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## The development of a therapeutic community for homeless persons with co-morbid disorders: moving beyond the binary imperative implied by NIMBY

### Abstract

Similar to most urban centers in Canada, the city of Victoria is experiencing a substantial increase in the number of homeless persons with co-morbid disorders, and a decline in the services available to meet the needs of this population. Using a discourse analysis of print media articles, this research examines the prevalence of NIMBY (not in my back yard) sentiment to a farm-based therapeutic community for homeless persons with co-morbid disorders. Opposition was based on concern for maintaining the character of the broader community and fear that the farm would be transformed into an institution. Supporters argued that opponents were selfish and cruel because they were blocking a humanitarian effort to help people in need. Evidence of NIMBY is present in that the siting process evoked the stigma associated with homelessness. However, the binary imperative commonly found in the literature is insufficient in this case as a third party, First Nations, claimed ancestral right to the land on which the farm was located. The results suggest that more creative methods of analysis are necessary in the siting of human service facilities.

**Keywords:** NIMBY, homelessness, co-morbid disorder, therapeutic community, discourse analysis.

**JEL Classification:** A14, I10, I12, I18, I19, L30, Q0, R14.

### Introduction

Similar to other Canadian cities, Victoria faces a growing population of homeless persons, many with co-morbid disorders including addiction and mental disorder. Over the past decade the number of persons classified as homeless in Canada has risen from roughly 40,000 to over 150,000 (HRSDC, 2010). As with other developed nations, the reasons for this escalation can be traced to the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill population, an increase in the overall number of homeless persons and a decrease in available low-income housing, factors that emerged in the 1980s (Phol, 2001). The stigma associated with homelessness has resulted in the perception that homeless persons are lazy and responsible for their circumstances (Takahashi, 1997). In her book “The Ugly Canadian: The Rise and Fall of a Caring Society” Murphy (1999) highlights a trend of increasing and visible poverty amidst growing prosperity and abundance, and a general apathy towards homeless persons.

A 2005 survey of the homeless population in Victoria identified over 1,600 homeless persons, 50% of whom suffered from addiction, mental disorders and physical ailments (Cool Aid Society, 2005). Efforts of municipal and provincial government agencies, augmented with non-governmental organizations, have done little to ameliorate the situation. Since the survey, the number of homeless persons has continued to rise with many ending up in the criminal justice system (Watts, 2009). Interestingly, a majority of homeless persons do not wish to remain homeless, but cannot or do not want to access exist-

ing governmental and non-governmental services. And, the formation of an interagency coalition to end homelessness (City of Victoria, n.d.) has yet to have a significant impact on the situation.

In 2009, a charitable organization, Creating Homefulness Society (CHS), purchased a 78 hectare farm with the intention of creating a therapeutic community. Woodwynn Farms Therapeutic Community (WFTC) is being developed to help a small portion of the growing number of homeless persons in greater Victoria, BC<sup>1</sup>. When fully operational, the community will treat over 90 homeless persons suffering from co-morbid disorders including addiction and mental disorder. In contrast to the majority of therapeutic communities around the world, WFTC is not dependent on government resources; rather, its development and operation is based on the financial support of philanthropists and other public, non-governmental contributions. To that end, WFTC is being developed with the goal of becoming partially self-sustainable through the production of farmed goods and secondary products (CHS, n.d.). The decision to develop a non-profit and non-government subsidized facility for homeless persons with co-morbid disorders is based on the CHS experience with displaced populations. Dependence on government funding places agencies such as CHS in a precarious position subject to budget cutbacks, changes in government agendas and the adherence to bureaucratic structures that place an inordinate drain on limited human and capital resources.

<sup>1</sup> WFTC represents a unique development in that it appears to be the first to focus on homeless persons with co-morbid disorders in Canada. See Young (2010) for a detailed description of the community and the therapeutic model.

