UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Report

South Campus Farm: Land-use Conflict

Katarina Glavas, Annie Rosen, Rema Khaul, Ivan Lau, Tracy Lo, Peter Chiu, Vojislav Trkulja

University of British Columbia

AGSC 450

April 3, 2002

South Campus Farm: Land-use Conflict

Group 9

Katarina Glavas
Annie Rosen
Rema Khaul
Ivan Lau
Tracy Lo
Peter Chiu
Vojislav Trkulja

The Conflict

UBC and the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences are unable to reach an agreement over what type of development would best capture the value of the UBC South Campus Farm. While UBC feels that the area should be developed into a residential community, the Faculty would like the farm to be retained for its educational worth. Furthermore, the Faculty feels that by preserving the farm, UBC would have the opportunity to model ecological, economic and social sustainability (Masselink, 2001). Because UBC and the Faculty have conflicting understandings of the *value of the land,* a conflict has evolved around the issue of land use. UBC feels that economically the land is of high value and thus will provide the campus with funding. **(**[redacted] The Faculty feels that the land has an ecological value and hence should be used for research and educational purposes. [redacted]

Derek Masselink, a graduate student who is responsible for development of the Farm's landscape-management plans and promotional media, believes that the UBC South Campus Farm provides a unique opportunity to integrate a whole farm system, (a farm operation that includes crop, animal, forest, and wetland elements), into a new residential development (Masselink, 2001). In his master's thesis - *UBC South Campus Farm: The Elaboration of an Alternative* - Derek **(Masselink, 2001)**offers an alternate plan for the South Campus farm that includes both a farm and a high-density housing development. As such, his thesis proposes a solution to the land use conflict. **(**[redacted]

UBC's Position

The Official Community Plan (OCP) that has been adopted by the University outlines all development, transportation, and land use activities for UBC Campus. The OCP was developed using other planning documents such as the Greater Vancouver Regional District's (GVRD) Liveable Region Strategic Plan and UBC's Trek 2000. In accordance with the GVRD Liveable Region Strategic Plan, the OCP set a target population of 18,000 residents on the UBC campus by the year 2021, and 24,000 residents by the year 2030 (UBC Comprehensive Community Plan, 2000).

The aim of the University is to develop the South Campus area as a self-reliant community that includes its own commercial village centre, community centre and elementary school. Roughly ¾ of the existing 90 acres is to be developed into residential housing and community services. In the UBC land use proposal, the estimated population of the developed area is 5000 residents, housed in a high-density town centre and low-density residences. The plan also includes an elementary school in the centre of the community, and the concentration of the current Bioscience facilities and part of the Botanical Gardens from 60 ha to 11 ha. (UBC Official Community Plan, 1999).

The Faculty of Agricultural Science's Position

The initiative to save the UBC South Campus Farm began over two years ago when students and members of the faculty of Agricultural Sciences learned about the OCP. At a community development meeting, students stated that the preservation of the UBC South Campus Farm was imperative to provide experiential learning for students,

faculty, staff and community members. The loss of this landscape would signify the loss of the last remaining on-campus working land-base and the only operating farm found within the City of Vancouver.

Since then, students, faculty, staff and community members have come together to develop and promote a vision for the farm that includes principles of sustainability and better integrates instruction, learning, research, and community-building (UBC Farm Newsletter, 2001). Existing and developing projects on the South Campus Farm include a market garden, pumpkin and egg production, a Vineyard, ruminant grazing, sheet mulching, and shiitake/oyster mushroom production. The Farm has become an integral aspect of the Faculty of Agricultural Science's curricula and future visions. Ultimately, the goal of the UBC Farm is to "establish a *place* that provides a healthier alternative understanding of how we might structure our communities in this new century" (Reinventing the Farm, 2000).

Value Assumption

Our group's position on the land use conflict is based on many value assumptions including: weak anthropocentrism, eco-centrism, and community-based analysis. Weak anthropocentrism is the philosophical view that prioritizes basic human needs and interests (Armstrong, S. J., 1993). Following this line of reasoning, some of the group members looked at the residential development and the farm in the context of how they can help meet students' basic needs. These group members recognized the shortage of housing on campus, and the need to meet the increasing demand of students, and other members of the UBC community, for on-campus residences.

