

## Welcome to the MEG Newsletter 2016

### *Editors*

While selecting the theme of this newsletter-Evolving Environmental Leadership, we were quite sure of getting some very interesting articles, and in the end we achieved this objective. The aim of the newsletter was to explore how environmental leadership is evolving in different arenas. The underlying assumption was that, as leadership in general has been evolving from the individual to a collaborative and a more nuanced approach that addresses complexity considering the context in the contemporary world, environmental leadership also needs to take a frog-leap in order to create a wider and in-depth impact in protecting our natural resources (Case et al. 2015, p. 398).

This newsletter touches upon the lives of people associated with MEG. It starts with a note on how MEG is evolving and the organizing committee's plans to 'refurbish' the program structure. Then, it provides some very interesting perspectives on topics ranging from the ones that enhance leadership for environment with motivated youth aggregation at the Conference of Youth in Paris 2015, to reflections about the ways environmental leadership is fostered through individual interventions to a community echoing the need for a collaborative leadership in dealing with complex environmental concerns. Leadership qualities that these individuals exhibit in social processes to bring about change are also enumerated. Environmental solutions cannot overlook issues of trade-offs that the environmental leaders have to face, such as the choice between environment protection and poverty reduction, the alternative between forest project and clean energy as the means

to reduce the carbon emissions, as well as the ripple effects caused by choosing the greener solutions over the conventional ones.

In other news, the SOE 2016 has inspired our alumni and other participants to introspect about personal leadership and their vision of future. The newsletter also features some new activities such as 'Thesis café' which is helping current MEGgies with their thesis, traditional events like the team building weekends, and a farewell note from Julia as she moves to her new role away from us.

We hope you have a good time reading through the news, updates and perspectives of evolving leadership for environment from MEG and lives of MEGgies around the world.

Amrita (MEG 9) and Naomin (MEG 10)

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Albert-Ludwigs-Universität  
Faculty of Environment and  
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## News

*Editor*

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

**BREAKING NEWS - DAAD endorsed yet again the MEG program by granting it the EPOS-Funding 2017 - 2024!**

*MEG coordination team*



We are delighted to announce that DAAD has finally approved our re-application within the EPOS-Funding program. This means that funding for up to seven or eight scholarships per year exclusively to MEG for students from developing countries and countries in transition is secured until the year 2024! In 2023 we would then have to re-apply again.

Since our first successful application in 2006 about 60 fellowships have been provided to MEG students under the EPOS-scheme, covering the living and travel costs for the two-year program. Additionally, the MEG program gets extra means for tutorials under the scheme. This has summed up in the past to more than a million € in total. For more information about the EPOS-scheme click [here](#).

We are very grateful to the DAAD for this continued support and trust in MEG program. MEG would definitely not have been such a success story without the rich perspectives that students bring from developing countries and countries in transition. Their wide participation in the program would also most likely not be possible without the funding from the DAAD! All in all, this led to MEG growing

into a network of more than 300 students and alumni from 89 different nations till today – truly the 'United Nations of Students'.

And we are happy to share that this year's MEGgies (MEG12) come from: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Germany, France, Ghana, United Kingdom, Israel/Palestine, Canada, Columbia, Korea, Pakistan, Ruanda, Syria, Taiwan, Tanzania, USA und Zimbabwe. We are looking forward to a yet another profound MEG experience ahead!

### **BREAKING NEWS – MEG 9 wins Best-Thesis-Award**

Congratulations to Sascha Knabe, a MEG 9 student, who has won the Hansjürg-Steinlin-Award 2016 for the best MSc-thesis at the Faculty of Environment and Natural Resources. Sascha worked on “Agency in the Development of Renewable Energy Cooperatives in Germany”. The award will be handed over by the Rector during the official opening ceremony of the academic year on October, 19<sup>th</sup> in the Auditorium Maximum

### **Freiburg scientific theatre going stronger!**



The Freiburg scientific theatre is going places with its creative and innovative performances. Some of the notable events they performed at were - 2015 Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) in Paris on the sidelines of the UNFCCC COP21 with more than 3200 participants,

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LUMES program and the Agroecology Day, at the Lund University, in April 2016. More information can be found at this [link](#).

