

What is So Enticing Over the Border?: Whatcom County, Washington and the Greater Vancouver Area

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There has been much discussion and speculation over the past decade in regards to the dissolving of the boundaries of nation states and the creation of a "Borderless" world as described by Keniche Ohmae in his book, *Borderless World*. The passage of the Canadian-American Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement demonstrates how Canada and America are moving toward a regional trade partnership in an era of globalisation. This transition to cooperation which reaches beyond the nation state will provide opportunities for many, but may leave others feeling confused, left-out, and unable to truly understand the nature of what is happening and how they might fit into this new world. In order to begin to gain a greater understanding of how communities and geographical regions are responding to this transition, careful observations need to occur at the community level. These observations need to assess how specific communities are working with increased changes in the economy in light of the dynamics of urban and international influences, and in turn how these changes influence particular communities.

Purpose

Within the above context, the purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding as to how Canadians and Americans use the cross border region of the Greater Vancouver Area (GVA) and the Lower Fraser Valley (LFV), and whether the international border and current transnational policies, such as NAFTA, influence the development of this area. Specifically, this paper examines how land is used along the border and whether there is a cross border influence, or spillover effect, from the GVA and the LFV into Whatcom county, or vice versa. From an assessment of changing land use patterns, the study should reveal ways in which the border region is developing from an economic, an environmental, and a social perspective.

Background

Whatcom county, Washington is located 30 miles south of the city centre of Vancouver, British Columbia, and the less elevated, more inhabited portions of the county share the Lower Fraser River Valley with the GVA. The county has a population of about 160,000 people with approximately 60,000 people residing in the regional centre of Bellingham. Bellingham may be considered a college town with Western Washington University's population hovering slightly above 11,000 students. Bellingham also has a long history of being dependent on resource-based industries, such as wood processing and fisheries. The rest of the county's population is scattered throughout the more rural portions of the county which is embedded in dairy and berry farming and forestry activities in addition to a major aluminum plant and oil refinery.

The greater Vancouver area is an established centre of international trade and commerce and the Canadian gateway to the Pacific Rim. Therefore, it draws many Canadians from other provinces and immigrants primarily from Asian Pacific countries seeking employment, opportunity, or a freer political life (i.e. Hong Kong reverted to the People's Republic of China in 1997). As a result of its location and economic activities, the city of Vancouver and its surrounding communities have experienced significant urban expansion over the past ten years. The Greater Vancouver Area defined by the Greater Vancouver Regional District has a metropolitan population of 1,831,665 as of 1996 with the cities of Vancouver (pop. 514,008) and Surrey (pop. 304,477) having the largest populations within the region (Strategic Planning Department 1997). The remaining portions of the Lower Fraser Valley as defined by the Fraser Valley Regional District has a population of 166,850 with the cities of Abbotsford (pop. 79,435) and Chilliwack (pop. 45,580) having the largest populations within the region (Regional Growth Strategy 1998).

Had the international boundary at the 49th parallel not been established, the natural geographical basin of the Lower Fraser Valley would probably have a much more even distribution of the basin's binational population. However, the Oregon Treaty of 1846 established the international boundary between Canada and the United States from the Rocky Mountains west to the Pacific Ocean. The establishment of this political boundary truncated Bellingham's and Whatcom county's natural geographic connection to the GVA and the LFV. Nevertheless, due to its close proximity, the Vancouver metropolitan area's urban field reaches beyond the Canadian/American international border and has an economic, environmental, and social impact on the communities within Whatcom county (Friedmann 1978). This relationship may be thought of as "unbalanced" regarding cultural influences (McKinsey and Konrad 1989). Essentially, one side of the border spills over its boundary to influence and sometimes over-powers inhabitants of the other side. I will use this context from an economic perspective. From a geographic perspective, the majority of the binational Lower Fraser Valley may be characterised as a Border Region. According to Mc Kinsey and Konrad (1989) a border region is defined as:

"A border region is a contiguous zone in which exchanges between two nation-states take place. The width of a border region may vary greatly, depending on the nature of the exchanges. In a narrow sense, one could argue that any explicit crossing of the border occurs only at the border itself. In a broad sense, some border crossings have impacts extending deep into the interior of one country or the other; for example, the technological exploitation of airwaves acts to obliterate most attempts to constrain the exchange. Exchanges are likely to increase with proximity to the boundary but there is no fixed distance between the boundary itself and the interior edge of the border region".

