

Final Report: Administrator Stay at University of British Columbia (UBC)

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Stay duration: October 6th to 14th, 2018

Heike Mewis is scientific coordinator of a large joint research project within the field of biodiversity with a special focus on integrating different ecological and environmental research areas at the Berlin-Brandenburg Institute of Advanced Biodiversity Research (BBIB); she also acts as representative of future users in the planning process for a new sustainable scientific building for biodiversity research (“WIB”, “Wissenschaftsgebäude für Biodiversität”).

Thorsten Laute is responsible for managing the outdoor areas, logistics and technical supervision of the cultivation, care and maintenance of the living plant collection in the outdoor areas of the Botanic Garden & Botanical Museum Berlin.

We both are interested in sustainability and how to implement themes of sustainability into our daily work. One goal of the visit was to learn about sustainability criteria applied at UBC and how respective research areas and education are supported within a sustainable infrastructure. The other main objective was to learn about how sustainability is applied in the UBC Botanical Garden and UBC farm. The exchange is supposed to create long-term contacts with counterparts at UBC.

We had an extensive self-guided campus tour, where we discussed campus planning with respect to plantings and building arrangements. Here, we were impressed by the numerous communication and meeting areas available all over the UBC campus, and also within buildings (e.g. roof top terraces with food gardens). We also had guided tours through the Botanical Garden, a Greenheart Canopy Walk, and the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified buildings (see below for a listing), getting detailed information about architecture, structure, materials, history and usage under different sustainability aspects:

- Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability (CIRS), LEED Platinum
- Earth Science Building (ESB), LEED Gold
- Alma Mater Society Nest (AMS Nest), LEED Platinum

We had personal discussions with representatives of different divisions at UBC:

- Tim Herron, CIRS Building Manager
- Karen Taylor, UBC Sustainability Scholars Program Manager
- Liska Richer, UBC SEEDS Sustainability Program Manager
- Douglas Justice, UBC Botanical Garden Associate Director Horticulture and Collections
- Matthew Mitchell, Ph.D., NSERC Postdoctoral Fellow, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability (IRES)
- Angelique Pilon, Director of Urban Innovation Research at UBC
- Paula Martinez Rubio, Green Building Tour Coordinator with Sustainability & Engineering

Heike Mewis

The purpose of my stay at UBC was to visit LEED certified buildings to get insights into how people benefit from such a working environment, and to learn more about how the interaction of university, organization, research and education works there. The green campus tour and green building tours as well as the many discussions we had with the different program managers gave us a broad overview about the sustainable strategies applied at UBC. The high level infrastructure at UBC is complemented by the development of different processes and programs to encourage and involve university members in achieving high sustainability standards in different domains. Here I was very impressed by the advanced stage of these kinds of programs, such as the UBC Sustainability Initiative as an overarching program, and the SEEDS program in particular, which is well accepted both by students and faculty, and well implanted within the community. Especially the SEEDS program is a suitable standard that could be adapted to the structures at FU. What also impressed me a lot was the stage of the development of social aspects and the identification of university members with the sustainable aspects of their university. The UBC farm and the food gardens around the campus are popular and the fruits are used in cafeterias around campus. Food planted in the Botanical Garden is even donated to an aid organization supporting homeless people in Vancouver city.

To sum up, my stay at UBC has been very enriching because I learned a lot about several aspects of sustainability that could be (further) developed at FU and implemented into several programs within the FU, but also as an interaction between FU and the city of Berlin.

Thorsten Laute

The purpose of my stay at UBC was to learn about the Sustainability programs at UBC and how to apply this knowledge to my challenging profession at the Berlin Botanic Garden, such as in horticulture, in science and in handling with residues and resources; even in human resources.

The green campus tour and green building tours gave us a great overview about the sustainable strategies applied at UBC. I was very impressed by the highly developed level and standards of green infrastructure at UBC.

The visit at UBC Botanical Garden and the meeting with Douglas Justice, Associate Director Horticulture and Collections, was one of the biggest attractions at our stay for me. Douglas gave us his view of a modern scientific plant collection in times of climate change both from a scientific and a gardener's perspective. The abandonment of mineral fertilizers and chemical pesticides in collections of Botanic plant collections designated a straight way of cultivating. The exclusive use of compost as biological fertilizer for the maintenance of outdoor plants is extremely worthy.

Furthermore, located within the UBC Botanical Garden is the Garden Greenheart TreeWalk, a canopy walkway consisting of an aerial trail system that allows people to journey through the upper parts of the forest. Its structure enables visitors to explore the flora and fauna that thrives in this lofty environment. Greenheart is a Vancouver-based company and is leading the way in creating innovative strategies that support and protect nature through the development of non-invasive, sustainable eco-attractions. I was very impressed by the Treewalk in the old tree population and I would like to transfer the possibility of installing such a Treewalk at FU Berlin or the Berlin Botanic Garden.