The Freiburg Scientific Theatre was a spiff off of the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance in March 2012. It is a voluntary initiative consisting of a multicultural team of young experts in environmental governance. The team offers tailored performances for academic conferences, seminars, festivals and company events. Click [here](#) to find out more about their story!

#### MEG 4 Alumni wins Erasmus Prize 2016



Congratulations to Dr. Christina Espinosa, a MEG 4 alumni, who has won the 2016 Erasmus Prize for the Liberal Arts and Sciences! She was awarded the prize for her PhD thesis "Apart from Nature or a Part of Nature? Discourse Analysis of the Politics of Redefining the Relationship between Humans and Nature". For more information please click [here](#).

#### SOE event: Who. Shapes. Complex. Futures?

After months of intensive preparation, the MEG 10 students finally pulled off their Student Organized Event on the 23rd of April 2016, and with huge success!

The Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance was dedicated to the topics of

success factors for change and personal mastery. In the morning panel discussion, local and international change makers gathered at the University of Freiburg to share their experiences and strategies that have been successful for instilling change. This was followed by World Café sessions in which participants could further develop their ideas and questions with the individual panelists. Current and past MEG students were treated with a lively exchange on what are the key factors for change, and how do we explore our own inner resources, drivers and visions.

The second part of the SOE took place in the afternoon in the form of a workshop with a smaller group of participants. The topic for the session was "Introspection" and the facilitator guided participants through a number of group and solo exercises.

All in all, participants found the SOE to be very relevant and many of them could take back valuable insights with them and reflect on how they want to become future change-makers! The MEG10 students have also summarized the results and discussions in a document and hope that it is inspiring for the readers. This document can be downloaded [here](#).

In conclusion, MEG10 would like to thank all speakers, participants and also the MEG Coordination team for making this event a success.



## A refurbished package for the MEG Programme

*Prof. Dr. Heiner Schanz, Program Director*

*“Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è bisogna che tutto cambi – If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.”*

Over the last 10 years, the MEG has grown into a very successful, renowned program, as reflected in the feedback of many MEG alumni, employers and friends. Still, at the same time, the world around MEG has changed, and so have the students' and lecturers' expectations. Consequently, and in line with the quotation from Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's famous novel *'The Leopard'* that chronicles the changes in society in Sicily during the Italian unification in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was time to think about changes of the MEG program so that its undoubted strengths will further grow.

Governance is at the core of the MEG program and our everyday action. In the effort to improve our program, we gathered in late spring this year and organized a participatory process for the future of MEG. Discussions within the current MEG student generations circled mainly around the future of the 'Student Organized Event' (alumni will know why...) and a better preparation for the intensive thesis research, next to the call for a more intensive training in scientific writing skills and the need for more elective modules. Building on the outcomes of the students' Doodle survey on the future of the SOE-module conducted by student representatives, students' feedback from previous generations, intensive discussions within teams and larger forums with the MEG program committee as well as faculty teams from other programs we have decided upon the following approach

and changes to address the critiques and suggestions provided so far:

- There will be a new core module “Governance Research and Skills” replacing the former elective module “Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning (KMOL)”. That means that there will be an in-depth focus on research skills right from the first semester. The new module will cover areas such as introduction into governance research methods and the much desired skill of scientific paper writing. Also more procedural governance skills, such as facilitation, will be moved from the old KMOL elective into this new core module.
- The remaining, always excellently evaluated “Change Management”-part of the KMOL module (taught by Heiko Roehl), will now be integrated into the “Global Societal Changes” (GSC) module (taught by Martin Adelman, Executive Manager of the Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute, and Peter Poschen from ILO). The “Frankfurt Excursion” (with visits to development organizations such as GIZ, KfW etc.) will be removed from the GSC module. But that's not bad, as indicated in the next bullet-point.
- At the end of the first semester, there will be a new core module “Global Environmental Politics” (GEP). This module will start with an introduction into GEP theories followed by excursions to Frankfurt and Geneva (yes, that one still exists since more than ten years on invitation of various international environmental organizations in the “Green Capital of the World”...). Finally, this module will contain a session on the requirements of a first research paper on a self-selected topic related to global environmental politics.
- Considering the student survey results, the most discussed (and love-hate)

