

Welcome to the MEG Newsletter 2/2013

Editor

Winter's here, the Christmas market is open, the snow is coming and another generation of MEGs returns from their internships in, generally, far sunnier and warmer places (I somehow got this wrong and ended up in the Netherlands...).

The stress of looking for an internship now seems a distant memory, the contract has been buried under piles of other papers and the evaluation form is somewhere on Philipp's desk. We kind of feel like we deserve a holiday now, but that will have to wait until the winter break.

Whereas in our first semester, all conversations were about the modules, in the second about the SOE, now, in MEG8's third semester, they focus on the rich experiences we had in those three months away from home. We began to understand just how important the formerly dreaded internship was and that it would continue to influence our lives – personally, academically and professionally – for years to come.

This is how the idea of an internship newsletter came about: to look in depth at how they have affected the successive generations of MEGs. We will hear from MEGs old and new, happy experiences, culture shock, new networks, frustration and more.

However, MEG wouldn't be MEG if we all just stuck to one theme, so we're also fortunate to learn about such fascinating topics, as the links between sustainability and Buddhism or the commodification of nature.

Your Editor, Matthew Bach, MEG8

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News

Editor

It's been a busy year for MEG, though anything different would certainly be odd. We bid farewell to Leo and welcome Bleta and Seirra as our new module coordinators (see below). The faculty itself underwent some changes, including a fancy new name – Environment and Natural Resources.

We're MEG9!

Jip Welkers, MEG9

The 9th MEG generation is the largest MEG generation so far. With 36 people from 21 countries, the groups' patience is tested in group discussions, the laughter after an in-class joke is enormous and we are hard to be brought to silence. The size of our group unfolds an energetic, happy and focused intermingling of cultures, perspectives and disciplines. The synergies we create lead to interesting findings, speedy in-depth discussions and to-the-point questions.

This became apparent in our 3-day excursion towards Frankfurt. Here, we found the German Development Bank and GIZ without any troubles, but walked for 30 minutes to find our restaurant. We overwhelmed the presenters at these two very interesting institutions at these two institutions with our appearance and size, before attacking them with our questions. The overall experience of the Frankfurt excursion, as part of the Global Societal Change module, was very good.

It was not our only excursion; for the module "Sustainability and Governance", we went to

the Rhine Valley, where we were introduced to smart river management.

Furthermore, we went to the beautiful winter landscape of the Schwarzwald for a team-building weekend.

Coming soon: The Cost of Food

MEG8 launched its SOE – "The Cost of Food: Beyond the Pricetag" and is still hard at work preparing for the final event that will take place on 21-22 February 2014.

DAAD scholars from across Germany will converge on Freiburg to take part in workshops that will explore the (hidden) environmental, social and economic costs of our past, present and future food systems. Student moderators will guide them through exciting and innovative presentation formats: science slams, visual arts, infographics and theatre.

This will be followed by a public panel discussion that will bring together heavyweights to discuss the future of food systems, and a cocktail networking session.

Further information will be sent out as the date draws nearer and MEG8 hopes to see many of you there!

University Teaching Prize for Philipp Späth

Beloved MEG lecturer and internship coordinator Philipp Späth received the prestigious University Teaching prize for his overhaul of the Technology Assessment elective module in 2012.

For those of you who don't know, the module looks at how new technologies can help to

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address global environmental problems, while taking into account the intended and unintended consequences of technological choices that, in some cases, may reinforce rather than solve these issues.

Two TA practitioners were involved throughout the module and helped to guide students through a 10-day simulation of a TA process; the students worked enthusiastically on producing a study on DESERTEC, a large-scale solar energy initiative in Northern Africa.

Philipp taught the module again in 2013, choosing “smart grids” as the focus.

MEG7's Cameron Dron given DAAD prize

Good things come in twos; Cameron from MEG7 also received a prize. He was awarded the DAAD prize for Excellent Achievement of International Students. Asked about his reaction, he answered:

“I'm very honoured to receive the award and it goes to show what a great place Germany is for international students to study. Studying here has provided me with unique opportunities.”

Cameron is a Heinrich-Böll Foundation scholarship holder and has been recognized for his outstanding academic record, as well as his leadership in many extra-curricular activities promoting environmental awareness.

DAAD specifically recognized his involvement in the FREG science slams (see newsletter 1/2013), his environmental blog and his role in organizing ‘carrot mobs’.

This is the third time a MEG student has received the DAAD prize.

Graduation Party

The MEG, REM and FEM (all together referred to as FREG) classes of 2011-2013 have finally graduated and passed the torch on to the next generation of students. Hosted by the tri-lingual efforts of the FEM and MEG alliance as embodied by Aura (MEG7) and Daniel (FEM), the ceremony was full of laughter, poetry, singing and even boys-band shenanigans.

Yes, the electrifying entertainers known as 'Un-sync' continued their tour of Baden-Württemberg with a brief show for the lucky graduates, and despite some 'hiccups' in the production the crowd were dazzled by the band's, errr, unique approach to choreography.

Other lucky participants, Michael, Esther and Philipp received massage vouchers from the MEG7s as a thank you gift for putting up with the two years of stress they had caused. The after-party went long into the night with plenty of music, dancing and gute laune.....

Sustainable growth

Michael Pregernig, Program Director

“Growth” has been a much-noticed and strongly debated theme in the MEG for quite some time. Recent Forums (aka SOE events) have been revolving around this topic, e.g. when students critically deconstructed concepts like green economy, sustainable consumption or sustainable cities. In some of those contexts the notion of “sustainable growth” was brought up. Here, one might ask: Is sustainable growth possible; is it maybe even *the* way out of our socio-ecological crises (cf. the debate on the environmental Kuznets curve);

or is it rather a nonsensical oxymoron; or maybe even a dangerous sedative that might lure us into ever more lavish consumption patterns?

I won't give an answer to this tricky question, but rather report on some developments that make the MEG program kind of a test case on whether sustainable growth is possible or not. What I am talking about is the recent decision of our Faculty to increase the number of students in some highly sought-after Master programs, including the MEG. Technically, this decision was driven by a special funding program that the Land of Baden-Württemberg issued recently, the so-called "Expansion Program Master 2016". Because of its high application numbers and its innovative curriculum, the MEG was chosen as one of a few Master programs of Freiburg University to join the Master 2016 scheme.

