



Welcome to the MEG Newsletter 2015

Editor

Summer is upon us once again! Grills are out and the Dreisam is filled with people baking under the sun. Well, for us older MEGgies, it's time to break out into our exciting internship stints while the new MEGgies prepare for their arrival!

This year has been marked with many changes. First the MEG Newsletter is under a new management. Matthew has left us for a great job opportunity in Rotterdam and we would like to thank him for his wonderful contributions and wish him all the best.

Furthermore, the MEG programme team has been much occupied with changes in the core staff members. Dr. Heiner Schanz is reinstated as the programme director, and Dr. Olga Malets has replaced Dr. Philipp Späth as the internship coordinator, who is now on research funding.

As always, it has been a busy semester for all. The MEG9 successfully organised their Drop by Drop SOE event in February to raise awareness about water conflicts and justice.

The Freiburg Scientific Theatre won the university innovation grant to develop and conduct art and sustainability science programme, which will be held over the summer and winter semesters.

MEG Alumni also met in February in Weingut Andreas Dilger to catch up and discuss future plans for a more structured alumni network for people to get in touch with each other. This would certainly be much welcome for all past and present MEGgies.

Finally, with the MEG10s, we were certainly kept on our toes with the SOE throughout the first half of the year. Organising the event is special for us and for the programme, as it will be celebrated in conjunction with the MEG 10th year anniversary. MEG10 is thus proud to present its slogan, which titles "Who Shapes Complex Futures – Experiences and Strategies of Change Agents". With that, I take the opportunity to use this as a theme for this year's newsletter.

Apart from general news, we will take a glimpse at what MEG Alumni are currently involved in as future change makers, and also at some experiences of past and current MEG students in organising the SOE.

For now, I'll leave you to enjoy the world of MEG and till next time!

Your editor, Naomin (MEG10)

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News

Editor

Here are some of the highlights from the first half of the year you missed!

MEG9 SOE: Drop by Drop



Drop by Drop is a collection of six perspectives on Water Conflict and Justice produced by the MEG9 students. Months of preparation culminated in the series of videos which were featured on the 21st of February 2015, as part of the annual Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance.

Water is a basic human necessity and a fundamental human right. However, the reality is that many people suffer either from natural water scarcity or scarcity due to the mismanagement of water resources. This results in a lack of access to water on the one hand and unequal access to water on the other hand, culminating in conflicts and unjust social conditions around the world.

This year the Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance highlights themes related to water conflicts and water justice. The aim is to raise awareness and trigger discussion by giving six perspectives on the role of water as a cause of conflict and injustice, the political and economic drivers of water scarcity that result in these conflicts, the responsibility of individual water consumption, and the

technical, social, political and civic initiatives that have been developed by various sectors to prevent conflicts and injustice. The event was a great success with university students, professors and even general public turning up to catch the interesting videos.

For more information and photos of the event that took place, please visit the event webpage at <http://drop-by-drop.org>.

Geneva welcomes MEG10!



On the morning of 19th February, MEG10 students left Freiburg excited and enthusiastic to embark on a three-day excursion to Geneva. We arrived at our first destination, the International Environmental House, where we received a comprehensive overview and engaged in fruitful discussions with representatives of various departments such as the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

On the next day we had a full day at the Palais des Nations, participating in a UNCTAD workshop "Climate Change" - the role and perspective of Geneva-based international/environmental organizations. We were joined by numerous representatives from organisations such as UNCTAD, WTO, UNECE, ICTSD, IPPC and IOM, who shared insightful knowledge and addressed our questions regarding climate change.

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Full of inspiration from two days of presentations, we finally arrived at the office of IUCN and WWF on the third day, which marked the last leg of our excursion. Presentations from both organisations on biodiversity protection, global policy work and cooperation with the private sector certainly did not disappoint and left us encouraged to engage in similar activities.

The excursion was a great end to our first semester as MEG students. Not only did we have the opportunity to visit these institutions, we had a chance to do some sightseeing and even enjoy the famous Swiss cheese fondue by the lake. As such, we would like to thank all presenters from the various institutions during the excursion and also the organisers from the faculty who made this possible. We hope that future generations of MEG will continue to have this wonderful opportunity to have a first hand glimpse of the work executed by these organisations!