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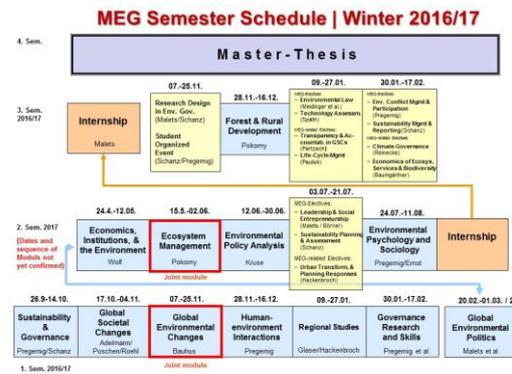
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“Student Organized Event” module, will now be offered as an elective in a time slot at the beginning of third semester.

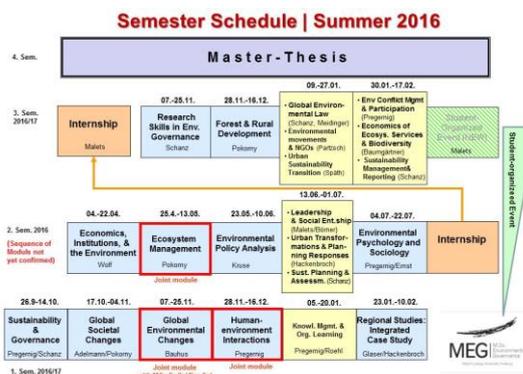
- Furthermore, the “Research Skills”-module offered previously as a mandatory core module in the third semester will now be morphed into an elective module called “Research Design” to deepen the knowledge on methods and designing of research. This will be an opportunity for the students who don’t have research background to learn these skills and also for the students, who already have the necessary research skills to attend other electives or even extend their internship period.
- Finally, given the opportunities of a second chair group assigned to the MEG-program (Michael Pregernig’s Sustainability Governance group) and the changes in the set of lecturers, new electives have been developed and their number has been extended. In the future, there will also be more opportunities to choose electives from other programs at the University of Freiburg (and abroad). As regards MEG electives in a narrower sense, there will be “standard elective” modules such as “Sustainability Planning and Assessments” and “Environmental Conflict Management and Participation”, “Sustainability Management and Reporting”, “Environmental Law”, etc. and somewhat more flexible ones depending on the availability of lecturers such as “Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship”, “Environmental Movements and NGOs” etc.

any case, students from MEG11 (and previous) generation will finalize their studies according to the old curriculum, thus being guardians of the tradition. As Don Fabrizio Salina, one of the main characters in ‘The Leopard’ expresses it: “This isn’t the end of anything. It’s the beginning of everything!”

**New MEG Plan**



**Old MEG Plan**



**A personal reflection on COY 11**

**Fostering Youth Environmental Leadership at an Early Stage**

Octávio de Araújo, MEG11 Timor-Lester

Being part of history in the making was definitely one of the highlights from last year’s trip to Paris with fellow MEG 11 students for



the 11th Conference of Youth (COY 11). Like every other participant, we didn't let the horrendous November 13th terror attack stop us from taking part in the event. Although we only managed to participate in the last day of the conference, the experience was extraordinary as we blended in with youths from different ages, nationalities, ethnicities, and academic backgrounds to fill the air with enthusiasm and passion to fight against anthropogenic climate change. Therefore, I'd like to share my reflection of the event by pointing out that COY has successfully created a platform for youths to channel information and generate innovative ideas which can stimulate leadership roles in environmental governance.

Under the coordination of French student network and the International Youth Climate Movement (IYCM), COY 11 has successfully gathered 4000 young environmentalists from 175 countries over three days to take part in its numerous conferences and workshops activities. As I made my way through the registration desk in Parc des Expositions of Villepinte with my fellow MEGgies, I was amazed with the variety of programs scheduled for that day, from plenary lecture to small group discussion and performance arts, to mention a few. The intensity of activities in the room generated background noise that resonated the energetic youthful spirit and the diversity within that space. It is proof that many

young people are also at the forefront fighting anthropogenic climate change. After attending some presentations and performances, I realized how powerful this event is for sharing information, exchanging ideas, expressing solidarity and overall networking with like-minded individuals.

