

Final Report: Senior Research Stay at the University of British Columbia

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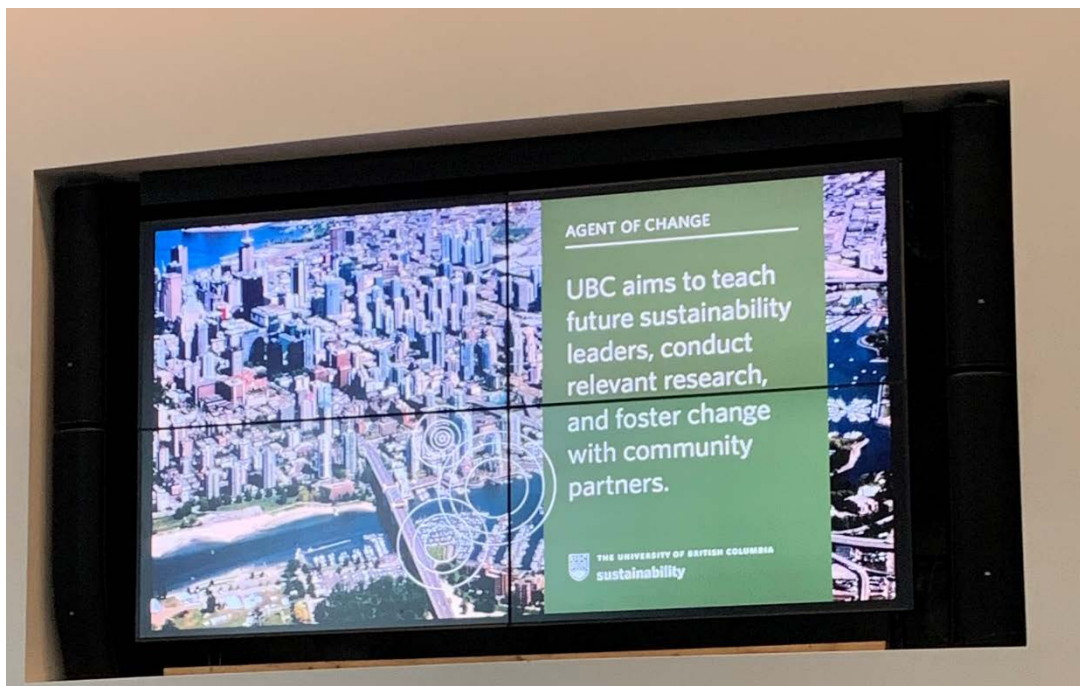
Environmental Policy Research Centre -FFU

October 4 – October 20, 2019

In October 2019, I enjoyed a 17 days research stay at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The purpose of my visit was to strengthen cooperation with the UBC and to explore opportunities for further collaboration in research and eventually joint organisation of workshops, possibly also in the context of the FU Berlin annual Spring Campus Conference. The steps made during my visit can be summarised under the keywords: **explore; connect, discuss and analyse; share and transfer, cooperate.**

Explore the new environment: Working and making research in a sustainable environment

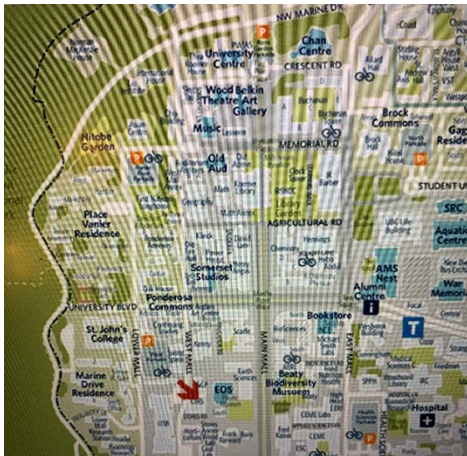
Sustainability in teaching and research as well as in campus and building management is a notable characteristic of the UBC. It is not without reason that the concept of the ecological footprint was developed here. Sustainability can be experienced everywhere on campus and is a guiding principle in many institutions. For example, in the UBC Sustainability Initiative, which was launched in 2010, or the Student Initiative for Sustainability. The UBC considers itself an agent of change and aims “to teach future sustainability leaders, conduct relevant research and foster change with community partners”.



