

Welcome to the MEG Newsletter 2/2011

Editor

Welcome to the second edition of the MEG Newsletter for 2011. With the festive season drawing closer, it is now time to briefly recap some of the main news from the last year.



Firstly, whilst the majority of MEG 6 students were spread throughout the globe on their internships, we welcomed the MEG 7 students to Freiburg. As with previous MEG generations, the new students are a very diverse bunch. They are a group of 23 students coming from 18 different countries, and many different academic and professional backgrounds.

More recently, in November, the graduating students of the MEG, FEM and REM programs celebrated their graduation party together at the Peterhofkeller. The event commenced with a champagne reception, followed by speeches from professors and students, and the presentation of graduation certificates. Guests were also treated to musical performances and other entertainment provided by current students.

Also in November, Melani Pelaez, a MEG 6 student from Ecuador, became the second MEG student in two years to be awarded the DAAD prize for Excellent Achievement of International Students.

This prize is awarded once a year to a student who not only demonstrates excellent academic achievement, but is also exemplary in his/her commitment to society and intercultural activities.



In other good news, the MEG program has been re-accredited by the German Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute, ACQUIN. Accreditation serves to ensure a high quality of study programs, market transparency, and the attractiveness of programs for foreign students. The MEG Program, which has been ACQUIN accredited since 2006, underwent a series of evaluations during the last year. In September, it received the ACQUIN quality seal again, with the review panel giving the study program high praise.



Planning for the 2012 edition of the Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance is well underway. Entitled, "Setting the Stage for Sustainable Consumption," the Forum will contain various innovative elements including scientific theatre combined with key note speakers, documentary film and sustainable living experiments, with the

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aim of fostering discussion and debate on the topic of sustainable consumption. The Forum, which will also comprise the MEG 6 Student Organised Event

(SOE), will be held in early March, 2012. The MEG 6 students are very dedicated to their task, and have even gone so far as to donate blood to raise the funds required to put on the SOE. The next fundraising event, a Christmas Beach Party, will be held on Tuesday, 20 December 2011, at the FöCa. To learn more about this event, please visit www.megforum.uni-freiburg.de/SOE2012.

There have also been a number of guest lectures at the Faculty during the last year. Two that stood out were lectures by Prof. Dr. David Brunckhorst (University of New England, Australia) on



“Landscapes and Systems: Context and opportunities for alternative futures towards sustainability,” and Dr. Jeff McNeill (Massey University, New Zealand) on, “Incorporating indigenous decision-making in New Zealand’s environmental governance structures.”

For all the latest news on the MEG Program, please visit <http://www.meg.uni-freiburg.de/>.

Sufficiency and Systemic Change -The Ideas of Ashok Khosla

By Melani Pelaez Jara (MEG 6, Ecuador)



It is not just an economic crisis we are currently living through. Everything is connected in life - the environment suffers from poor social decisions, and this ends

up costing us more than we expect. Societies and economies around the world are in crisis, our pockets as well. However, the greatest crisis involves that fact that our surroundings have been reshaped in such a way as to deny us visions of nature, or even worse, to limit our capacity to (re)produce healthily within it. We live now on an earth which faces many crises, but which at the same time shelters a human race with many solutions.

In October 2011, while completing my internship at the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) Division for Technology, Industry and Economics, in Paris, I had the opportunity to attend a short, but very inspiring, presentation on Green and Socially Just Economies, by Prof. Dr. Ashok Khosla. I had heard of Dr. Khosla previously, but I had never imagined that his work and ideas would be so closely linked to our daily discussions in the MEG program. Even though Dr. Khosla never mentioned the word ‘sufficiency’ during his presentation (was he being cautious in front of his former UNEP colleagues?), to me, all 40 minutes of his presentation spoke to the concept of ‘sufficiency’. I was able to briefly discuss my ‘sufficiency’ related suspicions with him after the presentation, and he confirmed that ‘sufficiency’ had been firmly lodged in the back of his mind whilst giving the presentation.

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According to Dr. Khosla, it is not possible to talk about green economies without also including social justice as a horizontal concept. He views social justice as a national level responsibility, and so the reconsideration and redefinition of what is, and how to achieve, fairness, equity, transparency, participation and happiness falls into the hands of governments, together with civil society and local enterprises. On the other hand, the redefinition of what is, and how to achieve, a green economy is an issue of global cooperation on efficiency, productivity, conservation, decoupling, and dematerialization. For decades the global income gap has been expanding, and our ecological footprints have continued to grow - now is the time to make some tough decisions before it is too late.

Dr. Khosla argued that, in the economic south and north, there are three possible scenarios that may eventuate to redefine our present and future circumstances:

1. For the economic south - to copy-cat, to piggy-back or to leap-frog.
2. For the economic north - business as usual, fine-tuning or systemic change.

For years, developing countries have been told by the economic north that expanding and improving global competitiveness is the key to success - and also the key to becoming copy-cats! Having every kind of product available everywhere and at any-time may be the concept of happiness adopted by the economic north, but does this also apply to people and lifestyles in developing countries? Do we really want to end up burying ourselves in disposable stuff, or is it better instead to live in harmony with our rich culture and nature?

It is undeniable that developing countries have much to improve in terms of produc-

tion systems, energy generation and distribution, and technical development. Such improvements would provide solutions to some absurd situations that currently exist, for example, the process of extracting oil from rich, fertile soil, exporting it to the north for refinement, and then re-importing it as expensive gasoline. Focusing on efficiency improvements or applying the well-known 'factor five' concept could provide some solutions, but not necessarily socially just solutions for people in developing countries. Instead, Dr. Khosla proposes a leap-frog strategy to solve fundamental problems and secure a happy, fair and sustainable future. Just as in Bhutan, Dr Khosla's favourite country, Gross National Happiness, instead of Gross National Product, would measure the success of this future. In this scenario, the discourse focuses on a 'factor ten', which envisages renewable energy in the mainstream, local, fair, inclusive and for-profit social entrepreneurs, innovative transportation systems, such as improved zeppelins, and breakthrough technologies fully inspired by nature.