What are the consequences of that? With our MEG9 generation, which started their studies in Freiburg in October of this year, we have increased the class size to around 35 students per year. Working in and with larger classes is, of course, not *per se* a positive thing; but it rather provides challenges both for students, who have to coordinate their work in ever larger groups, and for teachers, who have to come up with ever complex teaching formats. Nevertheless, we are deeply convinced that it is possible to instrumentalize the Master 2016 program in a way so that the MEG can be made an even more attractive study program – and that for a larger group of students. In the next months, we are going to work on some revisions of the MEG curriculum, leading in the end to a wider thematic spectrum, to more selection options for students and more diversified professional profiles for MEG graduates. How

can that be achieved? Largely by means of increasing our in-house teaching capacities. The Master 2016 program has enabled us to recruit three new lecturers: Kirsten Hackenbroch, Conrad Kunze and Lena Partzsch. Find below short profiles of Kirsten, Conrad and Lena, who are eager to shape the profile of the MEG in the future!

More on the MEG curriculum innovations in the next newsletter.

Kirsten Hackenbroch



Kirsten joined the MEG team in October 2013. She moved to Freiburg from Dortmund where she was a postdoctoral researcher within the programme "Megacities – megachallenge: Informal Dynamics of Global Change" funded by the German Research Foundation.

In her recent research (at TU Dortmund University), Kirsten investigated the role of statutory planning authorities, civil society (esp. environmental groups) and local inhabitants in negotiating spatial transformations in urban fringe areas of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She specifically analysed how these transformations are embedded into power politics and reproduce differentiated notions of citizenship. Kirsten studied Spatial Planning at the TU Dortmund University and the University of Aberdeen; she received her Dipl.-Ing. in Spatial Planning in 2006 and her Ph.D. in 2012. Within the working group Human Geography (Prof. Dr. Tim Freytag) she will continue to conduct research in the field of urban studies, with a particular focus on socio-spatial transformation processes and international migration. Kirsten is looking forward to contributing an urban geography perspective to the MEG modules and to supervising Master theses in this field.

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Conrad Kunze



In October I moved to Freiburg to fill a researcher positions associated to Michael Pregernig's Professorship. Besides teaching the research skills module and a part of the KMOL module I am engaged in research and publication. As a sociologist I specialised in

environmental topics such as behaviour and consciousness, green consumption, careers of topics in the mass media and world system theory. My Doctorate and recent publications are focused on the transition to renewable energy and community energy in particular. A corresponding seminar for MEG is planned for 2014.

I studied at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg Islamic Science, Arabic, Psychology, Philosophy, History and Sociology. I taught and researched at the Chair of Environmental Issues in Social Science at Technical University of Cottbus with Prof. Schluchter and worked as a freelancer subsequently with the *Büro für die demokratische Energiewende* in Berlin. I wish to contribute a sociological perspective to MEG in supervision, teaching and upcoming research projects.

Lena Partzsch



Lena Partzsch officially joins the MEG team in January 2014. She moved to Freiburg from Greifswald where she was deputy leader of the social-ecological research group GETI-DOS (Getting Things Done Sustainably). Since 2009, Lena has

been qualifying for a Habilitation at the

Institute of Political Science, University of Muenster. Her Habilitationsschrift (book project) deals with the new power of private individuals in global politics, such as philanthropists, celebrities and social entrepreneurs. Prior to this, Lena led an interdisciplinary project at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research in Leipzig (2007-2009) and was a member of the PhD Graduate Course "Ecology and Fairness in the World Trade Regime" of the Wuppertal Institute (2004-2007). Lena studied political science at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Institut d' Etudes Politiques Strasbourg; she received her Diploma in political science in 2003 and her Ph.D. in 2007. Parallel to her studies, she worked as Parliamentary Assistant at the European Parliament and the German Bundestag (2002-2004). Lena is a board member of the working group on Environmental Policy and Global Change for the German Political Science Association (DVPW). She serves as a Vertrauensdozent of Heinrich Boell Foundation. Her major research interests are Environmental Governance and International Relations.

MEG-Internships - some global statistics

Philipp Späth (Internship Coordinator) and Mark Heuer (MEG8)

Since a large part of this newsletter is devoted to MEGie's individual experiences in their internships, we thought it would be also nice to look back at all the internships that MEGies ever did and see where they ended up – in numbers. So here come again some MEGy statistics.

Firstly we wondered whether our impression is correct that most MEGies end up working in their internships on development related issues.

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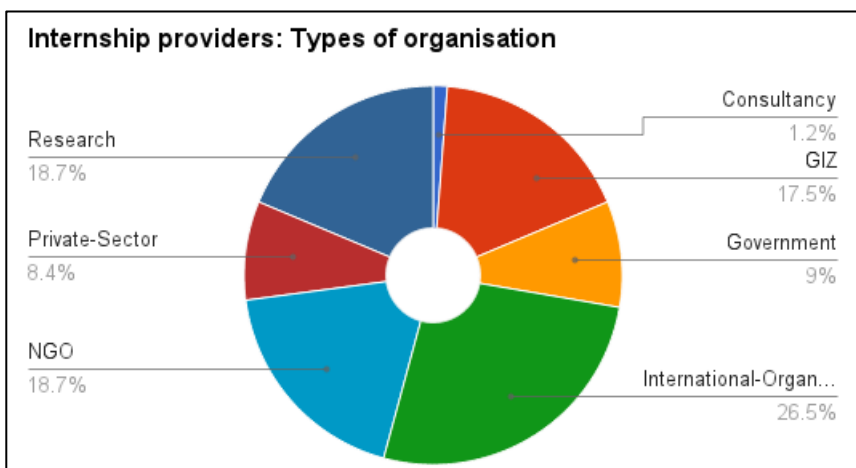
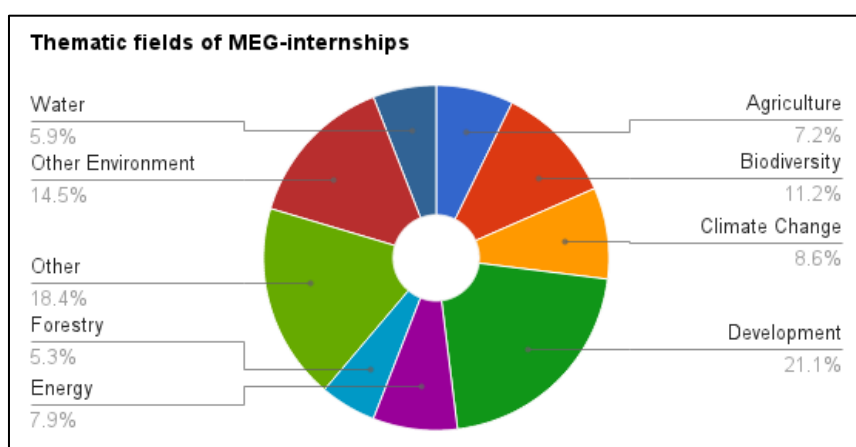
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The answer: Yes. The biggest group of internship placements to which we were able to attribute a dominant topic, i.e. over 21%, dealt predominantly with development issues. Biodiversity (11,2%) and Climate Change

(8,6%) were also important topics, and the pertinent sectors energy, agriculture, water and forestry each attracted between 7,9 and 5,3%.

