Assignment #1

Redefining Social Sustainability in the University Context

Antony Kwok and Janine Pham

February 4, 2009

Geography 446

for Sally Hermansen and Lorna Seppala

Table of Contents

Social Sustainability, in a University context, can be summed up with three broad tropes; **equal access, opportunity and stewardship.** These have been chosen because they are representative of the potential and responsibility of academic leaders that occupy the University and go on to become business leaders, decision makers, knowledge pioneers, etc. that come to wield influence and power over society.

1. Equal access because people are in a perpetual state of growth and striving towards self-improvement. (for example—access to education for continual learning and equal quality of life standards to maintain best health, safety and well-being of all individuals.)

2. Opportunity because a university campus is a living lab that can absorb pilot projects and experiments in the pursuit of knowledge. An ever-changing and dynamic environment, universities foster growth, progress and innovation.

3. Stewardship because people need to act with foresight and sound planning if there can be any hope for a bright future.

1.   Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. "STARS 0.5." *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education*. 2008. 1 February 2009.   http://www.aashe.org/stars/index.php

2.   Germain, Annick. "The Social Sustainability of Multicultural Cities: A Neighbourhood Affair?" Belgian Journal of Geography 4 (2002): 377-386.

3.   Partridge, Emma. "Social sustainability Challenges for the development industry." *University of Technology Sydney*. PowerPoint. 2005. 11 December 2008. http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/isf/newsevents/Emma20Partridge_ISF.pdf

4.   Sidh Sintusingha. "Sustainability and urban sprawl: Alternative scenarios for a   Bangkok superblock." Urban Design International 11.3-4 (2006): 151-172. ABI/INFORM Global. ProQuest. University of British Columbia Library. 4 February 2009 http://www.proquest.com/

5.   Nave, Lisa. Socially Sustainable: Lifestyle website, with a blog, related to issues of social sustainability. 2007. 3 February 2009.<http://sociallysustainable.com/essays>.

6.   Taschereau, Denise, Wornell, Heather. "A Different Development: Citizens are successfully pushing plans for a sustainable community in Vancouver's false Creek. " Alternatives Journal 23.4 (1997): 9-10. CBCA Reference. ProQuest. University of British Columbia Library. 4 Feb. 2009

7.   Electronic City of Vancouver Policy Report on Sustainable Development. 10 May 2005. 3 February 2009.
   <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20050524/documents/p1.pdf>.

8.   Sustainable Neighborhoods: Community Living and Learning for Sustainability. December 2008. 3 February 2009. <http://sustainableneighborhoods.blogspot.com>.

9.   Heather Greig-Smith. "Culture needed for sustainability. " Regeneration & Renewal 22 Oct. 2004: 7. ABI/INFORM Global. ProQuest. University of British Columbia Library. 4 Feb. 2009

10.   Global Reporting Index. 4 February 2009. www.globalreporting.org

11.   Leroy White, Gregory John Lee. "Operational research and sustainable development: Tackling the social dimension. " European Journal of Operational Research 193.3 (2009): 683. ABI/INFORM Global. ProQuest. University of British Columbia Library. 4 Feb. 2009

12.   Nave, Lisa. Socially Sustainable: Lifestyle website, with a blog, related to issues of social sustainability. 2007. 3 February 2009. <http://sociallysustainable.com/essays>.

13.   Partridge, Emma. "Social sustainability Challenges for the development industry." *University of Technology Sydney*. PowerPoint. 2005. 11 December 2008. http://datasearch.uts.edu.au/isf/newsevents/Emma20Partridge_ISF.pdf

14.   Sidh Sintusingha. "Sustainability and urban sprawl: Alternative scenarios for a Bangkok superblock." Urban Design International 11.3-4 (2006): 151-172. ABI/INFORM Global. ProQuest. University of British Columbia Library. 4 Feb. 2009 http://www.proquest.com/

15.   Sustainable Neighborhoods: Community Living and Learning for Sustainability. December 2008. 3 February 2009. http://sustainableneighborhoods.blogspot.com

16.   Taschereau, Denise, Wornell, Heather. "A Different Development: Citizens are successfully pushing plans for a sustainable community in Vancouver's false Creek. " Alternatives Journal 23.4 (1997): 9-10. CBCA Reference. ProQuest. University of British Columbia Library. 4 Feb. 2009

17.   "UBC Sustainability." UBC Sustainability Office. 2008. 30 January 2009. <http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/index.html>

Key Concepts of Social Sustainability

(from 'Works Cited', lecture slides and class discussions)

1) Community building

The word 'social' is derived from the Latin root *'socius'* that means *companion.* This notion of companionship and comradery is built upon a foundation of strong personal relationships and connectivity that foster communal feelings of unity and family-like ties between people who occupy the same locality. In this instance, the University cannot just be an institution enrolls students or employs professors. Institutions do not sustain people. UBC is an entire experience, a wonderful stage of life that shapes the values and futures of individuals who seek a home away from home, a friendly community and sense of belonging whether takes from as earning degrees and learning or working a passionate career building the leaders of tomorrow.

