headlines, but they are the backbone of resilience in regions that global polices often forget.



The historically marginalized regions are not just victims of climate change, but leaders in innovation and adaptation.

Local knowledge often remains unseen at the global level. If commitments made in these negotiations are to be meaningful, they must be rooted in lived experiences of the frontline communities globally. Like those who have grown up by waters such as Nam Lolwe-where knowledge is passed through stories told on canoe rides, nets cast at sunrise, songs sung during fish drying, and prayers whispered when the waters swell too high. These voices must shape decisions made in global spaces.



COPs are flawed, but Necessary

Let's not sugarcoat it—COPs are far from perfect. The bureaucracy, slow progress, and power imbalances often make them feel like exclusive spaces where those who are most affected have the least influence. But we can't afford to disengage. COPs, despite their flaws, remain one of the most powerful platforms through which we must push for systemic change, whether that's on a global, regional, or local level. Major climate agreements, from the Paris Agreement to Loss and Damage funding, exist because activists, scientists, and leaders refused to back down, no matter how imperfect the process may be.

As former UN Secretary-General H.E. Ban Ki-Moon once said, "The time for talking is over. The time for action is now." These words resonate with me deeply and feel like an ongoing call to action. There's a quiet strength in that urgency—one I carry with me, motivated by both the challenges and the opportunities ahead.

For future MEG students and climate advocates

Do not just watch, engage. Attend side events, network with activists, and push for representation. COPs are more than an observation; they are a chance to learn, challenge, and, most importantly, act. Real change happens when knowledge meets action.



The Road Ahead...

COP29 reaffirmed that my journey in Environmental Governance is more than just academic growth—it's about equipping myself to fight for just, inclusive, and actionable climate transformations. As my Dear Father often reminds me, "We need more than passive participants in this fight, we need critical thinkers, disruptors, and advocates who ensure that climate action becomes a lived reality for those on the frontlines."

Leaving Baku, I felt both hopeful and frustrated, but more determined than ever to ensure that the voices of those who suffer the most from the climate crisis, like the communities around the Great Nam Lolwe, are heard and centered in global solutions. As my people would say, **'Wan ok wabed jowang' gi ndalo mabiro'** — we will not be spectators of our own future.

Self-organised Green Transitions Conference

**Amanda Galusha, Gabriela Puschel
Cassigoli, Ghita Faiad, & Darius Lee
(MEG19)**



Amanda Galusha, Gabriela Puschel Cassigoli, Ghita Faiad, and Darius Lee started planning an event, Urban Climate Transitions: Questions of Justice and Pathways to Commoning featuring presentations, a panel and film screening in October 2024. The project was inspired after Amanda attended an event organized at Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences for a discussion on implementing location-based green infrastructure by a Smart City Masters program. After the event, there was a discussion on why some communities might be resistant to green projects and many of the reflections were related to assuming a lack of imagination or understanding of the benefits of green infrastructure.

Coming from Toronto, where there are many challenges related to spatial equity, Amanda felt critical reflection on power and justice aspects such as questions of who benefits from green projects and who often faces negative consequences such as gentrification and displacement did not get expressed deeply. She wanted to explore the ideas further and spoke with Sebastian Klemm from Dark Matter Labs, one of the speakers at that event.

Sebastian's generosity of ideas and time helped the MEG crew continue the conversation. Through weekly meetings, the use of project management tools and a digital whiteboard, ideas and themes came together. It was important to have contingency plans so a long list and short list of participants was created.

It was quite amazing to find that you can just email and ask people to get involved and receive positive responses. During the planning process, Amanda had insightful phone conversations with Wulf Daseking, longtime head of urban planning at the City of Freiburg on his work on the Freiburg Charter. Ghita and Amanda visited Shahrzad Enderle at her office and talked about her previous and upcoming work on migrant women's mobility.

