“We Need More Power”

The Bargainer Role and Interorganizational Social Capital on Chicago’s Southeast Side

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“We need more power.” This simple statement, spoken by a Southeast Environmental Task Force staff member during an interview with me, summarizes some of the main tensions and struggles involved in environmental work in this complex area of Chicago. Local environmental groups have long fought for environmental justice on the Southeast Side in a grassroots effort. Will working with larger, better-funded “outsider” environmental groups—organizations that are increasingly looking to build networks of local support in the region, but that often have different organizational priorities—give these grassroots groups the power they need to pursue local environmental concerns? Can these outsider and local environmental organizations, who come to the table with different histories and missions, work together in ways that benefit all groups involved? This paper explores these questions.

Introduction

The high biodiversity and rare habitat types of Chicago’s Southeast Side have attracted conservation-focused environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since the 1970s. At the same time, the region has played host to a number of much smaller, local grassroots groups that

have evolved out of environmental justice concerns in the area, namely, the region's past industrial pollution and its lingering effects on the health of community members. This paper will focus on interactions between three groups currently and historically involved in environmental work on the Southeast Side: large environmental NGOs, grassroots environmental groups, and local residents. For the purposes of this paper, "large environmental NGOs" or "outsider environmental organizations" refers to city, county, or nationwide nongovernmental environmental groups that do not originate from the Southeast Side (the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, and Friends of the Forest Preserves). "Local" or "grassroots groups" refer to environmental groups that began on the Southeast Side and have always been led by Southeast Side residents (the Southeast Environmental Task Force and People for Community Recovery). "Local residents" refers to individuals living on the Southeast Side who are not organizational staff.

During the 1980s and 1990s, relations between larger environmental NGOs and grassroots groups working on the Southeast Side were tense and disagreements were common, largely due to differences in organizational priorities and competition for funding. Tensions between these organizations have cooled in recent years, and larger environmental NGOs have stepped up efforts to engage with local residents. The aim of this thesis is, first, to identify the historical and present problems that have muddled relationships between these three overarching parties; second, by drawing from the region's unique historical background, interviews with organizational staff, and a review of the academic literature, to assess the applicability of bargainer theory of inter-NGO relationships[1] to environmental groups of various sizes working on the Southeast Side; and, third, to broach an important underlying question: does the process of bargaining ultimately lead to results that are mutually beneficial to *both* large and local environmental groups working in the

1. See the section on theory for a discussion of the bargainer role for large environmental NGOs drawn from Princen, Finger, and Bryant.

region? In other words, if bargaining does occur, is it a process that helps both of these types of groups advance their individual goals and objectives?

Given the Southeast Side's strong, historical base of grassroots environmental work, I first explore the applicability of the bargainer arrangement on the Southeast Side. In such an arrangement, large environmental NGOs build social capital and support for their *own* work in the region by acting as intermediary bargainers, providing local groups with the resources they need to advance environmental issues that are of high concern *to local residents*. In this way, the concerns of grassroots environmental groups are backed by the increased funding and reach of larger environmental NGOs. At the same time, by forming strong positive relationships with local grassroots groups—and by extension, the local constituencies they serve and influence—large environmental NGOs can advance their own goals via their support of local projects and interests. Rather than aggressively asserting their own objectives and plans, which has caused tension between environmental groups working on the Southeast Side, larger environmental NGOs seek to find points of resonance between their own missions and those of grassroots groups.

The Sierra Club's founding role in the creation of the Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago, which supports connections among grassroots environmental groups across the South Side, demonstrates the real-world possibilities of this type of bargainer collaboration on the Southeast Side.[2] Despite the recent successes of the bargainer role in the region, I stress that, in accordance with the geographer Raymond Bryant's criticisms, this set of relationships may not be the only solution to the region's interorganizational conflicts. Rather, the current coalescence of certain goals between large NGOs and local environmental groups make bargaining mutually beneficial. In the future, if significant

2. Michael Hawthrone, "Environmental Justice Groups Fight Pollution Problems on Southeast Side," *Chicago Tribune*, September 15, 2011.

changes in organizational priorities and strategies were to arise, then the collaboration between large NGOs and local environmental groups may no longer work.

The body of this paper includes (1) a review of literature aimed at familiarizing readers with the specifics of the bargainer theory and the role of social capital in environmental work more generally; (2) a historical background section, which establishes the origins of the Southeast Side's strong history of grassroots environmental justice activism and identifies past sources of interorganizational conflict; (3) an updated look at these relationships, drawing from interviews with organizational staff and a review of mission statements to identify current priorities and interactions; and (4) a synthesis of my findings in which I conclude that the bargainer role does currently fostering amiable relationships with grassroots groups and local residents on the Southeast Side, but will require diligence in order to avoid the region's past history of interorganizational conflict.

Why focus on interactions between these three parties?

To put it simply: because environmental organizations working in the region have deemed mutually beneficial interactions between these three groups to be desirable and important to the success of their respective goals for the region.[3] Past and present attempts at coalition building by environmental organizations, along with more recent attempts by certain environmental groups to step up community outreach in the area demonstrate a desire for increased collaboration between these parties. Interviews with staff from environmental organizations working on the Southeast Side indicate that these groups are cognizant of their relationships with one another and local residents, and feel that positive interactions between these groups will be beneficial to their own goals.

3. See the section on theory for an in-depth description of the meaning of social capital and its importance for environmental work.

This thesis, therefore, operates on the assumption that both large and small environmental organizations working on the Southeast Side have an interest in maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with these other parties.

Why should Chicagoans care about environmental work on the Southeast Side?

Ecological and human health on the Southeast Side has consequences for the Chicago region as a whole; therefore, understanding environmental work in the region is significant for all Chicago residents. For Chicagoans who are already interested in land conservation, ecology, outdoor recreation, and environmental justice, the importance of environmental work on the Southeast Side may be clear, or quickly become obvious. The region's high biodiversity, rare habitat types, and history of pollution make it a site of interest for environmentally conscious individuals across the city.

Chicagoans who are less engaged with these topics are indirectly affected by environmental work on the Southeast Side. In order to make the city more inviting to all residents, the city needs to "expand and improve parks and open spaces" because of their aesthetic, recreational, and ecological value.[4] Open space also serves as "green infrastructure," especially ecosystem services like flood protection and water treatment, because of the increased rainfall predicted for coming years due to climate change.[5] The Southeast Side's rare wetland habitats, some of the last remaining in Chicago, are clearly important to the region's overall sustainable future. It is important to understand how environmental organizations in this region operate and if there are any opportunities for positive changes in interactions among larger environmental NGOs,

4. *Go to 2040: Comprehensive Regional Plan* (Chicago: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2014), 15, 117–20.

5. Ibid., 121, 126–35.

grassroots environmental groups, and communities. One recent example is the Chicago Park District's purchase and restoration of Big Marsh, a large wetland fragment to the northeast of Lake Calumet, and subsequent development of the Big Marsh Bike Park. Developments like this demonstrate the city's interest in the preservation and renewal of degraded habitats, both as an economic and ecological asset.

The Southeast Side's environmental justice concerns may seem more niche and disconnected from the lives of most Chicagoans, but they do influence the city's annual health-care budgets. The city has allocated around $150 million for health for 2016, much of this investment provides "health programming for families and those most vulnerable," particularly uninsured low-income residents.[6] Residents of Southeast Side neighborhoods, like Altgeld Gardens and other "toxic doughnut" areas that have high exposure to postindustrial waste report higher levels of cancer and respiratory problems than residents in other areas of the city. The present and future development of health problems in these vulnerable populations should be a concern, not only for their well-being and quality of life, but because of the potentially significant future costs associated with treating serious illnesses in a large segment of the population.

Theory: The Bargainer Role and Social Capital in Environmental Work

I begin with a brief review of relevant literature on social capital, the difference between environmental justice and conservationist ideologies, and the implications of the bargainer theory on large NGOs in environmental work.

6. Rahm Emanuel, *City of Chicago 2016 Budget Overview* (Chicago: City of Chicago, 2016).

What is social capital and why do environmental NGOs want more of it?