We, the economic south, need to focus our development process and perform a quantum leap that avoids all the mistakes of the economic north. At the same time, the economic north must face up to its challenging future, which must involve decreases, at all levels, of the production of unnecessary, polluting and destructive goods, services and technologies, and a systemic societal change that will hopefully translate into sustainable development.

'Building capacity to innovate is today's most urgent task for developing countries and regions' - this was Dr. Khosla's final statement, and I totally agree with him. Systemic change, or a transition to sufficient societies, is not about minor changes or fine-tuning economic and political decisions. It is a matter of both top-down and bottom-up approaches. It is about on-the-ground work and changes. It is about giv-

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ing ourselves the opportunity to fight against the institutionalised, structuralised and archaic way of thinking that we have been raised with. Systemic change means believing in everyday action and everyday exemplary lifestyles. Sufficient societies are a 'must' for the economic north. Leap-frogging is a 'must' for the economic south.

Dr. Ashok Khosla is a former UNEP Director, co-Chair of the International Resource Panel, Board Member of the Club of Rome, IUCN and IISD, founder of Development Alternatives, professor, social entrepreneur and leading expert on sustainable development. He lives in Delhi.

Disclaimer: This article is fully based on Dr. Khosla's presentation at UNEP-DTIE Paris, in October 2011. The author takes full responsibility for her own opinions and interpretations of the concepts presented.

Environmental Shock in Freiburg

By Ratchada Arpornsilp (MEG 7, Thailand)



I suppose it is easy to find a piece written by an international student about his or her cultural shock when living in a foreign land, so I decided not to go down that road.

Instead, I was struck by a desire to write a piece comparing my perception of Freiburg before and after I arrived.

To be honest, I knew nothing about Freiburg prior to applying for the MEG program. So I started "Googling" and learnt that Freiburg is an entry point to the scenic beauty of the Black Forest, and

hosts one of the most famous old universities in Germany. However, most of the information I was uncovering related to Freiburg's environmental prestige. My computer screen kept telling me that Freiburg is the green capital of Germany. Also, incidentally, after I got accepted into the program, I read an article in a Thai tabloid magazine that talked about Vauban and contained a map of Freiburg. At that time, I was very excited to receive all this information about the place where I would be living for the next 2 years.



When I arrived in August, I found that Freiburg was bigger, with many more people and cars crowded onto the narrow streets, than I had expected (although, of course, there were lots of bicycles too). It was only later that I learned that the big crowds were caused by the tourists here for the summer, and international students attending holiday courses. Now that I have lived here for over 3 months, I think Freiburg is not so big at all - the size of the city is just about right, even when you are getting around on foot.

Before arriving in Germany, I had mistakenly assumed that the whole of Freiburg would be like Vauban, where most of the motorists are members of car sharing schemes. It soon became clear that Vauban is actually only a small part of Freiburg. However, the biggest shock for me, after attending the first MEG module, was that the Black Forest is so artificial. It was

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severely exploited throughout the industrialisation period, as people believed they had the right to use the abundant natural resources in any way they wanted.

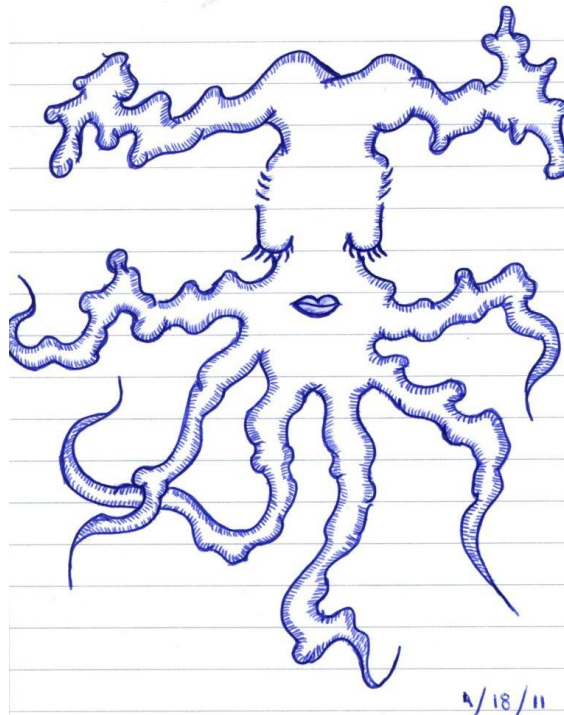
Even now the Black Forest serves more as a tourist destination, recreational attraction and source of wood, than as a functioning ecological system. In addition, although I have found that people here take the task of separating waste very seriously, there is still a large amount of waste that needs to be exported to other countries for various reasons. Furthermore, because most people assume that waste can be recycled, there is not much emphasis on reducing or reusing garbage.

All these facts were shocking, and to a certain extent, frustrating to me, because Germany is so renowned for its environmental standards and initiatives - and Freiburg is supposed to be the "superstar" in that regard. Now that I am in the post-shock stage, I have been able to analyse and reflect on my thoughts in this regard. I have realised that I received only one side of the story before I came here. Now that I am able to put that story in context, I can get a better sense of the processes which promote it to the outside world.

In comparison, the environmental situation where I come from, Bangkok, is deteriorating rapidly. You are, of course, free to ride a bike to university or work, but you do so at your own risk, because there is no infrastructure such as bicycle lanes. In fact, there is a huge probability that you might get injured in a car accident, or develop chronic respiratory problems from the pollution. The city keeps sprawling outwards, and as a result, people depend much more on private transportation. If you go shopping, you will get as many complimentary plastic bags as the number of items you

purchase, or more, as part of the heartfelt customer service. Those bags are of such poor quality that they cannot be reused. The separation of waste is not practiced because it all eventually ends up in the same place. People living in the slums earn their living by collecting the more valuable items of waste from the city's mountain of a garbage dump, and trying to re-sell it. This is beyond shocking, but it is true, and I believe that it does not only happen in Bangkok.

