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Making a Place for People at a Wildlife Corridor on Chicago's South Side

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Making a Place for People at a Wildlife Corridor on Chicago’s South Side

by

Alexis Winter

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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ABSTRACT

What role do environmental conservation projects play in the transformation of American cities? How do these projects affect city residents? In this study, I ask these questions at the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, where the Chicago Park District worked with institutional and community-based partner organizations to engage city residents in the creation of a lakefront wildlife habitat and public nature area. Through ethnographic interviews and participant observation I explored how actors at various levels understand this changing landscape and their roles in shaping it. I situate the Burnham Wildlife Corridor project in the broader context of a state-level plan, the Millennium Reserve, as well as relevant trends in urban planning and environmental governance. Using concepts from anthropology, geography, sociology, philosophy, and natural resource management, I interpret my results, with a focus on space, place, and the role of race and ethnicity in community engagement around conservation. I discuss emerging tensions and contradictions in urban environmental conservation and offer recommendations for how land managers and their partners can refine community engagement efforts aimed at increasing public participation in land management.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH AIMS

Ecological restoration and conservation are becoming more common in American cities, which raises many questions about the intent and outcomes that such a shift in land use will have in these places, particularly in and around neighborhoods that have historically experienced neglect and injustice. I explore these issues by examining the Burnham Wildlife Corridor on Chicago’s South Side in order to understand how different actors experience this new conservation/recreation area, as well as a related state plan, the Millennium Reserve. I focus in particular on land managers, their community and institutional partners, and local youth engaged in place-making and stewardship at the Corridor. I examine the way they understand the Corridor space and its associated programs—and, more broadly, the way they understand the respective roles/places of people and nature in the city. The purpose of such an analysis is ultimately to refine models for urban conservation in ways that incorporate the city’s diverse residents’ desires and make public spaces and programs more accessible, useful, and beneficial to all.

The Millennium Reserve in the Calumet Region

In late 2011, then-Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced the launch of the “Millennium Reserve,” an ambitious conservation project that he would later describe as “the largest open space project in the country” (State of Illinois 2013a). Official state materials on the Reserve described it as “a 220-square mile opportunity to transform a region in transition” through “innovative partnerships and action in the Calumet region that: I. Honor its cultural and industrial past; II. Restore and enhance the natural ecosystems; III. Support healthy and
Prosperous communities and residents; and IV. Stimulate vigorous and sustainable economic growth” (State of Illinois 2013b). The bulk of the Millennium Reserve area overlaps with the Illinois portion of the Calumet region, a landscape known both for its biodiverse wetlands and industrial history (Bouman 2001; Wali et al. 2003). Since the closure of most of the area’s steel mills in 1970s and 80s, many different plans have been proposed for the region, including an effort to have it named a National Park (Bouman 2001). In this sense, the Millennium Reserve has been many years in the making.

Studies of the Calumet Region show that among its diverse population, and among the outside agencies and organizations involved, people have many different and sometimes competing visions for the Calumet Region’s future (Bouman 2001; Wali et al. 2003). Given this diversity and the fragmented nature of the various protected areas within the Illinois portion of the Calumet Region, it seems unlikely that the Millennium Reserve will ever achieve the cohesion implied by the term “urban park,” as it is sometimes described. Chicago Public Radio environmental reporter Chris Bentley summarizes the situation this way:

Millennium Reserve is, according to the Department of Natural Resources’ Lisa Cotner, ‘an ongoing initiative to make on-the-ground projects happen.’ What [comparisons with large-scale urban conservation projects in other U.S. cities] really illustrate about the Millennium Reserve is how wide-ranging its goals are — industrial resurgence, economic development, recreation and ecological restoration all share top billing with open space, depending on who you talk to. The broad scope may help clear the path for action by the project’s more than 50 partner organizations, but it’s also likely to foster some disputes over just what the ‘open space’ project is all about. [2013]

One way in which Millennium Reserve leadership sought to communicate the nature of the nebulous project in its early stages was through the designation in 2012 of twelve Millennium Reserve “model projects.” One of these projects was the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, which had been launched in 2011 primarily as an effort to create habitat for migratory birds. Managed by the Chicago Park District, the Corridor is an 103-acre strip of land on Lake
Michigan coastline at the periphery of the Millennium Reserve and just outside of what is typically defined as the Calumet area (see Figures 1 and 2). At least initially, the Corridor was meant primarily to provide habitat for migratory birds, setting it apart from most of the Chicago Park District’s property, more traditional city parks with playgrounds, field houses, etc. In 2012, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor was named a Millennium Reserve “model project” by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Although these projects are described as atypical and remarkable by local natural resources managers, they are in fact part of two larger trends in the United States. The last 30 to 40 years have seen the deindustrialization and economic decline of many American cities, or at

Figure 1. Burnham Wildlife Corridor. Source: Chicago Park District.
Figure 2. Millennium Reserve. The location of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor is outlined in red. Source: State of Illinois
least parts of them. To varying degrees and in varying ways, these formerly industrial areas have been transformed, with some experiencing gentrification (Zukin 2008). The second key trend is the changing nature of environmental conservation in the context of increasing urbanization and dwindling state and city funds: for public land managers, protecting nature by keeping people away from it seems less and less feasible, as does going it alone without the aid of non-profit and/or private sector partners (Powell 2013; Jonas and Bridge 2003).

Research questions

To understand how various stakeholders will negotiate the goals of the Reserve and what outcomes the initiative will have, I undertook an ethnographic case study of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and the partnerships and discussions that are emerging around it. In this study, I focus on the intersections of federal, state, city, and community level stakeholders’ goals and understandings of environmental policy and the ways racial/ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of stakeholders involved affect the outcomes of this effort. It is important to note that this intersection is of course a construct, one that came into view as a result of my interest in policy and my internship with The Field Museum in Chicago, which I discuss in more detail below. I focus on those actors involved in an official or policy capacity and especially those working, to varying degrees, with and through The Field Museum in the name of “community engagement”; there are, of course, other actors with a “stake” in the transformation of this piece of land, whose views matter as well.

As a way of understanding the Corridor, the Reserve, and the changing nature of environmental conservation in general, I sought to understand the perspectives of land managers and their institutional and community partners: specifically, youth and families involved with an environmental education program connected to the Corridor called the “Green Ambassadors.”
The Green Ambassador program was made up of 24 local high school students and their adult mentors, and was facilitated jointly by local community-based organizations and staff from the Keller Science Action Center at The Field Museum, a natural history museum on Chicago’s lakefront, just north of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. The research questions guiding my study were as follows:

1. How do stakeholders at the federal, state, city, and community levels understand the Burnham Wildlife Corridor project?
   a. What do they see as the purpose of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor?
   b. What are their goals and their reasons for collaborating with other stakeholders on projects related to the Corridor?
   c. How do they understand the Millennium Reserve vision for the broader region?

2. How do the Burnham Wildlife Corridor’s community partners benefit (or not) from their involvement with the Millennium Reserve, via the Wildlife Corridor?
   a. How do community partners use the space?
   b. How do residents of nearby neighborhoods use the space?
   c. How do these stakeholders measure the success of their programs connected to the Corridor and/or Reserve?
   d. How is work connected to the Corridor compatible (or not) with the community organizations’ pre-existing goals?
   e. Has environmental stewardship and educational programming connected to the Burnham Wildlife Corridor influenced the community partners’ other programming? If so, in what ways?

My goal was in part to discover, through interviews, participant observation, and other methods, how much consensus had been built around these policies. The anthropological literature on both protected areas (e.g., West et al. 2006) and policy networks (e.g., Wedel et al. 2005), as well as work on environmental governance (e.g., Lemos and Agrawal 2006), describes great change in methods of policy implementation in recent years, and makes clear that emerging multi-agency partnership arrangements are far from consistent or straightforward—and that further study is needed to understand their outcomes.
It was beyond the scope of my study to fully evaluate the success of the partnerships I examined, so I turned my attention to what could be more readily understood in the short term: for example, communication and shared goals. I expected that if I found that stakeholders from different organizations shared a vision for the Corridor, including metrics for its success and priorities for its future development, this would suggest that there were active lines of communication between these organizations. I approached this with an awareness of both the differing levels of power among the partners, and the difference between apparent and actual consensus. Active communication between partners might, in turn, suggest that the collaboration had been and would continue to be at least somewhat successful. Success would be evaluated in terms of the government agencies’ stated goals of involving a diverse range of government and community partners in transforming long-underused open space into places that provide both ecosystem services for the region and social and economic opportunity for nearby residents. Given the short timeframe of my project, I focused more closely on the first part—involving a diverse a range of partners—than evaluating the ecosystem services and ultimate social and economic benefit.

**Applied objectives**

As an applied anthropologist, I set out not only to contribute to the scholarship on urban environmental policy but also to provide insights that might benefit research participants and partners. A better understanding of how the Millennium Reserve operates on the ground could, for example, help community organizations think through the extent to which it may or may not be advantageous for them to position themselves as part of the Millennium Reserve vision. In addition, I conducted research while working as an intern with The Field Museum (this relationship is described in greater detail in Chapter Three) and sought to offer support in both
the short and long term to this organization and its partners. I supported the Museum in the short term by assisting with the Green Ambassadors program and the overall community engagement planning process. In terms of longer-term support, through my research and analysis I hope to provide information that will help the The Field Museum (and potentially, other similar intermediaries) refine their approach to community engagement around environmental initiatives in ways that benefit the communities such institutions serve.

**Research setting**

Within the anthropological literature on public policy, rarely is a study contained in a single geographic location; fieldwork is located instead “in the mental space of a policy” (Abram 2003: 146). This was the approach of my study as well, though it also took place in the following locations: the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, the Pilsen and Bronzeville neighborhoods, the community partner organization locations, The Field Museum, and the offices of the stakeholders I interviewed in various other agencies. In what follows I provide further background information on a few of the key locations of my research.

**Burnham Wildlife Corridor**

What was formerly a marginal strip of lakefront land populated mostly with invasive trees, the Chicago Park District is now transforming into a mix of native woodland, savanna, prairie, trails, and sitting areas known as the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. “Wildlife corridors” have increased in popularity with planners and land managers in recent years, especially in cities (Evans 2007). Varying widely in scale, they are broadly defined as “features linking habitat patches that were once historically connected” and are thought to promote biodiversity (Evans 2007: 130). They are attractive to planners seeking to “balance the spatial demands of
Figure 3. Train tracks along the western edge of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. Both freight and commuter (the Metra Electric and South Shore lines) trains pass by the Corridor. Photo by the author.

Figure 4. Looking west toward Bronzeville from the Burnham Nature Sanctuary. Photo by the author.
**Figure 5.** Panorama of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, looking east. The bridge on the right goes over Lake Shore Drive. Sanctuary. Photo by the author.

**Figure 6.** Freight train passing by the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. This photograph was taken facing southwest from within the Burnham Nature Sanctuary. Photo by the author.
development and conservation” (Evans 2007: 130). According to Evans, they may sometimes
serve as a transition stage between “disuse” and development.

Notably, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor is named for architect Daniel Burnham, designer
of the “White City” for the Columbian Exposition in 1893 and lead author of the ambitious Plan
of Chicago in 1909—two famous efforts to transform Chicago from a crowded and polluted
industrial city to a clean, beautiful, cosmopolitan commercial hub (Smith 2009). One particularly
famous aspect of the plan was its protection of lakefront open space (Smith 2009).

**The Field Museum**

Another famous feature of Chicago’s lakefront is the Museum Campus, which includes
the Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium, and The Field Museum. (Another of Chicago’s major
tourist attractions, The Museum of Science and Industry, is located further south, in Jackson
Park. Its building originally housed the Palace of Fine Arts built for the Columbian Exposition
and later The Field Columbian Museum, which moved to its present location in 1921 [Smith
2009].) The Field Museum is home to the Keller Science Action Center, who describe their
mission this way:

> The Field Museum has a century-strong commitment to explore and document the
diversity of life on Earth and the connections between human cultures and their
environment. The Action Center is a team of specialized scientist-explorers who build on
this foundation to translate science into action and measurable outcomes on the ground.
Our team forges partnerships with governments and communities to implement targeted,
science-rooted recommendations, and works to turn vision into reality: from national
parks, to indigenous reserves, to vibrant wildlife corridors that benefit inner-city
neighborhoods. [The Field Museum 2016]

Action Center scientists work on conservation projects in the Andes-Amazon as well as the
Chicago Region. Since 1995, the group working on these efforts has gone through several
iterations and names; before undertaking this research, I had worked with some of the same staff
in what was then known as Environment, Culture, and Conservation (ECCo). During that time, I
assisted in research, writing, and outreach related to an initiative called the Chicago Community Climate Action Toolkit, and helped organize an eco-tour of natural areas along the Kankakee River, roughly 75 miles south of Chicago. Thus I was already familiar with the Field Museum’s model for engaging citizens in conservation and with some of the people I worked with in my thesis research.

**Key neighborhoods near the Corridor**

The community-based organizations being engaged by the Field Museum are located in Bronzeville, the neighborhood immediately west of the Corridor, and Pilsen, located about three miles west and a mile north of the Corridor. Both neighborhoods are near downtown and suffered economic decline between the 1960s and 1990s, but in recent years have experienced “non-White gentrification” (Anderson and Sternberg 2012). Despite their proximity and commonalities in this sense, there has not been a great deal of collaboration or “cross-pollination” between these two neighborhoods in the past.

Bronzeville\(^1\) is predominantly Black (see Table 1) and was once known nationally as Chicago’s “Black Metropolis” (Boyd 2009; Drake and Cayton 1945; Sternberg and Anderson 2014). During the Great Migration, thousands of Black migrants moved from the rural south to the urban north seeking freedom and economic opportunity; through redlining and other discriminatory housing practices, Blacks were sequestered in the increasingly crowded “city within a city” of Bronzeville (Drake and Cayton 1945; Wilkerson 2010). Often compared to New York’s Harlem, Bronzeville hosted a number of thriving Black-run businesses and nurtured an arts and cultural scene that included such famous inhabitants as Duke Ellington, Gwendolyn

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\(^1\) “Bronzeville” is not one of Chicago’s 77 official community areas; for the purposes of demographic analysis, a combination of the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community areas is generally used (Anderson and Sternberg 2012).
Brooks, Richard Wright, Dinah Washington, and Louis Armstrong (Boyd 2000; Sternberg and Anderson 2014). Starting in the 1960s and 70s, desegregation, urban renewal, and loss of manufacturing jobs led to a dramatic decline in population and income (Boyd 2000). Today, neighborhood boosters are seeking to spur development in part through calling attention to the area’s rich history and historic buildings and housing stock (Sternberg and Anderson 2014).

Pilsen\(^2\), along with the adjacent La Villita (“Little Village”), is well-known as the center of Chicago’s Mexican-American community and an entry point for Mexican immigrants since the 1960s (Grossman et al. 2000; Anderson and Sternberg 2012). Prior to that, it was home to mainly Eastern European immigrants who worked in local industry; in this context it became one of the target areas for Jane Addams’ Settlement House movement and a site of active labor organizing (Grossman et al. 2000). As with Bronzeville, the loss of industrial jobs in the 1960s

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\(^2\) Like Bronzeville, “Pilsen” is not an official community area; it is roughly equivalent to what is called the “Lower West Side” community area (Anderson and Sternberg 2012).

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### Table 1. Demographic profiles of Chicago and its Bronzeville and Pilsen neighborhoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Area (sq. mi.)</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Pop. per sq. mi.</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino of any race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Median age*</th>
<th>Median income*</th>
<th>Percent unemployed</th>
<th>Park acreage per 1000 residents*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Chicago</td>
<td>237.0</td>
<td>2,712,608</td>
<td>11,446</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>$47,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Boulevard / Douglas (Bronzeville)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>41,713</td>
<td>12,269</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>36.0 / 34.8</td>
<td>$30,918 / $32,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower West Side (Pilsen)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>34,979</td>
<td>11,957</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>$35,116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Using the available data, statistics for these categories could not be combined into a single “Bronzeville” figure. They are given for Grand Boulevard and Douglas, respectively, separated by a slash.

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP 2016b; CMAP 2016c; CMAP 2016d; CMAP 2016f)
and 70s led to economic decline and disinvestment (Anderson and Sternberg 2012), making its historic housing stock affordable and thus attractive to potential gentrifiers (Sternberg and Anderson 2014). However, cultural preservation efforts and community organizations remained strong and in the 1980s and 90s, Pilsen residents successfully organized to resist the White-led gentrification they had seen displace Latin@s in neighborhoods on the city’s northwest side (Anderson and Sternberg 2012). However, the neighborhood, with its many murals and thriving commercial strip along 18th Street, remains a popular destination, and gentrification and the extent to which the community should position itself as an ethnic tourist destination vis-à-vis White Chicago remain hotly debated topics (Anderson and Sternberg 2012).