MEG Alumni Meeting



On 20 Feb 2015, the social gathering of the MEG alumni took place in Freiburg in Weingut Andreas Dilger. With a turnout of approximately 50 people, it was a great success. It was heart-warming to hear the chatter of MEGs from 10 different generations (current students were part of the organizing committee). People had a good time catching up and getting to know

each other across the generations. Even, the MEG generation “zero” identified themselves. The future steps are to create a more structural network, in the form of an association, with regular social meetings. If you are a MEG alumnus or alumna, get in touch by e-mailing the MEG Alumni Committee megalumnicommittee@gmail.com.

Freiburg Scientific Theatre Wins University Grant



The Freiburg Scientific Theatre, originally developed within the MEG programme and consisting of former and current MEG students, has been awarded a grant from the University's Innovation Fund to develop and conduct an Art and Sustainability Science Programme in 2015. The two-part programme "Science, Sustainability and Art - Exploring tools for transformation" will be held over the summer and winter semesters, and will include a series of seminars, discussions and workshops led by international experts working in the field of interactions between art, sustainability and science. In addition, each part of the programme will include a free public performance by the Freiburg Scientific Theatre.

Urban Environmental Governance goes FRIAS

The Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) is the international research college of the University of Freiburg. As an integral part of the university, the Institute unites the humanities and social sciences as well as medicine, the natural sciences and engineering. Dr. Philipp Späth together with a consortium of scholars from our university, from the Rachel

Carson Centre in Munich and from Strasbourg University has been granted competitive funding of an interdisciplinary project group within the context of FRIAS. Beginning this fall, they will jointly organise a graduate course, an international conference and some joint publications on the topic of "Green Cities" in USA, Germany and Singapore. They will also invite scholars from abroad and reflect particularly on how the 'mandates' for local environmental policies differ across the cases and how they changed over time.

Panta Rhei

Heiner Schanz, Programme Director

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato, in his dialogue *Cratylus*, recounts Heraclitus' saying: "Things that exist move and nothing remains still", which he expands further to "you cannot step twice into the same river".

But is Plato really right? At first sight, taking over again the responsibilities as MEG programme director after six years of having served as full-time Vice-President of Academic Affairs of the University seems nothing else than stepping into same river again: The original MEG curriculum is still to a large extent in operation. The MEGies are still the passionate, diverse, intellectual and endearing student groups. Teaching in the MEG programme still feels like taking a refreshing shower given the highly inquisitive, eager to learn attitude of the students. Many MEG-lecturers have been enthusiastically steering the programme right from the start, and also many of the administrative challenges are still the same as in MEG's very first years.

Yet, MEG is no longer the same and each achievement is worth celebrating: So, to start with, MEG is celebrating already its 10th anniversary (which in the highly volatile field of higher education is in many ways similar to adolescence)! When the MEG programme started in 2005 there was hardly any other master programme in the field and nowadays 'Sustainability' and 'Environmental Governance' have become important fields also in higher education with dozens competing programmes worldwide. MEG itself has grown - from a pioneering programme into one of the University's most successful international, interdisciplinary program; with more than 200 extremely competitive applications from all over the world for the 36 student positions each year; and a success rate of over 98% despite the high international academic standards required. The diversity in geographical representation and versatile backgrounds of students has truly grown into a 'United Nation of Students', with in the meantime more than 224 alumni from 67 different countries. The number of elective modules has risen and so has the number of lecturers. At the same time the student group size has increased by almost 50% from originally 24 to 36 nowadays, posing new challenges for group dynamics and didactics.

As always, success has many parents, but there is one person who deserves special credit for this triumph: Prof. Dr. Michael Pregernig! Without Michael's generous, indefinite, empathetic and prudent efforts as MEG programme director in the past six years, the programme would definitely not be as appealing as today, not to mention whether it would still



exist at all. Thank you very much, Michael, for raising the bars of the MEG programme! I am very happy that Michael has accepted the offer of the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources to stay with the MEG as visiting full professor at least until March 2016.

Moreover, MEG will continue to change: I am delighted to share that, both the University and the Faculty have committed themselves to strengthen the programme further, by establishing a second chair group. The appointment procedure for the new professorship on 'Sustainability Governance' is already well under way and if the procedures go as planned, there is a fair chance that we can welcome the new professor already during the coming winter term!