Woodwynn Farm is located on Vancouver Island approximately 15 kilometres from the city of Victoria on the Saanich Peninsula. Over two years of fundraising and negotiation were required to obtain the property. To gain support for the project, the director of CHS and several volunteers engaged in community outreach to the home community, Central Saanich, and to the greater Victoria area. Acquisition of the property involved a substantial amount of effort on behalf of the director and volunteers of CHS, and the generous financial contributions of undisclosed philanthropists. Under provincial legislation, Woodwynn Farm is designated as agricultural one and its development is restricted under the Agricultural Land Reserve (Agricultural Land Commission Act, 2002). From the outset, neither provincial or municipal approval were required for purchase of the property, but zoning for a TC has been, and continues to be, a contentious issue as housing for 90 residents requires substantial development. At the moment, WFTC can support six residents, but CHS intends to pursue zoning changes for future growth (CHS, n.d.).

Although WFTC started accepting residents in Spring 2010, opposition to the purchase of the property and establishment of the community has been subtle, albeit persistent. Opponents to the community have been labelled NIMBY's (not in my backyard), a concept that denotes a negative community response to proposed facilities. NIMBY differs from anti-growth protest as the latter rejects any development in the proposed community (Pendall, 1999). And, while the voice of opposition may not represent the sentiment of an entire community, it is generally loud enough to catch the attention of decision-makers (e.g., politicians or financial contributors) regarding ostensibly unwanted facilities. Regarding human service facility siting, NIMBY is frequently associated with LULU (locally unwanted land uses) (Dear, 1992). Whether these facilities and/or the services they provide are supported by the state, financed privately or a combination of both (i.e., a non-governmental organization) opponents argue that such facilities are unnecessary, not suited to the community or the clientele they serve, and have the potential to overburden existing community budgets and services. Due to the nature of clientele, health risks are frequently invoked as an argument to resist development. As well, human service facilities threaten to reduce property values, personal security, neighbourhood amenities, and community aesthetics (Dear, 1992; Schively, 2007).

### 1. NIMBY/LULU in perspective

From a non-critical perspective, opponents of human service facilities are considered to be narrow,

self-interested and irresponsible because their position contradicts the common good of society (Hermanson, 2007). Further, they are considered irrational and uncivil in spirit; their position detracts from societal good by blocking the development of much needed facilities (Cowan, 2003). In contrast, the people responsible for siting decisions, politicians, experts and other stakeholders are considered rational and civic-minded; obviously they have weighed the costs and benefits and arrived at the best decision for the community. While seemingly straightforward, this utilitarian model is difficult to apply because both the short-term and long-term costs and benefits may not be known. As Gibson (2005) cautions, experts sometimes get it wrong.

From an analytical sociological position, a simple binary interpretation of supporters and detractors of human service facilities belies the contested nature of land-use and the social, political and economic background in which siting occurs. If politicians and expert planners represent the public good, then de-facto grass roots organizations opposed to human service facilities represent the enemy, a force to be overcome. Unfortunately, scholars in the area are frequently co-opted, perhaps unwittingly, into becoming instruments in the siting process by investigating NIMBY and LULU groups in order to determine ways to usurp their cause<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, if politicians and planners can make siting decisions based on the common good, then it is just as likely that opponents to a siting decision can present rational and civic-minded arguments representing their own version of the common good. In the end, each side of the debate argues for the moral high ground by discrediting the other side. Even if there is a winner, it is not a clean victory, nor is it without future conflict or antagonisms between sides.

A disturbing component of efforts to overcome NIMBY and LULU opposition to human service siting rests in the claim that the negative connotations ascribed to opposition groups suggests that they need to be controlled (McClymont & Hare, 2008). Clearly, if successful this antidemocratic sentiment may lead to the slippery slope of silencing other LULU groups. Alternatively, opposition in the form of NIMBY and LULU gives rise to debate and can lead to policies that reflect the good of society, whatever that might be given the issue. The rhetoric revolving around NIMBY and LULU represents a fundamental disjuncture in logic. As Wexler (1996) argues, the decision for siting a facility represents one, not the only solution to a problem. The binary imperative is rarely challenged, perhaps for good

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Gibson (2005).

reason; the underlying cause of the problems leading to the need for increased community services is vexing to say the least.