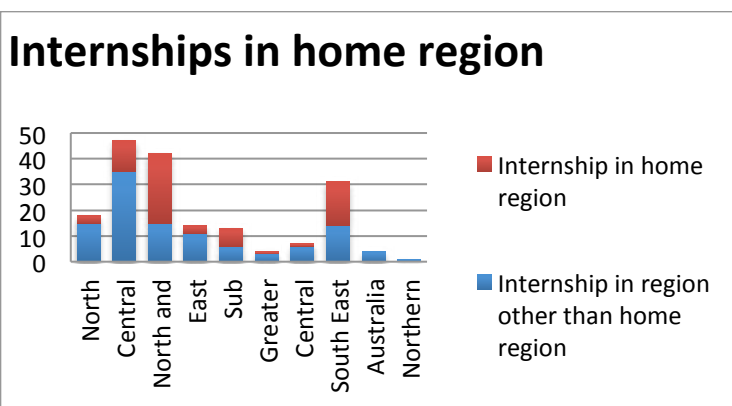


Second, we always wanted to know whether those MEGies who aim to change the world from within a powerful (!?) International Organisation outnumber the NGO-oriented treehuggers (!?), anarchists (!?) and social workers (!?). We found that our stereotypes missed out on quite a large group: nearly 1 in

5 MEGies actually ends up in a research organization, as many as in an NGO and more than follow their buddies into the GIZ. The largest group, however, a good fourth, truly are those who intern in an international organisation. Governments and the private sector each attract only around 9%.

Thirdly, we find it also interesting how diverse and wittily MEGies in general choose the location of their internships! (That there are exceptions of misguided MEGies like Matthew has mentioned above).

See this map of where people go in relation to where they came from to study MEG.

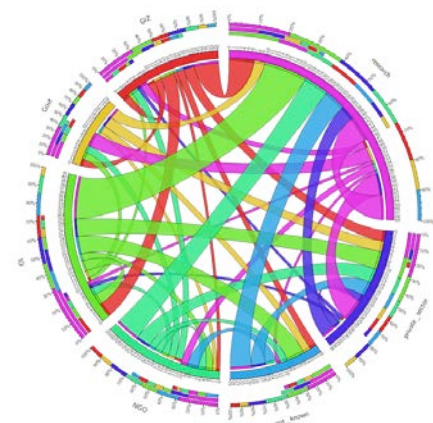


As the arrows indicate, read always clockwise: Many latinos and latinias obviously fell in love with/in Western Europe and stayed here for their internship. While the MEGies with roots in Western Europe tend to fly quite some miles on their way to the bush in Sub-Saharan Africa or to the jungle (or to a world city) in Southern Asia.

What you can't see in this map is how many MEGies did their internship in the world region that their passport has been issued in: More than two thirds of those we dubbed 'Western Europeans' stayed in Western Europe, a good third of those from Latin America and of those from South-East Asia, but – to our surprise - none of those from Australia or Northern Africa.

This brief review of where MEGies did their internships left us with a picture as diverse as our program is itself. The data confirmed some prejudices, but also revealed some surprises, like the fact that latin americans seem to be as attracted to Western Europe as moths to a candle. However, wether these findings can be generalized to a wider population remains a question for further research.

What we only start to understand, for example, is how the internships relate to where the MEG Alumna and Alumni spend their life after MEG: We know that quite some of them spend some time in Rome. None so far have ended up in the circus - we hope. But the software *circos.ca* (see our last graph below) makes us devine that the MEGie's choice concerning the type of internship provider can serve as a predictor of their future. However, very few of those who served as interns in International Organizations or the GIZ end up in that sector directly after graduation. Most of them actually seem to first (?) spend some time in research organisations, and we know that quite some of them actually pursue a PhD project.



Hello from Bleta and Seirra

MEG Coordinators

Bleta is from Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. She has a background in linguistics and management. Before MEG, she worked for the GIZ in Kosovo in the field of vocational education reform, with a focus on gender. She graduated from MEG in March 2013. After a brief return home, she decided that she missed the MEG-Family, and so happily applied to be one of Leo's successors, a job she shared with Seirra for the past months, and that she will give up by the end of this year. However, she hopes to stick around the Herderbau for the next three years, during which she will study discourses on coal-based energy generation in Germany and Kosovo in the frame of a PhD.

Seirra is from the States, Minnesota to be exact. "No, we don't really speak with a dialect like the people in the movie Fargo..." She has a background in International Relations and Environment and Sustainable Development. She came to Germany in 2004 to intern at a US Consulate and follow her now husband across the ocean. During her first years in Germany she worked for an educational research company and rose to management and eventually developed curriculum and instructional development materials globally. After graduating with the MEG 2 class, Seirra continued to work in curriculum and instructional design for various global projects, including those with a health and environment focus. Seirra, along with Bleta, has been the MEG Coordinator since April

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2013. In May, she left in order to take time to welcome her little girl to the world. As of January she will fully work as the MEG Coordinator and hopes to pursue a PhD with an emphasis on Environmental Health in the near future.

Memories of a non-critical internship

Juan Carlos Sanchez, MEG2

I wish someone would have told me back in the MEG years that “the internship” is not the beginning and the end of the world!

I remember the group paranoia and madness around finding an internship. It was almost possible to trace a direct correlation between being a successful role model MEG and being accepted by a development aid agency funded project, in some extremely remote and exotic community in the middle of nowhere. A project of course in which we MEGs could put into practice all our governance skills, and support other governance experts, in leading meaningful change processes through tools such as multi-stakeholder platforms and community-based dialogues. Special MEG points were awarded if there was a promise of indigenous peoples being involved.

No wonder that such a highly valued, meaningful event had its catharsis after the internships took place and it was time to go back to the classroom. This was the time when this internal non-official competition took place. The day that we had to present to our fellow MEGs what we had done after our life and career changing experience in wherever country we were: be that the middle of the Hondurian Moskitia, supporting local leaders to understand how to take care of their own territories and natural resources, or shedding

some light at the Ugandan border on how to tackle tusk trade by introducing some very smart economic incentives and measures that no-one had ever thought of.

And as expected, there was a high-end sector of the class, eager to show and tell, what was already obvious. Their internships had been a success from a very classical goal-oriented perspective, in which all criteria had been met. Building a network: check. Having big responsibilities: check. Engagement with the local communities: check. Improved and strengthened governance levels: check. Some incredible stories, worthy of a MEG newsletter special issue!