This reflection has reminded me that there is always something that we can do better to help improve the state of environment, wherever we might find ourselves. It was this exact thought that compelled me to join the MEG program. Its multi- and inter-disciplinary setting, complete with students from all corners of the world who bring their own experiences and perspectives, provides a solid base from which to begin our future global environmental missions.



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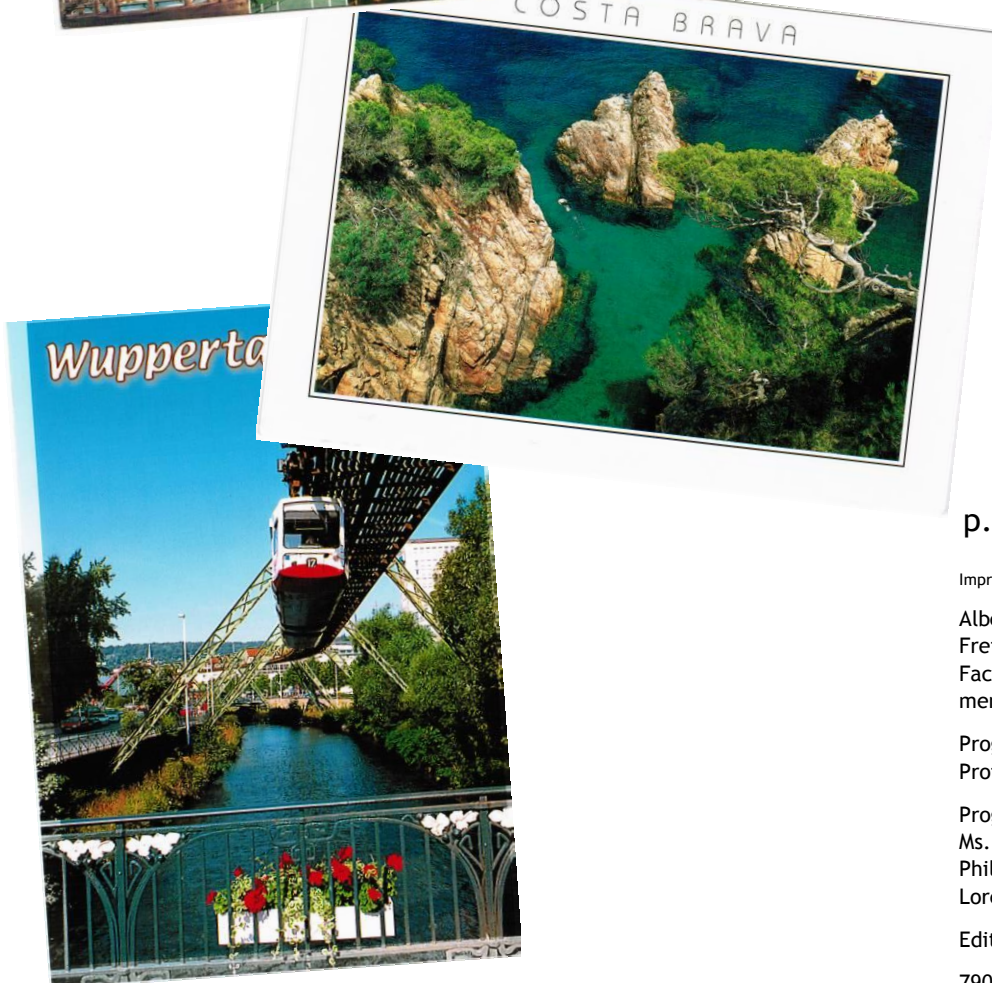
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ALUMNI Postcards



Annie, Samira, Alba (MEG 3)
& Romy (MEG 4)



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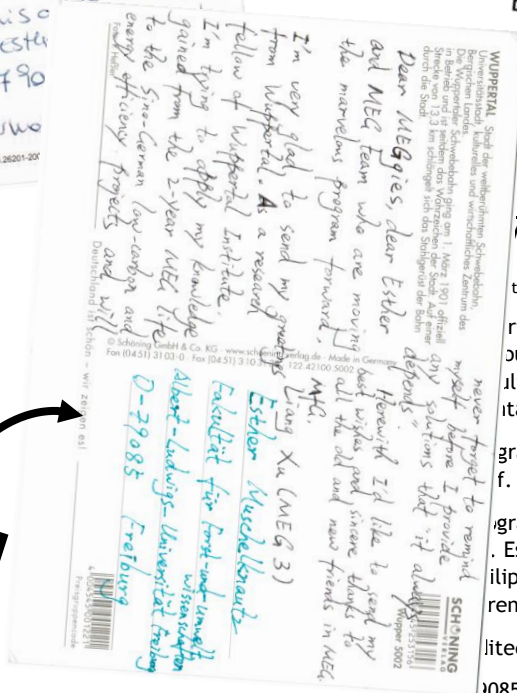
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Esther (MEG 3)



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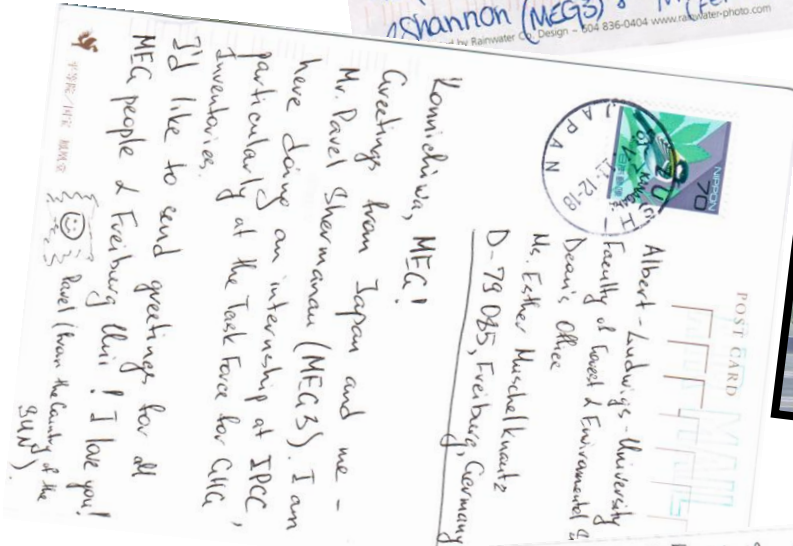
Liang (MEG 3)