In the main, the binary imperative sidesteps the debate on the wholesale restructuring of social relations that require the externalization of social problems and the concomitant necessity of siting human services facilities. From one perspective, the universal principle of justice as fairness, in the Rawlsian sense, trumps a community's right to reject human services facilities (Lake, 1996). The principle of equity holds that the distribution of amenities and disadvantages should be distributed equally across social, economic and geographical spheres. Furthermore, the dialectical relationship between opponents (NIMBY/LULU) and proponents of facilities or services detracts from the state's failure to mediate successfully, the damage caused by capital restructuring in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lake, 1993). The state is failing at dealing the problems emerging as a result of this restructuring, and thus it is politically more expedient to focus on NIMBY/LULU debates, not to say more convenient. The intractable crises involving homelessness, addiction and mental health are symptomatic of deeper structural problems with capital (Wexler, 1996). The NIMBY/LULU debate surrounding siting is evidence of these problems, we just need to recognize them as such; it is capital that requires the facilities and services, not communities.

The binary imperative evidenced in NIMBY/LULU debates on human service facilities also evokes a spatial metaphor (Takahashi, 1997). The factors leading up to the increased demand for such facilities – the decline of the welfare state, the redistribution of human services, fiscal crises in governments – has resulted in local communities bearing the responsibility for homelessness and the problems associated with it. However, at the center of resistance is the stigma associated with homelessness, productivity, a social norm associated with acceptance. Lack of productivity is tantamount to dangerousness, criminality and moral culpability for one's social circumstances. Takahashi (1997) argues that the resulting fear of difference is projected onto objects and spaces so that the location of homes and services are tainted with the stigma. If a high degree of importance is placed on these objects and spaces, then the moral contagion introduced by human service agencies threatens the identity of residents and their communities. Wilton (2002) extends this analysis by introducing colour into the equation. Homelessness, and the problems associated with it, not only result in a loss of productivity, but also the loss of whiteness. A romanticized view of the community to a bygone era is justification for excluding

disabled, dirty and dependent persons because they threaten the character of the community.

## 2. Relevant research

While the literature on NIMBY and therapeutic communities is scant, research pertaining to NIMBY and the siting of facilities and services for homelessness persons with co-morbid disorders is more prevalent. The results of a few studies are presented here as they highlight the contested nature of efforts to deal with issues relating to homelessness, co-morbid disorders and attempts to respond to them. While not comprehensive, these studies provide a contextual background for the present research as they relate to proposals aimed at facilities/services, and highlight the conceptual problematic inherent in NIMBY research.

Research on opposition to the development of facilities for homelessness persons with HIV/AIDS shows evidence of successful NIMBY campaigns. Takahashi's (1997) analysis reveals that such persons possess negative characterizations and as such, they and the places they inhabit carry a socially undesirable stigma that most people want to avoid. The establishment of human service facilities is thus difficult if not impossible in communities that have the resources to mobilize opposition. Lake (1996) observes that the issue of volunteer communities – those that are not in any position to oppose development because (1) they are not able to mobilize politically; and (2) they need any economic investment that they can find – often end up with a disproportionate number of such facilities/services. Policies such as New York's *Fair Share* formula, wherein facilities and resources are distributed more equitably across neighbourhoods (Lake, 1993) have been yet proven successful. More often than not, facilities and services are left undeveloped and those in need are left without the much needed resources. Wilton's (2002) research on NIMBY and race in San Pedro, California, underscores the conflict involved in siting housing for non-white special-needs clients in an upwardly-mobile European-American context.

In contrast to opposition that is based on client/group characteristics such as HIV/AIDS or race, research on over 800 Swedish residential care facilities by Gerdner and Borell (2003) suggests that community resistance can be traced to the characteristics of the community and the facility itself. Using several models, the authors were able to show that NIMBY reactions were most prevalent concerning the siting of large-scale facilities in rural settings. While sex explained very little of the model, being male was also a significant factor in the results as females were more accepting of facilities.



Lastly, research involving the remodelling of a hotel for homeless persons reveals the complexity of NIMBY responses to human services development in downtown Seattle. Referred to as Seattle's *Hygiene War*, Gibson (2005) documents the struggle of a non-profit organization to provide hygienic services (shower and washing facilities) to the city's street population. After securing the Glen Hotel for development, the Low-Income Housing Institute (LIHI) was faced with opposition from business and unfavourable coverage in the mass media. The Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) presented city council with a petition arguing that such a development would seriously compromise the economic well-being to the city core. In the end, the DSA provided funding that was matched by the city so that an alternative site could be purchased and developed for the express purpose of helping homeless persons, further away from the disputed Glen Hotel site. Interestingly, the compromise was not a result of the NIMBY debate, but of LIHI's status as the owner of the hotel (Gibson, 2005).