As well, van der Schelde and Hoekveld (1992) have developed an excellent model of regional systems that function in an international context as well as within a cross-border interaction of borderlands. Van der Schelde and Hoekveld (1992) argue that regional systems should not be seen as massive quantities, but as multilayered structures in which every layer has its own scale and is part of a more extensive layer. Each layer is primarily dependent on the areal division of labour. For example, some regions may be dependent on the migration of seasonal vacationers from metropolitan areas who spend part of their time and money in far away regions, but leave these regions to their own devices for other portions of the year. Or, another layer of this regional system includes the city-hinterland web system, or "urban field" (Friedmann 1978; Coppack

1988). Finally, van der Schelde and Hoekveld (1992) note that there is a layer of a regional system that is based on resources exploited on behalf of national or international markets, while integrated into daily local interactions. A key point to this analysis is that at all levels, these regional systems may cross the border, thus generating cross-border interactions. Van der Schelde and Hoekveld have demonstrated this concept in the form of a model (Figure 1). For the purposes of my preliminary research, I will be examining the "Cross Border Interactions" of the Borderlands in addition to the "International Cross Border Interactions". If the growing metropolitan area were not constricted by the international border, the influences that the larger urban GVA has on the smaller more rural Whatcom county would be mitigated by comprehensive regional planning. However, the situation surrounding the greater Vancouver area and Whatcom county can be characterised by an absence of consistent interactive communication which is imperative for effective policy making. Under these conditions, environmental, economic, and social impacts go unchecked.

[FIGURE 1 Regional Systems Inter- and Intra-National Interactions \(van der Schelde and Hoekveld 1992\)](#)

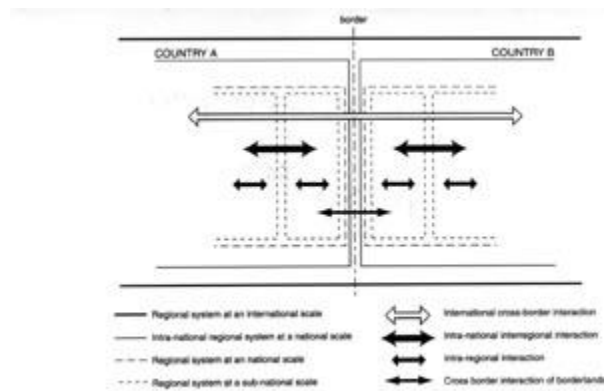


FIGURE 1 Regional Systems Inter- and Intra-National Interactions (van der Schelde and Hoekveld 1992)

Methodology

The preliminary research and findings for this paper reflect the initial interviews of an expert panel of key informants which include agricultural experts, planners, public executives, private sector executives, academics, immigration attorneys, corporate attorneys, and regional employment and economic experts. A total of twenty-five people have been formally interviewed. Fifteen being Americans working in Whatcom county, and ten Canadians working in the Greater Vancouver Area, the Lower Fraser Valley, or Whatcom county. Each person interviewed was asked the following six questions:

- Does the GVA, LFV influence Whatcom county?
- Does Whatcom county influence the GVA, LFV?, if so, then how?
- Do you do any sort of collaboration/planning with Whatcom county? (for Canadians)
- Do you do any sort of collaboration/planning with the GVA, LFV? (for Americans)

- Are there any particular policies, such as the Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, GST, etc., which have influenced the effects that you are describing?
- Looking to the future, what role do you see Whatcom county/the GVA, LFV playing as the GVA, LFV/Whatcom county continues to grow and change?