**Structure of this thesis**

In the chapters that follow I first give a brief overview of the research setting, covering the relevant history of the places and policies studied. I then review the areas of scholarly literature that I found most helpful in examining a conservation-based place-making project in a deindustrializing American city. These include the anthropology of protected areas; literature on space and place from anthropology, geography, and philosophy; the anthropology of policy and governance; urban political ecology; historical ecology; urban sociology; and literature on environmental governance from the natural resource management field. I then explain my study’s research methods and the results of my interviews and participant observation. To conclude, I interpret my results, bringing concepts from the literature review to bear on my observations and suggesting implications, applications, and possible future directions of my research.

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3 In a spirit of gender inclusivity, some have adopted the term “Latin@”s” in recent years to denote “Latinas and Latinos” concisely. I use this term throughout this thesis, except in cases where I refer to official census categories (e.g., Table 1) or quote others’ comments.
CHAPTER TWO:  
LITERATURE REVIEW

Given its history of work that incorporates both large-scale structural forces and lived cultural experience on the ground, anthropology is well-suited to address my research questions regarding the Millennium Reserve and Burnham Wildlife Corridor. In what follows I review relevant concepts and frameworks mainly from works of anthropology and geography. I begin with the concepts that help us understand discussions of the Corridor, Reserve, and their surrounding neighborhoods as sites, and then explore ways of understanding the Corridor and the Reserve as policies. I conclude by reviewing concepts and research programs uniting people, place, power, and environment as well as relevant trends in environmental governance.

Space and place

While my study was not focused on the physical space of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and the daily goings-on within it, I did examine the ways people understood and created the Burnham Wildlife Corridor as “space” and/or “place,” and what practices they imagined could and should happen in some locales and not others. Thus, a review of some of the relevant literature on these concepts is necessary. Space and place are deceptively simple terms that have been the source of extensive scholarly discussion. One common thread is that these concepts cannot be neatly defined in absolute terms; it is more fruitful, it seems, to offer analogies, describe them relative to other concepts, and discuss their functions in social life. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre describes the role of space vis-à-vis social life: “social
relations…have no real existence save in and through space. *Their underpinning is spatial*” (1991: 404). It follows then that space is the site of becoming, and of wielding power:

It is in space, on a worldwide scale, that each idea of ‘value’ acquires or loses its distinctiveness through confrontation with the other values and ideas that it encounters there. Moreover—and more importantly—groups, classes or fractions of classes cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as ‘subjects’ unless they generate (or produce) a space. [Lefebvre 1991: 416]

Space may also be understood as the site where “the passive body (the senses) and the active body (labour) converge” (Lefebvre 1991: 405). It is important to note that in this study I am interested not only in space as the underpinning of social relations, but also in the social relations of actors in a particular space; even if the day-to-day goings-on in the space were not a focus of my research time, it is important not to lose sight of the Corridor itself.

Another interesting voice in this discussion is that of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. He explains that space is more abstract, while place is more concrete. Space in its emptiness may seem strange, while “place is an organized world of meaning” (Tuan 1977: 179). Tuan asserts that place tends to be associated with security, and space with freedom: “we are attached to one and long for the other” (1977: 3). The two concepts can only be defined in relation to each other: “From the security and stability of place, we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa” (1977: 6).

Time is an important element in developing concepts of space and place, and helps us to approach the topic of place attachment. Space may become place over time through the human activities that imbue it with meaning and value (Tuan 1977). Tuan continues that space might be thought of as “that which allows movement” which would mean that “place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be turned into place” (1977: 6). This notion is similar to Tim Ingold’s idea that “places exist not in space but as nodes in a matrix of
movement” (2000: 219). Elaborating on the relationship between place and time, Tuan writes that we may treat “attachment to place as a function of time” and think of “place as time made visible” (Tuan 1977: 179). While one may gain abstract knowledge of a place rather quickly, what we call the “the ‘feel’ of a place takes longer to acquire”—except in the case of brief yet powerful experiences (“love at first sight”) (Tuan 1977: 183-184). Just as children and adults have different relationships with time, so too do they differ in their relationship with place. Tuan also discusses nostalgia and the desire for historic preservation, impulses which stem in part from anxiety about the speed of change in the present: “When a people deliberately change their environment and feel they are in control of their destiny, they have little cause for nostalgia” (1977: 195). This rootlessness is evident in museums, for which truly “rooted” people have no need.

Tuan expands on the topic of attachment to place in Topophilia (1974). Topophilia refers to “the affective bond between people and place or setting”; it is “diffuse as concept and concrete as personal experience” (Tuan 1974: 4). There are a variety of forms of attachment to place and ways of becoming attached: a farmer’s topophilia, for example, is vocational and involves a greater physical intimacy with the landscape. One’s connection to place may also persist “beyond the fleeting when aesthetic pleasure is combined with scientific curiosity” (Tuan 1974: 95). Unfortunately, he continues, the layperson too readily accepts tropes describing the environment that are presented to them by planners and experts.

This limited review of literature on space and place suggests the breadth of all that “space” and “place” can contain. There is discursive/conceptual/imagined “space” and physical “space” (i.e., those that might become places) and the ways they overlap and connect. For the purpose of my research, I will more often be using “space” in the sense of a geographic location
through which beings may move and onto which meanings, claims, and ideas might be projected. As for “place,” I again draw largely on the work of Tuan (1974; 1977) and use this term to denote space onto which humans have projected cultural meanings that give a location more particularity. Space functions as a site of power-wielding and meaning- and self-making and becomes place through transformative movement/action over time. These definitions are useful in an analysis of environmental stewardship, place-making, and the discourse and policies around such efforts.

**Nature and wilderness**

The stated goals of land managers working on the Corridor and Reserve include explicit references to urban nature and wildlife—whether it be “bringing,” “restoring,” or “preserving” what is understood to be “nature.” In this context, nature is generally being used in the sense of “the phenomena of the physical world collectively; especially plants, animals, and other features and products of the earth itself, *as opposed to humans and human creations*” (OED Online 2016b, emphasis added). The lineage of the term in this sense, and the related term “wilderness,” should be traced, and the theory around these concepts explored.

Particularly instructive here are discussions within the research program of historical ecology, which is “concerned with the interactions through time between societies and environments and the consequences of these interactions for understanding the formation of contemporary and past landscapes and cultures” and draws on work in anthropology, geography, ecology, and history (Balée 2006: 76). These writers explain how the nature-culture dichotomy is deeply engrained in the language and culture of the industrialized West: nature is widely seen as pristine and “out there” (Ingold 2000: 191) awaiting encounter by humans who may taint or corrupt its purity (Cronon 1996; Redman 1999; Moran 2006). Whether one believes that humans
shape the environment, or the reverse, or some combination, the idea underlying all of these perspectives is that humans and nonhumans/“the environment” are of different realms (Redman 1999). We may trace the lineage of this dichotomy back to the notion of Cartesian duality (Moran 2006) and still further to Judeo-Christian and Greek philosophy and mythology (Redman 1999).

Historical ecology offers tools for understanding the impossibility of a “pristine wilderness”: for example, the concept of longue durée, a centuries-long view which leads us to evidence that as long as anyone has been talking about a “pristine wilderness”—and longer—it has never actually existed: the effects of agriculture on the environment date back as far as the Holocene era (Balée 2006). Furthermore, their work shows that much of what we perceive or once perceived as “untouched” has in fact been actively managed by past populations, and that human disturbance has sometimes actually increased biodiversity and other measures of ecological health (Balée 2006). Taking a broader temporal and spatial view of ecological questions also allows us to recognize the realities of global anthropogenic climate change, which has effects on a planetary scale (Moran 2006). These concepts and frameworks and the insights they enable complicate much of the assumptions and logic underlying environmental conservation and restoration: i.e., historical ecology asks us to reevaluate our understanding of what we are restoring and the state to which are restoring it.

Landscape

Indeed, even among the conservation community and others who advocate for a more “harmonious” relationship with nature, the conceptual nature-culture separation is almost inescapable in the industrialized West. The separation is deeply embedded in the English language, presenting a particular challenge for English-language writers trying to describe non-
Western worldviews in which there is no distinction between nature and culture (Redman 1999). For example, Tim Ingold explains how the ontology of the aboriginal Pintupi people of Australia contradicts the separation of “human persons, as meaning-makers, and the physical environment as raw material for construction” (2000: 55). This challenge is one reason that the preferred unit of analysis within historical ecology is the landscape (or *Landschaft* or *paysage*): “where humans and the environment meet in an analytic whole with a temporal dimension that defines the relationship” (Balée 2006: 77). As Ingold explains, landscape is not nature or land; neither is it space: “whereas actual journeys are made through a landscape, the board on which all potential journeys may be plotted is equivalent to space” (2000: 192). Humans are a part of the landscape and vice versa, so “whereas with space, meanings are attached to the world, with landscape they are gathered from it” (Ingold 2000: 192).

**City and neighborhood**

The Corridor and Reserve are projects that come out of specifically urban social and ecological transitions, and their community engagement components depend on assumptions about the size and diversity of their surrounding population. For this reason, I find it useful to draw from sources from sociology, as defining what constitutes “urban” has been a major preoccupation of sociology since its beginnings. Early writing on urbanism was influenced by nostalgia for forms of community imagined to have been lost to industrialization and urbanization: Georg Simmel, for example, wrote in 1903 of the sensory overstimulation of cities and the overall psychological cost of the freedom cities afford. One of the central figures of the Chicago school of sociology, Louis Wirth, defined cities as large, densely populated, and heterogeneous, and believed that the city exerts direct effects on its residents (1930). The compositional theory of urbanism arose later, in such works as that of Herbert Gans, who
critiqued Wirth’s determinist/ecological theory, asserting that factors like race and class were more important in shaping city residents’ lives, and that the city was made up of a mosaic of social worlds (1968). Claude Fischer (1976) argued for a synthesis of the two theories into the subcultural theory of urbanism. More recently others such as Alan Walks (2012), drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s *The Urban Revolution*, argue that the urban and suburban should be understood as distinct yet inseparable sets of flows; each needs the other to exist. To understand the urban neighborhood in particular, sociologist Robert J. Sampson’s *Great American City* is especially helpful here. Sampson defines the neighborhood “in theoretical terms as a geographic section of a larger community or region (e.g. city) that usually contains residents or institutions and has socially distinctive characteristics” (2012: 56) and argues that “the most powerful role for neighborhoods in the contemporary city” may be “perceptual (or cognitive) social organization” (59).

**Racial economy**

Another key form of perceptual social organization in the contemporary city, and in the community engagement efforts around the Corridor and Reserve, is race. Anderson and Sternberg have applied the idea of “racial economy” (mainly as described by David Wilson) in understanding development, specifically non-White gentrification, in Chicago’s Pilsen and Bronzeville neighborhoods. According to Wilson, the concept of racial economy explains empirical objects and processes (e.g., poverty, unemployment, urban form) by reference to the interconnections among political institutions, economic markets, and conceptions of race (Balibar and Wallerstein 1992; Gilroy 2000). …Political and economic institutions are positioned as subtly but powerfully interwoven and always influenced by and operative through constructed notions of race [2009: 140]

In the concept of racial economy, governance and identity meet and make evident some of the specific ways in which capitalist development proceeds unevenly (Anderson and Sternberg
2012). In the context of the (re)development of Pilsen and Bronzeville, Anderson and Sternberg show that middle-class Whites more readily consume Mexican-American cultural content than they do Black American culture, which they associate with crime and poverty. Mexican-American Pilsen has a thriving commercial strip and has become somewhat of an ethnic themepark for White visitors, while Bronzeville attracts fewer tourists and emerges more as a “space for identity constitution” for Black Chicagoans (2012: 442).

Such relationships between racial identity and political and economic projects are constantly shifting and being renegotiated:

Rather than blunt, static formations crafted through strictly economic imperatives, [racial economies’] functioning also necessitates the careful mobilizing of elaborately choreographed identities—the Black and Latino poor—to legitimize these imperatives. In the process, political and economic actors must continuously navigate evolving public perceptions on race. To D. Wilson (2009), these actors help constitute a cast of characters whose function is to justify capitalist agendas, such as restoring city competitiveness, upscale redevelopment, and banishing the racialized poor—historically narrated as crime-ridden and prone to gang violence—to spaces of disinvested neglect. [Anderson and Sternberg 2012: 439]

These processes of negotiation play out in and produce social spaces, which in turn function to reproduce the various meanings that have currency in the racial economy (Anderson and Sternberg 2012; Wilson 2009).

**Policy and governance**

My interest from the outset was in studying the Burnham Wildlife Corridor as both place and policy—to understand how ideas and power relations shape the landscape. Policies are “inherently anthropological phenomena” (Shore and Wright 1996) that merit further study within our discipline, and indeed, anthropology has much to offer the study of policy. Our methods allow us to triangulate information in ways our informants in policy studies cannot (Schwegler and Powell 2008) and to assess the everyday lived experience for the communities that are on the
receiving end of policy (Schwegler and Powell 2008; Shore and Wright 1996; Wedel et al. 2005). Anthropologists’ contributions may help avoid some of the false dichotomies that tend to dominate policy discussions, and may help to critically assess what “policy” means, rather than accepting it as an unproblematic given (Wedel et al. 2005).

Anthropologists have a range of different definitions and understandings of “policy.” Shore and Wright believe policies “encapsulate the entire history and culture of the society that generated them” (1996: 476) and may be thought of as Mauss’s total social phenomena, Turner’s condensed symbols, or Malinowski’s charters for action. Abram argues that policies can be thought of as “the making concrete of a particular instant in a history of development” (2003: 142) and Wedel et al. suggest that it might be useful in some instances to think of policy as political technology (2005). Policy is distinguished from regulatory law in that the former must be implemented, not merely signed into law (Cochrane 1980). Policies are, for the most part, implemented not by direct force but by limiting the range of choices for action and defining what behavior is “normal” or “rational”; anthropology may help reveal cases in which political agendas are advanced under the guise of “rationality” or “neutrality” (Wedel et al. 2005). In such a conceptualization Foucault’s notion of governmentality is often cited (e.g., Shore and Wright 1996). Although it is important to sketch a working definition of policy before studying it, Wedel et al. stress that the central question for anthropologists is not what policy is but “what…people do in the name of policy” (2005: 35).

Policy studies, perhaps even more than other topic areas within anthropology, do not allow anthropologists to entertain the notion of a “traditional” field site within a neatly bounded community or geographic place (Abram 2003; Schwegler and Powell 2008; Shore and Wright 1996; Wedel et al. 2005). Instead, anthropologists study the “specific constellations of actors,
activities, and influences that shape policy” (Wedel et al. 2005: 34). This is true even in cases where policy concerns a specific geographic area, as Abram (2003) explains in reference to a land use policy study:

> Although I did look at the field in question, and walk across it, that was the extent of my own (and many of the others’) direct experience of it. It took on, however, an array of symbolic meanings viewed not as an ‘anthropological place’ (in Augé’s terms) but as the object of a policy around which people’s arguments congregated. [142]

In her study, Abram examined a small part of the lives of many different actors who were somehow affected by or implicated in the policy of concern, rather than examining a large part of the lives of a small group of people to understand the way of life of a community. Such an approach is compatible with Nader’s concept of looking at the “vertical slice” in which hidden hierarchies linking people to policy are revealed (1980, discussed in Shore and Wright 1996).

Nader’s call for anthropologists to “study up,” i.e. study policymakers and others in power (1972), is also well-known. Schwegler (2008) cautions that while we should study up, we should not become too preoccupied with our supposed relative powerlessness, or equate status with knowledge. She prefers Reinhold’s (1994) notion of “studying through” to understand how knowledge moves through networks of actors of varying levels of power and status. In following information through these networks, we must remember that policy-making is not a linear process: it is more like a chemical reaction than a conveyer belt (Wedel et al. 2005). Finally, in conceptualizing the research “site” and population in the anthropology of policy, it is important to recognize that complex societies consist of multiple diverse “publics” and that different groups will be affected differently by policies (Wolfe 1980; Okongwu and Mencher 2000). The messiness of policy is what makes ethnography such an important research tool: it reveals relationships and flows of information that more abstract models cannot.
Connecting people, power, place, and environment

In the preceding sections, I have reviewed the terms and concepts, and discussions around them, that are foundational to a study of people undertaking a place-making project. However, in practice these elements tend to present themselves as messily entangled with one another. For example, how can we separate policy and place when they produce each other? Concepts that point to such entanglements will be most useful, in that they direct our attention to relationships and process, central foci in a study of a changing landscape. Concepts within environmental governance, including the application of Deleuze and Guattari’s work on assemblage to describe shifting sets of relations and practices of relating (1987), are particularly applicable in my study, which examines a network of diverse actors engaged in shaping their environment.