Furthermore, on April 1st 2015, Dr. Philipp Späth left his position as assistant professor in order to lead an own, international, DFG funded research group on "Smart Eco-Cities". As many of you know, Philipp did an excellent job as lecturer with a key focus on technology assessments and urban environmental governance, and dedicated himself in an extraordinary manner to MEG not least as internship coordinator. Thank you very much, Philipp, for the exceptional work and strong commitment and I wish you great success in this endeavour! Again, the win-win news is that Philipp will stay with the Chair group of Environmental Governance and continue to contribute his expertise to the MEG.

On July, 1st 2015 Dr. Olga Malets has taken over the position as assistant professor in Environmental Governance. Olga will introduce herself in this newsletter later, but let me indicate how glad we all are with such a top-class

appointment. I warmly welcome you to MEG.

Last but not least, the MEG10 generation is preparing for their Student Organised Event. The student cohort has selected the theme for the anniversary event, 'Who? Shapes. Complex. Futures. – Experiences and Strategies of Change Agents'. The Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance 2016 taking place between 22nd- 24th April 2016 will not only make a peak in the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the MEG, but through the strong involvement of the experiences of the MEG alumni, it would also produce an opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the program, thereby carving new directions to possible future adaptations of the MEG curriculum for Winter Term 2016/17.

With the changes that are inevitable, achievements through the hard-work, new developments, highly intellectual people, MEG programme is ready to step up to the future.

So, Plato is indeed right: No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. However what Plato undermined was that the pleasure of stepping into the river does not change!

New staff!



Olga Malets joined the MEG team in July 2015. She is a research associate at the Institute of Environmental Governance. Olga's research interests include environmental and forest policy and governance, forest certification, transnational governance, organisational theory in sociology and social movement research. Her current research is focused on the interactions between public and private policy instruments in

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forest governance. She is working on a project comparing the reactions of federal and regional forest authorities to private forest certification in Russia and the US. More broadly, she is exploring the relationship between strategic action of environmental actors, including states, business and civil society organisations, and their institutional environments. She is also interested in feedback effects in transnational governance systems. She co-coordinates a project that investigates under what conditions transnational governance actors, including international public and private organisations (e.g., the Forest Stewardship Council and the World Bank), react to critique and gaps in the implementation of their rules and standards. She holds an undergraduate degree in sociology from St. Petersburg State University (2003) and a Master of Arts degree in sociology and social anthropology from the Central European University in Budapest (2004). She completed her doctoral studies at the International Max Planck Research School on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies and received her doctoral degree in social sciences from the University of Cologne (2009). Before joining the University of Freiburg, Olga was a research associate at the Chair of Forest and Environmental Policy of the Technische Universität München (2009-2015) where she taught international forest and environmental policy in an international Master programme on Sustainable Resource Management. In 2014, she was awarded a DFG research fellowship and was a visiting research scholar at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Olga is hoping to contribute a transnational sociological and

political perspective to the MEG profile. She is convinced that understanding social, political and environmental governance processes is key to advancing a global transition to a more environmentally sustainable and just society.

A Master Thesis: A risky endeavour and a great surprise

Ina Soetebeer, MEG7



orientation you need to navigate through the jungle of over 50 types of cereals, don't they? Life after MEG seems similar. You get certified. Great. Some might buy it but what is it about innovation in certification schemes? Who guarantees you that the 51th type of cereals will be bought? Innovation remains a risky endeavour.

As you all know, Master Theses can be risky endeavours. That's good and probably one of best experiences of MEG, since you can tackle a puzzle you are concerned about, and which doesn't let you sleep at night. In my case, I struggled with the question of how we can achieve wellbeing in a world with limited resources. I faced this riddle doing a case study

Have you been in a supermarket ending up buying the latest innovation of your favourite cereal brand? It might be the 51th type of cereal but it works. You buy it because it is innovative, it is new and it has special colours packaging. Or do you prefer the good old labels? Certification schemes give you the



on the German Enquete Commission on “Growth, Prosperity, and Quality of Life”, a non-permanent policy advisory body staffed with parliamentarians and scientists. Once finalised, I handed in my thesis to the GAIA journal that had a call for Masters Student Papers. And it proved that being risky can be great. Why?