Each interviewee was asked additional questions that related to his/her areas of expertise in order to examine the details which could further explain this relationship.

Content analysis of each interview was used to extract common themes and ideas as well unique individual perspectives. Overall, an issue was considered a major factor or a theme if 25% or more of the respondents considered it important. Based on this methodology, five themes emerged regarding the Greater Vancouver Area's and the Lower Fraser Valley's influences in Whatcom County. (There were minimal if any influences in the opposite direction -- Whatcom county influencing GVA, LFV). These influences include the following:

- The development and growth of Whatcom county as a "bridge city", or "bridge county";
- The expansion of Canadian owned small entrepreneurial firms;
- The availability of professional trade related services;
- The rise in trade related physical infrastructure;
- The rise in Canadian owned industrial development;
- The purchasing of Whatcom county farmland by Canadian berry farmers;
- The development and growth of commercial and retail activities in relation to crossborder shopping, and
- The transitions of Canadian owned recreational residential properties.

Each of these influences will now be discussed in turn and possible underlying mechanisms of these influences will then be assessed.

Whatcom County as a Bridge City

With the removal of trade barriers between the United States and Canada over the years, Whatcom county's communities are quickly becoming gateways, or bridge cities, between these two economies. According to Kresl (1991) bridge cities serve as conduits between two national economies. According to van der Schelde and Hoekveld, this type of activity may be classified as an "international cross border interaction" since the goods and services only pass through the cross border region. In order to be an effective bridge city, a community must invest in roads, port improvements, bridges, ship-railroad linkages, customs facilities, and warehousing for transshipment centres, and establishing regional offices for firms in the forwarding business, and even the assembly of components from both national economies into finished goods.

Additionally, the community must also ensure that the area has a critical mass of firms providing financial, legal, brokerage, transportation and a variety of other necessary business services that relate to continental and international trade (Kresl 1993). The most important attributes of a bridge city are not its physical components, per say, but its attributes which enable the city to move beyond just expediting goods to adding value to them and providing the necessary professional services which help to guarantee that these goods reach their market destinations without delay. Essentially, Whatcom county needs to support the development of professional

and value added services which will siphon and recirculate the flows of international cross border interactions (Figure 2).

[FIGURE 2 Influence of a Bridge City in Inter- and Intra-National Regional Systems \(van der Schelde and Hoekveld 1992\)](#)

The Expansion of Small Entrepreneurial Firms

Whatcom county is quickly becoming a "control point" for many small aggressive companies that have origins in the GVA or the LFV. Essentially, many are using Whatcom county as a "bridge city" to facilitate the flow of goods between the Canadian and American consumer market.

Since the mid 1980s, over 500 Canadian firms used Whatcom county as an extension of their Vancouver area headquarter facilities. According to three interviewees, Whatcom county is perfectly situated from a geographic perspective to serve as a bridge city. The northern portions of the county are within a one hour round-trip drive of the GVA and there is easy access to Interstate 5. Other attributes include the opportunity for a U.S. address, U.S. mail service, a good labour force, and just having an overall U.S. presence. Roughly 10% of these types of companies are interested in the perceived abundance of Whatcom county's expandable land. However, according to interviewees, the majority of these expanding Canadian entrepreneurs want to locate in Whatcom county because they can drive to their distribution or warehouse facilities, take care of matters, and still be at home for dinner at a reasonable hour. The regional location of Whatcom county to the GVA and the LFV is allowing these companies to shift parts of their headquarter operations into the U.S. while still being able to maintain other major headquarter operations in Canada.