As an educational tool for youths in the topic of climate change, COY has the potential to enhance youths' leadership role in environmental governance. The event provides opportunities for organizers, speakers and attendees to reflect on a leading role that each one can play in tackling climate change issues be it in their campus community, neighborhood, city, country or region. The inspiring story on reducing plastic bag waste by a group of students from Green School Bali and a talk on clean nuclear energy by an American scientist exemplify some leading youth initiatives around the globe representing the voice of a quarter of the world population.

Thanks to the pioneer youth organizations that launched the first COY in Montreal, 2005, many achievements have been made through the established youth environmental governance at national, regional, and worldwide level. For COY11, they have come together to form a working group that produced a youth manifesto and delivered it to the COP21 Presidency. Obviously having the manifesto delivered to the COP presidency is not the end of the journey for the movement but rather a major leap in its development. There are still more tasks to be done if we want to make sure our voices are heard and our concerns are taken into consideration in the climate negotiations and actions. Hopefully with its expansion, this youth network platform will continue to enhance cooperation with principal decision makers

and at the same time prepare potential future environmental leaders early on.

As we returned from Paris that week, I felt overwhelmed with some valuable lessons. They truly guided me in the search for a leading role in the environmental field which I started, when I embarked my journey as a MEG student. Although having to endure 18 hours on a bus, plus accommodation which can only be compared to a 'battery hen' experience, the trip to Paris was an irreplaceable part of the MEG experience to date, the lessons of which stay with me as we work through our modules.



## Decision-making dilemma

### Addressing Climate Change Increase Poverty and Unemployment?

*Syahrina D. Anggraini, MEG 8*

Early August, I attended a workshop on Green Jobs organized by ILO (International Labour Organisation) and it took me back to the GSC (Global Societal Changes) class by Dr. Peter Poschen. At that time, Dr. Poschen talked about the Green Jobs initiative, definition, and its linkage with climate change. Topic discussed in this workshop have moved beyond the GSC class (naturally, as the class was held four years ago). Although it still talked about green jobs and climate change, they now narrowed it down to study on country

case, what would be the impact of a country's climate policy on labor market. The study will be conducted in several countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

To conduct the study, the ILO team collaborates with IGES (Institute for Global Environmental Strategy) and the country's ILO office. They developed a simulation model with inputs of various economic and policy parameters that can project future labor market. Rather than focusing on technical results of the model, I would focus on one of the possible result of the projection, one that will most likely happen if leaders and decision makers do not make careful decisions.

The model ILO developed is not completed yet, so at the moment they gathered stakeholders that have, to some extent, conducted similar studies about climate change impact. Now, some of you might know that parties to the UNFCCC have submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) prior to COP21 last year, including Indonesia. When Indonesia developed their INDC, a group of scientists from universities were asked to develop and run a model that can estimate future CO<sub>2</sub> emissions with inputs of various economic and statistical parameters. In addition, the scientists were also asked to develop models to estimate the impact of the country's climate policy on SDG goals, including poverty alleviation.

The head of the scientist group presented preliminary result of the climate change – poverty model on the workshop - and said -it is not a final one as policy makers have not yet reached agreement on some figures and directions. However, one of interesting possible future envisioned is that **addressing climate change may lead to higher poverty rate**. At first it was quite shocking for me. Throughout my career and study on climate



change, I always believed that addressing climate change will lead to a better quality of life, improved livelihood, and increased rate of survival for the vulnerable. And now this model predicts the opposite. Why? How can it be possible?

Not to be completely ignorant to the technicalities of the model, I acknowledge that the model has limitations. It is a dynamic model and there are many assumptions and parameters used there, so the negative result on employment and poverty may also be influenced by some other factors. Still, I believe decision-making is the key to any outcome.

Countries have political commitments. They want other countries, and their citizens, to take their effort in combating climate change seriously so they put focus on the issue and sometimes as a consequence, put other issues aside. Here is an example to illustrate it. Say a country has a five-year development plan with a budget of USD 100 billions, and they have divided the budget for allocations on typical state budget (infrastructure, defense, education, etc). During the third year, climate change issue suddenly caught policymakers' attention and they agree that more effort, and budget, has to be channeled into addressing it. Where would the budget come from? Most likely they tag another development program having climate change related components (such as forest rehabilitation that may contribute to mitigation and adaptation) so that they are seen to have achieved some result. Another option is to reallocate the budgets, most possibly on other development related programs, including poverty alleviation. And unless the budget reallocation is compensated, the sectors experiencing it will probably have less improvement than it ought to have achieved.