Environmental governance

Discussions of “environmental governance” within the literature on natural resource management and urban political ecology offer useful examples of how we might study people attempting to exercise power over “nature” or “the environment”—and of course, over other people. In their review of literature on the topic, Maria Carmen Lemos and Arun Agrawal define environmental governance as “interventions aiming at changes in environment-related incentives, knowledge, institutions, decision making, and behaviors”—more specifically, “the set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organizations through which political actors influence environmental actions and outcomes” (2006: 298). Lemos and Agrawal assert that although its forms vary, environmental governance is ubiquitous and therefore demands our attention.

Governance encompasses more than government: natural resources are increasingly being governed by non-state organizations and actors such as non-profits, community groups,
environmentalists, and businesses (Lemos and Agrawal 2006; Hagerman 2007; Jonas and Bridge 2003). As Jonas and Bridge explain, “The state’s role in mediating the relationship between nature, the economy, and society has fundamentally changed. Nature is no longer a national resource or instrument of national planning and production; it is something to be governed, consumed, and marketed—locally and globally” (2003: 958-59). According to Lemos and Agrawal, the development of these new models of environmental governance are motivated by “the recognition that no single agent possesses the capabilities to address the multiple facets, interdependencies, and scales of environmental problems” (2006: 311)—and, on a more basic level, the reality of governments facing financial crises.

While these new collaborations offer the possibility of including a greater number and diversity of people in environmental decision-making, they also carry some risks. According to Lemos and Agrawal (2006), these include the commodification and/or neoliberalization of nature, increased inequality, and a loss of accountability. These risks have been explored on various scales by geographers in urban political ecology, whose approach is more critical than most of what is found within the field of natural resources management. Particularly relevant and instructive research includes Hagerman’s study in Portland, Oregon, on deindustrializing areas as “blank slates” (2007). Hagerman casts a critical eye on “common sense” concepts of space, place, and nature. Drawing on the work of Bruce Willems-Braun, he writes:

> If we accept that arguments about nature are not innocent, then we must examine how they are directly implicated in social relationships. Issues of power in this context directly lead to questions about who is granted legitimacy to speak in debates about urban-nature futures. This is particularly relevant in areas that dramatically portray the history of industrial capitalism and its social and ecological effects as they are transformed for the future. [Hagerman 2007: 287]

Also helpful is While et al.’s work on the “sustainability fix,” a concept that “draws attention to the selective incorporation of ecological goals in the greening of urban governance”’ (2004: 551,
quoted in Keil 2003). Attention to scale is important in exploring such concepts: as Paul Robbins writes, political ecology is built upon the assumption that “any tug on the strands of the global web of human-environment linkages reverberates throughout the system as a whole” (2004: 5). At the same time, as we explore global linkages and trace policies and ideas through human networks, Jonas and Bridge (2003) urge that in using “aspatial” concepts like “environmental governance” we not lose sight of the material makeup of the spaces and places being affected by policy.

The literature on several specific forms of environmental governance is worth examining here. The first form is the protected land area: as West et al. (2006) explain, anthropology has shown how conservation areas are produced more than they are “protected.” Protected areas have also been shown to produce new environmental subjectivities include civic involvement and activist roles. West et al. believe that protected areas merit further anthropological study: “Our contention is that protected areas matter because they are a way of seeing, understanding, and (re)producing the world. As such, they are rich sites of social production and social interaction” (2006: 252).

Another form that may co-occur with protected land is “comanagement,” which refers broadly to state-community partnerships in managing land or other natural resources (Lemos and Agrawal 2006). From the state’s perspective, comanagement offers “the benefit of time- and place-specific information that may help solve complex environmental problems” (Lemos and Agrawal 2006: 311). One branch of comanagement is “civic ecology practices” which denotes “local, hands-on environmental stewardship actions taken to enhance both green infrastructure and community well-being in human-dominated systems” (Krasny et al. 2014: 178). Such projects work to preserve “social-ecological memories” while also providing opportunities to
acquire new skills and knowledge. As cities’ funds wane, local governments increasingly are turning to community partnerships to implement environmental policy through civic ecology projects.

Much of this recent work on civic ecology has focused on environmental education. Krasny’s research with Shusler (2010) found that the youth environmental projects they studied succeeded overall in advancing youth’s intellectual and social development and in advancing their physical and mental well-being. Kudryavtsev et al. (2011) argue for the importance of place in understanding environmental education and its outcomes, and argue for civic ecology’s increased engagement with the environmental psychology literature on place.

Another relevant form of comanagement is that of park conservancies, groups of community members that organize to raise funds and manage neglected city parks. Conservancies arose in New York as public funding drained in the 1970s and 80s and are becoming more common today (Powell 2013). While these groups can move quickly to compensate for public neglect and transform parks dramatically in the short term (Powell 2013), researchers have also documented the risks and disadvantages they carry. For one, by compensating for public agencies’ neglect of parks, they may serve to obscure a problem that demands public outcry (Powell 2013). In addition, conservancies may only protect the parks in high-income neighborhoods where citizens have the time and resources to run such an organization, and thus turn parks into sites of inequality (Powell 2013; Krinsky and Simonet 2011). As private organizations conservancies may be less transparent than parks departments (Powell 2013) and less able to guarantee longevity of programs (Hayward and Dolesh 2013).

When conservancies manage public space, labor is often deunionized and casualized; although volunteer stewards may enjoy workdays, the overall outcome tends to be negative for
both parks workers and the parks themselves (Krinsky and Simonet 2011). For example, in the case of New York City’s Central Park, “The experience of shedding full-time workers exposed some of the dangers of moving toward a more casualized turnover pool for private parks managers. [Central Park Conservancy] depends on its ‘relationships’ with the public and its image—‘our label’—to raise money, and a more casualized workforce makes this more difficult” (Krinsky and Simonet 2011: 39).

**Assemblage and rhizome**

In attempting to make sense of networks and relationships in environmental governance and human-nature relationships generally, some scholars have applied the concepts of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, specifically the concepts of assemblage and rhizome. To begin with assemblage, a useful definition is offered by Tania Murray Li when she applies the concept in the context of forest management: she defines “practices of assemblage” as “the on-going labour of bringing disparate elements together and forging connections between them” (2007: 263). It is important to note that the bringing together that “assemblage” describes is not highly organized, rigid, or pre-determined; it is more accurately described as fluid, improvised, shifting, and emerging. Assemblage draws our attention to process, action, and contingency and to the agency of a variety of subjects, rather than the operation of a “totalizing plan” (2007: 265). The assemblage is “traversed by a will to govern and not simply to coerce” (Li 2007: 287).

Another strength of the idea of assemblage is that it accommodates the messiness of human-nature relationships: in fact “fuzziness, adjustment and compromises are critical to holding assemblages together” (Li 2007: 279). The assemblage contains contradictions and tensions: “It is a product of popular demand as well as expert diagnosis and prescription. It
carries with it a will to govern that sits uneasily with an argument that communities are capable of governing themselves” (Li 2007: 267). The shape of the assemblage may appear to change depending on one’s position within it (Li 2007).

The six key practices of assemblage Li describes are “forging alignments,” “rendering technical,” “authorizing knowledge,” “managing failures and contradictions,” “anti-politics,” and “reassembling.” In the context of my own research I find the concepts “rendering technical” and “anti-politics” particularly useful. By rendering a situation technical, land managers and other actors simplify it into a clear narrative of problem and solution. Within the realm of anti-politics, meanwhile, are such practices as prescribing the appropriate relationships between people and natural resources and “encouraging citizens to engage in debate while limiting the agenda” (Li 2007: 265).

A closely linked idea to assemblage is the analytic of rhizome. In botany, a rhizome is defined as “an elongated, usually horizontal, subterranean stem which sends out roots and leafy shoots at intervals along its length” (OED Online 2016). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) adopt this term to create an analytic which transcends categories such as “social” and “natural” to connect multiple human and non-human actors in a network of creating or becoming. The states of this becoming are called “refrains,” another of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts (1987), described by Laura Ogden in her multi-species ethnography *Swamplife* as “shifting states, continually becoming and becoming undone” (2011: 45). The growth pattern of a rhizome is described by Deleuze and Guattari in contrast to that of a tree: “Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from a tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order” (1987: 7). A tree is hierarchical and genealogical; it contains points and positions while a rhizome consists only of lines. For these reasons it has become a useful analytic for describing
the complex, fluid workings of environmental governance and other nature-culture events and relationships.

Conclusion

I have considered multiple disparate areas of literature in part because the subject of my research was an effort to develop an “unconventional” conservation area/program: unconventional in this case meaning urban, participatory, small-scale, and culturally diverse. In other words, I draw on many ideas because my informants claimed to do so themselves. Moreover, as discussed above, the literature on protected areas does not yet include much research on small-scale urban natural areas. Furthermore, my previous experience working on urban environmental initiatives taught me that human-environment relations are mediated by a range of historical, political, and economic factors that cannot be ignored. With this in mind, I use concepts from different topic areas together in complementary ways to make sense of the research results. For example, from the literature on space and place, we understand that the former becomes the latter through human labor over time; but other bodies of work, such as that on racial economy and urban sociology, help us understand the sociocultural meanings that people bring to a space, and the reasons they might be more or less inclined to spend time turning that space into place. Similarly, historical ecology provides the background and context necessary for understanding concepts such as “nature” that are pieced together in the problem-solution narratives described in the environmental governance literature.

I have also reviewed this wide variety of work so that no piece of the project I studied is taken for granted; I aim to cast a critical eye on this project from every angle. One of anthropology’s central projects is to denaturalize what appears to be natural, and illuminate how these realities are instead the result of human intention and action. This contribution matters
because it makes room for human agency and shows us that things might have turned out another way—and, further, that things could be different in the future.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter I describe the qualitative and quantitative analysis of data collected both from secondary sources and in ethnographic participant observation and interviews. All research was conducted in accordance with anthropological research ethics and followed the guidelines of the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board, who approved the study (study number Pro00017701). Below I detail the processes by which I collected and analyzed data and protected my study’s participants through ethical research practices.

Secondary sources

Having worked on environmental initiatives in Chicago from 2011 to 2013, I brought some background knowledge of Chicago and environmental conservation efforts there to this research project. In 2011 and 2012 I had worked for The Field Museum on research and communications pieces for a multi-partner project called the Chicago Community Climate Action Toolkit, as well as the Museum’s early phases of research and engagement with residents and conservation stakeholders in rural Kankakee County, just south of Chicago. In addition, in 2013 I worked for the University of Illinois at Chicago; in this position I assisted with organization and engagement around the University’s Sustainability Strategic Thinking process.

Seeking additional background information to supplement my existing knowledge of Chicago area conservation, I consulted secondary sources such as news articles, government web sites, reports, plans, maps, and public meeting minutes related to the America’s Great Outdoors
(AGO) Initiative, the Millennium Reserve, and the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. From these sources I was able to sketch an outline of these initiatives: their goals, the agencies involved, and the issues that might arise as they took shape. This information, along with my literature review, helped me form my research and interview questions. I continued collecting secondary sources during and after data collection, either as these documents were published or as I learned about them from informants. Consulting these sources helped me get a picture of the “official” discourse on this topic and its reception in the media, and corroborate information collected in participant observation and interviews.

In addition, I was allowed access to data from a survey conducted by Field Museum staff at a volunteer tree planting event at the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, organized by The Field Museum, Chicago Park District, and other partners in spring of 2014. In this survey, 25 anonymous adult volunteers provided basic demographic information and answered questions about their experience at the tree planting and their connection with the Corridor and other green spaces.

**Ethnography**

**Participant observation**

Participant observation is a cornerstone of anthropological methods and appropriate for exploratory research: it is key to building relationships and knowledge to discuss directly with interviewees, and it offers opportunities to understand patterns of social life that are not verbalized in interviews (Schensul and LeCompte 2013). The goals of my participant observation were to familiarize myself with the locality near the Burnham Wildlife Corridor; understand how people use the Corridor and other public green spaces; build relationships with The Field Museum’s community partners and the Green Ambassadors; and finally, to understand
the outcomes of the Green Ambassador program and the Millennium Reserve so I could compare project outcomes to their stated goals. Participant observation opportunities were limited by access, the overall time frame of my research, and the schedule of the Green Ambassadors program. In selecting sites to observe, I followed the place-based/neighborhood focus of the Green Ambassadors program itself.

The bulk of my participant observation was conducted as an intern for The Field Museum’s Science Action Center over roughly three months in the summer of 2014. In this capacity I provided my supervisors research and education support related to the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and Green Ambassadors program. I attended 13 Green Ambassadors related events, all but two of which were workshops. The extent to which I participated in or observed the workshops depended on how much support was needed by Field Museum staff on any given day. In some of these sessions I quietly observed and took notes, while in others I provided support to the Museum staff leading the workshop. Often when the Ambassadors divided into their “pods” I would sit with a pod and help keep them on track, clarify the task at hand, and stimulate discussion as necessary. I led one workshop for the Ambassadors on the topic of demographic information: where to find it and how they might use it in their research. When the Ambassadors presented their research-to-action ideas to project partners and their families at the end of the summer, I helped set up and took photographs at the event. Outside of the workshops, I conducted a literature review and gathered and generated workshop materials.

I also conducted participant observation at a volunteer workday at the Burnham Nature Sanctuary (a section of the larger Corridor) that did not involve the Green Ambassadors, but rather a small group of volunteers from Chicago Cares, an organization that connects Chicagoans to volunteer opportunities. I introduced myself as a researcher studying uses of the Burnham
Wildlife Corridor. I spent most of this event moving and spreading mulch and/or conversing with the site stewards and volunteers and thus did not take notes until afterward. In contrast, when I conducted participant observation on my own in and around public open spaces in Bronzeville, I kept to myself and paused to take notes on my observations.

I also observed internal planning meetings at The Field Museum’s Science Action Center, occasionally participating when I could contribute. These meetings helped give me a sense of the broader context and goals into which the Green Ambassadors program fit and provided me with information that helped me support that program and other Museum efforts related to the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. The content of these meetings mostly provided background knowledge; it is not the focus of my analysis and is not quoted here.

**Interviews**

To understand how this environmental initiative operated and is understood on multiple levels, I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight people from various organizations involved with the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and/or Millennium Reserve: one federal employee, two working on the state level, two from a city agency, one from The Field Museum, one from a community-based organization involved with the Green Ambassadors, and one volunteer steward of the Burnham Nature Sanctuary (“site steward”). Four of these interviewees are also members of the Millennium Reserve Steering Committee (explained in more detail in Chapter 4) or were involved in convening it at some stage. Several of these interviewees were chosen based on publically available information on the agencies involved in these initiatives, while others were identified through snowball sampling: I was referred to or introduced to them by Field Museum staff or previous interviewees. To address concerns by The Field Museum about avoiding program evaluation fatigue, Green Ambassadors were not interviewed. My interviewee
list was constrained by my short time in the field and by the limited availability of some of my contacts. Ultimately, due to these constraints, my interviews ended up being more from the policy/government agency side than the community organization side than I had initially intended.

A semi-structured interview format was appropriate in this context because it is well suited to exploratory research (Schensul and LeCompte 2013). This format allows the researcher to collect comparable data, but in a way that also allows the interviewee to introduce new topics and areas of inquiry. Semi-structured interviews are also a wise choice when “studying up”: they are appropriate when the researcher may only get one chance to talk to their interviewee, and when the interviewee has a high status within a given community and is very busy (Bernard 2011). A semi-structured format can ease tensions that may come up in interviews with policymakers, in that their format demonstrates that the researcher is “prepared and competent but…not trying to exercise excessive control” (Bernard 2011: 158).

I asked each interviewee about their organization, their role within it, their understanding of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and/or Millennium Reserve and its/their uses, how these initiatives are related (or not), how they measure success in these initiatives, visions for the future of these spaces, and their rationale for partnerships with other organizations (see interview guide, Appendix A). I asked all interviewees about both the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and the Millennium Reserve, but focused more on one or the other depending on the interviewee’s role, level of knowledge, and comfort speaking about the initiatives. I also gave interviewees a demographic survey of which they could complete as much or as little as they liked (see interview guide). Most interviewees provided most if not all of the information requested in the survey.
Interviews were 25 to 105 minutes in duration and one person was interviewed once and then again briefly at a later date for follow-up information. All interviews except one were audio-recorded. Questions were sometimes reordered and (less frequently) omitted depending on the focus of the interview, either beforehand based on knowledge of the particular interviewee’s role, or during the interview in response to the direction in which their answers took the conversation. For example, sometimes interviewees gave information that answered certain questions before they were asked, or brought up topics I had not anticipated, but which seemed to be of great interest and importance to them. Overall, in keeping with the spirit of the semi-structured interview, I struck a productive balance between exploring these tangents and gathering comparable data.