The event in January, 2025 included impulse presentations and a panel discussion with Nadha Hassen, PhD MPH, Sebastian Klemm, Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook, PhD, Dr. Shahrzad Enderle, and Austin Gage Matheney. The film "The Green Divide" by researchers at Barcelona Laboratory for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona was a cherry on the cake of what ended up being a great night of insights and engagement from a hybrid (in-person and online) audience. Attendees heard presentations from Canadian and European perspectives including hearing Indigenous perspectives on seven generations urban design on Turtle Island from Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook and experiences of racialized park perceptions from Nadha Hassen's photovoice project in Toronto, Canada. Dr. Shahrzad Enderle shared insights on the panel about her experience with Bike Bridge, a program that started in Freiburg and has spread to other EU cities which aims to strengthen social participation through spatial mobility with a focus on refugee and migrant women.



The event was not without challenges. It was very difficult to keep the 3 presenters on time and maintain a good experience for those in person and online. During the planning process, sometimes it was difficult to come to a consensus and ensure everyone's opinions were heard and equally included. Professor Daseking got stuck in Stuttgart on the night of the event and wasn't able to make it in the end. A big learning for Amanda was how much effort the coordination required including booking, testing and setting up the space and all the preparatory communication with participants.

When asked about a key learning from the event, Darius expressed that in hindsight, "while it was good to bring diverse perspectives, you learn the most when you let the speakers interact and ask each other questions." The panel was cut short and that was a missed opportunity for taking engagement with the audience and participants to the next level. Gabriela indicated she's keen to plan another event and there has already been some discussion about what and when so...stay tuned for fall of 2025 and reach out if you want to get involved!

Current MEG Dynamics

Our Erasmus Experience

Ina Hobson, Till Hentschel (MEG19)

Exploring Environmental Governance Across Europe: Our Erasmus Experience

With fewer compulsory courses and a broader selection of electives, MEG students now have more flexibility to participate in the Erasmus program—without expecting significant delays in their studies. Till and I (Ina) took this opportunity to explore different perspectives on environmental governance across Europe. The Erasmus program, funded by the European Union, is designed to foster European cooperation—essential for achieving climate mitigation and adaptation goals. I spent my semester at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, while Till studied at the University of Antwerp in Belgium.



Till shares his experience:

"I'm very happy that the MEG Master allowed me to do an exchange semester in Antwerp through Erasmus. As a German student, Freiburg was great, but I wanted to experience studying in another country as well. I joined the Advanced Master Programme in Globalization and Development at the Institute of Development Policy at the University of Antwerp. I had an amazing time, learned a lot, and was able to easily transfer my credits from Belgium as electives in the MEG program. Michael, Esther, and Seirra were incredibly helpful with this! I highly recommend this experience to other MEG students."

As for me (Ina), I met many new students and professors who enriched my understanding of environmental and cultural diversity across Europe. I also gained insight into the varying national policy approaches that challenge the creation of a unified European strategy for environmental governance. I believe that success in this field often depends on networking and collaboration across disciplines – something the Erasmus program strongly supports.

It was a valuable experience, and I look forward to sharing what I've learned with my fellow MEG students. During the semester, Till and I reunited for a weekend in my host city, Wageningen. It was a great chance to reconnect, discuss the challenges of living abroad, and catch up on all things MEG. We're both excited to return to Freiburg soon and look forward to seeing everyone at the MEG graduation!

A Decade on MEG9's: A Heart-warming Reunion Celebrated with MEG 19's.

Who would have thought that a decade later, MEG alumni from all corners of the globe would gather once more? This 10-year reunion of the MEG 9 cohort was not only a chance to reconnect with old classmates but also an opportunity to mingle with the current MEG 19 students. Many alumni found themselves filled with nostalgia, seeing their younger selves reflected in the eyes of the current students.

A summer's day afternoon provided the perfect atmosphere for such a bonding event. Despite the excitement of the Germany vs. Spain quarter-final playing in the background, our focus remained on engaging in vibrant discussions about today's environmental governance landscape through enriching multigenerational discussions.

The event was made even more delightful with a delivery of delicious pizzas, sparkling drinks, and icebreaker games organized by our current Student Representative, Lucia. The gathering lasted over two hours, filled with laughter and meaningful conversations seen in the above photo.