Now, we have to be cautious here. Addressing climate change may result in poverty alleviation and improved livelihood. It has also been highlighted in many of the UNFCCC instrument that combating climate change should contribute to sustainable development. However, such objective/goals need processes that may take years or even decades to realize, and along the way the lives of people are affected.

When the renewable-based energy supply and call for reducing fossil fuel-based supply is extensively endorsed, without fully preparing the infrastructure and market for the renewable-based energy as well as substitute/alternative for the fossil fuel-based industry, the jobs of millions of people come to stake, not only those directly related to the fossil fuel-based industry but also the induced jobs created by the industry. Furthermore, the decrease in the purchase power of the population may lead to slower trade domestically, etc., causing a ripple effect. Perhaps those of you with fluency in economy can better understand and explain this cause-effect process. So, with all good intentions to preserve and better the environment, address climate change goals, we might end up solving one problem but worsening others or creating new ones.

In addition, addressing climate change is often faced by conflicting interest. There are times when even sectors with similar goal to reduce GHG emissions argued over what measures to take, such as the choice between preserving forest or developing geothermal in a forested land. Both choices lead to reduction of GHG emission so with that as a goal both sectors are correct. However, which measure should be implemented?

Being MEG, we are all familiar with the "it depends" answer to almost every question☺. So, I suppose when we are contributing to

decision making in addressing climate change, we also need to remember the “it depends” answer. What is at stake? Do we want to pursue the climate change objective and sacrifice others? Do we want to continue working to find a relatively balance option, regardless of time limitation?

In the case of the two possible measures above, the answer would probably depend on how much value the forest have (biodiversity, water supply, etc.) against clean energy and more jobs creation, and whether there are any alternative renewable energy sources to be developed in the area without disturbing too much of the forest, etc.

## Evolving transformational leadership

### A cornerstone for sustainable forest management

*Ratchada Arpornsilp (Tarn), MEG7*

When you were asked about your ideal leader, who were you picturing in mind? Do you reckon yourself the current and future leader in the environmental governance field which you are embarking on in MEG? I am sure most MEG students do, particularly with full inspiration and empowerment from the Freiburg Forum on Environmental Governance 2016 through the examination of success factors for change and personal mastery. With that note, I congratulate and salute the MEG10 generation on putting together multi-dimensional perspectives and processes to navigate social change.

So, I took this opportunity to introspect by asking myself what my vision for the future was during the time in MEG and whether I am set on that pathway. Now my next reflection questions were - even if I am aware of my vision and I assert my best effort in

approaching it, am I already a change maker? More importantly, how do I create or lead broader social change? What kind of leadership qualities are required to foster change that is positive, optimal and sustainable to all, including our environment? The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC), my affiliate organization, has also become more critical, questioning ourselves about the impacts on the community forestry arena despite of our interventions across various scales. We realized that leadership gap could pose a key barrier to prevent the favorable change.

The Leadership Camp for Sustainable Forest is our latest initiative to groom potential future leaders with the motive to work with and support local communities in realizing sustainably managed forests, the SDG15. The setting of Karen indigenous community in the North of Thailand (for which its leader, Mr. Preecha Siri, was awarded UN Forest Hero in 2013) is selected as the experiential learning ground for these future leaders. Mr. Siri's leadership journey of how he managed to mobilize and consolidate the community members to keep their identity and ways of sustainable living intact while simultaneously mastering the adaptive actions to the outside forces and industrialization is remarkable. In this case, leadership explicitly plays out as the success factor that makes this community different from other Karen communities.



What exactly are the leadership characteristics that Mr. Preecha possesses to successfully transform the forest and community towards sustainable outcomes? His involvement with the community forest management began 40 years ago along with few members discussing the issues and visions for village development in the face of external claims over their customary lands. Motivation and dedication to the community works are rooted in his consciousness, determination and common sense to contribute and support the community. He respected people's different talents and interests on an equal footing, recognizing the value of diversity nevertheless he ensured all members shared a common long-term vision. He believes and works in partnerships and joint collaboration with various organizations and individuals without any getting any personal recognition for his work.

