

# Fellow Report: Senior Reserch Stay at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver



**Submitted by:**

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## Senior Research Stay at the UBC

In 2016, I got the chance to visit the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada as a visiting scholar. My aims were to learn more about its programs related to sustainability and educational research and to create cooperation with researchers in the fields of sustainability, Social Network Analysis, educational research and public policy. In the following, this report summarizes some major results of my research stay.

As Social Network Analysis belongs to my main research fields, I was very happy to get the chance to meet David Tindall and to discuss the way social networks influence the implementation, operationalization and diffusion of sustainability in different areas. Since David Tindall has been mainly interested in sustainability movements and sustainability policy in Canada, we found many parallels in our research concerning the way, social movements shape the sustainability agenda in different countries, the power of social relations in global environmental governance and the diffusion of sustainability innovations.

With respect to the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) we could compare research results on the way these conventions are realized in Canada, Germany and on a global level. These conventions have been established in order to

tackle the global challenges of the twenty-first century concerning the loss of biodiversity and climate change. At the Freie Universität Berlin I head a DFG project in which we analyze the role and influence of different actors in this convention



**Picture 1: UBC's rose garden close to the department of sociology**

by using empirical techniques of Social Network Analysis, so that the research project could benefit from the insights gained at the UBC in this area.

In addition, Moura Quayle, university professor and director at the Sauder School of Business presented some aspects of the university's sustainability strategy and its programs to strengthen sustainability at the UBC and Canada in general. For example, the newly established Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs has integrated sustainability as an integral part of its curriculum. The main aim of this master is to educate students to become future leaders with ethical responsibilities and the skills required to develop innovative policy solutions in the modern world. I further discussed the way teaching addresses Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with Quayle's colleague Anne Wittman.

I further had the chance to speak about sustainability and green growth in global political economy, innovation research and public policy with Kurt Huebner, Jean Monnet Professor for European Integration and Global Political Economy, Interim Director of the Institute for European Studies and professor of political science at the UBC.

I met with Alison Taylor at the Faculty of Education to compare the way, vocational training is realized in Canada and in Germany. Together with Fei Wang, Faculty of Education, I compared the education systems in Canada and in Germany. We explored different cooperation opportunities concerning, for instance, joint proposals for research grants in the areas of educational research and educational policy.

Robert VanWynsberghe of the Faculty of Education gave me an introduction into the newly established Master program in Educational Studies – Education for Sustainability. This program has been created at the UBC to offer students the chance to engage in real-world projects concerning Education for Sustainable Development. Participants of this Master program will work in close cooperation with the government, civil society actors, city staff and other partners and tie research and teaching to the community in order to develop solutions with respect to sustainable development.

Moreover, Pierre Walter, also professor at the Faculty of Education, gave me insights into his research on education for sustainability, sustainable tourism and sustainable consumption.

Although Susan Gerofsky was in Berlin while I was in Vancouver, her team at the Faculty of Education explained me the way, Education for Sustainable Development is realized at the UBC. They took me around the Orchard Garden, the UBC Farm and the Roots On The Roof – a student initiative or UBC club that manages a rooftop garden at the campus and grows its own food. The aim of this initiative is to raise awareness concerning student and community

capacity around food. The food is sold at low shared prices at special UBC markets. , In order to get an impression of how Education for Sustainable Development is taught at the UBC we visited the Orchard Garden while Sandra Scott’s teacher education class was there.

In this context, I further explored how the concepts of vibrant and sustainability communities are realized in Canada. Vibrant and sustainability communities are collective impact programs which support the establishment of social relations and foster the extension of partnerships between actors with different affiliations in order to jointly tackle societal or environmental problems, to reduce poverty and to broaden perspectives through cooperation. One aim



**Picture 2: Entry, Roots on the Roof, a student initiative at the University of British Columbia**

of this program is to connect cities and communities from all across Canada in order to promote sustainability and to reduce poverty and inequalities. The program shows many parallels to the initiatives of “educational landscapes” in Germany, which seek to foster cooperation between actors from formal and non-formal education in order to support individual learning biographies and to tackle inequalities. As I head a research project on educational landscapes (granted by the Mercator Foundation) at my department at the Freie Universität Berlin, understanding the concepts of vibrant and sustainability communities was also interesting for my own research.





**Picture 2: Students introducing other students to the student initiative Roots on the Roof.**

Overall, the scholarship provided by the German Academic Exchange Service offered me the opportunity to establish and to strengthen research networks and cooperation with UBC scholars in the fields of sustainability, Social Network Analysis, educational research and public policy. This will provide a basis for further collaboration. Results of this cooperation considering the organization of joint conferences, sessions for summer schools or publications are being planned.



**Picture 4: Beach right next to my office at UBC**