But also, there were some others that were not so eager to show and tell... I guess including me. I kept regarding my internship as a failure. I mean, I did re-learn how to eat with my hands until my fingernails were yellow, and I had some of the best travels of my life with my very good friend and MEG partner in crime. But still I felt that something was missing in my quest to become one of the successful global elite. I could not compete with the success stories from the MEGs on the frontline that I was hearing. So basically I think I presented something very quickly, just to get off the hook, but really feeling bad about myself.

That same year, I applied for a second, non-mandatory internship, as I felt that I would never be a true MEG if I had not had a chance to environmentally govern some under pressure territories as required by a traditional internship. And I did... and I ended up working for the organization, which supported me on that second internship. And the story ended well.

But internships are not the end of the world. And from my own personal perspective, a little bit more serenity is needed in order to

understand and contextualize our expectations as MEGs students, both in terms of how we engage with future colleagues and institutions, but also regarding the type of work in which we will be deployed during our professional life. Development work is a very odd enterprise and, as such, it should always be regarded critically, making visible the links between who is paying the bills and who is managing projects, which at the end of the day, is where we MEGs do most of our internships.

But also, the reflection should go in the direction of the beneficiaries of these “projects and programmes” in which we end up working. Some idealism, to move away from the developed-to-development-world charity and more into respecting others’ rights to deal with resources according to their sovereign and autonomous will. And in my view, those should be the criteria of success to be highlighted during show and tell night after our MEG internship adventures.

Wanna culture shock? From megapolis to Caribbean island

Julia Bunina, MEG8

For most of my life I have lived in Moscow – one of the biggest cities in the World, where people work 12 hours a day and spend the rest of the time in traffic; but also where you can have everything that civilization can offer you, Moscow now is like New York, but in Russia.

For my internship I went to St. Vincent – a tiny island in the Caribbean with a total population of 100.000 (50% of Freiburg or 0.08% of Moscow). St. Vincent is like Moscow, but just the opposite. Moscow is huge, St. Vin-

cent is tiny, in Moscow you don’t wear a pull-over for one month a year, in St. Vincent you wear a pullover for one month a year. In Moscow, money and success are the key goals of the majority of people, in St. Vincent people can sit next to the road for hours just observing those passers by – it’s like an offline Facebook.



When I came to St. Vincent my constant question was “why?” Why are people so poor? Why then don’t they work? Why don’t they strive for more? Sometimes I also asked myself “how?” How will I survive for three months? How can these people feel fine without the European quality of life: good roads, cars, cafes, coffee?

Yes, the country is incredibly beautiful. Yes, what you see in postcards and “Bounty” advertisements is absolutely true, and there are even better places. Yes, mangos, guavas and all sorts of fresh fruit are indeed the cheapest products in the country. But my focus was not on these things: for the first two months I was not noticing these ‘tourist attractions’. I was overwhelmed by the downsides and struggled to concentrate on positive ones. In my third month, though, once my culture shock has passed, I was finally able to see the absolutely stunning beauty of the place and understand why the Caribbean is a tourist’s dream.

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Throughout my time there, I was asking myself two questions: why people don't work and why they don't strive for more. This is my explanation of it:

Why people don't work? People don't work in St. Vincent, its as easy as it sounds. I haven't met anyone who would work hard, yes they do go to the office, but going to the office and working are two different things. In the Forestry Department, where I was attached to do my research – an economic assessment of forest-related activities –, the office hours were 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., though most came at 8.30 and left at 3.30, taking an hour and a half break for lunch, as well as several twenty-minute breaks for tea and a chat. I was upset and amazed, I couldn't understand why – “the island lies in poverty and you just chat”!



At the end of my three-month internship, I asked this question to the FAO consultant who came just for 2 weeks for the institutional review of the department. And he gave me an amazing answer: “what would change if forestry employees work more?” And then I have said: “Right, nothing!” The forest, as well as other parts of St. Vincent's nature, is unspoiled, basically virgin forest. You can't produce timber, because of the small scale, and the water comes clean from the forest so you can drink water right from the streams.

Fruit trees grow in your backyard the whole year so you don't need to plan ahead for harvesting. At the end of the day, it's like a paradise.

Why don't people strive for more? Here I mean for the luxury of 'ordinary' European life. I thought my local friends were sarcastic when they called an extremely bumpy and worn one-lane road a highway, but then I realized that they were not! I thought the saying “you can find everything in our capital” (Kingstown – 30.000 people) was dark local humor, but they were really meant it. It took me a while to realize that the majority of people had never left the island; people just haven't seen anything else (TV series don't count – no one believes them).

The scale is different, the scale is smaller, and you are happy with what you have, without necessarily knowing that there is something else out there (or that you want it). Just staying at home and going to church every Sunday is far important to the people of St. Vincent than ordering sushi at 3 a.m. in Moscow, in part because you can't have a taste for something you never tried.

And all this left me with a last question: if people are like this, if the starting point is different (nature in Europe is almost completely exploited; in St. Vincent it is basically virgin), maybe that society has another pattern of development? Maybe the “first world” doesn't have to push the country to follow in its footsteps and should let it develop in its own way? Maybe they will find their own way of leading a sustainable life?

Sustainable palm oil? Internship report

Naho Kawashima, MEG8

Palm oil is widely used in many of our daily products such as chocolate, margarine, cereals, shampoo, and cosmetics, to mention a few. However, palm oil is not only versatile in industrial and household use, but also known for its adverse environmental and social impacts.

Today, globally consumed palm oil reaches 46.7 million tons and Indonesia alone accounted for 47% of world production in 2010, followed by Malaysia (36%). There is no doubt that palm oil contributes to economic development of the producing countries and the diet of millions of people in the world. But much of the palm oil plantations have been developed at the expense of rainforests of Indonesia and Malaysia, leading to massive emissions of greenhouse gas and loss of biodiversity.

In order to promote and maintain sustainable production of this indispensable vegetable oil for our daily living, there are many initiatives currently underway all around the world, both privately and publicly.



One of the most recognized sustainable palm oil initiatives is the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), which started in 2004

as a joint initiative between WWF and large multinational corporations like Unilever. Under RSPO certification, palm oil producers are able to export their product as “Certified Palm Oil” (CPO) by following RSPO Principle & Criteria, which include, for instance, environmental protection, legal compliance, and socially responsible activities like consideration for adjacent communities.

Consumer goods manufacturers are provided with more flexible options to present their sustainability certification: either by declaring the amount of CPO included in their product or by purchasing CPO credits via a web-based system (Book & Claim).

Today, CPO accounts for 14% of globally traded palm oil; most of it was certified through Book & Claim, implying that the actual palm oil traded with high traceability is still very little. RSPO is truly an innovative private sector engagement for moving toward sustainable palm oil production, but there seem to be limits to a purely consumer-driven movement.