Communication in the CIRS building

I made an excursion in the CIRS (Center for interactive research in sustainability). This provided a congenial environment as it aims to foster sustainable futures through integrated research and learning about the linkages among human, technological and natural systems, and to support

decision making from local to global scales and I took the opportunity to talk with students and academic staff.



Looking for the CIRS

The CIRS building, a “living laboratory” that will help to advance research and innovation on global sustainability challenges is UBC’s first LEED Platinum certified building,



On the campus, the visibility of sustainability in architecture is impressive and there is a widespread use of wood. One of the most notable buildings is the "UBC Brock Commons Tallwood House" also hosting a student dormitory as well as academic and operative areas which has been constructed using innovative solid wood. The timber industry dominates in British Columbia. The densely wooded province exports around 10 billion euros worth of timber products every year. It is not surprising that the building material has a long tradition in the region, but somehow it surprised me what kind innovation degree the construction industry has reached. With this pilot project, UBC wants to "put itself at the forefront of the revival of timber construction". The use of wood as a renewable material that stores carbon demonstrates UBC's commitment to sustainability.

Sustainability is also a key prerequisite of all construction materials. This was evident in all building and institutes I visited. They were among others: the IES -Institute for European Studies in the Choi Building (Kurt Hübner), the CIRS (Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability, Sara Muir); the Liu Institute for Global Issues (George Hoberg, M.V. Ramana) and the IRES -Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability (Kathryn Harrison, Department of Political Science).



Wood construction, recycled bricks in the Choi Building and the Liu Institute for Global Issues

Connect, discuss and analyse

Having connected in advance with Prof. Hübner at the Institute for European Studies (IES) and Prof Ramana and Liu Institute for Global Issues, School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, I had very good basis for the very beginning for a well organised and inspiring exchange. I also met other academics and staff.

The specific aims of my stay, i.e.:

- Build upon and complementing existing cooperation between FFU and Canadian researchers and develop new common projects in the field of Governance for sustainability, especially in the field of renewable energy and nuclear waste governance
- Identify further common interests and possibly synergies between UBC and FFU/FUB
- Learn about structure and research methods at the UBC, interact with and build bridges between scientists from the UBC and the FUB

were fulfilled.

With Prof. Hübner I discussed already during his visit in Berlin during summer 2029 some aspects of my research in the field of social acceptance of wind energy. He found this topic interesting also for a speech at the UBC.

In general, most of the discussions I had with academics concentrated on the energy transition and the propulsive role of the “Energiewende” for the German economy. There is much interest on the German phenomenon of leadership in renewable energy and in initiating sustainable paths and discussing the barriers and drivers to a policy enhancing the sustainable use of resources. People were keen to reason whether there are useful lessons to be learnt in the Canadian context. Canadian scholars wanted to know more about the conditions and institutional reforms that set in motion the *Energiewende* as an all-encompassing, societal project and as the motor of a deep transformation.

I had meetings with George Hoberg, Professor of Environment and Natural Resource Policy at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs and we exchanged papers. He showed interest in my work and attention to issues concerning social acceptance of wind and other renewables.

During my stay, I took the opportunity to meet several times with M.V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security and Director of the Liu Institute for Global Issues, School of Public Policy and Global Affairs. I already cooperated with Prof. Ramana and he is one of the authors in the [book](#) I co-edited with Achim Brunnegräber in 2019. Ramana was keen to know about the [interdisciplinary project](#) on long-term radioactive waste management and governance to whom I participated and that has recently been concluded. We had a preliminary exchange of ideas and screened possibilities for intensifying cooperation in the field of nuclear waste management. We discussed at length the role of the regulator and operator for nuclear waste in Canada and the USA and tried to compare these structures with the situation in Germany. A part from other common areas of interest, we also discussed over how indigenous communities are being dealt with in the nuclear waste management process in Canada. With the PhD student Prerna Gupta we tackled issues concerning the nuclear programme in India and how Germany organised the phase out of its nuclear plants.

