

## Welcome to the MEG Newsletter 2014

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### Editor

It's been another intense and positive year for MEG and the MEGgies. In fact, the program is just on the verge of its first two-digit birthday: 10 years!

Though much has changed during this time, the MEG has only grown in relevance to today's world, truly fulfilling its mission to train students for shaping complex futures. At the same time, the program's cosmopolitan and trans-disciplinary core remains strong as ever.

Also unchanged are the academic rhythms: new MEGs arrive, while previous the generation is in their internships, and the one before that is handing in theses and packing bags.

Having now experienced the whole MEG chronology, from induction to graduation, I find it heartening to see the cycle continue year after year.

Initially, I had wanted to steer this issue towards an exploration of transitions and uncertainty: two concepts that we face in our lives and throughout our studies (both theoretically and practically). Yet the sense of disruption inherent to them seemed out of place.

The idea is therefore to bring the newsletter back to its original calling – as a snapshot of the endless diversity and ceaseless creativity of those who over the course of two years become MEGgies.

The call has been answered, loud and clear! In this issue, we look at the ongoing thought-provoking lecture series on sustainability and its relation to power and change. We then

turn our attention to the budding alumni network, which will make it possible for us to keep in touch and tap into a vast pool of experience.

Before reading about two experiences of going back “home” after the master's, we get updated on MEG's very own Freiburg Scientific Theater. We also hear about another MEGgie's experience at the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions.

And finally, we solve the mystery of how three generations of MEGs found themselves in Buffalo, figure out how to become a social entrepreneur, learn about MEG8 as they leave, get a sneak-preview of an upcoming book, and discover the hidden Caucasus.

There you have it, MEG – its diversity and creativity – in a nutshell!

Your Editor, Matthew Bach, MEG8

## Newsletter 2014

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Imprint

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## News

### Editor

The newsletter is out just in time to mark the end of yet another exciting and busy MEG calendar year. Here are some of the highlights in case you missed them.

### Welcome MEG10!

We are happy to welcome the 10<sup>th</sup> generation of MEGgies to Freiburg and the shaping of complex futures! Keeping in MEG tradition, they are a diverse bunch: 36 students from 22 countries, as well as a wide variety of academic and professional backgrounds. We wish them all much success!

### MEG8 SOE: The Cost of Food

It was a wild ride! More meeting than we can recall – discussions, debates, minutes, plans, and more. And then, it happened. We started off with lots of small events (Newsletter 2/2013), which led up to the latest instalment of the *Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance* that focused on the hidden costs of our food system.

Thanks to generous support from the DAAD Millennium Express, we were able to invite students from all around Germany (and the world) for workshops exploring roads to a fair and affordable food future. You can see the amazing results on the event website: 'costoffood.org'.



The big day ended with a major panel discussion featuring speakers from the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the Nexus Foundation, KfW, Ecologic, and the Freiburg GartenCoop. The venue was packed!



Photo: Kristina Izmailova

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## ... and MEG9's SOE: six videos and launch event

Jip Welkers, MEG9

Water is a basic human necessity to which people in all parts of the world relate. Despite the declaration of water as a Human Right, the reality is that there are a number of situations where diverse interests and power relations prevent people all around the world from freely and equally exercising this right, which in turn leads to injustice. Scarcity of water is a main cause of the respective conflicts in many countries and as a consequence, such conflicting relations raise the question of fairness and justice when distributing and accessing water. Therefore, the MEG9 SOE will focus on the topic of "Water Conflict and Water Justice".

We are currently in the process of designing and filming six videos with themes varying from the economic drivers of water scarcity to social and technical solution for providing access to water. We will keep you updated about the details of our launch event, which will take place at the end of February 2015 and where to find the videos.

## mAppetizing Smartphone App gets the Prize!

MEG's very own Mark Heuer and Philipp Gassner (MEG8) won the University's prize for student engagement with their mAppetizing smartphone app ([mappetizing.de](http://mappetizing.de)).

Initially developed as part of the Cost of Food SOE, it took on a life of its own and became an irreplaceable part of sustainable living in Freiburg:

*"Have you ever been new to a city, and just didn't know where and how to shop and eat the way you want? Who knows the closest market? When is it open? Where can I pick nice apples or get organic flour, fair chocolate and regional lettuce? And how do I get there by bike? We have been there. And even though the green city Freiburg makes it rather easy for you to eat and shop right, you just have to know about the options.*

*All that knowledge out there is now bundled and readily available in your pocket with our Smart Phone app „mAppetizing Freiburg". We provide an one-stop resource – a 'food pocket knife' – for your eating experience in Freiburg – with truly low costs."*

Be sure to download it and try out it!

## MEG 9 Takes Geneva by Storm!

Alessandra Große, MEG9

Early one February morning, the students of the MEG9 generation met excited and full of expectations for their three-day trip to Geneva. By afternoon, we were at the International Environment House listening to speakers who shared with us valuable personal and professional insights from their work at the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The following day, we took part in a workshop on the *MDGs and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda* at the Palais des Nations, which featured speakers from various UN agencies, the World Trade Organisation and the International Labour Organisation. During our free time, we enjoyed the sights (including the famous "Jet d'Eau"),

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as well as the city's international atmosphere with spicy Indian and delicious Ethiopian food.