In addition to this voluntary initiative, there is another emerging scheme that attempts to fundamentally change the structure of the palm oil industry from the production side. The Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) program is a mandatory certification system led by Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture. ISPO is a compilation of sustainability-related regulations that are relevant to palm oil production and all producers operating in Indonesia are obliged to obtain its certification. Ultimately ISPO is expected to help the Indonesian government to achieve its international commitment to reduce GHG emissions 26% by 2020, or 41% when international cooperation is gained.

The government aims to certify all producers by 2014 under ISPO, but there are some

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deeply rooted obstacles for implementation. For example, due to the inadequate mapping of protected areas, there are many cases where provincial governments issue permission for land conversion in nationally appointed protected areas. Even if some companies try to conserve high-value forests (rich biodiversity and socio-cultural importance) found in their concession areas, their land use right will be taken away and given to other companies for not complying with the law to convert the given forest areas into other uses!

This is a very critical situation where regulation is actually hindering the private sectors' efforts to protect the environment.



During my four-month internship at United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Indonesia, I assisted mainly the Sustainable Palm Oil (SPO) Initiative. Through this project, UNDP strives to support the Government of Indonesia to put in place a good legal framework to solve problems and promote sustainable palm oil production nationally through this ISPO system.

The SPO Initiative is also a major public-private program which facilitates the coordination of key stakeholders in the entire supply chain through the establishment of national platforms. This provides them with an opportunity to have their field-level concerns reflected in policy making.

Some might still be skeptical if the whole idea of sustainably produced palm oil is possible in the first place. However, I am personally fascinated how major actors in the entire supply chain have coordinated to address key issues and collaborate together to promote more sustainable production in the sector. Both voluntary and mandatory certifications system can be more effective if complemented by active involvement of private sector and good supporting legal systems.

This five-year program started in 2013. I am hoping it will be an important foundation supporting the expansion of sustainable palm oil production that will lead to the further economic development of Indonesia, as well as to better quality of life for all consumers across the world.

Transitions to Sustainability

Editor

“It depends” – Wicked Problems and Radical Change

One of the very first concepts that I learnt about in MEG – actually, even before applying – was that of so-called ‘wicked’ problems. In the conceptual basis document for MEG, Memmler et al. use it to show that:

“[T]here is no accepted definition of the problem, that one problem is interrelated with others, that there is no right or wrong answer,

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only more or less useful solutions, and even worse that the problem is constantly shifting.”
(Memmler et al. 2005: 3)

What this translates to in MEG-terms is “it depends.” This answer, however, is not very helpful and has frustrated many of us from our very first module – I recall a heated discussion with Michael, in which some of us argued that saying “it depends” is disempowering.

These ‘wicked’ problems were thus with me from day one and have followed me ever since. By chance (and a HiWi), I stumbled across the framework of Transition Management (TM) that, as Environmental Governance more broadly, seeks to address such problems. As even solutions to these problems often do little more than exacerbate them, we need radical changes: transitions.

TM is a governance approach that emerged in the late 90s in the Netherlands to foster structural changes at societal or sectoral levels toward sustainability, i.e. sustainability transitions. Promoted by charismatic academics, the Dutch government used the approach for large-scale transition projects (energy, mobility, water, etc.).

It looks at how system innovations are created in (protected) niches, accelerated and upscaled to the point where they result in systemic change. This approach is then translated into an iterative and participatory model for governing transitions with specific processes (Fig. 1), strategies and principles – which I’ll spare you!



Fig 1. The Transition Cycle (DRIFT)

Since the early days the approach has undergone continuous (re)development and is no longer considered such a fringe framework: the EU through its FP7 funding program has invested millions of euros into it, cities around Europe have also embraced it, and more and more companies are looking to it as a means to generate radical innovation.

Interning at DRIFT

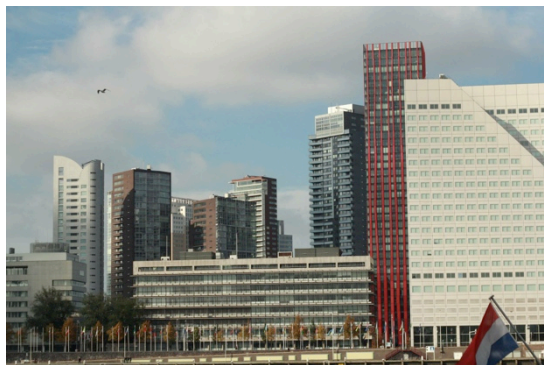
So, why all this about complicated frameworks? Well, in a nutshell, because I did my internship at DRIFT – the Dutch Research Institute for Transitions at Erasmus University Rotterdam (for more info: www.drift.eur.nl) – which is the point of origin of this entire approach. For 2.5 months I was immersed in it, and loved it!

It was exciting for me to discover just how many ways of approaching persistent problems exist and that many of them reject the “it depends” cop-out. It was empowering to see how hard top-notch academics are working to kick-start real change: a far cry from ivory

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tower concepts. It was also humbling to see just how massive the scale of the job to do is.

I was grateful to be surrounded by colleagues who were always ready to sit down and chat about complicated theoretical, methodological or beer-related questions. No question about it, DRIFT is a stimulating environment – all of the researchers there are juggling essays, classes, conference papers, projects, consulting work, books and so much more.



There were, of course, other advantages to interning at DRIFT, the first being the city of Rotterdam. Almost completely destroyed during the Second World War, it has flourished into a playground for modern architects and, along with a super-urban vibe, boasts a dazzling level of diversity: more than 50% of the population is not of Dutch ancestry (this means, if you like Indonesian, Surinamese or really any non-European kind of food, this is your place!).

Under the influence?

Would I do it again? For sure. Would I recommend future MEGs to head to Rotterdam for some cutting edge research? Definitely! In fact, I wasn't the only MEG there – Steffen from MEG7 was busy preparing his thesis at DRIFT at the same time as my internship.

We are both looking at ways to use the TM framework for our theses and are also involved in co-authoring some exciting papers. Our collaborations are clearly far from over – and, the links between DRIFT and MEG will hopefully continue to expand.



Professional experiences at the Center for People and Forests

Ratchada Arpornsilp, MEG7

This brief story shares my internship experiences during the MEG program and how they greatly contributed to the enhancement of my professional career at the Center for People and Forests. More information on the institute can be found here: www.recoftc.org. Perhaps it can give the new MEGgies a personal tip for the coming internship too.

I started thinking about the internship during the Christmas break when I decided to pursue theoretical discussion within the forest

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governance field. With that and my wish to visit home, the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC) was my target. I was lucky that a former colleague knew the Thailand Country Program Unit and put me into direct contact with them.