Social capital is broadly defined as "the variety of quite specific benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks."[7] For an environmental organization social capital is the potential benefits that an organization receives from building positive relationships with other parties: be they governments, other environmental organizations, or communities. The benefits of social capital may come in many forms, including community outreach, volunteer engagement and support, and inter-NGO coalition building (sharing resources between environmental groups to address certain needs and working towards common goals).[8]

Environmental NGOs pursue social capital for a variety of related reasons. Smaller local organizations tend to be interested in "reaching up" to larger better-funded environmental NGOs.[9] These larger NGOs can provide resources to grassroots groups that would otherwise be out of reach, for example, access to legal representation, grant-writing experts, connections with press and media, or even on-the-ground personnel to help manage events and campaigns. For small, local environmental organizations—many of which are primarily run by volunteers and have very limited budgets, as is the case for Southeast Side groups—the ability of larger environmental NGOs to provide resources is a major draw for building social capital.

7. "About Social Capital," Harvard University Kennedy School, n.d. Web, 2017.

8. Cathy C. Conrad and Krista G. Hilchey, "A Review of Citizen Science and Community-based Environmental Monitoring: Issues and Opportunities," *Environmental Monitoring Assessment* 176, no. 1–4 (May 2011): 273–91.

9. Thomas Princen and Matthias Finger, *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Larger environmental NGOs, on the other hand, can build social capital by "reaching down" to grassroots groups and residents.[10] These better-funded groups are generally less interested in monetary resources and more interested in forming relationships with a large base of local people. The benefits of such relationships to large environmental NGOs are twofold: first, community members can provide a "cost effective alternative" to hired staff.[11] Many environmental organizations, especially those involved in conservation and restoration work, may be drawn to the low-cost and high-volume assistance that community members can potentially provide.[12] Second, on a deeper level, community involvement in environmental restoration and monitoring activities promotes public support for habitat conservation and other environmental issues.[13] There are several modern examples on the Southeast Side of "reaching down" by larger environmental groups active in the region. Examples from other urban areas, like Portland (the Community Watershed Stewardship Program) and New York City (Million Trees NYC), demonstrate the powerful, positive impacts that citizen involvement can have on environmental work.[14]

The draw of increased social capital attracts both large environmental NGOs and grassroots groups, but difficulties in maintaining relationships with community members and other NGOs are both evident on

10. Ibid.

11. Conrad and Hilchey, "A Review of Citizen Science."

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Vivek Shandas and W. Barry Messer, "Fostering Green Communities through Civic Engagement: Community-based Environmental Stewardship in the Portland Area," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 74, no. 4 (2008): 408–18; Dana Fisher, Erika S. Svendsen, and James J. T. Connolly, *Urban Environmental Stewardship and Civic Engagement: How Planting Trees Strengthens the Roots of Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2015).

the Southeast Side during the region's past and present. So far, attempts at collaboration between large environmental NGOs, local groups, and Southeast Side residents have been mixed: while there have been more positive interactions in recent years, the region's past reveals a history of conflict between these groups.

Conservation versus Environmental Justice

The priorities of groups within the environmental movement have diversified extensively since the emergence of the first American environmental organizations in the late nineteenth century. As discussed in more detail in the Historical Background section, a particularly noteworthy shift was the emergence of large numbers of small, local, resident-led environmental groups, often referred to as "grassroots" efforts, in the 1980s and '90s.[15] The memberships of these groups were generally people of color or white blue-collar workers and they tended to focus on health issues caused by local pollution, unlike larger environmental organizations, which generally focused on the conservation of natural areas and wildlife.[16]

Local activists used the term "environmental justice" to argue that humans who are socially vulnerable due to their class or race also suffer from the effects of human activity, particularly industrialization and pollution.[17] While the terms "environmental justice" and "conservationism" are certainly complex, for my purposes, I focus on the difference in how these two realms of thought construct the relationship between humans and the environment and how this difference affects

15. Nicholas Freudenberg and Carol Steinsapir, "Not in Our Backyards: The Grassroots Environmental Movement," *Society & Natural Resources* 4, no. 3 (1991): 235–45.

16. Ibid.

17. Alejandro Colsa Perez et al., "Evolution of the Environmental Justice Movement: Activism, Formalization and Differentiation," *Environmental Research Letters* 10, no. 10 (October 2015): 1–12; Freudenberg and Steinsapir. "Not in Our Backyards."

organizations' goals and aims. This difference is particularly important in the Calumet region, a patchwork of industrial and remnant natural sites that attracts individuals and organizations who ascribe to both these ideologies, opening up opportunities for both collaboration *and* conflict.

Large Environmental NGOs as Intermediary Bargainers

Historically, small local environmental groups on the Southeast Side often struggled to gain influence over and access to government officials, media, certain industries, and other parties. Large environmental NGOs can build social capital with local groups and communities by providing resources normally out of their reach.

Princen and Finger argue that environmental NGOs can serve a unique bargaining role between grassroots groups, communities, and state government. Individuals and grassroots organizations represent a "bottom-up" model of power by "reaching up" to government and bringing their concerns to policymakers. Governments, in return, operate "top down" by bringing their own interests and priorities down to the people via laws and policies. Princen and Finger argue that larger environmental NGOs can mediate bottom-up and top-down processes, promoting compromise between the government and locals. They argue that this unique ability stems from the "legitimacy" and "transparency" of large NGOs: "In the environmentalism realm, NGOs are perceived as defenders of values that governments and corporation are all too will to compromise"[18] Princen and Finger claim that the public perceives environmental NGOs as less easily swayed by economic influences than governments and businesses, allowing them to serve as bargainers through which local needs are communicated to government. In situations where environmental crises are

18. Princen and Finger, *Environmental NGOs in World Politics*; Raymond L. Bryant, *Nongovernmental Organizations in Environmental Struggles: Politics and the Making of Moral Capital in the Philippines* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 35.

unfolding across city, state, or national boundaries, NGOs are not bound by political boundaries and can act more freely than government officials. Large-scale NGOs have the ability to "create linkages between the local and global" by using their platform and resources to bring publicity to local environmental issues; large NGOs' flexible geographic boundaries and separation from the state give them this unique ability to act as intermediaries between locals and government.[19]

While Princen and Finger's model is elegant in its simplicity, many environmental NGOs bring their own ideology to the table and do not serve as unbiased bargainers between the state and the people. For example, the divergence in ideology between the conservationist priorities of large environmental NGOs and the environmental justice concerns of grassroots groups during the 1980s and '90s made it almost impossible for these different types of organizations to collaborate.

Bryant characterizes large NGOs as "moral entrepreneurs" with their own interests and priorities, who rely on creating an illusion of impartiality and objectivity to maintain credibility: "it is when they are seen as fighting for the Right and Good on behalf of others and not simply for themselves that NGOs may actually be best placed to acquire power."[20] Bryant argues that many large NGOs gain power by maintaining a reputation of being aligned with dominant forms of morality, but morality is not constant, may "differ from place to place," and is an outcome of "specific cultural and historical moments."[21] Larger NGOs' ability to serve as successful bargainers is contingent and may no longer be effective if they cannot maintain positive, mutually beneficial relationships with local groups or if priorities (Bryant's "moralities") between groups change.

19. Ibid., 42.

20. Bryant, *Nongovernmental Organizations*, 18.

21. Ibid., 22.

Historical Background: A Brief History of Environmental Work on the Postindustrial Southeast Side

The Southeast Side is a postindustrial region still reeling from the withdrawal of major industries. Historically, its communities and grassroots groups have been torn between improving the environment and choosing economic improvement, and various environmental organizations have had varying goals and priorities for the region. Regional geographer Mark J. Bouman aptly frames the situation: "the notion that what is important is in dispute, is, in fact, part of the point: as citizens and others who work in the Calumet region struggle to rehabilitate the economy and the environment, what rises to the top of the agenda depends on how the region is comprehended."[22]

Industrialization

Chicago's Southeast Side is part of a larger ecological area known as the Calumet, which stretches across Lake Michigan's southern Illinois shore, through Indiana, and into southwest Michigan. As the meeting point of a number of habitat types—deciduous forest, coniferous forest, prairie, and wetlands—the Calumet supported abundant ecological niches, allowing for the development of high biodiversity in plant and animal life.[23] The region's shoreline was dominated by a rare "dune-and-swale" habitat: a series of elevated, drier sand dunes alternating with wet lowland swales that emanate outward from the shoreline. The intense, compact ecological variation that occurs within a dune-and-swale

22. Mark J. Bouman, "A Mirror Cracked: Ten Keys to the Landscape of the Calumet Region," *Journal of Geography* 100, no. 3 (2001): 104–10.