Bridge City Professional Services

An essential component to the success of any bridge city is a critical mass of firms that provide financial, legal, brokerage, transportation and a variety of other necessary business services (Kresl 1993). Over the past twenty years, Whatcom county has amassed a significant number of these types of professional services which is unusually high compared to other counties of comparable size that are not located along an international border. In fact, according to interviewees, Whatcom county's only true competitor at this point is Seattle. However, with the rising number of goods crossing the international borders into Whatcom county on a daily basis, Whatcom county needs to be aware and proactive in increasing the number of professional services which expedite the movement of these goods. Otherwise, these goods will flow to border crossings which provide and encourages this growing knowledge infrastructure (Kresl 1993).

Bridge City Physical Infrastructure

The third leg to the foundation of building a solid bridge city is the investment in state of the art physical infrastructure. The effects of the Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, and the growing population of the greater Vancouver area are putting pressure on the four main border crossings

in Whatcom county -- Peace Arch, Truck Crossing, Lynden, and Sumas (Hacker et al 1997). This has propelled the county to form alliances with federal, state, provincial, and private and non-profit interests groups to seek out planning strategies and funding mechanisms which will alleviate some of these pressures. In addition to site specific border improvements, a public-private nonprofit partnership is exploring the possibility of establishing a major bulk port facility in northern Whatcom county. In fact, the major private investor is a Canadian based company. According to both Canadian and American port specialists, a primary reason for Canadian interest in a port facility in Whatcom county is to alleviate the growing pressure and bottlenecks that currently occurs at the Vancouver Port Corporation facilities.

Possible Underlying Mechanisms

Overall, according to interviewees, the discussion and debates around the passing of NAFTA within both the U.S. and Canada did more to raise the psychology and awareness of doing business in the U.S. for Canadian entrepreneurs than the actual provisions of the policy itself. This increased awareness helped many entrepreneurs see the opportunities that Whatcom county has because of its location in the U.S., but still only an hour round trip from their homes. Additionally, two interviewees cited the fact that many of the new immigrants to the Vancouver area are extremely entrepreneurial in nature, and if successful, will eventually want to start marketing to Americans. If immigration continues into the GVA, Whatcom county can expect to see continued growth in these entrepreneurial firms setting up headquarter extensions and branch firms. A spin-off of these activities is the rise of export and trade related professions in addition to improved physical infrastructure. These professional jobs will provide long needed high end salaries and encourage well educated people to remain in Whatcom county. Finally, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, with the rapid growth in the GVA and the increased trade activities across the Pacific side of the Canada-U.S. border, there is growing pressure on Whatcom county to be used as a transfer point, or staging area, for goods moving from one regional economy to the other. This being the case, Whatcom county will need to strengthen its current physical infrastructure in addition to creating new types of bridge city infrastructure, for example, a major bulk handling port. These physical improvements and changes in Whatcom county's built environment will create the most obvious indicators that the county is moving from an economy that was dependent on forestry, farming, and fishing to one that is dependent on expediting the flow of goods over an international border.

Industrial Development

With Whatcom county quickly becoming a bridge city, a significant secondary attribute is the opportunity to add value to products before sending them to their final destination. This type of economic development activity will help to create opportunities for many less skilled workers who might have been heavily impacted by the recent employment downturn in the Pacific Northwest's forestry and fishing industries. Although retail development was a key economic strategy in the late 1980s, interviewees stated that Whatcom county is realizing that just promoting retail development is not a successful strategy in building and sustaining family wage jobs. According to three interviewees who have expertise in land use planning and regional economic development, many of the smaller communities in Whatcom county are now zoning significant amounts of land as industrial for economic development, and business interests in

British Columbia and Seattle are their primary targets (Bellingham Whatcom Economic Development Council 1997). According to one legal expert, since the mid 1980s there has been a steady growth of Vancouver area owned companies setting up manufacturing operations in Whatcom county. In fact, there are now over 125 Canadian owned companies in Whatcom county, and ten to twelve Canadian companies are now locating in Whatcom county on a yearly basis. As one can see from Table 1, a majority of this relocation and expansion activity originates from Vancouver proper. However, there is significant expansion activity coming from areas both east and south of Vancouver proper (i.e. Burnaby, Richmond, and Surrey) into Whatcom county (Table 1).