On the third and last day of our excursion, we headed to Gland to visit the IUCN and WWF headquarters, where a former MEG student had kindly organized the speakers of the day. With these three intensive days, we ended our first semester as MEGgies and spread across the globe, from the Swiss glaciers to the Ecuadorian rainforest, to enjoy the semester break.

## Sustainability - Power and Change

Jip Welkers, MEG9

As one of the first 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities of MEG, an innovative public lecture series about "Sustainability - Power and Change" is being held throughout the winter semester. Nine speakers will give lectures and discuss about the overriding questions:

*How are power and change linked up?*

*Which kinds of power foster or prevent change?*

*How useful are current concepts and theories of power for sustainability research and practice?*

Power in sustainability research and practice is an essential element and is increasingly recognized as such. Those who strive to foster change and to understand the stability of the established, unsustainable system must face issues of power.

The lecture series is set up with a group of MEGs who are actively involved with the

preparation of the lecture series and moderate the discussions.

The series will form the basis for an edited volume on power and change in sustainability research and practice, which will be submitted to *Global Environmental Politics*. Students will help in writing the papers; an exciting way of combining research and education!

Professor Simonis from the Berlin Social Science Centre kicked off the series with an inspiring talk about blockades and dynamics in global environmental politics.

Dr. Rohan D'Souza from Jawaharlal Nehru University talked about *Water, Power and Environmental History* in South Asia and specifically in India. In his book<sup>1</sup> he argues that under British colonial rule, eastern India went from a flood-dependent to flood-vulnerable region. His lecture also shed on why history is essential for seeing different ways of living, and constructing and solving problems. He emphasized that water is not a technical issue; it is deeply political.

As part of the organizing team, Rebekka Frick (MEG10) and I got the chance to talk in greater depth to Dr. D'Souza. He told us research is largely about analyzing and questioning change and power dynamics. For example, what is change and how does it differ from evolution? Is change always for the better? Is there a difference in understanding change between the political practice and the academic discourse?

He also gave us some inspiring advice for doing research, which could be helpful for any scholar:

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<sup>1</sup> *Drowned and Dammed: Colonial Capitalism and Flood control in Eastern India (1803-1946)*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2006.

- Modernize by questioning modern assumptions. For example, how did life become like it is now? How is poverty created? What is it to be a great human?
- Question the question.
- Create your own capacity for meaningful thinking. Life outside of the classroom, talk, travel, but most importantly listen. Get theories from books, but experience from life.
- Be careful with the difference between problem-solving and problem constituting. Find out how, why and by whom problems are framed as problems.
- What we want to be made has to be made meaningful.
- A good academic project starts when you fight a lost cause and start finding out how power and legislature works.

Inspired to hear more?

Come to one of the upcoming lectures and/or read the special issue on Sustainability, Power and Change (for updates, see the MEG website). To end with the slogan of the lecture series, "if we want to foster change and understand the stability of the current (non-sustainable) system, we have to deal with questions of power."

The next lectures are:

**26 November 2014 @ 10:15**

*Aysem Mert (Käte Hamburger Kolleg/Centre for Global Cooperation Research)*

From Radical Ecology (Back) to Developmentalism: An Analysis of Sustainable Development Discourse.

**28 November 2014 @ 10:15**

*Dr. Flor Avelino (Dutch Research Institute for Transitions)*

Power and Empowerment in Sustainability Transitions

**8 December 2014 @ 15:15**

*Prof. Dr. Dave Huitema (VU University Amsterdam)*

Climate Change and the Power of Policy Learning

**10 December 2014 @ 15:15**

*Dr. Alice B.M. Vadrot (ICCR-Foundation)*

The Politics of Knowledge and Global Biodiversity

## The New MEG Alumni Network is here

*Radina Vassileva & Chloe Hill (MEG9)*

*Survey by Jip Welkers (MEG9)*

With over 150 MEG graduates spanning 10 generations and 57 countries it is finally time to set up a student based MEG Alumni Network. With graduates working across the globe in fields varying from consultancy to research to international organisations, the benefits of an established alumni network are numerous.

MEGs tend to stick together by nature during their studies. We want to help each other out and a MEG Alumni Network could help us do this across generations, even after we have graduated and are living thousands of kilometres away from each other.

Graduated MEGgies could post about new job openings in their employment sector and gain access to inexpensive interns, while new MEGgies will be able to gain a glimpse into their prospective future. It would open cultural and sectorial communication channels between graduates to enable greater problem-solving ability, but also stay more updated about the developments in the field of Environmental Governance and share knowledge about different specialisations.

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MEG alum could even have the opportunity to provide graduates or current students with some advice or be an immediate contact when visiting or living in a new country (who needs the Lonely Planet guide book when you have a fellow MEG?). More than this, an alum could serve as (a source of) inspiration for both graduates and current MEG students.

We circulated a survey about half a year ago through Esther to all the MEG Alumni with the results showing that many MEG's would be interested in getting in touch with other MEG generations and making new connections (Figure 1).

For this reason one of our first initiatives will be to expand the *Meet the Alumni/ae* section of the MEG website (<http://www.meg-uni-freiburg.de/134/>). This forum is a great way to get to re-connect with fellow classmates, learn about other career paths and share your own experiences.

So what will this MEG Alumni Network look like? Well, that is the big question right now that we, the MEG Alumni Committee - a group of current and former MEGgies, who have been informally meeting over the past year - are trying to figure out and we want to keep you informed and involved.

We are considering creating an association with an official status. Such an institutionalisation would have both benefits, such as

becoming independent of the faculty, but also financially demanding and requires the active engagement of people within the administrative team.

