

Social Sustainability: Geography 446

submitted to

Sally Hermansen & Lorna Seppala

The University of British Columbia

Vancouver, BC

Curranne Labercane

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Definition

Social Sustainability- A socially sustainable community provides an inclusive, equitable, and decent quality of life for current and future generations, in which people live, work and prosper in a vibrant community of communities.

Dimensions

Social sustainability deals with complex issues such as health, interaction and adaptability. Social sustainability encompasses access to basic needs such as housing and sufficient income, and makes use of both individual resources, as in education, self-development, values, leadership, as well as community capacity, such as relationships, networks, and norms that assist in collective action to both improve and maintain sustainable development.

The above issues are underlined by four components:

- 1) Inclusion
- 2) Equity
- 3) Security
- 4) Flexibility

1. Inclusion

- the right and the opportunity to participate and interact in the community; one that celebrates diversity

2. Equity

- individuals have access to sufficient resources and opportunities for personal development and collaboration

- fair distribution of resources among communities

3. *Security*

- individuals and communities have economic security and the confidence that they live in safe, healthy and supportive environments

4. *Flexibility*

- having resilience and being able to adapt to change
- the ability to build upon what already exists, and learning from experiences both within and outside the community

(as adapted from <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20050524/documents/p1.pdf>)

University Context

Vision:

The University of British Columbia, a recognized leader in sustainability fosters an equitable, dynamic community where social sustainability is achieved through community participation, economic, social and ecological learning and related values that are represented in its institutional policies, programs and practices.

Mission:

UBC recognizes its responsibility as an institute of higher learning, to exercise leadership and promote awareness of the pressing social needs in the community and the importance of social investment. UBC proposes to actively pursue social sustainability as a way to foster equitable and inclusive community development and to make social sustainability a priority within networks of students, employees, stakeholders, business partnerships, and neighbours.

Four Performance Goals

- 1) Social inclusion
- 2) Promote and improve relevant curriculum
- 3) Inspire leadership, public understanding and awareness
- 4) Accountability

Performance Goals (In detail)

1. Social Inclusion

- Care for individuals, protect human rights and ensure health and safety
- Access to participation in decision making
- Foster a sense of place supported by a community identity that reflects the diversity of the population

2. Education/Curriculum Goals

- Recognize our obligation to educate the university community about the importance of individual and institutional social responsibility
- Support sustainability curriculum (guest lectures, sustainability materials, groups/offices: Trek 2010, SEEDS, Continuing Studies and Sustainability Office)
- Increase the focus on sustainability in undergraduate/graduate programs
- Interdisciplinary programs (Encourage and support research in sustainability across all of the colleges).

3. Leadership

- Maintain UBC's role as academic institution model of sustainable practices
- Commitment of resources to sustainability efforts
- Develop partnerships with stakeholders and implement incentives to support sustainability efforts
- Outreach and connect to the local community and governments (AMS, local and federal governments)

4. Accountability

- Internal/external Assurance systems (AA1000, GRS, STARS).
- Demonstrate that UBC has allocated adequate resources to allow it to implement associated policies and commitments.
- Qualitative and quantitative information regarding existing commitments and future goals.
- Communicate the above in its report to Stakeholders.

Key Indicators of Social Sustainability

Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS)

STARS is a highly collaborative and voluntary self-reporting framework that looks at measures relative progress toward sustainability for post-secondary institutions. Higher learning associations, nonprofits, businesses and governments are participating in STARS.

STARS:

- Creates incentives for sustainability progress, and helps to build a more diverse community
- Acts a guide for progressing sustainability across all sectors of higher learning

- Assists in information sharing regarding sustainable practices and performances
- Establishes a common measurement of sustainability in higher learning

www.aashe.org

Global Reporting Index (GRI)

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is a multi-stakeholder non-profit that develops and publishes guidelines for reporting on environmental, economic and social sustainability performance.