Going through the literature, we will find his characteristics are strongly associated with transformational leadership, widely acknowledged as those of a leader of change. This trait of leaders are not based on power and control but closely connected and inspired by a clear set of the core inner values and passion that they hold on to and communicate regularly to others. They draw on and affect others' integrity and morality, transcending short-term personal goals and attracting higher intrinsic needs of self-satisfaction in seeking socially responsible outcomes and well-being. Most importantly, they lead by being role models to exert their beliefs and build trust from others.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, leaders are those who are eager to induce and drive change. However, different societies at various points in time cultivate and

embrace different traits of leaders. I highly encourage those from ASEAN who would like to explore their leadership qualities for sustainable development to look into the IATSS Forum Leadership Training Programme for Young Professionals in ASEAN countries. It is organized twice annually in Japan with full financial support. There you will be able to discover your leadership characteristics and approach that can mobilize the group's power in support to achieve a common vision or goal.



For more information, visit [www.iatssforum.jp/en/](http://www.iatssforum.jp/en/)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.transformationalleadership.net](http://www.transformationalleadership.net)

## SOE - a bittersweet experience

*Naomin Tan, MEG10*

Every group starts planning the SOE feeling excited, empowered and determined to make it one of the most memorable events in the MEG program. The MEG10s were no different. We had ambitious goals right from the beginning, especially as it was around the 10th anniversary of MEG program. For that, we sat together in countless plenaries, worked in smaller discussion groups, debated on the theme, speakers, timing, and everything else you can think of in preparation for the event. We even scraped many ideas which we worked on for months, only realizing in the end that it was either way too ambitious or not feasible at all.

Our plans therefore changed from a four-day event to a one-day event, from trying to involve as many stakeholders as possible to keeping it small within Freiburg, from embracing all dimensions of Environmental Governance and finally, narrowing it down to the topic - how one can effect change in the complex world we are living in? These constant changes prove that the SOE was not simply a one-day event. For all of us, it was a long process of preparation which took more than a year, and one that tested a lot of nerves and patience. Along the way there were arguments, some discontentment, but more importantly also successes in making breakthroughs during our decision making processes.

What the SOE came out to be was a product of having to work with 35 other students, each with different expectations and working styles. It was a result of all our sweat and tears, not knowing if it will even take place at one point of time. And then, being able to band together

at the end understanding that we all had one common mission despite our disagreements: to make the program a successful and memorable one. It was having to ignore the small petty differences we had in terms of character, personal objectives and time commitment in order to communicate to each other constructively and churning a productive workflow that accommodated everyone's needs.

The SOE was hence definitely one of the most challenging aspects of my time in the MEG program. However, given that it was tedious and at times a nerve wrecking process, there were valuable lessons learned throughout the course of the organization. The biggest takeaway for me was that every individual needs to be able to compromise and learn how to give and take. As long as we can all agree on a single ultimate goal, the process was one whereby we could learn to make mistakes together, suffer from consequences together, but more importantly enjoy the fruits of success together. I believe such scenarios are not uncommon in larger organizations where many of us may eventually end up working. The SOE can therefore, be perceived as an insight to what would greet us in the future when we begin working alongside colleagues with various nationalities, cultural background and perhaps even a different understanding of what's good and bad.

This has been an interesting journey which I will take away with me even after graduating from MEG. I can only urge future MEGgies to enjoy the process along the way and keeping it in mind that in the end we all do share a similar goal of trying to make the world a better place (I hope).

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## Thesis Café

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*Niklas Mischkowski, MEG10*

After three semesters and a demanding and inspiring SOE everybody seemed to have vanished from the faculty's surface. Not too long after, though, fellow students started popping up from the unknown depths of retreat - and we were all back to the same question: How to properly ferment vege... eh, wrong text, I mean: HOW THE HECK DO I GO ABOUT THIS THESIS? Well, some had the answer already in mind before starting their studies, others thought they did and reconsidered, some of us were tempted to go new ways, and again others were lost in translation. Somewhere at that point a few remembered that such a thing as a thesis café was mentioned to us during the last semester. A handful of us, not willing to wait for this myth-building to be uncovered as truth materializing some day, thought about meeting program privately. As if connected by heart and soul, in parallel, Michael organized the first session and - that's how it all started.