[TABLE 1 Top Five Areas of Origin for Canadian Companies Expanding into Whatcom County, Washington](#)

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Location	Type of Activity				Employees			Capital (\$ millions)		
	Mfg/ Prccsng	Constr./ Develop.	Service/ Other	Sales/ Dist.	1 - 4	5 - 20	>21-100	<\$.1	\$.1-.5	>\$.51
Vancouver	10	13	3	12	10	11	8	14	5	12
Whatcom Cnt. ¹	14	5	8	6	7	17	4	11	9	9
Surrey	6	1	2	6	3	7	4	4	4	8
Richmond	8	1	3	3	4	7	3	5	3	6
Burnaby	3	1	1	3	1	4	2	3	2	2

Note: 1. Canadian owned companies who consider Whatcom County as headquarters.

Source: Fourth Corner Economic Development Group. Whatcom County, Washington. 1995.

Possible Underlying Mechanisms

There are many reasons for a business person to locate a manufacturing facility in Whatcom county, while still being able to drive home to the GVA in a reasonable time frame. Interviewees cited five to six major reasons for Canadian companies wanting to locate in Whatcom county. These reasons include the following:

- Located right on the I-5 corridor and has immediate access to 35 million consumers between Washington and California;
- Goods do not have to go through inspections and delays at US customs;
- Cheaper serviced industrial land than in the GVA;
- Labour is cheaper and is not as prone to unionise;
- The cost of doing business is lower, and
- Access to US banks.

However, according to a study done by KPMG in 1996 and sponsored by the Canadian Government, the Royal Bank of Canada and the Economic Developers Association of Canada, the cost of doing business in Bellingham, Washington was slightly higher than in Vancouver. The study stated that Canada enjoyed a wide advantage in the cost of labour and benefits and a smaller edge in land, construction, electricity and debt-servicing costs (Milner 1996). The study also noted that the cost edge would be maintained even if the Canadian dollar strengthened. In fact, the Canadian dollar would have to reach 87 cents U.S. before U.S. cities could catch up to their Canadian counterparts.

Despite these findings, according to economic development specialists on both sides of the border, Whatcom county has still set its sights on attracting companies from Canada, and expects relative success for these efforts. Regarding this conundrum, probably the next logical step in this study would be to ask companies who have recently settle on either one side of the border or the other what were the determining factors regarding their location decisions.

From a purely economic perspective, many of the communities are promoting and competing to capture manufacturing when this type of development is providing less and less employment in light of automation (Thurow 1993). Similar to retail, by encouraging companies from out of the area to set up plants within Whatcom county, the decision making regarding the direction and growth of these new industries will be made outside of Whatcom county. Additionally, from an environmental perspective, agricultural experts and planners noted that there is now tremendous pressure for the conversion of agricultural lands to industrial. From a social perspective, these communities are looking outside for innovation and ideas in order to enhance and rejuvenate their surroundings. Although community leaders might think that this type of economic development is what they need to maintain their economy and way of life, many do not realise until these new industries have permanently altered their communities that perhaps more reflection before action was needed (Bello et al 1994).

The Transition of Farmland Ownership in Whatcom County

Since the early 1990s, Whatcom county has surpassed the Balkans as the number one producer and exporter of raspberries in the world. Of the 120,000 acres of farmland in production in Whatcom county, approximately 6,000 are in raspberry production. It is an extremely lucrative cash crop, and prices for these berries are at a premium. It is so lucrative, in fact, that many Canadians who are raspberry farmers just over the border in the areas of Surrey and Langley are quickly buying up the raspberry farms in Whatcom county and farming them as well. Many Canadian farmers have bought the adjacent raspberries fields directly across the Canada-US boundary so that their rows of raspberries line up perfectly from one country to the next. According to van der Schelde and Hoekveld (1992), this particular type of cross border activity may be considered a cross-border interaction. The reason for this is that much of the cross-border activity originates from within the region, and spills over or is purposely developed for policy and/or profit implications on the other side of the border.