We are also currently contemplating:

*How would a MEG Alumni Network function with the MEG graduates living across 6 different continents?*

*Is it feasible to organise excursions and meet-ups?*

*Or are online updates and communication more realistic?*

The survey we circulated half a year ago also showed that a large proportion of MEG graduates interested in physical meetings (Figure 2). We are therefore planning a 10 year MEG anniversary Alumni in February 2016 with more details to follow.

Input about the new MEG Alumni Network is very welcome! We are also looking for two ambitious MEG10 students (as well as anyone else who is interested) to join our team.

If you want to join the MEG Alumni Committee, submit a *Meet the Alumni/ae* profile or have any ideas for the Alumni Network please do not hesitate to contact us at [megalumninetwork@gmail.com](mailto:megalumninetwork@gmail.com).

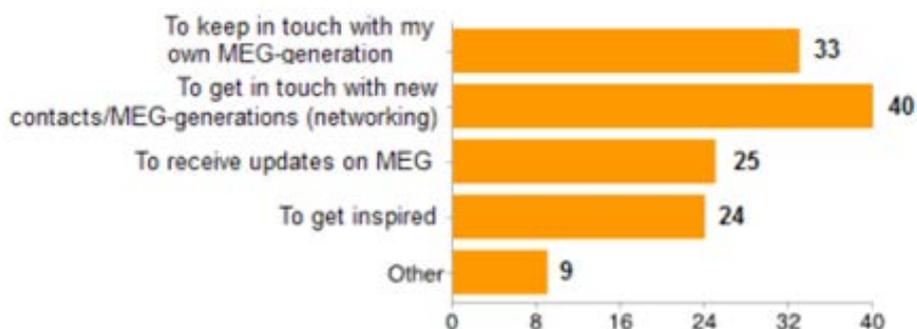


Figure 1: What would you expect from a MEG Alumni network?

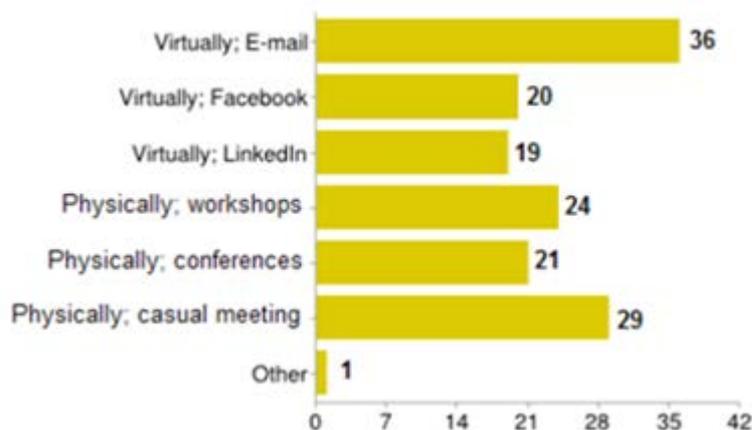


Figure 2: How would you like to be in contact with the MEG-Alumni Community?

## An Update from the Freiburg Scientific Theater

*Brendan Dobbie (MEG6)*

For those who came in late – the Freiburg Scientific Theatre was first developed by MEG students as part of the 5th annual Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance in March 2012, where we showcased our first play “Setting the Stage for Sustainable Consumption”.



To our surprise and pleasure the event was a great success, and that performance turned out to be the beginning of an exciting journey. Since March 2012 we have been invited to perform our Scientific Theatre at many different events and venues around Germany, including academic conferences, public festivals and even Christmas parties. The positive responses we received from our audiences and the motivating personal experiences we received in establishing the project made us realize the great value of the concept. This encouraged us to continue our work and take it to the next level. We did this in November 2012, when we officially launched the Freiburg Scientific Theatre as a non-profit association in Germany.

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For those not yet familiar with our work, the Freiburg Scientific Theatre comprises a culturally diverse group of young and passionate sustainability experts. The group still mainly draws from current and former MEG students, however we have now expanded our group to include people from other academic and professional backgrounds. We use theatrical techniques to communicate important sustainability science messages to the public, and promote discussion, in an entertaining and engaging manner. As we try to appeal to the emotions, not just the mind, we hope to engage and provoke audience members at a deeper level than is possible with traditional science communication methods.

In this way, the theatre serves as a mediator between experts, scientific communities and the public, as well as between cultures and generations. It is a collective experience, which deepens understandings, cuts through communication barriers, and can serve as a catalyst for public interaction and behavioural change.

The approach is born out of the professional background of our theatre crew, who are not

trained actors, but sustainability scientists and practitioners. This experience allows us to expand our approach beyond the performance to include substantiated discussion with the audience. The broad spectrum of our international and professional backgrounds enables us to adjust our performance to the theme of the occasion at which we are playing. In addition, a significant feature of our Scientific Theatre is the use of different languages, cultural traditions (including music, dance and song) and cultural settings. To develop our performances we work with an array of professional theatre educators and are always looking to expand our horizons.