First, because of the surprise: When I got the notice that I won the GAIA Masters Student Award, I was so overwhelmed that I started hugging Chinese business men who were travelling with me in the same train compartment. As a response they gave me lots of Chinese sweets. Looking back, I am sure they thought they witnessed an authentic German welcome ritual and for me, I experienced a real sugar shock.

Secondly, I got an invitation to the annual GAIA conference. This year it took place in Bonn at the Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN). I got to know the difficulties an interdisciplinary journal with a heterogeneous target group is facing. I met inspiring people and I left the conference with food for thought.

Thirdly, I met Janina Heim, a former MEGgie. She works at the BfN and she took me to look behind the scenes. Did you know that there is a room with protected species and artefacts that are used to train bureaucrats to combat smuggling? To be honest, the giant tortoise shell was extremely beautiful.

Last but not least: I got the possibility to continue working on these pressuring issues in my PhD and since I got a subscription to the GAIA journal, I get more food for thoughts.

Dear MEGgies, have fun and take the risk choosing the topic you really think it's

worth working on for your Master Thesis. It is probably the most innovative part of MEG. And don't miss sending it to GAIA. ;)

The application deadline for the GAIA Masters Student Paper Award 2016 is Nov, 2, 2015, and that's the link for all detailed information: <http://www.oekom.de/zeitschriften/gaia/student-paper-award.html>

A Community for Complex Futures

Matthew Bach, MEG8

It wasn't so long ago that I was sitting behind the editor's desk, chasing contributions and trying to cobble together the latest newsletter. In my nearly two years as editor, I was mostly struck by the vast diversity of texts that past and present MEGs sent me – some dealt with religion, others looked at development issues, and yet others described internships in (more or less) exotic places.

Searching for a common thread is a little bit like finding the proverbial needle in the haystack. To make matters all the more bewildering, the articles came pouring in from pretty much every continent (yes, MEGgies, we still have to conquer Antarctica). Perhaps this thread is the programme itself and the shared desire to shape a future marked by ever-rising complexity.

The programme itself has left an unexpected mark on me in the form of a job. I recall being somewhat unenthusiastic about hunting down an internship and ending up having a great time at a research institute (DRIFT) in the Netherlands. Yet even then, I would never have guessed that they would hire me! In my role as project manager for two EU research projects, I get to look at the fascinating range of sustainability initiatives taking place, both in policy and practice, across Europe and beyond.



One of them, TRANSIT, tries to build a theory of transformative social innovation and looks at such networks as Impact Hubs, Eco-villages, or the Global Seed Movement; the other, ARTS, looks at how grassroots transition initiatives can grow (“scale up”) and help to change our societies for the better. This puts me in daily contact with researchers and activists (or even a mixture of those) who are shaping our world for a sustainable future.

The reason I bring this up is that I would like to encourage MEGs to view themselves as part of a much larger community that works towards the same goals and a common spirit – this is an ever-growing community and, from my experience, a highly welcoming one.

The Pacific Beat

Philipp Gassner, MEG8

Pling [-] pling [-] pling [-] pling.

Is this it? Have I found it? The Pacific beat?

The sun just set, way too early again, putting an end to another short Fijian winter day which, with 20 - 25°C, could not be any more pleasant – the many Fijians suffering from a cold at the moment might disagree. It's just before 6 pm and dusk seems to be in a rush to make way for another starry southern sky, which gives

me this strange feeling of being home away from home again. Providing perhaps the only example of a Pacific rush at all this is quite a contrast to the long and lazy European twilight summer evenings, which already seem so far away in space and time. And the famous Fiji time is filled with plenty of Kava, this murky water of life. Grinding it up in mortar and pestles results in the omnipresent Pling and - passed around in a coconut shell - in numb lips.

Bula. Clap. Slurp. Ahhhh. Strong! Clap. Clap. [-]

Clap. Slurp. OAhhhh. Clap. Clap. Clap. Vinaka vaka levu.

The Pacific beat?