In essence, contextualizing the development of the Glen Hotel within the NIMBY framework is inaccurate. A simple dichotomy of for and against positions, one based on a humanitarian concern and the other on economic interests, underestimates the influence of other factors. In this case, LIHI was able to negotiate a compromise that resulted in obtaining the facilities they needed and, as importantly, having the expenses paid for by elements of the community that bare some responsibility for dealing with the problem (Gibson, 2005).

### 3. Methods

The method used to assess NIMBY and its impact on the evolution of WFTC involves an analysis of print media articles appearing in local newspapers from February 2007 to March 2010. A total of 60 articles relating to WFTC were identified, starting with the announcement of the sale of the property and ending with an editorial on the NIMBY issue surrounding WFTC. Of the 27 articles selected for inclusion in the analysis, 13 were reports and 14 were editorials. These articles were selected because they contained content related to the purchase of the property for use as a therapeutic community and support for or opposition to the development of WFTC.

The discourse analysis in this research is informed by an emphasis on conversational and textual analysis used in critical sociology (Blommaert, 2005), social psychology and communication studies (Given, 2008; Potter, 1997). Given the naturalistic nature of the data, i.e., they were not collected for the purpose of this research (Lofland & Lofland,

1995), the issues raised in the reports represent the views held by the authors of the articles. In particular, the processes and procedures that people used to formulate and rationalize their position are analyzed. As Starks and Trinidad (2007) observe, "...language both shapes and reflects dynamic cultural, social, and political practices" (1374). Of importance here are the different views expressed in the articles and how reality is interpreted and portrayed in text, including evidence of persuasive argument through claims and counterclaims. Regarding support for WFTC, articles were selected if they contained discourse relating to: (1) humanitarian concerns for homeless persons; (2) examples of other successful community based facilities/services; and (3) examples of pro-social activities in which residents in the community would be involved. The discourse on opposition was delineated by reference to articles that: (1) expressly opposed the development of a TC on NIMBY grounds; (2) provided evidence of controversy over land use such as zoning; and (3) contravened the best interests of the community. In most cases, the discourses for support and opposition overlapped, whether it for or against WFTC was determined by how the argument was framed.

### 4. Results

The findings presented here summarize a detailed analysis of 27 data extracts. Given the volume of material, only a limited number of examples are presented so that readers can appreciate the essence of the data. References to NIMBY do appear in text, but they do not dominate the discourse. Opponents to the development of WFTC base their claims on: (1) the property should remain in its current state – the farm should not be transformed into an institution for homeless persons; (2) the unsuitability of the farm for a therapeutic community; and (3) concerns about public safety. Alternatively, supporters of a therapeutic community argue that WFTC is a humanitarian project required to deal with a significant homelessness problem in Victoria. Other counter claims directed at opponents' perspectives as unfair are presented, and a third party in the discourse, local First Nations, is identified.

Controversy over Woodwynn Farm began with it being listed for sale in 2007. Very quickly, the debate over the purchase of the property was dubbed a battle between land preservationists and advocates for the homeless (Moneo, 2008). Considered by some local residents to be a showpiece of the Saanich Peninsula, announcement of the sale prompted a discussion between interested citizens and city council in Central Saanich. The mayor suggested that the community raise money for purchase of the property and develop it for general use, including sports facilities

and nature trails, while maintaining its primary function as a farm (Wilson, 2007). Referring to the sale, another council member, Alistair Bryson, commented that "...not only does farmland provide food, it nurtures the spirit...[i]s this the community's wish?" (Wilson, 2007, p. C9). Bryson's comments underscored the attachment that many community members felt toward the farm – that it not be subjected to any kind of development.

Despite the metaphorical reference to an idyllic community with an organic farm supporting its residents, the proposal for a community farm did not include the original people living in the area. Chief Morris of the Tsartlip First Nation argued that the land now called Woodwynn Farm was taken away from his people.

"Does anyone really believe that we have been fairly compensated for 160 years of oppressive behavior on the part of invading Europeans who destroyed our way of life, stole our land and have tried everything to break us? Why shouldn't we look at Woodwynn Farm, land on the very border of our reserve, and say to the Canadian government, we want you to buy that farm for us. There is not much land left around here. Let us have back a part of our traditional territory" (Morris, 2008, p. D3).