MEG

M.Sc.
Environmental
Governance

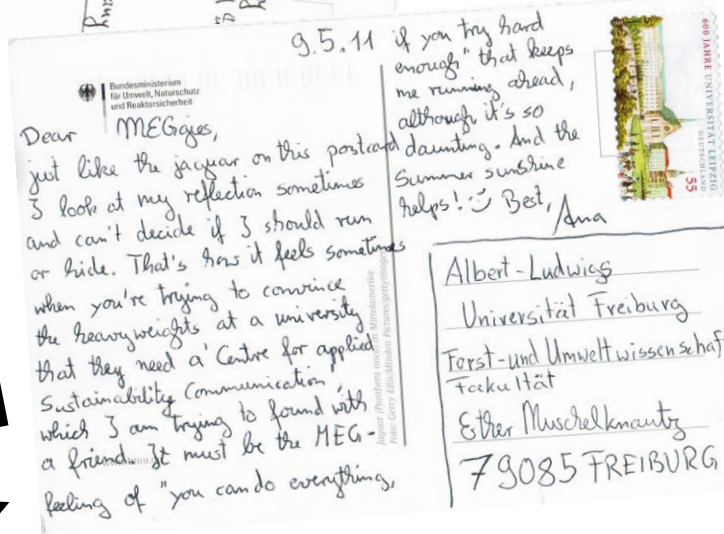
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Shannon (MEG 3) & Maria (FEM 3)

Ana (MEG 3)



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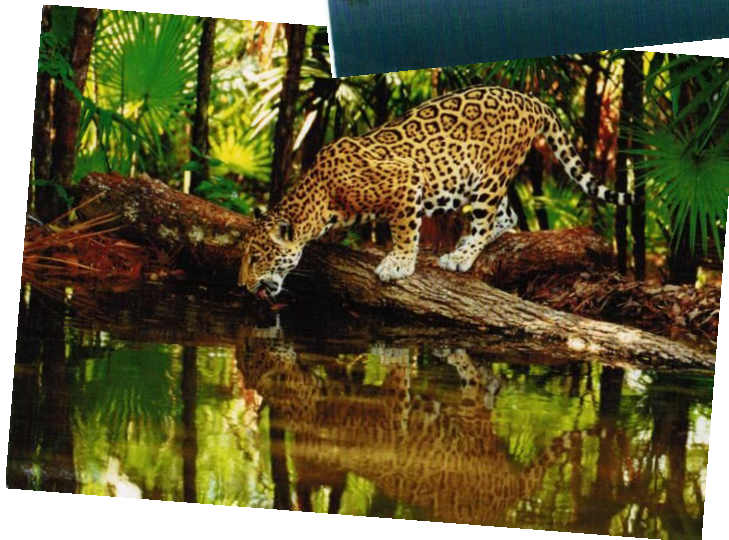
SHAPE. COMPLEX. FUTURES.



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Pavel (MEG 3)



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17-12-10

Meditations on India

By Luis Bustillo Munoz (MEG 6, Mexico)



When MEG generation 6 started last year, the internship part of the Masters was mentioned as something we would have to organise

'soon'. Of course at that time it all sounded very distant, but soon the task of finding an internship became very pressing. The ideal period to do the internship is during the summer break, between the 2nd and 3rd semesters, and so I decided to do mine during this time slot. The search for a good internship started early in the year, but

proved to be a difficult task - I couldn't seem to find anything! I only received negative responses and that was when I actually got a reply to my e-mails at all. In the end, I spent 7 weeks working for an organization that a good friend of mine recommended to me - these proved to be some of the most intense and interesting weeks of my life.



I had the opportunity to do the internship with Hand in Hand in India, a land that I would describe as an "overload for the senses". This country offers so much at the same time that it's difficult to cope with everything whilst trying to keep a cool head, a capacity the Indians seem to have in ample supply. Hand in Hand (<http://www.hihindia.org>) is an NGO that works with poverty alleviation, mainly in the state of Tamil Nadu. I was working with the Resource Management pillar of Hand in Hand on a project located on the border between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The project was in the middle of a nature reserve forest inhabited by a variety of wild animals, including deer and elephants. Hand in Hand's ongoing project is aimed at improving the livelihoods of the inhabitants of this region, who belong to a lower caste and struggle to obtain access to water to allow them to cultivate maize and millet.

My experience in India, on the whole, was amazing, both on personal and professional levels. I found myself in the middle of a beautiful natural site, surrounded by nature, wildlife

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and friendly people. One of the most significant afternoons for me involved sitting down on a big rock with Radja, the leader of the project, in a nearby river, talking about the past, present and future of India. As we sat, we watched an old lady washing her clothes and a couple of fishermen cleaning some fish, probably preparing them for dinner. We talked about their traditions, culture, religion and even politics. Many things sounded so familiar, I could almost swear he was telling stories from back home in Mexico! But some other things sounded so far off - so distant and apart from my reality. Distance, this is exactly what I thought about during my internship. Not so much about the physical distance that separated me from home or from my university town, but more about the cultural and ideological distance that separated me from the people now surrounding me.

Back in Freiburg, only some weeks prior to my travel to India, a group of MEGgies and I conducted an experiment for one month. We were trying to find out how feasible a 'sustainable' way of life is while living in the city. During this month we all struggled to let some things go and implement changes to our lifestyle that were not always very pleasant. These small sacrifices were done in the name of 'scientific experimentation', or so we liked to think (by the way, some of our experiences have been filmed and will be put together in a documentary film that will premiere at the 2012 Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance).