2) Culture

To build community cohesion there must be a sense of shared culture which can come in the form of common practices, values, languages, history, arts and literate, etc. For example, cities take on an urban culture that has distinctive characteristics that citizens can then stereotype and laugh at themselves. (e.g. Vancouverites can't drive when it snows and we all love the Canucks.) Even within UBC Geography, jokes about human versus physical geographers are rampant and help build our department.

3) Integration

Social sustainability offers very humanitarian aspirations such as building neat, little communities with old-timey simple joys and people living in harmony with each other and nature. To this idyllic end, integration plays a significant role by abolishing negative views of difference such as age, gender or race issues. The is no room for racism or discrimination in a socially sustainable environment. That is not to say that cultural assimilation is expected, but differences would be embraced and celebrated. Tolerance is the order of the day.

4) Academic Growth

The whole reason why universities exist is because they are educational communities that value learning and teaching and produces research in search of new knowledge. Without academic growth, what is the purpose of a university? This is fundamental to social sustainability because people must are constantly learning and discovering new things and the drive to think and be critical is essential to humans. Universities foster a space to develop those capacities.

5) Accountability

Social sustainability has a definite need for transparent accountability because it is such a general concept and the definition is elusive. Since social sustainability is meant to take care of people, a certain kind of peer pressure reporting is necessary to ensure people motivate each other to aim higher and be better at achieving altruistic, humanitarian aspirations.

6) Quality of Life

In order to achieve a sustainable society, basic needs for a quality of life should be achieved. The health, safety and well-being of an individual fall under this category. Access to health care and security would lead to a strong civil society.

7) Education

The right to obtain an education maintains social sustainability as this leads to growth. Knowledge allows new ideas to generate, which then brings improvement to the society.

Indicators

	Equal Access	Opportunity	Stewardship
STARS			
- ED credits 1- 19		X	
- ED credits 20-2		X	
- OP credits	X		
- AF credits 1-5		X	X
- AF credits 6-8		X	
- AF credits 10			X
- AF credits 13-18	X		
- AF credits 19-26	X		
- AF credits 32-34	X		

	Global Reporting Index
Equal Access	Number of people/families/organization/communities benefited Number/area/length of facilities built- Sum of money invested or value of construction - material donated Number of infrastructure projects involved- Percentage of sewage effluent recycled- Volume of potable water produced-
Opportunity	Number of people/organizations benefited or served, or number of volunteering projects implemented Number of volunteers from the company- Number of volunteering hours offered by employees- Number of employees sent for community service, - amount of equipment/resources provided for the community service Number of service councils/committees formed-
Stewardship	Amount/percentage of consumed energy, consumed resources, vehicle trips reduced or saved Number/area/percentage of work sites restored- Sum of money spent on environmental protection- Percentage of resources/waste recycled - Resources utilization efficiency- Number of families/people benefited- Number of jobs created- Amount of revenue for municipality generated-

What is the University context?

In this report, we have defined the University context to be a smaller scale version of a thriving city. Using UBC as our guide, we understand the University context to be an environment that fosters a strong academic culture that values learning and teaching. It is a place where knowledge is produced and is ever-striving to be improved upon because universities aim for excellence. This constant competition to be the best is in part due to the corporatization of universities. Without a doubt, the University context profits from students who pay fees to earn professional qualifications. That is why the actions, policies and consequences that come from the knowledge produced in universities should be used towards ethical solutions for a better society. But essentially, a campus is a school that cultivates people to become critical thinkers and educated citizens. This is why our definition of social sustainability encompasses three broad tropes that are well within the capacity of University.

Suggested University performance goals

1. To provide a suitable learning environment for current and future generations as demonstrated/measured by:
    a. Class availability to meet student demands
    b. Space to accommodate needs
    c. Knowledgeable instructors/operators

2. To ensure access to maintain a fair quality of life
    a. Healthcare
    b. Security and safety
    c. Well-being (spiritual, physical and emotional)

3. To continue to take risks in research and academia, encourage experimentation towards progress

4. To plan for changes with due diligence and quickly bring solutions to arising problems, have contingency plans and clear goals

Assignment Feedback

This was actually very difficult to do even with all the preparation and direction we received in class. Social sustainability was impossibly hard to pin down and every time we felt we had a solid definition, it just kept growing. As discussed in class, the scope of the goals were also very difficult to make up because they needed to be broad enough to get our meaning across but also narrow enough to call for action. And lastly, trying to articulate very tacit knowledge such as aiming for humanitarian goals and feel-good ideals felt awkward and inappropriate when trying to present it academically which is why our language is sometimes informal.