However, they felt that high-density housing is sufficient in meeting this need and that low-density housing is not necessary. [redacted]

The group as a whole recognizes the farm's potential to sustain adequate food for a small community at UBC and believes that the farm could become one of the food suppliers for the food service industry at UBC. We feel that by using the farm as a food supplier, the cost of food on campus could become more economical [redacted] In addition, we believe that the farm could create academic activities for the students that would provide them with unique learning opportunities. [redacted]

Some group members took the eco-centric viewpoint. Eco-centrism, also known as bio-centrism, is the philosophical standpoint that is based on the belief that the natural world possesses a value in its own apart of its ability to satisfy human needs (Agricultural Science 250 class notes). Therefore, the UBC South Campus should be valued for its intrinsic worth and the farm should be developed in ways that maintain the biodiversity of the land. Under the Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP), roughly ¾ of the existing 90 acres are to be developed into residential housing and community services (UBC Official Community Plan, 1999). However, if such plans are implemented most habitat and vegetation will be lost. Although these group members would rather have the entire farm retained, they recognize the need to meet the OCP plans, which require 5000 people living on South Campus by the year 2012 (UBC Official Community Plan, 1999). [redacted]

Community-based analysis is [redacted] a value assumption held by all of the

group members because we recognize the importance of the residential development and the farm in developing a community at UBC. The farm will encourage residents to purchase locally produced foods. This will help build an on-campus food system, and thus localize the food economy. Furthermore, localizing the food economy may incur some economic profits to UBC, specifically to the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences. [redacted] Other benefits include the production of more nutritious foods, and the creation of a strong community in which members are educated about local agriculture. Students from UBC and from the elementary school that is planned for development can learn about sustainable agriculture through direct learning experiences (Feenstra, G. W., 1997). The farm can involve local farmers and help facilitate community-based research. Community based research is a systemic inquiry process which uses a joint approach to investigation that enables all stakeholders whose lives are affected by the problem to be involved in the research process. [redacted] By sharing their diverse knowledge and experience, farmers and researchers can create better solutions to problems which, in turn, will improve the quality of their community life (Stringer, E.T., 1999).

Our Position

By exploring our value assumptions and discussing them openly with one another, our group has come to a consensus on the land use conflict; we all agree that the farm and the residential community should co-exist.

Integrating the existing farm and forestlands, also referred to as the bioscience lands, of the UBC South Campus within the development of the South Campus

community will offer many ecological, economical and social benefits. In addition, the inclusion of this landscape will contribute to achieving the sustainability goals of UBC (Masselink, 2001). Sustainability is the "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Kloppenburg, J., 2000). The sustainable development policy states that "UBC recognizes that just as the university contributes to a healthy society and economy through education to build social capital, we also need to invest in maintaining the ecological services and resources, our natural capital, upon which society depends" (Masselink, 2001).

The integration of the farm and forestlands will contribute to ecological sustainability. Because the farm will incorporate organic farming methods, it will help to create ecological sustainability. Firstly, it will enable the capture and recycling of local nutrients. Leguminous plant species can replenish the soil via nitrogen fixation. As a result, on-site nutrient losses will be minimized and existing soil resources will be conserved. Other methods of nutrient capture and cycling include composting systems and green manure crops (Masselink, 2001). Secondly, by implementing organic farming systems, less chemical inputs like pesticides will be used. As a result, there will be less environmental degradation from farm run-off that can contaminate streams, rivers and the soil (Asociacion Nucleo de la Universidad Rural, 2000). Furthermore, because organic farming techniques require lower net energy inputs they minimize the use of non-renewable energy resources (Masselink, 2001). Communities that are regenerative (such as the South Campus community) are created with the integration of the farm and forestlands, use renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and electric energy.

Renewable energy sources such as this are available locally, at a low cost and do not pollute the environment (Masselink, 2001). Lastly, the South Campus community would produce less packaging and transport waste because food produced on the farm could be consumed within the community and on the UBC campus.