The MEG 9 alumni reminisced about memorable events and some noted how "some things don't change," presenting a self-organized bouquet of flowers as a token of gratitude to MEG program organisers, Seirra, Esther and Michael.

These beautiful opportunities, outside of the traditional classroom setting, allowed us (current MEG students), to get a glimpse of the promising career prospects of MEG.

We hope events like this continue, not only as a place for old friendships to rekindle, but also as a space to foster meaningful conversations among environmental governance researchers, practitioners, and enthusiasts alike.



Creative Entries

Students & Alumni

What does it mean to have a home? Some words for MEG19

Lucia D'Amore (MEG19)

Ever since I arrived in Freiburg, I've been asking myself: what does it mean to have a home? On our first MEG Orientation Day in October 2023, I looked around and saw a group of strangers. I wondered how my next two years would be so far from my home and my loved ones. I looked again, and I tried to imagine what MEG19 would be like.

Little did I know how it would turn out to be.

Slow but steady, we started cohabiting MEG. I say cohabit, because we didn't just come to class: we lived together in them. We shared cookies, coffees, yoga in between classes, questions and answers, uncomfortable moments, thoughtful silences, loud hearts speaking. And somehow, we found an ingredient to make this cohabiting better: we started having fun together. Very early on we started using our own language, our MEG memes.



Some of them are classified, but others you can see throughout this article.

I would argue that our first step towards what we are now was the Team Building Weekend in December 2023.



That was the first time we played together. Each of us in our own ways: some coordinating the games, some observing, some trying to win. But we simply had fun, without thinking too much, without judging each other. It felt a bit like that cliché movie moment when two 5-year-olds meet for the first time at the playground and ask each other: “do you want to be my friend?”

Potlucks appeared as our strongest tradition at the same time. Under the premise of bringing food to share, we found in potlucks a common place to meet. It became clear what it meant to us in our second potluck in January 2024, after a Winter Break that was the first one far from home for many. We shared our food, listened to music and played games. We were all tired and stressed about the second part of the semester, but still there was a feeling of relief about being back that you could feel in the air. That night I asked myself again: what does it mean to have a home?

Summer came, and the potluck events intensified –but now, in picnic format! The front garden of Herderbau building would see more of us than anyone could imagine.



Frisbee afternoons and resting under the sun in between breaks would be added to our already long list of MEG19 traditions.

A lot of different activities appeared here and there, like our visit to Boppard or our amazing weekend in the Faculty Hut.



Both experiences were thoroughly documented and turned into unique filmographic pieces by our camera and documentary crew.

We also started having academic fun together: we coordinated an Exchange café after the elective modules to share what we learned, and we planned and executed a student-taught class on International Relations and Global Environmental Politics. Curiosity is one of the biggest traits of MEG19s: from exploring and hiking all over the Black Forest, to sharing our diverse traditions. We celebrated Sinhala and Tamil New Year, Thanksgiving, Chinese New Year, Secret Santa, visited Christmas markets here and there...

But MEG19 was not only about fun. We discovered another ingredient to success: caring. MEG19 became a place we could ask for help, and we found support among ourselves. When stress kicked in, when it was time to move WGs or call a doctor, when the immigration office was more frustrating than usual; the MEGgies would be there as well. We understood that sometimes the total is more than just the sum of the parts: it's not just the people, it's the community. And I ask myself again: what does it mean to have a home?

To have a home is to create community. To have a home is to support others and be supported, to enjoy the good times and go through the stressful moments together, to have someone bake a cake for your birthday to share in class, to have a choice on how to spend your days -whether it is alone, working in silence with other MEGgies, chilling by the Dreisam or eating all together in Mensa.



To have a home is to have a community that brings you up if you need it, or respects your space if you don't. And this is what MEG19 means to me. MEG19 is to me, right now, a home.