**Data analysis**

As Schensul and LeCompte explain, ethnographic analysis is recursive and begins during, not after, fieldwork; it is “a cyclical process of raising questions, collecting data to answer them, analyzing the data, and then reformulating old or generating new questions to pursue, based on the previous analysis” (1999: 27). In such short-term research, the amount of reformulating I could do while still in the field was quite limited. However, my research was recursive in that I reviewed information collected as I prepared for interviews and participant observation and interview situations, adjusting my approach slightly as I learned more and saw certain themes emerge.

A more structured textual content analysis of field notes and interviews did not begin until after I returned from my research site in the fall of 2014. My first step was to review my field notes and transcribe and review key segments of interviews, which allowed me to get a sense of emerging themes and produce a preliminary paper and presentation discussing these
themes and my fieldwork experience. I then proceeded to type my handwritten field notes and add memos where applicable, as well as transcribe my audio recordings of interviews in their entirety. I then analyzed these transcripts and field notes, as well as the tree planting survey data, with the help of the qualitative analysis software NVivo. I began by coding the data in two phases: the first phase using a more deductive approach, the second more inductive. I developed my first set of codes based on the content of my research questions (see Table 2) and then manually coded all field notes and transcripts with these eight broad codes. I then exported the extracts of text for each code and wrote notes and paragraphs on themes and patterns emerging within each category.

Next, as a way of organizing the full scope of topics, ideas, and themes that emerged, I read through my data again, noting thematic keywords. Using NVivo I performed a word frequency search of my data and used the results to expand and refine my existing list—this served as a more quantitative check on the list I had produced from my impressions while reading. The result was a list of 68 additional codes (see table in Appendix C) that structured the more inductive side of my analysis. With the help of a text search that highlighted relevant keywords, I applied these codes manually to my data as well as the tree planting survey results. I then used NVivo’s auto-code function to automatically code text using a text search for the keyword and related words. This was only possible for words that tended to be used in only one way: for example, “steward” was only used in the environmental sense in my field notes, whereas “nature” was used in a variety of ways that did not all have to do with the “natural environment” or wildlife, and thus could not be auto-coded.

With coding complete, I used NVivo’s cluster analysis function to understand associations among codes and among field notes. In other words, this analysis helped me answer
Table 2. Determination of deductive analysis research codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Key idea</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do stakeholders at the federal, state, city, and community levels understand the Burnham Wildlife Corridor project?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. What do they see as the purpose of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor?</td>
<td>➔ purpose of BWC</td>
<td>➔ purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What are their goals and their reasons for collaborating with other stakeholders on projects related to the Corridor?</td>
<td>➔ rationale for partnerships</td>
<td>➔ partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. How do they understand the Millennium Reserve vision for the broader region?</td>
<td>➔ Millennium Reserve vision</td>
<td>➔ MR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➔ BWC--MR relationship</td>
<td>➔ BWC--MR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do the Burnham Wildlife Corridor’s community partners benefit (or not) from their involvement with the Millennium Reserve, via the Wildlife Corridor?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. How do they use the space?</td>
<td>➔ uses of BWC</td>
<td>➔ use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. How do these stakeholders measure the success of their programs connected to the Corridor and/or Reserve?</td>
<td>➔ measures of success</td>
<td>➔ measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. How is work connected to the Corridor compatible (or not) with the community organizations’ pre-existing goals?</td>
<td>➔ compatibility with org. goals</td>
<td>➔ orggoals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Has environmental stewardship and educational programming connected to the Burnham Wildlife Corridor influenced the community partners’ other programming? If so, in what ways?</td>
<td>➔ influence of BWC on other work</td>
<td>➔ influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the following questions: 1) what codes tend to be found with or near other codes in my data? and 2) how do the pieces of data I have compare to one another in terms of how they have been coded? From this analysis I produced additional notes and compared these observations with the notes produced from my first phase of coding and analysis, which had been more driven by research questions.

Research ethics

Informed consent

All interviewees gave consent to participate having been informed of the nature of my research, risks and benefits of participation, and the extent of the confidentiality of their remarks. This was provided in a written document (see Appendix B) that they were given ample time to
read and then sign before the interview. I would also summarize the contents of the form verbally. Participants marked on the form that they a) understood the form and what I was asking, b) consented to participate in the research, and c) consented to have the interview recorded (which was optional). When possible, I emailed a copy of my informed consent document to the participant in advance of the interview to give them more time to review it. I encouraged my participants to ask me questions about the study and told them they were welcome to stop the interview at any time.

For my participant observation of the Green Ambassadors workshops, written informed consent was not required as my research presented only minimal risk to participants and did not involve any activities that would normally require written consent. I instead gave a presentation to the group explaining the nature of my study, that it is confidential, and that they would not be identified in any publications resulting from the study. I also encouraged the Ambassadors to ask me questions or express their concerns to me at any time. It should also be noted that when I began my research, this program was already under way and the youth participating in it understood that an ethnographer is generally present at workshops to observe and document their behavior. In this way I was stepping into a role with which they were already familiar.

For my participant observation at public green spaces, the research presented only minimal risk to participants who were observed in these settings. The potential risks encountered by individuals I observed were no different than the potential risks they encounter in the course of their normal everyday activities. As in all other parts of the research, data from these observations was anonymized.
Privacy and confidentiality

Hard copies of field notes, demographic surveys completed during interviews, and signed informed consent documents have been stored in a locked location. Typed field notes, interview audio recordings and transcripts, and informants’ contact information have been stored digitally in a password-protected location on a secure server. While internship supervisors at The Field Museum were aware of the identity of some interviewees, they have not had access to the interview recordings, transcripts, or completed demographic surveys. In all materials participants’ names have either been removed or changed to a code name, and no names or obviously identifying information are present in this paper. In addition, the gender-neutral pronoun “they” is used when referring to any interviewee in this paper, regardless of gender, to protect the identities of participants further. Differences in perspectives along gender lines were not a focus of my project at the outset and were not observed in the course of the study, so the omission of gender from my descriptions of individual interviewees does not detract greatly from the content here.

Relationship to The Field Museum

As a student researcher simultaneously serving as an intern with The Field Museum—and gaining access to research subjects largely through this internship—I had to balance ethical obligations as a researcher with obligations to The Field Museum. For this reason I explained to informants that I represented the Museum only in a very limited capacity, and that I was interviewing them as a student and the data would belong to me and not the Museum. I also stressed that while I intended to provide the Museum with recommendations, my role was primarily that of a student and not a program evaluator. However, despite my best effort, I was
aware that it was unlikely that participants who met me through Museum staff would be able to remove this association entirely from their mind while we spoke.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In what follows I describe the results of my ethnography and secondary research, focusing primarily on themes that emerged in interviews. First I explore how research participants understood and defined the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and its place in the context of urban ecology and plans in Chicago, with emphasis on the Millennium Reserve and how that plan itself is understood. Next I describe uses of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, both those I observed and those research participants observed or envisioned for the future, and the roles of various actors vis-à-vis the Corridor. I then share participants’ comments on community engagement efforts and partnerships around the Corridor and conclude by describing preliminary effects of these efforts, with a focus on the Green Ambassador program.

Research participants’ demographic information

The two main components of my research were semi-structured interviews and participant observation with the Green Ambassadors. Of the eight interviewees, four were men and four were women, and seven were White and one was Hispanic/Latin@. Not all interviewees provided their age; those that did ranged in age from 35 to 69 years. Of the 24 Green Ambassador youth, ten were young men and 14 were young women, they ranged in age from ninth grade to 23 years old, and ten were Hispanic/Latino@ and 14 were Black (my own observation—I did not ask them how they identify). Of the 25 tree planting volunteers who took The Field Museum’s post-event survey, five were men and 20 were women. Five were between
ages 18 and 30, twelve were between 31 and 45, and eight were between 45 and 65. Per the categories offered in the survey, two identified as African-American, 15 as Hispanic/Latino, six as White, and one as “other.”

**Defining the Burnham Wildlife Corridor**

My first research question asked how various stakeholders understand the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, including the purpose of the space and its place in the Millennium Reserve. Both the Reserve and Corridor were described in a range of ways. To begin with the Corridor, while owned by the Chicago Park District, neither the Corridor nor the existing Nature Sanctuary within it is often called a “park”: of those I interviewed, only two used this term to describe the space. In interviews and in Green Ambassadors workshops, the Corridor was more frequently called a “space,” “natural area,” or “nature area.” Less frequently, it was called a “habitat.” At the time of the study, of course, the Corridor was a work in progress, with some portions such as the Nature Sanctuary open for use and others under construction. This transitional, unfinished quality surfaced in comments such as this by a city employee (“City Employee A”): “Really it’s a passive space. … We’re trying to make it a little bit more of an active space. But we’re not sure what that means yet” (I5_0808). They also explained that its location makes it less readily accessible to those that might activate the space: “It’s not really *in* a community,” they explained (I5_0808). The volunteer site steward interviewed described the space as being “on the edge of neighborhoods…in a place that people don’t routinely come” (I2_0801).

Similarly, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor is on the edge of the Millennium Reserve, both geospatially and politically. The Corridor is located within the official Millennium Reserve area in a strip of land (a “chimney,” “panhandle,” or “northerly connection” in the words of a few interviewees [I1_0710; I3_0805; I8_0819]) extending off of the northern edge of the Millennium
Reserve; visually, it stands out on the map because it interrupts what is otherwise a fairly smooth, rounded outline around the Reserve area. In 2012 the Illinois Department of Natural Resources had chosen a group of model projects that included the Corridor, but by the time I arrived to do my research in the summer of 2014, I found its relationship to the Reserve had become (or always had been) more ambiguous. When I explained to a Millennium Reserve Steering Committee member that I was studying the Corridor as a way to study the Reserve because the Corridor was a Millennium Reserve model project, they asked, rhetorically, “Is it?” They proceeded to explain that when the Reserve Steering Committee was formed in 2013, it did away with the model projects concept and re-focused on a set of “priority projects” that reflected the committee’s work on defining the Reserve. The Corridor is not one of these new “priority projects” (I1_0710).

Opinions varied as to where the project stood at the time of my research. According to an employee of the federal agency that funded the project, from “the DOI [Department of the Interior] perspective” the Corridor is indeed a Millennium Reserve project “in the sense that we were able to provide a big chunk of funding to that work. Because the governor had said Millennium Reserve was one of his top priorities and so the Fish and Wildlife Service allocated a million dollars, roughly, through our Coastal Restoration program…to put towards Millennium Reserve projects” (I4_0806). However, they continued, the Corridor’s status within the Reserve or as a “model project” is not all that important: “my funding, it was completely unrelated to the state’s model project thing—it came first, actually. And we just did it because it was one of the priorities of my office” (I4_0806). They felt their office probably would not have done anything differently had the funding come from a different source because the project itself was worthwhile: “I think the work was important anyway so even if the state governor administration
changes we’re gonna still be invested in working in the Burnham Corridor because it’s along the lake and it’s good for migratory birds and it’s in Chicago…sort of with or without something called ‘Millennium Reserve’” (I4_0806).

In answer to the Millennium Reserve question, the volunteer site steward at the Corridor explained that stewardship of green spaces in a metropolitan region is always part of a larger picture in some sense. Site managers’ jobs are to “optimize the separate components” to contribute to “an overall program.” “It’s easy to see it in the whole context of things,” they continued, “cause we know what the context is. And everybody who’s a steward is aware of these things” (I2_0801). The site steward added that none of these conservation ideas about connecting fragments (e.g., “green infrastructure”) are all that new. They simply take on different names as the times change and funding opportunities present themselves. The site steward explained it to me this way in the following exchange:

AW: For me it’s interesting, the Wildlife Corridor as a part of the Millennium Reserve, because technically it’s just outside the Calumet Region as it’s usually drawn on the map, y’know?
Site steward: Oh! Well that was because the Park District wanted a piece of the action and they got it, that’s why [laughs]. I mean frankly they’re there and this is an opportunity, this is something that was on their minds. And this was a place where they could do something. And on the whole I think it worked out well because it brought—they were able to use that to involve a whole lot more people. [I2_0801]

While the site steward was aware of the mission of the Millennium Reserve, this specific initiative did not seem to be a central focus or motivator in their day-to-day work.

Similarly, the Millennium Reserve did not seem to be on the mind of one of the community partners who played an active and important role in organizing the tree planting and the Green Ambassadors. They said the name “Millennium Reserve” alone “doesn’t really ring a bell.” “If anything, [the Green Ambassadors] probably see it more as like ‘the field trip project’ [laughs]. The Field Museum project” (I6_0811). While the site steward and community partner
differed in their level of knowledge of the Millennium Reserve, they shared a kind of indifference to the initiative: they are not opposed to the plan, but they do not think about it much, and they have what they need to do their work without it.

The city employees interviewed were more readily aware of the Millennium Reserve but distanced the Burnham Wildlife Corridor from the Reserve in their comments. City Employee A explained the Corridor as being in but not of the Reserve: geographically within the Reserve area but not within its scope, policy-wise—largely because the Reserve itself had yet to take a clear shape. For this interviewee, the Reserve seemed to be a delicate topic:

AW: How do you see [the Burnham Wildlife Corridor] fitting in to the larger picture of the Millennium Reserve?
City Employee A: Boy [laughs].
AW: It can be, y’know—it doesn’t have to fit into that picture.
City Employee A: I think it very much does in terms of green space, in terms of, y’know, having a green corridor in Chicago, y’know that fits in with the Park District’s lakefront plan. But that’s, y’know, yeah, I’m gonna stop there cause there’s a lot of things with the Millennium Reserve that, it’s just such a fluid thing and I don't think the idea is—I know the idea is concrete of what they want to happen but I don’t think the wheels have been set in motion to help define it in a real world way. [I5_0808]

This city employee described their office’s involvement in the Millennium Reserve as incidental, though not insignificant: “The timing of it is funny for us...because we’ve taken over these new properties in Calumet, so that’s not directly but a little bit coincides with the Millennium Reserve. So for us it’s a tremendous opportunity for access to partners and resources to help us build that space. But again we’re sort of waiting for the real-world projects to hit” (I5_0808). City Employee A also expressed that their particular role had more to do with programming existing spaces than planning new ones and thus that they were not as involved as others in discussions of initiatives like the Millennium Reserve.
Another city employee (“City Employee B”) was more involved with planning and asserted that the Burnham Wildlife Corridor was neither in nor of the Millennium Reserve—it was merely aligned with the Reserve’s goals:

City Employee B: Well, the Millennium Reserve map has been redrawn so the Burnham Wildlife Corridor no longer fits within the boundaries of the space. … But the different, the similarities are that Millennium Reserve is very much about communities and building relationships. In that way there are definitely similarities.
AW: Oh, ok. Yeah, I’ve heard different things. I’ve heard that it is within it, still kind of that little piece that sticks off the top, but is that—am I maybe getting outdated information or—
City Employee B: That little piece that went all the way to Northerly Island, that used to be sort of called ‘the panhandle’? From the latest information I know, that is no longer part of Millennium Reserve.
AW: But before, it was one of the—I think in 2012 one of the model projects.
City Employee B: Yeah.
AW: Yeah. And it received a significant chunk of funding and I don’t know, that was through the Millennium Reserve, right?
City Employee B: It was not.
AW: Oh it was not.
City Employee B: No.
AW: So that, the US Fish & Wildlife—that’s just like, that funding would have come through anyway, it’s kind of like not part of—
City Employee B: It came, the US Fish and Wildlife funding came before Millennium Reserve and was independent of Millennium Reserve. [I8_0819]

This exchange is notable in that it illustrates the ambiguous status of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor vis-à-vis the Millennium Reserve, and also because it highlights one important potential source of this ambiguity: that there are multiple ways in which the Corridor can be “part of” the Reserve: geospatially, financially, and programmatically (both in the sense of its mission and goals and the activities that take place there).