After a bumper year of shows in 2013, the work of the Freiburg Scientific Theatre has continued strongly in 2014. We began the year on home territory with performances at the MEG 8 Student Organised Event, "The Cost of Food – Beyond the Price Tag." This was followed by further shows at the Synagieren Wirkcamp in Freiburg, and on the Aktionstage Nachhaltigkeit Freiburg, during the city's official sustainability week. We were also invited to play at the Netzwerk n Konferenz in Bochum and at the Freiburg Sustainability Summit, a large conference jointly organized by the Fraunhofer Institute and the

University of Freiburg. In addition, the Freiburg Scientific Theatre was invited to perform at the closing plenary session of the IUCN World Parks Conference in Sydney, Australia this November, however unfortunately due to the extensive travel costs involved we had to decline the invitation.

In addition to our theatrical performances, we have broadened our activities to include the facilitation of theatre workshops aimed at teaching participants to use theatre as a tool to communicate environmental and sustainability policy messages. This year we have been invited to give workshops at the Synagieren Wirkcamp in Freiburg and for STUBE in Berlin. In addition, we recently facilitated a special workshop on intercultural communication for the University of Greifswald.

In order to further the professional development of the Freiburg Scientific Theatre we have recently obtained office space at the Grünhof in Freiburg, where the group meets regularly to work on administrative matters (in addition to our regular rehearsals). This workspace is important to allow us to develop new projects, and it has proved very useful in the development of a new school project in Bad Krotzingen, where we are helping to facilitate school lessons on Theatre, Sustainability and Science for year 9 students in conjunction with a local teacher.

Looking forward, the Freiburg Scientific Theatre has applied to participate in the United Nations Climate Change COP 21 next year in Paris, and is currently working on an application for EU Strategic Partnerships funding to develop a network of similar theatre organizations throughout Europe.

The Freiburg Scientific Theatre has been an adventurous and inspiring journey for all of us, and it is our dream to continue this project, about which we are so passionate. With all the positive energy we have received from our experiences and our audiences, we look forward to keep on acting for sustainability.

**Save the Date** – the Freiburg Scientific Theatre will facilitate a public scientific theatre workshop in Freiburg on 17/18th January 2015 - everyone is invited! For more information please see check our website (<http://scientific-theatre.org>) and our Facebook page soon.

## To Leave or not to Leave, that was the Dilemma

*Ingrid González (MEG8)*

I never thought leaving Freiburg would be so difficult. But it actually was.

I guess after living there for two years, it inevitably became my home. While flying back to my home country Colombia I had more than 10 hours to think about my “transition”, how much did this living-abroad-experience change me?, would it cost me a lot to get used to Colombia again? What is next for me? Do I really want to leave?

It is definitely not the end of the world though, but for me the transition was challenging. Freiburg was my first time living so far away from home, getting used to studying in English, fighting with German, getting to know so many different cultures, people, group works, social sciences!!!! Not forgetting to mention to schedule yourself, from getting used to the

crazy time schedule of administrative offices to think about shopping for groceries on Saturdays because everything is closed on Sundays! That is definitely different to Bogotá.

It was an interesting experience. You get to know wonderful people, to enjoy seasons and their related food and activities, to discover new places. Your mind simply opens to new experiences and suddenly your new style of life becomes familiar and time passes in the blink of an eye.

Of course I missed home, the food, my family and friends, but at the same time I realized that I got used (and liked) so many things in Freiburg that I am definitely struggling a little bit here back home.

Now in Bogota, a city of approximately 8 million inhabitants my transition to this reality has been also challenging... I am currently writing my thesis, so Freiburg is still part of my daily activity of writing.

It's been one month since I left Germany. Now having noise all the time from my neighbors is becoming my background music to sleep and traffic noise in the early morning my alarm. Do you have any idea of the noise 8 million people make when commuting to work? Even though I miss Freiburg, Colombia is my eternal home. It is just about laugh, love, and of course available fruits 365 days of the year ;-)

I've been asked many times: Germany or Colombia? Uff, difficult to say. My heart is half broken and it will always be. To me Germany means freedom, security and future. Colombia means family, happiness and roots. None and both, I would say.

## Drifting in Rotterdam

*Bernadette Kirner (MEG8)*

Dear DRIFT,

How are you? I hope everything is fine and that you are not too busy with researching, writing, publishing, reviewing and still have enough time for borrels<sup>2</sup> with delicious borrelhapjes<sup>3</sup>, DRIFT-outings and city tours with twitter-competitions, the weekly versnelling-sessie<sup>4</sup>, and a million transition arenas.

Ever since I left you, I love to think back of the fabulous times I've spent with you in Rotterdam a bustling vibrant harbor city (definitely the windiest place I have ever lived in) full of architecture, design, art and lovely people. Truly unforgettable...

It really was such a great pleasure to get to know you during my internship in May and June and I am always happy to get some recent news from my incredible collegas<sup>5</sup>.

I have to say I really liked being your guest and am very much looking forward to see you

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<sup>2</sup> Borrel: Evening get-together with drinks and snacks.

<sup>3</sup> Borrel hapjes: snacks for borrel.

<sup>4</sup> Versnelling sessie (= 'acceleration session') Weekly meeting at DRIFT, where a certain topic gets presented to the team by one or two colleagues in the context of a short input-presentation. Someone caters the lunch.

<sup>5</sup> Collegas: working colleagues.

anytime soon! Until then: eet smakelijk<sup>6</sup> and don't forget to properly lock your oma fiets<sup>7</sup>!

Forever yours,

Bernadette



*Rotterdam's new Central Station reflecting its surroundings*

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Note by author:

This year I did my internship at DRIFT (Dutch Research Institute for Transitions – the hub for transition research in Europe and leading research institute in transitions towards sustainability) in Rotterdam and this review surely will continue to praise DRIFT as Matthew Bach did in last year's MEG newsletter.