23. Chris Boebel, dir., *The Evolving Calumet: A Journey* (Chicago: Calumet Ecological Park Association, 2006), DVD.

habitat fosters biological diversity,[24] and its abundant food and raw materials first attracted permanent white settlements in the 1830s.[25]

Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the extraction-based economy of the small number of Calumet residents began to alter the region's natural landscape. Hunting and dredging of the area's sprawling wetlands for farmland depleted the region's once immense biodiversity.[26] Sand and clay reserves, which are plentiful in dune-and-swale habitats, were transported to factories and made into bricks and glass to support the growth of Chicago. The construction of the railroads in the 1850s supported the transportation of these raw materials.[27] The Great Chicago Fire in 1871 prompted the growth of the steel industry on the Southeast Side, whose steel helped rebuild the city with the world's first tall buildings.[28] The invention of the Bessemer process in 1857—a revolution that allowed steel to be produced cheaply and in large quantities—aided this growth.[29] American demand for steel during the First and Second World Wars kept the Calumet region's steel industry booming through the mid-twentieth century.[30]

The region's natural environment played a significant role in determining its ultimate industrialization. Remnant wetland and drained marshes tend to flood, which discouraged building of large amounts of

24. Ibid.

25. Kenneth J. Schoon, *Calumet Beginnings: Ancient Shorelines and Settlements at the South End of Lake Michigan* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2003).

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Boebel, *The Evolving Calumet*.

29. *Feasibility Study* (Chicago: Calumet National Heritage Area Initiative, July 2017).

30. Ibid.

housing stock and devalued the land's value in the eyes of many developers.[31] The region was still sparsely populated and cheap land was plentiful up until the late nineteenth century. Where housing developers had seen nothing of value, the steel industry saw promise. Compared to Chicago's expensive and heavily industrialized downtown, the Southeast Side provided space for expansive steel plants and the Calumet River's connections to the Mississippi River and Great Lakes made transportation of the heavy materials for making steel cheaper and faster.[32] The region's wetlands were even useful to the steel industry as dump sites for waste, like Big Marsh, which was used as a slag dump for the now closed Acme Steel, located directly north of the marsh.[33]

The Making of Southeast Side Communities

Chicago experienced rapid population growth during its march toward industrialization. Aided by waves of emigration out of Europe and the annexations of smaller towns (the Southeast Side was not annexed by the City of Chicago until 1889), the city's population grew exponentially, from four thousand in the 1840s to over one million by 1890. The growth of the steel industry during the late nineteenth century prompted the dense settling of the Calumet and the construction of much of its permanent housing stock. Industry tycoons Adolph Hegewisch of the Pressed Steel Car Company and George Pullman of the Pullman Palace Car Company created the company towns and housing of Hegewisch and Pullman, which retain the names of their developers.[34] Many European immigrants settled on the Southeast Side and took these relatively

31. Ibid.

32. Boebel, *The Evolving Calumet*.

33. *Feasibility Study*.

34. Schoon, *Calumet Beginning*.

high-paying factory jobs.[35] With the decline of the steel industry, the descendants of European factory workers, who were generally middle class, left in search of other work. The Southeast Side remained a majority White area until the 1980s and '90s, at which point it became a majority African American and Latino area.[36] As a whole, the city's population began to decline during the 1970s and '80s, gradually shrinking from its peak of about 3.4 million to its current level of about 2.7 million. Chicago's largest population losses have occurred on the city's far South Side (encompassing the Southeast Side), which has lost almost 150,000 residents since 2000 alone.[37]

A Divided "Environment"

The planned company towns on the Southeast Side created relatively isolated communities in close proximity to factories, unlike the more organic expansion of neighborhoods seen in other areas of Chicago. Similarly, the construction of post–World War II, racially segregated Chicago Housing Authority communities such as Altgeld Gardens and Trumball Park—initially created for returning veterans, but later used by many low-income Chicagoans—contributed to the Southeast Side's hallmark patchwork of industrial, postindustrial, natural, and residential areas that is seen to this day.[38]

35. Ibid.

36. "Chicago Racial Demographics, 1910–2000," *Huffington Post*, December 6, 2017.

37. Greg Hinz, "As Loop Population Booms, South Side's Plummets," *Chicago Tribune*, December 13, 2016.

38. Beverly Anne Lesueur, "Altgeld Gardens: The Evolution of Culture and Education in an Isolated African American Community," (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2010), 1–14; D. Bradford Hunt, "Trumbull Park Homes Race Riots, 1953–1954," in *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, ed. James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, Janice L. Reiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

This complex matrix attracted many different kinds of environmental groups, from those focused on conserving natural areas and species (e.g., the Nature Conservancy), to those invested in the clean energy and sustainable development (e.g., the Sierra Club), to those interested in human health and environmental justice (e.g., People for Community Recovery).

The Calumet region's prairies and wetlands are surviving remnants of a once vast ecosystem that spanned across the southern coast of Lake Michigan (fig. 1).[39] Though greatly fragmented by industrial and residential development over the past century, these habitats still host a number of endangered species, and Chicago's Southeast Side remains one of the most biologically diverse areas in the state of Illinois.[40] Of particular note is the region's "food, nesting sites, and resting points for a wide variety of migrating birds" (fig. 2).[41] This rich ecology has drawn the interest of older, conservation-minded environmental organizations.

Local groups, like the Southeast Environmental Task Force and People for Community Recovery, emerged in the 1980s to address regional pollution caused by the region's industrial past and its effect on human health. Part of a national trend of grassroots organizing for environmental justice, these groups focused on postindustrial waste sites and the introduction of garbage landfills in the area. Their efforts to cleanup postindustrial sites were not centered on the preservation of habitats or species, but on the improvement of human health.[42]

39. Jefferey M. Levengood, Walter J. Marcisz, Allison M. Klement, and Margaret A. Kurcz, "Nesting Ecology of Black-crowned Night-Herons at Lake Calumet Wetlands," *Illinois Natural History Survey Bulletin* 37, no. 3 (August 2005): 95–108.

40. Ibid.

41. Bouman, "A Mirror Cracked," 106.

42. Sherry Cable and Michael Benson, "Acting Locally: Environmental Injustice and the Emergence of Grass-roots Environmental Organizations," *Social Problems* 40, no. 4 (November 1993): 464–77.

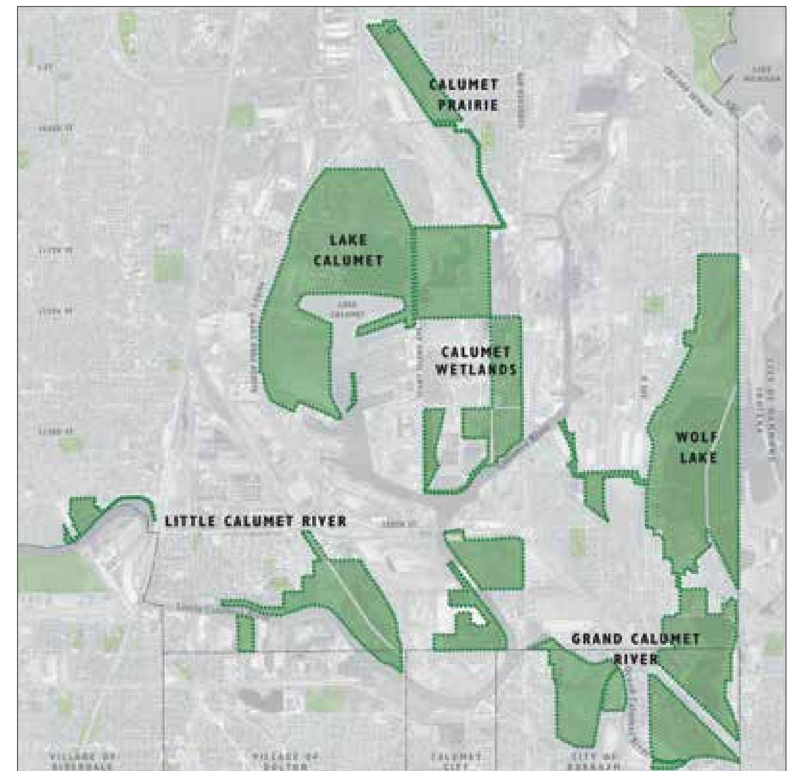

Figure 1. The major natural areas on Chicago's Southeast Side.

The Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan, City of Chicago, https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Sustainable_Development/Publications/Calumet_Open_Space_Reserve/COSR_maps.pdf.

Figure 2. Black-crowned night-herons perched along Lake Calumet, near a coking plant.

Photograph by Michael Jeffords, Illinois Natural History Survey.

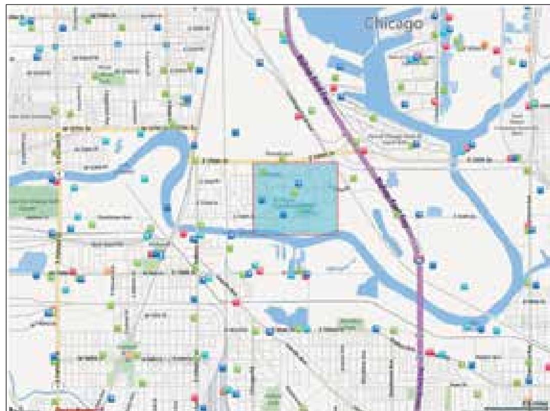

Figure 3. Altgeld Gardens and surrounding hazardous toxins, indicated by colored squares.

Brandi M. White and Eric S. Hall, "Perceptions of Environmental Health Risks among Residents of the 'Toxic Doughnut': Opportunities for Risk Screening and Community Mobilization," *BMC Public Health* 15 (December 2015).

The Origins of Environmental Justice Activism on the Southeast Side

The movement of heavy industry in to and out of the Southeast Side and the greater Calumet region has left its mark on the landscape and the bodies of local residents. Although many of the area's factories have been defunct or demolished since the 1980s and '90s, the by-products of a century of operation remains. Today, around 90 percent of Chicago's landfills—along with EPA-designated postindustrial Superfund Sites like the "Calumet Cluster"—are located on the city's Southeast Side.[43] The Calumet region is home to many "toxic doughnuts," residential pockets boxed in by sources of toxic emissions, whose "residents bear a disproportionate price of the region's industrial past and present in a variety of physical ailments."[44] Toxic doughnuts of the Southeast Side, like the Altgeld Gardens neighborhood, have some of Chicago's highest mortality rates for environmentally related lung cancer and stroke, in part due to residents' above-average exposure to radon, asbestos, and other airborne toxins (fig. 3).[45]

The seeds of community concern surrounding environmental pollution and human health were planted on the Southeast Side even before the national boom in environmental justice activism of the 1980s. As early as the 1940s, community members began to be concerned about local pollution. A former Altgeld Gardens resident Rosemarie Harding recalled: "There were days when the old smells of what lay beneath the

43. Christine J. Walley, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

44. Bouman, "A Mirror Cracked," 108.

45. Brandi M. White and Eric S. Hall, "Perceptions of Environmental Health Risks among Residents of the 'Toxic Doughnut': Opportunities for Risk Screening and Community Mobilization," *BMC Public Health* 15 (December 2015).

earth would come up and pinch the inside of your nose. Some people said the dump held chemical refuse and that the fumes were noxious."[46]

A mid-1970s survey of environmental attitudes across Chicago revealed that residents of Southeast Side neighborhoods, like Calumet Heights and Pullman, had higher levels of concern about issues such as pollution than wealthier areas on the city's North Side. The survey's findings quashed assumptions that "concern about environmental pollution is a white, middle-class, suburban phenomenon."[47]

Deindustrialization and the Growth of Southeast Side Environmental Groups

The deindustrialization of the Southeast Side in the 1980s and '90s pushed the environmental justice movement to the forefront, and was a critical time period that has shaped the Southeast Side's current economy, society, and environment. Wisconsin Steel closed in 1980. The Calumet region continued to loose industrial jobs throughout the 1980s that had sustained its residents' middle-class lives. Nationally, the steel industry employed around 400,000 individuals in 1980 and only around 164,000 in 1990.[48] Waste management companies bought vast tracts of blighted, cheap land vacated by industry for landfills and garbage incineration plants (often without the input of community members).[49]

It was in this context that several local environmental organizations

46. Rosemarie Freeney Harding and Rachel Elizabeth Harding, *Remnants: A Memoir of Spirit, Activism, and Mothering* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 76–77.

47. Susan Caris Cutter, "Community Concern for Pollution: Social and Environmental Influences," *Environment and Behavior* 13, no. 1 (January 1981): 106–7.

48. James B. Lane, *The Uncertainty of Everyday Life: A Social History of the Calumet Region during the 1980s* (Valparaiso, IN: Home Mountain Printing, 2007).

49. David Naguib Pellow, *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Boebel, *The Evolving Calumet*.

formed, including two groups that remain active today: People for Community Recovery (1982) and the Southeast Environmental Task Force (1989). People for Community Recovery, under the leadership of Hazel M. Johnson, a neighborhood resident who would later be dubbed a "mother of the environmental justice movement," responded to the heightened occurrence of certain cancers in the Altgeld Gardens neighborhood.[50] The task force was a conglomeration of a number of smaller grassroots groups led by local resident Marian Byrnes; it opposed the proposed construction of a new garbage incinerator on the former Wisconsin Steel site.[51] These groups have continued to fight for local environmental interests over the past several decades.

Historical Relationships between Environmental Groups on the Southeast Side

Local Southeast Side environmental groups have gone through periods of cooperation and discord.[52] Some collaborations were mutually beneficial, for example, the coalition known as CURE (Citizens United to Reclaim the Environment) successfully fought against the construction of a landfill at O'Brien Lock and Dams during the 1980s. Disagreements were not uncommon: for example, the question of the expansion of garbage incineration facilities and the location of Chicago's proposed third airport, which would drain Lake Calumet and its adjacent marshes, created tensions between local groups during the 1980s and '90s.[53] Some groups supported limited expansion of garbage incineration facilities, under the assumption that the potential economic benefits would outweigh the dangers to human health or the environment. People for Community

50. Margaret Ramirez, "Hazel M. Johnson, 1935–2011." *Chicago Tribune*, January 16, 2011.

51. "History," Southeast Environmental Task Force, n.d. Web, 2017.

52. Pellow, *Garbage Wars*; Walley, *Exit Zero*.

53. Pellow, *Garbage Wars*.

Recovery, which had experience with several incineration facilities in close proximity to Altgeld Gardens, felt that their neighborhood was likely to be targeted for new facilities and was steadfastly opposed to more landfills.

Mayor Richard M. Daley proposed a third airport in 1990, which would have demolished Hegewisch and smaller portions of surrounding neighborhoods.[54] While the airport could have brought jobs to the struggling region, Hegewisch residents feared for their homes and their natural areas. In an attempt to highlight the area's rich biodiversity, local environmental activists engaged in "the Great *Thismia* Hunt of 1991," a campaign that asked local residents and experts to comb Hegewisch's marshlands for an incredibly rare species of plant, thought to only exist in the Calumet.[55] The public outcry and protest from Hegewisch residents eventually squashed the proposal.

Racial and class conflicts between local environmental groups on the Southeast Side affected organizations' relationships with outside institutions and organizations. Though residents across the Southeast Side suffered economically after deindustrialization, not all neighborhoods suffered equally. During the 1980s, residents of Hegewisch, a primarily White neighborhood, were "fighting to hold on to 'middle class' respectability" and Altgeld Gardens' primarily African American population had "long struggled to find any work at all (fig. 4)."[56] People for Community Recovery, an African American group based in Altgeld Gardens, built bridges with the middle- and upper-class academic, public health, and environmental justice worlds. The Southeast Environmental Task Force, based in Hegewisch, formed connections with middle- and upper-class, conservationist groups that at the time were more focused

54. James Strong, "Southeast Side Airport Studied," *Chicago Tribune*, February 8, 1990.

55. Cynthia L. Ogorek, *Images of America: Along the Calumet River* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2004).

56. Walley, *Exit Zero*, 137.

Figure 4. Altgeld Gardens and Hegewisch neighborhoods.

Green Economic Industrial Corridor, Southeast Environmental Task Force, http://setaskforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Calumet-Vision-Plan.jpg.

on restoration and recreation than human health.[57] Racial and class differences also contributed to different environmental priorities: People for Community Recovery did not find the same commonalities that Hegewisch had with the larger, wealthy, and overwhelmingly white environmental NGOs.