The ambiguity of the Corridor’s status in relation to the Reserve has, apparently, little to do with the mission of and activities within the space: restoration for migratory bird habitat and (habitat-friendly) recreation fit perfectly within the Millennium Reserve vision. The ambiguity instead results, at least in part, from disagreement over whether the broader Bronzeville...
neighborhood containing the Corridor should be included in the Reserve. Two interviewees with knowledge of the early steering committee discussions brought up this issue on their own. One of these committee members gave a couple key reasons Governor Quinn’s office was interested in including (in fact “needed” to include) Bronzeville in the Reserve, despite others’ opposition: they wanted to gain the support of African-American leadership in the region, and the Bronzeville piece would connect the Millennium Reserve to Millennium Park and downtown. They also described the tension arising from steering committee members’ insistence that the Millennium Reserve was strictly a *Calumet* project, which frustrated community leaders in Bronzeville (I1_0710).

Another interviewee, a state employee (“State Employee A”), who witnessed these debates also mentioned the connection to Millennium Park: “One [reason to include Bronzeville] is that the South Side is far away and scary to many people who live in the region who aren’t from that part of the region. So connecting it to downtown makes it a lot less scary” (I7_0814). In the course of debating the inclusion of Bronzeville, however, State Employee A further developed their argument for its inclusion. This came up when I asked them to explain what they meant when they said they sometimes felt like “the conscience of the Millennium Reserve” (I7_0814). Some members of the steering committee, they said, opposed the inclusion of Bronzeville in part because they believed Bronzeville’s leadership was difficult to work with. State Employee A had developed an extensive argument for the inclusion of Bronzeville, which they felt strongly was “the right thing to do” but also made practical (especially financial) sense (I7_0814). They felt that its inclusion allows more projects to receive the extra consideration, attention, and funding that may be available for Reserve projects. What’s more, it opens up Reserve projects’ access to IDNR’s Coastal Management Program funding: without including
the Bronzeville portion, only a small part of the Millennium Reserve would be on Lake Michigan’s coastline. This particular argument was developed somewhat after the fact: “I don't know whether or not it was actually the rationale but it’s the one we stand behind now” (I7_0814). State Employee A also noted that there are significant ecological connections between the Calumet region and the lakefront.

In addition to ecological connections State Employee A also drew historical connections between the Calumet region and Bronzeville:

And from a storytelling perspective, there’s all kinds of connections, everything about Bronzeville, if you know anything about the Great Migration and about the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area and those are completely connected and integrated with parts of the Calumet region. And so extending the stories and connecting them, especially people, and what has that meant, gives you lots of things that you can do together. [I7_0814]

State Employee A also maintained that from an economic development perspective, Bronzeville’s “interests and needs” are “different but as intense as the economic development interests and needs in the Calumet Region” (I7_0814). Finally, they stressed the importance, in the context of the conservation community being mostly White, of including communities of color even if it is not easy or convenient. When I responded that the Calumet region was itself home to many people of color, State Employee A replied that Bronzeville’s social history gave it an important symbolic value, and then reiterated the other benefits its inclusion would have, as well as its long history of exclusion and disinvestment. They reflected on their agency taking this position: “I’m sure we made some people cranky.” They added, “I’m sure people are still mad about it now” (I7_0814).

Another interviewee working on the state level (“State Employee B”) explained the rationale for the inclusion of the “panhandle” in the Reserve:
Millennium Reserve was originally designed geospatially to connect to Millennium Park, ok? And that’s sort of how the name Millennium Reserve was derived, by making that sort of conceptual connection and physical connection to Millennium Park, it would sort of through association convey the idea that...this is a unique resource, just as Millennium Park is. And we’d like to reimagine the Calumet Region just as that area that used to be Millennium Park which...was unused other than for the railroads. That was reimagined and entirely and made a first class destination. We’d like to kind of think we could do the same thing with the Calumet region. So that was the idea behind that, that little connection to the downtown area. And it also pulls in the Bronzeville neighborhood which also has a rich history connected with the Great Migration, a lot of human history tied up in that as well, so we want to make that connection also. [I3_0805]

State Employee B continued that while they were personally not too familiar with Bronzeville, “we’d like to give the Bronzeville neighborhood and the champions of Bronzeville the opportunity to sort of attach to Millennium Reserve and hopefully realize some of the same benefits that we hope will materialize out of the larger effort” (I3_0805). Ultimately, at the time of my research, Bronzeville was being framed as a kind of “gateway” to the Calumet region and was presented as part of the “Illinois lakefront” portion of the Millennium Reserve in official materials.

As for the Burnham Wildlife Corridor itself, clearly no single, simple definition emerges, but various elements and themes recur. The Corridor emerges as a mutable policy and partially-blank space that shifts shape depending on the priorities of federal, state, and city administrations; opportunities for funding; and the status of other plans. It also, of course, shifts shapes according to the speaker describing it. Two key elements that recur even as the Corridor shifts shape include habitat (especially for birds) and connection between other (more established) destinations. The Corridor appears mostly independent of the Millennium Reserve, especially as it moves forward.
Defining the Millennium Reserve

To understand the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and Bronzeville neighborhood’s place in the context of larger plans, it is helpful to understand how participants regard those plans. My focus was on the Millennium Reserve plan, as it was the original driver for my project, and a key piece of my first research question.

Generally, the Reserve vision was described in official materials, and by most interviewees familiar with it, as having three main components: ecological restoration, economic development, and community/cultural engagement. This is in line with current thinking on “sustainability” as being located at the intersection of environment, economy, and community—an idea sometimes described using the metaphor of a “three-legged stool.” As State Employee B explained, the Reserve steering committee wanted to

focus on that intersection of environment, economy, and community, with the understanding that environmental considerations aren’t an independent, stand-alone kind of a thing. They’re linked to the well-being of the human community in the region and also to the economy, and that each leg of that stool does best when all three legs are doing well. [I3_0805]

Reconciling these three elements of the Reserve with one another (at least rhetorically) can be difficult and results in what can sound like ambivalence toward industry, as in the following comment from State Employee B:

Going back to that core former industrial area, there are a lot of assets, a rich human history of the area. …And I think it's important to highlight the heavy manufacturing era of the city of Chicago and the role that that area played building not only the city of Chicago, but building the country, basically. But the other thing down there is that there’s this richness of natural areas, of remnant lake plain prairies and marshes and other kinds of wetlands that are unique—globally rare, in some cases. And that’s a legacy we don't want to forget either. That was sort of the raw material out of which that region was carved. And now those remnants sit in this matrix of y’know, kind of bombed-out industrial areas and fills areas, slag, and all kinds of problems down there. And so there’s a lot of stress that’s put on them. And they require a lot of management and a lot of stewardship. [I3_0805]
Industry, here, is cast in both a positive and negative light: it is a source of economic sustenance, social history, and regional pride—but also environmental stress and degradation.

In descriptions of the Reserve, three interviewees mentioned former Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and/or the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative and the story of the Calumet area being presented to Sec. Salazar as one of the state of Illinois’s key conservation priorities.

AGO and the Reserve represent a new kind of conservation, State Employee B explained:

> It’s kind of a convoluted path…about four years ago President Obama launched something called America’s Great Outdoors and it was his administration’s effort to align sort of federal resources behind local efforts to promote outdoor recreation and conservation and stewardship and that kind of thing. Whereas in the old days it might have—a federal outdoors initiative might have focused on building new refuges and new, adding land to the federal land base—that’s kind of from a bygone era and now the idea is ‘let’s get federal resources behind locally developed outdoor initiatives.’ [I3_0805]

According to these interviewees, a common response to the federal opportunity presented was to point to the many existing plans, studies, proposals (e.g., for a national heritage area), and initiatives in the Calumet region. The area, State Employee B explained, had “a lot of local champions for open space and conservation” (I3_0805). In this sense, the Reserve is described as an actualization of many ideas that had long been in the works. According to the Corridor site steward, it had to be this way, given the state of conservation funding:

> It’s a plan of opportunities, basically. You do something when you have the chance to do it, keep lots of ideas in store and then—now I’m not sure they would consider themselves that kind of terminology, but that’s a very pragmatic way of dealing with trying to manage your green infrastructure with very little—very few resources. [I2_0801]

In line with this, activities that fall within the scope of Reserve-related work were sometimes described as things that would have happened anyway. To one steering committee member, the Reserve was very much tied to then-Governor Quinn, whose term ended in 2015, which meant that under another administration it might take a different form or name.
While the Reserve was in one sense nothing new, interviewees noted that there was or at least had been some degree of confusion around the project’s goals. As the federal employee interviewed said, “Probably every single person you ask about Millennium Reserve is gonna have a different understanding of what it is” (I4_0806). Another steering committee member said that the sweeping generalities of Governor Quinn’s early descriptions of the Reserve left some in the conservation community scratching their heads (I7_0710). One particular source of confusion was the geographic size of the Reserve: total Calumet area open space is generally considered to be about 42,000 acres, but when the first Reserve map was generated the area was touted as 250,000 acres in size, the “largest urban park” in the country—which, according to this steering committee member, prompted “pushback” from the conservation community (I1_0710). Many found themselves conflicted, the steering committee member explained: “Everybody’s happy to have a light shined on this area, but it’s so unclear” (I1_0710).

Tension and confusion arose in interactions between the local conservation community and those perceived as outsiders, such as those sent from the State to organize the early stages of the initiative in late 2011 and 2012. The steering committee member quoted above described one of these outsiders as a “political guy” who irritated a lot of people by agreeing to everything proposed: as a result, the steering committee member said, “you never know where you stand” (I1_0710). One point of tension and “pushback,” cited by the federal employee interviewed, was the name “Millennium Reserve” itself: “Every time that the folks involved with the Millennium Reserve do outreach to get feedback they get overwhelming feedback that it’s a horrible name that everyone hates” (I4_0806). The problem seems to be, at least in part, that this name erases “Calumet,” connecting to the debate around how strictly the Millennium Reserve is a Calumet project, discussed above in the context of the Bronzeville area inclusion issue.
At the time of my research, these confusions had not been entirely cleared up, as the comments of City Employee A about “waiting for the real-world projects to hit” above make clear. As they also said:

City Employee A: It’s this thing that’s ‘Oh yeah the Millennium Reserve, the funding’s coming, this is gonna happen, this is gonna happen,’ but that talk has been going on for years now and I have not really seen much action behind it, so.

AW: So it hasn’t really been—it’s been something that you're hearing a lot about but in terms of how you actually get your work done day-to-day, it hasn’t—

Interviewee: It doesn’t affect it. I mean, planning meetings, things like that. Talking about what it is and how we can use it as an opportunity. Even putting real world projects together, but in terms of action on the ground, I haven’t seen that happen.

AW: Is there some sense of planning fatigue with all this? Like go to a lot of meetings, talk about a vision—

City Employee A: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. [laughs] [I5_0808]

In sum, the Reserve was described as a multi-dimensional initiative with a broad scope that both holds promise and makes it, at times, frustratingly unwieldy.

**Actors and practices at the Burnham Wildlife Corridor**

In my research question 1a, I asked what stakeholders see as the purpose of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. The answer to this question came down essentially to “for whom” (actors) and “for what” (practices). Broadly, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor was defined by interviewees as a place for native plants, wildlife (mainly birds), and people. When asked how they would describe the Corridor to someone unfamiliar with the space, half of interviewees mentioned wildlife habitat. Three mentioned either planting native species or removing non-native ones. Answering follow-up questions about land managers’ goals, a volunteer steward mentioned more specifically the kind of native habitat that they are trying to produce in the Burnham Nature Sanctuary: “a sustainable habitat, an eastern hardwood forest,…and a prairie savanna ecosystem” (I2_0801). This interviewee went into the most detail on the shifting ecological makeup of the Corridor, repeatedly describing the space as a laboratory, and secondarily, as a garden.
Historically, they explained, the Nature Sanctuary area was lake bottom, so the idea of restoring it to a previous state could not apply. The idea, instead, was to remove invasive non-native plants and then plant native ones to encourage the development of certain habitats native to the “broad metropolitan region” (I2_0801). However, one has to observe the space and the outcomes of various management efforts such as tree plantings. The goals for the space, they said, had to be flexible; an “artificial solution” with each square foot mapped out would not apply (I2_0801). Technically, in their view, this was not a “real natural area”: “If you want a real natural area, well it’s something that has developed over time in a place. And what we’re dealing with here is we’re trying to cram [laughs]—you know we’re trying to get something that normally takes 100 years or 200 years or 300 years and do it in three” (I2_0801). When asked if a land management goal was to have the Nature Sanctuary eventually be self-sustaining, the steward answered that there were too many “outside influences,” such as birds dropping invasive seeds, for the desired flora to thrive without some degree of continued management over the long term (I2_0801).

In three interviews the bird habitat element of the Corridor was described as primary. As City Employee A said, “Really it was funded for—my understanding is for bird habitat. And the, y’know, the connection to people has come up along the way” (I5_0808). An employee of the federal agency that provided funding frequently cited migratory bird habitat along with community engagement as the primary goals of their agency’s support of the Corridor. The site steward said the importance of migratory birds influenced their management decisions:

It’s mostly designed for birds. And we’ve always been sensitive of that. … All the trees on the other side, we left them because we want to maintain enough variety in plant size and openings. And if you get rid of too much cover, there won’t be places for the birds to hide. And you need a certain critical mass because in a prairie setting various prairie birds need huge acreages just to nest. [I2_0801]
Human actors and their involvement in the Corridor came up more often in interviews (in
part, of course, because of the questions asked), although it seems the role of the Corridor’s
human occupants is not well defined. While the site steward emphasized repeatedly that people
should visit the Corridor, they cautioned that “you don't want mobs of people stomping around”
while stewardship work is underway (I2_0801). The site stewards were also frustrated by dog-
masters: during one of my visits they discussed the problem and the need for more signage
informing people not to walk their dogs there. The idea that not all human use of the space was
positive also came up in the site steward’s description of past usage, pre-restoration: “It was a
terrible place. People did—they were assignations in here and drug dealing and God knows what
else. During the day people practiced parking in here. There were driving lessons—very well
used but it was really unsavory” (I2_0801). The steward also described how drivers had veered
off Lake Shore Drive and crashed into the space: one buckeye got a “glancing blow” from a car
but its roots remain connected and it continues to grow, now in a “funny-looking” way, the
steward told me with a laugh (I2_0801). Before the restoration efforts began there were “a few
birders” including “a woman who just died…she had been here along the lakefront for 60 years.
She was one of the people who hung out here and we met her almost immediately” (I2_0801).
However, “There was no organized group that came in here. This was seen as a real dead end”
(I2_0801). In contrast to the “unsavory” uses, birding was seen as an activity appropriate to the
space. Other past uses considered appropriate included running, hiking, cross country skiing, as
well as a science class from a nearby school coming to take soil surveys and help out with
stewardship activities. The site stewards host volunteers at a monthly workday as well as “other
groups who’re hunting for experiences—‘green’ experiences—y’know, we accommodate them”
(I2_0801).
The city employees interviewed described similar present uses of the space: the main “organized” activities being bird walks in the spring and fall during bird migrations, and the monthly workdays. City Employee B mentioned nature photography and “people just taking hikes” (I8_0819). City Employee A discussed the regular workdays and tree planting event, then remarked, “Other than that, it’s really just a path for people to walk on at this point” (I5_0808). This interviewee considered passing through by foot to be a more “passive” than “active” use of the space. City Employee A mentioned that uses depend on the portion of the Corridor: for example, birding was mostly done in the southern portion, in the more established Burnham Nature Sanctuary. When asked about general uses of the space, the community organization partner interviewed said that they saw the Corridor as potentially “such a great space in particular for our families to go and visit with their kids” and also, of course, the site of the Green Ambassadors’ and community’s tree planting accomplishments—which the community partner hoped they would want to visit and admire with pride (I6_0811).

**Community engagement and partnerships**

How else did participants see people fitting into the Burnham Wildlife Corridor picture? City Employee A said that their office was looking to community members to “get involved in not only accessing the space, but also helping to design and create a use for the space” (I5_0808). They believed this was important because while various agencies may have “a vision for the space—that doesn’t necessarily mean that that’s how the community is gonna use it” (I5_0808). This desire for community input and interest drove what both city employees described as an unprecedented level of community engagement efforts related to the space. As City Employee A noted, while the space was designed for birds, the “community-driven process” of determining its human uses has been “much more robust than what the Park District has done
in the past” (I5_0808). City Employee B explained that community engagement was such an essential piece that it was difficult to separate the goals and purpose of the Corridor from that of the Green Ambassadors program, and that both projects were “about creating networks of people” (I8_0819).

For one of the community organization partners, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor was defined first and foremost by human connection. They said they would describe the Corridor as “a collaboration of two communities” that also “involved other agencies” (I6_0811). They went on to explain that at the outset of their organization’s involvement with The Field Museum and the Corridor, the parents of the youth served by the organization had reservations about the project. “So when I explain what it looks like before we actually had the involvement, it was really us selling the idea of bringing communities together to make more green spaces for everyone” (I6_0811).