When the first MEG19 left by the end of the third semester, it began to be clear: MEG is ending. My heart skips a bit when I think about it. I've been revisiting our journey together a lot lately, wondering again what went so well with this group of strangers that I met a year and a half ago and now I don't want to leave.

I don't know if there is a success formula. Maybe it was the fun and the caring, maybe we were just lucky. But one thing I'm certain: MEG19 is a community. And it will live with us forever.



MY CAREER, YOUR CAREER?

Gabriela Weber de Morais – MEG 3

I set off on a sustainability journey 20 years ago when I joined ABN AMRO Bank in Brazil as a sustainability trainee. Two years later I moved to Freiburg to become part of the third cohort of MEG students. Reaching two decades of work in the field now presents a good opportunity to reflect on how MEG has influenced it.

To start with MEG was a watershed in my professional life. I had graduated in Communications and I wanted to move from being a specialist on communications to becoming a specialist on environmental social sciences. MEG provided me with the credential to make this transition.

I returned to Brazil to work with ESG strategy in the financial sector. Later I felt the need to get closer to the field. This is when I moved to Bremen to pursue a PhD degree centered on governance of marine protected areas in Costa Rica under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Achim Schlüter who had been my Master Thesis' supervisor.



Thereafter I worked for 7 years with E&S safeguards in development finance in Frankfurt and often collaborated with former MEG students or others who studied forestry in Freiburg. I relocated two years ago to Brazil where I currently work in the private sector to strengthen local communities that live from non-timber forest products in the Amazon.

In this role once again I have the chance to interact with people who studied in Freiburg. Although MEG has been a common thread in my career path, preparing me for new challenges and connecting me with people with a shared background, I believe the analytical thinking skill is the key contribution MEG has had on my work and this will continue to happen in the years to come.

Transition to the Kingdom of the Sick

Svea (MEG 16)

<https://gofund.me/6e4be1f1>

"Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place."

#CureM.E.

BIRTHDAY-FUNDRAISER
FOR ME/CFS RESEARCH

You can inform yourself and those around you about ME/CFS

- because ME/CFS can affect anyone, is common, and is often diagnosed too late.

You can donate to biomedical research

- because there is hardly any state funding and about 1 million people are waiting for medication, therapies and a cure.

You can share this fundraiser with as many people as possible

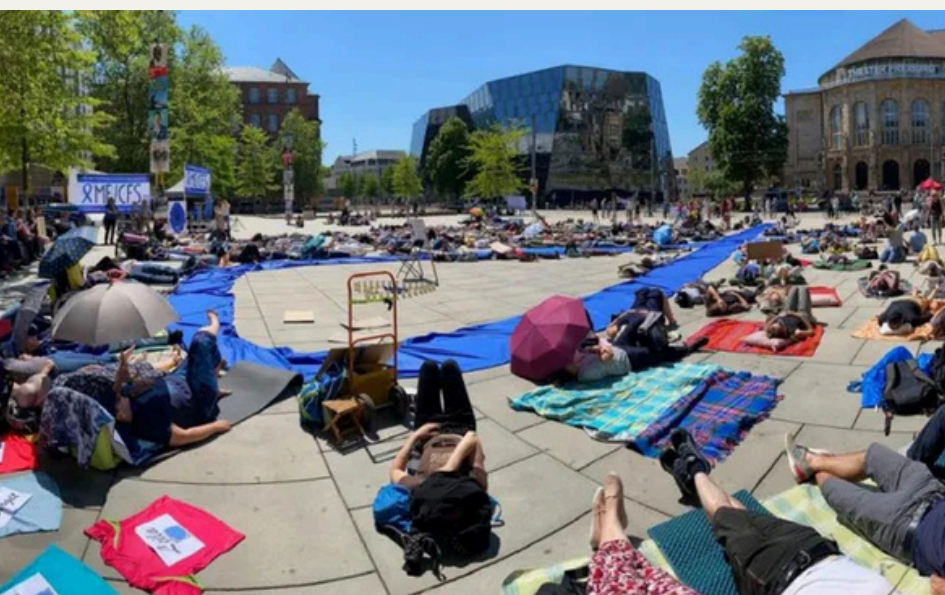
- because together we can make a difference!