However, thinking of this in India, all those experiences seemed so distant and, although I hate to say it, useless. In Germany you can try to have, and most probably achieve, a very sustainable and low impact way of living. You might spend

more money than expected, but you can still achieve it. On the other hand, in India, in the economically challenged cities and towns, in the slums, out in the fields where farmers struggle while waiting for rain for cultivation, who could actually consider trying to take such a luxurious approach to everyday life? And this word really applies in my opinion - 'luxurious'.

That is not to say that people in India are not concerned with sustainability or that they don't care about the environment at all, but it is true that we are all living very different realities. Sometimes we are all so enclosed in our own discourses that we forget that there are other people out there, with other priorities, other opportunities and other realities at hand. I think the key is to realize that not everyone has to follow the same path as us - even if it is the neighbour living next door, we can never know exactly what his or her background and motivations are, so we shouldn't label or judge too quickly.

For example, you might be of the opinion that global warming is not an anthropogenic phenomenon. With this in mind, what would actually stop you from buying some beans in the market imported directly from Kenya? In my case, it is coherence and common sense. It might be true that I don't necessarily believe it is bad a thing that some big freight airliner has transported these beans from a far away country, but I do understand that this product can be sourced from a closer producer. I might also want to avoid supporting an agricultural system involving high subsidies that affect local producers back in Kenya. Or I might be of the opinion that it just doesn't make any sense to buy something from another continent, double wrapped in plastic and for the same price, if you can get it from some place closer to home.

I strongly believe that our environmental discourses have to be re-thought and re-evaluated. So far, too much damage has been

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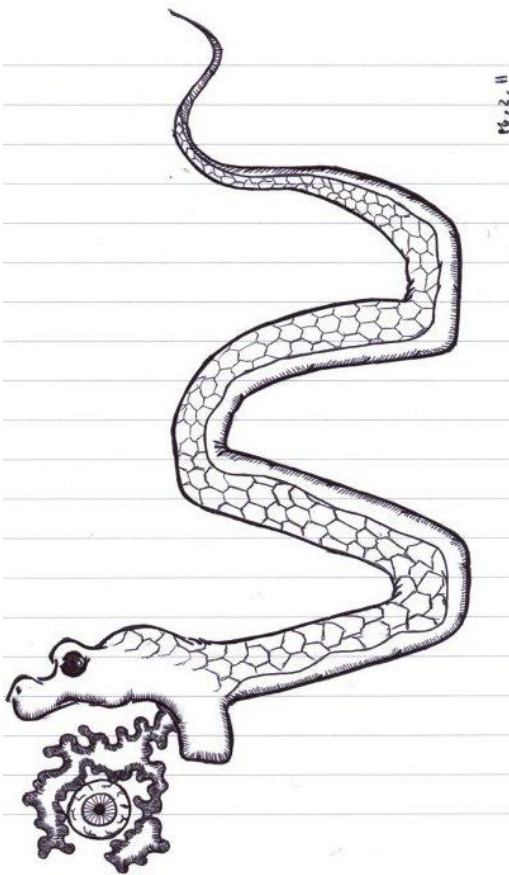
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done by weak hypotheses and fear mongering. However, I also believe that this change has to come from us, and as participants in the MEG program, we have a direct obligation to be bigger than propaganda and marketing.



I have been back from India for some 3 weeks now and I am still trying to adapt to my old reality. I'm still thinking of how strange it felt to be eating locally produced food with my mentor and colleagues knowing that they got it from the shop around the corner and that it had arrived there directly from the fields in the vicinity of the city or the state. At the same time, I know that to do this in Freiburg would involve the extra effort of trying to find the right pro-

ducer in the local market, the extra time to go and buy the food (remembering your non-plastic bag to carry it all in), and probably paying a little bit more money to get the Bio variety. However, there in India, at that moment, I basically had to eat what I had in front of me on the table, and give thanks for it. Was it Bio? Did the farmers use pesticides? Was it GMO? Did they wash it properly before to cooking it? You will never know.

The experiences I had in India will stay with me for the rest of my life. I will try to do whatever is possible, with the capabilities I have at hand, to change my surroundings. After all, this is the only thing that we can do - some will be able to accomplish extraordinary changes, some others more humble ones. In the end, what counts is that we do something, and try to mould our reality into what we want it to be, whilst hopefully finding some other souls along the road that want to take the ride with us.

Interview with Dr. Peter Poschen



Ina Sötebeer (MEG 7, Germany) interviewed Dr. Peter Poschen, Director of the Job Creation and Enterprise Development Department at the ILO, and lecturer in the MEG Module,

Global Societal Change.

1. What is the most important environmental problem the world is facing today?

It's Climate Change, and it will definitely become irreversible within the next 20 years. So, do you want to hear the good or the bad news first? Since Copenhagen failed and compensatory payments have become more and more unrealistic given the financial crisis, a new cli-

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mate deal has become even more difficult to agree upon. The countries' positions are highly complex and because the USA is continuing to block the negotiations, there is no new deal. To overcome the North-South divide, both big emitters (Europe and the US) have to be a part of the solution.

In terms of awareness-raising, however, Copenhagen has been a success. Environmental issues have never before been as highly prioritized and as much a part of political agendas. Even if the US blocks further steps in the climate negotiations by rejecting any agreement with binding targets, there are numerous smart initiatives going on at sub-national levels. Investment in renewable energies and energy efficiency is rising. Local transport systems are being transformed to become more sustainable and energy balances of public buildings are decreasing thanks to renovation projects. However, to really address Climate Change, state action is essential. Bottom-up solutions will never be enough.

2. Is Climate Change a workplace or an environmental issue?

If Climate Change is only discussed as an environmental issue, it will not get the attention we need to cope with the phenomenon. Climate Change affects sectors, regions and groups throughout the planet in an imbalanced way. We have to understand these dynamics to address the labour markets and provide appropriate adaptation strategies.

3. Spending four days with the “MEGgies” – Is it worthwhile?

Sustainability has become my life time topic. I am a child of the “environmentalised” generation. I was 17 years old when,

in '72, the first international environmental conference was held in Stockholm, and when the Club of Rome published its enduring book, “Limits of Growth”. Studying forestry was a logical way to dedicate my professional life to “green issues”.