Although my choice was very clear and I submitted an official application, a statement of purpose and a letter from the MEG internship coordinator even before the spring break, by the time I received confirmation, it was almost the beginning of the internship.

Hence, it is definitely a good strategy to start applying to internship providers as soon as you can – maximize all your previous or current professional connections and support, and prepare alternatives. I took a great risk in applying for only one!

Throughout the official two and a half month internship, I was assigned to work with the regional gender program, which was conducting pilot case study research on the relationship between gender roles, community forest management, and climate change in Thailand.

I was engaged with the project at the stages of methodology design, data collection and communicating the preliminary results. Though my project was a regional one, I worked with the country team at the local and field levels, thereby having the opportunity to interact at various levels.

Addressing specifically your interests and objectives in the internship application letter will help the providers to place you in the right roles for mutual benefits. I learnt a lot from this research work, especially its contribution to research skill module after I returned to Freiburg. My research was so well received in RECOFTC that even after the internship, I still provided input to draft publi-

cations and maintained professional relations with the institute.

During the time of thesis proposal development, I decided to embed my individual research in the work of RECOFTC. Hence, I integrated the themes that would be of the institute's interests and submitted the proposal to them, asking if the thesis could be hosted.

I spent the last 6 months of MEG embedded in RECOFTC and was grateful that they gave me complete freedom to work on the thesis and provided recommendations and supervision only when I requested. The advantages of this option are the networks for data collection, domestic travel support, technical advice, opportunities to learn and become involved in other programs' activities, as well as the pressure to complete the thesis on time. Yuki from FEM is also now at RECOFTC to work on his thesis in the field.



Yuki (FEM) and me

At last, after going through all the examination processes, I have recently been offered a permanent position at RECOFTC, as a

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Country Program Coordination Officer to work with its different country offices across the Asia-Pacific region.

Studying a year at the University of Oxford

Justin Rhodes, MEG7

Last year I was offered the opportunity to study the MSc. in Water Science, Policy and Management (WSPM) at the University of Oxford, UK. The department of geography offers three different interdisciplinary courses: The MSc in Nature, Society and Environmental Protection (NSEP), Environmental Change and Management (ECM) and WSPM.

My initial excitement was soon followed by doubts. Should I leave everything behind and move to England to start something new or just stay in Freiburg. Which course is better...MEG or WSPM. After quite some confusion and several lists of advantages and disadvantages I finally decided to take my chance and move to England.

So was the course any better than MEG? Ummm... difficult to say! Though the WSPM course was definitely more challenging at times than MEG in terms of workload the courses offered at Oxford's Department of Geography are in many ways very similar to MEG. They are generally highly interdisciplinary both in terms of modules and student's backgrounds as well as highly international with students and examples from around the world.

Lectures started early in the morning until the afternoon and evenings were filled with group work or presentations we had to attend. I think the greatest difference to MEG was the

fact that all written examinations were scheduled right at end of the course, which meant a lot of work and stress bundled in a few weeks which meant that I have never had to learn as much in so little time.

So...was it worth it? I think yes if I consider the whole experience I got over there. As a student at Oxford there are so many opportunities waiting for you to make use of. Student societies, for example, are generally well funded and offer interesting possibilities to network. In many ways the university systems is much more supportive towards students taking action and trying to realize their own ideas. Moreover, socializing is central to Oxford and the numerous formal and informal dinners you are invited to as a student allow you to meet interesting students and lecturers all the time. And these contacts to interesting people you take away with you after your studies are the actual value that lies in Oxford.

Collective Intelligence and Social Transformation in Liège

Peter Volz, MEG3

Peter Volz - a former MEG 3 student - co-founded the research society DIE AGRONAUTEN in Freiburg, dealing with all aspect of regional, sustainable food systems. He was invited to Liège in order to present the Regionalwert AG from the Freiburg region. This shareholder society channels citizen capital into building regional, sustainable food structures along the chain of added-value. It can provide inspiration for upcoming initiatives. (peter.volz@agronauten.net)

What happened in Liège, Belgium the 5/6 November 2013 is a good example of what is

happening all over Europe now: Citizen-driven efforts to change the food system on a local level.

This case is an inspiring example of citizens and local initiatives getting together in a creative, motivated and constructive way to form a bottom-up transformation. Participation is the key and people are brought together from different societal stratas, e.g. farmers and consumers.

The role of design in this process is of high importance with regard to aesthetic setting, process facilitation and content. Cultural activities are not sidelined, but are actually part of it.



The two-day activity “Ceinture aliment-terre” started with an event in an old and beautifully designed “Manège de Cavalerie” (horse riding hall) in Liège. Just two art students changed the big space into a real art-food-space: Empty vegetable boxes formed a big sculpture in the middle of a circle of chairs. The hall was furthermore equipped with discussion tables, each for 10 people.

These tables were illuminated by lights garished with vegetables, each table being equipped with a specific vegetable type. These vegetables were linked to information boards that indicated what was discussed at the pumpkin table, the leek table etc.

The space was opened the first evening (public mobilisation event) by hosts Daniel Wathelet and Vincent Wattelet both with interesting backgrounds in grassroots (food) projects and art. According to the event theme they both were dressed as gardeners.



Christian Jonet presented the coalition-project “Ceinture aliment-terre”, which since 2 years brings together the numerous activities that are going on in the region dealing with all aspects of sustainable local food. This process was recently financially supported by the local government.

50 initiatives already working in this field are at the core of this project, either as supporters or partners. This event opened the scope of the project even further and had the clear aim to form a diverse but coherent network for Liège and the region.

This input was followed by presentations of European guests presenting three experiences:

- The citizen shareholder society “Regionalwert AG” from Freiburg, Germany as an example of an already existing citizen movement for a local sustainable food economy.
- The recently founded international platform “International Urban Food Network” from Paris.

- The eco-design initiative “Faltazi/Les Ekovores” from Brittany, France outlining their eco-design solutions for urban food systems.

These approaches were then followed by a series of 3 small theatre pieces with immediate reactions from the public and the European guests. The themes of the plays were access to land, access to market and the challenges faced by small farmers regarding market pressure, economies of scale and distribution. It was not surprising to hear afterwards that some actors have a professional background as agronomists.

The next day the circle of chairs around the stature filled with more than 150 people mostly associated to local initiatives in order to get involved into transforming the local food system. Techniques of collective intelligence (such as open forum, world cafe) were used to structure the participatory process, which basically went from the abstract to the concrete.

After lunch the circle gathered again. This time it became more constructive when – based on the discussions – concrete actions were proposed. Groups are now being formed to work within the network on the questions discussed, like e.g. the work group on citizen finance. In the next six months these groups will develop solutions and propose them in another event.