Possible Underlying Mechanisms

According to interviewees, farmland in Whatcom county is significantly cheaper than just over the border in Surrey and Langley. An acre of raspberries costs about \$14,000 US in Whatcom county, whereas that same acre would cost anywhere from \$CDN 30,000 to \$CDN 60,000 around the Abbotsford area. Interviewees cited the severe pressures on developable land on the Canadian side of the border as the main reason for this cost differential. At this time, over half of all raspberry farmers are Canadian and of East Indian origins. Regarding effects, this particular situation has many different sides to it. From an environmental perspective, the preservation and purchasing of farmland for the sake of farming is good in light of the rapid growth of the area. According to one interviewee, the U.S. dairy industry is suffering a depression and farmers are tempted to convert their lands to residential or industrial uses in order to sustain an income. The demand for additional berry land might stave off developers who are interested in converting dairy lands to residential and industrial properties. However, modern day methods of berry farming require excessive amounts of biocides and fertilisers which are not particularly good for the surrounding soil, air, and water. Additionally, since raspberry farming in this area is quickly becoming a global niche market, there is little room or demand to try to experiment with crops that might better serve the surrounding region between Vancouver B.C., Seattle, and Portland, Oregon.

The social component of the transition of raspberry farm ownership is probably the most interesting and perhaps reflects some of the challenges that Whatcom county must continue to work with if it wants to be better incorporated into the halo of Vancouver's global access. As stated previously, almost all of the Canadians who are purchasing the raspberry farms in Whatcom county are first or second generation East Indians. According to five interviewees, this is causing some tension in the farming community of Lynden which is known for its strong Dutch heritage and generational ties to the community and farms. According to the author's interviews, many of the people in Lynden and the surrounding communities do not know much about these new farmers except the fact that they are buying up all of the available raspberry farms and that they keep to themselves. It was noted that it is difficult to compete financially with these new farmers since it is perceived that these newcomers have access to sources of financing, such as through their extended families and religious connections, that the local farmers do not have.

Overall, a key component to a community's continued development in an age of globalisation versus the support and participation of all people affected by change. The spillover effect of Canadian farmers of East Indian origins into Whatcom county provides an example of the concerns and issues that might arise within communities who think they want to open their doors to the world for economic reasons, but have not educated their communities regarding cross cultural awareness and understanding. Without this awareness, newcomers tend to feel awkward and unwelcomed, and the community can remain stagnant and unchanged.

Growth of Commercial and Retail Properties

In the late 1980s, Bellis Fair, a major shopping centre, was built along Interstate 5 to the north of Bellingham in order to intercept GVA shoppers with destinations to the proposed Mt. Vernon Mall in Skagit county and the greater Seattle area. The Canadian dollar fluctuated between 80

and 92 cents compared to the American dollar. In fact, according to interviewees, at times over 50% of the shoppers were Canadian. This has spurred additional retail and commercial developments all along the I-5 corridor from Bellingham to the international border (Evenden and Turbeville 1992). However, according to some interviewees, many Canadian retailers are reacting to provide the same shopping experiences, such as big box discount stores, that are offered on the U.S. side of the border. According to one interviewee, Canadian retailers still cannot compete with the inventory nor the level of service offered in U.S. stores. The person went on to say that the biggest market of Canadians who are drawn to shopping over the border are those who are new to the Vancouver area. Essentially, the longer a person has lived in the Vancouver area, the less the person will shop over the border. Therefore, with the GVA estimated to grow by another million to 1.5 million people over the next ten years, retail development will still be a significant factor in Whatcom county's future, but not at the level of intensity that occurred in the late 1980s.