I find myself surrounded by Fijian, Indo-Fijian and Chinese neighbours, which in this order aptly reflect the melting pot demographics of Fiji. As does their musical blend of evergreens in Mandarine, Bollywood beats and life Fijian Ukulele tunes: The perfect lullaby. Add a rough count of 10.000 migrant workers (call us Expats if you will – but I feel this is far more than semantics in light of all faces of 21st century work migration) and that's Suva for you. THE hub in the Pacific. Be it malls, food courts or international organizations. You name it; the Singapore of the Pacific has it. UNICEF, WHO, EU, SPREP, ICUN, TNC – the jungle of acronyms continues.

This brings me to the reason (or one of the many) why I'm here. Work. Either on one of the colourful local buses – windowless, letting the fresh tropical and salty air play around my

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sleepy face, blended with less colourful, mostly pitch black exhaust fumes and a metallic sound.

Tack [-] tack [-] tack [-] tack.

Sitting down at my desk, made from beautiful, certified Fijian timber, my glance goes astray again and again from the jam-packed work plan on the screen to the magnificent ocean view. Not only another privilege, but a good reminder, what we're here for to protect. The ocean. The Pacific.

To be precise: *Marine and coastal biodiversity management in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu in behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the International Union on the Conservancy of Nature.* In a nutshell and to add yet another acronym, **MACBIO**, the GIZ implemented project I just joined for three years after finishing MEG8 last December. Already the length of the project title indicates the complexity at hand that would make any MEG drool - and makes me wonder whether the name of the street the office is intersecting with, is also our symbolic motto: *Goodenough Street*. Aptly, the humble project approach of coordinating, learning and sharing surely resonates with my MEG shaped worldview. As a Fijian friend summed it up: *'The last thing we need is yet another NGO preaching from a big white car to the villagers.'* But that might also be the colonial and missionary past speaking.

This and many other things I'm slowly getting my head around. The four regional conferences I could attend already helped a lot. As did the murky water after the

sessions. For instance bent over an ocean of maps, chatting about mapping community based protected areas with colleagues from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste. Striking is also the different beat of discussion in the meetings, between the calm and understanding mumbling of the Fijians and the hectic, high pitch of the US Prof, teaching at the Uni of the South Pacific just down the road, as only one example of the white knows-it-all.

Bula vinaka [-] Mumble [-] Mumble [-] Mumble [-] Vinaka.

It has been two weeks since I had the first view of the tiny speckles of land in the middle of ocean only in the last minutes while descending. This gave me a rough idea just how vast this Water World is, and how small and remote my new home - (dis)connected to the rest of the world and its hectic news only with paradoxically fast 4G internet.

I can't wait to explore this cultural, linguistic and culinary heritage. Having signed up for language classes and slowly eating my way through the amazing Indian and Viti [Witi] (Fijian) cuisine, I'm on a good track. At the intersection of both - food names - I already made some progress: Vakalolo [Wakalolo] (everything cooked in coconut), Kokoda [Kokonda] (raw fish), Tavioka [Tawioka] (Cassava), Bu [mbuu] (drinking coconut) and vainaviu [wainaawiu] (pineapple), to name but a few, make up most of my calorie intake.

After an incredibly warm welcome by the friendliest people you can imagine to a Vanua, ([Wanua], land) that doesn't have a word for stress, I continue my complex search for the true Pacific beat.

Suva is certainly not Fiji. And Fiji is certainly not the post card idyll travel agents want to make you believe. It is much more.

Pling [-] pling [-] pling [-] pling.



Research Project “Nascent” - Transformative initiatives in the food sector

János Jákil, MEG8

For quite some time, initiatives of regional food supply and production have served to concentrate attention on possibilities of a sustainable food sector, food security, food sovereignty and resilient production methods. Whether it is about community supported agriculture, food consumer cooperatives, urban gardening initiatives or citizen shareholder support for local ecological agriculture and food sector enterprises, they all have one thing in common: they provide alternative forms of economic activity. And their number increases. Can they shape the future development of the German food sector by enhancing regional diversity and sufficiency?

The German research project “nascent” (<https://www.uni-oldenburg.de/nascent>; soon: www.nascent-transformativ.de) aims to analyse their potential for development regarding a sustainable transformation of the food sector. Thus, the project is guided by questions like: Can such initiatives become drivers of a sustainable change of the food system? Do they stimulate society-oriented entrepreneurship, social innovation or the diffusion of sustainability standards? What obstacles and needs for support can be identified? And how can these new forms of economic activity be pushed or stabilized?