This event was a watershed moment for the civic agriculture movement in Liège. The process took a while but was clearly a way of collective intelligence. The overall goal was envisaged, the process designed, but the methods to reach the goal were left to grow substantially from collective reasoning. The conviviality of the small city of Liege does help in this.

Leaving the city of Liège by train left me with the feeling that the design of the station was not the last futuristic design that shapes the city.



Liège train station

Sustainable Development and Buddhism

Wansiri Rongrongmuang, MEG4

The word "Sustainable Development" was invented in the Western world, whereas "Buddhism" originated in the East. Even though the two are widely used in different contents and contexts, I find similarities in their concepts. They could be used to explain why so few Buddhists reach nirvana and rarely any countries are at a sustainable stage. The purpose of this article is not to explain Buddhism to foreigners, nor to define the concept of Sustainable Development, but rather to raise interesting points from my observation regarding their resemblances and complementarity.

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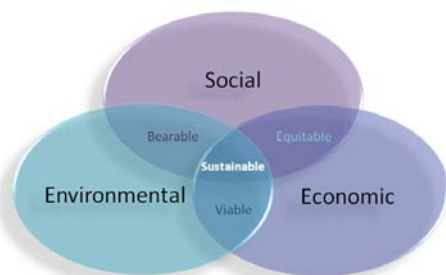
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First of all, Buddhist practice is based on 'the middle path', meaning no less, no more. You need to eat. You need a shelter. You need proper clothes. And you need medicine. These are four basic factors to sustain life. You need a certain amount of those and no need for extra to keep yourself alive. Eating too much or not having enough food will only make you suffer.

To sustain an economy, you also need four production factors: natural resources, capital, human resources, and entrepreneurship. By using fewer resources, production becomes insufficient; by using too many resources, we spoil it. There has to be a balance. The current over-exploitation of forests, land, water or even labour has been causing problems for the economy itself. The famous law of diminishing returns proves this.

The second point is that Sustainable Development is both a goal and a process – it is not about 'knowing' but 'doing': the same as in Buddhism. Although in both there is a long way to go to reach the final destination, once you start the doing, you are progressing to different stages. If you do it right, the result is there. When you meditate, your inner peace grows. When you catch the right amount of fish, the fish stock is maintained.

Thirdly, the success of both depends on the readiness and willingness of individuals to act. While this readiness is about acquiring enough knowledge to see the road ahead, willingness entails mostly braveness and

determination. People nowadays have enough information about the causes of global warming, for instance, yet they usually insult their ability to alter the current wrong but convenient course in favour of a better one. Similarly, a determined Buddhist can be brave to say no to bad Karma, when they know it is bad.

Lastly, the Buddha's term of "perceiving a round weapon as a lotus blossom" (mistaking wrong for right) depicts the most important obstacle to achieving nirvana/salvation, as well as to reaching sustainability. Most people believe that money or material wealth, instead of being 'no-self', is their life refuge. Along the same line, GDP is deceiving us as the key indicator of human wellbeing.

A question raised in Buddhist Economics that makes sense to me is: when mainstream economics assume a path of unlimited growth, how can limited resources catch up? When the development assumption is so wrong or unreasonable, how can economics means be right?

All in all, to achieve the ultimate goal(s) of Sustainable Development and Buddhism, you need to be able to distinguish right from wrong, you must have the readiness and willingness to act and then act – if you do so, the results will be there. Sound like a simple process? Yes, it is that simple. People are not (yet) seeing it.

Changes start from you – your mindset, your actions. Do spread the words when you realize it. And I hope that one day, collectively, we will reach the stars together.

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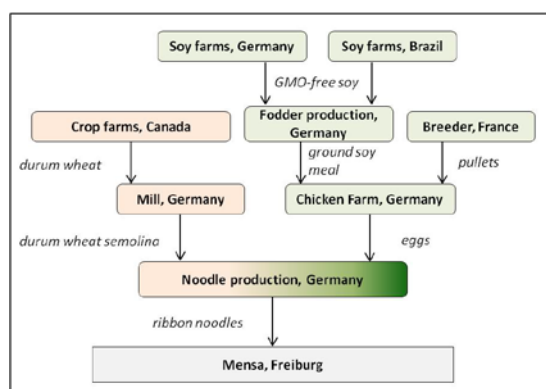


The MEG MENSA food detectives

János Jákli, MEG8

Lunchtime. Eat, drink and chat in the lively Mensa of the Institutsviertel. This has been and still is for many MEGs a daily or once in a while ritual – and for many other students, too. In a typical MEG-manner, some MEG8s wanted to know: Where does the Mensa food come from?

Hence, a sub-project group of the 2014 SOE (The Cost of Food) is committed to tracing back the supply chain of certain products the Mensa sells. In cooperation with “Studentenwerk Freiburg” (SWFR), suppliers have been contacted and further information has been requested as far as possible in the supply chain. For example, tracing back the noodle production has been a part of the project (see figure).



The final presentation of the supply chains trace-back will take place in the Institutsviertel Mensa on January 9 or 10. This will be one of the small events leading up for the final panel discussion on February 22, 2014. For updates on the SOE visit www.costoffood.org

On a Shopping Spree - How Much's the Nature?

Philipp Gassner, MEG8

'This is where we make most of our planets, you see', Arthur Dent, protagonist of the Sci-Fi classic Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, is welcomed to a planet factory, moving through massive chunks of whole worlds being built. Fiction aside, what would it take to build such a world? The occasional ocean, a couple of cows and fish, many mountains, a few fluffy clouds on top, a bunch of bushes and trees with apples and pears, et voilà. A quick run to the mall should do.

At the latest in front of the checkout you might wonder how much your shopping spree will be. Let's see: 5 billion liters of oceans, 2 million tons of trees, 10.000 cows, and 67 cubic kilometers of clouds? Hard to sum up, isn't it? Well, if we want to compare different forms of capital, apples and pears so to say, we obviously require a common measurement standard. That's why they came up with money, no need to reinvent the wheel. So how much would the ocean be, or the forest? Easy as that, just look up the price for the ocean's fish or the forest's timber. But timber is not all a forest embraces. It provides many other benefits to society: The mere pleasure of wandering about it, the carbon it stores or the oxygen it produces. Unfortunately oxygen does not have a price nor a market - it is an externality.