One way in which social/cultural content and activity was to be added to the space was through visual art. In City Employee B’s estimation, the plants alone did not reflect the cultural character of the community:

The community told us about places where they wanted sitting areas, ideas for what type of sitting areas, signage, groves of trees, there were ideas for, I guess, naming, dedicating different spaces….So there’re really a lot of ideas about how to make the space more personal to the community. Or have the space reflect the culture of the community. Versus just being native plants….One thing that did become clear is that folks felt it was important to include art in the space. [I8_0819]

City Employee B felt art was important to the community because involving local artists provided a more direct, literal way for (at least some) community members to shape the space—as opposed to merely offering input at a design charrette. They also brought up the possibilities of incorporating art into nature education at the Corridor. At the time of my research the Park District was working with The Field Museum and other partners to organize an
arts/culture/nature committee who would handle the selection of community artists to work on sitting areas and other art elements in the space. These elements were described as part of a place-making process that would bring cultural meaning into the Corridor.

Independently, while brainstorming research-to-action project ideas in one of the workshops, a few of the Green Ambassadors pitched a mural, a way to “mix art and nature.” In response to this idea, one of the museum staff suggested the Ambassadors interested in the mural think about answering their research questions as a way to discover the content that would be in their mural. Public art also came up in an interview with one of the project’s community partners, who suggested that a mural could make the viaduct leading to the Corridor “a little more appealing” (16_0811) which would in turn make the space feel more welcoming and accessible. The community partner interviewed told a story in which youth involved with their organization collected garbage in the neighborhood and then made a mural out of bottle caps and other materials. This community partner also drew an analogy between green spaces and murals to illustrate that green spaces need maintenance by the community members over time. In general, Pilsen, one the neighborhoods involved in the project, is known for its murals; The Field Museum has even been involved in the past with the creation of a mural in a native garden in Pilsen.

The content of the art elements to be added to the space was of course yet to be determined at the time of my research, but some themes were being discussed. One major theme was migration—specifically, connecting Bronzeville’s Great Migration history with the migration of birds through the Corridor. Bringing in Great Migration heritage content would draw on work already underway by the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Commission and others. These heritage themes came up in most interviews, with one interviewee noting that
plans for a Great Migration Trail in Illinois were being discussed. While the Pilsen community partners were very much involved in the Corridor and would be involved in bringing art to the space, the Bronzeville’s Great Migration history was the only specific heritage theme that came up frequently in my research.

Partnerships and the rationales for pursuing them were framed and described in a variety of ways. Collaborations with partners were the way to connect people to a space and make it more of a place. Several interviewees said that partnerships with community organizations (whether directly or through another institutional partner) were necessary to involve a greater number and wider range of people in the space. The first point—number of park visitors, and especially stewards—connects to the issue of funding. As State Employee B explained, like many state agencies theirs had suffered financially over the last decade. The federal employee interviewed explained that restoration work “takes a lot of hands and we don’t have that much money” (I4_0806).

However, the involvement of community members engaged in stewardship through partnerships with CBOs and other organizations was not described simply as free labor. The federal employee quoted above went on to explain that the goal of partnerships with CBOs was to “not just recreate [native habitats] but at the same time, build community engagement and ongoing stewardship so that the people who surround them are—enjoy them and take ownership of them and help out with managing them” (I4_0806). This idea of “ownership” came up in two other interviews as well. While never explicitly defined by the speakers, it is clear that in this context “ownership” is not meant in the sense of legal property rights but, seemingly, as a sense of having a stake in something and/or feeling responsible for it. In almost all instances where
“ownership” was mentioned, it was closely linked with the actions of environmental stewardship over time.

City Employee A explained that as someone whose job is mainly concerned with “programming spaces,” their goal was “to see more people engaged in the space, taking ownership.” When asked to describe what success at the Corridor would look like, they answered that one key component would be for some of these community groups who have been engaged in this planting process, to have taken ownership of the space. And to be interested in participating in activities and stewardship there. For me those are, personally, those are the two key things: stewardship and engagement in activities. I think real success could be measured five, ten years down the road if these organizations, these community based organizations are still involved there. [15_0808]

The federal employee echoed this idea: “You can’t do habitat restoration once and walk away and say you’re done—you have to maintain it. So, success would be that the neighbors who live along there really feel ownership of the Corridor and are volunteer stewards and stay engaged and love it and maintain it” (14_0806).

Similarly, when asked about the imagined future of the space, a community partner involved in the Green Ambassador program and volunteer tree planting responded that beyond seeing the Green Ambassadors and their families use it, having that be like their space now, because they helped create that. ...Not only did they help plant, but they actually helped put [the tree planting event] together. I think that when you are involved to that extent, you just feel like it’s yours, like ownership again—it goes back to that. Where versus if just the city comes out and planted it. Well that’s their job right? [AW: Yeah.] (laughs) That's their job to, y’know, plant it. But when you have other people get involved then it becomes yours. So I think them having that sense or that feeling that they don’t only just belong to this community, that they actually—that community’s also theirs gives them that sense of belonging. ...But I think there is just the bigger picture. I think that place will be used for generations to come. I, my hope is that these kids, these teenagers could later come back, y’know ten years from now and bring friends or their families and let them know, like ‘hey, look at this tree, it’s like eight foot high now, I actually planted it when it was like only like a foot,’...I guess more like that mark or that stamp, like ‘I was here, I helped create this, I was part of this.’ [16_0811]
The implicit logic in these comments is that stewardship results in (a sense of) ownership which results in more stewardship, benefiting both people and nature over the long term. The benefits of this relationship are a high priority for under-funded state and city agencies. The federal employee consulted explained that while “restoration” traditionally had a more narrow definition and referred to activities such as “breaking tiles and planting and you know taking care of invasives [i.e., non-native plants] and things like that,” it now included “things that lead to stewardship—so outreach, but not outreach in terms of like nature education, but outreach that’s specifically geared toward stewardship” (14_0806). With the broadening of this definition this interviewee’s agency could put restoration funding toward such activities. They explained that this was especially relevant in urban projects.

Another idea associated with community engagement was the concept of “connection to nature,” a kind of relationship to “nature” that results from time spent there. This concept comes up frequently in official documents and plans related to the Corridor and Reserve and in conversation with members of the conservation community. In the survey given after the tree planting, one of the questions Field Museum staff asked volunteers was “How do you feel about this place?/Do you feel a connection to it?” and most respondents said they did feel connection to the Corridor. One said, “I feel super connected, absolutely. I’m rooted here! I planted one tree for everyone in my family.” Another said, “It was really inspiring to be connected to nature – I didn’t realize when I grabbed that first tree. I felt a spiritual connection, that first tree was a real connection.” In the Q&A after the Green Ambassadors’ presentation of their project proposals to funders and other partners, a Museum staff member asked them, “When you go by the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, do you feel differently, feel something for it?” One responded that yes, they
feel pride and tell their friends about their work there, while several other Ambassadors nodded in agreement.

A connection to nature was discussed both as good in itself but also as providing other benefits to the individual or society at large. In one workshop a Green Ambassador said, “Science says green space relaxes the nerves” and the volunteer site steward interviewed said that connection to nature might help fight ignorance and inspire investment in the fate of natural areas. They reasoned: “All exposure to [nature] is good. Because most people just, they wouldn’t have such dumb ideas if they knew more about science or they had more connection with—” [at this point the steward noticed a spotted goldfinch and paused to point it out to me] (I2_0801).

The site steward also opined that the Green Ambassadors should spend more time at the Corridor because

That’s really, if you really want somebody who’s sensitive to green things, that’s gonna act as a go-between for it. …Unless you spend some time with it, you don’t have any stake in it. I mean, I appreciate a lot of things, but I don't spend the time with it and so…it’s strictly a theoretical connection. And when I was younger, I mean I spent a lot of time out of doors whereas these kids haven’t [laughs]. And now’s the time to give them that chance. So you get a, sink the hook in deeper. [I2_0801]

The second goal in terms of engaging people with the Corridor was that of bringing a greater diversity of people to the space, and/or to green spaces in the region in general. City Employee B described it as “reaching people beyond the choir,” explaining:

Building natural areas is different than building a building. …When you build a structure, you have more of a model of ‘If we build it, they will come.’ Natural areas are not like that in that the people who come are the ones who are already nature lovers, who are familiar with the space…. A lot of people in Chicago are still kind of apprehensive about that type of space and we realize that engaging the community in the development of the space, then they are more likely to be invested in it, and actually use it, versus being an outsider of it. [I8_0819]

Diversity of people spending time in green space was a focus for those interviewed from state and federal agencies as well. The federal employee interviewed said the Corridor and the Green
Ambassadors were projects worth supporting in part because they help the agency achieve their
goal of “working in urban areas and connecting with urban people” (I4_0806). When asked
where this goal originates, they responded that it was at least in part “from demographics, that is
increasingly urban. We’re supposed to connect with and serve the country and more and more of
them are living in urban areas and so that’s where we should be working and connecting”
(I4_0806). This goal, they explained, is a focus of Secretary Jewell but also of those “in the
field” from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service; this “grassroots”
aspect gives the theme some “staying power” (I4_0806). While the interviewees quoted above
spoke of “diversity” and “urban populations” neither of them spoke explicitly of race or
ethnicity. State Employee A, however, said that “there is a huge challenge with diversity” among
the leadership in the conservation community, and specified that they were speaking in terms of
race and gender: the community tends to be dominated by White men (I7_0814). While this
point has less to do directly with residents who visit local green spaces, it is related in that both
issues were discussed in the context of a concern with effectively serving urban populations.

Among the benefits of community engagement was the Park District getting community
“buy-in” into the initiative. As City Employee B explained, people at the design charrette were
excited about the possibility of a new and different park space, but also by “just being involved
in the process” (I8_0819). This is important, they reasoned, because it builds trust between the
agency and the community it serves, and starts a conversation. They described it as one of the
key outcomes of the design charrette:

We wanted their buy-in, we wanted to hear what it is they wanted, how they saw the
space and what they actually thought about the project. So it’s really having that: the best
outcome of any charrette like that is not necessarily the specific ideas, it’s more about
building those relationships where we actually start talking to each other and build
common language. [I8_0819]
Similarly, State Employee B said that in conservation work, partnerships help build consensus and “political support, both small ‘p’ and big ‘P’” and that “investment tends to aggregate around those, where that political support is found” (I3_0805).

**Preliminary impacts of community engagement around the Burnham Wildlife Corridor**

My second broad research question asked how the Burnham Wildlife Corridor’s community partners benefit (or do not benefit) from their involvement with the Millennium Reserve, via the Wildlife Corridor. The effects of the community engagement efforts described above are difficult to measure so soon after these efforts began. Below I discuss two of the main outcomes of community engagement efforts, the Green Ambassadors program and the large-scale tree planting workday held at the Corridor, as a way of exploring preliminary impacts on the communities near the Corridor. I conclude with a description of interviewees’ thoughts on how the community engagement around the Corridor has affected their work and/or how it will do so going forward.

**The Green Ambassadors program**

At one point early in the summer, the Green Ambassadors were asked to explain to a few family members or friends what the program was about—develop a sort of “elevator speech”—and to report back to the group about those conversations. Reporting back, most described it as a paid youth program but beyond that the level of specificity varied. One had said mainly that the youth go out into the community and another said that it was meant to “address concerns” in the neighborhood. Going into more detail, another described it as a program in which the youth learn about the environment, how culture ties in with the land, and how green space affects people. Another said it was about the environment and sustainability and the following questions: How safe and clean are your parks? How unified is your community? How are they related? Another
offered that it was an internship with The Field Museum promoting knowledge of green space among the Ambassadors and community members, increasing activities in green spaces, and making them healthier. Another emphasized the cross-cultural collaboration element, describing the program as two communities unfamiliar with each other that came together to do this program to better the community.

Interestingly, in this discussion none of the Ambassadors mentioned the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. Indeed, the nature of the program and its goals (especially in terms of having the youths’ research shape the course of the program) allowed for a wide range of discussion topics. Of these, I did not often observe ecological topics being discussed; more often green spaces and parks in general came up, as well as community life and concerns. Below I describe in further detail a few of the key themes that came up with more frequency than others at the workshops I observed: community character and comparison, crime and safety, and the economy and employment.

The most frequent topic of discussion I observed was the identity, character, and qualities of the neighborhoods from which (most of) the Green Ambassadors came, and were tasked with studying: Pilsen and Bronzeville. Over the summer I observed the Ambassadors increasingly drawing comparisons between the two neighborhoods and applying those comparisons in developing project ideas. In these discussions, Pilsen was characterized as a more thriving community, socially and economically. Ambassadors, especially those from Bronzeville, pointed to Pilsen’s bustling commercial strip on 18th Street, describing it as “clean,” “open,” and having a warm atmosphere, with the smells from bakeries wafting out onto the street: “it smells like bread.” Some of the youth perceived Pilsen as having more jobs, small businesses, and economic opportunity. Gentrification was also sometimes discussed, with one Ambassador who resided in
Pilsen noting the tension and frustration they felt in relation to gentrifiers. A major theme that emerged in discussions of Pilsen was the sense of family-orientation, community, and togetherness, with one Ambassador even saying that Pilsen itself was like a family. The one deficit of Pilsen most frequently discussed was its lack of green space. It was generally described as a relatively safe community, although violence in Pilsen was occasionally mentioned: for example one Ambassador discussed their father’s memories of past violence in the neighborhood, their observation that sometimes streets seem eerily quiet, and their classmates’ experiences with violence. They also noted that at the same time, exaggerations of violence and misperceptions about the neighborhood were frustrations as well.

Bronzeville’s key assets, in contrast, were not seen as being located in the social and economic life of the community in the present day. Although the exciting work of certain community based organizations was noted, Bronzeville’s rich social history came up more often. The neighborhood was characterized as quiet and residential, not densely populated and active as it once had been during the days of the Black Metropolis. Artifacts of this history included, for example, residential architecture, churches, and historic dance halls like the Forum and the Savoy. People need to be educated about this history and listen to their elders’ stories, one Ambassador noted, because “it’s a sense, it’s a feeling: once you know, you care.” The youth frequently mentioned Bronzeville’s abundance of green spaces like Mandrake Park, Fuller Park, and Ellis Park but noted that these were underused or sometimes misused (i.e., there was criminal activity or the perceived threat of it). The Ambassadors sometimes mentioned that there were not enough small businesses or jobs in Bronzeville.

Frequently the two neighborhoods were described in relation to each other. In these comparisons, Pilsen tended to be described more favorably, especially by a few particularly
vocal Ambassadors who were not from Pilsen. One noted that Bronzeville used to be like Pilsen, with businesses run by community members. Overall, Bronzeville was often described as having the important asset of open space, while Pilsen was described as having the cultural activity that might fill an open space. In a couple workshops that involved discussions with other youth groups, these youth pushed the Ambassadors to see Bronzeville in a more positive light. Members of a youth group that were mapping assets over that summer listed the many assets they had come across in their research and the history there that served as an important source of Black pride.

Comparisons between neighborhoods fed into discussions of what it might mean for these two neighborhoods to come together in a project. Proposing a mural in Bronzeville as a project idea in a workshop, one Latin@ Ambassador said, “Let’s put some of Pilsen into Bronzeville!” In the same discussion, a Black Ambassador said that in doing a project in Bronzeville, they would not want Pilsen to feel left out: “we all came together to make ‘Pillsville,’” referring to the joining of the two neighborhood names that the youth had come up with for a ceremony initiating the beginning of the program’s summer term. One of the Latin@ youth suggested that the project could expand into more of an exchange: given that there was more green space in Bronzeville, “we can bring some of Bronzeville to Pilsen too” (presumably implying that they could promote the stewardship of existing green spaces and the creation of new ones). A couple weeks later one of the Ambassador pods presented an idea for an annual festival at the Burnham Wildlife Corridor bringing Pilsen and Bronzeville together.

Crime and safety was another key theme that arose in Green Ambassador discussions. They were interested in determining, through observation and interviews, how safe each park felt to the people there. For example, after one park visit they reported that the children involved in a
day camp loved their park and felt safe but the seniors in the park did not. Another one of their findings was that at some parks, people reported that violence operated on a schedule: the space would transform from day to night. All of the program’s park visits were during the daytime, but safety was still a concern for the mentors and Museum staff and occasionally came up as they navigated these spaces with the youth. At one park in Bronzeville, a group of men were observed loitering during the day and the adult supervisors advised against interviewing these men—to which one youth Ambassador responded, “I’m not afraid.” One of the Ambassadors from Pilsen had shared their parents’ concerns about the safety of traveling to Bronzeville for Green Ambassador research. One of the community partners interviewed also said that parents of youth involved with their organization (in Pilsen) had had hesitations about the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and Bronzeville neighborhood and that they required some extra reassurance. This is one example of the small, day-to-day ways that Chicago’s segregation is felt.