Well – where to begin? It was a blast! Honestly, the whole thing. The team at DRIFT, the projects they do and put all their work, good thoughts and time into, Rotterdam itself

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<sup>6</sup> Eet smakelijk: Enjoy your meal.

<sup>7</sup> Oma fiets: (= 'Grandma's bike') traditional old Dutch bikes without handbrake and gears.

...- even the weather presumably was a whole lot better than it would normally be ; ) Not to forget: the Dutch. Such fun people and really welcoming.

Would I recommend to MEGs to do an internship at DRIFT? For sure! Are you looking for something really different and a research institute where academic research is put into practice, alongside with advisory and education? Definitely your place to go!

For more information: [www.drift.eur.nl](http://www.drift.eur.nl)

*Editor's note: MEG9 has carried on this new tradition – Jip Welkers and Radina Vassileva also did their internship there this year. And the ties are deepening...*

*DRIFT's Dr. Flor Avelino will be giving a lecture in Freiburg in November (see Sustainability – Power and Change above), and another Drifter, Dr. Niki Frantzeskaki is expected in Freiburg next year to teach the MEGs about sustainability transitions!*

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## Leaving Freiburg, leaving the relaxed student life

*Syahrina D. Anggraini (MEG8)*

I left Freiburg on 9<sup>th</sup> of October and went back to my hometown in Bogor, Indonesia. It's definitely a mixed feeling, leaving the place that has been my home for more than two years. Sad, of course, because I might never see some of the people I've met and befriended in Freiburg again. I also worry about how well I can adjust with life in my home country, which is rather different from life in Freiburg. But I'm happy, especially to see my family and friends, to be able to taste those special dishes that I grew up with (and not just some imitation with whatever ingredients we can substitute in Germany!).

My experience going back home might not be as difficult as for some of my friends, since I think I have more 'anchor' in my hometown. First of all I'm married, so going back to where my husband stays is definitely coming home for me. I had also been back for visit a couple of times during the master's. And although there is always a period where I need to adjust to the weather, the food, and the time difference, I can manage. Then I have my job, so while some MEGs might be busy looking for job opportunities, sending applications here and there, I simply walk back to my office and tell my officemates that I'm back and get involved in project work.

Despite the excitement of reuniting with a familiar setting, I do miss the student life in Freiburg, which I became accustomed and enjoyed, especially during the last semester when we no longer had classes and had more flexibility with our time.

Living in Bogor is a work and also a family life. During my time in Freiburg I used to arrange my schedule according to my wishes, no need for so many compromises with others. In Bogor, think of sleeping longer on weekend? No can't do, it's time for laundry and house cleaning, and sometimes family gathering or even project meetings (yep, we sometimes hold meetings on weekends as that's the only time everyone is available). Want to see midnight movie on weekdays? No way, office starts at 9 am and it's an hour's ride from home (I definitely did not miss the traffic jam in Bogor). In Freiburg, my flatmate had a cat that I could occasionally hug and feed, and then he would leave me alone. My family (especially my husband) won't do that, they demand more attention ☺.

However, I am not officially done with my study, there is still the thesis to complete, and I will be back to Germany at the end of the year. Not to Freiburg but to Bonn, to do my post-graduate internship at the UNFCCC. This, at least, made parting with friends back then easier since there is still chance that I might see some of them again.

So, hope to see you Meggies again sometime soon...

## Three Generations of MEGs in Buffalo

*Editor*

*Photos: Eric Cheng*

Have you noticed how people often work on really similar things without knowing it? Well, this is just what happened to four of us MEGs – Brendan Dobbie (MEG6), Sophia Carodenuto (MEG5), Laura Dieguez and

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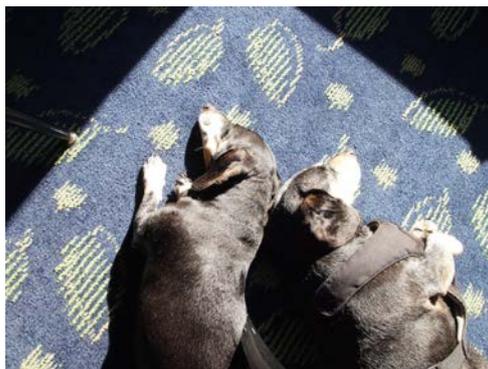
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myself (MEG8) – when we ended up in, of all places, Buffalo New York!

Now you must be thinking that we went there to sample the famous *Buffalo Wings* (you're not far off...) or its less famous but equally delicious co-star the *Beef on Weck*. We also didn't fly over 6000 km to see the Buffalo Bills ("American football") or even the Sabres (ice hockey).

The clue is that we all look at non-state governance in relation to natural resources under the supervision of Professors Errol Meidinger and Margaret Shannon. They had kindly invited us to a workshop for graduate students on the Transnational Business Governance Interactions (TBGI) framework.

tory governance (e.g., norm formation, enforcing, monitoring).<sup>8</sup>



Other highlights included a guided tour of Buffalo, a visit to Niagara Falls, lots of food, and time playing with the cutest Dachsunds!



During our time there, we shared case studies with our peers from Canada and received feedback from senior academics. We learnt about the governance of Private Military Security Contractors (think Blackwater), children' online privacy, shale gas ("fracking"), EU timber regulations, and much more.