So what is this about: The thesis café is an offer by the heads of the program to come together in an informal setting to share and discuss your ideas, questions, and experiences regarding how to go through the process of developing, carrying out, and writing a scientific research piece. The first session dealt with the question of how we want to set up the sessions (small groups with similar issues, all together, etc.) and a chronological list of the steps and themes we figured to be of interest, likely to and should be covered. The following sessions were characterized by a quick check about everyone's state of work, and then going into one of the themes, getting some input from Michael's side and further discussing whatever needs to be discussed. It is an offer,

and not everybody believed the sessions to be useful. As a result, the group size was comfortable. In order to start this format, I believe it is really crucial to take time to discuss and decide on how to structure it. As people will never have the same pressing issues, you should know whether and how the format makes sense to you. And as far as I can see, considering the diffusion of ideas in mind, there are privately organized thesis cafés taking place in parallel. So in one or the other way I think it will help you to not stay alone in Plato's cave...the library, your student room, etc.

## Together we stand divided we fall - Team-building 2016

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*Narte-Adjoka Narteyr, MEG11*

All too soon the holiday period ended; the sudden realization hit me as I descended the Platform 7 escalator towards Freiburg Hauptbahnhof to meet the other MEG 11s for our train ride to Himmelreich for the much anticipated "Team building weekend" on the 4th and 5th January 2016. It was a great opportunity to reunite after the Yuletide and New Year holidays which MEGgies had celebrated from all corners of the globe.

After an exciting/ fun-filled 15-minute hike from the Himmelreich train station, we arrived at the Studienhaus Wiesneck to a warm welcome of tea, coffee and biscuits; whilst the manager briefed us on the history and various services offered by the Studienhaus.

Esther outlined the activities we would engage in during the upcoming two days. We right away witnessed the importance of feedback (a subject we would later on discuss) and enjoyed its benefits with a change in tradition since our team building "weekend" was on a

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weekday due to the complaints from earlier generations on the inconveniences of having it on a weekend.

The first activity of the day was to make a poster showing what the MEG program means to us, where we saw ourselves currently and our idea of the future. We were divided into groups which came up with creative posters of diverse themes; from a MEG 11 Football team and their tactics sheet to defeat the opponent (unsustainability FC), to one of an imaginary metropolis being saved from the fiery wrath of a monster. Interestingly, we all had a keen awareness of our goals and position, and it was useful to have that insight from other MEGgies too.

The first day went by quite quickly; after discussing some roles in team work i.e. facilitation and other topics, we bonded over a couple of exciting games like the balloon rail and forming a square with a rope with members blindfolded. The lesson of the day was the importance of team work, trust and learning to rely on each other for successful results. We ended the day's session with a delightful dinner and a more relaxed socialization time with card games and drinks.

Bright and early on the second day, we had some more discussions in the seminar room and got down to the day's activities. Building on the previous day's experience and skills gained from bonding, we had to navigate through an obstacle course backwards. With some creative improvisation and team work, both teams managed to maneuver the course in record time to everyone's surprise. In the end, we had a chance to give anonymous compliments to other MEGgies.

The team building weekend was a priceless experience and much-needed capacity building session to equip us with the necessary skills to face the Student Organized

Event which previous generations kept warning us about.

The entire team is grateful to Ms. Muschelknautz and all administrative staff of the MEG program who facilitated the organization of the trip and on everyone's behalf I feel in 2017 we would give Freiburg an SOE event to remember for years to come.

## Summer vacation has arrived and finally relaxing time, yay! Err...actually no!

*Ellen Oliveira, MEG11*

For some of us this vacation has a bigger meaning. This is the time when some of us will take a step further in their careers. After reading so many articles, reflecting about abstract ideas/theories and thinking how they could possibly be applied in real life, here is the chance: The most anticipated environment related "internship"!

To begin with, it was not that easy to get a position. Many times those questions were heard between our peers: "Did you find an internship?"; "And" Oh my god, it is getting close, no institution answered my application yet!". Seriously, I do believe that I speak for all of us - Germans and foreigners. Essays are extremely easy compared to the task of finding a job position in this capitalist globalized world. Unfortunately, some didn't succeed this summer and will try during the next one, which is also extremely important! We are the generation that has no time to lose. We are here to develop the skills that we believe are important. If the actual opportunities don't meet our life goals, why should we insist?