Outside of the park visits, violence and crime also came up in workshops, as a more general concern in the lives of the youth and as a concern that might frame research-to-action projects. One Ambassador told a story about an art project at their school in which the students were assigned to make a piece of art based on something personal; violence came up, but not green space, they noted. Another youth from Pilsen talked about a teenage girl who was killed in her neighborhood and the impact it had on the community, explaining that there was a decrease in violence after that tragedy. One Ambassador shared that they had witnessed shooting in their South Side neighborhood. Green Ambassador mentors also occasionally expressed concerns about violence, or reports or perceptions of violence among other community members. In one discussion a mentor noted that a friend of theirs, a policewoman, said that she would not go to the area where the Wildlife Corridor was located. In the context of all these discussions,
promoting creative uses and stewardship of green spaces emerged as a way to promote safe ways to be outdoors. As a research-to-action project, some of the Ambassadors proposed putting together a youth program that would prevent involvement with gangs.

Another theme that came up with some frequency was the economic life of community members, especially employment. As discussed above, the Green Ambassadors pointed to local commerce as an important indicator of a neighborhood’s prosperity, and gentrification occasionally came up in discussions. At one workshop, when a member of another youth group meeting with the Ambassadors said many of the problems being discussed could be traced back to the root problem of unemployment, one Ambassador offered that green space can create jobs and that “not all Black brothers and sisters take their opportunities…we’re lucky to have this opportunity [the Green Ambassadors program].” The Ambassador internship was a job itself and a sort of job training program in which skills such as research, public speaking, and proposal writing were honed. When asked what they thought their organization’s youth were getting out of the program so far, one community partner answered, “for sure, career readiness skills” and “just being independent and also bringing them a sense of ownership” (I6_0811). Career readiness was evidently a focus of the program’s supervisors as well as the funders and other partners who attended the Green Ambassadors’ project presentations. One attendee asked the Ambassadors if any of them were considering environmental careers and another asked them how they would financially sustain the projects they were proposing. Another in the audience followed up to ask the Ambassadors if their program had prepared them for appealing to funders.

**Tree planting workday at the Corridor**

One of the most frequently discussed impacts of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor was the success of the “Roots and Routes to Grow” tree planting event held in May, 2014, just before I
arrived for my summer of research. Field Museum staff and partners reported that the event had exceeded expectations in several ways and brought a new level of energy and momentum to the project. The sheer scale of the planting was mentioned often: “Basically planting 25,000 trees with volunteers—nothing of that scale has been done before,” City Employee B said (I8_0819). A federal employee said that they were “blown away” by the number of the volunteers that showed up (I4_0806), which City Employee B estimated at 800 (I8_0819). Of the 15 planting volunteers surveyed who said they were surprised that day, seven said it was by the number of other volunteers who came out.

Given the scale of the event, volunteers, funders, and organizers also praised the coordination prior to the event and the day of—including the leadership of the Green Ambassador youth. They were pleased with the teamwork and friendly atmosphere cultivated by the group leaders and their fellow volunteers, and the sight of different races and generations of people working together. The generational point was of particular interest to participants, as the tree planting was held on Mothers’ Day. As one community partner explained:

It was more like a, I wanna even say like multigenerational, event, ’cause we had grandparents there and we had the parents which were their kids, and then we had our youth. So that was really cool to see, that we were able to you know have an event like this and promote culture and diversity as well as green spaces. [I6_0811]

While a few said the work was challenging, some reported that their experience was pleasant in part because the holes for trees were already dug when they arrived; one said planting the trees “was like instant ramen noodles.” When asked what surprised them, one volunteer responded, “How easy it is to plant a tree.” The effect of this experience is best understood in the context of a comment by a community partner who helped organize the volunteer effort: they explained how community members involved with their center had said, “How you gonna plant that many trees? There’s no way you’re gonna plant that many trees’” (I6_0811). This
community partner recognized that it would be important to “break it down into smaller tasks, or projects—that’s when things start falling into place” (I6_0811). City Employee B praised “the many different partners who were very invested in the success of the project” and made an event of this scale possible (I8_0819). One measure of this success, especially for the Museum and state and city agencies involved, was the presence of press and notable people like Field Museum President Richard Lariviere, Alderman William Burns, and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

Feedback on the event from the 25 volunteers surveyed afterward was overwhelmingly positive (see Table 3), with many reporting that they had fun planting trees with their families and with new acquaintances. For many, the thrill seemed to be in the novelty of the experience. Just over half surveyed had never been to parks in the area before and several commented that the event was something different for them or special in some way: for example, one respondent commented that “you don’t get a chance to plant a forest that often.” Most of those surveyed reported being surprised in some way, generally positive. A couple mentioned posting photos of the planting to social media. Almost all said they would return to the park and several mentioned wanting to come back to check on their trees. One said that they took pictures of their trees to help them remember their location and so they could measure the progress.

The Green Ambassador youth also said they wished to return and check on their trees and some said they had marked the ones they planted. A Field Museum staff member commented that they thought the Green Ambassadors surprised themselves with the level of leadership and enthusiasm they displayed at the planting, and told the Ambassadors that they “walked the talk” of the program content at the event. Overall there was a sense that this promoted the Ambassadors’ connection and sense of ownership of the Corridor, as discussed earlier in this
chapter. A central focus of Green Ambassadors supervisors was finding ways to maintain the momentum, enthusiasm, and energy generated by the tree planting.

**Influence of project(s) on organizations’ work moving forward**

When asked how the Green Ambassadors and/or Burnham Wildlife Corridor work had influenced their organizations’ other projects, several interviewees responded that the community engagement efforts might serve as a model for future work. Two interviewees connected the Corridor work to green space in the Calumet region. The federal employee explained:

I want to learn how they were so successful here. …We funded another project with the Forest Preserve District that was habitat restoration on Forest Preserves in the Calumet that also had a stewardship building component. …Right now for next steps, what I'm trying to think about, I'm engaging conversations with the Forest Preserves about trying to grow that in some way and so we’re not sure how that’s gonna look yet, with birds and community engagement as a theme…there might be some way to roll this all up into some sort of next bigger project. [I4_0806]

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe or somewhat</th>
<th>No data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will you come back here?</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did anything surprise you today?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you do this type of thing again?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you tell your friends/people about what you were doing today?</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They continued that they might take what they learn about this project’s success and pass it along “up my chain, to say, ‘Hey look at this great work that’s going on in Chicago’” (I4_0806). City Employee A said that their office might pursue similar levels and kinds of community engagement in another case “where we have green space with sort of physical barriers from the community around it, and we want the community to be able to access that green space” (I5_0808). They added that they hope a forthcoming program evaluation of the Burnham Wildlife Corridor will “help shape some of the work at Burnham and then also at the Calumet space” (I5_0808). City Employee B said the project had expanded their own understanding of potential project partners:

> When I think of projects I now cast a wider net in terms of me thinking through the different partners and how the project can be. There could be more participation from the public and with the partners. … The major impact has been mentally so far is casting a wider net in terms of thinking through who the stakeholders are and how we can all work together. [I8_0819]

They also said that while partnerships are nothing new for the agency, these partnerships showed them how “with the right partners and enough time—and funding—how really large-scale projects can happen” (I8_0819). City Employee A said they had learned that through the project that community engagement is not one-size-fits-all:

> A lot of what we have done was the same thing in Pilsen that we’re doing in Bronzeville, and those are two very different groups. And Pilsen has the large community based organizations with hundreds of constituents and Bronzeville has lots of community-based organizations, with smaller numbers of constituents. So the strategies we learned after the tree planting event are very different. And what those strategies are…I don’t know the best practices for working with those types of sizes of organizations but I think the approach needs to be different. [I5_0808]

Another key lesson from the tree planting that they noted was the huge difference providing transportation to the space makes in terms of getting volunteers out for a workday. As a result,
“we’re trying to think about that and create pathways and routes from these communities to the space” (I5_0808).

In terms of the community-based organizations involved, one community partner explained how the “ambassador” concept was playing out among the youth in her organization. The youth involved with Green Voices, the precursor to Green Ambassadors, presented to other youth involved with the CBO what they had learned in Green Voices. The presentation inspired the younger children to collect garbage in the neighborhood, and they even went so far as to remove the objects (chairs and other household items) that residents place in the street to mark the parking spot they have shoveled in the winter (a practice called “dibs”). The community partner recalled, “People would come out like, ‘What are you doing?!’ And [the children] are like, ‘You’re littering!’…It was pretty funny” (I6_0811). The project caused a bit of an uproar in the neighborhood, they recounted, with neighbors calling to complain and press coming to cover it. They also observed that the City was more attentive to street sweeping after this incident. In another example, a few teenagers involved with the CBO were caught breaking bottles on the street. To resolve the situation, the staff assigned these teens a research paper and had them talk with the youth involved in Green Voices for some “teen-to-teen teaching”:

They were older, so they were like 16 and 17 year olds, the ones that were involved with The Field Museum, and the ones that did the breaking of the bottles were 12 and 13 year olds that were also participants in our program. So then the older girls were kinda like, ‘We’re disappointed, y’know we’re over here trying to start, tryin’ to do this, bring it to the community, and you’re pretty much littering and destroying the community.’ (I6_0811)

The discussion proved effective; they said with a laugh, “I don’t think they will ever break any bottle ever again” (I6_0811).
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In what follows I interpret my results, grounded in theory from literature on space, place, nature, cities, race, and policy reviewed previously—and the ways these elements come together in urban environmental governance. In particular I focus on scholarship that helps us make sense of the ways in which various stakeholders experience and describe the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and its associated programs. I first explore various ways of understanding the roles of community members, agencies, and institutions in conservation initiatives and then turn to tensions, contradictions, and problems that point to areas for future study. I conclude with some proposals for how this study itself might logically be expanded in the future and what this would offer the field of anthropology and those working in urban environmental conservation.

Roles of community members: Turning space into place

In the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, one key emerging role for community members is that of meaning-makers and potential stewards: land managers see them as actors who might convert space into place, which would inspire more people to care for the land there. Comments from those involved with the Corridor reveal that for the most part, it was not yet a place, at least for them. These comments often confirmed Tuan’s (1974; 1977) argument that places, and place attachment, come into being over time, and rarely overnight. For example, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, a work in progress, was more often called a “space” by land managers and their organizational and institutional partners than a “place” or “park.” Space was associated with
strangeness and abstraction in other ways as well. The novelty and unfamiliarity of the space was seen as forbidding—take, for example, the community partner who described her constituents’ hesitations, or the site steward who mentioned the “assignations” and other “unsavory” activities that once took place at the site. However, it was also viewed as exciting, as comments from enthusiastic tree planting volunteers encountering the Corridor for the first time reveal. Whether positively or negatively described, running through many interviewees’ comments is certainly a sense of freedom, possibility, and movement—the latter especially, given that the space was historically railroad property and is now being redesigned for migratory birds.

Tuan’s (1977) and Ingold’s (2000) ideas about space, place, and movement also apply here in the sense that one of the place-making activities land managers and community partners have proposed is the addition of art to the space, including sitting areas, which invite the “pause” of place, as Tuan (1977) described it. Art was described as something that would make the space more “personal,” i.e., imbue the space with human meaning. In addition, two interviewees described the space as “passive” rather than “active” and one described walking through the space as a more “passive” use of the space, suggesting that the space will become place in the course of being acted upon by humans that stop and intervene (in appropriate ways) there. Finally, themes of movement, passage, and freedom run through the Corridor’s transition from “a real dead end” to a “gateway” to the Calumet region.

As Tuan (1977) also explains, space is associated with emptiness, freedom, possibility, and abstraction; place has a more concrete quality because it is understood to be filled with meanings resulting from specific events. This idea of concrete place vs. abstract space is evident in research participants’ comments that refer to “real” places—e.g. the frustrated city employee waiting for the “real-world projects to hit” in the largely abstract Millennium Park, or the site
steward describing a “real natural area” as “something that has developed over time.” Indeed, time, along with physical labor and sensory exposure, is a key element of the stewardship that land managers and their partners believe will “connect” the Green Ambassadors and others to the Burnham Wildlife Corridor and make them figurative owners of it and “engaged with” the space.

The Corridor’s status as a work in progress and as more space than place were related to the ambivalence about humans and their roles at the Corridor. It was not clear if the activities of people or birds had primacy at the Corridor in part because of shifting policy priorities but also because there was an overall sense that people had yet to attach themselves to the Corridor in a visible and meaningful way; they had yet to transform it into a place. Furthermore it seemed that perhaps with the exception of people like the volunteer site steward and avid birders and hikers, people had to add meaning to the space rather than draw meaning from it. The implication is that the land, flora, and fauna there do not themselves carry meaning, or that they do not carry meaning that is intelligible to the average park visitor user. Perhaps this is so because the site is lakefill, and/or because land managers assume city residents of color are not interested in nature.

Creating place at the Burnham Wildlife Corridor presents a particular challenge given the space’s narrow shape and marginal location, but also because of its status as a “corridor” and/or “gateway.” A corridor is by definition a space that is passed through on the way to one’s destination; it is not a destination in itself. The Burnham Wildlife Corridor is a space to pass through between the Calumet area and downtown. It is not a square surrounded by homes or businesses; thus, inspiring people to pause there and engage in place-making is more challenging. Why has the Park District taken on this challenge? They are doing so because a place is understood as something that people take care of, or “steward,” while space is understood as untended. This leads us back to “ownership,” which came up in interviews. The
concept of “ownership” comes up in all kinds of discussions of human relationships to common spaces and goods, public housing being one example: the idea is that we live in a culture that values home ownership and if people feel that a space belongs to someone else, they will not be moved to care for it. A legacy of eighteenth century liberalism, the belief that private property is “the foundation for individual self-interest and optimal social good” continues to shape policy, even when literal ownership is not involved, only “the logic of property” (Blomley 2004: 614).

Roles of community members: Racial economy and neighborhood

Another way of understanding the way humans imbue the Burnham Wildlife Corridor with meaning—and value—is to look at the process through the lens of racial economy (Wilson 2009; Anderson and Sternberg 2012). Pilsen and Bronzeville are close to the Corridor, yes, but so are the neighborhoods of Hyde Park, Bridgeport, and Chinatown, among others. Why are youth from these neighborhoods not included in the Green Ambassadors program? The Field Museum already had relationships with community organizations in Pilsen and Bronzeville, which may have influenced that decision, but it is unclear to what extent. The work of Anderson and Sternberg (2012) helps us illuminate the selection of neighborhoods involved with the Corridor. Hyde Park and Bridgeport are two of Chicago’s more diverse neighborhoods, and thus might be seen as lacking a strong single racial identity in the present day (CMAP 2016a; CMAP 2016e). Bridgeport was once the home base of Chicago’s political machine and was notorious for White supremacist violence; while statistically it is relatively diverse for the city, it remains only 2.7% Black (CMAP 2016a). Chinatown has a strong racial identity to Chicago’s White mainstream, but at only 5.7% of the city’s total population (CMAP 2016b), Asians do not seem to be a group with whom land managers and conservation organizations are particularly focused on connecting.
Pilsen and Bronzeville, however, are majority Latin@ and Black, respectively; what’s more, organizations in the neighborhoods are engaged in making them sites of “ethnic consumption” (Anderson and Sternberg 2012). In other words, they are not merely places where large numbers of Latin@ and Black residents live; they are sites of—and their names are shorthand for—particularly compelling narratives of Latin@-ness and Blackness. Community engagement related to the Corridor may have been intended to paint cultural content onto a blank canvas; or we might say that it was meant, in a sense, to bring the Corridor into the local racial economy—to make it part of ongoing projects of development that draw from the histories and contemporary identities of local Blacks and Latin@s. We might at least say it was an attempt to bring green space in general into narratives of Latin@-ness and Blackness. This is one way of explaining the emphasis on cultural identity and history in the Green Ambassadors program. Cultural content does not just foster engagement and connection; it has political and economic value in the local context—especially as the city continues to transition from a landscape of production to a “landscape of consumption,” as it is called in the gentrification literature (e.g., Zukin 1995). It might also be done in the name of efficiency: it is difficult to find shortcuts to the kind of place attachment that Tuan (1974) describes and that conservation organizations strive for, so why not weave the Corridor into salient relationships with place that already exist?