Local Groups and Larger Environmental NGOs

Interactions between local groups and larger NGOs were fairly rocky during the 1980s and '90s. Though both large and small organizations have certain shared goals, the subtle differences in priorities between more traditional conservation work versus human-centric interests (like health and economic development), competition for funding, and "credit"

57. Ibid.

for environmental work have contributed to disagreements between groups, as evidenced by the following statement from People for Community Recovery's executive director Hazel Johnson in 1993:

> We don't need White people to speak for us. We speak for ourselves… We ain't going to participate if they come with their own agenda. We want our own agenda. The Sierra Club and the Wildlife Federation use information from grassroots groups like us and take it back to their offices to get grants and we don't get any of the money.[58]

Such criticisms of large conservationist organizations by local groups were widespread in the United States at the time. In 1990 a group of environmental justice organizations and activists across the nation signed a letter condemning the limited outlook of traditional environmentalist groups, which they dubbed the "Group of Ten."[59] Activists argued that the Group of Ten ignored the economic suffering of postindustrial low-income communities of color.[60] One well-publicized critique of the Group of Ten focused on the Nature Conservancy and the Audubon Society's opposition to sustainable development by Hispanic shepherds in New Mexico, on the grounds that grazing would damage protected natural areas.[61]

58. Pellow, *Garbage Wars*, 76.

59. Richard Moore et al, "Letter to the National Wildlife Federation," SouthWest Organizing Project, March 16, 1990. Web, EJnet.org: Web Resources for Environmental Justice Activists, 2018.

60. According to Pellow, "Big Ten" or "Big Green" are environmental organizations with a national or international reach: Defenders of Wildlife, Environmental Defense Fund, Greenpeace, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and World Wildlife Fund.

61. Pellow, *Garbage Wars*.

Takeaways from the History of the Southeast Side

This brief history of environmental work in the Southeast Side reveals that environmental groups have struggled to interact in mutually beneficial ways due to subtle but significant differences in organizational goals. Many of the larger environmental NGOs were formed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and sought to preserve a pristine nature from industrialization and urban development.[62] Though these larger groups are not bound to their founding principles, elements of their preservationist mind-set were evident in their disagreements with local environmental groups during the 1980s and '90s.

The locally led environmental groups that remain active in the region, People for Community Recovery and the Southeast Environmental Task Force, were formed during the 1980s as part of a national boom in grassroots environmental activism, centered around the related issues of environmental justice, pollution, and human health.[63] Some local groups, like People for Community Recovery, felt that larger groups were taking advantage of them for personal gain and not sharing the benefits they reaped. The issue of credit and compensation was highly important to these local groups, who operated—and continue to operate—primarily through volunteer support with very few external sources of funding.

Class, race, and strong ties to neighborhoods often prevented collaboration during the 1980s and '90s in important debates over the expansion of incineration facilities and the location of a proposed third airport. For some local environmental groups, the economic gains associated with a

62. Robert J. Brulle, "Environmental Discourse and Social Movement Organizations: A Historical and Rhetorical Perspective on the Development of U.S. Environmental Organizations," *Sociological Inquiry* 66, no. 1 (January 2007): 58–83; three of the large, most active environmental NGOs on the Southeast Side—Sierra Club (1892), Audubon Society (1897), and the Nature Conservancy (1946)—arose during what Brulle describes as the "preservationist" movement of environmentalism, which conceived of "wilderness as an alternative to urban life."

63. Cable and Benson, "Acting Locally."

development might outweigh the environmental toll placed on another community; the region's poor economic condition in the postindustrial era contributed to this difficult balancing act of environmental and economic improvements.

Current Interactions: Large Environmental NGOs, Local Groups, and Communities

Very little academic literature discusses how and if relationships between large environmental NGOs and grassroots groups on the Southeast Side have changed since the 1990s. In this section I analyze the scant sources and present findings from my own qualitative interviews of organizational staff and reviews of organizations' websites (mainly organizational mission statements). These interviews and materials provide a preliminary analysis of the kinds of environmental work happening on the Southeast Side, inter-NGO interactions, and NGO-community interactions. Further interviews with community members who are not organizational staff would provide important information about public opinion and perception of environmental groups and issues and create a fuller, more complete picture of these interactions. For the purposes of this exploratory paper and the limited amount of time available for interviews, I limited my efforts to organizational staff, who often had broad perspectives on both interorganizational interactions and community outreach. Therefore, this section should be understood as an initial step into understanding a set of topics that have been relatively unexplored in this region, rather than a complete or conclusive look.

Current Environmental Attitudes of Southeast Side Residents

The most recent study of environmental attitudes of Southeast Side residents in Altgeld Gardens in 2015 reported that community members' awareness of environmental risks remains very strong.[64] The majority of surveyed residents expressed a lack of trust in the government's ability to address environmental crises, but most residents strongly agreed that "if people work together, they can change the environment." Concerns over hazardous waste and landfills are similar to the perceived threat of drugs and crime in the community. Most residents reported receiving most information on the environment from People for Community Recovery, their local environmental organization. Altgeld Gardens' residents are very aware of environmental health risks, believe in the power of community activism, and have close ties to their local environmental group. Over 60 percent of Altgeld Gardens residents surveyed indicated that they would not rely on large outsider agencies, like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to inform them of environmental risks in their community. None of the residents surveyed reported that they received "a lot" of environmental information from the EPA; over 30 percent reported that they received "almost none" from the agency. Similarly low numbers were reported for other groups perceived as outsiders by the surveyed Altgeld Garden residents: the City of Chicago's Department of Public Health, the Chicago Housing Authority, and universities. On the other hand, over 45 percent reported receiving "a lot" of information about the environment from People for Community Recovery; only about 11 percent reported receiving "almost none" from the group. Overall, it appears that People for Community Recovery has had the most influence over and access to community residents.[65]

Another notable finding from the 2015 study is the relative priorities that residents place on different environmental issues: generally, residents think more localized environmental problems pose a greater threat to the community than broader issues like climate change. Residents considered "dumping hazardous waste" (79 percent) and "landfills" (74

64. White and Hall, "Perceptions of Environmental Health Risks."

65. Ibid.

percent) to be "high risk" to both the community and to individuals; residents considered global issues, like "depletion of the ozone layer" (52 percent) and "global warming" (48 percent), as "high risk" to the community.[66]

These findings have important implications for larger environmental groups seeking to establish stronger relationships with local community members. Larger groups must learn that local groups influence residents' opinions on environmental issues and that many residents have preconceived feelings of distrust towards outsider organizations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, larger environmental organizations should be aware that local issues, like pollution, matter more to community members than global environmental issues, like climate change.

Current Inter-NGO Relationships: The Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago

One major development in inter-NGO relationships on the Southeast Side over the past decade has been the Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago. The alliance was formed in 2011 with the encouragement of the Sierra Club to bring local environmental groups on Chicago's South Side together and oppose a new coal-to-gas plant on 114th Street.[67] The alliance currently consists of the Sierra Club, People for Community Recovery, the Southeast Environmental Task Force, and several other grassroots environmental groups in the Little Village neighborhood and the nearby city of Cicero, Illinois. The alliance meets monthly and focuses on banning petroleum coke, also known as "petcoke," a by-product of the refinement of oil from tar sands that is

66. Ibid.

67. Hawthrone, "Environmental Justice Groups Fight," *Chicago Tribune*.

carcinogenic at elevated levels.[68] The city has passed ordinances that require factories to keep petcoke piles covered rather than left exposed to the air, but the alliance is fighting to have the petcoke removed from the Southeast Side entirely.[69]

The alliance's projects to ban petcoke and to reduce "dirty industry" fit within each local group's goals, despite organizational differences. The alliance also aligns with the Sierra Club's nationwide clean energy campaign, "Beyond Coal," which highlights the impact on climate change caused by coal-produced energy and addresses the health impacts of carbon emissions.[70]

Analysis of Organizational Mission Statements

I compared the mission statements of two local groups (the Southeast Environmental Task Force and People for Community Recovery) and two outsider groups (the Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club). Given the historical interorganizational tensions between environmental justice (human health, sustainable economic development) and traditional conservation groups on the Southeast Side, it is important to understand how these organizations currently align themselves.