We also delved into the TBGI framework, which explores the complex interactions between actors across all dimensions of regula-

<sup>8</sup> If you want to learn more, check out the seminal paper: *Eberlein et al. (2014) Transnational business governance interactions: Conceptualization and framework for analysis. Regulation & Governance 8.1: 1-21.*

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## Transitioning of a self-appointed to-be social entrepreneur?

Jonathan Niessen (MEG7)

It has been almost a year since I handed in my thesis and thus finished MEG in December 2013. A lot has happened since then, but I am still – or rather back, in Freiburg. I always criticized these people who stayed lingering in Freiburg, not knowing what to do with their lives. Now I understand them better ;)

After finishing MEG I went directly to Berlin, the place most self-appointed to-be social entrepreneurs go to find their luck. I joined an online start up ([www.boost-project.com](http://www.boost-project.com)) that runs a platform allowing users to donate to a charitable cause every time they go shopping online, without extra costs. It re-channels so called affiliate-marketing commissions to a (German) charity of your choosing. I wanted to create a spin-off company, focusing on climate change related causes, but I ran out of money and motivation after my three-month trial. I knew I would be traveling around Colombia during April and May, and that I couldn't make substantial progress in time.



So I put this project on hold and when I came home the green search engine ECOSIA had done a very similar, but smarter browser extension ([www.getecolink.com](http://www.getecolink.com)). I am happy that someone more potent realised this idea, this is how social business works, if you do a good job, you put yourself out of job. Well, I didn't do a good job, nevertheless I like to tell myself that ECOSIA came up with this idea because I applied there for an internship, while in Colombia, and told them about my idea. They contacted [boost-project.com](http://boost-project.com) while I was away, but then decided they would rather do it themselves than in cooperation with us. When I contacted them a few months later, congratulating them for the cool browser extension, and that I always had wanted such a tool, I got no reply. Strange world, but hey - since they didn't answer me, I can still believe that I initiated this project with just a few lines within an unsuccessful internship application.



The only productive thing I did during that time- apart from diving into the social business scene of Berlin, was to help building the new website for Freiburg Scientific Theatre, a successful MEG (the proof that MEG projects do work out). Luckily for me, the Scientific Theatre was not the only one – after Columbia I got hired to give a workshop and presentation on my thesis topic: business beyond growth. With a colleague who did a similar master thesis in Oldenburg, I am still working with this client. We are applying for funds for a bigger consulting project in this field. More on this maybe next year - who

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knows if this will work out in the end... or maybe be copied again ;)

After Colombia I came back to Freiburg, where my weeks were divided between working two paid days in a local firm, and three unpaid days for the Freiburg's co-working space "Grünhof". They are very cool people and I immediately felt comfortable being in the team and I knew I wanted to work with them. I also worked as a barkeeper in their Café/Beergarden "POW" during the World Cup - fun times! During this time I co-organised an internship-matching programme, bringing together Freiburg students and sustainability oriented startups in Freiburg ([www.unternehmenslust.de](http://www.unternehmenslust.de)). Some of you might remember my facebook spamming ;)

At that time I finally found people that wanted to grow gourmet mushrooms on coffee waste as a business (Yes, you can grow none-psychedelic edible mushrooms on waste and sell them to good restaurants and hotels). This was an idea I already had when I started MEG and that was inspired by a TED Talk. During my whole time in MEG I never really got to connect with people around a business idea, but hey – maybe I have yet to meet you! I rather met those people at social business conferences like WHU SustainAbility Conference where I went with Cameron from my MEG class, or Tatendräng – both organised by students of private business schools. But then, a few days before I left Freiburg again I met people in the co-working space that really wanted to start a business with me.



But I had to leave, to join a five week summer school organised and paid by Climate-Kic, an EU funded organisation with the aim to support the creation of businesses that mitigate or help to adapt to climate change. I had a really good time, with 40 people from 24 different nation, unlike MEG, they were more entrepreneurially minded... and if not entrepreneurial, at least there were more engineers and real scientists (chemistry, physics etc.) ;). I can really recommend applying for this summer school next year! You can even get credits for it!

After another three weeks working on a traveling double decker bus, promoting direct democracy in Germany I have my room in Freiburg back. I was smart enough to only sublet my room. The plan was to do an internship at a Freiburg based online start up "Wattfox" dealing with energy efficiency and renewable energy systems for homes. However then I got a job offer at the co-working space I volunteered for in early summer. This is kind of my dream job right now and I didn't even have to apply. This is how all the failing and volunteering paid off in the end. And I meet a lot of Meggies in Café POW during the day and on Fridays my lovely friends from Freiburg Scientific Theater, who by the way

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do a damn good job and are my favourite MEG spin-off. The mushrooms project is on ice now, so if someone wants to take over, I am willing to give some tips to a more potent entrepreneur! I still think Freiburg is a good place to start such a business.

If you are in Freiburg - come by at Café POW, and let's talk about your business ideas!

## From Geneva to Baku

*Julia Bunina (MEG8)*

Let's be honest, as students who study in Europe, we talk more often about some regions than others. Latin America, South East Asia (especially India and Indonesia), Africa (I know it's too big to be called a region)... these are so to say "sexy regions" for traveling, doing internships, and just dreaming about.

On the other hand, some other regions we talk far less about; they remain enigmatic and "exotic", though they might be much closer to Europe. Russia, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia are perfect examples. Just tell me, how many people do you know who have done their internship on the South Caucasus? Well, I have doubts that there would be more than 3 or 4 (including me).