In cooperation with about 30 practice partners from Germany the research questions are refined trans-disciplinarily

and answers are to be found. Particularly, the description and systematization of these forms of economic activity play a central role in this project in order to analyse opportunities and obstacles of transformative processes of diffusion. The team of researchers and organizers, conducting the three-years project (01.04.2015 – 31.03.2018), is from three different institutions: University Oldenburg, University of Applied Science Munich and the Foundation “anstiftung & ertomi”.

As a member of “Die Agronauten” – a research association for sustainable, regional agrarian and food systems – and practice partner I had the chance to participate in the kick-off workshop. The vast variety of different forms of organizations was very surprising to me. Of course, compared to the current big players in the German food system or having in mind the possible merger of Monsanto and Syngenta, they are small. However, the dominance and concentration process in the conventional food system seems to create a vacuum that provides space for and attracts entrepreneurial alternatives. With the support of research, strong cooperation among each other and political attention they might have the chance to shape the food sector sustainably.

Celebrating the Lush Life

Shannon White, MEG3

Lush is an international manufacturing and retail company, originally founded in the UK, by a group of innovative, progressive and creative inventors. For over 20 years, people have been enjoying, bathing, showering, soaping up and giving massages with Lush products.

Lush is a company that believes in providing quality products and standing behind the ethics of the company. As a value driven organisation, Lush sets the bar high in ethical purchasing, charitable givings and sustainability. Lush’s

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commitment to giving back more than it takes from society and the environment, is exemplified through its focus on naked and package-free products. When waste can't be eliminated completely, the team looks for the simplest packaging and use post-consumer or post-industrial recycled materials that are 100% recyclable, compostable and biodegradable whenever possible.

I'm the Sustainability Specialist at Lush North America, based in the Head Office in Vancouver, Canada. My main role is to integrate sustainability into the day-to-day operations of the 200+ shops across North America as well as support our manufacturing facilities. My focus is to create lasting value by enhancing Lush's business performance, reducing the environmental impacts of our operations and engaging staff in our efforts. The past year has been full of building out the foundation of sustainability at Lush North America.

Working at Lush is fun and challenging. Because we all know that you can't manage what you can't measure, one of my most recent projects has been to develop and roll-out a program where all of the shops weigh, count and track the different waste streams that they have for a set period of time twice a year. This way we will be able to track and measure improvements and opportunities in waste reduction and diversion. As the majority of our shops are in malls that don't have organic waste streams, I worked with shops to find local composting partners through which they could compost.

Additionally, every single shop has 3 hours a month that can be used to research and implement sustainability-related initiatives in their shop. To provide the shops with

guidance and support on how to use this time, I have built out guides full of actions that can be implemented at the shop around environmental impact areas (waste and recycling, water and energy).

Currently, I am analyzing all of the sundries (from paper towel and pens to refrigerators) bought by shops. With this information, I am building out a shopping list of eco-friendly products for the shops. The intention is to support the growing markets for environmentally friendly alternatives through the buying power of a rapidly growing company. In addition, I am working on a rating system that will eventually allow us to benchmark shop progress along pre-determined sustainability-related criteria. This will be used to measure progress and celebrate successes amongst the shops.

A key component to being on the Sustainability team at Lush, is working with all of the teams to find the opportunities to integrate into existing projects or processes. Such as working with the Design and Construction teams on how our shops are built out and what materials are used



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to the Brand Communications team to collaborate on what type of materials are used in shop displays and communicating how they can be disposed of afterwards. I focus on training staff and building capacity, enthusiasm and support for sustainability programs. By building these relationship and enthusiasm Lush is continually supporting sustainability as a company-wide priority and establishing itself as a leader in the industry.