Further debate including the Tsartlip Nation did not appear until later in the developmental process of WFTC and the opposition to, and support for, a TC in the discourse.

Although the official decision to establish a therapeutic community did not appear in the media until almost a year later, concern over any transformation of Woodwynn Farm formed the basis of argument against the development of a TC. At this point, objection to any development was the primary theme. Opposition to the use of the land became apparent in a municipality planning meeting where the director of CHS presented his case for the purchase of Woodwynn Farm and the development of a TC, which would require rezoning. Acting on what they believed was the wish of the community city council did not support the proposal. Fear of the unknown, safety and change to the community were cited as reasons for the decision (Westad, 2008). One resident commented that the farm was and always had been a public asset and that once zoned institutional, would be lost as a farm forever.

A local group of about 40 residents concerned about the status of the property as a farm announced its decision to purchase the property with the intention of placing a covenant on the land rendering it in perpetuity (Lavoie, 2008a). Later identified as the Farm Lands Trust (FLT), this group proposed to

raise money for the purchase of Woodwynn Farm to turn it into an organic community farm with outdoor recreation potential. The FLT admitted to having NIMBY sentiments, but that their aim was protect the farm (Lavoie, 2008a). Outlining their mission, a spokesperson for the FLT commented:

"We are simply for protection of valuable farmland in perpetuity, for giving young organic farmers in the valley access to the production of safe, organic food and for community involvement in choosing social programs for the disabled and socially disadvantaged. The seeds for our vision for the Mount Newton Valley as a community-based bread basket for Victoria were planted years ago. At least two of our board members have investigated ways to purchase Woodwynn Farm years before the therapeutic community put in its offer" (Souther, 2008, p. A13).

In response to public criticism and the council's rejection of rezoning, supporters of WFTC counteracted negative claims and identified protectionist attitudes. One supporter argued that WFTC would benefit the participants by giving them the security and skills to reorganize their lives while contributing to the production of the farm (Horie, 2008). Another advocate of WFTC in attendance at the council meeting observed an element of NIMBY in that there was support for the idea, but not in Central Saanich (Byron, 2008). The director of CHS was quoted as saying "If not here where? If not now when?" and challenged the entire region as being stuck about any kind of new idea (Paterson, 2008, p. A14).

Following council's decision to not rezone Woodwynn Farm, the FLT began raising money to purchase the farm before CHS could finish its own fundraising for purchase. The director of CHS argued that the FLT was engaged in a \$6-million NIMBY campaign and that "This is the most rabid, radical group of NIMBYs I have ever seen. There is such a fear of the homeless" (Lavoie, 2008b p. A1). The director also underscored the humanitarian aspect of a TC and the benefit it would bring to Victoria and that fears of Woodwynn Farm becoming an institutional setting were unfounded (Lavoie, 2008c p. A4). The NIMBY label was accepted by an FLT member who argued that the FLT's mission was to preserve the farm, and that "There is an element of NIMBYism..." (Lavoie, 2008b, p. A1). Others commented that the CHS had failed to allay the fears associated with a TC for homeless persons and that NIMBYism was legitimate response in this case. This person went on to argue that "The freedom to defend our homes is at the very root of our democracy" (Clark, 2008, p. A11). In his view, the NIMBY position is legitimate because the developers of WFTC failed to consider the impact of the project on property values, and the health and security of the community.

Opposition to WFTC also included an attack on the business plan guiding the siting process. The proposed TC was criticized on the grounds that: (1) using homeless persons as labor on Woodwynn Farm would not yield sufficient production; (2) the property was too expensive for such a purpose; and (3) that the distance of the farm from the city made a problem for participants and staff (Tunnicliffe, 2008). These comments were countered by a local resident who claimed that anti-NIMBY sentiment was pervasive in the opposition to WFTC. In her words, "I can't understand how people can be so selfish...How can people be so selfish and mean and ugly, just thinking of themselves..." (Lavoie, 2008b, p. A4). Another resident commented that a therapeutic community at Woodwynn Farm would be productive for farming and beneficial to participants.