Finally, urban sociological thought is helpful here as well: focusing on the category of neighborhood is clearly providing land managers a way of cognitively organizing community engagement targets, as Sampson (2012) might suggest. Additionally, land managers and their partners appear to be approaching the engagement process using a compositional theory of urbanism (Gans 1968). In this way, Pilsen and Bronzeville are treated in the community engagement process as discrete “social worlds” in Chicago’s neighborhood mosaic—two social
worlds that can be compared and that demand different organizing approaches. This framework results in the focus on neighborhood and cultural identity and on bridging social worlds that I saw come up time and again in Green Ambassadors workshop discussions.

**Roles of agencies and institutions: Making sense of urban ecology and conservation networks**

In trying to determine whether or not the Burnham Wildlife Corridor was a Millennium Reserve project, in order to better understand how policies operating at different scales connect and interact, I was able to understand the messiness of urban environmental conservation and the networks through which conservation policy is implemented. The policy making process here is indeed, as Wedel et al. (2005) assert, more like a chemical reaction than a conveyor belt, and the networks and policies studied appear now much more like rhizomes than like trees. The role of The Field Museum may in fact be to make a rhizome look like a tree: they help crystallize ever-shifting conservation networks and initiatives into something coherent enough to then be mobilized in organizing communities near the Corridor. The rhizome certainly seems to apply to the Millennium Reserve when we consider comments from participants such as “It’s a plan of opportunities…you do something when you have the chance to do it” and “Probably every single person you ask about Millennium Reserve is gonna have a different understanding of what it is.”

The concept of assemblage—a set of emerging connections between heterogeneous elements (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Li 2007)—applies here as well. One feature of the assemblage that Li (2007) emphasizes is that it has a different appearance from every angle, and this is certainly true of the Millennium Reserve. Definitions of places and policies were shifting according to relationships between organizations, which helps explain why I could not get a clear answer as to whether the Burnham Wildlife Corridor was in fact a “Millennium Reserve project.” It is more
possible to connect the Corridor to funding streams and ideas about urban conservation ("priorities," etc.) than it is to a named piece of policy that is connected to a particular gubernatorial administration.

Based on my observations, I would also argue that the Chicago Park District and partners are “rendering technical” (Li 2007) the complex nature of urban human-wildlife entanglements. What was marginal, unused land becomes the site where the following problem-solution narrative plays out: birds and other wildlife need habitat at this crucial location, and urban residents need access to green space to live well; both are achieved through the engagement of residents in place-making and stewardship activities at the Corridor. Stewardship itself is a way for residents to engage physically in the act of problem solving at the Corridor in a way that is simple and straightforward: for example, planting trees in pre-dug holes. The tree planting is also a good example of “rendering technical” in that some of the key outcomes were clearly measurable—in numbers of volunteers present and trees planted. The organizing agencies provide this broader picture and narrative through such numbers to help produce a sense of accomplishment on the part of the volunteers. These organizations’ role is also to help build a narrative where people have ways to be the solution and not the problem. It will be useful in future research to trace where models for such problem-solution narratives come from (e.g., they might be handed down from federal agencies or come out of research on topics relevant to conservation).

**Tensions and contradictions in urban conservation**

If the governance practices that fall under “anti-politics” limit the possible roles for community members by “encouraging citizens to engage in debate while limiting the agenda” (Li 2007: 265), then a logical question follows: how might their roles be expanded? In some
ways, this is what a program like the Green Ambassadors seems to be intended to do. The youth were not merely brought in to, say, brainstorm ideas for a mural and then paint it; they were engaged in a nine-month research-to-action process that depended on their generating and implementing ideas at almost every step. However, the open-ended nature of the program seemed to frustrate them and test their patience at times. Many appeared disengaged or bored in some of the activities and some expressed a desire to make something happen earlier in the process than had been planned. Observing the Ambassadors, there were times I wished the program were more streamlined or cohesive so that it might be more satisfying to them in the short term. However I also realized that this might mean limiting the topics of discussion and the potential directions in which their projects might go. This tension between widening roles for community members and designing a program that is clear enough to be more readily accessible and enjoyable presents a challenge for those trying to engage residents as place-makers at a green space in which these residents are not already invested.

This challenge and potential models for surmounting it merit further study as government-community partnerships continue to form around conservation projects. If conservation is expanding to include building and shaping relationships between residents and nature, this opens up the opportunity for more actors to have a say: more agencies get involved, and, of course, residents. How do all the various partners in such collaborations make sure this opportunity is not wasted?

Another unresolved tension that merits further study is the “connection to nature” that land managers and their institutional partners are concerned with promoting among urban residents so that these citizens support conservation policy and act as stewards of the land. This kind of connection was certainly a major goal of the Green Ambassador program and an
important metric of its success. But how is connection to nature to be measured, especially in the short term? As Tuan (1977) reminds us, almost all learning happens at the subconscious level: how do we measure a growing connection that is not operating on the conscious level? Tuan (1977) also writes that laypeople often accept and repeat tropes describing the environment that they hear from experts and others. When a Field Museum staff member asks a Green Ambassador or a volunteer at the tree planting “Do you feel a connection to this place?” it is clear to the person being asked that the “correct” answer is yes. How do land managers and conservationists gauge the durability and “authenticity” of community members’ words regarding their connection to nature? Are they “truly” connected or are they holding up a mirror to conservation organizations, reflecting back these organizations’ ideas and rhetoric? Why and how does the difference matter?

Whether or not the difference does matter, it will likely remain a concern for some time as conservation in the United States evolves and becomes less about protecting large land areas from human interference and more about promoting environmentally sustainable relationships between people and the green spaces near them. In the context of this change it becomes less straightforward to track the progress and measure the success of conservation efforts. Further questions for those involved include: What proxy measures might we use when we examine “connection to nature”? How might social scientists better evaluate those connections? Who decides what “connection” means and looks like, and what does that mean for the future of community members’ involvement in shaping their local landscapes? And, how do we link this intangible outcome of environmental programming—a sense of connection to nature—to the more tangible and visible outcomes (e.g., wildlife population increase) with which government agencies are also concerned?
Applications of these findings

Four key recommendations emerge from these preliminary conclusions. First, as discussed above, land managers and their institutional partners should continue to refine their methods for measuring “connection to nature” and their thinking about what such a connection means for their work. This might involve not only consulting examples from existing research and from other projects, but also working with The Field Museum’s well-developed network of community partners to understand what connection to nature looks like to them. This would have the additional benefit of involving community partners early in the process of developing and evaluating environmental programs. Land managers and their partners might also think about connection to nature in a more holistic sense; that is, how nature and connection to it fit into the broader picture of their constituents’ everyday lives and other priorities. Perhaps people are “connecting to nature” in ways that land managers do not readily recognize.

Second, I would recommend that the Museum and other partners who developed the Green Ambassadors program continue to work on the difficult task of balancing cohesion and organization with community participation in environmental programs. In other words, what parts of the process can be tightened or made more straightforward so that participants, especially youth, have a clearer understanding of their place in such programs, and can contribute their thoughts and energy in a productive way? This may come with time and practice, and could involve assessing the youth’s various interest and skill areas up front in a way drives focus areas and division of labor later on.

A third recommendation is for the Chicago Park District, The Field Museum, and other partners to continue their development of art spaces and programs in and related to the Corridor, as this was a clear area of enthusiasm and interest among the youth. Art invites the “pause of
place” and may inspire a sense of ownership, two of the key goals of the community engagement efforts described in this study. A related recommendation—because public art, like green space, requires maintenance—would be to develop a system for involving the Green Ambassadors in the Corridor and in other Park District and Museum programs in an ongoing way. While many said they would like to return and check on the progress of the trees they planted, I believe additional encouragement and insistence that the Corridor is for them would help greatly with this. Following the example of the community partner interviewed, who involved older youth in mentoring younger children after a disciplinary issue arose, there might also be opportunities for former Green Ambassadors to mentor new youth who go through the Museum’s programs. Continued contact with the Museum would benefit the Ambassadors in terms of professional development and opportunities, and could help Museum staff better understand connection to nature by observing it in a more longitudinal way among the Ambassadors.

**Possibilities for expanding this study**

Having taken an approach to my study that was more policy-based and multi-sited, in the future I would consider expanding the study by using a more place-based approach. This could mean spending more time in the space observing and interviewing people in parks (no matter where in Chicago they reside) and speaking with more people in Bronzeville, the neighborhood adjacent to the Corridor—whether they are involved with the Corridor or not. At present my study does not reflect the diversity of opinion that likely exists within the Bronzeville community. If time were limited I might start with those involved with organizations promoting Bronzeville and its heritage to understand what role green space plays in neighborhood identity and the process of making the neighborhood an attractive tourist destination. For similar reasons
I might interview real estate agents and developers to understand the relationship between green space and gentrification or the neighborhood’s desirability overall.

It would also be worthwhile to talk to people in Pilsen and other neighborhoods outside of Bronzeville to understand outsiders’ awareness and perceptions of the Corridor and the neighborhood surrounding it, and possibly of the Millennium Reserve. Additionally, following the suggestion of a federal employee I interviewed, I might choose another one or two sites within the Millennium Reserve to compare to the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. This would allow me to better understand the various forms the Millennium Reserve vision is taking on the ground and (to a limited extent) how various factors contribute to different conservation outcomes. Finally, I would extend my effort to “study through” by following the Corridor and Reserve policies through to the federal level, outside of the Chicago region, and interview stakeholders there. This could help me identify the sources of various ideas related to environmental conservation and community engagement and trace their path through organizational networks—helping to place my observations of one green space in Chicago in the broader picture of the changing nature of environmental conservation in the United States.
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APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions for the Study “A Case Study of Conservation Policy Implementation through Community Partnerships on Chicago’s South Side”

This is a semi-structured interview. Questions may not always be asked of participants in the same order or may be modified slightly in wording to best fit the perspective of the interviewee.

(Informed consent procedure)

1. Briefly describe your organization.
   a. What is its mission?
   b. Has your organization been involved with environmental projects in the past? If so, what kinds of projects were they?
2. If you had to explain the Burnham Wildlife Corridor to someone unfamiliar with the space, how would you describe it?
   a. What is its purpose?
   b. What is it like to be there?
3. How is the space used?
   a. How do you use it?
   b. How do others use it?
4. How did you and/or your organization come to be involved with the Burnham Wildlife Corridor?
5. What are your reasons for collaborating with the other partner organizations and agencies involved with the Corridor?
6. How do you and/or your organization define success when it comes to your work related to the Burnham Wildlife Corridor?
   a. Would you consider the tree planting at the Corridor this past May a success? Why or why not?
   b. Would you consider the Green Ambassador program to be successful so far? Why or why not?
7. How is the work you are doing with the Burnham Wildlife Corridor related (or not) to your organization’s mission?
8. How has this work affected how you see your organization and its goals?
9. How do you envision the Burnham Wildlife Corridor’s future?
   a. What should it become? What do you hope it becomes?
   b. What do you think it will become?
10. How does the Burnham Wildlife Corridor fit (or not fit) into the larger picture of the Millennium Reserve?
11. Do you have any questions for me about my study? Would you like to be contacted about the results?
Thank you very much for your time. Your thoughts will help inform ongoing efforts to understand partnerships and collaboration in conservation projects.

Optional demographic survey

This survey is completely optional and confidential. Please provide the information you are comfortable sharing—you may provide all, some, or none of the information requested below.

Age: __________

Gender: __________

Race/ethnicity: _____________________________

Annual combined household income (circle one):

- < $10,000/yr
- $10-$30,000/yr
- $30-50,000/yr
- $50-70,000/yr
- $70-90,000/yr
- $90-110,000/yr
- $110-150,000/yr
- $150-200,000/yr
- $200-250,000/yr
- $250-275,000/yr
- $275-300,000/yr
- > $300,000/yr

Education - highest level attained: ____________________________

Home zip code: _______________________

Thank you!
APPENDIX B:
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Document for “A Case Study of Conservation Policy Implementation through Community Partnerships on Chicago’s South Side” (#Pro00017701)

The Research Study
As a master’s student in applied anthropology at the University of South Florida, I am studying how conservation policy is implemented through collaboration and partnerships at the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. I, Alexis Winter, am the principal investigator of this study and am being guided by my academic advisor Rebecca K. Zarger. I am interested in hearing your views on this topic and will discuss with you the Burnham Wildlife Corridor, programming related to it, and your organization’s broader mission. I have asked you to participate in an individual interview that will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes and take place at a location of your choice. If you agree, I would like to record the interview for accuracy, but that is optional. Additionally you may complete a short survey that collects demographic information, but that is optional as well. Adults over 18 are eligible and your responses and contact information will be kept confidential.

Benefits of the Research Study
Through your participation in this study, you will contribute to a better understanding of how conservation policy is implemented through partnerships between a variety of organizations and agencies. Your views may help Burnham Wildlife Corridor partners work together on this and similar projects in a way that advances both environmental and social goals. Shared in the thesis paper produced as a result of this study, your opinions, concerns, ideas, etc. could help inform projects elsewhere in the Millennium Reserve and similar projects in other U.S. cities.

Confidentiality
Only my academic advisor and I will have access to documents and information from this study. All information you share with me will be kept completely confidential and in a locked location. You will never be referred to by your real name in any documents or reports containing information collected during interviews. I would like to audio record the interview only if you agree that I can do so. This will help me to accurately document your views, but it is up to you. To ensure your rights are protected, records can be reviewed by USF and the Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Voluntary Participation
There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. Your decision to participate is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Further Questions
Thank you, I really appreciate your help with this study! Please read this form and sign below to participate. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the principal investigator on the project, Alexis Winter at 708-508-0109 or by email: alexiswinter@mail.usf.edu. The University of South Florida’s Institutional Review Board has approved this study (#Pro00017701). If you have any questions
about your rights as a participant in this study, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida (813) 974-5638. Thank you!

**Agreement**

[  ] I understand what the person conducting this study is asking me to do.

[  ] I have thought about this and agree to take part in this study. If you sign below, it means you agree to participate in the study “A Case Study of Conservation Policy Implementation through Community Partnerships on Chicago’s South Side” (#Pro00017701).

[  ] I agree to have my interview audio recorded for accuracy. [optional]

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study: _______________________________

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study: _______________________________

Date: ___/___/___

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: ___________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: _________

Date: ___/___/___

**Researcher’s agreement:** [ ] I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect and he or she understands what the study is about, as well as known risks and potential benefits. Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: ___________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent: _________ Date: ___/___/___
APPENDIX C:
INDUCTIVE ANALYSIS CODE LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inductive analysis codes</th>
<th>media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aesth* (aesthetics)</td>
<td>migration* (migration, migrations, migratory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affect</td>
<td>nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>art</td>
<td>eco* (ecology, ecologies, ecological, ecologically)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community* (community, communities)</td>
<td>fauna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection</td>
<td>flora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservation* (conservation)</td>
<td>habitat*</td>
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<tr>
<td>preserve</td>
<td>opportunity* (opportunity, opportunities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>reserve</td>
<td>ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restore* (restoration)</td>
<td>plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>culture* (culture, cultural)</td>
<td>planting</td>
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<tr>
<td>ecor* (economy, economic, economics, economically)</td>
<td>pd* (politics, political, politically, policy, policies)</td>
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<td>biz</td>
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<td>real-natural</td>
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<td>rts</td>
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<tr>
<td>jobs</td>
<td>scale-scope</td>
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<td>science* (science, scientific, scientifically, data, datum)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>anthro* (anthro, anthropology, anthropological, anthropologically)</td>
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<td>edu* (education, school, schools, schooling, teacher, academic, curriculum, curricular)</td>
<td>research* (research and stem words)</td>
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<tr>
<td>env</td>
<td>sp-pl</td>
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<tr>
<td>green* (green, greens, greening, greener, greenest)</td>
<td>boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>sust* (sustainability, sustainable)</td>
<td>hood*</td>
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<tr>
<td>family* (family, families)</td>
<td>bz* (Bronzeville, Bronzeville's)</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen-age* (intergenerational)</td>
<td>pro* (Pilsen, Pilsen's)</td>
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<td>map</td>
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<tr>
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<td>park</td>
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<td>place-idea</td>
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<td>steward* (steward, stewardship)</td>
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<td>landscape* (landscape, landscapes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>built</td>
<td>future</td>
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<tr>
<td>land</td>
<td>history</td>
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<tr>
<td>water* (waterway, waterways, river, rivers, riverfront, lake, lakes, lakefront, coast, coasts, coastal, pond, ponds, marsh, marshes, wetland, wetlands, canal, canals, swamp, swamps, swampland)</td>
<td>urban* (urban, city)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In addition to applying these codes manually, with the help of text search highlighting, I also used them in automatic text search coding, using the words in parentheses.