The mission statements of People for Community Recovery and the Southeast Environmental Task Force both focus on pollution prevention above all other environmental issues.[71] Both organizations support sustainable development in the region, promoting "green" economic growth

68. "Health Effects of Petroleum Coke," United States Environmental Protection Agency, n.d. Web, 2017.

69. Curtis Black, "Petcoke Controversy a Sign of Environmental Racism," *Chicago Reporter*, April 10, 2014.

70. Beyond Coal: About Us," Sierra Club, n.d. Web, 2017.

71. "Mission Statement," People for Community Recovery, n.d; "Mission & Values," Southeast Environmental Task Force, n.d. Web, 2017.

akin to recent projects in the nearby neighborhood of Pullman.[72] This balance of economic and environmental improvements are linked to environmental justice, which is the priority of the populations that these organizations primarily serve.

Sierra Club lists five "overarching visionary goals" for its nationwide environmental campaigns. These goals include climate change, clean energy, conservation, and environmental justice:

> Protect our air, land, water, and communities from pollution… and help our activists, local communities and allies win on the environmental issues most important to them. Engage in strategic alliances on broader issues if this can help further environmental causes and remain consistent with our values.[73]

The Nature Conservancy, while still primarily focused on preserving natural areas, also has incorporated environmental justice into its "Our Values" page:

> We respect the needs, values and traditions of local communities and cultures, and we forge relationships based on mutual benefit and trust. [We] demonstrate our respect by committing to local, on the ground involvement with people, communities and cultures. We respect the needs, values and traditions of local communities and cultures, with an awareness and sensitivity to their economic realities.[74]

72. Patrick Sisson, "Manufacturing's Green Future Taking Shape at Method's New Pullman Plant," Curbed Chicago, February 23, 2015. Pullman, a Southeast Side neighborhood to the west of Lake Calumet, has experienced a number of developments aimed at promoting green economic growth in recent years (LEED-certified Method Factory, Gotham Greens greenhouse, plans for a Whole Foods distribution site, etc.). The goal of such developments is to provide economic opportunity to residents while avoiding the pollution-producing practices of the region's industrial past.

73. "Sierra Club Strategic Plan: Overarching Visionary Goals," Sierra Club, n.d. Web, 2017.

74. "Our Values," The Nature Conservancy, n.d. Web, 2017.

It is notable that these national groups have incorporated some of the criticisms they faced during the 1980s and '90s into their current missions statements. The interest of the Sierra Club and the Nature Conservancy to become locally involved and connected suggests that there may be more grounds for future collaboration between local and large environmental groups than in previous decades.

Interviews with Organizational Staff

Given the lack of current research, I conducted a series of short interviews with staff members of environmental organizations that are currently active in the region. The goal was to understand interactions between organizations and with local residents, to learn how historical relationships had evolved in recent years, and to determine the applicability of the bargainer theory to environmental work in this complex region.

Interview Methods

I chose staff members based on their involvement in projects and campaigns on the Southeast Side. I wanted interviewees who had personal experience working in the region and could speak to on-the-ground challenges and interactions with other organizations and community members (This was more of an issue in larger organizations, as many regional staff members were not involved in Calumet-specific projects.)

Staff members could choose an in-person or telephone interview; all participants chose a telephone interview, mainly due to their limited and sometimes unpredictable availability throughout the week. Each interview lasted about thirty minutes and followed a qualitative interview format.[75] All interviewees were asked essentially the same questions, but the order and phrasing of questions varied to facilitate the flow of conversation and to avoid awkward transitions. If an interviewee brought

75. Robert Stuart Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

up an interesting topic or experience, I asked follow-up questions, encouraging them to elaborate.

I began each interview by asking the staff member to describe their organization's projects and campaigns on the Southeast Side. From there, I asked questions about which constituencies their organization was attempting to serve and attract. I asked them to describe the main ways in which their organization came into contact with these communities, such as public events, meetings, educational programs, etc. I then asked staff members to discuss any difficulties in maintaining community interest in their projects. From there, I generally asked about interactions with other environmental organizations in the region, such as the ways in which their organization collaborated with groups and with which environmental groups they were regularly in contact.[76]

Geographical Scope

The Calumet is generally defined as an ecological region that stretches around the southern shores of Lake Michigan. I chose to focus on organizations working on the Southeast Side of Chicago, within or just over (in the case of the Nature Conservancy) the city limits (fig. 5). By limiting my focus, I was able to ensure that all the organizations I interviewed were engaging with a similar, if not identical, group of community members and natural and industrial spaces.

Interviewees

One staff member from each of the following NGOs was interviewed. For confidentiality purposes, interviewees are not mentioned by name. Below is a short description of each organization, its regional scope, and its main projects on the Southeast Side:

Sierra Club–*National*

This organization is connected to the Southeast Side through its

76. See the appendix for a list of guiding interview questions and topics.

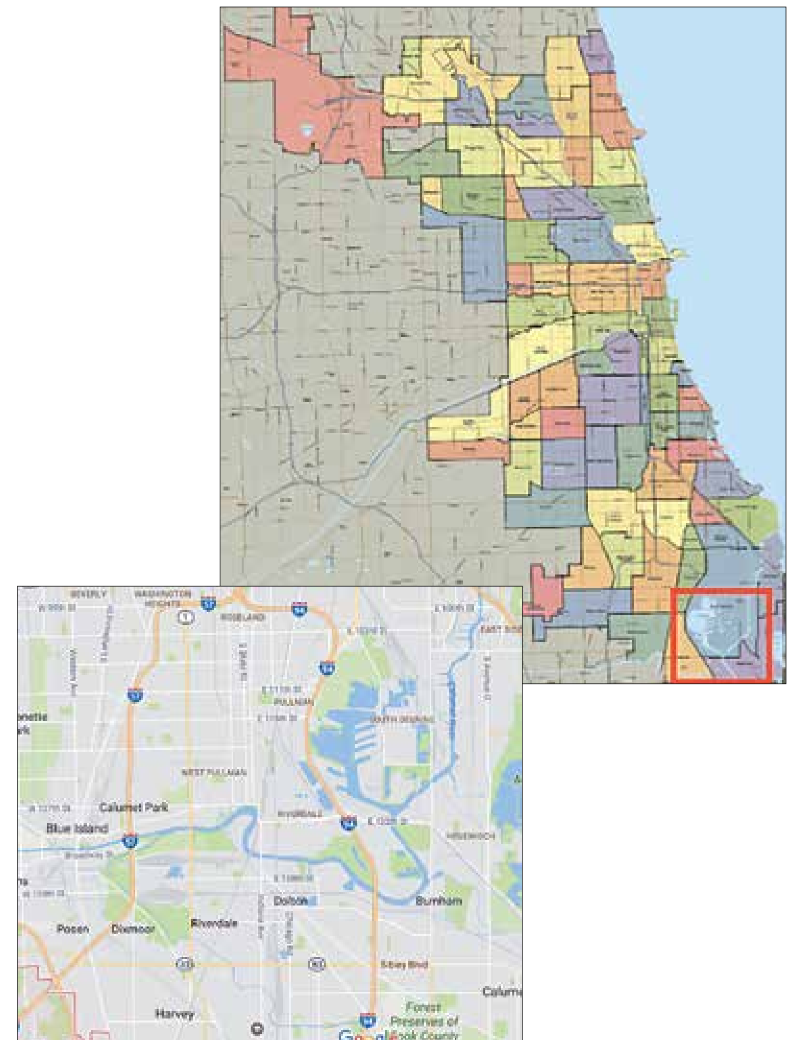

Figure 5. Approximate geographical boundaries of the study area.

nationwide "Beyond Coal" campaign. In 2011, as part of this campaign, the Sierra Club sought the support of local environmental groups to oppose the proposed construction of a coal-to-gas plan on 114th Street. Sierra Club continues to work with local environmental groups throughout the Southeast and West Sides via the Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago.

The Nature Conservancy–*National*
The conservancy has been active on the Southeast Side since the 1970s. It collaborated with scientists at Northeastern Illinois University, who had been studying the Indian Boundary Prairies since the 1960s. The site is just south of the city limits in Markham, Illinois. Despite its long presence in the region, it has only begun developing a community outreach plan over the past two years.

Friends of the Forest Preserves–*County*
This group is a countywide organization that helps maintain several natural sites on the Southeast Side—Kickapoo Woods, Whistler Woods, Beaubien Woods, and River Oaks—through volunteer stewardship and restoration events.