Actually, I am going to write about my internship, which I did in Geneva at the ZOI Environment network - a Swiss-based NGO. They work on projects in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. It is a small NGO consisting of 15 nice people. They are a supportive and open-minded team either from Switzerland or the Former Soviet Union. They work mostly with UN or-

ganizations, the Swiss government, and the European Commission.

I was involved in the project on the South Caucasus and was lucky to work with people who love and know the region very well. And even though for three and a half months I was living in Geneva, I felt I was in the Caucasus for most of the time I spent at the office. My main responsibility was doing desk research on environmental issues in this region for a project that looks at the links between the Environment and Security in the South Caucasus.

We went "to the field" for interviews and spent one week in Tbilisi and Baku – definitely the highlight of the internship for me! It was my first "real" business trip. We asked the representatives of NGOs, ministries, and research organizations about their countries' main environmental problems and how they might be interlinked with Security. The biggest concern of environmentalists in Georgia is an expansion of hydropower plants, in Armenia nuclear power plant management, and in Azerbaijan oil pollution. Interestingly, Georgian environmentalists were a lot more open about real problems than their Azerbaijani colleagues.

Simply being in the region was perhaps the best part: experiencing Georgian hospitality, wandering around cozy Tbilisi, and discovering hyper-modern Baku – the New York of the Caucasus filled with the smell of oil. Somehow, these regions are less promoted in Europe; I have even heard from a friend in Geneva that I am doing "exotic" research. Exotic or not, I was happy to be in the region, which is not yet "flooded" by tourists and where people are still "real".

## State & Stories: Storytelling for Biodiversity

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Philipp Gassner (MEG8)



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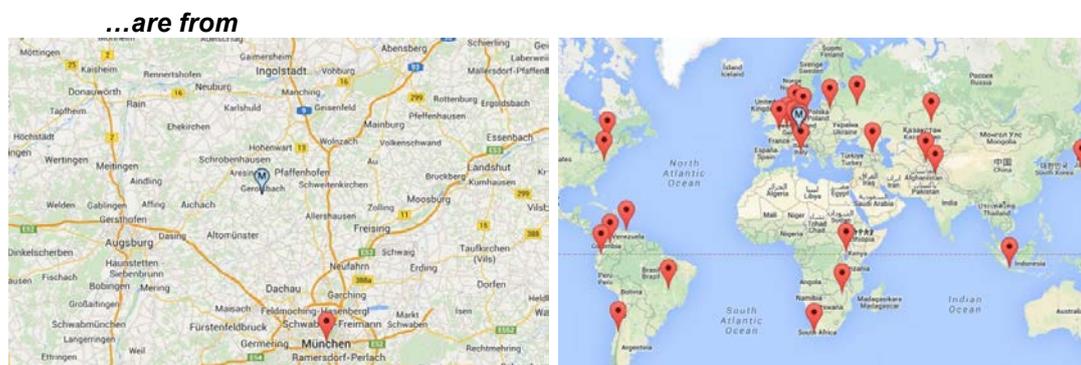
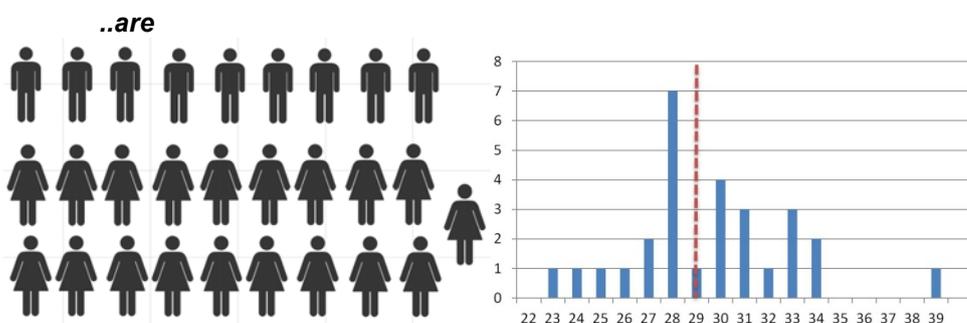


Fig. 3 M= Geographic Midpoint; Center of minimum distance

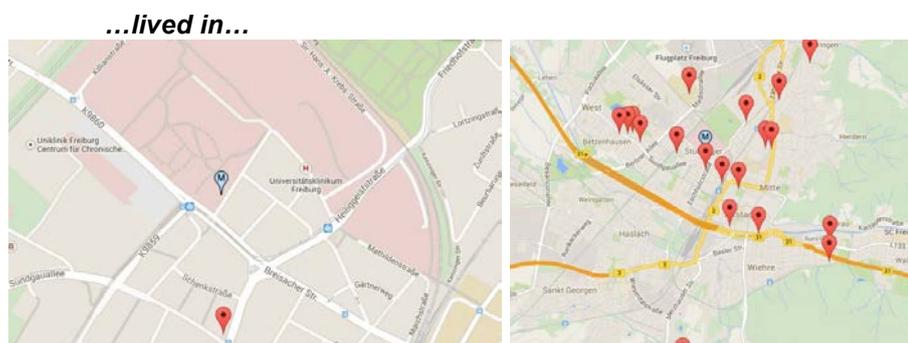


Fig. 4 M= Geographic Midpoint; Center of minimum distance

### 3. MEGs did internships in...



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4. MEG 8 did a Student Organized Event...

