

Final Report

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I was given the wonderful opportunity to stay at UBC's Institute for European Studies (IES) for two weeks in October 2015, supported by UAS. Kurt Huebner, director of the IES, kindly provided an office for me during my stay. He also introduced me to a number of interesting people at the Department of Political Science working with—or interested in—sustainability. I also had the opportunity to meet and talk to a few PhD students working on related subjects.

My stay further coincided with three very interesting and important lectures that were given at UBC, which are closely connected to sustainability and further broadened my knowledge and understanding of this important issue. The first one by Sheila Watt-Cloutier on "The Arctic Wise", the second by Prof. Jon Krosnick from Stanford University on "What Americans Really Think about Climate Change" and the third one by Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute, Columbia University. Furthermore, a delegation from the DAAD and seven German universities visited Vancouver and UBC while I was there. I was invited to join their reception at the Vancouver Art Gallery and was able to introduce our UAS program not only to other academics but also to the German General Consul.

My aim whilst at UBC was twofold: On the one hand, to establish connections with UBC staff working on and with sustainability-related issues and introduce them to UAS. On the other hand, to discuss further teaching and research cooperation, whilst also reflecting upon my own work with/on sustainability. While in particular the latter aim was very ambitious given my short stay, I did manage to talk to some people who are certainly interested in further cooperation. We discussed the possibility of organizing a joint summer school for PhD students and possible teaching cooperation.

Sheila Watt-Cloutier gave a fire-side talk at UBC's Green College on Sunday October 18 on "The Right to be Cold – One Woman's Story of Protecting her Culture, the Arctic and the Whole Planet". Watt-Cloutier is a fascinating and inspiring woman – activist, author and politician, but also International Chair (and former President) of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). On November 30. 15 she was awarded the *Right to Livelihood Award*, also known as Alternative Nobel Prize. In her talk she presented her story, exploring the relationship between ecological conservation of the Arctic and the survival of Inuit culture, language and ways of life, and ultimately the conservation of the world. She also emphasized the importance to recognize that there is more to the Arctic than ice, wildlife, polar bears etc. The human dimension of climate change is important to understand!

Professor Jon Krosnick from Stanford University gave a talk at the UBC Political Science Department on Wednesday, October 21. He presented his decade-long research (and findings) on "What Americans Really Think About Climate Change: Attitude Formation and Change in Response to a Raging Scientific Controversy". Jon Krosnick is an expert on the psychology of attitudes, especially in the area of politics. For the past three decades he has studied how the American public's political attitudes are formed, change, and shape thinking and action. He looked at and investigated the causes of candidate choice, what influences people's decisions about whether to vote, how the news media influence public opinion, and more. The findings of his research suggest that Americans' awareness of global warming and climate change has been and remains high. While there is a lack of substantial government action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transform America's energy economy, the findings cannot confirm American public's apparent indifference to climate change.

The talk by Jeffrey Sachs took place on October 22 at the UBC's Robert H Lee Alumni Centre, supported by "the Breakfast Club". Moura Quayle, director of the LIU Institute for Global Politics, opened the event. Also Grand Chief Ed John, Representative of the First Nations to the UN, was invited to share his view on sustainability. This was in particular remarkable as the UBC is built on First Nations Land. Jeffrey Sachs' talk was in particular of interest to me because he only very recently – on September 25 2015 – facilitated the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Goals in New York. He really is a pioneer of sustainable development and gave a hopeful and motivating speech. It was great to see so many people interested and passionate about this issue gathering.

These talks touched upon different facets of sustainability. Although the lecturers did not always explicitly focused on sustainability, they offered a lot of connections. In particular they highlighted the importance of "out of the box" thinking; not always sticking to the obvious explanation but looking for alternative approaches and solutions to a problem.



Furthermore, I met with Kathryn Harrison (Political Science); Sima Godfrey (Political Science and Languages); David Tindall (Sociology); All of them were interested in further and intensified cooperation and exchange. They were fascinated to learn about UAS and hope to cooperate with us. The PhD candidates Elizabeth Schwartz and Jennifer Allen (both Political Science) also expressed their interests in working together.

I will stay tuned on enhancing further cooperation and hope that at least an intensified exchange can take place. But I do believe that this wonderful program has to be filled with content that emphasizes sustainability: for me this lies in research project as well as teaching cooperation. It should this engage faculty staff but also students – mainly M.A. and PhD.