So how did I become involved in the MEG program? Honestly, I accidentally joined the lecturing team when I was kindly asked during one of your excursions to the ILO headquarters in Geneva. The first experience was very worthwhile, and lecturing the MEGgies has given me an opportunity to sensitise you to integrated approaches. It's a chance to promote holistic views and it's refreshing and challenging because I have to be as precise as possible to ensure that my message carries across.



4. The Green Economy - How can we make it a reality?

A green economy is a concrete vision of sustainability - but in practice, the concept is often oversimplified. There's an ongoing dispute between the ILO and UNEP about this. A green economy doesn't automatically lead to increased justice and social equity. The transition towards greener economies has to be socially fair. There are many good initiatives, and country-level support for the ILO Green Job Programme is constantly growing. For example, in

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Brazil, a new law for solid waste management uses incentives to integrate waste collectors into the formal labour market. In 2005, the Indian government launched the *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act* (NREGA) to address the marginalisation of people in rural areas by providing supplemental wages and financing the restoration of ecological infrastructure.

5. Rio+20 – Will this be just another gathering of important people in fancy conference rooms?

There is hope that Rio+20 will re-animate the idea of sustainability. Hope that the concept of sustainability will be clarified and appropriate indicators adopted. If we can't agree, then at least someone needs to take a leadership role and get us moving forward by establishing a feasible and useful indicator set which reflects sustainability in a broader sense. The emerging countries, especially Brazil and South Africa, have shown interesting dynamics and smart policy approaches. Rio+20 is a chance for the international arena to get sensitised to them and to foster these concepts.

Part of the discussion about clarifying the concept of sustainability includes the need to put a higher priority on the social aspects of sustainability. Also, the idea of growth as the stand-alone solution has to be changed. The answer is not to prohibit growth, but to rethink its purpose. We need to ask which forms of economic growth are most suitable to obtain the social improvements we try to get from growing GDP. In particular, the developed countries have to face the question of whether there is still any purpose in growing their economies.

6. Where does all your motivation come from?

There's no need for a long explanation: I have 5 children and 3 grandchildren.

7. Your advice for the MEGGIES?

"Occupy Dancefloor"- I just saw this bizarre advertisement pinned up all over the department. [Laughs] Is this today's form of activism? Today's pressing problems require visionary ideas and feasible concepts. Which screws and levers need to be turned? Where are the hubs? How can we optimize information flows? To precipitate change one must be able to analyse and understand the system and its complex interrelationships. Very few ideas are not realised because of technical problems. The question is - who makes the rules of the games?

Discovering the Pearl of Africa

Juan David Jaramillo Salamanca (MEG 6, Colombia)



People refer to Africa as "the black continent", but this cannot be further from reality. Black is the absence of colour, but Africa has them all - from the

dark skin of its people to the green of its vast vegetation, the innumerable colours of its wildlife, and the blue skies and oceans that sometimes seem to merge on the horizon - just name a colour, Africa has it! So for me, Africa should be known as the "white continent", because white is the sum of all the colours. This is how I want to start my article about my time in Uganda, the Pearl of Africa.

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I went to Uganda to work with GIZ's Promotion of Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency Program (PREEP). PREEP's goal is to help overcome one of the main shortcomings of the country - insufficient energy supply. In Uganda, less than 5% of the population has reliable access to electricity. Only a short time of my stay had passed before I experienced this particular problem, when the power was cut off to the place where I was staying. Blinded by the comfortable and, I would even say, spoilt way of living we are used to in the "western world", I immediately looked for alternatives to "fix this problem." Amongst other things, I tried to find new accommodation with a diesel generator, and always remembered to charge the battery of my laptop when I was at work. Luckily, none of these would-be solutions worked. The other places to stay were not "nice enough" and my laptop's battery died (RIP), so I decided to stay where I was living – thank you destiny!

Those long nights spent in the dark transformed into perfect occasions to start reading a book (*The White Massai*, even if I didn't find it excellent, I read it thoroughly as, somehow, I identified with many of the situations it described), to learn some German and even to begin writing a blog about my favourite sport, basketball, instead of just reading hundreds of them - but none of these new found activities would prove to be so marvellous as going out with my friends and meeting new ones!

However, I must admit that at first I was a bit hesitant about hitting the streets of Kampala, and there were a lot of "buts" that I should own up to - "but I live too far", "but it's too late and I don't want to use a *Boda*" (*Boda Bodas* are motorbikes that are used as taxis - just sit back and enjoy

the ride!), "but I worked the whole day and I'm tired", or "but tomorrow I have to wake up early". With each "but" I realised that I could have been missing out on a wonderful experience.



I will now introduce you to the *magic* of Uganda. On a certain weekend we went out without a car, so we had to use a *boda* to commute. As it turned out, using *bodas* at night didn't seem so dangerous as during the day (one "but" down). By making this first leap of faith, and using the *bodas*, I came to know a driver with whom I felt safe enough to drive around Kampala. Suddenly I wasn't living so far away, because with the *bodas*, everything was closer (of course using the *bodas* was dangerous, but so was missing out on wonderful opportunities). So in this way, one more "but" was banished out of sight.

And yes, I had been working all day long, and I was tired, but that hadn't been stopping me from continuing to work a little bit more at home each night (courtesy of my responsibilities for the MEG Student Organised Event). So I asked myself, if I had the energy to sit down in front of my computer screen, why didn't I have the energy to go out and have a good time? Another "but" bites the dust. And any way, wasn't I going to bed late even when I stayed at home? So why shouldn't I stay up for more fun reasons instead? And so the last "but" hit the road.