Southeast Environmental Task Force–*Local*
Formed in 1989 by community activists in the Hegewisch neighborhood, the task force continues to run campaigns dedicated to reducing pollution and increasing environmentally friendly economic growth on the Southeast Side. It is member of the Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago.

Interview Findings

Despite a history of conflict, current interactions between local groups and larger NGOs are largely positive. The sustained collaboration between local and large environmental groups with the Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago similarly indicates an interest in collaboration among local environmental groups.

The Southeast Environmental Task Force reported largely positive interactions with larger environmental organizations. Sierra Club provides legal representation to the group, allowing them to build a case against the planned construction of a coal-to-gas plant in the area, and the Natural Resources Defense Council helped the task force with grant writing. The South East Environmental Task Force staff member expressed interest in continuing to collaborate with the Sierra Club and other larger environmental organizations, while echoing some of the concerns voiced by Hazel Johnson in the 1990s: that local groups feel appreciated and that their contributions to broader campaigns be recognized. It is important that grassroots groups feel that their interactions with larger environmental groups are mutually beneficial, not extractive or domineering, given the limited funding available for environmental work in the United States.

The Sierra Club likewise reported positive interactions with the task force and People for Community Recovery. The Sierra Club interviewee stressed the importance of local knowledge in developing effective policy: "It's hard to get anything done alone." The Sierra Club also intended to continue to working with Southeast Side groups on the upcoming People's Climate March.[77] Overall, despite its roots in traditional conservationism and past conflicts with environmental justice groups, the Sierra Club currently appears to be on very good terms with local Southeast Side groups.

Other larger environmental groups, like Friends of the Forest Preserve and the Nature Conservancy, have historically had limited contact with local grassroots groups in the region. More recently, they have expressed a desire to increase their interactions with community members. Friends of the Forest Preserve wanted to attract a more volunteers to participate in its restoration events, and the Nature Conservancy, which has struggled

77. Editor's note: The People's Climate Movement uses mass rallies and the alignment of people and groups "to demand climate [change], jobs, and justice." "About Us: Our Movement," People's Climate Movement, n.d. Web, 2018.

with littering and other destructive activities at Indian Boundary Prairies, hopes to reduce misuse of the preserve by building relationships with locals. Few of the conservancy's preserves in the United States are located in urban areas, which in part explains the late addition of community outreach to its strategy. Lack of community engagement plans and policies at the conservancy's national level required self-motivated efforts by on-the-ground staff members in the Calumet region, according to my interviewee.

All groups interviewed expressed some degree of difficulty in attracting and maintaining the interest and involvement of local residents. The Southeast Environmental Task Force reported having a strong core base of support, but could not branch out and broaden their reach, in part because of limited resources and personnel. The Nature Conservancy and Friends of the Forest Preserves noted, perhaps unsurprisingly, that events with opportunities to socialize and participate in recreational activities tended to attract a far greater number of residents compared to restoration-only events (e.g., invasive species removal, trash pickup, etc.).

Reflecting on Changes in Organizational Relationships

The collaboration of larger NGOs with local organizations and a willingness to search for points of resonance stems from a shift in the dominant environmental concerns among the American people over the past half-century. The publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 was a turning point in the American environmental movement and a predecessor for modern environmental justice activism.[78] Widely read, *Silent Spring* criticized the use of the pesticide DDT, which accumulates in ecosystems, and sparked activism that led to a ban of the pesticide for agricultural uses in 1972. For the first time, everyday Americans began to link chemical pollution to the environment. Environmental

78. Robert Cameron Mitchell, Angela G. Mertig, and Riley E. Dunlap, "Twenty Years of Environmental Mobilization: Trends among National Environmental Organizations," *Society & Natural Resources* 4, no. 3 (1991): 219–34.

organizations started to incorporate toxins in their platforms, expanding beyond the "defensive" protection of habitat and wildlife to "offensive" efforts to control ecological damage from compounds developed by the American chemical industry.[79]

Understanding the ecological impacts of manufactured chemicals required a high level of scientific expertise, and banning them at the national level required political and legal knowledge. Environmental NGOs increasingly shifted away from volunteer-based models and hired high-paid experts, like scientists and lawyers, with the skills and background to lobby for policy change.[80] American interest in environmental issues during the 1960s and '70s increased membership in environmental groups, which supported the shift towards more paid staff. Advancements in technology allowed environmental organizations to reach more and more Americans via direct mail (and eventually email) campaigns, broadening their reach and base of support.[81]

By the 1980s, many began to view American environmental NGOs as bloated, overly bureaucratic, and out of touch with the concerns of ordinary people.[82] According to critics, elite experts now did environmental work, rather than the community members and volunteers who had once formed the backbone of American environmental organizations. Memberships were larger, but members' participation was limited to monetary contributions rather than direct action. A significant subset of the American public, including lower-income people and people of color, began to feel shut out and disconnected from the work of these large environmental organizations. This "criticism from radical and grassroots strands of environmentalism has provoked a good deal of

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

soul-searching within the national organizations."[83] The process of deindustrialization left communities across the United States in similar predicaments to Calumet residents, without work and living in polluted landscapes.[84] Feelings of frustration with, fear of, and disenfranchisement from establishment environmental NGOs prompted a surge in the formation of grassroots activist groups who felt their needs and concerns were not being addressed. Just as *Silent Spring* had changed the environmental movement during the 1960s, deindustrialization prompted the call for environmental justice, which "was institutionalized as a central priority of the federal government in 1994 through an Executive Order by President Bill Clinton."[85]

The shift away from the more adversarial relationships of the 1980s and '90s has been an undoubtedly complex process, involving a shift from the traditional conservationist values by the nationwide organizations and a recognition of environmental justice concerns. The issue of industrial development, for example, draws the attention of all large NGOs, grassroots groups, and local residents on the Southeast Side for different reasons. For the Sierra Club, the current fight against coal-to-gas plants fits perfectly into its "Beyond Coal" campaign and its organizational aim to reduce usage of fossil fuel sources nationally. The Southeast Environmental Task Force and People for Community Recovery come to the fight from a local, environmental justice perspective, seeking to protect the health of local residents. Despite these differences in perspective, these groups have been able to unite around this shared objective: local and global goals become joined in a mutually beneficial way.

83. Riley E. Dunlap and Angela G Mertig, "The Evolution of the U.S. Environmental Movement from 1970 to 1990: An Overview," *Society & Natural Resources* 4, no. 3 (July 1991): 215.

84. Freudenberg and Steinsapir, "Not in Our Backyards."

85. Colsa Perez, "Evolution of the Environmental Justice Movement," 2.

Synthesis: The Applicability of the Bargainer Role and Suggestions for Southeast Side Environmental Work

Based on my review of the history of environmental work on the Southeast Side and my interviews with staff members of local and large environmental groups, I observed elements of Princen and Finger's bargainer theory in interactions between environmental groups working on the Southeast Side. This arrangement did increase positive social capital between these different parties. It is important to recognize that the bargainer arrangement is not a static solution to the region's struggles with interorganizational collaboration. Taking into account Bryant's misgivings that large NGOs may not bargain as equal partners or in good faith, I offer concrete suggestions that I believe will help maintain mutually beneficial relationships in years to come.

NGO Bargainers on the Southeast Side?

The divide between the environmental justice interests of grassroots groups and the traditional conservationism of large environmental NGOs during the 1980s and '90s prevented effective collaboration.[86] Currently, NGOs have taken on a bargainer role, a mutually beneficial arrangement between local groups and large NGOs. Through the successful Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago, the Sierra Club has gained a local base of support for its nationwide "Beyond Coal" campaign and local groups gain a powerful, well-connected ally with resources to help them protect their communities from a polluting industry. Studies in Africa and Asia have found that environmental projects with large-NGO mediators were just as successful, if not more successful, than projects that relied on collaboration between grassroots

86. Brulle, "Environmental Discourse and Social Movement Organizations."

groups alone.[87] In regions where grassroots groups struggle to maintain positive relationships—a historical problem on the Southeast Side—mediation by large NGOs was found to be helpful in encouraging collaboration between groups.[88] In the right contexts, the bargainer model of large NGO involvement can facilitate the building of social capital for all parties involved.