I also met Kathryn Harrison, Professor at the Department of Political Science, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability.

Particularly interesting was my encounter with Sara Muir Owen, a UBC Program Manager at the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) who also helped Prof. Hübner to organise my lecture at the UBC. Sara has been involved in numerous projects including the Canadian Institute of Planner's 2010 Planning Excellence Award for the "City of North Vancouver 100 Year Sustainability Vision." PICS develops innovative climate change solutions through multidisciplinary scholarship and research programs with partnering universities, provincial and local government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. The peculiarity of PICS is that is led by the University of Victoria in collaboration with the UBC, Simon Fraser University and the University of Northern British Columbia.

Share and transfer: My outreach activities at the UBC

On October 16, 2019 - almost as a conclusion to my visit - I held a talk entitled "Social Acceptance of Wind Energy: Forces, Factors and Policy Frameworks at Play in Europe" in the CIRS building. The talk was jointly organised by the Institute for European Studies in cooperation with the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS).

I illustrated insights and preliminary results from the [Horizon 2020 WinWind Project](#) that I coordinate at the FFU to a Canadian audience of scholars, academic staffs and students. The number and quality of the questions received on acceptance issue, but also on the meaning of the *Energiewende* showed how well acquainted the audience was with these topics.

My lecture was advertised on the website of the IRES, by the [Pacific Institute of climate solutions](#). and on the website of the [Institute for European Studies](#).

I reported about my speech on the news session of our website at the [FFU](#) in English and German.

Moreover, I posted a news on the website of our project [WinWind](#). The social media coverage was provided through a tweet on the [WinWind Website](#).

WinWind Project hat retweetet



Sara Muir Owen @muirowen · 17. Okt.

Great to have Rosaria DiNicci @winwind_eu and @FFU_Berlin join us at #UBC and #PICSCanada to share research results on social acceptance of wind energy



WinWind Project @winwind_eu

🍁 Rosaria DiNucci from @FFU_Berlin presents #WinWind project's results at #UBC to an audience of Canadian scholars, students & civil society in the iconic CIRC...

Cooperate: Possible collaborative activities stemming from the visit

I believe that my stay could strengthen the cooperation between the FFU/Freie Universität and UBC/IES/LIU/PIC and could enhance further exchanges. I identified two areas for potential cooperation. George Hoberg is interested especially in issues concerning acceptance of new grid projects and plans possibly a visit to Germany. We will intensify contacts in the next future.

With M.V. Ramana we evaluated first the possibility to cooperate in writing an article comparing the roles and functions of regulators for nuclear waste in Germany, Belgium and Canada. I collected much information about it and got useful contact of practitioners working in the field. Unfortunately, for reasons of time, he had finally to refrain from a cooperation, but the article partly based on his information is going to be published in an edited book to appear in 2020. We will continue to exchange ideas and remain in dialog.

Additionally, I explored short-term opportunities for cooperation. With Kurt Hübner und George Hoberg we discussed the possibility of a UBC participation in a project application under the H2020 programme of the EU on community energy and democratisation of the energy system that –should the application be successful -I am going to coordinate for the FFU. Since UBC is setting up an internal cluster on climate policy, very interdisciplinary, this project would have fitted well, but more time would have been necessary. We are at moment still considering the possibility for Kurt Hübner or George Hoberg to serve on the advisory Board of the Project, should this be successful.

Altogether, this visit was successful and helpful. On the longer term, I am very willing to build upon the ideas shared and contacts made and develop this collaboration further.