Example GRI Reporting. Social inclusion and aid to disadvantaged community groups

Performance indicator

- Number of people benefited
- Number of locations that have initiative-related activities conducted
- Percentage of minorities included in workforce or education program
- Sum of money donated for the initiative
- Value of subcontracted products and services provided by special employment centers
- Number of self-help groups formed

Impact indicator

- Percentage of program participants reported positive impacts on their lives

*Using “Social inclusion and aid to disadvantaged community groups” as an example, we can see that the GRI analyzes not only performance indicators, but also impact indicators.

www.globalreporting.org

Other Strategic Measures

- Measure the number of ethnic and gender minorities in faculties, clubs, governments and workplaces.
- Measure the numbers of programs implemented annually based on community and academic involvement.
- Measure the community attendance at sustainability events and lectures.
- Measure the number of international students who attend UBC annually.
- Measure the number of UBC students who participate in study abroad experiences.

(as adapted from http://www.uccs.edu/~pages/docs/Sustainability_Plan_and_Appendices.pdf)

Annotated Bibliography

AccountAbility: Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability. “Assurance Standard AA1000.”

(2003): 1-40. 27 Jan. 2009.

<<http://www.accountability21.net/uploadedFiles/publications/Assurance%20Standard%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>>.

AccountAbility's Assurance Standard AA1000 is an applicable standard for assessing and strengthening the credibility of an organisation's sustainability reporting. These AA1000 principles may be applied and depend on the information available, sufficiency of evidence, underlying systems and processes, internal assurance systems, and existing Assurance for specific aspects of performance reporting. Thus; this program acts like an external audit and the guiding principles of this program could be followed, as these are world-wide standard sustainability guidelines, and these principles helped to define sustainable practices in the Vancouver Olympic Games.

Braddley, Shannon and Mario Lee. City of Vancouver .“Administrative Report.” 05186

(2005):1-33. 28 Jan. 2009.

<<http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/socdev/socsustain.htm>>.

The report administered by Braddley and Lee discusses Vancouver and its context for social development. The City of Vancouver wants to promote Vancouver as a vibrant multi-cultural society with clean and safe neighbourhoods. In doing so, a significant contribution to the city's liveability has been the implementation of a wide range of policies and programs that address social issues and improve the quality of life for all residents. These initiatives have been born out of partnerships with community groups, organisations and other levels of government.

The City of Vancouver maintains that social sustainability revolves around basic needs, human capacity and social capacity, such that providing equitable access to resources and fostering partnerships are most important. This article is quite in-depth at the planning and carrying out

strategies designed to implement social sustainability. It is a comprehensive model, one which UBC could adapt for its own uses, particular in relation to strategies.

Environment Canada. "The State of Canada's Environment-1996." (1996). 27Jan. 2009.

<<http://www.ec.gc.ca/soer-ree/English/SOER/1996report/Doc/1-5-2-6-4-1.cfm>>.

Environment Canada's article deals with social sustainability and the relationship between development and current social norms. An activity is socially sustainable if it conforms to social norms or does not stretch them beyond the community's capacity for change. Social norms can be religion, language, education, interpersonal relations, class systems, work attitudes, tolerance, tradition and values associated to lifestyle and the environment. This article demonstrates that to define social limits to sustainability, there is no alternative to exploring the issues in partnerships with the groups or communities concerned with respect to their social norms.

Gates, Rick and Mario Lee. City of Vancouver . "Policy Report: Social Development." 05176

(2005):1-6. 28 Jan. 2009. <<http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20050524/documents/p1.pdf>>.

Gates and Lee in their City of Vancouver Policy Report define social sustainability: "For a community to function and be sustainable, the basic needs of its residents must be met. A socially sustainable community must have the ability to maintain and build on its own resources and have the resiliency to prevent and/or address problems in the future." The idea of resiliency is a key finding in that it lead me to use flexibility as a performance goal. Resiliency means overcoming barriers, while flexibility goes one step further by easily accepting change. Another

important thought in this definition is about resources and the idea of maintaining and building upon them. This is a key feature of sustainability.