These words by Susan Sontag describe the course of my past years pretty well. After what seemed like a harmless infection in 2018, my body just wouldn't return to "normal" again. Being 22 at that time and having an optimistic outlook on life, I was sure these symptoms would disappear pretty soon; tomorrow maybe, I would wake up feeling better. But that tomorrow never came, instead, years of medical odyssey began.

It took 5 years and countless doctors' visits and google searches (the latter being more helpful) to find out that I am ill with a condition called ME/CFS.

Now I am 29 and my life transitioned from being an overachiever into that of a chronically ill person having to spend 23 out of 24 hours in bed in a dark room with no distraction. I painfully learned that with each time I pushed beyond my limits, the transition to the kingdom of the sick progressed and my condition worsened. I learned that disproportionately many young women are affected by this neuroimmunological disease (thanks to the fact that we have a stronger immune system, yay!).

Research has been heavily neglected over the past decades with the tragic result that there are no treatments, no care structures and no recognition of this actually rather common disease. Hence, it would mean the world to me if you consider supporting my fundraiser for the ME/CFS Research Foundation by donations or by sharing with those around you.



On the 10th of May, 2025, MEGgies alike, went to a 'lying' demonstration in support of increased funding into ME/CFS. Initiatives like this showcase the importance of international and domestic MEGs sharing political concerns, and supporting one another in the fight for change. It shows us that no matter where we come from, we often have the same demand - a better, more just future for all.

Images, dialogue and playfulness: a graphic novel on the sustainability crisis

Cristina Espinosa (MEG 3)

As an educator and researcher in environmental social sciences, I recognize the importance of making academic insights accessible. As part of the Young Academy for Sustainability Research (YAS) at the University of Freiburg, I joined a science communication experiment to co-produce a graphic novel on the global sustainability crisis. Collaborating with social scientists, humanities scholars, and creatives from Ellery Studio[1], we critically engaged with our research to draw empirical and theoretical inspiration for storylines.



Figure 1: Cover of the graphic novel "Welt im Wandel"

We explored themes like responsibility, complexity, anxiety, loss, and hope, shaping characters and plots that would resonate with a broader audience. The texts we drafted formed the backbone of our collaboration with graphic designers.

After two years of exchange, our graphic novel, *Welt im Wandel: Fünf Stories zur Umweltkrise* (A Changing World: Five Stories on the Environmental Crisis, Waxmann), is finally out. Through this process, I discovered the power of graphic novels as a science communication tool. Their mix of imagery and dialogue makes them particularly engaging for teenage students – our envisioned changemakers of the future. Their mix of imagery and dialogue makes them particularly engaging for teenage students – our envisioned changemakers of the future.

Unlike traditional scientific publications, graphic novels can convey the emotional dimensions of sustainability crises. Climate change, often discussed in abstract scientific terms, becomes more tangible through personal narratives that evoke connection and empathy. This format also helped us depict less visible aspects of the crisis, such as the deep-rooted cultural and value conflicts tied to biodiversity loss. By including 'different voices' – diverse speakers, narratives, languages, and concerns – we illuminated both the social and physical dimensions of sustainability, along with justice issues.

These insights reaffirm my belief that graphic novels are a powerful medium for raising awareness and inspiring action. As educators and researchers, we must continue to explore unconventional ways to communicate science effectively.

[1] The contributors of the graphic novel are (in alphabetical order): Lea Breitsprecher, Yasemin Çakır, Cristina Espinosa, Javier Francisco, Matthias Kranke, Pawel Leyk, Eugen Litwinow, Sarah May, Dorota Orlof, Bernd Riedel, Hannah Kristin Schrage, Dodo Vögler, Michael Vollstaedt and Ida Wallin.