Possible Underlying Mechanisms

Cross border shopping is a common phenomenon along many boundaries which host different tax rates and the availability of goods. Based on these policy differentials, according to Van der Schelde and Hoekveld (1992), this type of activity may be considered a cross-border interaction of the borderlands. Whatcom county has only recently begun to take full advantage of this situation through the promotion of lower gas prices and consumer goods. However, this economic development strategy is closely tied to the strength of the Canadian dollar. Thus, its success or failure is largely out of the realm of influence or control of Whatcom county. County economic development specialists have begun to realise this, and are now trying to diversify the economy by promoting and recruiting manufacturing and other industries. Nevertheless, with the southern suburbs of the GVA planning to host a majority of the region's growth over the next ten years, Whatcom county will still continue to develop shopping facilities within the more northern portions of the county.

From an economic and planning perspective, the building and promoting of these new shopping centres has devastated the heart of the downtown centres for Bellingham and other areas. Additionally, from an environmental perspective, these developments have been built on prime agricultural lands. Although this is a common phenomenon in many mid-sized towns throughout America, the planning and development of these shopping centres were designed not only to serve the needs of Whatcom county but also to cater to shoppers living in the GVA. Thus, these cross-border malls are designed to not only attract local residents, but also to entice consumers across an international boundary. According to one interviewee, this commercial capacity targeting to an outside population makes it difficult for the downtown centre to develop a niche or specialty market that is not already being filled by stores in these new developments. Many people must now drive much longer distances and battle city-style traffic in order to purchase every day and specialty goods. In fact, one interviewee mentioned a story about how an older Bellingham resident has been so frightened to drive to Bellis Fair that he now has everything mail ordered to his home. According to one planner, this puts an additional burden on the lives of people who do not own, nor are capable of driving cars.

Overall, from a social perspective, the promotion of retail services to American and Canadian shoppers alike was so successful that now the low end service industry employs 30% of Whatcom county's workforce (Whatcom County Planning and Development Services 1997). However, Whatcom county's economic development strategy of catering to a metropolitan area that is within its Berrigan, but outside of its political influence has created economic dependencies and dynamics that are beyond the county's control. Thus, there is a political disconnect between those who make the decisions, and those who are affected by these decisions.

The Transition of Recreational Properties

Even since the 1960s, pockets of Canadian owned recreational residential properties may be found throughout the more rural and scenic areas of Whatcom county. These properties were relatively cheap compared to similar properties in B.C., and they were only an hour to two hours driving distance away from the GVA (Ruttan 1977). Many of these recreational communities have anywhere from a few hundred residences to a couple of thousand, and were primarily used as second homes (cottages) for the weekend. Over the past ten years, many of these areas have gone through, or are going through, a transition from being a recreational residential community to a community which has permanent full time residents. For example, both Birch Bay, located on the water in the northwest portion of the county, and Paradise Lakes, located along Highway 542 which leads to Mount Baker, were both considered recreational communities with well over 60% of the population being seasonal, and Canadian (Whatcom County Planning and Development Services 1997). However, each of the communities is going through a transition to becoming a more permanent place of residence for the U.S. residents of Whatcom county. According to one planner, the areas are quickly changing from over 60% Canadian recreational residential ownership to a 50/50 mix of Canadians and permanent residents. Eventually, both areas will be over 60% permanent residents. The communities do differ in what types of residents they attract. According to interviewees, Birch Bay, being some of the last underdeveloped beach front along the inhabited west coast, is quickly being bought up and developed by wealthy retirees, professionals, and U.S. executives who work in Vancouver, but prefer to live in Whatcom county for lifestyle and income tax reasons. Once again, according to van der Schelde and Hoekveld (1992) this type of activity may be considered a cross-border interaction of the borderlands. Additionally, with the development of a major port facility at Cherry Point, which is immediately to its south, Birch Bay will become the logical place of residence for many who will be employed by this new industry. The Paradise Lakes area, however, is being inhabited by people looking for affordable housing, but who are unable to afford housing prices in the more urban portions of the county.

