Report on the Activities

of the

Students for Planetary Health Berlin
(SfPHBerlin)

Summer Term 2018
(04/01/2018 - 09/30/2018)

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About us.

The Students for Planetary Health Berlin (SfPHBerlin) are an interdisciplinary initiative based in Berlin. Through projects and activities we want to promote the vision of Planetary Health and contribute to Planetary Health itself. We connect, exchange and create consciousness.

Active Members.

Oskar Masztalerz (Student of Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin; BSc. in Geography), Henrika Kleineberg-Massuthe (Student of Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin), Kamilla Toewe (Student of Medicine, University of Southampton; BSc. in Geography), Milan Schmidt (Student of Geography, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Johanne Hammelbeck (Student of Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin), Fabia Roth (Student of Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin), Luise Pebbels Busse (Student of Medicine, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin)
**Prolog: Founding Process in the Winter Term 2017/2018.**

After the founding of our initiative in December 2017, we spent our time in the winter term 2017/2018 mainly on self-discovery and organization. Along the principles of inclusive and consensual decision-making and grassroots democracy we worked out our basic structures, principles and objectives and decided on methods how to reach our aims. We got to know ourselves, each other and our group identity and took roots at our home universities and their student councils in Berlin. We educated ourselves about the principles and topics of Planetary Health, exchanged knowledge from our different study subjects and created consciousness in ourselves for the exigent issues of the emerging new discipline that we consider to be about nothing less than life itself.

Thanks to our self-discovery process in the Winter Term 2017/2018, we were able to get started with activities and projects right at the beginning of the Summer Term 2018 and thus had the opportunity to engage ourselves extensively throughout the whole semester. In the following we provide all interested people a brief overview of our activities from April to September 2018.
Kick-Off-Event of the Summer Term 2018: “Planetary Boundaries – Boundaries of our Health?” at Charité Berlin

05/08/2018

As our first official activity of the semester, we invited to our Kick-Off-Event at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. We presented our initiative and its structure, principles and objectives to all interested students from different subjects and universities in Berlin. Under the title “Planetary Boundaries – Boundaries of our Health?” we gave an introduction to Planetary Health and its major principles, issues and actors, lively discussed about interactions between environment and health, and collected questions and topics of particular interest to be discussed throughout the semester.

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SfPHBerlin Regular Meeting

05/16/2018 – 08/08/2018

Throughout the whole semester, our group came together every second week for our regular meeting. With friendly support of the student council of the Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, we could use the university’s facilities for our meetings. On warmer and sunnier days, we met outside and open-air to have a more natural frame for our discussions. At our regular meetings, we exchanged about personal, scientific and organizational topics, discussed recent developments in the field of Planetary Health and planned our upcoming activities.
Workshop “Climate Change & Health Advanced” at the event “Umwelt, Gesundheit – und wir?” (“Environment, Health – and us?”) at Charité Berlin
04/28/2018

Already before our official Kick-Off-Event, we had the opportunity to contribute to the meeting “Umwelt, Gesundheit – und wir?” of the working groups Public Health and European Integration of the German Medical Students’ Association (Bundesvertretung der Medizinstudierenden Deutschlands e.V., bvmd) with our two-hour workshop “Climate Change and Health Advanced”. The participants were Medical students from all over Germany with basic knowledge about the topic, with whom we worked on deepening their understanding about the historical and political dimensions of climate change, its physical processes, its impacts on human health and particularly vulnerable subpopulations and spaces. In our workshop we used various interactive methods to improve its educational effects and the experience of the participants.
Lecture & Discussion “Food for Thought – Nutrition and Health in a Globalized World” by apl. Prof. Dr. med. Sabine Gabrysch MSc PhD at Charité Berlin
05/26/2018

Only some weeks after the start of the semester we had the honor to welcome Sabine Gabrysch for her lecture “Food for Thought” to our group. Gabrysch is Head of the Unit Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the University of Heidelberg and Honorary Professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. During her talk and the subsequent discussion, our group members and all interested other students, who had been warmly invited, were provided insights about the interconnections between nutrition, nutritional health, agriculture and its effects on the environment from an innovative comprehensive perspective.