The Meant-to-be Master: MEG

Camila Cosse Braslavsky (MEG15)

I've always had a deep love for nature and a desire to work for meaningful causes. However, my struggles with math and a slight number dyslexia made it challenging for me to find my way into environmental protection, a field I have always adored. I also happened to have a strong inclination towards exploring different perspectives, which led me to pursue a bachelor's degree in Religious and Cultural Studies.

I once dreamed of writing a thesis on how Buddhism could help rewire our relationship with nature and address the lifestyles that have contributed to our current environmental crisis.

Yet, I still felt uncertain about where I fit into this vast landscape. It wasn't until I participated in a WWF field internship that everything began to click. I applied for a position in Bhutan, focused on building and supporting wildlife conservation corridors in a region known for its endangered large feline populations. Although I didn't secure that spot due to limited availability, I was invited to Madagascar instead.

This opportunity allowed me to spend five months learning about agroforestry and forest conservation within a REDD+ project. During this time, I realized that effective policies and agreements are essential for such projects to thrive. I discovered that my natural organizational skills could significantly contribute to these initiatives.

The journey ahead was still long and filled with uncertainty. With no degrees and no clear path from my home in Buenos Aires to large-scale environmental projects,

I took it one step at a time. Someone pointed me toward a bachelor's degree in Civil Society Management, suggesting it would be the perfect fit for me because of my **"ant-energy to work on key topics but lack of interest in working for the state"**—and it truly was.

In this program, I encountered International Relations and Policy Analysis, two fields that captivated me, along with Economics, which I had dreaded. However, I ended up writing my thesis in this field under the guidance of a brilliant professor. By the end of my 20s, I was working on policy projects—though initially in education rather than the environment.

I was eager to move toward my ultimate goal. As inflation in Argentina began to skyrocket (although laughable compared to most recent development), I struggled to enter the environmental field as I had hoped. So, I decided to pursue a Master's degree. I enrolled in a Global Studies program focused on inequality and social issues at the University of Freiburg. Although these topics didn't seem directly related to nature, I thought I could write a thesis and do an internship related to the environment, which would somehow connect.

While at Freiburg, I discovered the MEG program (Master of Environmental Governance). A classmate from the Global Studies program took an optional course with MEG and immediately texted me: **"I found the program you have to be in."**

He explained the curriculum, and it sounded like exactly what I needed. Despite the sacrifice of a year invested in my previous program, I made the switch.

Joining MEG was indeed the turning point I needed. I started in the second semester, and my first class was the Ecosystem Management module in the Black Forest.

I had the incredible opportunity to engage with hunters, farmers, and conservationists on-site, which confirmed that I was on the right path. Additionally, I worked with Dr. Ida Wallin as a teaching assistant for the Ecosystem Management module in my last semester—the very class I had fallen in love with during my first MEG class.

After graduating from MEG in my mid-30s, I was finally ready to tackle the policy environment I had long aspired to enter. I was fortunate to secure an internship at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which quickly changed the course of my career.

From organizing a conference at UNEP offices in Paris, I soon found myself working for an NGO at intergovernmental negotiations on plastic pollution and, subsequently, at the biodiversity COP the following year.

I am confident that none of those opportunities would have materialized had it not been for my enrollment in MEG. While my sense of strategy, resilience, and analytical skills played a significant role, I am forever grateful to MEG for opening those doors.

MEG 19/20 Meet-up

Did you know that the MEG selection committee in their quest to recruit a seemingly diverse global cohort, unintentionally managed to recruit a notable common skill among all students – and it is not what you think... The MEG 19 collective ability and love for cooking! (Note: Don't worry this is not a criteria of the application process)

On Tuesday evening after a long day of classes, the MEG 19 unconditional love for cooking prevailed – What better way to welcome the MEG20 than organising a potluck and cooking for all of them? Coupled with a few welcome speeches, lovely conversations and games, everyone had a chance to meet someone new.



Pia, a new MEG 20 from South Africa commented *“For me the meeting was an event that inspired a lot of hope in me that I could and would make it through this first semester. Not only do I have a lot to learn in the classroom, but this programme will also inspire me to improve my cooking and baking skills. Best cinnamon buns I have had to date!”*

**MEGgie Questionnaire
Answers:**

What was your Biggest Change in Freiburg since your Arrival?