"As members of the Greater Victoria Community, we all have a responsibility to support creative solutions. Self-interested NIMBYism like that colouring the reactions of a few uncomfortable residents is antisocial and detracts from our community's progressive efforts to find workable answers" (Wood, 2008, p. A19).

Throughout 2008, the battle between CHS and FLT for the purchase of Woodwynn Farm intensified with supporters emphasizing the humanitarian efforts involved in a TC and criticising the opposition. Expressing frustration with NIMBY, one supporter of WFTC wrote: "I am sick of hearing people whining about homelessness, drug addicts and panhandlers while doing nothing. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem and have no right to whine" (Martin, 2008, p.A 11). While approval of City Council, was not required for the purchase of the property, the mayor reiterated support for the idea of a therapeutic community in principle, but would not commit to a therapeutic community because he did not have enough information about the WFTC plan (Mar, 2008). The FLT maintained its position on developing a community farm, but both sides were caught of guard by the Tsartlip First Nations' announcement to invoke the Douglas Treaty in order to regain control over property known as Woodwynn Farm. In a writ to the Supreme Court of B.C., the Tsartlip Nation appealed to the Crown to honour the Douglas Treaty of 1858. Chief Morris argued that, "we're hoping that the Crown will agree that Tsartlip wasn't consulted with when this land was given over several years ago. We hope that all parties and the community will see this as an opportunity for Tsartlip to have a piece of its culture and history back" (Bell, 2008, A 3).

Chief Morris did not dismiss the possibility of working with either the FLT or CHS in the event of a sale to either group.

As the debate ensued and it looked like the FLT would raise enough money to purchase Woodwynn Farm, accusations of NIMBY resurfaced. One supporter of a therapeutic community on the site criticised city council for failing to see the bigger picture.

"It is very disturbing to see short-sighted, disappointing and all-to-predictable NIMBY reaction from Central Saanich council, which voted not to support institutional or residential zoning on Woodwynn Farm. Council is closing its collective eyes to a project that could mean so much practically and therapeutically to the homeless people on the Saanich Peninsula. The Creating Homefullness Society project would add so much more to the use of the land than that proposed by the Farmlands Trust" (MacKenzie, 2008, p. A11).

Of significance, all sides in the debate constructed arguments to support their vision of what was best for land and their interests. And, although CHS was successful in purchasing the property, this success was not due to a victory in the NIMBY debate, but because it was more successful raising the money for the purchase. Nevertheless, at least some supporters claim that the "good guys won" (Patterson, 2009, p. A10). Moreover, comments from the FLT identifying WFTC as the "homeless farm" did not contribute to its popularity (Paterson, 2009). The FLT remains in the background should WFTC fail, and some neighbors have attempted to rezone the property adjacent to WFTC as non-commercial and non-residential in the event it becomes available for use by the CHS (R. LeBlanc personal communication, August 21, 2010). Finally, from a broader perspective, the contested status of the property is not fully resolved; the outcome of the Tsartlip First Nation's writ remains to be seen.

## Discussion

This study used discourse analysis to uncover the divergent views on the establishment of a therapeutic community by examining the manner in which they were articulated when arguing for or against the development of WFTC. On the one hand, proponents of WFTC were passionate in their stand that homeless persons with co-morbid disorders in Victoria deserved at least a chance to improve their lives and contribute back to society. WFTC represents an opportunity for them to do just that. Moreover, the discourse highlights frustration about the lack of movement to develop services and facilities to help a growing population of possible clients for WFTC. Statements demonstrating this view include: "I am sick of people whining about homelessness..." (Martin, 2008, p. A11); and "If not here where? If not now when?" (Paterson, 2008, p. A14). Indeed, some residents living adjacent to the prop-



erty were critical of apparent NIMBY resistance and urged city council to take proactive measures to support WFTC (Wood, 2008). Supporters also criticized City Council for its role in perpetuating the problem by failing to negotiate with CHS to rezone the property so that it could support TC residents.

On the other hand, opponents to the development of WFTC based their arguments on the assumption that a therapeutic community would mean an end to agriculture because Woodwynn Farm would be transformed into an institutional setting. The deep attachment felt by some residents living close to the farm was evident in the concern raised about the potential loss of their sense of community (Martin, 2008). Some of the discourse identified the property, including the buildings, as an historic icon of the community in need of protection. Indeed the FLT positioned itself as a guardian of the property with the intention of maintaining the agricultural functions of Woodwynn Farm in perpetuity (Souther, 2008). As well, some neighbors of the farm and City Council argued that CHS had failed to convince the community that WFTC was a sound plan and that it would not result in financial, criminal and aesthetic harm.