Planetary Health Annual Meeting 2018 with Emerging Scholars’ Brainstorming Session in Edinburgh, Scotland
05/29/2018 – 05/31/2018

A representative of our group had the opportunity to participate in the Planetary Health Annual Meeting 2018. Thus, the SfPHBerlin got in touch with the Planetary Health Alliance and many other students, scientists and healthcare professionals who contribute with passion to the Planetary Health movement. During the Brainstorming Session side event we also had the unique chance to exchange and connect in person with representatives from other Emerging Scholar Clubs from all over the world that engage in Planetary Health. Our representative could gain deepened knowledge and understanding of the issues and principles of Planetary Health and brought home lots of stories about inspiring encounters and insights into the vision of Planetary Health. Back home, he shared the spirit of the Annual Meeting and the global Planetary Health movement with all of our group members in a dedicated follow-up meeting.
Workshop “Climate Change & Health” at the project day “Klimawandel stoppen – Mission (im)possible?” (“Stop Climate Change – Mission (im)possible?“) at the Droste-Hülshoff-Gymnasium Berlin 06/15/2018

The school-wide project day “Stopping Climate Change – Mission (im)possible?” was organized by students of the high school Droste-Hülshoff-Gymnasium themselves. We are happy that we had the chance to support the students’ engagement with our four-hour workshop on “Climate Change and Health”, that we had organized in cooperation with the Deutsche Allianz Klimawandel & Gesundheit (member of The Global Climate and Health Alliance and the Klima Allianz Deutschland). 17 tenth and eleventh grade students participated in our workshop that covered the historical and political dimensions of climate change, its geographical and climatological basics, and the health topics heat stress, infectious diseases, malnutrition and vulnerable groups. Through interactive methods the students were empowered to gain knowledge and insights themselves with the help of the provided material and our mentoring. The workshop ended with a lively discussion among the students about the political implications of climate change and its health effects.

Lectures & Plenary Discussion “Morbus Kohle – selbstgemachte Gefahr für Klima und Gesundheit” (“Morbus Coal – Self-made Danger for Climate and Health”) at Charité Berlin 07/03/2018

Shortly after the first meeting of the Commission on Growth, Structural Transformation and Employment (Kommission für Wachstum, Strukturwandel und Beschäftigung, nickname “Coal Commission”) of the German Federal Government, whose mandate is to negotiate the future of coal extraction and power generation in Germany, we organized
the Lecture and Plenary Discussion “Morbus Coal” together with the students’ initiative Kritische Mediziner*innen Berlin. In a lecture hall of the Charité Berlin, several speakers shared their insights to the public audience: about “Morbus Coal and Planetary Health” (Oskar Masztalerz, SfPHBerlin), “Coal Power in Germany” (Arne Fellermann, German Federation for the Environment and Nature Conservation [Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, BUND]) and “Activism against Coal” (Sonne, Wolke und Blume, grass-roots initiative Ende Gelände). The event including the fruitful and controversial panel discussion with the audience was moderated by Henrika Kleineberg-Massuthe (SfPHBerlin) and Anna Kerkmann (Kritische Mediziner*innen Berlin).
Workshop “From Planetary Boundaries to Planetary Health” at the interdisciplinary students’ conference “Generation Nachhaltigkeit?!” (“Generation Sustainability?!”) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