Possible Underlying Mechanisms

Regarding the development of new executive style homes, according to real estate specialists, this activity is being fueled by dual income professional couples who would not be able to afford a home of similar quality and size in the GVA. According to interviewees, at least one partner usually has dual citizenship which allows the couple to legally live in the United States, but be able to work in Canada. Additionally, the US and Canadian immigrations and customs services have instigated a program, call the CANPASS/PACE program which allows frequent border

travelers to move more quickly across the border after going through a background check. This particular program provides a guaranteed conduit for these Canadians who reside on the US side of the border to reach their Canadian place of employment in a timely manner every day.

Recreational residential use have both helped and hindered Whatcom county. These secondary homes have encouraged pockets of growth that would not normally have been built if only the residents of Whatcom county influenced the growth and building of weekend recreational homes. Many of these cottages, cabins, and secondary homes are quickly becoming some of the only affordable housing alternatives for many people who reside in Whatcom county. However, as more and more people locate to these removed, but relatively affordable areas, it contributes to the sprawl of the urban fringe and places additional burdens on services, such as transit and health care for which the public must bear the cost. Although these cabins have helped to remedy the short-term economic problems of purchasing affordable shelter for some people, it contributes to long term public problems of having to sustain the infrastructure and the social needs of a people who are most likely not able to sustain themselves.

These new homes have spurred construction development in an area of the county (and region) which has been historically depressed and isolated. Although these homes and their new owners are greatly adding to the quality of the border towns and beach communities, some planners interviewed noted that these regions are quickly becoming gentrified, and many local residents can no longer afford to live in them.

Conclusion

Whatcom county, sharing the same natural Berrigan as the GVA and the LFV, but segregated by an artificial boundary, has experienced the influence of its northern neighbour in changing ways. From a historical perspective, Whatcom county has served as a "weekend get-away" for the GVA and the LFV. Evidence of this are the many cabins, cottages, and small homes dotting the once rural and still scenic outlying areas of Whatcom county. However, in light of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the sheer pressure of population growth, Whatcom county is strategically aligning itself to serve a new purpose within the sphere of influence of the GVA and the LFV. This new purpose is to serve as a bridge city or a "gateway" between the two economies of Canada and the United States.

Whatcom county will go through tremendous changes from being seen as a periphery at both the state and national level to becoming an important gateway in the era of regional trade liberalisation. From an economic perspective, there is a tremendous push for the GVA and Whatcom to work together and communicate as partners in order to make the most of free trade. However, based on the response of interviewees, the border still facilitates a feeling of disconnection in regards to the more social and environmental components found within the Lower Fraser Valley. Rarely was it mentioned that any sort of consistent communication or planning beyond preparing and coordinating for natural disasters ever occurred between the GVA and the LFV and Whatcom county. As the GVA and the LFV become more and more economically interdependent, it is the role of planning to begin to facilitate better environmental and social linkages between the GVA, the LFV and Whatcom county. These environmental and social linkages are just as crucial as the economic linkages if the region wishes to remain in

control of its own destiny. The ability to communicate and exchange ideas between two areas that affect one another is rare in the age of globalisation. If realised and acted upon, both areas may preserve their environment and way of life and be able to make better decisions for the future of the region as a whole rather than two distinct parts.

Looking Ahead

Looking at a longer term perspective, it is hoped that this research will also help to build upon the borderland theory, and how the Canadian and American cultures influence its development. Additionally, from the assessment of these land use patterns, one might be better able to determine how the border acts as a 'shield' and/or a 'sieve' when moving from one country to the next, in light of a "Borderless World". As well, interregional industrial interactions (e.g. software, aerospace, tourism, and the film industry) between Seattle and Vancouver will be examined, and possible influences that these activities have on Whatcom county will be explored. Finally, from a practical perspective, scenario building will be used to examine how the expansion of major physical infrastructure, such as a high speed passenger train, might bring Whatcom county into a more seamless connectivity with Vancouver, B.C. and Seattle, and how the Canadian and American cultures will influence and drive Whatcom county's character and nature of growth into the next century.

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