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However, that little story doesn't even describe half the magic of Uganda – magic that I think has the capability of leading us all to a sudden change of direction in our lives. In this regard, I asked myself, how was it possible that the absence of certain things could make me happy, when normally just the fact of not being able to take a hot shower in the morning can ruin my day? How could people like me, from countries with “higher living standards” than Uganda, be happy without these things that we normally take for granted? Had we all lost our minds? No! I came to realise that we were all using the same principle that I used when I was just a “tourist” in Uganda. For example, instead of using a *boda* or a car, I would simply walk. Sure it took longer and was more exhausting, but I got to enjoy the details of the journey.

That was the secret! In my view, when we have many things, we worry about making the most out of them all. To me, this is akin to “living life in the fast lane” – you might reach the end of the road faster, but can you be sure that you won't miss where you really want to go, or even the journey itself?

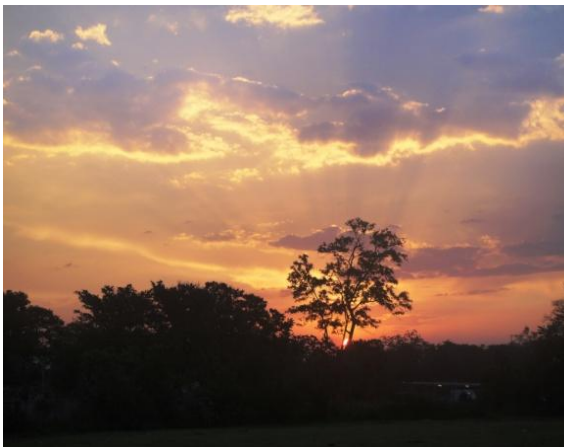
So I stopped worrying about the multiple things I had to do in the future. Instead, I decided that I was going to go out and meet outstanding people, who had also decided to enjoy the journey, and to take the risk to “live their lives alive.”

I learned that the true treasure of Uganda, the Pearl of Africa, was not its natural resources, nor is it emerging economy. The true pearl lies in the unusual mix of everyday situations that combine to break the restraints that keep us from discovering our true selves - that is the treasure of Uganda! Uganda helps you to discover

the pearl inside of yourself, which the busy day-to-day dynamics of our “normal” lives, are constantly hiding from us.



When I first thought about writing an article for this newsletter I considered recounting my many adventures in Africa - such as the roller coaster like flight to Entebbe, white water rafting at the source of the Nile, going to a wedding party to which I wasn't invited and being found out because I was the only *Mzungu* (white person) there, attending a soccer match and experiencing the unique ambience created by the non-stop blast of *vuvuzelas*, among a lot of other nice memories. In the end I realised that none of those experiences would have felt the same if I hadn't first discovered the Pearl of Africa.



So sorry Mr Editor, there was a small change of plans, but I think this is the most important story that I could tell of my first time in Africa. Any-

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way, if anyone wants to know more about the other stories, just ask me, I guarantee that this would be better than just reading them!

MEG 7 Goes to Frankfurt

By Aura Villanueva (MEG 7, Mexico)



On November 29, the newest addition to the MEG program embarked on a three day trip to Frankfurt to get a first-hand account of what the

Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the *KfW Bankengruppe* are all about. On the first day of our adventure, 22 anxious MEGies departed from Freiburg in the afternoon with the sun shining at its peak and bidding us farewell. The trip to Frankfurt only took 2 ½ hours' thanks to our skilled bus driver and, during that short period, we were able to bond even further as a group through heartfelt chats and collectively falling asleep. Upon arrival in Frankfurt, we were greeted by Technicolor city lights, intricate infrastructure, and the calmly beautiful Main River. We exited the bus and entered the Frankfurt Youth Hostel thinking of the busy days ahead. However, before jumping into the official business of the trip we were treated to a wonderful dinner at a traditional German restaurant, the *Affentorschänke*, which allowed us to enjoy our one night of freedom in a stress-free and friendly environment. As our bellies became satisfied, and as the night came to an end, we said *Guten Abend* Frankfurt and *Bis Morgen*.

Soon it was morning, time to put our best feet forward and get ready for a day filled

with presentations, and the possibility to question how the GIZ views development. At around 9 am we arrived at the GIZ headquarters and were welcomed by Ana Buchorova, a former MEG student from the very first generation! Ana introduced us to the main concepts behind the GIZ and the drivers promoting development strategies on a global scale. After her introduction, we began a round of presentations during which we grasped what the GIZ means in terms of development cooperation by looking at the topics of "poverty-oriented basic energy services", "environmental governance, green economy and Rio+20", and "promotion of quality employment and green jobs". We were also given information about how to become part of the GIZ, by either interning or becoming a trainee. As the presentations came to an end, so did our time in the GIZ building. By 6 pm we were headed back to city centre to enjoy another night in lovely Frankfurt. At dinner time we were treated to delicious food yet again, this time at an Italian restaurant called *Borsalino*, where the warmth of the MEG family felt ever-growing.

On the third and last day of our busy trip, we woke up bright and early to say goodbye to our rooms in the hostel. We then began the last leg of the trip by heading to the KfW offices in downtown Frankfurt. The KfW arranged a round of presentations that allowed us to touch base with various projects that enable sustainable development worldwide. The presentations related to the financing of offshore wind farms, sensible management of natural resources, and strategies for adaptation to climate change. During the presentations, we were encouraged to proudly represent the capabilities of MEG students by addressing the speakers with critical questions regarding their projects and the multiple stakeholders involved. By 2 pm the round of presentations had ended. We said goodbye to the KfW and enjoyed the last moments of our trip in the Frankfurt city centre.

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Embracing the afternoon dew falling upon the bus windshield, we said farewell to Frankfurt just as the burnt orange skyline collided with the Main River, and began our long trip back to Freiburg.

We wish to express our gratitude to the GIZ and the KfW for being so kind as to provide us with many knowledge-enriching presentations targeting a broad array of issues relevant to global environmental governance today. Also, thanks go to Ms Leonora Lorena, the trip's logistical mas-

termind, and the rest of the MEG 7 class for making this trip so enjoyable.

This concludes the 2nd edition of the MEG Newsletter for 2011. However, before you stop reading, be sure to turn to the next page to see the new adventures of MEG Person – the world's first gender neutral super hero.