07/28/2018

Organized as a Symposium of the Humboldt-Universitäts-Gesellschaft by students of multiple disciplines from Berlin, the conference “Generation Nachhaltigkeit?!” provided an innovative framework for various workshops, discussions, projects and other activities that concerned about our path towards sustainability. We contributed to the program with our three-hour workshop “From Planetary Boundaries to Planetary Health”. Through innovative scenario-based teaching methods the participating students from all over Germany were empowered to explore the meaning of the Planetary Boundaries concept for the health of Planet Earth and for the health of Human civilization. The participants made use of the opportunity to include artistic elements in the presentation of their working results. The main focus of the workshop was to crystallize the manifold interconnections and the meaning of the interconnectedness of all planetary and human health aspects. In the end of the workshop the political, philosophical and spiritual implications of the gained insights were discussed in plenary.
Workshop “Climate Change and Health” at the “Klimacamp im Leipziger Land” (“Climate Camp Leipzig”) in Pödelwitz, Saxonia 07/31/2018

“System Change not Climate Change” was the motto of the first Climate Camp Leipzig that successfully took place in the end of July 2018. Only a few hundred meters away from the edge of the open-cast lignite mine “Vereinigtes Schleenheim” more than 1000 climate activists were hosted in their streets and gardens by the remaining inhabitants of the small village Pödelwitz who are in danger to be evicted in favour of an extension of the coal mine area. Through their presence and various forms of peaceful protest the activists sent an important signal to the society and political decision-makers in the region and throughout Germany. For more than a week they created a colorful cosmos with a vibrant grassroots atmosphere providing space for grounding, unfolding and exploration. The SfPHBerlin were very happy to contribute to the manifold program with their three-hour workshop “Climate Change and Health”. More than 30 activists with various backgrounds were provided the opportunity to gain knowledge about the climatological aspects of global warming, its impacts on human health and particularly vulnerable spaces and subpopulations. Facing the edge of the coal mine not far away and feeling themselves this time’s heatwave’s temperatures of more than 36 degrees in the shadow during the workshop, the participants seriously discussed on climate justice in the health context by the end of the session.
Contribution to the Position Paper of the “Youth Cluster” within the Development Process of the new Global Health Strategy of the German Federal Government

August 2018

In the second half of 2019, the German Federal Government wants to approve its new Global Health Strategy with the aim to actualize the objectives of the German engagement and to react to new challenges. Non-governmental actors were given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the new strategy through position papers elaborated within a framework of the five clusters “Science”, “Economy”, “Think Tanks”, “Civil Society” and “Youth”. The development process of the position paper of the “Youth Cluster” was coordinated by the German Medical Students’ Association (Bundesvertretung der Medizinstudierenden Deutschlands e.V., bvmd). The SfPHBerlin contributed significantly to the position paper of the “Youth Cluster” through the introduction of Planetary Health as one of three major topics and the drafting of the concerning section. The final position paper of the “Youth Cluster” including our section on Planetary Health was presented to the public at an exchange event, transmitted to the government and is publicly available (https://www.bvmd.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Projekte/Gandi/Strategiepapier_Globale_Gesundheit-Position_der_Jugend.pdf)

However until now it remains unclear to what extent the German Federal Government will consider the positions of the non-governmental actors in the new Global Health Strategy. The possibility of submitting position papers admittedly is a step towards more inclusive decision-making, albeit the development process itself (e.g. the apparently arbitrary choice of the coordinating entities of the different clusters) remains highly intransparent. Hence the SfPHBerlin only commit themselves to the section on Planetary Health in the “Youth Cluster” position paper and neither to the position paper as a whole nor to the final Global Health Strategy of the German Federal Government.

We are surprised of how many projects in how many different settings we were able to run with our small but very motivated group during the last semester. We managed to empower students from various disciplines, high school students, environmental activists and interested people from civil society to tackle the issues of Planetary Health.

We are convinced that our inclusive decision-making, our hierarchy-less and interdisciplinary organizational structure and our cooperation and connection with other initiatives along with our positive and comprehensive approach to Planetary Health provided the very basis for the fruitful implementation of our projects and thus we will go on to hold up these principles during the next semester.

We look forward to further exchanging with the Planetary Health Alliance and other Planetary Health initiatives in Berlin and around the world, have already scheduled three further workshops in the next weeks and will go on to promote Planetary Health with our spirits, heads and hearts.

Berlin, 10/16/2018.