Partridge, Emma "Social Sustainability: Challenges for the Development Industry." (2005): 1-25. 16 Jan. 2009. <http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/isf/newsevents/Emma20Partridge_ISF.pdf>.

Emma Partridge comments on how sustainability is subjective, qualitative and political, yet we cannot afford to ignore the social dimension, as sustainability is balance and integration. She indicates key themes being interconnectedness, poverty and disadvantage, opportunity, participation, social progress and diversity. She poses the challenges to planning being community engagement, assessment of social impact and affordable housing.

Rebello, Daphne. "Theme IV: What is the role for Higher Education Institutions in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development?" (2003): 1-10. 28 Jan. 2009.

<<http://www.unesco.org/iau/sd/pdf/Rebello.pdf>>.

This paper focuses on action and how institutions of higher learning can use the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development to promote sustainable development. Rebello makes note of four goals found within the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):

- Promote and improve high quality, relevant basic education

- Reorienting existing education policies and programmes to address the social sustainability in an inter-disciplinary manner
- Develop public understanding and awareness of the principles
- Develop specialized training program to ensure that all sectors of society have the necessary skill- sets.

Starbucks Corporation. "Beyond the Cup: Corporate Social Responsibility Annual Report."

(2005). 20 Jan. 2009. <<http://starbucks.com/csr>>.

Starbucks provides a snapshot of their community development programs, such as charitable contributions, local volunteerism, as well as the United Nations Global Compact, a global initiative aimed at formalizing the human rights policy in their Corporate Social Responsibility report. The report states that Starbucks invested \$1.5 million in health clinics, schools and other projects to strengthen coffee-growing community in 2005. Starbucks also concentrates on ensuring workplace diversity by monitoring the numbers of employed minorities and embracing people from "all walks of life". Starbucks' "Key Performance Indicator Summary" in the fiscal report, as well as their policies on diversity, can be transferred to UBC context when applicable.

UCCS Sustainability Task Force, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. "Sustainability Strategic

Plan." (2007): 1-55. 29 Jan. 2009.

<http://www.uccs.edu/~pages/docs/Sustainability_Plan_and_Appendices.pdf>.

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs' "Sustainability Strategic Plan" provides a great example of reporting vision, mission and leadership, as well as facilities and curriculum goals, in relation to performance and sustainability. Structured by the Sustainability Task Force at UCCS, it outlines their path toward the sustainable future of its campus.

University of British Columbia Sustainability. "Inspirations and Aspirations.: The Sustainability Strategy and You." (2006): 1-16. 27 Jan. 2009.

<http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/pdfs/ia/51060_ubc_sus_book_rv1.pdf>.

A review of the "Inspirations and Aspirations.: The Sustainability Strategy and You" illustrates the importance of the campus community as its dedication to achieving the sustainability goals. The strategy indicates UBC is fulfilling a critical need in society: "We're not only educating future leaders, we're actively participating in the search for solutions to the social, economic, and environmental problems of our time."

It provides 3 social goals which provide a starting point from which this paper is based:

- Improve human health and safety
- Make UBC a model sustainable community
- Increase understanding of sustainability inside and outside of the university context

University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. "Diversity Strategic Plan 2007." (2007): 1-36. 29 Jan. 2009.

< http://www.uccs.edu/~pages/docs/Diversity_Strategic_Plan.pdf>.

This “Diversity Strategic Plan 2007” describes a set of strategies, goals and priority actions for building diversity into the platform of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs:

1. Diversity within: Retaining diversity in staff and student numbers
2. Diversity without: Bringing in diversity (outreach, community engagement, recruitment)
3. Diversity in what we do: Innovations (cultural competence, curriculum, skills, research, planning and budget)