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MEG PERSON "IN THE LAIR OF THE POSITIVIST?"

HERE STANDS THE BUSTLING CITY OF MEGALOPOLIS - NOW THREATENED BY THE INSIDIOUS INFLUENCE OF MISMANAGED COMMON POOL RESOURCES, NEO-LIBERAL GROWTH PATTERNS, AND UNSUSTAINABLE LEVELS OF CONSUMPTION - ITS CITIZENS DOWNTRODDEN BY POOR ACCESS TO PUBLIC DECISION MAKING. ADMIT THE BURGEONING SOCIAL DEPRIVATION, ONLY ONE PERSON DARES MAKE A DIFFERENCE - MEG PERSON!



NO TASK IS TOO BIG OR TOO SMALL IN THE FIGHT TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND EQUALITY.

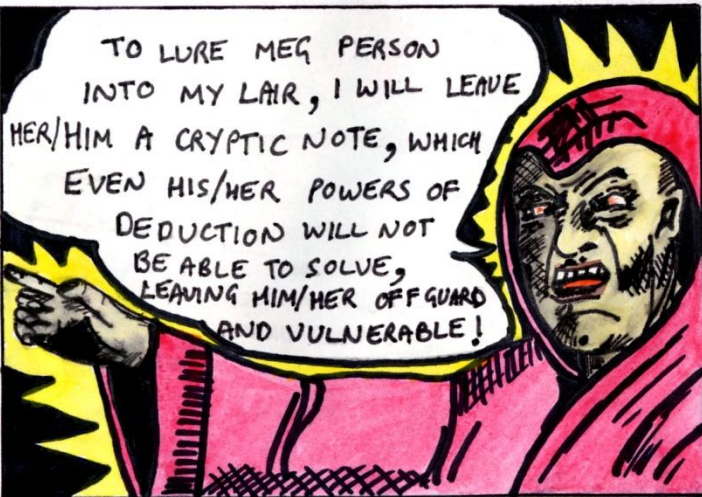


MEANWHILE, AT A BOARD MEETING OF THE EVIL SCIENTIST MONKS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, THEIR CHARISMATIC, BUT SOMEWHAT STUCK IN HIS THINKING, LEADER - THE POSITIVIST - OUTLINES HIS PLANS FOR GLOBAL DOMINATION.

WE HAVE DEVELOPED A NEW TYPE OF PESTICIDE SO DEADLY THAT NOT EVEN THAT PESKY MEG PERSON WILL BE ABLE TO SURVIVE IT - AND IT'S GM TO BOOT!



TO LURE MEG PERSON INTO MY LAIR, I WILL LEAVE HER/HIM A CRYPTIC NOTE, WHICH EVEN HIS/HER POWERS OF DEDUCTION WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SOLVE, LEAVING HIM/HER OFF GUARD AND VULNERABLE!



THE NOTE IS DELIVERED TO MEG PERSON.

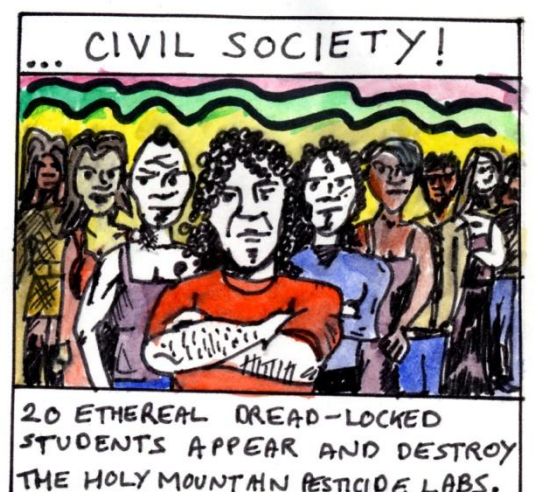
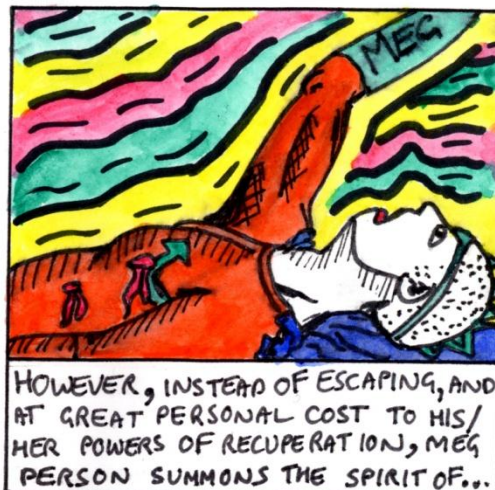
THE MONKS OF HOLY MOUNTAIN ARE COOKING UP SERIOUS MISCHIEF FOR MEGALOPOLIS. HOWEVER, WE WILL GIVE YOU ONE CHANCE TO SAVE THE CITY, IF YOU CAN RIDDLE ME THIS O' MEG PERSON:

"IF 2 COWS ARE IMPRISONED FOR 10 YEARS FOR DEPLETING A NORWEGIAN COD FISHERY, HOW MANY YEARS IN GAOL SHOULD 5 LOBSTERS RECEIVE FOR EATING ALL THE GRASS IN A COMMUNITY OWNED SWISS PASTURE?"
-- (A) 100 (B) 25 (C) 60





LEAVING MEG PERSON LYING WOUNDED, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT (S)HE WILL ACT RATIONALLY AND SAVE HIS/HER OWN LIFE, FORSAKING THE PEOPLE OF MEGALOPOLIS, THE POSITIVIST UNCONCERNEDLY SETS ABOUT IMPLEMENTING HIS PLANS TO DESTROY THE CITY.



DRIVEN MAD BY THE INFLEXIBILITY AND PARADOXICAL NATURE OF HIS ASSUMPTIONS, THE POSITIVIST IS CARRIED AWAY BY MEGALOPOLIS CITY AUTHORITIES TO THE PANOPTICOM MENTAL INSTITUTION.