The Freiburg Scientific Theatre gets creative with the Science, Sustainability and Art Series

Sadhbh Juárez Bourke, MEG6

A few weeks ago the Freiburg Scientific Theatre held the first edition of a two part programme “Science, Sustainability and Art – Exploring tools for transformation” at the faculty. The series was a combination of lectures, workshops and a theatre performance, which we organised with the aim of exploring aspects of aesthetic enquiry -such as creativity, empathy and



emotions- as aids for research, and also communicating and teaching sustainability science. To investigate such a unique topic we brought lecturers from different disciplines and approaches to speak at the faculty:

Dr. Kagan from the University of Lüneburg gave us a broad overview of artist-scientist initiatives, and interesting insights on how culture fits into the three-pillar model of sustainability and how local governments (try to) integrate it in practice. His good nature and easy-going personality spurred our cosy group into an animated discussion, which we carried on into dinner with the theatre group. The next day Dr. Kurt from the und.Institut in Berlin proposed the concept of “predisciplinarity” to produce science that “goes beyond the mere intellectual, seizes the whole person and encourages a development of consciousness”. Drawing from Schiller, Klee and Beuys, she gave us a personal account of stepping away from the mechanics of daily life and into “the zone”. Dialogue instead of debate (had you realised se battre means to beat the other up in French?), moving from enlightenment to enlivenment, bringing out the stories beneath the facts, and finding creative strategies that allow for other modes of thinking, were some of her insights. The third and last lecture by Prof. Gadagkar from the Centre for Ecological Sciences in Bangalore, had us captivated with his charisma and inspiring approach. Gadagkar has made a name for himself in India, not only for his findings as a socio-biologist, but also for his remarkable teaching methods, in which he uses all sorts of artistic tools – from poetry to theatre, and even Disney cartoons – to teach the students the essence of the scientific method, and how to become a systematic observer and a model natural scientist.

The workshops organised by Freiburg Scientific Theatre members are also worthy of note.

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Brendan gave us a great chance to let go of our daily tribulations and dive into our creative skills, while giving us a tour of the world of environmental comics. A heroic walk up the Schlossberg in the scorching sun was worth the soothing experience that followed under the cool canopy of the woods, which produced some amazing artwork and a sense of inner peace for all attendees. The Scientific Theatre workshop was a mix of great fun and deep discussions. We started off on Saturday with basic movement exercises to get in touch with our body, and finished off on Sunday with some pretty impressive sketches on intercultural communication problems and refugee stories, with many moments of hilarious laughter and sheer magic in between. Torben and I (facilitating) were touched by the enthusiasm and motivation of the group. Last but not least, the theatre performance in which we presented our band new play "Paradise vetoed – Stories of Climate Change" was packed to the rafters despite the heat. Many thanks to all of you who came along and who participated in the series!

We're having the Autumn Edition of the programme in November. One thing we've learned in this joint exploration of art for transformation is that one of the most important and basic tools is having fun. Many of us who've done or who are doing the MEG have some aspiration to "save the world", in one form or another. Many of

us are over-informed, over-stressed, worried about the future and struggling to reconcile our awareness with our lifestyle. And the more we learn about the dire state of the world's environment, the more over-informed, overstressed and worried we become about

the future. Too much of this, and you don't get strong leaders changing the world, you get apathy - numbness and people going through the motions just to get through the day. This was our main motivation for starting the theatre group, and also for organising this series. Yes, we want it to be scientific and relevant, but we also want something to connect us to our humanness, the small needs and joys, to acknowledge our emotions and use them as a guide for our behaviour. Is it possible to bring these aspects together and still be scientific? I don't know.

So we're going to invite a neurobiologist for November to see what she thinks about it. We're also going to ask an Environmental Scientist who wrote her doctorate on using theatre as a tool for public participation. The amazing UK cartoonist and environmental activist Polyp (my teenage hero) is also coming to give us a workshop. And we're getting Carl Folke, scientific director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, and legendary art director Lars Hall, to lend us their beautiful installation based on their book combining photography and science. We might bring someone to give us a scientific explanation about why documentaries such as "The Age of Stupid" have a strong impact (and why not screen the movie also?), or we might get a master student to explain how you can do interviews by giving your interviewee a camera instead of using a tape recorder. If we're brave enough (and manage to butter up the administration) we might even set up a "spuren parcours" in the Innenhof, just for

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fun. And why not get the Botanische Garten to lend us some plants to liven the space up?