An interesting element in the debate surrounding Woodwynn Farm appeared with announcement of the Tsartlip First Nation and its historical claim to the property. This aspect adds a third party to the NIMBY debate on Woodwynn Farm, thus rendering the binary imperative, frequently invoked in NIMBY literature, insufficient in this case. Clearly, the use of the property known as Woodwynn Farm is hotly contested from three perspectives. More importantly, the struggle for legitimacy experienced by supporters and opponents of WFTC highlights the broader social, political and economic factors related to the dispute, and the socio-spatial element at play.

The tripartite aspect to the depiction of the Woodwynn Farm dispute as NIMBY underscores a fundamental problem with the binary imperative, commonly found in the NIMBY/LULU literature. The appearance of First Nations' claims in the discourse is evidence that the future of the land known as Woodwynn Farms is anything but clear. The Tsartlip First Nation is at odds with the dominant European-based culture that settled in the Saanich Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In one sense, the antagonisms between supporters and opponents of WFTC detract from this historical schism between cultures. As well, the socio-spatial implications of a therapeutic community were cause for concern for some residents in the vicinity of the farm. The perceived threat of Woodwynn Farm being transformed into anything but what it had come to symbolize was unthinkable for many. However, the discourse does

highlight a NIMBY element that resisted accepting homeless persons (Byron, 2008; Clark, 2008). Following Takahashi's (1997) model, the stigma attached to homelessness and homeless people contradicted the idyllic rendering of Woodwynn Farm as a symbol of stability and nurturance.

### Limitations

The method used in this research is not a complete account of the events surrounding the debate on WFTC in that it is limited to textual analysis. Yet, all text relies on interpretation and cannot be divorced from the structural contest in which it originates thus lending credibility to the method. And, while it is true that the media tends to focus on sensational events and is involved in ideological work (Ericson, 1998), the bias toward the controversy surrounding WFTC has yielded a robust account of the issues and interests pertaining to siting WFTC. As well, the reports analyzed here do not represent the breadth and scope of opinions of the authors, thus the results lack the kind of depth found in ethnographic research. Finally, the larger socio-economic factors influencing the development of WFTC have yet to be identified and analyzed.

### Conclusion

The case of WFTC has highlighted the contested nature of property development that at first blush appears none problematic. While seemingly straight forward, the proposition and siting of a therapeutic community to serve homeless persons with comorbid disorders in a rural setting was fraught with conflict and obstacles. Although evidence of the "ugly Canadian" is minimal, the discourse suggests that NIMBY does play a factor in the disputes surrounding WFTC. However, the data also reveal a complex array of issues relating to homelessness, and the contested nature of land use. The majority of social services for homeless persons are located in the city. However, this unequal distribution of services is arguably a response to need; a majority of the homeless population is concentrated in downtown Victoria (Cool Aid Society, 2005). Given its rural setting, Central Saanich has little exposure to the plight of homeless persons. Consequently, WFTC represents a threat to the character of the broader community, much like the case of the Glen Hotel in Seattle. However, it does not appear that an alternative setting will be provided to WFTC any time in the near future, as was the case with LIHI (Gibson, 2005).

As a result of deinstitutionalization, the changing nature of service dependent groups, and the reduction in resources to help them (Piat, 2000), will require more creative solutions than heretofore have



been available. While the concept of NIMBY may be relevant in some cases, reducing siting disputes to a binary model underestimates the many factors that potentially influence decision-making and community acceptance or rejection of human service facilities. Ironically, the fact that both municipal and provincial governments have been silent on the First Nations' involvement in the debate perhaps speaks louder than the conflict between the other two parties. Although it will be several years before the writ filed

by the Tsartlip First Nation is heard in court, the real contested nature of Woodwynn Farm may be more complex than ever anticipated. Future research on siting issues relating to human service facilities can benefit from the rich data obtained using ethnographic methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A clear understanding of the drives and motives of champions for facilities, and those who oppose them, would provide for a more comprehensive understanding of the issues and potential solutions.

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