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...with lots of meetings



Fig. 5 Wordcloud of all 94 pages and 26094 words of MEG 8 SOE minutes

...which people liked

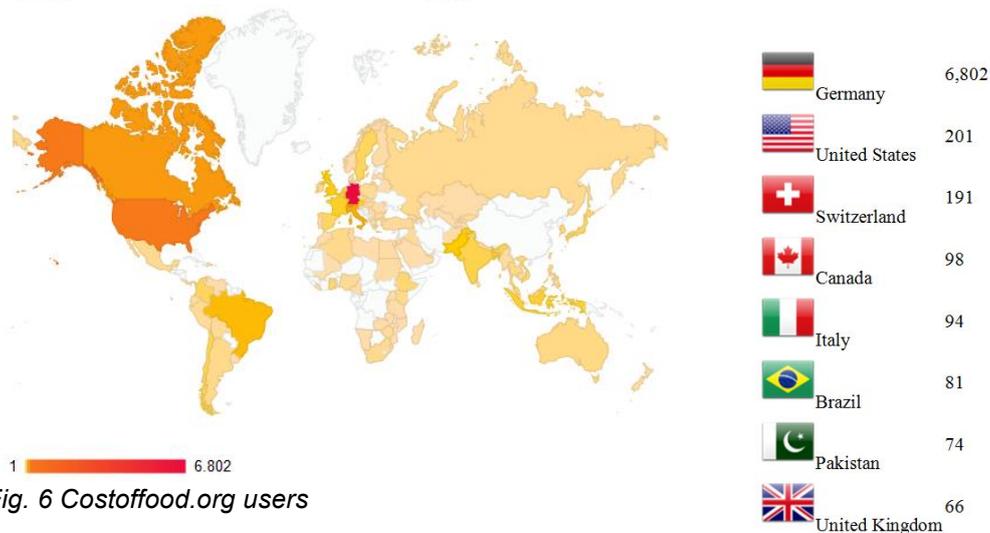
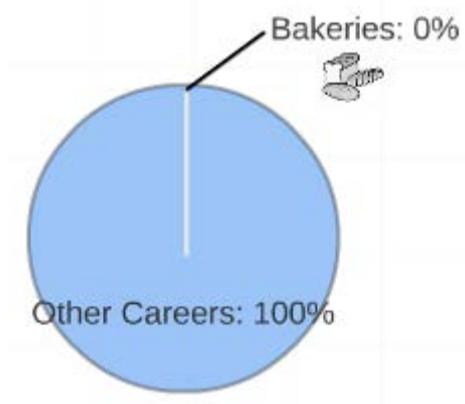


Fig. 6 Costoffood.org users

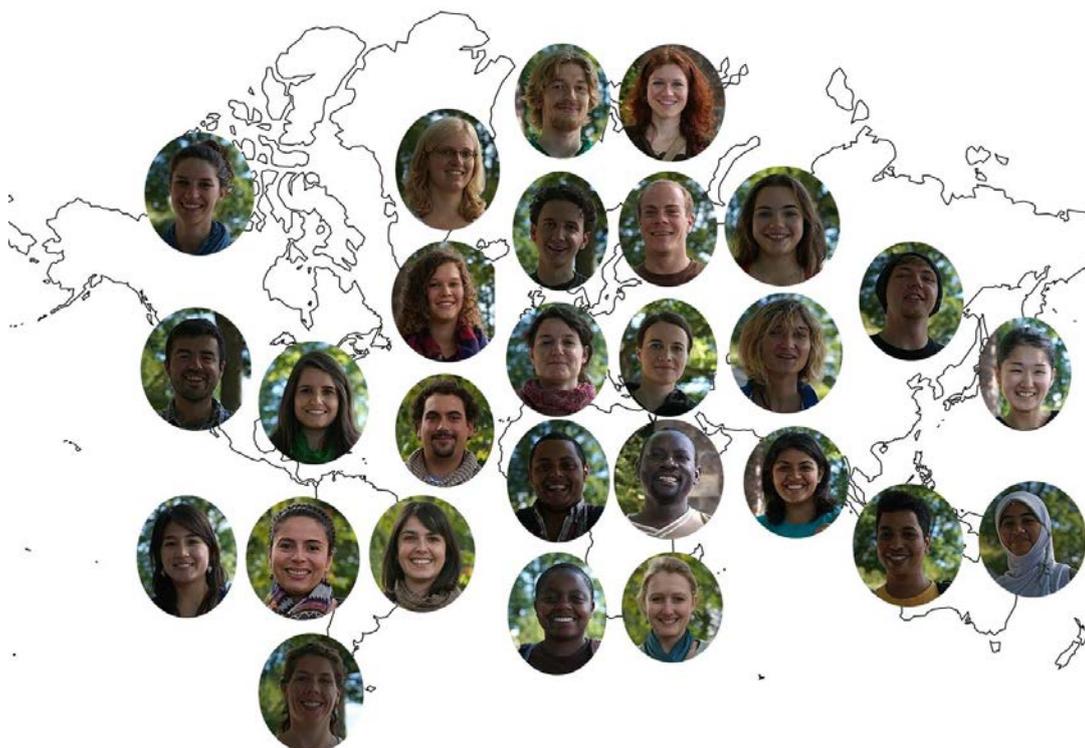
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5. MEG 8 have complex futures in...



6. MEG 8 says thanks & goodbye!



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