Döner Prices



My worldview. I have learned a lot from my peers' experiences

My career outlook and frame of mind



Routine! Also cool people & community. And: sustainability is relative!



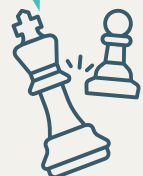
My daily life, my daily language, the political situation, my awareness about other (cultural) realities and worldviews.

I have become more familiar with different cultures and new ways of thinking and I have a deeper appreciation for my own culture too.



My understanding of socio ecologic interactions, my knowledge of international dishes, my opinion on sprudelwasser (sparkling water) and my use of second-hand/zu verschenken articles, all of which have improved.

World: Trump re-elected, fundamental change in US foreign politics; personal life: many new friends and hobbies, joined many new event formats, experienced new locations, etc.



How MEGgies relate to Global Change

Crossing disciplines

I think transdisciplinary approaches to environmental challenges are on the rise. There is more recognition about how every discipline, sector, etc. can contribute and the need for humanities and social science to have equal representations with science and technology to solve challenges because the problems go far beyond technocratic or scientific solutions can offer. In fact, attacks on the scientific legitimacy of climate change (climate denialism) cannot ignored or solved with more science.

1

2

Shift in Global Power

US foreign politics, therefore political world order; German politics: increased focus on migration and economy, climate policy losing attention



3

Geopolitics

Thanks to the GEP student-led module we engaged with different IR theories and aspects. I think it's important that we learn to analyse and navigate a rapidly changing world where environmental concerns may not be prioritised anymore

Technology

5

4

How we relate to each other with the rise of technology and individual independence. We have become less reliant on communities but I have loved our discussed in MEG on degrowth and the positive repercussions of returning to more community-oriented living.

Normativity and multiple truths co-existing

Moving away from trying to make an effort to find the truth, towards emotional, manipulative arguing, more egoistic action and a very tense political order. Meg relates to that with the fact that we are all interested in finding solutions to environmental and societal problems and into these topics but still have very different beliefs and perspectives on issues like personal individual responsibility, consumption, habits (like flying) and the right approaches to our worlds crises. Also, the ongoing problem of global north and global south not being able to openly and constructively discussing pressing issues but being shaped and hindered by stereotypes, generalisations, feelings of guilt and reluctance impeding us from a valuable discourse.

Alumni Questionnaire

What changes are there in employment sector?

Increased pressure on natural resources (including illegal mining and logging linked to drug trafficking in the Amazon) and post-truth politics and AI making environmental governance more challenging, however at the same a growing focus on environmental and social safeguards and positive impact measurement at the project/programme level.

The biggest change working in the due diligence and supply chain sector is the rise of protective trade policies and tariffs, as well as sanctions related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the use of forced labor in Xinjiang.

How does MEG relate to current social & global transformation?

There is more urgency than ever before to take action and international politics is in a quite sensitive moment with conservative and far-right political parties considerably influencing the debate. Crafting innovative solutions for sustainable and equitable natural resource management under such circumstances is crucial and this relates directly to MEG.

The rise of nativist politics and decline of globalization across the world. MEG equips us to understand the complexity of these issues, though MEG's mission is generally under attack globally (sustainability, intersectionality, global frameworks, etc.).



What is some advice for Current MEG's?

I believe "putting one foot in front of the other" is a good approach to keep moving forward and making a contribution despite the challenging environment these days.

As a generalist it may seem daunting (and it was when I first started my job search during the peak of the pandemic in 2020/2021) but keep an eye out for global trends. If interested in consulting, take courses or self study topics that are relevant to broader sectors of the economy (energy transition, supply chains, Ghg accounting, etc.).



Thank You

It is so nice to see how many students and alumni gave their time to contribute to this newsletter. It really showcases the special connections and networks this Master offers. Here is to another year of learning and engaging with the complex and dynamic world around us.

[For more updates check the MEG website](#)