The ongoing success of the bargainer arrangement on the Southeast Side has relied on two important factors: (1) a shared goal or mission across all organizations involved, and (2) a balance of corresponding needs and resources between large and small groups—each group has a need that is met by working with the other organization. In general, given the strength of grassroots environmental justice activism on the Southeast Side and the strong ties that residents feel to the local groups, larger NGOs may find more success in building connections with residents if they work in closer contact with the grassroots groups already serving these constituencies. Unless other larger groups are able to find points of commonality with the antipollution and human health goals of local groups, as the Sierra Club has done, it may be very difficult for them to act as effective bargainers.

Maintaining Effective Bargainers

Given Bryant's qualms surrounding the bargainer theory *and* the Southeast Side's history of interorganizational conflict, it would be naïve to assume that the bargainer arrangement will continue to benefit all parties indefinitely. Another sea change in environmental priorities, like the

87. L. David Brown and Darcy Ashman, "Participation, Social Capital, and Intersectoral Problem Solving: African and Asian Cases," *World Development* 24, no. 9 (September 1996): 1467–79.

88. Yvonne Rydin and Mark Pennington, "Public Participation and Local Environmental Planning: The Collective Action Problem and the Potential of Social Capital," *Local Environment* 5, no. 2 (May 2000): 153–69.

growth of American environmental justice activism in the 1980s, could make it difficult for large NGOs to work effectively with local groups. I recommend that NGOs build social capital with the community and among themselves and pay attention to changing priorities of local groups.

Building Social Capital between NGOs and Community Members

Despite the importance of community involvement in environmental work, many organizations struggle with "volunteer dropout and disinterest"[89] and all Southeast Side environmental organizations interviewed tried to attract and maintain community members' attention. There is no universal answer to this challenge, but aligning volunteer skills more closely with a community's interests can help, such as on the Southeast Side, where residents are more concerned with pollution.[90] Awards, recognition for service, or volunteer training can provide positive reinforcement and make restoration work accessible to community members with a variety of backgrounds and levels of experience. Another strategy is to collaborate with other environmental organizations, which can "widen the net" in the search for interested community members.

The social aspects of events are often the biggest draw for volunteers, not necessarily a desire to help the environment. The Nature Conservancy and Friends of the Forest Preserves both reported that events with recreational activities were far more popular that restoration-only events. Studies of the motivations of environmental volunteers have found that the most frequent and consistent attendees are drawn to events that facilitate socialization; "ecologically focused" programming without

89. Conrad and Hilchey, "Review of Citizen Science."

90. White and Hall, "Perceptions of Environmental Health Risks."

opportunities for volunteers to interact with one another are less likely to attract consistent participation.[91]

All of these factors open up opportunities for pooling resources. The larger environmental groups use their funding to provide resources (for example, boat rentals, art supplies, equipment, or training experts) and the local groups bring their base of regional support and knowledge. Such collaborative events could attract more people than any single environmental group working independently.

Building Social Capital among Environmental NGOs

On the Southeast Side local groups have historically struggled to build social capital with one another. Authors Dütting and Sogge analyze the primary factors that drive or hinder successful networking and collaboration between NGOs. Common factors for collaboration include basic trust among leaders of different organizations, a shared project or crisis, strength in numbers (especially among NGOs who focus on protecting minority or targeted groups), a desire for higher political standing and leverage, and a desire to incorporate "themes" or ideas from other NGOs. On the other hand, irreconcilable differences in ideology or leadership style, competition for donor funding, and fears of loss of autonomy and visibility push NGOs apart and prevent effective collaboration.[92]

Dütting and Sogge noted the complexity of national-level NGOs interacting with local organizations: "With many NGOs working at the

91. Robert L. Ryan, Rachel Kaplan, and Robert E. Grese, "Predicting Volunteer Commitment in Environmental Stewardship Programmes," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 44, no. 5 (2001): 629–48; Stanley T. Asah and Dale J. Blahna, "Motivational Functionalism and Urban Conservation Stewardship: Implications for Volunteer Involvement," *Conservation Letters* 5, no. 6 (December 2012): 470–77.

92. Gisela Dütting and David Sogge, "Building Safety Nets in the Global Politic: NGO Collaboration for Solidarity and Sustainability," *Development* 53, no. 3 (September 2010): 350–55.

national level, it will be interesting to see how they will engage themselves—as part of social movements… at the sub-national level. This may require ways of linking and collaborating quite different from models now in use."[93] Historically, interactions between environmental groups in the Calumet witnessed both competition for funding between the Sierra Club and People for Community Recovery and unification around shared crises, such as landfills or coal-to-gas plants.[94] The Environmental Justice Alliance of Greater South Chicago similarly demonstrates how organizations with different motivations have been able to cooperate. On the Southeast Side, connecting global and local environmental problems may be key to achieving increased social capital between environmental organizations of different sizes and scopes. The Sierra Club's success in linking its clean energy concerns to local environmental justice activism sets a powerful precedent for other large environmental NGOs already active, or looking to become active, on the Southeast Side.

Conclusion

Groups like the Southeast Environmental Task Force and People for Community Recovery evolved during the environmental justice boom of the 1980s and '90s and have continued to represent local environmental interests in pollution, human health, and sustainable economic development over the past several decades. These local groups have historically strong ties to neighborhoods and past conflicts occurred along class and race lines. Today, a number of larger national NGOs are active on the Southeast Side and hope to benefit from increased connections to local residents as potential volunteers and supporters. In turn, smaller local NGOs hope to access broader resources by associating with the NGOs. Large NGOs, like the Sierra Club, have found it beneficial to take on a bargainer or mediator role between grassroots groups and

93. Ibid, 354.

94. Pellow, "*Garbage Wars*"; Walley, "*Exit Zero*."

governments, foundations, and the media. The Sierra Club gained community support for its nationwide initiatives and local groups gained access to legal and grant-writing support. By providing smaller organizations with out-of-reach resources, the large environmental NGOs support and help, rather than dominate and exploit. This bargainer relationship works as long as groups with varying access to power share the same goals.

The bargainer relationship is always contingent on historic circumstances. A future radical shift in the environmental movement that drastically separates the environmental ideologies of large and local groups, like the rise of environmental justice activism and grassroots organizing that occurred during the 1980s, could disrupts collaborations between large and small NGOs. Similarly, if more traditionally conservationist organizations are unable or unwilling to connect their goals to the concerns of local organizations and residents on the Southeast Side, such organizations are unlikely to be an effective bargainer. By connecting organizational goals, large NGOs and Southeast Side environmental groups alike will be more successful in engaging local residents as volunteers and allies. Fortunately, the climate of open-mindedness towards connection and collaboration evident in my interviews with staff members from environmental organizations active in this region cast a hopeful light on the future of interorganizational interactions on the Southeast Side.

Appendix

Guiding Interview Questions

The following questions and themes were discussed in each of the staff interviews. Using an open-ended, qualitative interview format, the wording and order of these questions varied to facilitate the flow of conversation. Additional follow-up questions were asked whenever I felt they were necessary.

1. In general, in what ways does your organization try to engage with community members on the Southeast Side (holding public events, educational programs, etc.)?

a. Is this strategy different from your strategy in other parts of the city?

2. Does your organization currently track "community engagement" statistics such as numbers of attendees or participants in an event or program?

a. If so, about how long has your organization been recording this kind of information?

b. On average, how many people would attend or participate in a typical program?

c. What proportion of these people attend more than one event/program or continue to be involved in some way with your organization?

3. What kind of projects is your organization primarily involved in on the Southeast Side (e.g., restoration, preservation, conservation of certain species)?

a. What role do you see community engagement playing in your organization's interests for the Southeast Side? In other words, how does community outreach help you achieve your organization's more overarching goals?

b. Do larger environmental issues like climate change factor into your region-specific goals on the Southeast Side?

4. Do you interact with other groups working on the Southeast Side? Do you collaborate with them?

a. If so, can you describe how you collaborate with these other organizations?

b. Can you describe any difficulties your organizations have encountered in working with these other organizations?

5. How do you publicize your events and programs?

a. Is there a particular audience your organization is trying to attract to events (for example, age)?

b. How often do you hold public events or programs?

c. Do you have an idea of how participants usually find out about your organization's events?

6. Can you describe any difficulties your organization has had creating and/or maintaining engagement with Southeast Side communities?

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