So stay tuned for the Autumn Edition of the "Science Sustainability and Art" series, and keep some space in your calendars for November - we're looking forward to seeing you there!

takeaways: 1. to accept others' opinions 2. to move on, even if there are issues and 3. to be patient. As the process advanced, I realised that in larger groups like ours, I don't need to lead or even repeat the already discussed points, but rather accept others' opinions. What became important was to make it happen, to get the process going. Yet, volunteer when needed. I became quieter in general in those big meetings and I appreciated it, as that gave me an opportunity to listen. In the smaller groups however, we had enough opportunities to share opinions and quickly agree as well. These settings were also not without problems, as attendance apparently was a constant issue, but we solved it by understanding the concerns. There was always someone or the other who volunteered to take the lead that kept the process moving.

Besides my experiences, some factors that led the SOE on 21st February to be successfully implemented in my opinion were- Firstly, the decision making rules was a painstaking process for all of us, but in the end it helped us stay self-governed (that's what MEG is partially about- 'Governance') all the way. Secondly, hard to find videographer and who finally came to our rescue behind the scene and behind the videos was our videographer, Markus Wichmann. His humble and dedicated support



A Mixed Bag of Learning Experience

Amrita Choudhary, MEG9

Step by step, we executed – 'Drop by Drop'- our student organised event. The intellect of 35 students produced 6 unique videos with the theme - 'water conflict and water justice', which culminated into a grand event on 21st February 2015.

This glittering coin of SOE behind the curtain, had fun and frustration on two sides. For example, on one side we underwent the fun-filled trainings by Esther and on the other, not so easily acceptable differences in opinions that lead to frustrations in the process.

This mixed bag, over the period brought to me some interesting





was instrumental in producing these videos. Lastly, the teamwork in the last days, helped put up a large event together showcasing the efforts put in for over a year and half.

So, from this mixed bag, what I choose to take out is the positive outlook and to move on!

The Roller Coaster Ride that is the SOE

Natalia Aguilar, MEG10



While thinking of a way to describe how the process of our Student Organized Event has been like, I ended up picturing it as one of those huge super famous roller coasters. Despite the precautionary announcements, warning signs and instructions from the staff at the entrance of the amusement park, it is not until you are closer and in the queue, that you look up and realise just how big, complex and frightening this apparatus is. In the beginning, as with the SOE, you feel the anticipation and the excitement; you perceive this roller coaster as a way to prove to yourself what you are really made of, and culminating in an outstanding event. You stay in the line and, after ignoring some screams from the previous

participants believing you might be braver than them, you reach the entrance and, still positive, even try to get to the front seats. Then all of a sudden, you are strapped in, and without any possible escape, route you start feeling scared. You feel that they should have given you more time to prepare for this, but they didn't.

We have been through lots of ups and downs since we jumped in this ride almost a year ago, and the process started really quickly when we hardly knew or understood each other. Even though there has been some smooth and pleasant parts, such as the Team-building Weekends and playing childish evening games, most parts of the journey have been pretty intense. Through attending never-ending meetings, which are arranged within the "free" slots in our classes, duties and personal lives, we have managed to climb up many steep hills. We addressed organizational issues, agreed on the topic and the layout, found tactics to avoid chaos in meetings, applied for fundings, handed in detailed progress reports, coped with pressing deadlines and the list goes on. On top of that, our generation's carriage has been pulled along by two extra G-forces: a change in the administrative staff of the master programme some months ago and the arrival of the 10th MEG Anniversary, which adds extra pressure in having to fulfil greater expectations, apart from our own.

That said, even though planning such an event





has been far more challenging and arduous than I could imagine, I'd like to believe that when we are finally able to pull the brakes to disembark the roller coaster, we will feel not only satisfied and proud, but also more experienced and confident in knowing how to deal with complex environmental problems. Because, isn't gaining experience through interacting within such a diverse group of students to plan and reach common goals what will make us emerge as good environmental governance actors?

Well, it is too soon to try to foresee how successful in terms of audience or outreach our event will be. However, I suspect that since there is a possibility our futures might be laden with individual "SOEs", its main beneficiaries would eventually be us.

With that, I conclude this edition of the newsletter, and wish everyone all the best in their forthcoming internships, master thesis, jobs and other environment saving stints!

"I believe that the more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction"

- Rachel Carlson, 1954

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