Despite the big increase of environmental movements since the 70's, the role and

importance of the future environmental leadership as it seems to be, unfortunately, still under construction. Relying on this scenario, should we wait for the opportunities to come knocking on our doors or inbox these days ☺ or should we push and show the world, how necessary we are? How can our life goals meet and help other's expectations and build a better world together?

Either option brings to my mind the importance of a stable and diverse network. Through our daily speech, the relationships we build with our classmates, active listening and facing new experiences. When something is done with passion, everyone can easily recognize. Through recognition many doors are opened in our life.

People in general bring us opportunities, put us in contact with new realities and sometimes even by chance give us that hint you know, that simple word ... that changes the whole future.

Have you ever heard about the dreamers who aim to build a better world? Yes, that's us. And we are ready to take that leap.

Los geht's!

## Farewell from Julia!

*Julia Leiendecker, MEG Coordinator*

When on September 30th my time as MEG Coordinator is coming to an end, I will be looking back on two successful years of cooperation, shared achievements and encounters with many interesting people.



It seems like yesterday, that I first made my way through the Herderbau nearly getting lost (like everyone else) on the lookout for my first

meeting with Michael Pregernig. Right from the beginning, I enjoyed the atmosphere in the MEG team: a very pragmatic and high quality approach which makes the MEG modules run so smooth. My introduction to the job was also very smooth, especially since I had the pleasure of working with my predecessor Seirra Roemmermann (a MEG 2) for a month as she did a great job introducing me to a well-organized coordination system.

My first highlight was welcoming the MEG 10 generation in September 2014 and having the pleasure of watching a group of very interesting individuals become professional MEGs over the next few months. The same happened a year later again with the MEG 11 group. I had the privilege of doing two excursions with both generations – to the KfW and GIZ in Frankfurt, and to the UN, environment network and the IUCN in Geneva - thus enjoyed getting to know the group and the background of each student better, seeing them emerge as a group. These excursions were also among my biggest highlights in terms of organization. I personally enjoyed the program and the diversity of speakers and perspectives presented.

Yet another highlight was the Student Organized Events, especially the one presented by MEG 9. It was exciting to see this group put on such an excellent performance.

The greatest pleasure and sense of achievement I take with me is that I was able to be of service for students who take part in a Master program I would have loved to do myself. It was an honor to accompany young future professionals and I am looking forward to seeing many of you take on the task of environmental leadership.

As my time as MEG Coordinator ends, I am moving on to an equally exciting job, taking

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care of our third child. It leaves me to say GOODBYE to a great team and all future environmental leaders with “*one auspicious, and one dropping eye*”!

## Welcome of Barbara

*Barbara Degenhart, MEG Coordinator*

By the beginning of October 2016, I will start my work as Module Coordinator of MEG and as Project Coordinator of KERNiG at the Chair of Environmental Governance.



When I first read about MEG I thought it fit me like a glove. I studied Geo- and Atmosphere Sciences (BSc.) and did my Master on Global Change and Regional Sustainability at the University of Innsbruck (Austria). With my internships at the Austrian Development Agency and the Environmental Umbrella Organization in Vienna I got first working experiences during my studies. In my master thesis I was working on the multifunctionality of urban gardening in San Miguel de Tucumán (North-Western Argentina). I have been a university assistant at the Chair of Development Studies in Geography and Cultural Geography at the University of Bayreuth (Germany) since 2012. At the moment, I am finishing my dissertation at the Bayreuth International Graduate School for African Studies. In my dissertation project I work on changing food consumption practices in Northern Ethiopia.

Since the first meeting with Heiner Schanz and Michael Pregernig I have enjoyed the professional and friendly atmosphere within MEG. I felt part of the team already at the first moment. Julia and Markus introduced me with

their friendly and open nature to the daily business.

I am looking forward to working with the MEG team and to accompanying the current and future MEG generations. I wish the MEG 12 generation a good start and the MEG 11 success for the progress and finalization of their studies.

**We hope that you enjoyed reading this year's newsletter and are inspired by what past and current MEGgies have achieved. Till next time!**

*“We don't inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”*

— *David Brower*

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