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Fig. 1 A dollar sign in Brunei's jungle waters and mangroves? Source: ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook 2010, ACB

Chocolate Externalities

To get a better grasp of this economic lingo, just imagine living next to a chocolate factory. Every morning you wake up to the divine smell of chocolate, nonetheless you surely won't pay the factory for this joy. On the flipside of this positive externality, the factory can also produce negative ones, for instance poisoning a river with its chocolate sludge. For this, society will have to pay, not the factory, since pollution is not traded on a market and therefore doesn't have a price. No price means no cost for the company and no incentive for its manager to reduce the pollution of the river. Likewise, most environmental goods, and externalities do not have a market.

The creation of an artificial market is the only solution to generate a price, which can then guide decision makers. For decision makers in climate change this is already being done. After hearing the simple message of the renowned Stern Review 'damages from global warming are way more expensive than its prevention', formerly priceless CO₂ is now traded on the stock markets, at least in some parts of the world, like the EU. For carbon this is fairly easy. One tone costs a few dollars. But how much is the wide array of values of ecosystem services and biodiversity?

Cheesy but True

The answer is more than € 1 trillion - close to the combined GDP of all ASEAN countries. And this is just one year's worth of biodiversity loss, as Dr. Luke Brander, a lead author of the study on 'The Economics of Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity' (TEEB) explains. You see, externalities sum up. Only after identifying these, they can be demonstrated and captured. On its way to do so the TEEB initiative is hosted by the United Nations Environment Program and supported by the European Commission and many individual countries.

Countries like Germany, India or Thailand who realize that it doesn't matter whether it's the dentist, climate change or biodiversity: prevention and conservation pay off. This holds good globally: A study, recently published in the journal *Science* estimates the costs of the maintenance and establishment of conservation areas to effectively protect the world's biodiversity: \$ 80 billion a year. Sounds enormous? Only at a first glance. It is less than 20 % of global spending on soft drinks, and only a tiny fraction of the value of these ecosystems.

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The value of valuation becomes clear: Non-valuation automatically means the attribution of zero value to goods – be it chocolate sludge, fluffy clouds or oxygen from a tree. If you don't value it, you won't save it.

Beyond doubt, TEEB is an important tool, but biodiversity needs clear thresholds, given that it cannot be simply substituted. Cheesy, but nevertheless with some truth to it: *'When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money.'* Mind you, manufacturing a new planet remains Science Fiction and nature is clearly not a shopping mall.

Full version and more on www.GreenChallengeAccepted.org

Selected DAAD Activities

MEG8 DAAD Scholars/Editor

On 26 April 2013, DAAD scholarship holders in Freiburg met to network. MEG's Peter Achuu gave a presentation on his experience in Germany

On 29-30 April 2013, DAAD held its Network Meeting for Development-Related Postgraduate Programs in Bonn. MEG's Syahrina Anggraini discussed *Growth and Resources - Concerns for Developing Countries*. Check out her interview: http://millennium-express.daad.de/?page_id=4526&lang=en

On 18 June 2013, DAAD held its Change Agents conference in Heidelberg. Participants explored the role of (possible) change agent in their home countries. More info: <http://millennium-express.daad.de/who-are-the-change-agents/?lang=en>

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Unpaid internships: a (virtual) MEG Debate

Delayed publication with the Editor's apologies. A big thank you to János, Ina and Tópsi for taking part in this online debate!

János (MEG8): Good Morning! My argument is that supervised internships are generally useful for students. However, internships have to be paid adequately to cover expenses (living costs, rent). I consider unpaid internships as a very selective tool that enables only students with sufficient financial funds to apply. This leads to a selection and reproduction of the same people working in the UN & Co. Furthermore, scholarship money is not for cross-subsidizing companies' internship wages.

Tópsi (MEG4): Good morning Janos, Ina! I think an internship is an opportunity for students to learn about a real-life working environment. When you are a full-time student, you don't get paid anyway. So the precondition for a good internship is not money; a successful internship is determined by an interesting job description with a clear line of command and tasks.

Ina (MEG7): Good morning! I agree that money is not a precondition. However, I think payment is important – at least to cover living costs. Internships, especially those with responsibility and conceptual thinking, often offer too little money to live on (e.g. UN, IUCN). My argument is that there is a lack of critical discourse about internships, which have become something of an obligation ("pimp your cv") and without ten of them...

János: Is it only about students? Or is it really "society" expects as Ina said a dozen internships with cool company names? Some media agencies pay 25 Euro-CENTs per day,

as the supply of internship applicants is high enough.

Tópsi: I agree that basic living welfare should be provided, but what if an interesting position is advertised by a poor organization? In such cases, students would be wholly responsible for their living costs.

Ina: I agree that one has to distinguish between the internship provider's conditions, and I also think that in the end it is about personal choices. However, why is it that social scientists need longer to find a proper job after graduation (statically speaking)? This is a structural problem. For example, consultancy and internship work has become a common way of employing people, as it increases flexibility and efficiency, but are these the values we want to work for?

János: That might be the case for social scientists with a more "abstract" curriculum, which makes it more difficult for HR managers to value. I guess they need to prove even more their practical skills by means of internships.

Tópsi: I'd say to find a job that you like is hard and takes time, not only for social scientists. You have a year (in MEG) to look for one – isn't it enough time? Another point is that, nowadays, I see many low-paid "jobs" disguised as "internship" and I don't think they should be called that way.

János: Agreed, the supply of willing interns has opened a huge market for the labeling of part-time jobs as full-time internships with extra challenges. In particular, I have found internships after graduation to be really dangerous; this is where it often becomes a vicious cycle.

Tópsi: Find a real job! After a graduation, don't look for low-paid (subsistence) 'internships', unless one really captures your inter-

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est. If it's compulsory to do an internship, it's a good chance to explore the professional world before graduating, but I don't think it should be compulsory.

Ina: Yes Topsi, it is a process of learning how to master the jungle of good and bad internships and jobs to find those that are suitable. However, I still think that we need a more critical discourse about how society and working conditions are changing and often negatively affecting personal life. To restate the value argument: flexibility in work conditions is not something that should be a valued per se. It often comes with these kinds of international and interesting job offers, yet it affects personal life a lot. So I think there are different alternatives if your critical mind tells you there is nothing interesting posted: (i) be entrepreneurial, create your own job or internship, or (ii) write a negative reply/rejection letter to the employee that posted an internship, making clear that is not ok in terms of conditions and ...make a business out of it

János: I also agree with Topsi and would add to it that companies should consider the local living costs and configure their financial reimbursement accordingly. Of course, an intern from India has higher costs to get to an UN internship in Geneva than a Swiss or German intern. And Ina, aren't (i) and (ii) the same?

Topsi: Ina, another option would be to try and contact an interesting organization even if they don't advertise a post. This is similar to volunteering.

János: Another key point here is transparency: it would be very useful to have a database with all (idealistic) NGOs, companies, institutions, ministries and their conditions and payments for internships. Some governance efforts might be needed for that!