The integration of the farm and forestlands into the South campus helps the community achieve social sustainability. Unfortunately, most North Americans are unaware of how or where their food was grown (Masselink, 2001). By including the farm within the community, connections between land, food and community could be re-established. Growing food locally decreases the reliance on external food resources and businesses. Economic benefits are also provided by the amalgamation of the working landscapes and the community. For instance, jobs for students and residents would be created. By growing local produce, the creation of local markets and restaurants would be promoted. In addition, a focus on the local economy could prevent the monopolization of larger corporations. Furthermore, the community could provide a sense of home for residents where they could work, live and study (Masselink, 2001).

Concluding Statements and Research Questions

By incorporating the existing farm and forestland into the South Campus Community residential housing can be created while economic, ecological and social sustainability is modeled. The university's need to build a residential community would be addressed and the Faculty of Agricultural Science's desire to retain the landscape would be respected. The question that now remains is: how is this type of community to be created? Due to spatial constraints and escalating land values, the use of land for

research and educational purposes is not seen by the university to be a practical or economically sustainable use of land. This is because the existing land on campus is of high economic value. Our group recommends that the Faculty conduct a contingent value survey that would assess an ecological value for the UBC Farm. In addition, we feel that the students at UBC must be made aware of the land use conflict. This could be done through guest lectures and seminars. We believe that by increasing awareness on campus, the existing farm and forestlands can be retained.

An additional research question that was brought up in our group discussion was: what conditions should be created so that the farm and residential community in the South Campus area can live in harmony? In the past, complaints from people living near farms often revolved around odour from manure and compost, noise and odours from farm buildings, slow moving farm vehicles on local roads, and early morning or late evening operation of machinery (Ministry of Agriculture, 1998). Our group proposes that this matter is dealt with by investigating other rural communities that are able to peacefully co-exist. The work done by Michael Abelman in particular could be beneficial. Michael is the author of *On Good Land* and *From the Good Earth,* and the manager of Fairview Gardens.

Fairview Gardens is a 12 acre organic farm located near Santa Barbara, California. In the late 70s, as the urban sprawl encroached on Fairview Gardens, Michael Abelman began to receive complaints, from local residents, pertaining to farm operations. In the 1980s, buildings finally surrounded the farm and the new residents were continually complaining about the noise of the animals and the smell of the compost. At one court hearing it was even suggested that the roosters should have their vocal cords

cut out. Through operating an open-door policy, and educating the local community, Fairview Gardens managed to win the support of their neighbours. In 1993 the land-owners were under pressure to sell to developers, but local residents managed to raise $800,000 in eight months to save the farm. At Fairview Gardens, members of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program pay in advance for a weekly share of the harvest from mid-March to mid-November. Through their participation, they established a connection with the food they eat, the land it's grown on and the people who produce it (Fairview Gardens, 2001). We hope that by using the work of Michael Abelman, connections between the land, food and community of the South Campus will be established.

References

Agricultural Science 250 class notes. 1999.

Asociacion Nucleo de la Universidad Rural, 2000: Bribri Bio-diverse Indigena de Talamanca

David Masselink. UBC South Campus Farm: The Elaboration of an Alternative. UBC, April 2001.

Feenstra, G.W. "Local food systems and sustainable communities." American Journal of Alternative Agriculture. Vol.12, Nov 1997, p.28-36.

Kloppenburg, J. et al. "Tasting food, tasting sustainability: defining the attributes of an alternative food system with competent, ordinary people." *Human Organizations*. Vol.59, n 2, 2000, p. 177-186.

Norton, B.G., "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," in Armstrong, S.J., Botzler, R.G. *Environmental Ethics Divergence and Convergence*. New York: McGraw-Hill Inc. 1993 p. 286-288

Planning Along Agriculture's Edge. Centre for Urban Agriculture at Fairview Gardens, 2001 Ministry of Agriculture, BC, May 21, 1998. http://www.fairviewgardens.org

Re-inventing the UBC Farm: Urban Agriculture and Forestry on the Point Grey Campus. UBC Faculty of Agricultural Sciences. February 17, 2000.

Stringer, E.T. 1999. Action Research, 2nd E/D. London: Sage Publication. p.1-15.

UBC Official Community Plan and Comprehensive Community Plan http://www.ocp.ubc.ca/ocp